u3a Towcester



Monthly newsletter for members of Towcester u3a

Reminder - New Member Meeting date

Friday 27 November between **10am – 12 noon at Towcester Town Hall.** If you're new to u3a, this is an ideal opportunity to find out how you can make the most of your u3a membership, as well as introducing friends, neighbours or family members to what we offer. There will be representatives from a range of interest groups to chat to over a cup of coffee. All welcome.

Does your group need help with purchasing equipment?

We have recently helped the Folk Dancing Group with acquiring a lightweight sound system for their sessions, and Church Visits with a microphone to assist with audibility of talks given in churches they visit. If your group would benefit from some financial support for new equipment (which may be also available for loan by other groups) then please contact our Chair, Deb Heaphy - chair@towcesteru3a.co.uk

Monthly meetings



25 November

Seasonal celebration

Mike and Rachel Fenton

Autoharp and Dulcimer Delight

For our last meeting of 2026, we will enjoy traditional Anglo-American folk, country, blues, '50s pop, with audience participation, featuring these unusual ancient instruments.

To celebrate the upcoming festive period, do join us after the talk for seasonal refreshments. As we will be providing mince pies and mulled wine in addition to the usual tea/coffee and biscuits, **we really need you to reserve your place in advance** so we can cater for everyone who would like to join us. See details below.

Coming up in 2027

27 January

Chris Payne - Northamptonshire Owls – The different species to be found and their nesting habits. How they are monitored and ringed.

24 February

Sageena Thakur – Book Art – Creating 3D sculptures out of old books

You are all warmly welcome to come along, and we are happy to accommodate guests who would like a taster of what the u3a is about. Our meetings all start at **2pm** and are followed by refreshments, and we welcome you to stay for a chat with other members over tea and biscuits. The venue is Towcestrians Sports Club, where there is plenty of free parking.

Please assist us by booking a place at all meetings if you possibly can at:
https://u3a.simplemembership.co.uk/Towcester/Administration/Events

Transport

On occasion we are asked about whether there is any transport available from Towcester to the monthly meetings at Towcestrians Sports Club. We are looking into whether we could use Daventry Area Community Transport to assist with this, with a pickup in the centre of Towcester and return to the same place. There is likely to be a small charge for using this service. So that we know if there would be any demand for this, if you are interested, or know someone who would want to use this, please contact chair@towcesteru3a.co.uk

Monthly Coffee & Chat

Our informal coffee get-togethers continue to be held each month between 10am – 12noon at Watling Street Village 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 meeting is: **Thursday 10 November**

No meeting in December

Group news

Boys Toys



The group had a great trip to the Hucknall Flight Test Centre Museum, where we were given a lovely tour of this ex-Rolls Royce test facility. The input from very knowledgeable staff included loads of stories from the 1920s through up to modern times.

Boys Toys 2



For their October day out Boys Toys 2 visited Pashley Cycles at Stratford on Avon. Celebrating their centenary year, Pashley Cycles was founded in 1926. They hand make a variety of machines ranging from the traditional bespoke tourers and sporting bikes through to tradesmen's bikes, ice cream/coffee vendors trikes, as well as electric bikes, and 'Boris' city hire bikes.

Boys Toys 2 enjoyed a fascinating factory tour seeing how a Pashley Cycle is built. From the raw Reynolds steel tubing, through frame assembly, painting, wheel building to final fitting out. Afterwards an excellent lunch was taken at the Yew Tree, Avon Bassett.

Strollers



October saw Strollers on what seemed like a summer's day, with the sun warm and lighting up the many fields, but it was definitely autumn with the sound of the wind blowing through the beautifully coloured trees and the many leaves under our feet. The walk was led by Diana who wanted to remind us of how beautiful our countryside is and she succeeded, with no traffic noise it was lovely. We met in Paulerspury and walked across fields and back through Pury End which is significant as the birthplace of the missionary William Carey. We also passed houses where women once sat outside, lace making.

Striders



Striders enjoyed beautiful weather for their October Stride, starting from Abthorpe and following a circular route through Bucknell Woods to Wappenham, returning via Slapton for lunch at the New Inn.

Thanks for Jennifer for leading, and for the weather smiling on the group.

The Group also fitted in another 'Super Stride'at the end of the month. The route went around Staverton, Catesby, Hellidon, Fawsley and Badby Woods, covering 12 miles.



Photography Group – expertise needed

The photography group has been popular amongst enthusiasts wanting to get out and use their cameras, but many would really appreciate some tuition or input on photographic techniques. They are therefore appealing for someone who is able to share their photographic knowledge and skills so everyone learns and progresses.

