u3a Grantham

www.u3asites.org.uk/grantham

Grantham U3A is a registered charity No: 1097587

November 2026

Chairman's Message

"I can't believe it's November", I hear people saying. Oh, come on. It's not like we haven't had a bit of a clue with some familiar months leading up to it. I could understand the confusion had we just come straight out of April. You'd have a point there. But here we are, completely blindsided by the calendar yet again. Still suffering jetlag from putting the clocks back an hour. Still amazed that the sky begins to darken at 4.30. Well, come along people, because I have to tell you that Christmas is but six weeks away so get cracking on that shopping!

And talking of the festive season, as I mentioned last time, the individual interest groups' tree ornaments have been submitted and are lovely and imaginative! They will adorn the branches when tree festival starts in St Wulfram's in November. Thank you to all those who crafted these. We hope to erect the tree again in the Ballroom of the Guildhall for our Christmas Party. And this will take place from 2pm on the afternoon of Tuesday 15 December. A census of those intending to attend was sent out last month by email. The replies have been received in strict chronological order and the first 130 members will be confirmed. The rest (so far just a handful) will go on a Waiting List, as we have been obliged to do in the past, because of Fire & Safety Regulations pertaining to crowd capacities in SKDC premises.

Renewals of u3a membership for 2027 are due by the beginning of January, and the process is open now. It may be done online through the membership portal (https://u3abeacon.org.uk/u3aportal),via the Web site, or in person with the membership secretary at the Tuesday Talk or Coffee Morning. The annual subscription is now £12.50 basic.

(*pro rata* extra for paper magazine, *pro rata* reduction for associate membership, as in current year).

I make no apology for repeating here an appeal from last month's editorial:

As the year slips away towards 2027, and our AGM in February looms, I become increasingly aware (for aware: read *nervous*) of the parlous state of our Committee Membership numbers, and of their continuity and succession. As I have said many times to the membership, we cannot exist as an entity within the framework of the Charity Commission rules unless we have as a minimum a functioning executive. And so once again I appeal to our considerable association in excess of 650 members for **volunteers** who would be willing to serve on the committee. It may involve *only one morning a month*, and possibly less than that, as we are all volunteers with other commitments. Please do consider this. I do not wish to preside over a committee of dedicated, committed, enthusiastic but exhausted volunteers who work tirelessly for Grantham u3a and do so in a sea of dwindling numbers with no refreshment in site. (No, I don't mean tea and sandwiches: I mean fresh blood!)

And now with nights well drawn-in and heating well turned-up, with that, I wish you a cosy, snuggly November, with stew and dumplings and lots of Good Things to eat and drink.

John Foulkes-Jones, Chair

Beacon Administrator / Membership Secretary

We welcome new members this month: Ann Wardrop, David Thomas, Gary Saxton, Helen Saxton, Kevin Swindin, Peter Rymer, Richard Street, Bob Hough, Sara Kent, Sharon Maklowicz

Our membership renewal programme for 2027 has been open since 1st November. Members with email addresses should have received an email detailing the online renewal process. Our preferred method is to renew online. This is an advance notification before 1st January 2027 due date. Otherwise, we'll have a last-minute rush! You must log in to your Membership Portal on the u3a website to renew online.

Members who haven't set their portal password must do this first. Please contact me if you need help.

New members who have joined from 1st November will also enjoy up to 2 months of free membership. Their subscription will last until 31st December, 2027.

Our Christmas Party received an overwhelming response. Lots of members replied early. Despite an initial hiccup for members with shared email addresses, I hope I resolved them all. The Party has been oversubscribed; it will be held in the Guildhall Ballroom, where SKDC has imposed a strict fire regulation not to exceed the prescribed limit. We therefore cannot admit anyone who doesn't have an invitation. Members who have been allocated a place in the Party should have received an invitation email. Other members, who have responded but unable to secure a place in the Party, have been notified that you are on the waiting list. Anybody who cannot attend the Party should notify me immediately so that the next member on the waiting list can take his / her place.

