

Membership Renewal

You will have received an email from our Membership Secretary recently, reminding you that our new membership year begins on the first of June, so renewals will be **due by 31 May**. All the details of how to renew and pay are in the email. This does not apply if you have joined in the last few months. Because of the difficulties in depositing cheques, it would be hugely helpful if you can **pay by bank transfer, or by card at the monthly meeting or at Coffee & Chat on 15 May**. Any queries contact: membership@towcesteru3a.co.uk

AGM

Just a reminder that our AGM is on **Wednesday 27 May** and takes place during our Monthly Meeting. You will receive an email asking you to vote - please do engage with your u3a and take a few minutes to complete this short on-line survey – it takes literally 1 minute! We do need a representative sample of member votes for them to carry.

We also welcome members to become more involved by joining us on the committee or simply volunteering to help out on an ad hoc basis. If you could offer some assistance in keeping your u3a running or would like to find out more, please do contact Deb Heaphy – chair@towcesteru3a.co.uk.

Supporting groups



We recently received a request from the Pétanque Group to assist them with replacing the gravel for their “terrain”. The Committee agreed to cover the costs and as you can see the terrain is now looking very smart.

The Pétanque group meet at the village pub in Tiffield on Fridays and enjoy refreshments whilst they are there!

Please contact us if your group needs financial assistance to purchase equipment. Provide us with costings with your proposal and we will let you know if we can help.

Monthly meetings

Special extra meeting – Avoiding fraud and scams



Monday 8 June – 2pm – Towcestrians

Following January’s Monthly Meeting, with speakers from Northamptonshire Police and their Cyber and Fraud teams, we have arranged another session (this is **in addition to** the normal June meeting). The talk was extremely well received, with so many questions that it wasn’t possible to cover everything on that occasion. Therefore, this will be a re-run for those of you would couldn’t attend

previously, but with additional material, which will no doubt be as invaluable as the content that was covered before. So, whether you would like a recap on points raised, plus a bit more, missed the talk first time around, or would value the opportunity to speak to experts on the topic, please do come along. Let us know whether to expect you by booking at: <https://u3a.simplmembership.co.uk/Towcester/Administration/Events>

Also coming up:

There is the usual diverse range of speakers and topics coming up for 2026, so we look forward to welcoming you to join us on the last Wednesday of each month at 2pm, at Towcestrians Sports Club.



27 May - AGM

Sageena Thakur

Book Art

Our speaker demonstrates how to create 3D sculptures out of old books, which promise to be fascinating! There will be some examples on sale.

There will also be a short element of official business for our AGM.



24 June

Martin Lloyd

Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies

Recounting stories of spying and intrigue.



29 July

Summer Social: The West End comes to Towcester

Once again, we will be combining this meeting with a celebration of the u3a year, with seasonal refreshments, a vintage ice cream cart and musical entertainment featuring songs and anecdotes from West End shows. It's sure to be popular, so do please reserve your place in plenty of time.

Talks at the monthly meeting are followed by refreshments, and we welcome you to stay for a chat with other members over tea and biscuits. There is plenty of free parking. Please book a seat so we know how many to expect. *Book all meetings at:* <https://u3a.simplmembership.co.uk/Towcester/Administration/Events>

Monthly Coffee & Chat

Our informal coffee get-togethers are held each month between 10am – 12noon at Watling Street Village (formerly 185, on the High Street). These provide the opportunity to meet other members for a chat over a hot drink. Meet in the front room – purchase your own drinks. All very warmly welcome. The next meetings are:



Friday 15 May

Wednesday 17 June

Group news

IT Helpers Group – next meeting Monday 18 May



The IT Helpers group are here to help other U3A members with their IT knowledge, whether this is about how to use their IT equipment (smartphone/iPhone, notebooks/iPads, laptops, etc) or doing activities on them such as emails, documents, internet use, or how to use some tool, etc. This could be tutoring or problem solving. If you are not sure what you want to know, then come along to a meeting for a conversation with one of us and that should get you started.

