



www.u3asites.org.uk/grantham
Grantham U3A is a registered charity No: 1097587

April 2026

Chairman's Message

I usually start on a seasonal note, and as I write, my spirits are uplifted by some lovely Spring sunshine, a chorus of morning songbirds, and blue skies above. Not exactly cloudless, though, with the promise of wind and rain to come later in the month. So far, so traditional. It is April, after all, and the weather's pretty much conforming to type.

I hope that all our members passed a relaxing Easter with friends and family and with the inevitable overindulgence of eggs by grandchildren. Many among our membership, it is worth remembering, spent Easter on their own, and perhaps didn't want to. Loneliness is a significant issue in our age group and our u3a exists to ensure that those that want company and friendship, can find it.

Plans are being laid for our 25th Birthday Celebration day in August. We will publish a programme for the event nearer the time. Meanwhile, we are still seeking contributions – anecdotes, photos, videos, personal stories, and so on – that illustrate the historical journey of Grantham's u3a. A few of our members were involved in the foundation 25 years ago and may have some archival material such as newsletters or publicity or indeed stories, and these would be of immense value to the planning group. We hope to produce a timeline film and include in it as much as we can of members' memories and activities. Please contribute anything you can to make this a special and significant (and indeed permanent) legacy. Email photos and videos to John Down (downjs01@gmail.com) or Joy Wilson (joy2712@live.co.uk) by the deadline of 31 May please.

You know I am always going on about recruitment to the Committee? Yes, of course you do. And we are aware that many u3a members are often willing to help with special tasks, or specific events, or have a skill they are happy to share but are reluctant to make a long-term commitment to actually sit on the Committee. So we would like to

compile a list of those who feel they could help out occasionally if the need should arise. This would be really useful. In fact, we're going to call such a group of members the Really Useful Group. If you would like to join the RUG, please let Joy Wilson (email above) know.

Don't forget our Monthly Meeting on Tuesday 21 April in the Guildhall Theatre at 2pm with our own u3a's David Valerio, and of course our ever-popular coffee morning in St Wulfram's the Tuesday after that at 10.00.

Do get out and enjoy the spring sunshine and the magnificent blossoms adorning the trees in the parks and green spaces – if wind and rain give us a breathing-space. **John Foulkes-Jones, Chair**

Beacon Administrator / Membership Secretary

We welcome the following new members to Grantham u3a:

Alan and Ann Holderness, Alan Parker, Angela Morris, Carole Retford, Rob and Colette Cooknell, Fiona Hornsby, Janet Whittle, Judith Townsend, Maurice Grooby, Pauline Lewis, Ray Mawer, Ruth Wilson, Sandra Feist, Susan Lucas. Our current membership stands at 617.

Another reminder is that there are still 32 members who have not visited the [members portal](#) to set up their passwords. It's important that members check their membership details, such as Name, Address and Contact Telephone Number etc. If you join as joint membership and sharing email address, you still have to set up passwords for individual accounts. I would endeavour to help members to complete the password setup process. I understand a lot of members are saying that they are not tech-savvy when it comes to modern technology or computers. I'd argue that the process will only take few minutes if you have a mobile phone or tablet. Your phone is a lot smarter than making calls, or texting using Whatsapp! Please give me a call if you are stuck. I am here to help.

Note: WE DO NOT STORE YOUR FINANCIAL DATA IN OUR WEBSITE.

I look forward to meeting members at the monthly talk or coffee morning.

Paul Lai 07780 662650

memsec.granthamu3a@gmail.com and beacon.gu3a@gmail.com

Pastoral Care

Please let Carole Troops know if you become aware of a member who is ill and would appreciate a message of support, or if someone has died. Her contact details are , **5 Somerby Grove, Grantham NG31 7HR**
care.granthamu3a@gmail.com

Tuesday Talks

21 April David Valerio returns to update us after his very popular appearance in January 2024. His talk is called "*From Ignorance via Intuition to Illumination*"

The talk will focus on Parkinsons Disease. David will focus both objective and subjective elements covering research into PD, including the place of alpha synuclein, stem cells and mitochondria.