There is also room for more members, at all levels, so if you would like to take this up or revitalise old skills, and in particular anyone with skills they feel they can share with other group members, please contact Jill Stewart – jillastewart49@gmail.com

Painting for Pleasure

The project this month was to design a nursery wallpaper or a picture. Also a seasonal watercolour of conkers which are in the header of this bulletin.





Church Visits



Our October visit was to the 14th century church of St Peter & St Paul in the tiny village of Easton Maudit. This turned out to be one of our most interesting visits due to the talk given by the church warden, Tim Allebone. Tim has lived all his life in Easton Maudit and was a mine of information about the history of the church and the village.

The most notable features of the church are the beautiful Minton floor tiles and the memorials to Sir Christopher Yelverton (one-time Speaker of the House of Commons) and his son, Sir Henry Yelverton. The Yelverton family held the manor of Easton Maudit from 1578 until 1801 when the manor was sold to the Earl of Northampton, whose family still hold it today. Sir Henry built a large manor house next to the church (reputedly containing 70 rooms) but sadly this was demolished in 1801. Charles I was rumoured to have visited the manor in 1636.





Other famous visitors to the village in the 1750s were Oliver Goldsmith, Dr Johnson and David Garrick who were friends of the then vicar, Thomas Percy (himself a scholar and poet and later bishop of Dromore). A more recent resident of the village was Derek Nimmo who is buried in the churchyard.

The church was gifted five pieces of silver-gilt plate in the mid-1600s and these have been on permanent loan to the V&A Museum since 1927 due to their historic significance.

Ukelele Group



The Ukulele group meets every Tuesday at 2pm in the Brave Old Oak in Towcester and is developing its skills with a view to possible small performances. We're delighted that they will be performing at the New Members Meeting on 27 November. To enhance the group they are in need of an experienced bass ukulele player and an experienced percussionist - particularly Cajun.

If you're able to help please contact: Jan Wright - janw57@hotmail.co.uk

Theatre Group



Ten of the theatre group went to see "The Choir of Man", set in a pub, at the Derngate. What a fantastic uplifting celebration of community and friendship by nine highly talented men. You can even go on stage and get a beer!

Below is a list of shows for which we have tickets for in the first few months of 2027. As usual the performances are all matinees and at Milton Keynes theatre unless otherwise stated.

Should you require tickets for any of them please let us know, either by contacting us (details below) or in person at the Towcestrians monthly meeting. We will then add you to the list as 'interested' and nearer the time (usually about 4-6 weeks prior to the performance date) will email you for payment.

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S THE HOLLOW	Thursday 21st Jan	£37.21 circle
MATTHEW BOURNE'S CINDERELLA	Thursday 28th Jan	£32.21 circle
BACK TO THE FUTURE	Wednesday 17th Feb	£34.00 circle
DINNER LADIES	Wednesday 17th Mar	£28.50 stalls (Victoria Wood vibes)
HADESTOWN	Wednesday 21st Apr	£29.00 stalls
AGATHA CHRISTIE'S MOUSETRAP	Wednesday 28th Apr	£34.50 stalls

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

London Explorers 2

A visit to the Frida Kahlo Exhibition at the Tate Modern

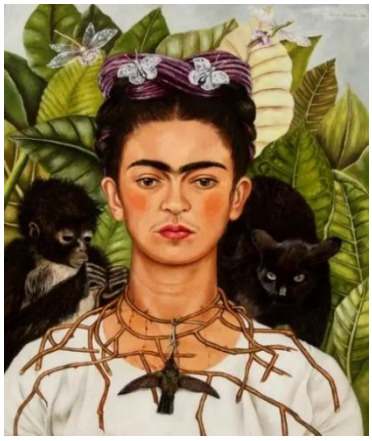


On a miserable, wet day, members of London Explorers 2 donned their anoraks and set off to the Tate Modern to see the exhibition: **Frida Kahlo - the Making of an Icon** to discover the extraordinary story of how she became one of the most influential artists of all time, a cultural phenomenon, and an internationally recognised commercial icon.

Kahlo wearing a Rebozo - Mexican shawl

The exhibition comprised 10 rooms showcasing over 30 of Kahlo's most iconic works that depict her "many selves" - the dedicated wife, the intellectual, the modern artist, and the political activist. Many of her paintings were self-portraits in traditional dress, often along with animals and all showing her distinctive, signature monobrow. In addition, some of her Tehuana dresses, jewellery and photographs were on display as well as the substantial corsets that she had to wear to support her back following her accident when a teenager. There were also many works by her contemporaries and the artists she inspired both at the time and since showing the lasting impact she had.

