

Doncaster u3a

June-July 2026



Registered Charity No. 1074577

Message From The Chair

Hello members. This is the beginning of my first year as chair, and my first message to you. Thank you for supporting me and I hope to show that your confidence in me is not misplaced. I would like to thank those that attended the AGM on 20th April, it was good to meet and speak to many of the 74 people who braved the bus disruption to attend.



Having a functioning Committee, made up by members for the benefit of members, is an essential part of Doncaster u3a and I am thankful to those members who have put themselves forward to join the committee and those who agreed to continue in their role. The new committee members introduce themselves elsewhere in this newsletter. It will, of course, take a little time for the new committee to get a “handle” on things, but we already have a solid foundation on which to build.

At the moment we have a committee made up of 9 people although the ideal number is 12 to 15. We will always be on the lookout for people who are willing to give their experience and time to help keep the wheels turning. So If you are interested and would like find out more please contact a member of the Committee, or if you would like to attend a committee meeting, as a guest, and experience how the ‘engine room’ works, then please contact myself or Paula Harmer to indicate your interest and we will arrange a suitable date. Becoming a Trustee and joining the Committee give you an opportunity to contribute to how we develop and progress as a ‘Members for members’ group. At the present time we are looking for members who are willing to take on the role of Business Secretary and also the role of Membership Secretary. So, if you are interested in joining the Committee and becoming a trustee then please speak to a member of the committee.

I would like to thank the previous Chair, Paula Harmer, as she hands over the reins, for the work she has done during her 3 years in post. She worked hard and had many difficulties and legal issues to deal with and overcome. This hard work has enabled her to hand over Doncaster u3a in a very healthy condition with the number of members now standing at over 450. I will still rely on her experience and knowledge in the role for a while, so she is not getting away that easy.

I would also like to thank Kim Beresford and Christine Curtis who stepped down as trustees and committee members after years of providing great support to the Committee with their practical, caring and commonsense approach which was often felt further afield.

Over the past year we have all felt the effects of increased prices on everyday costs and u3a are not immune, but we are in a good place. A couple of years ago, as a result of there being a surplus of funds in our coffers, the committee decided to reduce subscriptions and fees. This surplus has continued and as a result these reductions will continue for a further year with membership subscriptions at £12 for an individual and £20 for a couple living at the same address. The fee for attending the Membership Meeting will also continue at the reduced rate of £1. The level of these subscriptions and fees will be reviewed in 2027.

To help maintain our finances in a good place I would like to remind everyone of the ‘Gift Aid’ scheme. This scheme, operated by the government and embedded within the tax system, allows charities – such as u3a – to claim back, as a donation, 25% of the subscription fee. In effect HMRC will give us £3 for an individual subscription of £12. This soon adds up. There are two points to be made about this scheme;

If you are a taxpayer and would like us to reclaim tax from the Government on your subscription as a Gift Aid ‘donation’ please indicate this on your membership form. If you are unsure if you have indicated such please contact a member of the committee.

You must be a taxpayer. Please contact the Treasurer as soon as possible if you are no longer a taxpayer as the Inland Revenue will seek to claim any Gift Aid overpaid to the Du3a directly from you and not from the Du3a.

I would like to remind everyone of the coffee mornings that are held every Tuesday, from 10.30 am (ish) to 1.00pm (ish) at the Powerhouse. Newer Members are urged to drop in and give it a try, it is a great place to have a chat and learn more about your Doncaster u3a.

Finally, now that the sunshine has replaced the rain, I hope that everyone has an enjoyable summer. Thank you for your support.

Stay Well

Michael

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

*Mary Jones, Julie Bowerman,
Andrew Holland, Carol Kirk,
Elizabeth Parker, Ian Jones,
Elizabeth Marsden, David Walls,
Roger Ketteringham, Carole Ketteringham,
Peter Oldale, Carol Smith, Gizella Costigan,
Christopher Gibson, Geoffrey Tanfield,
and Susan Tanfield*

Love of Nature

'Guided walk at Humberhead Peatlands Nature Reserve in early April'.



Our guide Julian was an authority on the importance of the peatlands for the environment. Julian took the Group on a short tour which

provided a panoramic view of the peatlands as far as Wroot and beyond. Goole, Crowle and Thorne Moors represent the largest raised bog wilderness in lowland Britain. A fascinating and in-depth talk on the area by Julian provided the Group with so much information that I should have made notes and tested everyone on their recall. Fortunately we were again lucky with the weather. It was a glorious sunny day with hardly a cloud in the sky.'