Our meetings are held monthly on the third Monday between 2:00 - 4:00 at the Sawpits Centre. The next meeting is **Monday 18th May**. You do not need to bring any IT equipment with you to the meeting as we bring our own, although if it is to do with a piece of IT equipment, then it would be helpful if you could bring the item with you. We do not operate an appointment system as it can be tricky to know how much help someone will need. You can come along any time during the meeting, but no later than 3:20 please.

We are a group of amateurs interested in IT and have a wide range of skills between us. We cannot guarantee to be able to solve every problem, but between us we will give it a try.

Email: ithelp@towcesteru3a.co.uk

Striders



Striders enjoyed a warm 6 mile walk from Greens Norton to Bradden, with the countryside coming alive as you can see in the group photograph. This was followed by refreshments at the Butchers Arms.

Strollers



Strollers had a lovely April walk led by Paul, around Stoke Bruerne and the Shutlanger area - where we saw sheep and lambs and a few bluebells - the Stoke Bruerne Brick Pits Nature Reserve and along the canal where we saw a nesting swan and the Side Ponds.

Finishing our spring walk with refreshments at the Boat Inn.

If this sounds like something that you would enjoy, then come and join us. Contact: Wendy Gallagher - edandwendy1@outlook.com

Church Visits



Thanks to Sue and Gill for organising the u3a Church Visit group to St Michael's of Church Stowe.

The original Saxon tower still remains with a couple of highly decorated corner stones. The main body of the church was repaired/rebuilt in 1639 by Lady Carey's son Henry and again in 1859 when Rev. Crawley commissioned architect Philip Charles Hardwick.

Church warden, Steve Henley gave us a detailed historical overview of the wealthy families connected to the church and manor who were

linked to the ornate memorials inside. The monument to the knight Sir Gerard de L'Isle 1304-1360 is in Purbeck marble. In 1329 he inherited the manor of Church Stowe. He was a descendant of Gilbert de Gaunt whose family were related to Wm the Conqueror.

There's an extremely finely carved tomb by Nicholas Stone of Lady Elizabeth Carey who was the step-granddaughter of Catherine Parr. Her son, Charles, was executed for his part in the Essex rebellion and son John was among the parliamentary commissioners who signed Charles I death warrant. All the monuments/ memorials were in excellent condition - a joy to see.

Mixed Crafts



Mixed craft enjoyed tea bag folding to make greeting cards.

Ramblers 2

Fortified with Easter eggs and hot x buns the 13 walkers set out for their April walk across green countryside starting and ending at Bradwell Abbey. A very interesting walk visiting sites from different time periods such as the ancient (Benedictine Priory at Bradwell Abbey and Bancroft Roman Villa) to a magnificent modern aqueduct, a working windmill and finally the famous concrete cows.



Lunch was taken at Wilson's Deli & Cafe at Bradwell Abbey, where once again excellent sandwiches were enjoyed at under £7! Thank you to Tony, Donna and Jane for arranging a lovely, interesting walk, with good weather and such good value lunch!

Ramblers at the windmill

London Explorers

Members of London Explorers 2 went slightly “off-piste” in April and visited an exhibition of the paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) at the National Gallery. The exhibition, entitled ‘From the Shadows’ is the first major exhibition dedicated to the British artist’s ‘candlelight’ paintings. His works include illuminated faces gathered around a variety of objects – from classical sculptures and scientific instruments to bones, bladders and animals!

The use of strong light and deep shadows create drama, reminding us of great painters from earlier centuries like Caravaggio. More than scenes of dramatic light and shade, Wright of Derby used the night-time to explore deeper and more sombre themes, including death, melancholy, morality, scepticism and the sublime

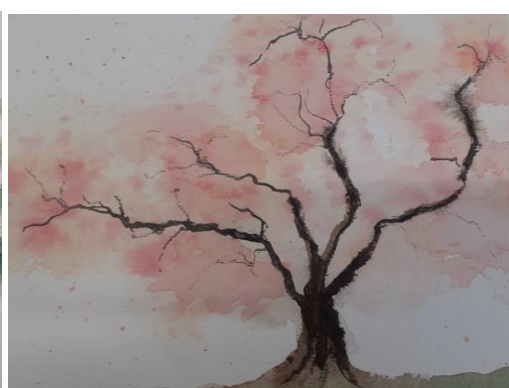


Having visited this specific exhibition, some members went on to see other paintings in the gallery including Van Gough’s Sunflowers, a number of Monet’s paintings at Giverny as well as several superb Canaletto’s. Others made sure they got back to Euston as there was a tube strike in London that day. Fortunately, it didn’t affect the Northern Line.

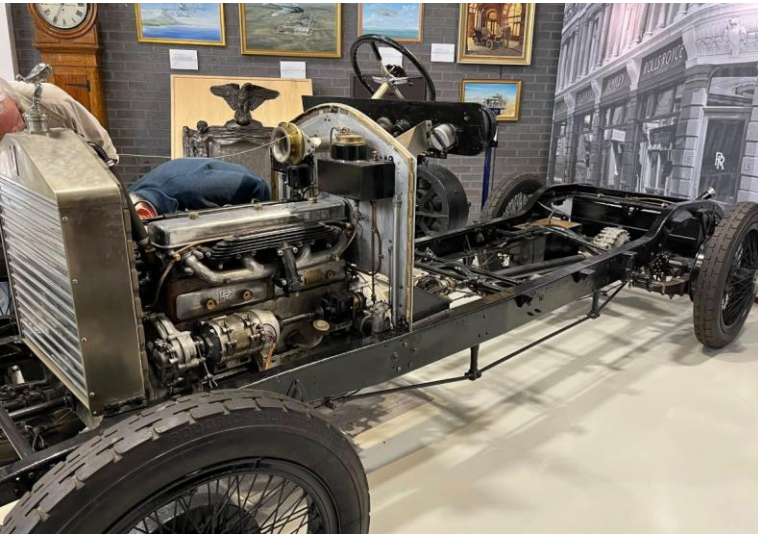
'A Philosopher giving That Lecture on the Orrery in Which a Lamp Is Put in the Place of the Sun' (1766)

Painting for Pleasure

April subjects for Painting for Pleasure members was boats, with a few examples shown below and also different interpretations of trees:



Boys Toys



Boys' Toys had another great trip with a hosted tour around the Rolls Royce Heritage Centre. We heard all about Rolls and Royce and how they started from the Royce company manufacturing electrical products then cars, IC and jet engines and even battery aircraft. On the way we had popped into the local "Charlies at The Pavilion" for a coffee. On our return for lunch we found most of the large facility's tables were taken by ex-Rolls Royce staff enjoying their groups AGM. I don't think John's impromptu hands up vote was counted! As ever a great day out.

Remember the term "Boy's Toys" has always referred to the things that interest the group and not our groups make up. We do already have lady and male members.

Boys Toys 2



Boys Toys 2 group visited SMS mediaport at Rugby last month. An interesting tour of a facility for a service that we tend to take for granted. If you've ever thought about how data and televised international events are transferred from the various orbiting satellites to your, phone, computer, tv etc. A visit to SMS will answer your questions. Unfortunately, photos were prohibited, but we were allowed a group shot out amongst the satellite dishes. Afterwards an enjoyable lunch was taken at the Arnold Arms, Barby

Boys Toys 3

Boys Toys 3 had a trip to Hook Norton in April. First we had lunch at The Sun Inn, then we had a guided tour around the Brewery, which was really interesting. The tour included the stables, with 3 shire horses, up and down at least 5 steep staircases to see all the different stages of the brewing process and finished with a tasting of their real ales in the cellar bar.



Garden Visits

There was no visit in April, but plenty coming up:

May – Malvern Spring Show – this trip is now FULL

NOTE the change of day for the next 2 visits due to both not being open on a Wednesday. Prices to be confirmed dependent on cost of the coach:

June - Monday 8 June – Belvoir Castle and gardens and retail village, with shops and dining.

July – Tuesday 7 July – Chenies House and Gardens, Hertfordshire for a private viewing. This is a Tudor manor house, with 5 acres of formal gardens composed of ‘rooms’, each with a distinct theme. These include a physic garden, sunken garden, kitchen garden, white garden and inner court – so lots to see.

Payment for visits – as from April Carol will no longer be able to accept cheques, so all trips will need to be paid via bank transfer or cash only. Payments by BACs should be to the following account:

Sort code: 77-21-03. Account number: 17224068

Holidays

A reminder of the two holidays this year, with some places still remaining:

23rd-27th June 2026 – Llandudno

20th-24th August 2026 - County Durham; includes an outdoor production of "Kynren".

Contact Carole Hunt on 01327 352564 for more information or booking.

Theatre Group

THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

John le Carrè’s masterful thriller is on tour and we have tickets for the matinee performance at Milton Keynes theatre on Wednesday 15th July. Seats are in the circle and, with our special group discount, are only £32.00 each. Please let Judith or Lesley know if you would like to see this thrilling play.



Tickets are also available for the matinee shows at Milton Keynes theatre for DIRTY DANCING - Saturday 28/8/26 - Circle seats at £31.59

Backstage tour

Please note, tickets for the ‘Behind the Scenes’ tour have now sold out. We will look at running another tour soon.

Contact: Finance/payment – Lesley - lesleyj22@hotmail.com / Bookings – Judith - judeat11@hotmail.com

Anyone for croquet?

Northampton Croquet Club is holding two open days to encourage new members. Maybe you'd be interested in giving this sociable game a try. The open days are **Sunday 17th May** and **Sunday 7th June from 11am-3pm**. The event is FREE and open to all ages, so the grandchildren can have a go too! It's great fun. All equipment is provided, you just need to wear flat shoes.

If sufficient numbers were interested it may be possible to start a group within Towcester u3a.

List of interest groups available at Towcester u3a

Towcester u3a offers a wide variety of interest groups. See: <https://www.towcesteru3a.co.uk/groups/interest-groups> If you have ideas for other groups which you think may appeal to members, do consider setting one up. Guidance and support will be provided. Don't forget – the ethos of the u3a is that is run 'by members, for members'. Contact: Jill Stewart - jillastewart49@gmail.com

Online learning from the u3a

In addition to what is offered in Towcester to members, don't forget that the u3a nationally offers many interesting courses and talks available to all members online, to enjoy from the comfort of our own home. Just to give you a taste of what is coming up in the next couple of months, topics include:

- Making the most of AI
- What's involved in food processing
- Drones – what are they good for
- Laughter yoga
- Welsh history archives
- ABC of Victorian painting
- And much more

Find something that interests you at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>



Towcester u3a trees

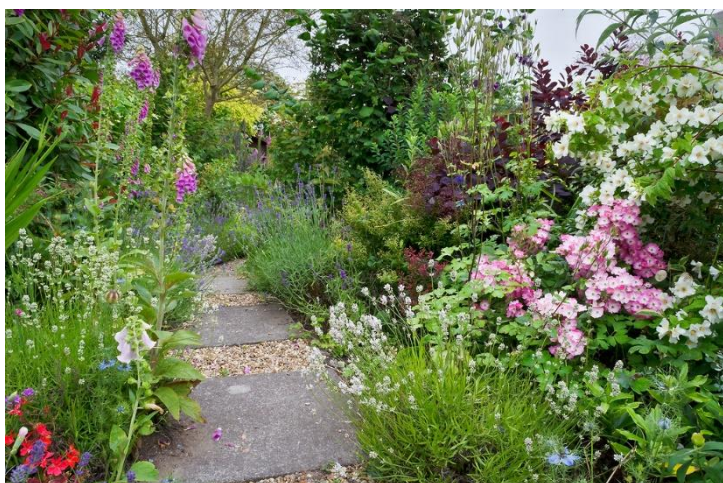
Some of you may recall that we planted 3 saplings in the water meadow near to Tesco in 2022 to mark the 40th anniversary of the u3a nationally, contributing to the Queens Canopy project, and the 12-year birthday of Tu3a (given that we had to miss the 10th due to the pandemic). We planted trees that would survive in potential flood conditions, and these were a Downy Birch, Field Maple and Hornbeam.

