



WSPu3a Newsletter

August/September
2026



St. Leonard's (without)

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

As summer starts to come to an end and autumn approaches it feels like a good time to check out everything that being part of the u3a movement has to offer us. I find that my diary is heavily loaded with groups and meetings during the first two weeks of each month but then there is a very quiet period. Time to take a good look at groups that run during the 2nd half of each month and maybe start challenging myself to join a group that may not be an obvious option for me but one that can make me think & learn new skills.

All of our **Group Leaders** should have received an email from our Groups Coordinator, Joan, inviting

them to an afternoon tea in October. I hope that most of you can attend as this is our opportunity to say "thank you" for all your hard work. Some groups are a lot simpler to run than others but the fact still remains that without people offering to lead a group our u3a would be very different indeed.

A quick reminder that next year we will not be asking for subscriptions until 1st July and our AGM will be held later than in previous years too. Also, we will be holding a meeting in January 2027 as it falls a little later in the month than in the previous 2 years. More information about that meeting to follow.

Rosemary Brown – Co-Chairperson

u3a Workshops

Please find below, details for both the **Group Leader Workshop** (see below) at Market Rasen & the **Promoting Your u3a Workshop** at Grantham. Several of us are going to the Group Leader event and car sharing can be arranged. The Group Leader one is suitable for anyone considering leading a group. If you would like to attend either of these, please book yourself on directly.

- Link to [Promoting your u3a](#)

Rosemary Brown

Group Leader Workshop

On behalf of **West Wolds u3a**, two of our Group Leaders are planning a genuinely useful and energising session for anyone who is already a Group Leader or who might be considering taking on a leadership role in the future.

Just as importantly, we hope it will be an opportunity for members to link across u3as in a meaningful way, drawing on the wealth of talented, supportive people who make our movement so special.

The workshop will be interactive, practical, and may well lead to further support and shared initiatives in the months ahead.

Both Jane Guy and Sandra Dean bring long experience of running successful groups across several u3as and across a wide range of subjects, and we're looking forward to sharing ideas, answering questions, and helping leaders feel confident and connected.

Members can secure places via Jane or Sandra by email:

jane.m.guy@gmail.com
sandrawwu3a@gmail.com

Sandra Dean (West Wolds u3a)



GROUP LEADER WORKSHOP

About the Workshop

Join Jane and Sandra for a lively and supportive two-hour workshop designed for:

- Current Group Leaders
- Members considering becoming Group Leaders in the future
- Anyone curious about how our u3a groups run and the support available

This is a fantastic opportunity to explore leadership in a friendly, encouraging environment. Whether you're already leading a group or simply wondering if it might be for you, this session will help you feel informed, confident, and connected.

Meeting Details

- 19 September, 2026
- 1.30pm - 3.30pm
- New Life Church, Market Rasen
- jane.m.guy@gmail.com
- sandrawwu3a@gmail.com

What to Expect

- Practical guidance on running successful groups
- Insights into the support available for leaders
- Ideas for starting new groups
- A welcoming space to share experiences and ask questions
- Light refreshments and plenty of time to chat

Why Attend?

- Build confidence in leading or starting a group
- Connect with fellow leaders and future leaders
- Discover new opportunities within our u3a
- Help shape the future of our vibrant learning community

Getting Involved

Look out for the upcoming email invitation from our Chair. We'd love to see both seasoned leaders and those who might be ready to take their first step.

INSPIRING, SUPPORTING AND GROWING OUR U3A COMMUNITY



Let's grow our u3a together—one group, one idea, one leader at a time.

Groups News

We are still enjoying summer with many members away on holiday. This often means that fewer people are at group meetings and some groups even close until September. Hence, there is very little news.

Unfortunately we are still searching for a leader to take over the reins from Irene in **Art**. If you belong to this group please consider this, possibly with someone else. It would be a great shame if this long standing, successful group has to fold.

A piece of good news is that we have started a second **Scrabble** group which will meet for the first time next month.

Finally, a big thank you to all **Group Leaders** for completing a Risk Assessment for their group.



