



Broadway Barrels and Berries

Photo by the Editor

The Committee's Briefs

Contact the Committee

You can use this link to send a message to any of our Committee:

[Woodhall Spa u3a Committee and Contacts Web Page](#)

Co-Chair's Corner

From Rosemary

Life is getting back to normal now as I continue to recover from surgery and it has been a pleasure to be back at both the monthly meeting and my group meetings. Whilst I was unable to attend much in person I made very good use of the online groups available to all u3a members. I belong to a poetry group, a playreading group, 2 quiz groups, a cryptic crossword group and am waiting for a map reading group to commence. These have been an excellent way of passing the time and it is so nice to meet u3a members from across the country. If you think an online group or two

might be good for you take a look here <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online/interest-groups-online-groups>. There is a cost of £12 a year payable in April but if you join after October it is £6.

I look forward to seeing you all in 2026 and a gentle reminder that there will be *no monthly meeting at Coronation Hall in January* as it falls on the 1st, a Bank Holiday.

Rosemary Brown – Co-Chairperson

Groups News

Here we are at the end of another year and it's time to look forward to new events, challenges and friendships.

Talking of time, I would like to share this short piece with everyone.... It made me think and count my blessings:

**As we say goodbye to 2025, let 2026 be your reminder that the greatest gift we have in this life is time. It passes so quickly and once it's spent, we can't get it back.*

*© [Georgia Denton](#)

Groups List

You can use this link to find a current list of the groups we support, and how to join up:
[Woodhall Spa u3a Groups and Activities Web Page](#)

*Don't wait to do the thing you want to do.
Don't go back to what's comfortable because it's easy,
Don't put off telling people that you care,
Don't spend time trying to fit in and please others.
The only time we have is now and that is a gift.
Spend it doing whatever makes your heart dance.*

Happy New Year!!

Joan Willard – Groups Coordinator

Coming Soon

Upcoming Events list

You can use this link to find more details on all the events in our diary:
[Woodhall Spa u3a Events Web Page](#)

Monthly Meetings

Please Note – there is no January Meeting

February 5th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

Life of a Singer/Songwriter

Nicola (Nicky) Haxby regularly busks to raise money for charities – mainly for the homeless around our area.

March 5th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance

Speaker: TBA

April 2nd

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

The £10 Poms to Australia

Rosanna McGlone – As one herself in the 50s, she is giving us a first-hand account of that experience.

May 7th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

Playreading Group

The group will be entertaining us with one of their performances

Group Noticeboard

Outings

If you have any suggestions for outings for 2026 please come and tell us. We are always at the back of the hall at the monthly meetings.

Outings Group Committee.

Find out more:

You can use this link to find more details on upcoming trips:

[Woodhall Spa u3a Outings Web Page](#)

Playreading

The Playreading Group has had another successful year and although some members have left we have welcomed several new members on board.

We have read a diverse selection of plays, ranging from the classic thriller "The Woman in White" to the absolutely absurd "Farndale Avenue Townswomen's Guild production of Macbeth".

We have offered to do a staged playreading at next year's AGM in May and have already chosen a play for this and we are looking forward to entertaining you again.

The group does have a couple of spaces available if anybody would like to join this great group of people. No acting experience is required, we just like having fun!

Rosemary Brown – Group Leader


Find out more:

[Play Reading Group Webpage](#)

Online u3a

Find out more:

You can use these links to search for ways of furthering your interest in specific subjects, or even take part in some competitions:

Our own WSPu3a website	Woodhall Spa u3a website
u3a – Online Learning Events	u3a Online Learning
Miracle on the Hudson, A Pilot's Perspective <i>US Airways Flight 1549's 'Miracle on the Hudson' showed how training, teamwork, and human judgment saved 155 lives. "This is the Captain. Brace for impact."</i>	Miracle on the Hudson
u3a Radio Podcast <i>In this festive edition of the u3a Radio Podcast, you can listen to a pantomime created by Newcastle u3a in partnership with Radio Tyneside. If you would like to share your story with the u3a radio podcast, get in touch by emailing communications@u3a.org.uk</i>	u3a Radio December 

Woodhall Spa u3a Systems

Behind all the hullabaloo of Speakers, Groups or Memberships etc, there are certain systems that attempt to keep our little show on the road.

The u3a Headquarters (in London) provide us with 2 main systems (Programs if you like) which together handle the day to day running of our organisation. Most of our members will never engage with them and that's fine. For others, such as the Treasurer, Groups Coordinator or the Group Leaders, it's something they must look at on a regular basis.

Beacon

First, we have Beacon which is hidden from the internet. This is where we store information about our members – who they are, where they are, who they may be married to (so we don't have to mail you twice, whether they have the quarterly newsletter, which groups they belong to etc.