The talk will focus on Parkinsons Disease. David will focus both objective and subjective elements covering research into PD, including the place of alpha synuclein, stem cells and mitochondria.

David was born a twin, the eldest of nine in Glasgow, 1947. He qualified in Medicine from Sheffield University in 1970 and later trained as a general surgeon in Aberdeen, London and Harvard He is a FRCS (Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons) Edinburgh and England and took a Master of Surgery (Postgraduate Degree) in 1979. David became Consultant General Surgeon 1982 at Grantham and Kesteven General Hospital. He was also an Examiner for FRCS from 1994 and an, Assessor of Examiners 2000-2006.

David retired in 2007 and then retrained in Humanities with Open University and he was awarded an MA degree (Honours). He is married with three children and 5 grandchildren. David developed Parkinsons Disease about 5 years ago.

19 May Bertie Pearce will entertain us with his talk on 'Creating an Imaginary World'

Theatrical scene design is one of the world's most beautiful, varied and lively art forms. Bertie looks at the relationship between actor and audience and how this transformed the space and architecture of theatre throughout the ages. Beginning with the Greeks and their remarkable innovations to pageants, masques and liturgical drama, through the science of perspective to court theatre, then a quick glance at Commedia dell'arte before entering the Elizabethan stage of

the Globe and The Fortune, arriving at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. From great architects such as Inigo Jones and Frank Matcham to practitioners such as Granville Barker and Gordon Craig and designers Cecil Beaton and Oliver Messel, Bertie brings to life the magical world of theatre.

Bertie Pearce is a Member of The Inner Magic Circle with Gold Star. He has performed all over the world in weird and wonderful places including: The Magic Castle in Hollywood; The Kulm Hotel in St Moritz and The Bertie and Boo Cafe in Balham, London. His 'Soiree Fantastique' Show at The Magic Circle in 1999 was a sell out and in 2003 he put on "All Aboard – The Comedy of Cruising" at The Bridewell Theatre in London which sold out for 11 nights. In 2008 he performed with his sister Boo in 'A Spoonful of Magic' at The Polka Theatre in Wimbledon and this was followed by Bertie and Boo's "Wonders of The World" Show which played at the Brighton Festival Fringe.

He is widely sought after for close-up magic and cabarets for private parties and fundraisers. In 2003 he was awarded the Carlton Comedy Award by the Magic Circle and twice won the award for Originality from The International Brotherhood of Magicians which won't surprise anyone who has seen his act.

He inherited a fascination with conjuring from his maternal Grandfather Charles Derek Hill who was a classic amateur conjurer of his day, building illusions at the family firm, Higgs and Hill. Equipped with a BA(Hons) in drama from Manchester University, Bertie went on to the Ecole Internationale du Theatre Jaques Lecoq in Paris. After a summer season in Jersey and two pantomimes he served time on the Cruise Ships for four years. His eyes were opened to the wonders of world travel and some unbelievable passengers which provided the material for his show All Aboard. In 2009 Bertie became an accredited Nadfas Lecturer and has toured extensively sharing his passion for Magic, Punch and Judy, Victorian Pastimes and Charles Dickens. His love of people and performance ensures that there is always a new and exciting gig around the corner.

Aside from performing Bertie loves the calm of the Sussex countryside where he has lived all his life. He loves gardening, forestry, making things and is very involved in his local church All Saints Church Crowborough. He is married and has two children, six light Sussex chickens, two pigs and a border terrier called Buttons.

16 June Philip Caine reflects on a life full of travel and challenge as he shares his career in his talk 'From Barrow to Baghdad'.

21 July Mike Burton presents his lecture 'The Water Babies'.

18 August is our 25 Anniversary celebration

15 September Fran Sandham talks about "In the Forbidden Land: The strange Tibetan adventure of Henry Savage Landor, the real-life 'Baron Munchausen' of Victorian explorers".

20 October Paul Isherwood gives us his talk 'Child Gambler Wins Life Back'; this is a tale of how a 10 year old boy lured by the magnetic pull of a slot machine with his addiction spiralling out of control had a light bulb moment and sought help. Now well into his fifties he hasn't gambled ever since.

17 November Lucy Lewis will talk about her career as Britain's first woman Bomb Disposal officer and beyond in 'Lighting The Fuse' .