What you do today can improve all your tomorrows

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](#)

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 <i>u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers.</i>	u3a Online Learning
Wild, edible autumn seeds <i>Join experienced forager Kathryn Clover of Hedgewitch Adventures for a fascinating introduction to the wild edible seeds that can be found in hedgerows, meadows and woodland edges.</i>	Join free here
u3a Radio Podcast <i>We've dedicated the whole programme to everything around the u3a Summer Festival which many of you will have attended in July. Our roving reporter, Maggie, travelled from Warminster to York to find out all about the festival.</i>	u3a Radio August 

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

September 3rd

2:30pm to 4pm

Coronation Hall

Cuba a time to Salsa

Steven Lovell

October 1st

2:30pm to 4pm

Coronation Hall

Oprah Winfrey Touched my Shoulder

Farmer Joe – our August talk



Local young farmer Joe, his two brothers and his mother gave a lovely presentation at our August meeting in Coronation Hall where they impressed everyone with their knowledge and enthusiasm. The level of confidence shown by all 3 boys was remarkable and we received many positive comments afterwards from our members. Joe has a Facebook page and pictures taken that day are posted on there ([Facebook link](#)) but I feel it important to share to you all the comments made by their mum:

"A while ago we got asked if we would do a talk at Woodhall Spa u3a club. I wasn't expecting so many people.. the room was full. It was such a fantastic atmosphere, everyone in the room was so kind. They loved the boys and what they do.

I was absolutely blown away when they did a collection at the end to help the boys keep living their dreams.. One lady had tears in eyes when she told Joe the future is bright with children like them, they are fantastic role models and inspirational. Joe's reply almost had me in tears when he replied: "Thank you so much, I love what I do and coming here today to talk to you about it made my day, your comment really is the icing on the cake".

Here too, is a link to a Blue Peter episode that featured young Joe: ([Blue Peter Link](#))

Thank you to our Speaker Finder, Susanne, for arranging this talk for us.

[Rosemary – Chairperson](#)

Group Noticeboard

Outings

The Outings Team will be announcing details of and taking bookings for the last outing of the year at the September meeting.

Places will be limited to 35 so come along to the meeting to be sure of getting a place.

The Outings Team

Find out more:

[Outings Webpage](#)

MOTO2

After a summer break MOTO2 will be restarting on the 17th September at 11.00am. Meeting at The Inn on the Broadway please. It would be lovely to have as many members as possible turn up so that we can plan future events.

Rachel Poole

Find out more:

[MOTO2 Webpage](#)

Cribbage

Hello, let me introduce myself, my name is Alan, my wife Wendy and I have recently been nominated as the new group organisers of the cribbage section which meets at 2pm on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at the community centre, Alexandra Road, Woodhall Spa.

If you enjoy a game of cribbage then please come along and join us.

Alan Colson – Group Co-leader

Find out more:

[Cribbage Webpage](#)

Around the Groups in 30 days

Walking Cricket

*'The slow-motion replay doesn't show how fast the ball was really travelling'. (Richie Benaud).
'It's been a very slow and dull day, but it hasn't been boring. It's been a good, entertaining day's cricket.'* (Tony Benneworth).

August 11th Reds Versus Blues

Six players picked red counters and imaginatively called themselves The Reds, and six people picked blue counters and imaginatively... Yes, you can guess the rest. We must really work on that part of our game. Despite the randomness of the team selection, the teams were well-matched and played a 12-over per side match in warm, breezy conditions. It was decided that the captains should be those who would be leading the team against Horncastle, so Kevin captained the Reds and Paul captained the Blues.

