



Membership goes on-line

Just a reminder that you can now manage your own membership record by logging onto our membership portal, **Simple Membership**. You will have been emailed details of this, including your username.

To login go to: <https://u3a.simplmembership.co.uk/Towcester/administration/login>

Your username is normally your surname + initial of first your name with no space - eg SmithJ. If you are unsure contact: membership@towcesteru3a.co.uk and if this is the first visit, click on the '**Forgot Password**' link to set your own password (or use this is at any time if you need your password to be reset).

A benefit of this is that you can update your details (whenever there is a change in email address, telephone, address etc) at any time, to ensure we can stay in touch with you. We would urge you to add emergency contact details to your record so that someone can be contacted if an emergency occurs during a u3a activity.

Very shortly you will be able to renew your membership on-line too – which will make the process much quicker and easier. You will be sent details of this by email in due course.

Monthly meetings



24 April - The Early Days of Genesis

Richard Macphail

A fascinating insight into life behind the scenes of a major rock band by one of their 'roadies'. If you haven't done so already you can book a place here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-early-days-of-genesis-tickets-873268618947>

Looking ahead



29 May - The Devil's Bagpipe – and AGM

Tony Millyard

A woodwind instrument maker and researcher, Tony specialises in making historic copies of flutes, bassoons and oboes from the late 17th to the 19th Century. You'll also learn a lot about the historical and religious context of the time.

As this is also our AGM there will be a short element of formal business.



26 June - My Extra Life

Mike Newbold

Mike took an acting course later in life and became a television and film extra. He will talk about his experiences during his 17-year career working in the film industry.

Coffee mornings

The next one will be on Wednesday 15 May at Costa, between 10-12 noon, so do drop in for a casual catch up.

Group news

Towcester u3a offers a wide variety of interest groups, some of which are represented below. Group co-ordinators are welcome to submit an account of recent activities to share with other members via this bulletin.

For a full list of groups and when they run, as well as contact details please visit:

<https://www.towcesteru3a.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Towcester-U3a-groups-.5th-March-2024-.pdf>

Church visits



Thanks to Gill and Sue for organising the Church Visit group to the Church of St John the Baptist at Tiffield this Wednesday, where we were given talks by the church warden Mike Dean and his wife Sylvia.

The church consisted of only a nave and north aisle in the 1200's, but was gradually extended. In 1856 St John's Reformatory for young offenders was built which grew from 30 to 80 boys, who were marched down to the church which was extended to include them at a cost of about £400. The Victorians, of course, changed and 'improved' the church building: replacing the box pews, getting an harmonium and extending the chancel (the wealthy Rev. Harcourt Delafons had the main window dedicated to his daughter, who died aged 8 in 1870 and another window to his wife.

In 1897 the clock was put in to celebrate Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (cost £90) and in 1937 electricity arrived (£44 - paid over 3 years). A new organ with bellows 1909 (£100 + £3 for transport & fitting) which lasted for 54 years. The 3 bells have been designed to be rung by 1 person - a system copied by a local man from the Rev. Henry Thomas Ellacombe who had been an engineer working for Marc Kingdom Brunel (Isambard's father) who had got fed up of dealing with unreliable, drunken bell ringers!

Recorder Playing



Our group of players were very pleased to receive an enquiry from a lady who has recently joined Towcester u3a and spotted our group. She had played the recorder in a group 25 years ago and has decided to try and refresh her skills and she is going to join us for a taster session.

We are keen as a group that people should discover that recorder playing isn't always the painful squeaky sound of children beginning to learn to play the descant recorder! I have been learning to play both the treble and tenor recorders since retiring, and would recommend it as a satisfying and enjoyable activity both on one's own or as a member of a group.

There is some lovely recorder music on YouTube to inspire us. Here is a link to 'Greensleeves to a Ground', performed by Fontanella Recorder Quintet <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLalEYQ4q38>

If you already play the recorder or are interested in the idea of learning to play the recorder please contact: Lynne Tebbenham 01327 352139 lynne.teb@gmail.com

Nordic Walking



In March the Nordic walking group were back in Milton Keynes looking for dry paths. We started from The Black Horse pub in Great Linford heading south on the canal towpath returning to the pub via Great Linford Park and Stanton Low Country Park. Lunch was taken at the pub after a slightly shorter 4 miler, good food, good laugh and great to get a dry walk in.