15 December is our Christmas celebration.

Coffee Mornings

Coffee Mornings are held in St Wulfram's Church, Grantham, 10.00am - 11.30am on fourth Tuesday of the month and are open to all members. The next meetings are:

Tuesday 28 April

Tuesday 26 May

Tuesday 23 June

Group News

Wine Appreciation Group

Joe White

The group has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. A celebratory four course dinner was held at a member's house. There we sampled an aperitif from Charente Maritime, France, a frizzante wine from Italy, plus a wine from Vouvray in France.

We study OENOLOGY – the study of wine, broken down into VITICULTURE, the agricultural growing of vines and their grape harvest (vendange) and VINICULTURE, the process of turning grapes into wine.

We usually sample a white and a red wine, (other varieties are available), together with some cheese to clear the palate.

Recently we have sampled wine from Georgia, which has the oldest record of wine production, going back several thousand years. March saw us sampling a white wine from Armenia and a red one from Roumania.

We currently have vacancies for up to three more members. We usually meet on the second Thursday of the month, in the morning. To find out more, please telephone me on 01476 401959. Joe White.

Wildlife Group

Kerry Brazil

On a warm and sunny afternoon the group visited Culverthorpe Lakes. Culverthorpe Hall is a grade 1 listed building whilst some of the outbuildings and stables are grade 2 listed. The hall was built around 1679 to 1700 in the Palladian style of architecture.

There are various versions of a story that tells of a monkey throwing a baby off the roof, or the monkey could have frightened the nursemaid who then dropped the baby.

When doing the recce for this walk, there were several very muddy stretches of path, so the group was warned to wear wellingtons or other suitable footwear. Whilst the mud had dried up a bit, we were

able to navigate the mud patches, and the stiles. Some members chose to walk another way to avoid the mud, meet up with us further around the estate.

There were a lot of greylag geese near the lake. Amongst the other birds on the lake we saw cormorants, mallards, grebe and a heron. The horse chestnut trees were coming into leaf and the blackthorn was starting to flower. There were a lot of purple and white violets, daisies and celandines in flower.



On 20 March the Gardening Group held its annual community talk in the Guildhall Arts Centre. This was given by Andy Jenkins of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) with the title "Gardening the Globe" and outlined the work that the CWGC carries out throughout the world to plan, construct and maintain the cemeteries where fallen servicemen and women from Commonwealth and former Empire countries are buried. Entry to the talk was by voluntary donation, and, thanks to the generosity of the audience, we were able to raise £277, which went directly towards the work of the CWGC.

Although it is funded by the six member states of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, the CWGC cares for the graves of 1.7 million personnel from the entire former British Empire and Commonwealth, maintaining sites in more than 150 countries and territories worldwide.

As such, the CWGC is one of the largest horticultural enterprises in the world, employing about 850 gardeners in over 23,000 locations around the world and encompassing most of the world's ecosystems.

The first war grave cemeteries, created after the First World War, were planned as a single entity, comprising both structural and horticultural elements, and attempted to imitate the English country garden planting style popularised by Gertrude Jekyll. The architectural advisers were Edward Lutyens, Sir Reginald Bloomfield and Sir Herbert Baker, and the botanical adviser was Arthur Hill, who later became director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. Kew also supplied many of the plants used in the original cemeteries.

As time went on, however, it was clear that the types of plantings used for the early cemeteries were not always appropriate for cemeteries in other countries, particularly those in hotter climates. In some countries plants would grow so large and so quickly that they would cover the wording on the headstones, so that more suitable plants had to be found. Roses, once popular in the early cemeteries, were not always suitable in drier climates, for instance, because of the amount of water they require.

Even the original designs of the headstones that mark the graves have had to be adapted. In some countries, where soil and weather conditions would not support a standard headstone, flat markers, known as Gallipoli markers, are used. Clearly a different sort of planting is needed for these, so that the wording on them is not obscured

The CWGC has had to adapt throughout the years, and now, in common with many other organisations, must deal with the problems caused by climate change and the need for sustainability when caring for its cemeteries. Unlike many other organisations, however, it also has to contend with maintaining cemeteries in war-torn areas, such as the Gaza Strip.