The Blues went in to bat and faced up to some mixed bowling – sometimes accurate, sometimes wayward. Jeff's bowling was like the curate's egg – a maiden over in the good part and then (to continue the egg metaphor) a bit runny in his second over. John was let off his umpire's leash and scored some good runs, but then gave most of them back later when he bowled. Ah, well. The Blues 111-1.	Interval	The Reds openers were the two Daves who lost two wickets in the first two overs but finished on 27 after their four overs. The other batters each played a steady innings but were pegged back by the loss of two further wickets before Kevin and Jeff batted well without loss of a further wicket to bring their total to 98. The Reds 98-4.
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Match Result:

The Blues 111; The Reds 98.
The Blues won by 13 runs

August 25th Match Practice

With a small crowd of only 11, we took the opportunity to practice before tomorrow's match against Horncastle rather than play a reduced match. Players were paired so that each pair could practice batting for four overs with the partner they were due to play with in the match against Horncastle the following day. Each player then bowled two overs when their batting innings had finished. This gave all the players a good workout and sufficient, batting, bowling and fielding practice. The pairs scoring the most runs were Dave and Kevin (44), Bill and Peter (31) and Jackie and Paul (30).

We are ready!

Continued

*Walking Cricket – Continued***August 26th Horncastle u3a Versus Woodhall Spa u3a**

On a hot, sunny Wednesday afternoon, Woodhall Spa travelled to Horncastle for the annual walking cricket match in an attempt to win back the magnificent, prestigious trophy that we narrowly gave up last year. Not only did we win, but as the only two u3as in Lincolnshire that have a walking cricket group, we can now justifiably call ourselves county champions.

Yes folks, Lincolnshire County Champions!

The team consisted of: Peter Browne, Den Dickinson, Bill Exton, Kevin Hogan, Jim Linke, Dave Martin, Jackie McKenny, Paul McKenny and Dave Spratt (sub.). Horncastle lost the toss and were put in to bat by Kevin and Paul, who led the team. John was umpire/scorer again but must have done a reasonable job as he reportedly got abuse this time from BOTH teams! It's always nice to play an away match and feel right at home...

Horncastle made a disastrous start, losing six wickets in the opening four overs with everyone bowling accurately and giving few easy runs to our local rivals. The all-round bowling performance was so consistently good from the whole team that by the end of the 12th of the 16 overs, Horncastle had lost 8 wickets and only had 5 runs on the board! (in walking cricket, each time a batter gets out five points are deducted from the batting side). I was minded to say: "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre" – but I didn't. The wickets tumbled due to good bowling, catching (particularly noteworthy was Jackie's catch on the boundary) and three run-outs. It would be wrong to name certain bowlers without listing them all over again. The fielding was mostly very good apart from a couple of dropped catches and the odd fumble but the overall standard from the team was very high and showed the progress we have made in our first season. In the last four overs, Horncastle added a very spirited 54 which enabled them to struggle to a below-par total of 59. Horncastle 59-8	Interval	After refreshments kindly provided by our opponents, Woodhall Spa came out to bat. The standard of our batting was perhaps disappointing overall, but a low target can be difficult to aim for as it only requires level heads to gradually accumulate the runs. Paul and Jackie batted sensibly as the bowlers struggled with line and length on a rather bumpy pitch and Dennis and Jim both played a steady innings and took our total to 50 at the halfway point. Horncastle then had their best spell of the innings and took four wickets in the next two overs before the batters rallied and kept their heads level and their bats straight. In the last four overs, Kevin and Dave hit some big shots and put on 42 runs without loss to see Woodhall Spa home to a comfortable victory. Woodhall Spa 100-4
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Continued

Horncastle U3a Versus Woodhall Spa U3a – Continued



Woodhall Spa u3a Team

After the match the Horncastle captain Mike was gracious in defeat and presented the trophy to Kevin and Paul in front of the massed ranks of TV cameras and a huge, excited crowd, and Rosemary thanked Horncastle for their hospitality. We look forward to the rematch.

Match Result:

Horncastle u3a 59; Woodhall Spa u3a 100.
Woodhall Spa u3a won by 41 runs

And Finally:

If you have been thinking about joining the group, or coming to see what it's all about, our next game is on Tuesday, September 8th at Jubilee Park. We start at 10am. It's great for your physical and mental health, its safe and social, and we have a lovely venue. And there's refreshments! Everybody is very welcome. Contact me or Joan Willard for more information.