Garden Visits



The March visit was to Kedleston Hall near Derby, an 18th-century mansion with Adam interiors, commissioned by Nathaniel Curzon, whose ancestors had resided at Kedleston since the 12th century. The group enjoyed the formal 18th-century Pleasure Ground gardens bounded by a ha-ha.

Visits coming up in the next quarter:

Wednesday 10 April – Kelmscott Manor & Buscot Park

Kelmscott Manor near Lechlade was the home of William Morris and offers a collection of artwork and objects owned and designed by him. There are also lovely gardens and a tea room. Coffee, tea and biscuits will be provided on arrival. Kelmscott is a Historic Houses property – members enter free (otherwise a charge of £17 applies, included in the cost below). In the afternoon nearby Buscot Park will be visited, the family home of Lord Faringdon. In the gardens there is plenty to see, including a new water feature.

Wednesday 8 May – Biddulph Grange – **PLACES STILL AVAILABLE**

A grade 1 listed Victorian garden, featuring a Chinese garden, stumpery, Egyptian Court and much more. **NOTE: PAYMENT OF £28 IS DUE BY 14 APRIL. Cheques (no cash please) payable to Towcester u3a; please post through Carole Hunt's door at 3 Wren Close.** There are still seats available – please contact Carole to book.

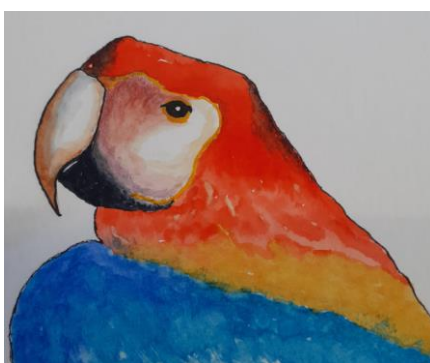
Wednesday 12 June – Dorney Court near Windsor

This will include a private tour of the property, a visit to Crocus Garden Centre and some time in the royal town of Windsor.

To book places or for any queries, please contact Carole at hunt_c6@sky.com

Painting for Pleasure

The Painting for Pleasure Group produced lots of paintings and sketches in our first 'Still Life' session, followed by colourful parrots:



Music Appreciation

At the group's last meeting members shared music of their own choice, something we do occasionally as a change from one member choosing music on a particular theme, instrument or composer etc.



I was inspired to find a piece about a boat after receiving news and some photos from an old college friend who lives on the Isle of Sanday. You may have heard in the news about the wreck of a boat being 'washed up' on Sanday (see picture left). The wreck was about a mile from where my friend lives and as she said, 'it's actually a wreck that has been there slowly, very slowly over time, shifting with the beach and the dunes for hundreds of years and following a storm has become exposed'. The site has been recorded with GPS and the wreck has now been moved to outside the Heritage Centre on Sanday, awaiting decisions by various experts. If you didn't see reports of the wreck, I'm sure most of you will

have heard of Sanday's other very recent claim to fame when their shop keeper mistakenly ordered rather more Easter eggs than intended! Here is the link to the piece I chose with some impressionist paintings, a far more peaceful scene than the stormy waters around Sanda that exposed the wreck.

Claude Debussy - En Bateau - Flute & Piano <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7OqWhWsVxA>

Our next meeting is on 'The Life and Music of Nicola Benedetti'.

For more information about the group contact: Valerie Hall - 01327 439615 - valerie-hall@tiscali.co.uk

Strollers

If you enjoy a stroll rather than a stride, this groups takes a leisurely walk each month for about 3 miles, followed by a chat over coffee. The April stroll will be a circular walk around Buckingham, taking in river and parkland, but no muddy fields! If you would like to join please contact Jill Stewart for details: jillstewart49@gmail.com

Mixed Crafts



The group had a fun afternoon needle felting, coming up with some Easter themed results and pyramid boxes for Easter gifts.

Boys Toys

Boys' Toy member Will arranged an excellent visit to a classic car and racing car restorer called Grayson Pace this month. We were welcomed on arrival with coffee and an excellent array of cakes. This small but growing business had many cars as work in progress including their own Lotus 11 being prepared for the racing season and a Ferrari GTO in white metal state following a rebuild.