Diane Williams

DIVINATION

DIVINATION – my dictionary defines this as 'the art of discovering future events'. It was the subject explored by a talk given by Elaine Perkins, entitled, 'Candle wax, chickens and Cheese'. Elaine displayed a collection of props to illustrate her presentation, which we were invited to scrutinise.



Soothsayers of the past may have been wizards predicting events for kings for instance, using everyday items which came to hand. For instance, coins where heads may mean good fortune, and tails the opposite. The numbers on a die are given degrees of comfort and misfortune or covered varying aspects of our lives; security, wealth, health or even love!

The Romans, never ones for keeping things simple, had a twenty-sided die. Ancient Greeks burned candles and

sought to interpret shapes formed when wax was cast into cold water. For kings or emperors gold instead may have been melted and cast. Four elements, earth, fire, air and water took on spurious nuances for predictions, with meaning being attached to the fall of, say flour, pins and needles or shadows cast on a wall.

All sorts of other items were used for predictions; a roundel segmented with numbers, each having its own voyeuristic derivation.

Your fortune may depend on whether an axe or spear lands to the left (bad) of target, or right (good fortune).

Roman or Greeks may have used slaves, entirely disposable assets to reach decisions. Animals. Chickens for example were used as predictors of fortune, as were oxen, birds, fish, rats and mice. Boudica, scourge of Romans in Britain, used a hare!

Three cheese lumps were set out and a parrot was poised to choose one, a prediction made from the one chosen. Wine as a fortune predictor? Did it spill, is it cloudy or clear? Milk, oil and water were all used too.



Fire played a part too. Throw salt on to flames and observe its colour, or the colour of its smoke. Did the flame die? Bad news!

Then which part of one's anatomy itches? Was it the right ear – if so bad news!

Staying with anatomy, women's breasts gave clues as to their fortunes. By comparing their size and shape associating them with fruit types rendered predictions. For instance, cherries, apples, pears, lemons and even melons offered guidance.

Let's end up with a strange one... A blind German voyeur practised as a 'Rumpologist' – checking the size, roundness, flatness and plumpness of people's bottoms.

So, we were acquainted with these and more examples of divination methods – not forgetting tarot cards, of course.

SIMON HUGHES

Mary Harrington - Obituary

It is with great sadness that I am letting you know that Mary Harrington passed away, peacefully in hospital, on 21st March.

I have been a friend of Mary's for a number of years, and it was she who introduced me to DU3A and persuaded me to join when I retired from work.

Mary's health started to deteriorate a couple of years ago but she was determined to continue to get out and about and enjoy life. The last DU3A event she attended was the 2024 Christmas Party where she enjoyed socialising and taking part in the quiz. In previous years she had joined a number of groups, including the Film Group, but more recently she concentrated on the Literature Group. She had a lifelong love of books and had worked in the library service for around 30 years in a number of roles. She obtained her degree in Librarianship at Leeds Beckett University. I first met Mary when I worked in Adult Education and taught an Adult Literacy evening class in Doncaster Library.

Mary was such a kind and compassionate person who genuinely cared about, and loved, people. She was a volunteer Samaritan for about 25 years and became the local Director before she retired in 2004. She first met her husband, Mike, the love of her life, when he became a Samaritan in 1998. Mary loved music and in recent years became a very skilled ukulele player and passed exams in the instrument.

Our thoughts are with Mary's beloved husband, Mike, and the rest of her loved ones. Like Mike says: "Mary is now at peace, but the world is a much sadder place". Mary's funeral was on April 15th.

Sue Jones



Upcoming Members Meetings

We are delighted to announce that we have 3 very different and fascinating speaking events lined up for you.

May 18th: Freelance journalist and photographer Paul Kirkwood brings history to life in his talk *Desperately Seeking Gertrude (Bell)*, tracing the footsteps of one of Yorkshire's most extraordinary yet underappreciated explorers. An adventurous archaeologist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Gertrude Bell spent years travelling across and mapping the Middle East. Her sharp insight and unrivalled local knowledge won her the respect of top British officials, ultimately earning her a seat at the table during major events like the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and the Cairo Conference of 1921.