For more information on the CWGC, please see their website www.cwgc.org which also has details of their cemeteries throughout the world.



New Age Kurling group

Sue Hughes

The New Age Kurling group, full of life after refreshments. We were all encouraged with the Winter Olympics, but thankful we didn't have to bend like they did.

We have welcomed a couple of new members and lost a few but the friendships continue.

Our high score winners enjoying Christmas Lunch



Enjoying cake from our Birthday celebration



Local History

Anne Rudderham

Our speaker for **March**, Colin Deeley, gave another interesting and informative talk, this time on Southwell Workhouse & Infirmary, and for someone who has now reached his 90th birthday, he never ceases to amaze us with his knowledge and delivery of speech, all without notes, which apparently we have his Royal Air Force training to thank for! Now in the hands of the National Trust and the most complete and best-preserved example of its kind in existence, Southwell Workhouse, built in 1824, was pivotal in the development of our national health and welfare system. For decades it was where the poorest in society had to work and where they received food, shelter and medical care and whilst Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* painted a bleak picture of life in the workhouse, at Southwell it's shown that - although harsh and monotonous - aspects such as education, medical care or diet may have been better inside than for the poor in their own homes.

It was Rev John Thomas Becher, a clergyman and magistrate and probably best known as a social reformer, who had the idea that local parishes combine funds and build a workhouse to house the destitute rather than each parish supporting individuals with food, fuel and clothing. Up to 158 inmates at a time from 62 parishes entered this building as a last resort and it was his view that workhouses should be a 'deterrent' to ensure that only the truly destitute would submit themselves to such a harsh regime (they had after all to ask if they could be taken in and then ask again if they could leave). It was also intended to achieve a 'moral' improvement, with the poor providing for themselves if at all possible.

Segregation was introduced and adults were divided into categories: those unable to work (called 'blameless') and those capable of work but unemployed (considered 'idle and profligate able bodied'). They were further subdivided into men and women and children were kept separate, although those up to the age of 3 stayed with their mothers. Each group lived in different areas, meaning families couldn't meet or if they did it was once or twice a week (a 'privilege' to be taken away from them as a punishment if needed).

Some members went on to learn more when we visited the workhouse and infirmary for our **April** meeting enjoying the guided tours and on-site cafe made all the more pleasant by the glorious spring weather. Colin was on duty for the tours (he's there every other Wednesday and at Belton House every Monday) and again gave his usual humorous account of life at Southwell. Grateful thanks to Tricia Daniels and Carolyn Midgley for helping to organise both March and April's events.

For more information about the workhouse and infirmary visit <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/nottinghamshire-lincolnshire/the-workhouse-and-infirmary>

Here's Colin giving a talk at the front main entrance of the workhouse. The window in the room above the door belonged to the master and matron (they had to be married as there was only one bed) and the windows at the side allowed them to keep an eye on the segregation 'exercise' yards below in case of any misdemeanour whilst the inmates were socialising.



In **May**, plans are in hand for a visit to the Polish War Graves Cemetery in Newark; the final resting place of hundreds of Polish airmen who died fighting the Nazis in Britain during World War II.

Writing Outdoors

Barbara Shannon

What better inspiration this month than Spring herself?

In sunshine we took a slow walk along the riverside, witnessing the annual re-greening – the unfolding of the fresh new growth, the blossoming, and the fascinating remains of last year's flowering, some still hanging on, others now dashed to the ground. But have you ever held in the palm of your hand the seed head of the London plane tree (*Platanus x hispanica*) in its final stage before seed dispersal? If so, you may have wondered if you had happened upon a small furry caramel brown mammal? Or a Tribble? Or the bobble off someone's hat? The flowers of this majestic monoecious tree, transformed into spiky fruits which hang like Christmas baubles all winter, are now dispersing; it has taken the tree a full year to complete its life cycle.

Nature wears many names and my favourite for this fully fledged seed ball is the 'lost troublepuff' - aptly named if you know that, as with other fluffy seed heads, children have been known to delight in putting these skin irritants down each other's jumpers. Look up in the coming weeks to see both male and female globular flower heads on separate catkins, the female with crimson stigmas and the male shedding the characteristic yellow pollen.



Spring Haiku

Beautiful blossom.
Spring sunshine, resurrection
Of the light from dark.

Carole Boyle

Rhubarb gin sunset
Under the forcing jar
Spring on our doorstep

Barbara Shannon



By Carole and Barbara

Spring 2026

On my hands and knees, trowel and fork ready.
The bugle call of the daffodil has sounded the reveille.
Awake now, I delight once more in the perennial rhythm repeating.
In a troubled world, the sun never fails to shine,
On the righteous and the unrighteous, and on my garden.
Newly unfurling, reaching for the warm, bright rays of the sun, fragile
green surprises
Peek in astonishment in the cracks between the paving slabs.
Brand new shoots, a benediction, a hopeful prayer.

Chris Anderson
3rd April 2026

Guitar group

Graham Welham

February was another quiet month for going out and playing gigs for the guitar group. However, there are confirmed future gigs in the pipeline for April, July, and November, and possible gig in May.

I hope everyone enjoyed our performance at the AGM (Annual General Meeting), with some new tunes/songs being included in our

repertoire, along with a slight change in the lineup of performers. Many thanks to all who stayed on till the end of the meeting. I think everyone in the band really appreciated the feedback we got on the day.



Throughout March we continued with our regular practice sessions. We also spent time rehearsing to play at a wedding in Newark.

The wedding took place on the 2 April, at The Boathouse House, Farndon, Newark. What a beautiful venue, and I hope in some small

way our music on the day helped to make this a memorable and wonderful day for the happy couple.

If anyone has photos of our guitar group playing either in the past or more recently, we would love to receive copies please. My contact details are: grahamwelham@hotmail.com

The Boathouse, Newark



Recent outings have been to:-

Stamford, where, as well as having a look around the excellent Friday market, enjoying a coffee and bite at the very good Cornish Bakery (thanks for the suggestion Bev) we also popped into the Stamford Arts Centre where we were in awe of the amazing skills of the Stamford Stitchers at their recent exhibition.



Newark. Another market town, a visit to the National Civil War Centre and, of course, more coffee. This time at the very good Stokes cafe (just by the Travelodge, in case you are wondering).

North Hykeham - to the special open day at The Lincolnshire Road Transport Museum. There are an awful lot of old buses, vans, cars, bikes, etc, etc there! We were lucky enough to have a ride on a vintage double decker bus. Anyone remember the little rough metal match strikers fastened to the seat in front? I had forgotten all about those - and the cigarette smoke that went with them!



We are very much looking forward to our summer outings - and warmer weather

Report of meeting held on 11 March 2026

Public backs Starmer's decision to limit UK involvement in USA attack on Iran although he agreed to allow Americans the use of British bases to mount defensive action.

Should The King go on a state visit to USA?

Hereditary peers will no longer have the right to sit and vote in the House of Lords in one of the biggest reforms to Parliament in a generation.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has included sat nav directions as part of the practical driving test in England, Scotland and Wales.

Blood test detects dementia in women up to 25 years before symptoms.

Teenage angst is not an illness that needs a life-changing label.

Moral dilemma on dividing inheritance between siblings with varying financial resources. jean.pritchard1@gmail.com

Recipe of the Month

Courtesy of Carole Troops

Tart Cherry and Almond Shortbread Bars

For the Shortbread

200g plain flour

100g castor sugar

150g unsalted butter, cold and cubed

1 tsp vanilla extract

For the Filling

100g tart cherry preserve or jam (I use morello cherry conserve or jam)

50 flaked almonds

Set oven at 175⁰C, Gas Mark 3. Line an 8inch square tin.
Combine the flour, sugar and butter in a processor and pulse until the dough starts to come together. If it seems dry add 1 tbsp cold water.
Press dough evenly into tin and bake for 12 – 15 minutes until lightly golden.

Spread jam evenly over the base and sprinkle with flaked almonds.
Bake for a further 10 – 12 minutes until edges are golden and filling bubbling.

Leave in tin until completely cold then cut into squares or bars.



Thank you to all contributors this edition. Please send your contributions for the May newsletter to ed.granthamu3a@gmail.com by Friday 8 May.