Here's the 'before' photo, and it's great to see they are thriving as you can see from the 'after' taken in the last week.



Two of the trees, thriving and adding more greenery to the meadows on a beautiful May day.

Blakesley Open Gardens Sun 7th June 2-6pm.



On offer are a wide range of gardens from the large, formal, with natural water feature, through intimate courtyard ones, the arboretum, with its wildflowers running along the old railway, a potager and the allotments and Pocket Park. There are the renowned homemade teas, a cake, produce and plant stall, with plants from both local gardeners and a local nursery.

All in aid of the upkeep of St Mary's Church, Blakesley. Tickets and map available centrally on the village green. Ample free on street parking. Adults £5 children free.

Free Mature Drivers Event – 27 April 2026 - Wellingborough

Are you a mature driver (aged 60+)? Live in Northamptonshire? Rely on being able to drive? This FREE event is for you! Our driving ability to drive changes over time for different reasons, especially as we get older. It's important that we recognise whether and how our driving is changing so we can stay safe and protect both ourselves and those around us. This Mature Drivers event is aimed at drivers 60+, and will cover all different aspects of driving. There will be FREE hints and tips drives available to book, delivered Northampton Advanced Motorists. **Our aim is to keep mature drivers driving safer, for longer.**

The event is being held at **Darby House, Darby Close, Park Farm Industrial Estate, Wellingborough NN8 6GS** ([what3words.com///shaped.spice.span](https://www.what3words.com///shaped.spice.span)) with two sessions, 10 am and 12.30 pm.

Book your Free tickets via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/northants-mature-driver-roadshows-4099083>

Driving safer for longer

Free Mature Driver Event

27 April 2026

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/northants-mature-driver-roadshows-4099083>

Darby House
Darby Close, Park Farm Industrial Estate
Wellingborough NN8 6GS
<https://www.what3words.com///shaped.spice.span>

Northamptonshire
NSRA
Safer Roads Alliance

The Sponne and Bickerstaffe Charity - Trustee Vacancies

The Sponne and Bickerstaffe Charity dates back to the 1440s and manages the Almshouses in Buckingham Way. The charity also provides grants to people in need for essential household items. The Charity is run by a board of Trustees that is responsible for maintaining the Almshouses, managing its finance and administering the grants. Trustees come from a range of backgrounds with experience of charity governance, finance, human resources, building maintenance, education, healthcare and the environment/sustainability.

The board current has a few vacancies for Trustees and would welcome applications from U3A members or from people you know who would be keen to help run this part of Towcester's heritage.

If you would like to consider becoming a Trustee, please contact the Charity's clerk at clerk@sponneandbickerstaffe.org who will arrange a meeting with one of the Trustees.

TVC

Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship is celebrating the 5th anniversary of opening its centre. If you are regular users of the building for your group meetings or activities, they have extended this invitation to join them to celebrate:

On Sunday, 7 June, we warmly invite you to join us for a brief church service followed by a buffet lunch, in celebration of five years of the Tove Valley Centre. Time: 10.30am-3.00pm Please RSVP at: bit.ly/TVC5years

We'd love you to bring your promotional material or poster; please leave it in the TVC Office by Friday 29 May, so we can display it appropriately, or email any digital material which we can display on a screen during the lunch to tvc@tvbf.co.uk by the same date.

Open Whittlebury – Sunday 7 June



Another date for your diaries – 12 gardens will be open in Whittlebury for you to browse, as well as art from local artists and floristry displays in St Mary's Church, afternoon teas and refreshments in the Reading Room, music from 2 choirs and plants for sale.

You are warmly welcomed on **Sunday 7 June between 11am – 4pm**. Free parking is in St Mary's Church field, Church Way, where you can purchase your programme at £5 with a map guiding you round the gardens. No charge for children.

Proceeds to be shared between the church and the Reading Room renovation project.