June 15th: Also known as the "Pink Hat Man," Chris Stanbury shares his *Walk of a Lifetime*. At the age of 70, he set himself a remarkable challenge: walking from Land's End to John O'Groats and then all the way back again. In just five months, he covered an incredible 2,645 miles, a journey that tested his stamina, resilience, and determination - while still leaving room for plenty of light-hearted and humorous moments along the way.

June 29th: Gracie Arnold: *Becoming a Young Shepherdess*. Ever wondered what it's really like being a woman in wellies, wrangling sheep and shearing wool for a living? In this lively hands-on talk, 19 year-old Gracie shares her journey from a harp-playing girl to a full-blown shepherdess - mud, muscles, mishaps and all! She'll chat about what it's like carving out a space in the farming world as a woman, the history of the women out in the fields long before her and look ahead to the future of agriculture. She will also shine a light on the value of British wool - and the people behind it. Along the way, you'll be able to handle fleeces from different breeds she's sheared, turning the talk into a hands-on, show-and-tell experience, bringing the countryside vividly to life.

We very much hope you can join us at these exciting *events!*

Helen Wynn,

Enjoying Poetry

As usual, the group has come up with some lively and far-reaching discussions as we hear and enjoy many different poems.

Our recent meeting spent a long time discussing the thorny issue of can you admire the work whilst despising and disliking the maker of the work? The poet Ezra Pound was at the centre of this debate. A deeply problematical figure but an astonishing poet.

For once I read one of my poems which imagines a dream like meeting with my late father.

Some Unearthly Hour
My father is here again
seated at the dining room table covered
with maps, a compass, all the paraphernalia
of negotiating disputed terrain.

Outside it's dark, around three in the morning
an occasional street lamp stutters into life then collapses
a cat sets off next door's security lights, otherwise nothing.

Dad tamps down the bowl of his pipe.

He seems remarkably young, in uniform,
his Invicta cap badge gleams, three pips on his shoulder
smartly cropped hair. I am in a T shirt and shorts,
dishevelled, not really up to snuff.

He is puzzled, stares at me
as if wondering what I am doing in his house
at this hour of the night when all he wants to do
is read his maps and smoke.

This time I decide to sit beside him
look straight into his eyes which of course,
begin to crease with laughter.

He taps the pipe stem
against the swirl of marks, symbols and numbers
covering the map, points to Monte Cassino,
where a road marked in brown tells his story.

Leaning forward he asks me why
I keep needing to meet him this way
after all, in a few years time
I'll be the age he was in November 1997
and we both know what happened then.

First published in Acumen



I read the poem to advertise the launch on my new pamphlet, *Before It's Too Late*, at the Doncaster Brewery Tap (7 Young Street DN1 3EL) on Saturday May 23rd, 2-4. Other poets will also be reading. Please come along if you can..

David Harmer

Music to our Ears

One of the best presentation we have ever enjoyed at any Members Meeting, 'Music to our Ears', a talk, offered by Paul Whittaker was amusing, enthralling, entertaining and inspirational.

It was also perplexing because Paul is deaf from his birth, yet can play several musical instruments, can read music and holds recognised qualifications to prove it!

The presentation could be interpreted as a double act as Paul was assisted by Stephen Heselton giving sign language from the wings. Paul and Stephen have worked together for 14 years. Nevertheless, a bit of assistance does not detract from the sheer genius shown to our audience of more than 70 du3a members.

Paul described his career in music; two Honours degrees from British universities along with an OBE awarded in 2007 for Services to Music. Paul's first degree would have been from the University of Durham which had all the facilities, but no places available.

Undeterred by this Paul applied to 12 other seats of learning also gaining a post-graduate course at the Northern College of Music.

We were also given a practical demonstration of British Sign Language illustrating how spelling out each word using letters would 'take forever', instead a type of sign shorthand is employed.

The talk was brought to life by elements of audience participation which was highly entertaining. The image enclosed shows those in attendance joining in a clapping game where we were divided into left and right groups and encouraged to perform a set pattern of claps, where it was possible to clap at the wrong time.

Hard to say which team was the ultimate winner, but it was close.

Paul also used sign language to give expression to a couple of songs delivered over the sound system. One of these was 'Chapel of Love', from the musical 'Annie get your Gun' – we all joined in enthusiastically.



Paul and Stephen do not just give talks. Paul has performed in musicals, for example 'Cats', 'Les Miserables', and 'West Side Story'.