Paul Lai
Grantham Beacon Administrator and Membership Secretary
07780 662650

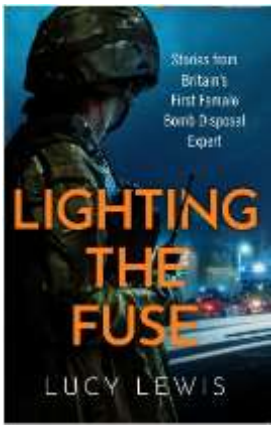
Pastoral Care

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

17 November Lucy Lewis will talk about her career as Britain's first woman Bomb Disposal officer and beyond in *Lighting The Fuse*.
Lucy Lewis joined the Army on the spur of the moment and after training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst was chosen in 1989 to become the first woman to operate as a Bomb Disposal Officer with the Royal Engineers. She subsequently served with the Royal Military Police in Germany and Northern Ireland, retiring in the rank of Major

to start a family. In 2018, Lucy made history for a second time by becoming the first woman to be appointed University Marshal at the University of Cambridge and now leads one of the oldest Constabularies in the world.



15 December is our Christmas celebration

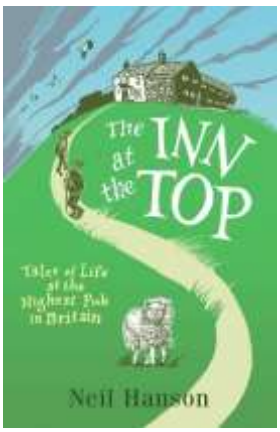
19 January Neil Hanson talks about *Inn & Out at the Top*

Neil Hanson is a successful author with 70 published books to his name. As well as his own, much-acclaimed work, he's also a "ghost writer". His clients include household names - an American showbiz legend, England's most legendary cricketer, a famous actor, one of Britain's most decorated soldiers, an England football manager and a man who turned his family's bakery into Britain's biggest fast-food chain - but also many less celebrated men and women who have led extraordinary lives or achieved remarkable things. Among many others, they include SAS men, fast-jet pilots, explorers and adventurers, a treasure diver, a kidnap negotiator, a notorious gangster, the first woman ever to qualify as a gamekeeper and deer-stalker, a leading surgeon and a spy.

A hugely engaging storyteller and award-winning speaker, Neil has entertained audiences at every type of occasion - corporate events, conferences, festivals, luncheon clubs, dinners and banquets - throughout the UK and right across the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

His talk *Inn & Out at the Top* is a laugh-a-minute tour of the quirks and foibles, highs and lows of his time running Britain's highest inn back in the 1970s and 1980s, grappling with tight-fisted farmers, eccentric characters, bizarre local customs, naturist weekends, "lates and lock-ins", police raids, rats in the attic, close encounters with magistrates

and planners, and the shooting of a famous double-glazing commercial.



16 February is our AGM

16 March Brenda Ainsley The Climate Crisis – and Some Solutions

20 April Dr Simon Durrant and Professor Caroline Horton will revisit their 2024 talk on 'Sleep is Essential for Health'

18 May Sarah Vokes 'Hearing Health, including age-related hearing loss, the link with dementia and practical advice'

15 June David Pinion will be talking about his Amazing Journey to Antarctica.

Maggie Ambrose , Speaker Finder
Jenny Lewis, Assistant Speaker Finder

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 24 November
December – No Coffee Morning
Tuesday 26 January 2027

Group News

Local History **Anne Rudderham**

At our last meeting of the year we were treated to another talk/quiz by Carolyn Dewhirst, this time the subject being St Wulfram's Church. Many fascinating facts and figures were passed on - there is indeed much to learn about this splendid building - and Carolyn's presentation, interspersed with a quiz, made it a fun afternoon (well done to Andy for winning the small prize after a tie-break!). Meeting in the Wyldbore Room at Grantham House worked well and those who wished could then pop into the church over the way before it closed at 4pm to see firsthand what they've just learned from Carolyn (and the Trigge Library just happened to be open too!).

We've recently received a request about volunteering at the Trigge Library; apparently it's very rewarding and training would be given. From Easter to September/October it generally opens from 10-12 noon on Wednesday and Saturday mornings as well as some dates during the winter months. Plus there are extra days when it is open especially for a group tour, so they would love new stewards to come and help - this might mean just couple of mornings a month. If anyone is interested, please get in touch with me and I'll pass on contact details (annerudderham23@gmail.com).

November is our planning meeting and we're looking forward to putting a programme together for 2027. January's meeting (Weds 13th) has already been booked and will be a talk by Mike Burton on *Rutland County* (Mike gave an interesting talk on *Water Babies* at the u3a monthly meeting in July) and this will be open to all u3a members if you'd like to join us. More details to follow in December's newsletter.