John Hart – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Walking Cricket Group Webpage](#)



Kevin and Dave walk in to bat



Mike Presents Trophy to Paul

Outings

A Glorious Day Out at Tolethorpe Hall

Another Saturday, another adventure! With a 9 am start, our hardy band of u3a travellers gathered with anticipation for our annual pilgrimage, or for some, a thrilling first visit, to the magnificent Tolethorpe Hall.

Nestled in Little Casterton, just a ten-minute drive from Stamford, this hidden gem is home to the Stamford Shakespeare Company and boasts one of Europe's finest open-air theatres. Set in a beautiful woodland glade, the permanently covered, raked auditorium seats 600, offering superb views and a truly magical atmosphere.

Our trusty Dickinson's coach arrived ten minutes early, allowing us to board with ease and depart right on schedule. The hour-and-a-half journey through Billinghay, Ancaster, and on to Stamford bus station was pleasantly uneventful, save for the excellent banter provided by our driver, which kept us all smiling.

We arrived in Stamford with time to spare, enjoying a leisurely few hours until 1.30 pm exploring the town's delightful shops, cosy cafes, and inviting restaurants. Some of us chose a gentle stroll down by the River Welland on the Town Meadows parkland, soaking in the summer sunshine.

A short hop brought us to Tolethorpe Hall, where we were greeted by a quintessentially English scene: a sprawling lawn dotted with picnic blankets, deckchairs, and glasses of wine. Those who had travelled earlier by car had bagged the prime spots, but we soon found our own corners to enjoy an ice cream before the performance.



And what a performance it was! The play was **'One Man, Two Guvnors'**, a riotous British comedy that had the audience roaring with laughter. For those who haven't seen it, the story follows Francis Henshall, a perpetually hungry musician fired from his skiffle band, who takes on two jobs to afford his beloved fish, chips, and a pint. The catch? Both his new "guvnors" are hiding explosive secrets—one is a gangster's sister in disguise, the other a posh toff who may have committed "accidental" murder. The fast-paced slapstick and the lead actor's infectious interaction with the audience were absolute highlights. (Do note: the play contains adult themes and language, so it wasn't to everyone's taste, but the energy was undeniable!)

All too soon, it was time to board the coach for home. Our departure provided one final moment of drama when a single car failed to appreciate that it couldn't pass the coach on the narrow road. After a brief standoff, the car had to reverse to clear the way, much to our amusement!

All in all, it was another wonderfully organised day out, filled with laughter, good company, and the unique thrill of live theatre under the open sky.

Our sincere thanks go to the tireless Outings team for arranging such a memorable trip, and a very special mention to Sue Pollitt, whose 15 years of dedicated service to our u3a outings are recognised. Here's to the next adventure!

Paul Membrey – (AI-assisted)

Find out more:

[Outings Group Webpage](#)

Croquet

Our Woodhall Spa u3a Croquet members who have just enjoyed a mornings Golf Croquet. The Smiles left to right from Debby, Terry, John, and Lucy say it all. What could be more pleasing than playing a game that is easy and nice to play in Jubilee Park? If you would like to try your hand at playing this wonderful game then please come and see how it's done – you just might like to have a go. You will find us in Jubilee Park on Tuesday mornings. Thanks for reading this article.

Bob Potter – Group Leader/Coach



Croquet: The Game

Croquet, which is thought by many to be a game played on a camomile Lawn in front of a Manor House and played by Ladies and Gentlemen at a garden party afternoon, well that was possibly the situation many years ago until the game became more popular and developed by having game rules drawn up the Croquet Association, which has since changed its title to 'Croquet England'.

So Croquet is now played by people who have a modicum of competitiveness in a sport played on a lawn* with a ball and mallet.

Croquet is an extremely tactical game which you will find very challenging and enjoyable.

**A croquet lawn can be any area of fairly level grass land large enough to accommodate six metal hoops positioned to form a course or route by which the game is played.*

Object of the Game

Briefly, to swing the mallet and strike the ball while aiming at a target – the target being either to strike an opponent's ball, or to run through a hoop, or just place your ball in a more advantageous position. The first player to correctly navigate the course of hoops is deemed the winner.