Paul's prime motivation is to inspire others to ignore their hearing disability and to this end he delivers music workshops to schools. These may include rhythm games employing a range of differing instruments.

Paul finished his talk with another piece of sign language inspired music, which was more like acting than anything else. The song was by American singer, Nancy la Mott. The piece is entitled 'Be kind -take care' and reminds us that we all want the same things.

It was a fitting finale!

Simon Hughes

Introducing your new Committee

Following elections and retirements at the AGM on 20th April we now have a new Committee made up of members who have put themselves forward to act on behalf of us all.

From the AGM, the following members became Trustees of Du3a, and consequently form the committee, who meet once a month (except August), to discuss matters arising and to explore ways to improve what is offered to the members. Within the committee there are a number of roles, some are leadership roles and some are management roles to do necessary jobs.

Sometimes, roles are shared, and sometime the Committee co-opt members, with knowledge and experience, to help out for a short period.

Leadership roles include Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Business Secretary.

Management roles include the Membership Secretary, Speaker Finder, Social Secretary, Welfare and Safeguarding Officer, Beacon Manager, Publicity Officer, Groups Coordinator

Under our constitution, which is in line with the requirements of both the Charity Commission and Third Age Trust, there are restrictions on how long a member can serve as a Trustee (9 years) and how long a Trustee can hold a specific post (3 years), though the latter case they can return to the post after a break of at least a year.

The following are the Trustees elected for this year, until May 2027

Michael Regan:

I have taken on the role of Chair for the first time this year. I am a keen, and sometime successful, gardener. I have worked all over the UK in construction on some major iconic projects.



Bought up in Doncaster, my wife and I returned in 2018 after spending over 35 years living in the Borders of Scotland, London and Oxford. We joined u3a in 2022 after we retired and are members of the Scottish Country Dancing group.

David Hamer:

I have been a trustee for 3 years. I am Group Leader Coordinator and Beacon administrator. I run Enjoying Poetry and I am also a member of the Literature Group.



Ken Bradbury:

I started as Treasurer in October 2025 as there was an urgent need for a new treasurer at this time and as a qualified accountant felt I could help U3A in this role and have been a member of U3A since 2016



Having recently returned to Doncaster after 40 years away in London, Canada, the USA and Brighton I was keen to reconnect with local activities and make new friends and engage in new ventures.

I've been a member of the Strollers group for many years and recently joined the theatre group and started a new dining group to visit Doncaster restaurants

I live in Sprotborough and support Leeds Utd where I am a season ticket holder. Having recently taken up cruising I'm keen to travel more and my two boys live in the USA so I often travel there each year to see them. I'm also keen to get involved in more local activities and make new friends in the area.

Robert Coleman:

I am a retired Mechanical Design Engineer and I am blessed with six Grandchildren that keep me busy and active. I enjoy holidays with my wife, especially Cruises. I try to keep fit and love cycling.



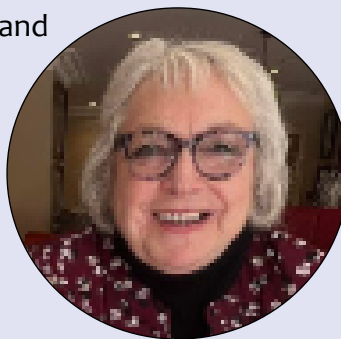
Chris Prewett:

I joined U3a in June 22 following the recommendation of a friend. I wanted to keep my mind active after retirement, and pursue hobbies and interests, I previously hadn't had time for.

I have taken over the role of Welfare and Safeguarding.

From June I will also be taking over the running of the raffle at the members meeting, so if anyone has any donations if they could please give them to me at the meeting.

I am a member of the following groups:



literature, discussing short stories, craft, enjoying poetry, theatre group. I have met some wonderful people and being a member of the U3a has really enhanced my life.

Helen Wynn:

Helen joined the committee in February as Speaker Finder. Originally from London she graduated in history from the University of London. After meeting her husband they moved to France where they spent ten happy years immersed in the culture. They now live in Bawtry with their beloved Border Collie, Archie.



John Coe:

I have been a member of Doncaster U3A for several years now taking part in the walking groups and mostly in the Photography Group.

Thank you for voting me on to the U3A committee.



Vicky Coleman:

I have been a member of U3A since early 2024.

I have the role of Social Secretary.