Tuesday and Thursday badminton groups

Tuesday and Thursday badminton groups held a combined Saree Party organised by Gill Derbyshire.
We all contributed food and drink, with delights such as chicken curry and beef stew, along with many homemade accompaniments and delicious homemade cakes and puddings. Saroj Ladva provided Sarees

for everybody to wear and spent a lot of time dressing us all up. Meanwhile, whilst others were waiting, it was quiz sheets to hand for a food quiz.

We then enjoyed some dancing to Punjabi music and took lots of photos.

We all made a donation to costs and the excess money is being donated to Rainbows Children's Hospice. All in all a fun time was enjoyed by everybody. **Written by Gill Derbyshire**





Fun Jive **Rob Watkins**

The Fun Jive group extend thanks to the Cuban Style Dance group who hosted a party evening in October at Ropsley Village Hall. John and Gill Derbyshire and Andrew Amper provided great music, dancing and a wonderful buffet. They made us jivers very welcome and set the bar high for the next event.
At Fun Jive we enjoy the considerable physical and mental health benefits of dancing and the fun and friendships that comes with it. Such is the success of this group that we do have a waiting list but if you wish to be a "lead" partner (usually male but can be female), or come as a couple, you may be prioritised.

Acoustic Guitar **Fiona Robbins**

Buoyed by the support of our seasoned players, the group is making real progress, growing both in proficiency and confidence. We are trying to test ourselves further by taking a more challenging approach to chord playing. It is a delight to see the more experienced members impart their knowledge to help us develop our skills.
Although we are committed to play simply for our enjoyment, we did enjoy our first ever 'gig' and have decided that we are ready and willing to undertake several throughout the year.
We recently returned to entertain the Cane and Able group, who are a delight, and anticipate making this a feature of our year. The challenge is to keep learning a good variety of songs and ring the changes when we do go out to entertain.

STEM Update **Jenny Shaw**

As we approach the end of 2026 the STEM Cell can look back on a year of wide-ranging subject coverage and significant growth in membership. Apart from our monthly talks in the Manthorpe Church Hall we have enjoyed two excursions to local universities as well as our annual Summer Social, this time not including a members' 'construction challenge'. We also had our first transatlantic session: a talk by an artificial intelligence specialist based in North Carolina using remote communication technology. Subjects of our monthly talks at Manthorpe have included Food Additives, Raptor Birds, Astrophysics, The Language of Mathematics and the West Burton Nuclear Fusion Project. Below is a photograph of some members with Katy Jarvis-Morgan, the speaker from West Burton. The robotics sub-group has

continued to meet informally and our July STEM meeting was an opportunity to recount how Grantham u3a fared in the 2019 National Robot Challenge and to talk about developments since then. We have never imposed a membership limit for the STEM Cell – it doesn't seem that long ago we were meeting in living rooms! – but we may have to review this if the growth trend of 2026 continues into 2027.



Strollers Walking Group **Jean Pritchard**

The inaugural meeting of the newly formed Strollers Walking Group took place on Thursday 8 October 2026. Following this walk the feedback has been very encouraging and a second, two stage walk around Grantham, is planned for 12 November. Details will be sent by email to those already signed up. If you would like to join us, please contact the Group Leader
jean.pritchard1@gmail.com

Several car drivers have volunteered to take passengers when we venture further out into the local countryside.

Scottish Country Dancers **John Aitken**

The Scottish Country Dancers were invited to dance at the opening ceremony of Harrowby Lane Methodist Church's Community Day on Saturday 10 Oct to mark 75 years on that site.





After the opening speech, we demonstrated a couple of dances and then invited onlookers to try some easy dances, which they thoroughly enjoyed, finishing with the Gay Gordons.





Many of the u3a members have joined other Scottish Dance groups and several were at Waltham's Hallowe'en Dance on 29 October, where several dressed up as witches before casting their spells as they danced. Four u3a members are in the photograph.



On Tuesday 03 November we were invited to Ropsley WI's monthly meeting. We showed off some dances before the majority of the WI members descended onto the dancefloor wanting to have a go themselves. A fun time was had by all!





Current Affairs **Jean Pritchard**

We welcomed two new members to the Group who made a good contribution to our discussions which covered the following:

Triple Lock: Andy Burnham said that he would keep it, then changed his mind to a 2.1% increase a year. UK pensioners are the worst off in Europe.

Closer EU ties: Andy Burnham claims that rejecting closer EU ties would be “dereliction of duty”.

USA: The Pentagon has announced that the execution of a terrorist who killed a dozen US service members will be live-streamed to the public.

President Trump has reached a deal with President Putin for Russia to release up to 4.8million tonnes of diesel to the global marketplace.