Also with an interesting story was an AC brought back from Africa that had the original Bristol engine replaced by a straight 6 Ford Zephyr engine. This has a special racing head and three large carbs now fitted. The staff could not do enough to show us around with a pride in their work which was refreshing. I enjoy picking the brains of a guy machine polishing a Porsche 911. The workmanship was excellent and as we left we were told "pop in for a cuppa anytime you're passing". We couldn't miss having lunch at the Wharf pub close by.

Folk Dancing Group

Some of the dances we do are quite modern and it can be difficult to find their origin as details become lost as they are passed on between callers. Dances such as 'The School Cook' and 'My Friend Carol' will no doubt have had some local significance somewhere!



Some older dances have an obvious historical connection. We recently danced 'The Radetzky Quadrille', a lively dance to 'The Radetzky March', composed in 1848 by Johann Strauss senior. The piece was dedicated to Field Marshal Radetzky, a senior member of the Austrian army who successfully led an assault in Italy that same year. The music is played at the famous New Year's Day concert in Vienna, with the audience encouraged to applaud the arrival of another year.

The link below shows Bournemouth and Christchurch U3A International Folk Dancers performing the 'Radetzky Quadril' at the Wimborne Folk Festival. I don't think we looked quite that professional when we were dancing!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5yWleRXWR8>

I'm afraid we have a waiting list as our caller is unable to take any more beginner dancers at present, although he would consider experienced dancers.

For more information about the group contact: Lynne Tebbenham - 01327 352139 - lynne.teb@gmail.com

Boys Toys 2

Boys Toys 2 group go mad like the March Hare!

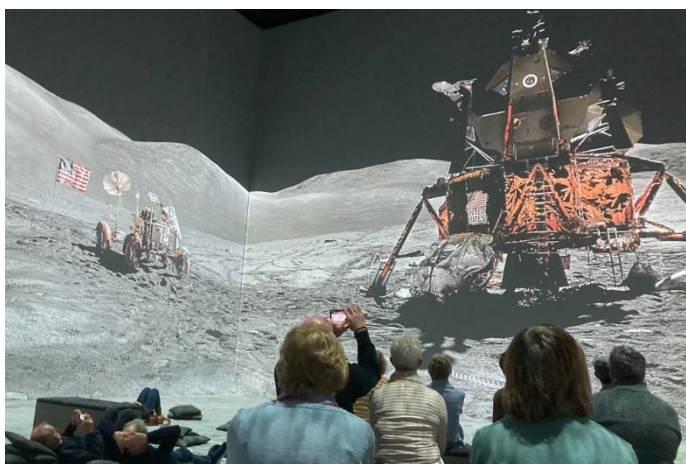


For their March outing, Boys Toys 2 group paid a visit to the MAD Museum (Mechanical Art & Design) in Stratford-upon-Avon today. A quirky museum of wonderful, moving mechanical art exhibits. With several retired engineers amongst the group there was plenty to view, and a lot of analysis of how the various amusing exhibits worked. Lunch was taken at the Miller & Carter restaurant around the corner from MAD Museum. A different and very enjoyable day out.

London Explorers – go to the Moon!



On our March trip to London, a group of LE2 members went to The Lightroom near Kings Cross to see the current production of "The Moonwalkers: a journey with Tom Hanks". Whilst sitting on benches dotted around the square room, we were reminded of the background and achievements of the incredible Apollo space missions with the aid of the Lightroom's powerful projection and technology. It was in 1961 that President John F Kennedy described space as a new frontier and proposed that the US should commit to landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth before the end of the decade not because it's essential but because we choose to go to the Moon. And then a few years later- lift off!!

