



# Newsletter

Affiliated to the Third Age Trust  
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Issue 123

December 2025

*Merry Christmas  
and  
A Happy New Year*

HELLO

I am sure we have all been enjoying the autumn colours and the unseasonably warmer temperatures of late, but I write as the winter deluge is to start this weekend! A shame, but necessary for our countryside!

I recently enjoyed a week in the Croatia sun as well as five days in York with the Travel Group. Croatia is a beautiful country, it was very hot but the sea was lovely for swimming. As to Yorkshire – it is where I feel most at home. Although Welsh born, there is nothing like a steam train and Whitby fish and chips!!! I will leave aside the awful car journeys, awful for me anyway!!!

The Committee returned to u3a work in September. We are continuing to print details of our u3a lectures in various village publications and we are trying to change a few photographs on the main website pages. Not easy, but it is good to try and keep improving and up to date.

In relation to the Interest Groups, I hope you have enjoyed seeing a couple of groups (so far) display their work as you register for the talk each month. Our numbers are steadily increasing – 552 at the last count so demand is growing. New groups are still needed.

The Book sale in November raised £52 which will be used to purchase audio books. A very successful event! It is hoped that more groups will take up the opportunity to “have a table” on our lecture days and showcase what they do.

The Theatre trips and Garden visits have been very good and we will miss them. So going forward, it means there is a bit of a choice as to which role might suit any one of you from March 2026 if you will step up and make the offer!

The December meeting is organised and I am sure we will all enjoy it.

My best wishes to you all,

Liz Chair Blackbourne U3A

## Monthly Lectures

10.00am at New Green Centre  
Refreshments served until 9.45

### Monday 5 January

Behind the scenes for  
Bury In Bloom

Chris Wiley

### Monday 2 February

AI Everywhere

Ian Hawker

### Monday 3 March

AGM

followed by

The World of Auctions and  
Antiques

Ed Crichton

## The First Female Bomb Disposal Expert



For September's talk, attended by 141 people, Lucy Lewis gave a talk entitled the 'The First Female Bomb Disposal Expert'. Lucy gave a very amusing talk, not just on bomb disposal, but on her 10 years in the army, from the perspective of being a woman in the army.

She joined the Army in 1989 and while serving with the Royal Engineers became the first woman to operate as a Bomb Disposal Officer. This she says was not a role for which she volunteered, but one she was 'voluntold' by the army. Once over the shock, the thought of becoming a Bomb Disposal Officer excited her, having seen what was involved in countless Hollywood films. Reality was somewhat different and not at all like Hollywood, or Trigger Point on TV.

She regaled us with several stories from her time in the army including the firing of a rubber bullet at a door

from 15 feet, only for her to miss the door completely, instead hitting the door frame. This caused the bullet to head back in the direction it came catching Lucy on the ear, resulting in her ending up with a huge purple cauliflower ear, making sleeping difficult for many nights thereafter.

Lucy went on to tell us, as well being taught how to be soldiers, then officers, they were also given the instructions on being a lady in man's world. This included a lesson on the ins and outs of attending regimental dinner, cocktail parties, etc. and what to wear, which in her case resulted in her wearing six pairs of knickers to her first gala dinner to allow her to participate in some of after the dinner games, while maintaining her dignity.

Lucy later transferred to the Royal Military Police and served a further eight years with her last post as a staff officer in Ministry of Defence before retiring as a Major in 1998 to start a family. During her military career, she was a joint service mountain expedition leader, heading up expeditions to Ecuador, Iceland and Sardinia.

Since leaving the army Lucy has been appointed University Marshal – the first woman to hold the post. Prior to her appointment, she was a University Constable for eight years (after completing a law degree).

Paul Taylor

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## Sir Cloudesley Shovell



A total of 125 members attended the October lecture given by Cathy Shelbourne. Her subject was Sir Cloudesley Shovell (Neptune's Rival or Great Britain's Hero).

The audience were advised that they would be asked to decide whether Sir Cloudesley Shovell was a real hero or a villain.

In the very early part of the talk we were shown part of a film that clearly suggested that he was a villain. Even allowing for poetic licence Sir Cloudesley was clearly shown to be responsible for the deaths of some 800 men on board HMS Association when it smashed into the Gilstone Rocks off the Scilly Isles on 23rd October 1707.

Having suggested that he was a villain Cathy Shelbourne then appeared to be anxious for her audience to see him as a hero as she then

proceeded to tell us of his brilliant naval career. Born in Cockthorpe, North Norfolk in November 1650, he was only 22 when in 1672 he was involved in the battle of Sole Bay off Southwold. By the time of his death he had risen to the rank of Admiral and was the second most senior sailor in the British Navy and had been involved in a number of successful naval battles.

Being responsible for the deaths of so many people makes it difficult to change one's feeling that he was a villain although this disaster did result in the passing of the Longitude Act in July 1714 that offered a prize of £20,000 to solve the longitude problem. This prize was won by John Harrison a carpenter and clock maker. His invention greatly increased the safety of sea travel.

The U3A members present also appeared unsure of his standing as when the vote was taken very few voted either way and I feel that the lack of voting showed that members had not been convinced.

Laurie Marshall

## A Journey through costume design

Our speaker for November was Amanda Sutherland who used her experience in the film and theatre industry to show how costume design had changed over the years.

It is important that costumes in period dramas are appropriate for the age of the part and periodically correct. The corset is the starting point. It was individually threaded and cut. The body allowed to relax and tightened later.

In the 18th century a pannier cage was used which was hinged at the waist to allow access through doors. Dresses were worn over the top with yokes (doughnut) and hip pads each side. The front and back were flat.