The Role of the Coach

Importantly, there will be a coach who fully understands the game. He/she will introduce you to two items:

1. **A mallet** – made up of a shaft approximately one meter long usually made of wood, with a mallet head 9" long by 3.5 ".
2. **A ball**, 3.5" diameter, which is made of a composite material or wood.

The coach will then help you to find the right grip for holding the mallet, and will begin to instruct you about striking the ball, as follows.

Continued

Croquet the Game – continued

Coaching

How to hold a mallet

There are various ways to hold a mallet, but whichever way you choose it should be comfortable and not cause any damage to your wrists.

That sounds easy enough but the coach will help you position your hands.



Your stance, swing, and strike

Before striking the ball stand with your legs apart by approximately 12" to 18" with the ball positioned centrally between your feet.

- Holding your mallet shaft comfortably with your chosen grip try swinging the mallet between your legs without a ball.
- After a few practice swings try striking the ball to go in a straight line – over a short distance to start with.
- Practice striking the ball to travel various short distances by changing your length of swing.

Tip: Only use your strength to hold the mallet and let the weight of the mallet strike the ball.



You're now ready to play Croquet.
Next time, find out how.

Bob Potter – Coach

Find out more:

[Croquet Group Webpage](#)

Wild Flowers

Ashling Lane Nature Reserve

Ashling Lane Nature Reserve is an amalgamation of meadows and woodlands created on agriculture land and existing meadows. Beginning in 2009 a total of 22,000 trees and shrubs have been planted in the heavy wet clay; this was evidenced by the deep cracks in the path. The trees also include a small number of eucalyptus trees to commemorate the Australian aircrew based at nearby airfields.

We did not venture too far into the reserve but the effects of the drought were obvious from our short walk. Blackberries, rose hips, sloes and crab apples were plentiful. Most plants were at the seeding stage and so required carefully examination of their leaves and stalks.



Prickly Lettuce



Teasel



Devil's Bit Scabious

We think we identified agrimony, prickly lettuce and red bartisia. The use of agrimony has a long history of medicinal use, from tired feet to "musket shot water" Prickly lettuce is also known as the compass plant because in the sun the upper leaves twist round to hold their margins upright, pointing roughly south or north from the stem. Like Peter Rabbit you should beware of effects of the milky sap of prickly lettuce. Red Bartsia is actually partly parasitic, gaining extra nutrients from the roots of its nearby host grasses.

Here are some of the plants we identified.

Common Agrimony

Prickly Lettuce

Spindle

Common Fleabane

Red Bartsia

Teasel

Devil's Bit Scabious

Rosebay Willow Herb

Wood Dock

Malcolm Capps – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Wild Flowers Group Webpage](#)

Woodhall Wanderers

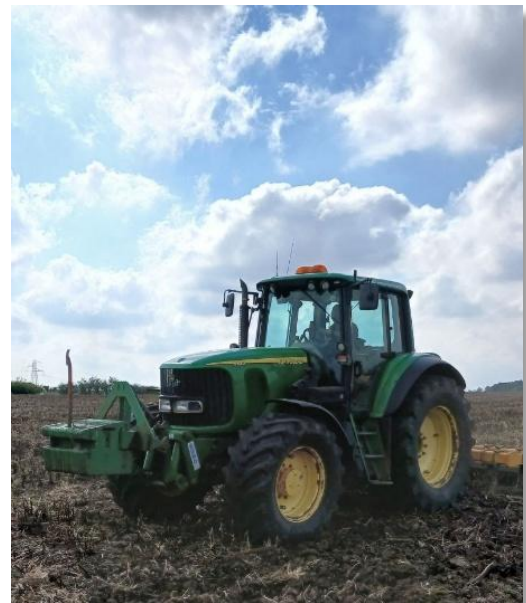
Scopwick to St Clement's

Our walk this month started off at the Royal Oak in Scopwick. The weather was looking good, no rain or thunderstorms on the horizon.... yet!



We set off along the picturesque beck in Scopwick then out into the surrounding countryside. Following the way signs, we walked across dry open fields and over hard earth being ploughed up by the local farmer. The effect of this summer's heatwave and drought was noticeable by the look of stressed trees and plants along the way.