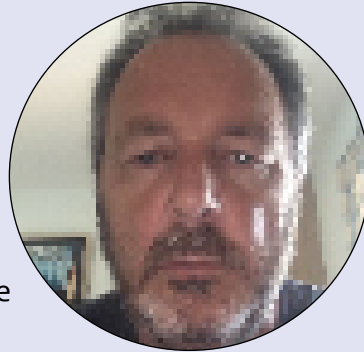
My interests are singing, handicrafts, holidays, keeping up the garden and short walks with a nice pub meal at the



end. I have 6 grandchildren which are my absolute pride and joy.

Ian Guy:

I am originally from Nottingham and was a keen cricketer and golfer. I was also a bank manager until I started a financial services business in Doncaster that grew to 150 staff until the crash of 2008. I stayed here after my retirement.



I am a keen Bridge player for Doncaster and have 5 children from 43 to 14.

“Many hands make light work”

To maintain an effective and compliant Committee we are looking for members who are willing to provide their support and experience in the roles of **Business Secretary and Membership Secretary**. On a temporary basis the committee has Co-Opted the following members for a short period.

Paula Harmer:

After serving for three years as Chair, I have agreed to be co-opted onto the committee for a further period of three months, to complete a hand-over of the role of Membership Secretary and to offer any up-to-date help to facilitate the smooth running of the committee. I



hope my experience will be of use.

Since joining u3a in 2018 I have met many interesting people. As a Trustee and in the capacity of Chair I experienced the warmth and support of our members. After some years as Speaker Finder, I became Membership Secretary, a role that ran alongside that of Chair. I also enjoy leading Art and German Beginners and I am a member of Cryptic Crosswords. I delight in reading updates, on the website and in the newsletter, of what our many varied groups are doing.

Executive members of the committee can be contacted through the [contact page](#) on the website. Other members of the committee can be contacted through the [members only section](#) of the website - please email the website manager if you have forgotten the password to this section and you need help.

If you wish to email a group leader about anything they can be contacted through their [group page](#) on the website.

If you do not have access to the internet please call 07735436176 and a message will be passed to the relevant person.

Thanks to David Daniels for the cover photos on this issue - see more of David's and other member's photos on the members only Facebook page - if you want to join the FB page please ensure that you answer all the questions and agree to the rules.

Pétanque Group

Our u3a pétanque group has become seasonal, as players don't all play in the colder winter months. Unlike the Walking Cricket group we cannot (yet) play indoors. However, some half dozen hardy souls brave the worst Yorkshire can deliver and play year-round.

We have restarted for 2026 and the 'season' runs every Wednesday from mid March to the Autumn equinox, some 28 weeks.



During this period we will battle for 'Les Prix Tricolores' and you may enjoy a reminder of their composition.

We shall offer the 'Ballon Bleu' to the du3a player showing the biggest improvement in results over the season.

In the 2025 season this was won by Jill Laming.

Then there was the 'Ballon Blanc', won by Chris Brown for the player with the best Wednesday attendance record. Chris was also instrumental in keeping play days going throughout last winter, along with Bill Hawkesworth and Christine Wright.

The third trophy, our 'Ballon Rouge' was won by Trish Huby who was outright winner of our knockout competition.

During late summer we shall ask 2025 winners to take their trophies off their mantle pieces and return them. They will

be refurbished and any wear-and-tear remedied. 'Les Prix Tricolores' will be recycled as trophies under the same categories as in 2025 and winners presented with them at our Members' Meeting next October.

July 2024 u3a held a regional festival on the York University campus and we entered a pétanque tournament team. Teams from Ripon, York, Harrogate, Doncaster and Howden were represented. Unfortunately we didn't win and that honour went to the Howden u3a team. The 2026 York festival is to be re-run this year but the entry for each player is set to be £18, whereas last year it was just £16 for our team of four. We have decided that the cost is just too high especially when car park charges are added, these being FOC in 2024.

Stop Press!

Pétanque as a sport is shaping up in South Yorkshire. An article in the Barnsley Chronicle states that a pétanque boudrome has been created at Ardsley Welfare Park. In order for its surface material to settle it is not to be used for six weeks. It seems that its status is an extension of the already established Ingbirchworth's facility and the overall management is covered by their club. We shall now make contact with Barnsley u3a to find out if they have the intention of creating their own pétanque group.

When looking up details, information about a Sheffield boudrome popped up and we shall investigate this too.