Nobody (including members of the committee) can access Beacon information unless they have a good reason to do so.

For example, a particular Group Leader can only see information about their own group; Committee Members can only see items that have direct interest in. Even members can withhold their name if they want to (luckily, we don't have any like that!)

People such as the Treasurer can access information such as where a member has paid their annual subscription, but they can't adjust the amounts or anything like that.

Website

Then we have our Website which is a different beast altogether. This is our chance to shine (and maybe hook a few new members!).

This is accessible by both ourselves and members of the public and is all about:

- Who we are
- What activities we provide
- Detailed information about our Groups and who to contact
- Locations where our groups meet
- When are regular monthly meetings will be held and who the speaker will be
- Information about our Outings
- Links to our Monthly Newsletter
- A link to our u3a Headquarters which has a Radio Podcast, information about all the activities, and more interest groups than you can shake a stick at.

The Website itself has regular updates, both for new features and bug fixes.

We also keep an eye on other u3as to see if they have any new ideas we can nick!

David Spratt – Webmaster

Around the Groups in 30 days

5 Mile Walking

Scopwick

On a glorious sunny and (for December) warm day the 5 mile walking group set out on their last walk of 2025.

Twenty three people met in the lay-bye at Kirkby Green before setting off along the village street then over the ford which was quite high.



Following the Rowston road, which was quiet, we turned down the farm track to head towards Scopwick. The track had a lot of recent use so was a bit muddy but passable.

Crossing the big drain we crossed four fields to reach Scopwick, two were grass tracks and two were a bit sticky.



Coffee break was near the playing field on the back lane before taking the grass track and farm road back to the start point. This was not a long walk as we needed to be at the [Penny Farthing Timberland](#) for lunch.

Continued

Scopwick – Continued

Thirty three of the group sat down for Christmas lunch as ten more members joined us on three tables all together, where we were looked after very well by the Penny Farthing staff.



Following a very good lunch season's greetings were exchanged and every one departed happy.

David and Liz Leech
Photos by Les Wylde

Find out more:
[5 Mile Walking Group Webpage](#)

Bird Watching and Wildlife

Moor Farm Reserve

Four members of the group met at the [Moor Farm Reserve](#) car park at 10.00 a.m. on a perfect still sunny morning to set off on the visitors' trail, taking note of the sign warning that wellingtons are essential to follow it. After the summer drought it was hoped that we could all complete the walk despite recent heavy rain.

Initially there were no birds in evidence and no sounds of birds, though usually the first records are noted from the car park, until the ubiquitous woodpigeons began to fly off in alarm at our approach. We then began to hear a number of woodland birds calling intermittently; including jay, carrion crow, wren, blackbird.

As we continued, areas of standing surface water came into view. Fortunately some pieces of timber had been laid across the worst places and with some careful balancing everyone made it through.

The woods remained eerily quiet but eventually we located a few more species, the list of which follows this account. I have included sparrowhawk as a probable as it gave us only the shortest of sightings as it flew rapidly away low through the trees.

I believe we recorded the lowest number of species on any Bird Watching Group outing but we all enjoyed the woodland walk on a beautiful winter's morning in agreeable company.

Species list

<i>Blackbird</i>	<i>Blue tit</i>	<i>Carrion crow</i>
<i>Great spotted woodpecker</i>	<i>Great tit</i>	<i>Jackdaw</i>
<i>Jay</i>	<i>Magpie</i>	<i>Mallard</i>
<i>Robin</i>	<i>Siskin</i>	<i>Sparrow hawk (probable)</i>
<i>Woodpigeon</i>	<i>Wren</i>	

John Watts

Find out more:

[Bird Watching and Wildlife Group Webpage](#)

Sew and Sew

Our group met for our last sewing session of the year, and the odd mince pie and lebkuchen were thoroughly enjoyed.

There were more works underway than completed items, so only a couple of photos this month. Judy was piecing a quilt top; Katherine was cross-stitching; Val had designed and was sewing a secret present for someone special to support their artistic creativity. Having hand applied and embroidered a small quilt, Joan was attaching the final binding. Lorna was hemming some trousers, and I was cutting fabric to make some Christmas cards.

Another embroidery by Stef was nearing the finishing line. This wintry scene with snow-covered chalets is for Stef's sister, who has a chalet in the French Alps. I'm sure that Stef's festive fingernails will inspire her to complete it in time for Christmas.

Val brought in her Christmas decoration of 'The Magi' which usually adorns her house this time of year. To represent the scene Val has appliqued well-chosen fabrics and trims using different stitches, attached beads, and finished with some hand-embroidery. No doubt, this is a family favourite every year.



Carmel Sefton

Find out more:

[Sew and Sew Group Webpage](#)

Art

Winter Leaves Art Competition – The Result

It was a genuine honour to be asked to be the judge for the Art Group's competition, this year. I can't remember ever being asked to do any such thing before, and having been a previous leader of the group and a lover of art, I felt only too happy to oblige.

First things first, though: What should be the criteria for assessing the 16 paintings with the theme of Winter Leaves? The response to a quick question posed to ChatGPT suggested a list of seven criteria, but I trimmed that down to just three, which were: *Emotional Presence*; *Technical Truth*; and *Memorability*.

On the morning of the event I took to my art history books to whet my critical faculties and prime my artistic eye, and there I unearthed examples of leaves as rendered in [Leonardo Da Vinci's botanical studies in his sketchbooks](#); also by several of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, in particular, [John Everett Millais' Autumn Leaves](#); and finally in the fabulous art of the [Chinese flower painters](#).

Irene, the day's hostess and leader of the group, had provided a lunch for the artists and myself, which gave the event a cosy feeling, and having indulged in some lovely home-baked quiche, mince pies, and meringue, I levered myself out of my chair to go and view the paintings, which were set up in another room, with all signs of identification covered over.

I rated each of the artworks for a total of 30, – 10 marks for each of the criteria.

It was a close result, with the winning piece by **Veronica Yeo** scoring just one more point (at least) than any of the others.

Mostly, it was all good fun.

My thanks to Irene and Mike for hosting us, and to the group for their warmth and great spirit.



That's me, blathering on about criteria, Leonardo, etc.



The winning artwork



Veronica, with her lovely painting

Tom Sefton

Photos by Paul Membrey

Irene Derwent – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Art Group Webpage](#)

Poetry

Dreams inspired our imaginations this month, and as you might imagine yourself, lots of ideas rose to the surface; take our two, here: Irene found a penned biography, serving as a bookmark in an old book, which sparked her musing about life and love; and then there's Marion's atmospheric dreamscape that takes her from the river at the end of a childhood garden and over to America, in the blink of an eye.

My Dream

*My Dream, where are you my Dream?
You are tantalisingly avoiding me.
Since reading the letter I have been perturbed,
A whole sequence of someone's life and expectations,
Denoted on 2 sides of posh notepaper, then this
resplendent missive,
Downgraded to a bookmark.*

*Someone's chunk of life, employed to give care and love,
To another's children, expressed in cold financial terms,
Hard then you know to be discarded,
A Contract filled, no part of a team,
Those little children's love and expectation thwarted.
The giver moved along.*

*So what is my dream Just that
Everyone loves and cares
For their own children, plenty of food, love and
anticipation
Of endless days and promise fulfilled.*

© Irene Derwent 2025

Catch of River Weed

*Underwater, swimming
against the current effortlessly,
don't need to breathe.*

*Streams of silver-flecked minnows
part and join beneath me. An eel
zigzags through slithering reeds.*

*I know where I am – slim clumps
of river weed, tall bulrushes,
this curve of the bank: the Welland –*

*my river, the half-mile stretch
between Deeping Cross and Low Locks.
If I surface at this precise point*

*I'll hear sisters shuffling
in the dock-leaf jungle,
brother whistling birdsong*

*high in the oak tree.
I'll smell wood-smoke
from bonfire remains.*

*I duck behind the rowing boat,
dive through deep water, colder now,
down to the riverbed, emerald*

*with slippery fern – to resurface
in the still middle of a clammy
Texan night, decades on,*

*damp fingers spread,
a faint catch of river weed,
a buzz along the veins.*

© Marion Ashton 2025

Tom Sefton

If you'd like to read more of our self-penned verses, please follow this link:

[Poetry Group Dreams](#)

The Final Word

Feedback

You can use this link to view past issues of the Newsletter, or to send a note to the Editor:

[Newsletter Web Page](#)

If you have any suggestions or comments about the Newsletter I'd be happy to read them. You can email them to me via newsletter@woodhallspa-u3a.org.uk, or use the link above.

The Newsletter wouldn't exist without the contributors, so I'm grateful to all those that made time to write an article for us all to read.

So that's it for another year – my fourth completed as Editor.

It's become something of a way of life in my retirement – one week, every month, I sit in this room and compile all the articles and photos that are sent to me.

It's a nice enough j..... I hesitate to use the word 'job', but it is somewhat akin to how I spent every day as a Technical Author, back when I had a lot more hair, and sat in a much bigger office with 100 or so engineering colleagues, with a cold, air-conditioned breeze playing on my neck.

Now it's all about walks and poetry, art and sewing. Back then it was all computers and electronics.

It is, nevertheless, a satisfying way to pass time, and as Joan has reiterated in her missive, time is the greatest gift we have in this life – because it's not just about words and photos, it's more about keeping us moving forward as a community of interested, curious-minded people.

Time well spent.

Many thanks.

Tom Sefton – Editor