Carrying on we could see the spire of St Clement's church in the distance at Rowston. The route we were taking took us along the Spires and Steeples Arts and Heritage trail. The trail is 27 miles long beginning at Lincoln Cathedral and finishing at St Deny's church in Sleaford. It passes through scenic rural villages, local art works and some historic landmarks.



After a few miles we stopped at St Clements church for a break. The church dates from the 12th century is a grade two listed building, and provided some welcome shade

Continued

Scopwick to St. Clement's – Continued

Back on the road we strolled down to Kirkby Green ford, crossing it any way we liked!



The final part of the walk was through Scopwick itself and back to the Royal Oak.... and a cool drink.

Jan Smith

Find out more:

[Woodhall Wanderers Group Webpage](#)

Visiting Churches

South Kyme Church

On a blisteringly hot afternoon the Churches group gathered at South Kyme Church just a stone's throw from the famous tower. Luckily, it was slightly cooler inside the church.

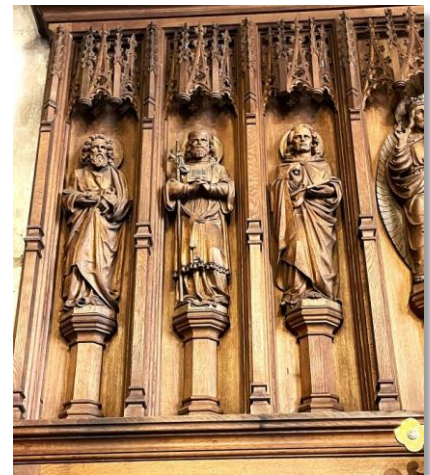
This church has an incredible history, from possible Celtic origins to Priory Church, and then to Parish Church.



Capital



Celtic Scrolls



Altar

Christian worship was already taking place in South Kyme village by the late 7th or early 8th century. This was proved by the discovery of important stone fragments of Anglo-Saxon carving on the site of the church during 19th century restoration work. The motifs on the carvings include foliage scrolls, knot work, plat work and trumpet spirals.

Decoration typically **Celtic** in form, similar to that on illuminated manuscripts of that age. The pieces can now be seen set into the north wall of the church.

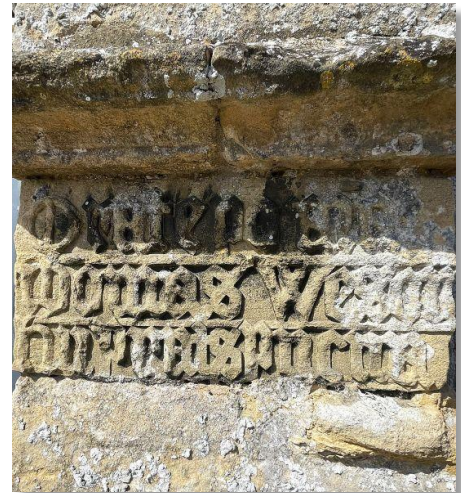
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South Kyme Church – Continued

The Priory Church was founded by Philip of Kyme, Steward to the Earl of Lincoln, before 1169. A small Augustinian Priory occupied by a Prior and about ten Canons.

During one of the Bishop of Lincoln's Visitations to the Priory he commented on the Canons going out without leave, eating and drinking without permission, and entertaining friends too liberally within the Priory. During a second Visitation the Prior, who seems to have lacked authority, complained to the Bishop that the Canons were too fond of idle sports.

Outside the porch one of the buttresses incorporates an inscription in contracted **Latin**. It reads, "Pray for the soul of Thomas Watson, butler of this Priory". One wonders whether Thomas Watson was singled out for commemoration in this unusual way on account of the particularly fine wines he dispensed to his fellow Canons? Perhaps he was responsible for the Canons transgressions that were frowned upon by the Bishop.