We learned that the Presidents of both USA and Ukraine have expressed the view that it is time for the other to go!

Slave Trade: It was reported that Chris Blackwell, the founder of Island Records (Bob Marley's record producer) is the 3 x great grandfather of "probably the second biggest slave trader (in British history) in the Americas. "

AI: OpenAI decrypted in six hours a letter to one of Bonaparte's generals which had been a mystery since 1809. AI was used by Iranian-backed Houthis to develop advanced missile guidance systems. Daily Mail editorial comment claimed "if AI technology goes wrong it has the potential to shut down every aspect of human life, or worse".

Computer Science: Pioneering computer scientist whose software code saved the Apollo 11 Moon landing from disaster, Margret Hamilton, has died aged 90. Her team produced an 11,000 page print out of code.

Buy a pre-trained pup: For £15,000 it is possible to avoid the frustrations of toilet training your new puppy.

Social changes since 40 years ago: Smoking in public places; Working from home; criminal sanctions for 'hate speech'; email communication; mobile phones; queuing to use a public pay phone; talking to a computer; etc.

France: A cyber-attack that hit French supermarkets causing older model fridges and freezers to heat up was estimated to be worth millions of euros.

jean.pritchard1@gmail.com

Cuban Style Dance Group **John Derbyshire**

On Saturday 24th October, the Cuban Dance group joined with members of the u3a Fun Jive group to hold a party at Ropsley village hall.
Everybody enjoyed a fun night, with dancing to both Cuban Salsa and Jive music. We all enjoyed a lovely buffet with lots of fun and socialising.
We asked for donations on the night to a charity and we are pleased to have sent £147 to Rainbows Children's Hospice. Thank you to everyone who attended. We hope to be able to do this again in the future!
We resume again on 18th November for 5 weekly sessions taking us up to the Christmas break. Please get in touch if you would like to join in and have some fun.

Electric guitar group **Graham Welham**

I thought I'd look back to Belton Festival in September when the weather was much warmer!! I've included some photographs sent to me by Byran Lette, of the guys playing on stage at the Festival. We only played for around 35 minutes, but had a great reception from the audience. The weekend was a great success for Belton, with performances from various groups. Other things to see were stalls, a mini funfair, and access to the Belton House grounds. And entry was free! The u3a had a stall, promoting the u3a organisation, our values, social events, and networking with other groups. Feedback I've had since from the Belton festival organisers is very positive with event very likely to go ahead again next year.

October has seen the guitar group, continuing with our weekly practice sessions at Belton Avenue, Church Hall. We've also been out to play at the Cree Centre and at Richard House Residential home for their service users (in September and October).

For our group the run up the Christmas will be very busy throughout November and December. We currently have gigs booked to play at Gregory House, Brick Kiln Place and returns to play at Richard House and The Cree Centre.

As the end of year is quickly approaching best wishes to all in Grantham u3a. And many thanks to all the guys in the guitar group who have been a great support again this year.







A chance to help. Could you volunteer?

Grantham Area Community Transport GACT operate a scheme to help people attend hospital and dental appointments and others, for a charge of 60p a mile. They are always looking for volunteer drivers. If any u3a members are interested in taking part, their phone number is 01476 978916. The office is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9.00am to 12.00 noon. At other times, please leave a message and a telephone number for a call back.

Recipe of the Month **Courtesy of Carole Troops**

Chewy Apricot Cookies



125g self-raising flour
50g ground almonds
100g castor sugar
100g butter
1 medium egg
3 – 4 drops almond essence
20g flaked almonds
100 g apricot jam / conserve

Set oven at 160^0C / Gas 3
Put flour, ground almonds and sugar into a mixing bowl and rub in the butter until it looks like coarse crumbs.
Beat the egg with the almond essence to mix, then add to the bowl and beat with a wooden spoon to thoroughly combine. (You can use a food processor if you wish.)
Taking walnut sized bits of dough roll 16 balls and place on paper lined baking sheets, well apart to leave room for them to spread. Flatten slightly and sprinkle on the flaked almonds.
Bake for 14 – 17 minutes until golden and just firm.
When cold sandwich together with the apricot jam and dust with icing sugar.
They will keep for 5 days in an airtight tin.

NB These are quite large so I usually make 20 balls.
You can use butter cream instead of jam, with 125g butter, 400g icing sugar, 3 -4 tbsps milk and 1 tsp vanilla extract.

Thank you to all contributors this edition. Please send your contributions for the December newsletter to ed.granthamu3a@gmail.com by Friday 4 December.