The height of waists then gradually rose until 1800 when a pad would be inserted to cover the curvature of the back. Neck-lines were lower and a lace insert would be needed. After that, waistlines moved down again. The skirts became fuller and layers of petticoats were used, about 12 to 15 for one costume. There was also the use of the crinoline cage.

In the Edwardian period there was a flatter front and fuller back, with the bustle having a waterfall petticoat.

In the 1910s costumes became more shapeless, with the bust flatter. There was the use of Egyptian style embroidery, cloche hats, T-bar shoes and embroidered accessories.

Waist bands dropped down in the 1920s and 30s with subdued colours such as beiges and blacks. In the 1930s there was the use of animal furs (fake fur is used now in film and theatre). In this period dresses were cut on the bias which made dresses hang well. There was also the invention of the zip. The trilby style hat was the fashion in this period.

In the early 1940s there was the utility mark and coupons. In 1947 came the new look using fabrics more freely. The body structure was managed with bras and girdles. With the new fabrics swimwear became more stylish as it was no longer knitted.

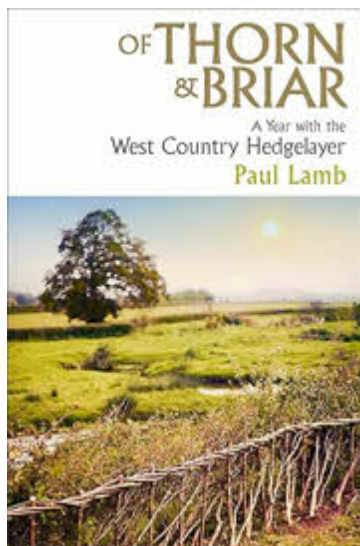
Into the 50s and dresses got wider with full skirts and batwing sleeves. Fashion designers tend to look at fashions from about 30 to 40 years earlier when looking for inspiration.

Mary Dunbavin

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## Of Thorn and Briar

### A book review looking forward to warmer Spring and Summer Days to Come



Born in Eastern England in 1976 and leaving school without any specific qualifications, the author, Paul Lamb, spent some years in New Zealand. He then returned to England to take an apprenticeship with a Dorset woodsman in an isolated coppice where he began his journey into woodsmanship, earning his living from the

woodlands and hedgerows of the West Country ever since.

He lives in his wagon (a converted horse box), as many itinerant farm workers used to, and travels the south-west of England, restoring an important but often forgotten part of our country. He is a highly experienced, dedicated and an internationally regarded exponent of the traditional art of hedge laying. His extensive countryside skills also include coppicing, a method of tree cutting that ensures

healthy and strong regenerative growth of woodland spaces.

When he is not laying hedges or regenerating woodland, Paul is using his woodcraft skills to design and build stunning, sustainable, natural wood products such as woven fencing, hazel panels, archways and any number of incredible items. As traditional management techniques are lost to modernisation, hedges have declined dramatically. Paul works alone and by hand to rejuvenate these linear woodlands, saving the homes of the wildlife that rely on them and bringing many other ecological benefits.

Following the rhythm of the seasons, this book describes Paul's life on the road and the practical aspects of his job, together with the characters he meets on the way. It is about practising a craft with skill, preserving our heritage for future generations and celebrating the glory of the landscape he has spent his life caring for.

Enjoy this book, available from the library, and marvel at its descriptions and appreciation of our still-remaining "green and pleasant land". However, if you prefer getting such information by other means, Paul has lots of delightful online videos and a regular podcast.

Stella Chamberlin



## Walks With An Interest



St John the Baptist, Stanton

Our October walk followed a roughly circular route starting from Stanton village hall. It was a varied and interesting walk and a fine day.

We headed out of Stanton along The Grundle. A grundle is an ancient, low lying, steep sided footpath. In the case of Stanton there is now also a higher level alternative running along the top of the bank.

Leaving the grundle we turned north and headed to our next point of interest which was Shepherds Grove, a former RAF and later USAF station active from 1943/44 to 1966. We heard about a number of incidents and events there during its time. The Shepherds Grove housing

and leisure facilities remained in use by the US Air Force until the early 2000s. The area has since been renovated and is now private housing and industrial units.

We crossed the very busy A143 to continue northwest through open countryside, stopping for a short refreshment break with views back towards Stanton. Our third point of interest was a field which was the site of a former archeological dig led by Basil Brown of Sutton Hoo fame. Remains of a Roman villa were discovered here and excavations continued for some time before Brown left to work on the project at Sutton Hoo.

Our final stretch took us back to Stanton via the remains of the fourteenth century Church of St John the Baptist, a lovely spot for a stop before returning to our cars and, for a number of walkers, lunch at The Cock in Stanton.

*Lynda Heywood*

The November walk was over the border into Norfolk for a ramble from Weeting. Here are some of the group standing at the stump of a medieval decorative stone cross that was a waymark for pilgrims to Walsingham Abbey. It possibly dates from the 1300s and was originally about 12ft high. We also visited the remains of Weeting Castle and St Mary the Virgin church with its Victorian round tower.



## Travel and Tourism



There are still a few places left on the Travel Group's trip to Transylvania and Bucharest next September, for anyone who wishes to come with us and try to find Dracula!

For full details of the trip please go to the Blackbourne U3A website, click on "Interest Groups" at the top, then click on "Travel and Tourism", and in the "Resources" box on the right click on "Transylvania September 2026".

If you have any questions please contact John Sutton, email [johnhsutton@hotmail.com](mailto:johnhsutton@hotmail.com)

## Art Group



Some of the Group's work on display in Pakenham village hall at their successful annual exhibition in October.

Reports, and pictures, from more Interest groups are always welcome to provide interesting and varied accounts of what Blackbourne U3A has to offer.

These should be sent to:  
[bryann@brysuward.plus.com](mailto:bryann@brysuward.plus.com)

**The deadline for the next issue is  
21 February 2026**