Latin

The Priory Church was much enhanced by Robert De Umfraville in the middle of the 14th century, and another Norman family the Tailboys married into the Umfraville family at the end of the 14th century. Following the dissolution of the Monasteries, the Priory Church became the Parish Church, and it was much reduced in size and probably fell into a considerable state of disrepair. Significant work was needed by 1805 when, during the digging of foundations for the new North wall, the Tailboys' family vault was uncovered. Four coffins were found, in one of them was Gilbert, Lord Tailboys, in another was the body of an unknown child, five or six years old, in a good state of preservation, having been immersed in spirit.

The church is full of hidden gems! One other of particular interest is the memorial brass and Purbeck marble slab to Gilbert Lord Tailboys. On it were brass effigies of Gilbert and his wife Elizabeth (Blount). Known as **Bessie** throughout her life, Bessie was a mistress of Henry VIII and bore him a male son. Both brasses were removed, probably by a Victorian church brass collector, and were thought to have been lost. In 1989 however, her brass was recovered after being sold, unidentified, at auction, and the original is now on show in the British Museum, a rare example of a palimpsest brass.



Brass

A palimpsest brass is one that has been engraved on one side, and then subsequently reversed, re-engraved and reused. An early example of recycling. The word *palimpsest* can also be used when referring to other reused materials such as parchment or papyrus. Bessie's brass had first been engraved and used in Flanders, in France, a century previously. The brass now in place at South Kyme is a copy.

The group were looked after royally by former Church Warden Anne Frieston with a plentiful supply of tea and biscuits. A great afternoon out.

Richard Gravestock

Find out more:

[Visiting Churches Group Webpage](#)

Solo Travellers

Boston Belle

As many of our solo travellers group were missing cruising we decided to embark on a cruise which was a little different to our usual choice of vessel.

On Monday 24th August several members of the solo travellers group set off for a day out on the water – this time a little closer to home.

We started by having a hearty brunch at a lovely restaurant in Boston called Rancho Grill – I think I can safely say we thoroughly enjoyed the food and the service was excellent; it's one of the few places which serves the breakfast menu up until 1 pm. There's a really good selection from Eggs Benedict Royal with smoked salmon, American Breakfast. Small English Breakfast (which wasn't really that small) and lots more to choose from.



We enjoyed a relaxing day out cruising through Boston and out along the Haven then skirting along the wash and then along the river Welland. We then turned round – which was really the only time the boat was 'rocking' – and headed back the same way. The highlight of the trip was seeing the seals basking along then riverbank on the Welland – we spotted quite a range of seabirds – too numerous to mention.



At 2pm we met up riverside with our Captain for the day Rodney from the Boston Belle. The boat can usually take about 60 passengers, but we were fortunate to just have 20 on board – so lots of room for everyone to have a seat outside. Hot drinks and bacon butties were available on board for those that were feeling a little peckish!



Continued

Boston Belle – Continued

As the Port of Boston is a working port so we did see a few large cargo vessels heading into the port and also out to sea. There are warehousing facilities based at the port so it's a popular distribution point particularly for the West Midlands, London, the Northwest and Northeast.



The weather was kind to us considering the recent downpours – We had mainly bright sunshine and it was only towards late afternoon that it started to get quite cool, on our return we had to wait half an hour for the lock to open – believe it or not because of the high water! Now we're trying to decide on our next adventure!

If anyone would like to join the Solo Travellers Group – we meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at The Dower House Hotel at 2pm – Let Joan know if you want to join the group. Our next get together is on Wednesday 9th September 2pm.

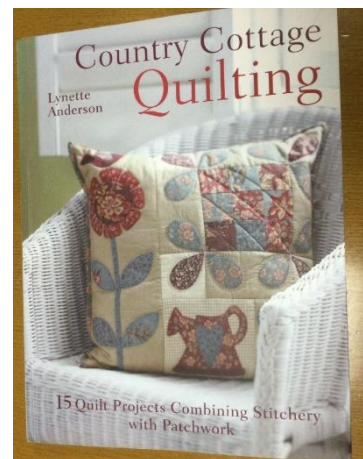
Coral Willcox – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Solo Travellers Group Webpage](#)

Sew and Sew

You may remember that earlier this year Joan completed a wall-hanging inspired by Lynette Anderson's 'Country Cottage Quilting' book. An admirer of the work 'commissioned' Joan to make the cushion from the front cover of the book.