Simon Hughes

Race For Life

Diane and Chris Woolven are entering the "Race for Life" event which will take place at 11 am on 14th June at Doncaster Town Fields. The event is in aid of Cancer Research UK. If anyone would like to sponsor one or both of them please contact Chris via the website using [this link](#), or call the Du3a phone (07735436176) so that a message can be passed on, or see Chris or Diane at the next Members meeting in May.



Gentle Strollers - April

This month the Gentle Strollers enjoyed a stroll through Melton Wood. I was hoping to see more bluebells but the wood anemones didn't disappoint. The weather was ideal & the group was well attended. We enjoyed light refreshments at the Stable café in the village afterwards.

Janet Kerry



I would like to give a big shout out to Felicity and Karen who run the theatre group and do such a marvellous job researching all the various plays and musicals. They put such a lot of time and effort into it which I think is appreciated by all of us in the group. In total they have organised about 19 which is a great feat in itself

So I would like to give them a big Thank you for all their hard work

Marilyn Wright

Bawtry Phoenix Theatre

June Production 4th -11th June 2026. Two One-Act Plays, both comedies:

'Sand to the Egyptians', by J.P.S. Yates - Our first play begins at a speed dating event, where James and Natalie meet for the first time. Will they hit it off? And will they still feel the same way the next day?

'When I Snap my Fingers', by Bruce Adam - The club's resident hypnotist, Madame Svengali, is poised to entertain you with her show. But will participants Simon and Maria ever be able to live it down?

Are you interested in theatre - acting or backstage? Why not join the [Bawtry Amateur Dramatics Society](#)?

Steve Kellet

U3a Online Events

If you check the '[What's On](#)' section of the website you will find that I regularly list online events that are available free of charge from the [national u3a](#).

These zoom events provide talks on a wide range of topics.

I have recently attended sessions on such diverse topics as Beethoven, Anglo-Saxon England, Richard Nixon, Magic Squares, Linguistics, and Kingsmeadow House.

Zoom is pretty easy to use on a computer or tablet, even on a smart phone - so take a look at the talks coming up.

German Beginners

Well, we have begun to tackle the many different endings for definite and indefinite articles, adjectives, possessives those that once also existed in English but were dropped somewhere long ago in the mists of time.

And there can be no doubt these make the German language a tricky customer!

We need to look upon it rather like cracking a code - it does have a rhythm and pattern peculiar to itself And initially seems baffling and complicated, but with use, with practice, with determination, it becomes easier.



We know it will fox us forever but we also know that the Language Police are not due to visit for a long time so we can take our time acclimatising.

Es ist notwendig, regelmäßig zu üben! Und wir üben!

Paula Harmer

National Newsletter

Please consider signing up to receive regular information from u3as around the country through the [email newsletter](#) - this is in addition to the magazine and can provide members with ideas for new groups or activities in existing groups

STROLLERS

26th February - Cantley Park/Woods/Armthorpe Tip Top

On a somewhat dreary morning that started with light rain, twenty u3a members set off from Cantley Park walking across the playing fields and into Cantley Woods. After a pleasant ten minute stroll through the woods, the rain had stopped and we exited the wood and walked up an incline to the top of the old Armthorpe pit where we had pleasant views of the surrounding area. After a gentle walk down from the top we returned, back into Cantley wood, around the playing fields and back to our cars.



After the walk we went to The Cheswold where other non-walking members joined us for an enjoyable lunch.

Sue Coote/Sue Stenton (Walk leaders)

26th March – Austerfield

On a lovely sunny morning the group met up at Yorkshire Caravans near Bawtry. Led by Jenny Burnett and Cynthia Morris, the group walked down the Great North Road and into the woods.

We had a pleasant walk through the woods, with its Spring flowers beginning to peep through, and then down a narrow path with an extensive open field on one side and the hidden railway track on the other. At the end of the track, we turned left towards Austerfield, walking again in dappled woodland. After a photo shoot, we walked up a gradual slope until we were on a bank with beautiful open views on our right. The view to the left was not so impressive as it was now a 32-acre brownfield site following the demise of a business two years ago. There is currently a proposal being put forward to build, on this site, approximately 267 energy-efficient homes, a care home and a new community hub.



We then walked past the Austerfield Study Centre and onto the High Street in Austerfield. Turning left up Highfield Lane, we passed the working quarry and a farm until we eventually arrived back at the Great North Road. A short walk up the road took us back to the Classic Café, at Yorkshire Caravans, where most of the walkers stayed for an enjoyable meal and amicable conversation.