The final room of the exhibition was entitled “Fridamania” which showed how she had become a global brand and featured a wide variety of Frida dolls and other commercial objects. Of course, a vast array of Frida merchandise was available in the shop at the end of the tour!



Kahlo was born in 1907 and suffered from polio as a child. When she was 18, she nearly died in a bus accident and sustained multiple fractures of her spine, pelvis and other bones in her body. She had always wanted to train as a doctor, but she began painting when recovering in bed wearing a plaster cast. During her lifetime she had numerous operations including a below knee amputation of her right leg. She was known to say that “ *My painting carries with it the message of pain”*. She died in 1954, just 47 years old.

The exhibition continues until 3rd January 2027

Self portrait with thorn necklace and humming bird (1940)

Garden Visits

Amazing autumn colours at RHS Wisley seen during the visit to this famous garden this month:






November visit – Thursday 12 November – Wimpole Hall & Gardens
The November visit will take in the magnificent National Trust Wimpole Hall and wider estate in Cambridgeshire. There is plenty to do and see, as well as opportunities for refreshments at several cafes/restaurants.

December - Christmas lunch – Wednesday 9 December
The Christmas lunch is at the Plough, Shutlanger. The festive menu will be available in due course.

Contact Carole Hunt on **01327 352564** or email **hunt_c6@sky.com**

Payment for visits – Carole is no longer able to accept cheques; 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*



IT Helpers Group – next meeting Monday 16 November, 2-4pm, Sawpits Centre

Do you need help in understanding how to use your PC, laptop, smartphone (Android or iPhone) or tablet? You may want help with emails, documents, spreadsheets, or using social media, for example. The IT Helpers group is here to help you get more from your IT and is free to u3a members.

At our previous meetings we have provided tutoring on using laptops and smart devices (Android phones, iPhones, tablets etc), and helped with topics

such as using the internet, using social media (Facebook, WhatsApp etc), security issues, as well as help with the apps installed on the devices.

If you would like some IT help then just come along to our next meeting on Monday **16 November**, **at the Sawpits Centre between 2:00-4:00** and we will have a one-to-one conversation with you. You do not need to bring any IT equipment with as we bring our own, although if it is to do with a piece of your own IT equipment, then it would be helpful if you could have it with you. If you are not sure what you want to know, then come along to a meeting anyway for a conversation with one of us to get you started. We cannot guarantee to be able to solve every problem, but between us we will give it a try.

The IT Helpers are a group of people who are interested in IT. We no longer work in the IT industry professionally, but we have a wide range of experience between us and are willing to offer support to members who have queries on using technology.

Meeting details: **Monday 16 November, 2:00-4:00, at the Sawpits Centre.**

Contact: ***ithelp@towcesteru3a.co.uk***



Mixed Crafts

The group made Sashiko mug mats this month. A sashiko 'mug rug' is a small, quilted fabric mat decorated with traditional Japanese sashiko running-stitch embroidery

Music Appreciation



Do join us on the first Monday of the month 2-4 pm at a home in Towcester for an enchanting introduction to all genres of music and to the fantastic composers who have given so much pleasure over the centuries and today. Projected onto a large screen, immerse yourself in the visual and sound experience and enjoy coffee/tea and friendly chat at the interval.

We've had music from costume dramas, ballets, focus on specific instruments (the harp was featured last month), Philip Glass for modernists among us, folk, film scores, and so much more. It's up to you too to share your favourites with the group when you are ready.

Group leader is Valerie Hall valhall321@gmail.com - Hope to see you there!

Reading between the Crimes



Are you a reader? Are you obsessed with crime novels? If so then we would love to welcome you to our Reading Between the Crimes 2 group. We are an extension of the original group which proved so popular we have started a second group.

We have read a huge variety of genres over our time covering authors such as Peter May, Claire McGowan, Satu Ramo, Harlen Coben and many more. We meet at 1.30 pm on the third Thursday at Watling Street Village – contact Lesley Anderson - *lesley.pask@gmail.com*

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 for the Autumn

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, some of the topics include:

- Screening to prevent stroke; do we do too much or too little?
- Elizabethan fashions
- Exploring world faiths
- Mindfulness and mediation
- Joni Mitchell and her Blue album
- The ultimate guide to editing your creative writing
- Learn bridge
- The Bayeux tapestry; embroidery or fabrication?

And much more in a diverse range of online lectures and learning opportunities.

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



Looking for something to fill a cold November evening? Pudding Party on 21 November in Whittlebury:

