



WSPu3a Newsletter

January/February
2026



Woodhall Spa Community Fire Station

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-Chairs' Corner

From Rosemary

Firstly a very happy New Year to you all and here's to a great 2026. Although our AGM is not until May, we are aware that several of the current committee will be standing down so there will be an opportunity for people to join us. At the moment we know that there will be the need to appoint to the following positions:

Business Secretary: this mainly involves taking minutes at our monthly meetings & distributing them. This person is also responsible for booking Coronation Hall for our monthly meeting & the Parish Council room for committee meetings.

Continued

Speaker Finder: this person books the speakers for our monthly meetings, liaising with them regarding what equipment they may need. Our current Speaker Finder has booked people for the majority of this year so this would not be a daunting role to step into.

Asset Manager: Our previous Asset Manager has done an excellent job this year in logging details of all our assets so anyone stepping into this role would simply be maintaining the register he has created.

Co-Chairs' Corner – Continued

All other committee roles are covered, however, this does not prevent anyone from coming forward to either take on one of these positions or joining as a committee member without a specific role, providing we do not exceed the maximum number we are allowed.

So – if you feel you could join us and would like to find out more please email me at chairman@woodhallspa-u3a.org.uk

Rosemary Brown – Co-chairperson

Groups News

We are almost at the end of the first month of 2026 and it is good to see groups busy planning ahead.

Good news is that two new groups have now started and look forward to welcoming more members.

The first one is **Solo Traveller** – an opportunity for members to broaden their travel horizons by getting together in an informal way to share experiences, fears and aspirations.

The second new group is **Local History** – a chance to explore what is on our doorstep, to share knowledge and to develop research skills.

Garden Visits, one of our well-established group is causing some worries.

After several years leading the group, Ann has decided that she must step down.

Thank you Ann for all you have done.

As we all know, a group must have a leader (or leaders) otherwise it will fold.

The organisation and running of this group is shared amongst members. A monthly rota is created with one or two members taking it in turns to sort out a visit or activity.

PLEASE let me know as soon as possible if you will lead this group.

There are still many topics that we, in Woodhall, do not cover so if you have any ideas do please fill in a Suggestion form or send me a message if you can't get to the monthly meeting.

Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can....Arthur Ashe.

Joan Willard – Groups Coordinator

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](#)

Monthly Meetings

Feb 5th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

Life of a songwriter

Nicola Haxby, Singer Songwriter

Mar 5th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance

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](#)

Group Noticeboard

Outings

The Outings Group committee wish all members a Happy New Year and say that we are busy working on organising six outings for 2026. We aim to vary our trips so that there is something to suit everyone and would welcome your suggestions. A reminder that all of our U3a members are welcome to attend any of our trips which are advertised at the monthly meetings, in the Newsletter and on the Outings Website.

The first of our Outings this year is to the Theatre Royal at Nottingham on 25th March to see Miss Saigon. This trip is fully booked but as we do often have cancellations we are now taking names for a reserve list.

Finally a new outing will be announced at the February meeting so we hope to see you at our table at the back of the hall at the coffee break.

Outings Group Committee.

Find out more:

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

[Outings Web Page](#)

Croquet

It's time once again to give a little consideration to getting involved for a couple of hours a week doing something which could be a very rewarding experience, meeting like minded u3a members in our local Jubilee Park to play Croquet.

You may consider yourself as someone who is not interested in a sporting activity because your health or fitness would give you more problems than you already have to deal with.

You could say, if I want to get fit 'go to the gym' but Croquet is not about getting bodily fit, it's about taking in some fresh air while participating in an activity amongst the rose gardens in our magnificent local park.

Croquet involves walking and a little body activity such as arms movement a little body bending and some strength in your hands enough to hold a croquet mallet, this all sounds somewhat daunting but honestly there isn't much more that's required.

The Croquet club have three qualified coaches who would give one-to-one coaching, enough to get you into the game quickly and we would like to think that maybe your interest in the game may become something you would like to continue with.

You do not require any equipment, whatever is required is supplied by the Woodhall Spa Croquet Club, but due to walking on the croquet lawns flat-soled footwear is required.

Our playing season starts in April, weather permitting, so if you're interested please find me at a u3a monthly meeting or have a chat with members of the Croquet Group who will also be in attendance.

Please have a little 'think' about playing croquet, it's healthy, friendly, and most of all it's enjoyable. You never know until you try.

Thank you for reading my contribution to our Newsletter.

Regards to all

Bob Potter – Group Leader and Coach

Find out more:

[Croquet Group webpage](#)

Continued

Visiting Churches

This time of year Visiting Churches don't do visits as we can never rely on the weather.

In December we had our first planning meeting, lots of lovely ideas for visits in 2026.

We have plans which include a return visit to St Denys in Sleaford.

We also have plans to visit Brant Broughton which has been described as one of the best of all Lincolnshire churches.

February we have our final planning meeting to confirm dates.

March we will venture to Sleaford.

We are a friendly group and always welcome new members.

Kathie Craigs – Group Leader


Find out more:

[Visiting Churches 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
<p>u3a Radio Podcast</p> <p><i>Hear about one of the most debated challenges of our time, climate change. What exactly is going on?</i></p> <p><i>And for those of us intrigued by archaeological discoveries, you'll know that pictures etched in stone were the way of communicating for people of Göbekli Tepe.</i></p> <p><i>Our third feature is on something to laugh about: Laughter Yoga.</i></p>	<p>u3a Radio January</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
<p>Interest Groups Online</p> <p><i>As part of the u3a movement, members generously volunteer their time and share their knowledge, skills and experience with the members in their groups.</i></p>	Click here

Around the Groups in 30 days

Home Computing for Fun

Editor's Note:

I have to thank Paul for this splendid introduction to using AI. I asked him to create this special version of his original report, which he had presented to the HCFF Group.

AI, described here, can be such a beneficial tool that Paul and I want Woodhall Spa u3a members to be able to get on board with it as soon as possible, and this is a great start. And yes, Paul employed AI to help produce this report.
Tom

Your First Steps with AI: A Beginner's Guide for Our u3a Community

Have you ever wondered what everyone means by 'Artificial Intelligence' or 'AI'? It can sound like science fiction, but it's actually a set of incredibly useful digital tools that are now free and accessible to everyone. This technology isn't just for tech experts—it's for lifelong learners, creatives, and the curious, just like us.

Imagine having a helpful assistant to draft a letter, a creative partner to design a greeting card, or a patient tutor to explain a complex topic. That's what modern AI can be. The best part? You can start exploring it today at no cost.

This guide will walk you through simple ways to use AI, recommend some excellent free tools to try first, and share tips to get you started confidently.

What Can AI Do For You?

Think of AI as a versatile helper. Here are a few practical things you might enjoy:

- **Have a Conversation & Get Answers:** Ask questions, brainstorm ideas for a project, or get explanations on countless topics.
- **Spark Your Creativity:** Generate images from a simple description, restore old family photos, or even create a short video.
- **Simplify Everyday Tasks:** Get help writing emails, translating text, summarizing long articles, or organizing your thoughts.

Top Free AI Tools to Get You Started

You don't need to download complicated software. Many of the best AI tools work directly in your web browser. Here are some highly recommended, user-friendly options perfect for beginners.

- **ChatGPT**
 - **Best for:** General conversation, writing help, brainstorming, and explanations.
 - **How to access:** Visit [Openai.com/ChatGPT](https://openai.com/ChatGPT) or download the official app.
 - **Good to know:** The free version has daily limits but is very powerful.
- **Google Gemini**
 - **Best for:** Research, answering questions with up-to-date web info, and working within Google's ecosystem (like Docs).
 - **How to access:** Use directly in Google Search or visit gemini.google.com.
 - **Good to know:** It's free with a Google account and excels at understanding context.
- **Microsoft Copilot**
 - **Best for:** A balanced assistant integrated into Windows and the Edge browser, good for general tasks.
 - **How to access:** Use in the Edge browser or at bing.com/chat.
 - **Good to know:** Also free and can create images.

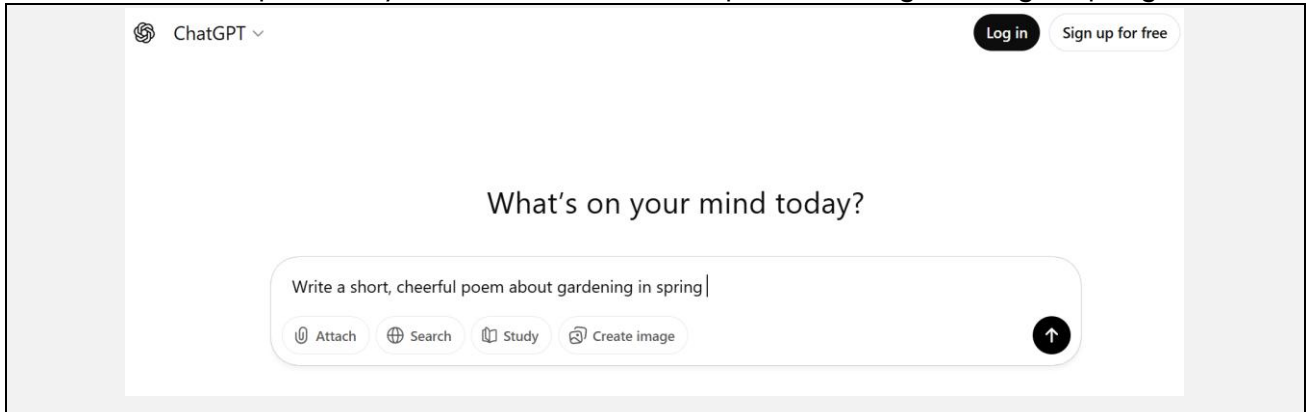
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Your First AI Adventure: A Simple Guide

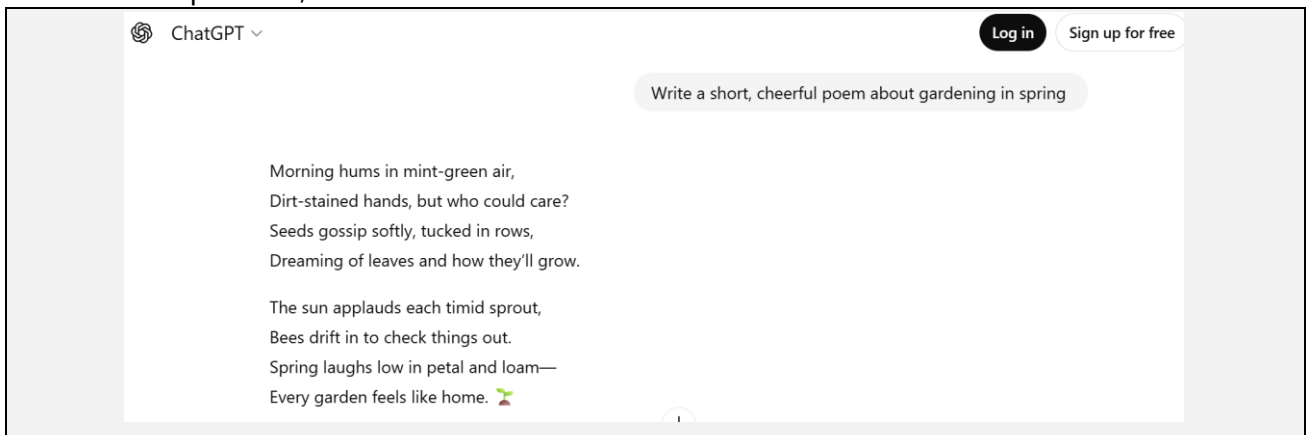
Starting is easier than you think. Follow these four steps:

1. **Pick One Tool:** Don’t feel overwhelmed. Choose one tool from the list above that matches a simple goal (e.g., ‘I’ll try [ChatGPT](#) to help me write a poem’).
2. **Be Specific in Your Requests:** AI works best with clear instructions.

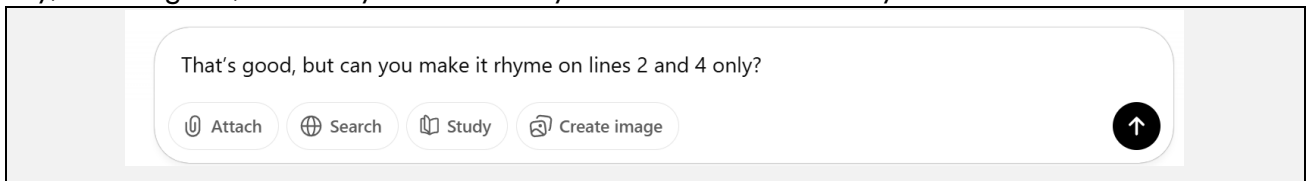
Instead of “write a poem,” try “Write a short, cheerful poem about gardening in spring.”



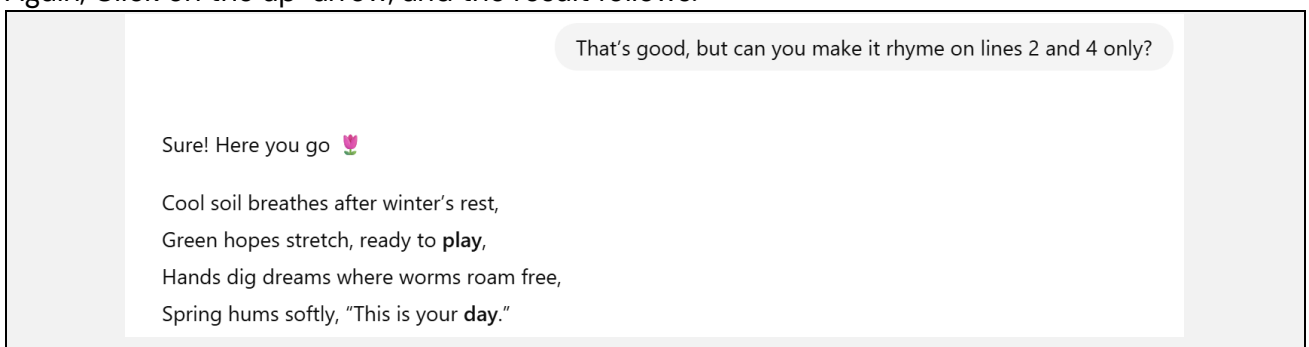
3. Click on the up-arrow, or hit ‘Enter’ and the result will follow:



4. **Experiment and Refine:** If the first answer isn’t quite right, just ask again differently. You can say, “That’s good, but can you make it rhyme on lines 2 and 4 only?”



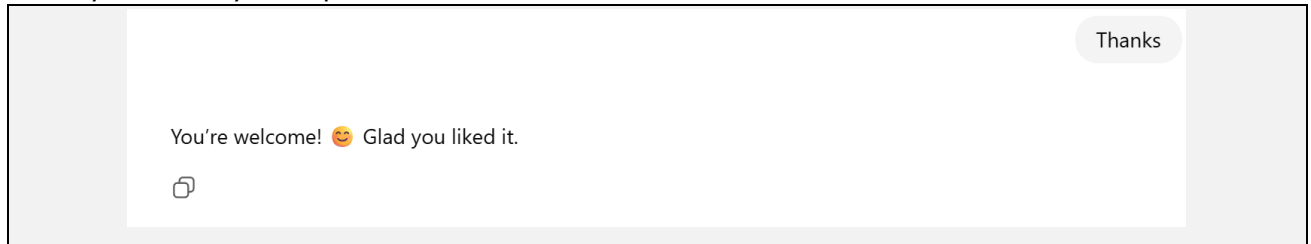
5. Again, Click on the up-arrow, and the result follows:



Continued

First AI Adventure – Continued

6. It really likes it if you're polite:



7. **Have Fun and Explore:** There's no 'wrong' way to learn. Ask silly questions, test its knowledge on your favourite hobby, or see what image it creates from "a dog wearing a Victorian hat."

A Note on Using AI Wisely

As with any tool, it's good to use AI thoughtfully:

- **Check Important Facts:** *AI can sometimes make mistakes.* For critical information, especially on health or news, double-check with trusted sources.
- **Protect Your Privacy:** Avoid sharing sensitive personal information (like your address, bank details, or others' private data) in your conversations.
- **Embrace the Learning:** The goal is to assist and augment your own wonderful ideas, not replace them. You are always in control.

Other Creative & Practical AI Tools

- **Canva's AI Art Generator**
 - **What it does:** Turns text descriptions into images, art, and designs.
 - **Perfect for:** Creating unique illustrations for newsletters, invitations, or personal projects.
- **GFP-GAN (Photo Restoration)**
 - **What it does:** Magically restores old, faded, or damaged photographs in seconds.
 - **Perfect for:** Bringing precious family memories back to life. You can try a free demo online.
- **NotebookLM (by Google)**
 - **What it does:** Acts as a personal AI assistant for documents you upload (notes, articles, ideas).
 - **Perfect for:** Students and researchers; it can summarize your own documents and answer questions about them.

For a truly enormous directory of free AI tools (over 5,000 and counting!), you can explore sites like aixploria.com or insidr.ai. They are excellent for when you're ready to dive deeper into specific interests.

In Conclusion

The world of AI is an exciting new realm for exploration, and it aligns perfectly with the u3a spirit of shared learning and curiosity. Why not give it a try this week? Start a conversation with an AI, and see where it leads you.

I hope this article gives you a clear and friendly introduction.

Paul Membrey [with the help of AI]

Find out more:

[Home Computing for Fun Group webpage](#)

5 Mile Walking

Dunston to Nocton

We were lucky with our first walk of 2026 – the snow had disappeared and 16 of us walked in dry, crisp, wintry weather. A few patches of ice were successfully negotiated with no mishaps.

The circular walk, led by Barbara Jackson, started in Dunston village, winding through bridleways, fields, and quiet roads to the neighbouring village of Nocton, (mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Nochetune' meaning a settlement). We speculated upon the trees reputedly planted by one of the wives of Henry VIII, chatted about the history behind the burnt-out RAF hospital, and also the magnificent residence of Lord Ripon, now derelict.



Nocton Hall in 1901

The early [Nocton Hall](#) was once owned by the Hobart family. Robert Hobart was Colonial Secretary leading to Hobart, Tasmania being named after him. The Earl of Ripon rebuilt the hall after a fire in 1841 but a further fire in 2004 resulted in the hall remaining derelict since. The overall Nocton estate has been owned by James Dyson since 2013.

The Red Lion pub in Dunston was closed so 10 of the walkers returned to Woodhall and had a tasty home cooked lunch at The Melrose which topped off a very enjoyable day for us all and a good start to 2026.

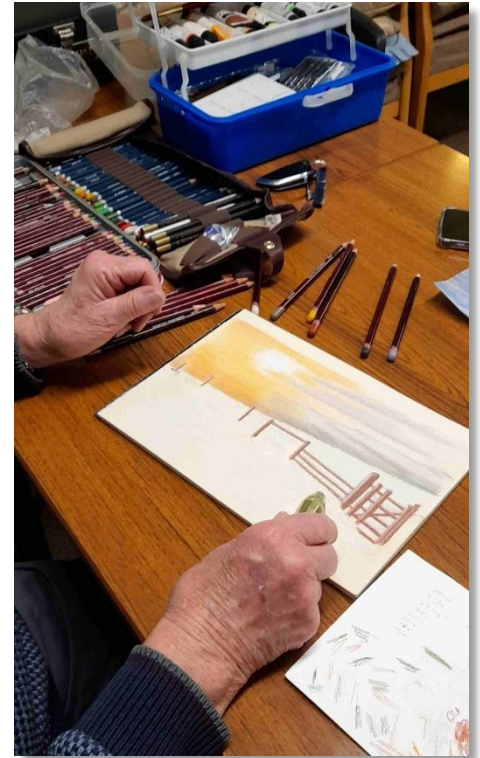
Barbara Jackson

Find out more:

[5 Mile Walking Group webpage](#)

Art

January Gallery



Our 1st meeting of this year was a very happy one catching up with friends after a long break and some interesting work commenced.

Irene Derwent - Group Leader

Find out more:

[Art Group webpage](#)

Woodhall Wanderers

Billinghay

An island, a mosaic and a ship, what do these have in common?
Yes, correct! Our walk this month was around Billinghay.

The first problem of the day was to find the car park hidden away in a housing estate and lacking signage; second problem was that the walk-leader had given a post code in Fiskerton but Maureen had spotted the error and put out a last minute email.



Photograph of Wall Mosaic, Billinghay, Lincolnshire
© [Lincolnian \(brian\)](#)

Blessed with sunshine after the rain of Storm Chandra, 19 Wanderers set off from the Village Hall car park and out on to the High Street and the wonderful mosaic.

Heading down towards the river we then virtually turned back on ourselves on a parallel road and walked around to the church. Passing the church and the old Golden Cross pub we came to Billinghay Skirth (River Skirth) which at this point is also the Carr Dyke.

Taking the appropriately named Skirth Road we followed the river, crossed the Carr Dyke, close to where it joined the river, and continued out towards the fen. Eventually recrossing the Carr Dyke, coming back to the village and the site of the old Lafford School. Turning on to a grassy footpath we headed away from the village and out across the fields towards Walcott. Crossing a couple of stiles we then came out on to the road to Walcott and turned back towards Billinghay.

A busy road but we weren't on it for long as we took the Causeway Road, passing the Fire Station and new housing before again taking a footpath across the fields, and very wet patches, to the village. Coming back on to the High Street and then the car park.

Following the walk three of us ventured into The Ship Inn and had a very nice home cooked lunch, plus a couple of well deserved pints, thank you Mr Bateman!

For those wondering about the island, Billinghay is the highest point around and *'in ancient times would have been that of a small settlement on a gravel mound surrounded by marsh which was flooded in winter.'* [Wikipedia](#)

John Cotton – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Woodhall Wanderers Group webpage](#)

Poetry

The Calendar and its Seasons were the themes for January's group session – a suitable subject for the start of a new year. The three poems presented here reflect the wonderful diversity of the group: Marion's transcends a single moment – a night-time revelation in her garden; Irene's pays homage to the strange but vital construct we call the Calendar and its seasons; my own is a muse upon the transitory nature of our small lives, conducted as they are under the familiar blanket of a trillion heavenly bodies.

January Muntjac Sonata

*Strident barking roused me from sleep,
lured me to the window in the early hours –
to see you, majestic lord, there at the centre
of the garden – your stage-balcony, lit
by the supermoon from a cloudless sky –
taut body, head tossed back, antlers piercing
the air – to screech in splendour streams
of silver breath – a new year message:
Slice through barriers – chant your own song.*

© Marion Ashton 2026

Another Winter, Nothing Changes

*On time and life passing under
unchanging constellations.
David Bowie died 10/01/2016*

*Winter beard, fades grey to white
Fading eyes that watched lonely comets come and go
Look towards Cassiopeia, one last time*

*Streetlit naked oak, fingers the passing shy clouds
Cupping the glissando moon
Sliding limb to limb, over glistening boughs*

*Another midwinter's night sky, marking time
Arrogant Orion, rising again, never wavers
Aldebaran's bull, ever checking the Hunter's pride*

*Sirius, brightest star, slips above the Henge's horizon
Fixed in the still point of a turn
The Pagan's solstice passes the moment on*

*Bowie's been gone ten short years long
A pinup black star fell from the careless heavens
And the planet tilts elliptic, spinning on and on*

© thom Sefton 2026

Calendar

*A Measure of all our Days,
So we must spend it in different ways,
It marks the days, and weeks which make a Month,
There are 12 of these in a year.*

*Is it important, well yes you say,
How would we know when to work and Play?
The months are unequal,
As we know 365 days in one year,
Most months have 31 days,
But there are only 30 days in June and September,
Poor February only 28,
A good thing too, let us hurtle towards Spring,
When the good times Begin.*

*Spring is green and leafy,
Full of warmer sunshine rays,
And longer days,
Sees new life and gentler ways.*

*Summer a brighter sun, less rain,
When schools break up, and families play,
They reimagine themselves on holidays.*

*Autumn a weaker golden mellow sun,
Leaves on trees turn colour, Harvests are got in,
There are new terms and new beginnings,
So many possibilities to explore .*

*Winter is Cold, short grey days, and longer nights,
When Christmas Celebrations cheer us,
Families unite and friends drop in,
Oh there it is another year gone by.*

© Irene Derwent 2026

Tom Sefton

Read More:

Use this link to see what else the group has written this month:

[January Seasons](#)

Let It Be/ Abbey Road – which was the last Beatles album?

The order in which the two final Beatles' albums were released is perfectly clear: Abbey Road was released in SEPTEMBER '69; Let It Be followed in MAY '70.

So what's the confusion?

It all comes down to the order they were **recorded** in:

Let It Be

Most of Let It Be (LIB) was recorded in January '69, now famously filmed and available for viewing on the [Disney+ Channel](#) in the Get Back series, or in the LIB film.

However, unhappy as they were with the mix of some of the recordings, the album was *not released* immediately. Nevertheless, in JANUARY '70, three of the Beatles, Paul, George, and Ringo (John had already left the group in September '69) returned to the Abbey Road studio to complete *I Me Mine*, a LIB track that had been abandoned earlier in '69. George then passed the LIB tapes to Phil Spector to remix (much to McCartney's displeasure) and subsequent release followed in MAY '70 (See LIB Naked, below).

Abbey Road

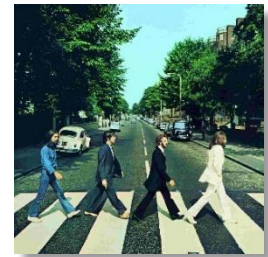
Abbey Road (AR) was recorded *after* the original LIB sessions, sporadically, from February, finishing in AUGUST '69, and was released in SEPTEMBER '69. (Remember, the LIB album had **not** been released at this point.)

It features some standout singles and a much-adored sequence of unfinished songs from previous years, collectively known as **The Medley**.

AR has become a favourite amongst fans and always rates highly in **Best-Album-of-All-Time** polls.



[Let It Be The Beatles](#)
© Apple Corps Ltd



[Abbey Road The Beatles](#)
© Apple Corps Ltd

So, when was the last time the Fab Four Beatles recorded together?

On 18th AUGUST 69, they all worked together on what was to be the last track of AR, which was prophetically called **The End**.

It's a landmark track, short though it is, for having the one and only drum solo recorded by Ringo, and a rotating sequence of 9 guitar solos shared by Paul, George, and John, in that order.

A beautiful song that fittingly drew **the most amazing artistic collaboration of all time** (IMO) to a close.

And that would have been that, except...

25 years later, Lennon having been killed in '80, the three surviving members got together to record two new tracks, constructed around a cassette recording of three songs that Lennon had left with Yoko. A further track from the tape, **Now and Then**, was reconstructed and eventually released in 2023, featuring all 4 Beatles playing – the final recording of Beatles' music.

Let It Be – Naked

2003, and Paul, who was never happy with the original version of LIB, arranged the release, in agreement with Ringo, George, and Yoko, of [a version of LIB](#) that reflected his original vision of the album. The result, for fans like me, is a much truer and better sounding album.

What we listened to:

[She Came in Through the Bathroom Window](#) – Part of the Medley from Abbey Road

[Golden Slumbers](#) – Continuing the Medley

[Carry That Weight](#) – Continuing the Medley

[The End](#) – The ultimate finale that includes all four Beatles

[I Me Mine](#) – Minus John

Tom Sefton

Below Zero – An Overview Of Working With The British Survey Team In Antarctica

David Blake, gave a very interesting talk to 6 members of the group about living and working in Antarctica and his time at the [British Antarctic Survey](#) where he was Head of Technology and Engineering for 25 years. He was responsible for the development, provision and upkeep of the survey's ships, aircraft, structures and utilities, scientific instrumentation, computing and communications, and ground transport.

Antarctica is in the region south of 60°S latitude and is the fifth-largest and southernmost continent. It is the coldest, windiest and driest continent as there is little new precipitation each year. The temperature at the South Pole averages -60 degrees Centigrade, with the lowest temperature ever recorded on earth at -89.2 degrees Centigrade being measured at the Russian Vostok Station.

Over 98% of the continent is covered by ice which is up to 4.7 Km thick and contains approximately 90% of the world's freshwater. The ice sheet is critical to the Earth's climate system and holds enough water to raise the global sea levels by nearly 60 metres if all the ice were to melt.

Antarctica covers an area of 6.5 million square km and is approximately twice the size of Australia and is largely uninhabited. It is a frozen desert.



Photo: David Blake – collecting an ice core at the South Pole.

At this time new territorial claims are not permitted. Existing claims are held in abeyance and the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, which is adopted by many nations, is used to govern the continent. The Treaty mandates for peaceful, scientific research and according to the terms of the treaty, military activity, mining, nuclear explosions and nuclear waste disposal are all prohibited. There are 34 National Antarctic Programs currently operating in Antarctica, and 3 observer nations

The Antarctic Treaty does support territorial claims made before 1959, by New Zealand, Australia, France, Norway, the United Kingdom, Chile, and Argentina. Under the treaty, the size of these claims cannot be changed and new claims cannot be made. Most importantly, the treaty establishes that any treaty-state has free access to the whole region. As such, research stations supported by a variety of treaty-states have been constructed within each of these territorial claims. Today, 48 states have signed the Antarctic Treaty.

One territorial claim by Chile, Argentina and the UK, has overlapping areas. This has caused friction at times which have been overcome through discussion. On-site in Antarctica, nations help one-another to overcome any practical difficulties that may occur.

The UK works closely in particularly with the USA, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Continued



Below Zero - Continued

There are no indigenous people, but in the summer months there can be around 5000 scientific researchers, engineers and fishermen working there, with many tourists visiting via cruise ships. In the winter months, there are around 1000 people there at any one time.

A very interesting fact that David told us was that the Argentinian contingent has had 3 babies born at their Esperanza station to military personnel and their partners.

There is extensive wildlife with many penguins, seals and marine life. The marine life in particular is abundant with many species represented. Several nations fish the seas including South Korea and Japan.



Photo: David Blake – Penguin welcoming ship at Halley

Many people think that the researchers live in tents, this is far from the truth. There are buildings constructed from various materials and designs. South Africa built its station from fibre glass, which due to the wind and snow beating against its building created a massive build up of static electricity..

The French and Italians have built a joint operation facility. There are both Italian and French chefs as food is a very important factor in Antarctica. The **Concordia Station** is used for research activities and also by the European Space Agency for studies on personnel in remote areas.

The USA has 3 stations, 1 is actually at the South Pole.

McMurdo Station is a U.S. research centre on the southern tip of Ross Island, a territory claimed by New Zealand. It is the largest station in Antarctica, capable of supporting 1,250 residents. It is in effect, a small town with a cinema, bowling alley and a church.

Supplies are shipped in by cargo ships and some planes. Deliveries can be anything from trucks and tractors to dry and frozen foods, to scientific instruments. These cargo ships can only reach Winter Quarters Bay, McMurdo's harbour, during summer, when the pack ice can be breached by U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers. Additional supplies and personnel are flown in from Christchurch, New Zealand, when weather permits.

The base is operated using hydrocarbon based fuel, which is brought in to McMurdo from New Zealand by ship.

Russia's main station is at **Lake Vostok** with their building made of plastic. 3 km from the base, the Russians drilled a 3000 m shaft which they, in their wisdom, filled with kerosene to stop the ice reforming. As far as is known, they have at least 9 stations.

Argentina's Station, **Esperanza**, is the nation's largest Antarctic facility, located in Hope Bay on the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. The station is known for a number of Antarctica 'firsts'. It is the birthplace of Emilio Marcos Palma, the first person to be born in Antarctica (One of the 3 babies born on the base) It also houses the first Catholic chapel (1976) and first school (1978) built on the continent.

Davis Station is Australia's busiest scientific research station. It is located in an ice-free area known as the Vestfold Hills.

Continued

Below Zero - Continued

British interests are overseen by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (FCO). They levy a tax of around 10% of income to source funds for educational projects.

Rothera Station based at Adelaide Island is the British Antarctic Survey teams (BAS) main hub for year-round biological and atmospheric research in Antarctica. It has a runway, hangar and the Bonner Laboratory.

There are several other British research stations:

Halley Research Station is a research facility in Antarctica on the Brunt Ice Shelf is operated by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The base was established in 1956 to study the Earth's atmosphere. Measurements from Halley led to the discovery of the Ozone hole in 1985.

The current base is the sixth in a line of structures and includes design elements intended to overcome the challenge of building on a floating ice shelf without being buried and crushed by snow. As of 2020, the base has been left unstaffed through winter since 2017, due to concerns over the propagation of an ice crack and how this might cut off the evacuation route in an emergency. UK base buildings (circa 1956/57) were originally built of wood and after 15 years usage they were about 15 metres under the surface. Halley 5 was built on stilts, which were extended each year as the ice built up. Halle 6 was built on skis and legs that moved.



Photo: David Blake

Signs Research Station - (South Orkney Islands) A summer-only station focusing on marine and terrestrial biology.

Fossil Bluff - (Alexander Island) A summer-only logistics facility with a gravel airstrip, supporting field parties.

Sky Blue - (Ellsworth Land) A summer-only logistics station.

Port Lockroy Island - (Goudier Island): A historic base turned museum, post office, and monitoring site, managed by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust.

Day to day life in general is good, the average temperature inside buildings is around 18/20 degrees C. The majority of the time is taken up with work, be it scientific research or station upkeep. Leisure time involves walking around the local area but avoiding the seals as they can be quiet vicious, watching the penguins, fishing, reading in the library, playing music or reading.

Other past-times include hiking, climbing and some social events and music, swimming, in fact it is a tradition on New Year's Day to have a swim and to watch the film, 'The Thing'.

Continued

Below Zero - Continued

The UK bases allow alcohol, but there is a ban on the US bases.

There is not full access to Wi-Fi or mobile phones as they are connected via satellite systems – all either geostationary or the newer Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites like Elon Musk's 'Starlink Constellation'.

With regards to medical needs there are medical facilities and satellite contact with surgeons etc, but if a serious medical need is identified, the patient is airlifted out to South America.

Lastly, pollution of a pristine environment is a big concern and there are sewerage works for human waste at many stations.



Photo: David Blake – Twin Otter aircraft arriving for recovery from the field.

Talk given by David Blake

Text by Helen F Sawyer – Group Leader

Find out more:

[STEM Group webpage](#)

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.

Tom Sefton – Editor

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