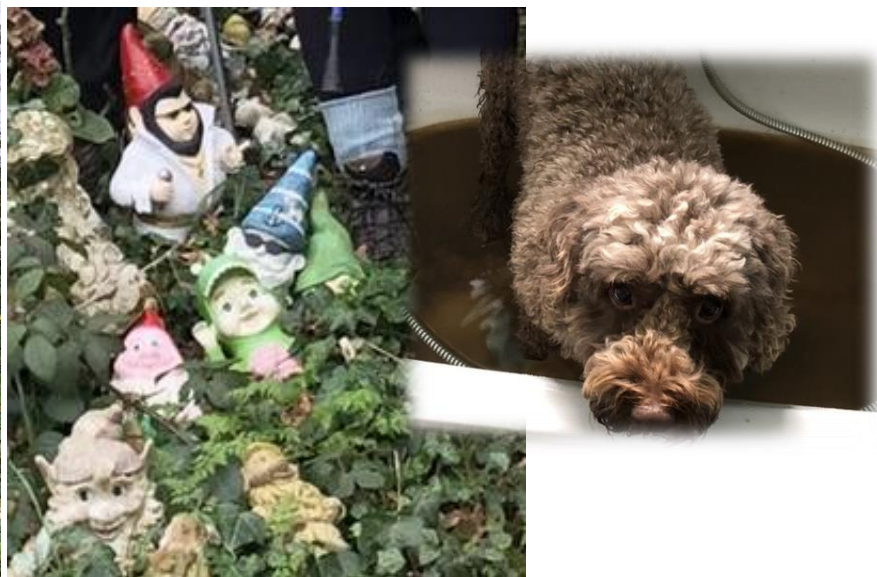


We felt as though we were there with Neil Armstrong on Apollo 11 in 1969 as he took his famous small step for man and a giant leap for mankind and remembered that the first electric car was the one that went to the Moon on the Apollo 15 mission in 1971. We were also treated to interviews between Hanks and astronauts of the current Artemis programme preparing for the next mission to the Moon in September 2026.

The Moonwalkers production has obviously proved to be very popular as booking has been extended until mid-October 2024 and will run in tandem with an exhibition of art by David Hockney.

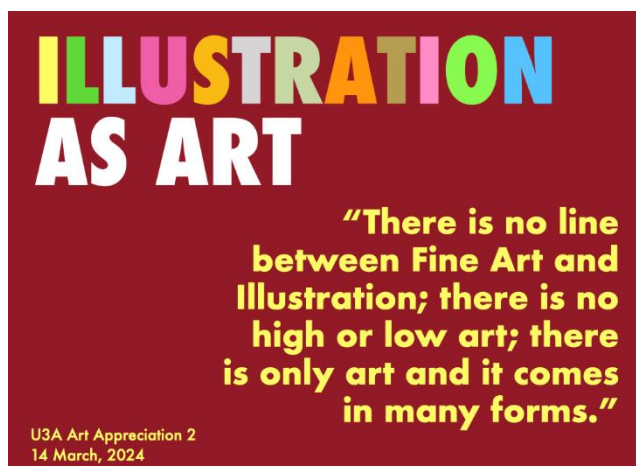


Striders



After the wettest February on record, the March Stride was voted to be the muddiest ever! The 6-mile circular route from Eydon took the group of 12 through very quiet countryside, where we stumbled across a 'fairy grove' – though populated by gnomes. Note Elvis has made a reappearance. The honorary canine member had a wonderful walk but was not so keen on the bath at the end!

Art Appreciation 2



We are a friendly and very lively group, and we have been running now for 10 years. We cover a wide range of art subject matter with a digital presentation each month. So far this year we have studied British Figurative Artists, Dame Laura Knight and Illustration as Art. In our April meeting we will be taking a look at the Courtauld Gallery, London.

Creative Writing



This month we're delighted to feature two pieces from the group Creative Writing Group. Each month, the nine of us write about 500-800 words based around a single inspiration. It is quite interesting the different directions that the writers can take us, ostensibly, all having started from the same place. This month, for example, the story we wrote had to start with a question. It could be any question, so that opened the horizon considerably.

Geoffrey Iley

It was with huge sadness, that we learned that one of our founder members, Geoffrey Iley, died shortly after our meeting last month.

When we selected the pieces that we wanted to share with you, it went without discussion that one of them would be from Geoffrey. His work was always the envy of us, seeming to be able to write with such aplomb and ease - and always so readable. As one of our members has said, he was one of those rare people; an Engineer that could write!

Geoffrey will be hugely missed by us, and it is no hyperbole to say that there will be a very empty chair at our meetings from now on. But, we predict that you will hear us say, many times.... "as Geoffrey would have said.."

As well as being a lovely writer, he was a lovely man. It was a privilege to know him. The sonnet is from Geoffrey Iley who cleverly wrote about one of the loves of his life.

A CHEESY SONNET

By Geoffrey Iley

Shall I compare you to a Camembert?
Not really, for you have a firmer touch.
Then there's the question; pre-or post-dessert?
It doesn't matter, for I love your taste so much.
And Stilton? That's a very different sort
Of cheese to savour at the banquet's end,
Along with fat cigars and vintage port.
Comes dawn; then Alka-Seltzer is your friend.
So many different styles I'm partial to:

Ossau Iraty, Raclette, Pont l'Évêque, Morbier,
Manchego, Leicester, Port Salut,
Comté, Cheshire – a few are 'à la Greque'.

But you, the noblest fromage, are divine
A well-aged Cheddar – and you're mine, all mine!



The second submission, by Liz Crussell, is an amusing piece set in a Slimming Club. If you are at all familiar with that experience will may well recognise the scene she sets.

THE WEEKLY MEETING

By Liz Crussell

"Let's get on with the best part of our meeting. But first - who are we?" Miranda trilled.

She smiled at the fourteen people sitting in front of her. Her curly long white hair scrunched up into a chaotic bun. Wearing one of her very bright kaftans, her eyes twinkled behind matching glasses à la Prue.

"We are Flab-u-less." the group lustily responded with smiles and nods to each other.

"YESSSS" Miranda shouted back. "We're here to support each other, never to judge. We all have our own challenges, our own strategies. We've tried the others, counting points, syns, calories, fasting, cabbage, high protein, low protein, eggs, no eggs, kimchee etc etc. We know it's about sensible eating, sensible exercise, not sweating it out in the gym. We are people of a certain age, who share the one goal of achieving the weight we feel is right for us. Sensibly, proportionately and most of all, having fun while we do it. Isn't that right?"

"That's right" was the reply in unison.

"First thing then, who wants to tell us about something they're proud of this week?"

Ava raised her hand saying “Last week I did what Rosemary suggested”. She smiled at a small round woman with rather lank dark hair. Her face dominated by large black rimmed glasses which she constantly pushed up her nose. She looked horribly embarrassed at being singled out.

Ava continued, “Each time I thought of just popping the children’s crusts, half eaten biscuits, cold chips and any other food they’d left, into my mouth, I put it into a glass jar. By the end of the week it was full. A gooey, mouldy messy mess. I’ve also started to be more careful about what I give them to put into their mouths. Trying to start better eating habits that I never had.”

“Ah, but you’re getting them now” George said encouragingly. A very tall, bespectacled, bald man, part of the group when it started 6 months ago. After the death of his wife, he’d lived on takeaways, ready meals and consumed more cheese than was good for him. Always assuring his only child, who lived in America, that he was ‘fine’. Ava and George had become firm friends through the group. Together they planned weekly menus, researched recipes, and once a week shared a meal.

Josephine waved her hand energetically. “Can I say something?”

She was a great enthusiast, always looking for new things and experiences. Probably the youngest of the group, with an eclectic variety of outfits almost rivalling Mirandas. Today it was a camouflage jump suit with Dr Martens and a scarlet head scarf trying, unsuccessfully, to tame her wild purple hair.

“Well, you usually do” Miranda replied, hastily adding “always interesting of course”

Josephine laughed, “I know, never one to keep quiet. I’ve found some really interesting cake recipes, made with vegetables. I’d heard of carrot cake, but beetroot and chocolate brownies, courgette muffins, parsnip and fruit? Who knew we could get our five a day by eating cake? As a treat I’ve baked the brownies and muffins – they’re in the car – shall I get them later to have with our cuppa?”

Miranda beamed “Splendid. Anyone else like to speak perhaps?” She could see some not very subtle encouraging looks pass between Maurice and Juliet. “Maurice, Juliet – do you have something?”

Maurice shifted uncomfortably in his chair and looked to Juliet for some direction. She nodded encouragingly.

He cleared his throat “Well, the thing is, well you know that I’ve been on my own since Mother passed last year.....andum....” He wrung his hands nervously, fiddled with his tie, and swallowed several times.

“Yes - and.....” prompted Miranda, trying to curb her impatience.

“Well, the thing is.....” the poor man said hesitating.

“Oh spit it out Maurice for goodness’ sake” cried Josephine.

Juliet, a kindly looking woman with a warm smile and gentle voice, stood up gracefully, took Maurice’s hand and said “The thing which my dear Maurice is trying to say – we’ve decided to move in together.”

A huge whoop of joy erupted from the others and as the noise subsided Miranda could be heard saying, “That’s fabulous news for the Flab-u-less Group! I don’t think there’s a better way to end today’s meeting but to congratulate our happy couple and start to plan the celebrations over our cuppa and Josephine’s cakes.”



Bashfully Maurice said “Thank you Miranda and all our friends here tonight. There’s something else I need to say”. He bent down, balancing rather precariously on one knee and produced a small box, looking adoringly at Juliet. How could he ever deserve this wonderful woman. Far too good for him. “Juliet, would you do me the enormous honour of becoming my wife.”

It was her turn to look a little shy as she allowed him to put the ring on her finger. “Oh yes of course – and how perfect to have all these precious friends here with us tonight.”

Helping Maurice up, they kissed and embraced chastely, before accepting more hugs and kisses from the group. Maurice was overwhelmed by all the emotion and had to use his pristine and beautifully pressed hanky.

Miranda, of course, was immediately into organising mode. "I'm very happy to plan your day. The reception can be here, either in the conservatory or in the garden depending on the date and weather. I can't imagine you'll want to wait, *tempus fugit* and all that. I'm sure we'll all want to be your guests."

Energetic nods all round. And so it was. They were all present, together with some of Juliet's small family.

The group had scrubbed up well. Rosemary, almost unrecognisable in a floaty green dress. Her hair beautifully styled. Secretly Josephine thought that if it wasn't for those unruly specs, she would be unrecognisable. Josephine was in uncharacteristically reserved blue tailored trousers, with a pretty floral shirt.

Miranda's astonishingly large fascinator almost outshone the bride's beautiful, subtle rose-pink lace dress which floated elegantly down to her ankles.

Seemingly a far less anxious man, Maurice had willingly submitted to Juliet's sartorial makeover.

His dark hair, elegantly peppered with grey, neatly cut. Resplendent in a light blue linen suit. Juliet had stopped short of pink. However, still needing something to fret about, he was worried about creasing. He'd accepted his bride's assurance that it was an acceptable look for a gentleman of his era. A brightly patterned silk shirt, no tie, in pink to complement Juliet's dress.



On that beautiful summer's day, Maurice and Juliet became Mr. and Mrs. Winterburn.

We meet the first Friday of every month, 10.00 am in the Oak Room at The Saracen's Head. They very kindly give us the room rent free!

If this inspires you to pick up a notepad and pen, if you would like to come along to get a feel for what it is like or just to find out more, please feel free to contact Anne Webb: anne.webb@yahoo.co.uk

Online learning from the u3a

As ever the u3a nationally offers many interesting courses and talks available to all members online. Coming up the topics range from:

The Arts & Crafts Designs of May Morris

AI News

The Key to Longevity, Happiness and Global Change

The Road to Clean Water; beginnings of a sewage system in Victorian London

Live cookery demonstrations

The Sonnets of Gerald Manley Hopkins

Laughter Yoga

And much more! Find out more / sign up at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>



Probus

We are an organisation for retired ladies. We meet on the first Thursday of each month at the Saracens Head, Towcester for lunch followed by a speaker. We provide fellowship and connectivity and hopefully learn something from the variety of speakers we have.

Left: Our April meeting where we enjoyed a talk on volunteering in Cambodia

WHY NOT COME AND JOIN US? If you are interested and seeing for yourself, you will be able to come as a guest initially.

Please contact Ann Nuttall (our current President) or Denise Rowe (Vice President) on ann.nuttall@gmail.com or serendipity.rowe@yahoo.co.uk

Free Mature Driver Roadshow

DRIVING SAFER FOR LONGER

Northamptonshire
NSRA
Safer Roads Alliance

The Goods Shed,
227 John Clark Way, Rushden
NN10 0AW
<https://what3words.com/minority.mows.interrupt>

FREE
Mature Driver Roadshow
7th May 2024

Advice on:
Car adaptations
Eyesight
Highway Code changes
How to stay safe
First Aid
FREE Hints/Tips Assessments

If you are you a mature driver (aged 60+) and live in Northamptonshire you can sign up for this FREE. It will cover all different aspects of driving. There will be a short talk and then plenty of time to meet informally with stand holders. Free advice will be available on car adaptations, eyesight, how your prescription medications may affect you, and much more. Book your Free tickets via Universe <https://www.universe.com/mature-drivers-rushden-2024>

Next issue – we welcome input on group activities, including photos. **PLEASE NOTE, DUE TO HOLIDAY THE NEXT ISSUE WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED UNTIL TOWARDS THE END OF MAY.** Please submit any content for inclusion in this issue to alison.foxton@outlook.com by **17 May 2024.**