B. Thompson

(Walk leaders: Jenny Burnett & Cynthia Morris)

23rd April – Sandall Beat

Our walk on the 23rd April was in Sandall Beat Wood. We started from The Sportsman on Armthorpe Road. Parking was a little chaotic because some fairground rides had been set up in the car park about which we hadn't been warned. This was soon forgotten as we set off on a bright sunny morning past the stables and into the woods.

The woods looked splendid with new leaves everywhere and patches of bluebells in abundance. We encountered a group of volunteers digging out the Spanish bluebells so that the British bluebells could thrive.



We took a circuitous route round the woods choosing some wide straight paths and some more narrow and twisty. Everywhere was very dry including the dykes and what used to be a swamp. The birdsong was much appreciated throughout.

On returning to the Sportsman many of us stayed for a well deserved lunch.

Margaret Craven

(Walk leaders: Margaret Allott & Margaret Craven)

Imber - an unusual day out

The village of IMBER is an elongated, Linear village, following the line of the local stream [Imber Dock] I first visited the village of Imber the Saturday before Christmas in the late 80's, I had been to a Sales Meeting in Andover on the Friday and found out about Imber's church having a mid afternoon Carol service on the Saturday, so I went before driving back home to Doncaster.

IMBER is a deserted village, that was taken over by the MOD due to it's location within Salisbury Plain, all the farms around the area had already been taken over and Imber sat there very vulnerable to take over.



It was in 1943 that Imber was taken, so that US Marines could practice urban warfare and what to expect when they disembarked their ships on D Day.. The village was supposedly going to be returned to it's people after the war but that never happened and it is still part of the MOD.



With the retention of Imber it has made Salisbury plain the largest training area in the UK.

We have seen Imber on TV and on films over the years, it has been used several times on programmes especially in the 60's such as The Avengers, and a film starring the Dave Clark 5... 'Catch us if you can'

The village is usually open 3 times a year, The Saturday before Christmas, a Saturday in August and normally an odd day around Easter.

The village itself is old, there has been a settlement since Saxon times, [first recorded], 967 ad, it was also mentioned in the Domesday Book. The population at it's maximum was 441 in the census of 1851, however by the MOD takeover [1943] it was down to 150 although most of the men were away fighting.



Many of the older houses were destroyed & 'Council House' shells were erected, [see above], which are still being used today for 'Urban Tactical Training'

They used to call it the 'Lucky Village', as it had survived the Black Death [plague] which was in 1348 to 1350, no cases reported although reportedly the Black death came into the UK at both Portsmouth and Southampton, [Imber is 43 miles from Southampton]

It also survived the Great Plague of London in the 17th century.... That plague of course wasn't just confined to London as people fled the city and carried the symptoms with them. that plague eventually covering most of the southern counties & over to Wales.



Over the last 20 years or so, the August open day that the MOD grants has become an unusual day out, as the MOD has tried to ban cars from the area simply because of the sheer numbers that were visiting, they now operate the IMBERBUS

All journeys commence at Warminster [7miles from Imber], with a couple of pick ups at local car parks and the local railway station/ express coach station via stops at Tilshead, Chitterne, West Lavington, Brazen Bottom & Imber.



Travel is normally by classic London Transport Routemaster buses, although occasionally other odd coaches are allowed on the route if bringing a group.

In 2026 the date is August 15th

Thanks for reading, Richard

Stretchers - April

Jenny Burnett stepped in to the empty slot, assisted by Cynthia Morris, to organise our April walk for which we are all grateful. We met at Yorkshire Caravans where a table was reserved in the cafe for our return – always a favourite! We headed south along the A638 to enter the woods just short of the railway line and were greeted by carpets of bluebells. Such a great time of year. On leaving the woods we crossed the main road in Austerfield and on to Low Common. Taking a long path across a field brought us back to the main road before crossing back again to join a bridal path that took us back to the A638 and Yorkshire Caravans. Good company and good weather made for a very pleasant 5 mile walk.

Wendy Hattrell

A scenic view of a lake at sunset. The sky is a gradient of blue and orange. In the background, there are several buildings, including a large one with many lit windows on the right. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the buildings. In the foreground, there is a dark, curved railing.

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Our friends at Powerhouse

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**Thanks to all the contributors to this issue. Please
send articles to nraynsford.u3a@gmail.com by
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