



Grantham

www.u3asites.org.uk/grantham

Grantham U3A is a registered charity No: 1097587

July 2026

Chairman's Message

It feels like the height of summer for the third time this year! Whilst these nights are scarcely granting us sleep, try to enjoy the days. Get out as much as possible and visit Lincolnshire's wealth of castles, houses and gardens. Invariably you'll find there a nice shady tea house where a cream tea will perhaps remind you that this is still better than the cold and driving rain which often has been the harbinger of summer.

Now, to business: we are fast approaching our 25th Birthday Party at the Priory Ruskin School on Tuesday 18 August. You should have received a Form by email to respond to the question of whether you intend to come. We have to determine approximate numbers both for catering and for the capacity limits of the venue. We have asked you to put your name down on a Waiting List (write to John Down – downjs01@gmail.com – if you missed the first mail) as we've now had about enough responses to fill the hall. Please let John know if you intend to come to the party, even if you are manning one of the stalls and assume you've already been counted in. In all likelihood, those on the Waiting List will still be able to come, or at least, many of them will.

As you may know, Grantham u3a has grown to more than 600 members with more than 60 different Interest Groups offered to them, all of which are run and led by members themselves. Maintaining and organising a group is not an easy task and needs some time and commitment. Some group leaders have commented that there are members who keep their membership of a certain group but rarely or infrequently attend its meetings. Since there are many groups with

waiting lists, we ask that your commitment to an Interest Group be made manifest in regular attendance and regular communication with the leader if unable to attend. This way, Leaders can reduce the waiting lists which are a source of annoyance to quite a few enthusiastic members of Grantham u3a.

And talking of Interest Groups you'd like to join, or even start up, there is a service offered online by the Third Age Trust whereby u3a Interest groups have regular virtual meetings by Zoom. These are led by u3a volunteers from other areas nationally and involve members from all over the country. Tai Chi, Crosswords, Italian, Soul Music and Latin (five groups of Latin!) are just some of the many online Interest Groups you might like to join. Find out more at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online>

Our next Monthly Talk will take place as usual on Tuesday 21 July in the Guildhall Theatre at 2pm and of course our popular coffee morning is celebrated in St Wulfram's the Tuesday after that at 10am.

I know many are away on summer holidays – before the school rush – and I hope you manage to keep cool and take the necessary precautions to protect your skin. Have a great vacation if you are going away and stay safe in this turbulent world.

John Foulkes-Jones, Chair

Beacon Administrator / Membership Secretary

Please welcome the following new members:

Graham Watkin, Sandra Snow, Peter Lester, Lynda Lester, Tony Maycock, Suzanne Maycock, Lesley Graham, Brian Graham, Barbara Young, Laura Newcombe, Peter Nickson, Pam Gray, and Janet Elizabeth Came.

Paul Lai
Grantham Beacon Administrator and Membership Secretary
07780 662650

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 Tel 01476 566279.

Tuesday Talks

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

This beautiful fairy story has charmed generations of children - and adults. But scarcely remembered now is the central part it played in the famous Darwinian evolution debate, nor the major boost it gave to the advancement of women's rights. It was also critical to the growth of the early environmental movement and the fight for clean water in cities. And it was decisive in ending the shameful Victorian era chapter of little boys being sent up chimneys as sweeps.

I am a former newspaper journalist and teacher, now retired. As a young man I spent many years in New Zealand, working as a reporter for the country's national daily newspaper. I specialised in politics, crime, Maori affairs and environmental issues.

Much of my teaching career was spent at Uppingham School, where I was Academic Assistant Head and I taught History. It was a huge pleasure – and an enormous privilege – to work, in the classroom, for so many years, with thousands of enthusiastic youngsters.

In my dotage I spend much of my time writing more and more historically-themed talks, which groups in all corners of the East Midlands listen to with patience and tolerance. These folk are really the successors to my pupils, because my talks reflect the way that I used to teach history - using jolly stories, lots of pictures, and plenty of colour, to seek to transmit a fascination for the past.

I sing with two choirs. One of these is the Belvoir Wassailers, a male voice group, which often performs in Grantham. I work as a guide at Rockingham Castle, and I enjoy both walking the great paths of Britain and also spending a day at Trent Bridge as often as I am able.

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 July

Tuesday 25 August

Tuesday 22 September

Group News

Cuban Dance Beginners & Improvers

John Derbyshire

Since starting the new dance group in February this year, the group has shown their commitment to improving not only their dancing ability, but also their ability to have fun and share any knowledge of dance that they already have, with others in the group. We completed the first 10 week course, had a 2 week break and are now coming into the ninth week of the second 10 week course. It was good to see that there was an increase in male participation on the second course. We're having a great time teaching and learning new moves, along with lots of laughter, coffees, teas and biscuits. The exercise obviously

deals with any biscuit calories! We still have a small imbalance in the class of ladies to men, so any applications from gentlemen would be considered, even though we are at our near maximum group size.

Wildlife Group

Kerry Brazil

Our June meeting was a visit to Boothby Wildland. We first had a talk given by Elliot, one of the rangers, and then a short walk around part of the former farmland.



At 617 hectares Boothby Wildland is the largest of the 3 sites owned by Nattergal. The other 2 are High Fen near Thetford, 292 hectares and Harold's Park, near Epping Forest, 205 hectares.

Boothby Wildland was purchased in 2021 and was formerly an arable farm. The aim of Nattergal is to recover nature by creating woodland, restoring rivers to their original paths, and gradually reintroducing free roaming herbivores. Pigs first, then cattle and finally ponies.





At Boothby wildland they have introduced a pair of beavers and their 2 kits, in an enclosed area. They are currently working on the restoration of the west Glen River.

Acoustic Guitar

Fiona Robbins

It's hard to believe that we started out as beginners 3 years ago: so much has happened in that time! The group shrank as members fell by the wayside, then grew with the influx of the Strummers. More recently we have been joined by some really competent players, which gave us the confidence to play our first gig.

On 1 June we invited a few friends to join us for our birthday celebrations, where we raised the roof. Using part of the time for a final rehearsal the following week we entertained the Cane and Able group at Barrowby. They were a lovely audience, singing along when they knew the words, and we all had a really good time. It was a real confidence-builder for those playing their very first gig: the nerves soon disappeared as they surprised - and really enjoyed - themselves. I am happy to report that, on both occasions, a good time was had by all.

Guitar group

Graham Welham

During June we continued with our regular Thursday afternoon practice sessions. It's been a bit hot at times, so many thanks to all group members who turned up to make the sessions go so well. July is going to be a busy gigging month for the guitar group. Our first gig of the month was at King's Court Care Home, Newark on 1 July. A great sound mix was well appreciated by residents and staff. I've attached some photos from this gig.

Many thanks to Steve Diamond for being the lead organiser for the group this time and helping me by reducing some of my workload associated with running the guitar group.



We also have two further gigs coming up in July, at Lancaster Grange in Newark and Gregory House, Grantham. These are return gigs to venues we've previously played. I'm looking forward to both of these.

Please feel free to contact the guitar group, if you think you have a venue, know of a Care Home, or other event, that might enjoy some live music.

Local History

Anne Rudderham

In June we had a house history talk/tour at Grantham House and our volunteer guide, Aina, gave a very interesting and informative presentation of this remarkable town house. Built in 1380 and now owned by the National Trust, it's currently used as a community space with free entry to enjoy its peaceful gardens, walled garden and riverside meadow, partake of the refreshments on offer in its cafe or browse through the second-hand bookshop. Its architectural features have been enhanced and remodelled several times over the centuries and include a 16th-century chimney stack, 17th century windows and an 18th-century staircase. The House and the Stables are both Grade I listed and the wall and doorway for the riverside garden is Grade II* listed. In its former life it has also been a girls' school. It was known as 'Hall House' in the 16th century after the Hall family who owned it and important guests during this period include Cardinal Wolsey and Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots. Its history also connects it to Belton House with the Brownlow and Cust families. Sir Richard Crust acquired Grantham House in 1732 and it subsequently became the dower-house for his widow Anne Brownlow who lived there until 1754 when she inherited Belton House following the death of her brother. She then passed Belton House to her son, John Cust, who became Speaker of the House of Commons.

There's the chance every Friday to discover more about the stories behind this fascinating place on *Grantham House Guided History Talks*, running at 11am and 1pm (but allow more time than stated as we'd been advised the tours would last 45 minutes but they actually ran for almost 90 minutes). Book your free place (no need to be a NT member but booking is essential) at

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/nottinghamshire-lincolnshire/grantham-house/events/c31b5ac6-ac33-4840-9d29-0e0bb719ae06>.

Or if you fancy going along to one of their garden tours for a detailed exploration of the beautiful walled garden, meadow and lawns, these will be taking place every Thursday at 11am and 1pm. Walks last around 45 minutes, are completely free and don't need to be booked in advance but best to arrive in plenty of time to take part.

For anyone requiring accessible parking,
email grantham@nationaltrust.org.uk or telephone 01476
285588. They will then be able to confirm the booking and advise
what to do on arrival.

In July, we'll be visiting the *We'll Meet Again World War II Homefront Museum* which is based at Freiston Shore, Boston.

Fun Jive

Robert Watkins

Fun Jive group is now in summer recess until 7th September. Anyone wishing to join us please add your name to the waiting list or contact the leader through u3a. We will try to accommodate you as we assess our membership when we resume. The success of the Fun Jive group has gone National. Two of our four instructors Barbara Shannon and Vince Ryan held a very successful class at the u3a National Festival in York in July. Forty beginners to their surprise learnt a routine of three moves and wanted more.

An Opportunity to learn bridge

The [Central u3a](#) offers [Beginners Bridge Course](#) for those members with computers or tablets. The online course is based on a well-proven methodology using Nofearbridge lessons and RealBridge playing sessions. Please click the links below for further details:
[u3a Bridge Group, beginners bridge](#)

The u3a bridge group is also looking for [volunteer bridge mentors](#). Are you an experienced bridge player and would like to help? Please check out the link below:
[u3a Bridge Group, bridge mentor](#)

Two articles about the u3a Festival 2026

The national u3a organisation held a Festival at the University of York from July 1st to the 3rd. There were over 200 different sessions available covering a vast array of topics and activities. I took part in a script reading session which included an early Hancock's Half Hour Sketch, and participated in a short lawn bowls event.

My main reason for attending was to support the Climate Matters IGO (Interest Groups Online) exhibit. There were several other Grantham u3a members in attendance too. The evening entertainment included music and dance sessions, and of course a quiz.

It is hoped to move the event around the country though the York Campus would be hard to beat as a venue. I can really recommend the event particularly if you can go as part of a group. **Steve Potts**



Grantham u3a was very well represented in York at the **u3a Festival 2026** at the beginning of this month. What a joy it was to travel and attend with friends we have made in our u3a groups here in Grantham. The three-day event at the beautiful parkland university was well attended with over 1,000 delegates; more than double attending the inaugural festival in 2024.

The number of talks, tours, tasters, and performances were so numerous and varied that we were all spoilt for choice. Barb and Vince from our own Fun Jive group offered a Modern Jive workshop which was very well attended and enjoyed.

Chris gives us a great flavour of the three days saying, "What an amazing three days spent at the u3a Festival. With talks and discussions ranging from *Discovering the Hidden Messages of the Bayeux Tapestry*, to an extremely interesting talk and discussion on AI led by Alan Freeland**, along with two members of the University academic team. It addressed the impact AI is having on teaching and the marking of student work.

** <https://u3acommunities.org/interest-groups/computing/ai-for-everyone-2/>

Other topics ranged from the *Valley of the Kings* for an overview of the tombs discovered thus far, to *Men who Challenge Misogyny*, led by a member of MACS (Male Allies Challenging Sexism) and how we can all play a part helping overcome this. Also covered were *Biodiversity in the UK* to *Are We Living in a Science Fiction Dystopia?*

A particular standout event was a two-hour evening music performance by Don't Frett, a nine-piece guitar group who played and sang with the audience joining in, so much so that we forgot to get up and dance.

Thanks must go to York u3a for organising such a successful event."

Rob offers his take on the experience:

"Climate Change — It is not enough to leave a monetary legacy.

Nine-piece guitar group — I will practise more.

Biodiversity — More to do in my garden to attract wildlife.

Fun Jive — I realised how far our teachers have brought us.

Pickle Ball — There is life in the old dog yet."

Nice one Rob, there is still so much to learn.

Vince learnt that Ham radio is not for him but has already purchased supplies to get going on developing his drawing further after attending Charcoal Portrait Sketching.

Alison and Dave covered a huge range of activities between them: Handbells, Pickleball, Pétanque, Painting, Modern Jive, Singing, Short Lawn Bowls, Mahjong for Beginners, Belly dancing, Walking Netball, and Walking Cricket, as well as attending talks, listening to a flute orchestra and dancing the night away at the Ceilidh, which we all enjoyed. Phew! They noted how 'the enthusiasm of group leaders and presenters shone through' not forgetting that everyone is a volunteer.



Jan and Pete also took part in a lot of activities, including a talk by Johnny Ball in which he reflected on his life and career, and a very interesting talk on the developing human brain 'Growing our Minds'. They emphasised how much they had enjoyed trying out new things and meeting and getting to know other u3a members from across the country. They summed up the festival as a great opportunity to 'Learn, Laugh and Live'.

Janet said her standout activity was an Improv workshop, which was fun and very liberating - definitely another one worth pursuing - anyone?

Most of us tried the Pickleball sessions and think it would be a great activity to introduce to the Grantham u3a - so watch this space.

I had a taste of '**shinrin-yoku**' or forest bathing, introduced in Japan in the 1980s and more recently beginning to be prescribed for well-being in the UK. I learnt how trees release chemicals called phytoncides, which have a protective antimicrobial effect on human bodies and can help boost our immune system. I knew there was a reason I was in love with trees!

I was particularly impressed by the reach and commitment of the **Climate Matters** group

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online/interest-groups-online-groups/climate-matters>

which is one of several online groups open to any u3a member. As well as presenting talks, they also had a stall & display throughout the three days where they took a poll on how worried members were about climate change - discovering that most are very worried.

If you haven't already found it, the online offering is well worth a look

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online>

What I came away with was how much the u3a provides for us all, by us all, not just in our local groups but nationally too.

Very well done u3a 🙌

Would we go again? - A resounding yes from us all, and I hope we have inspired you to think about going along next time.



Chris and Rob Watkins, Dave and Alison Walters, Jan and Pete Hubbard, Janet Neal, Vince Ryan and Barbara Shannon.

Barbara Shannon

Cinnamon Cookies (and Raisin Cookies)

120g softened salted butter

50g light brown muscovado sugar

150g castor sugar

3 tsps ground cinnamon

1 egg, lightly beaten

220g plain flour

1tsp baking powder

50g raisins (optional)

1 tbsp icing sugar

Using an electric whisk, beat the butter, both sugars and 2 tsps cinnamon together.

Add the egg, flour, baking powder and raisins and beat until mixture leaves the sides of the bowl and forms a dough.

Take tablespoons of dough and roll into balls (you should have 12 – 15). Chill in the fridge for at least 2 hours, then place on lined baking trays, 3 – 4cm apart to allow for spreading.

Bake at 160°C, Gas 4 for 10 -12 minutes.

Leave to cool completely on the trays.

Mix the remaining cinnamon with the icing sugar and dust over the cookies.

They will keep in an airtight tin for up to 5 days.

NB you can freeze the dough balls and cook from frozen.



Thank you to all contributors this edition. Please send your contributions for the August newsletter to ed.granthamu3a@gmail.com by Friday 7 August