The cushion has been pieced and individual items have been hand-appliqued in place. Rather than using plain fabric as suggested, Joan pieced together squares of the remaining fabric for the back of the cushion before bravely inserting a zip (Zips can often be our nemesis). Once again, in my opinion, the fabric choice and Joan's modifications have elevated it from the original.



Wendy has been welcomed back to the Sew & Sew group after a few year's absence. Of course, that doesn't mean to say that she hasn't been sewing. Wendy is often seen sporting new hats, bags, clothes etc. that she has crafted, and she has made many gifts for others too.



For those of you who watch *The Great British Sewing Bee*, you will know that 'fit' is very important; well, Wendy made a blouse from a pattern she had bought, but she wasn't quite satisfied with the fit. She adjusted it to have a dart at the front neckline and matching darts to the sleeves, thereby removing excess fabric to give it the shape she desired, while enhancing the style of the garment too. She also inserted side vents to improve the movement of the garment.

Have you ever found the perfect top – and you just want it in lots of different colours or fabrics? Now Wendy has her own bespoke pattern that she can use to make her own collection.

Carmel Sefton

Find out more:

[Sew and Sew Group Webpage](#)

Home Computing for Fun

A Friendly Update on Home Computing

If you've bought a new computer lately, or even just glanced at the tech news, you might have noticed things are changing. It's not just about faster processing anymore; our home computers are slowly becoming helpful assistants rather than just complicated typewriters!

Your Computer is Getting Smarter (and More Private)

The biggest buzz at the moment is on-device AI. In plain speak, that means your computer can process AI tasks directly on your machine instead of sending your questions, documents, and photos to the internet. By keeping your personal data on your own device, it reduces the risk of interception, storage, or mishandling by outside companies over the web.

Why does that matter? For one, it's better for privacy, because your documents and photos can stay on your own machine. It also means your PC might soon be able to help with everyday tasks automatically, like sorting your emails, organising your photo albums, or even reminding you about things you keep forgetting!

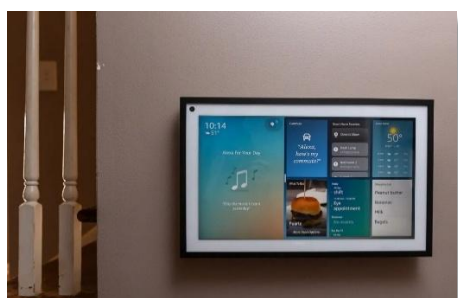
Smaller Computers are Having a Moment



Gone are the days when a powerful computer had to be a massive tower under your desk. In 2026, mini-PCs are becoming very popular. These are little boxes, about the size of a paperback book, that pack plenty of power for everyday use, including writing, browsing, email, and even managing your photos.

They are quieter, cheaper, and take up hardly any space. If your old computer is getting sluggish and you don't want to replace your screen and keyboard, a [mini-PC](#) can be a sensible, budget-friendly upgrade.

The Smart Home is Getting Easier



If you've already dabbled with a smart speaker or a video doorbell, you'll be interested in this. The tech giants are working hard to make a proper "command centre" for your home, in other words, [Smart Home Hubs](#).

Apple, for example, is rumoured to be releasing a new, simple 7-inch square screen; think of it like a small tablet that lives on your kitchen counter or mounts on your wall. It would act as a central hub to control your lights, heating, and music, all with a simple tap or voice command. It's designed to be much simpler than juggling different apps on your phone.

In a Nutshell

The days of the computer being just a cold, complicated box are fading. The aim now is to make our devices more like quiet, helpful companions, whether that's on your desk as a mini-PC, or on your wall as a smart home help. It's an exciting time, even if we do have to learn a few new tricks along the way!

Paul Membrey (AI Assisted) – Group Leader

Find out more:

[Home Computing for Fun Group Webpage](#)

Bird Watching and Wildlife

Chapel Six Marshes

At ten o'clock on a hot sunny morning with an offshore wind five members of the group met in the car park. After everyone's patience had been tested by the payment machine we set off on a circuit of the reserve, a mix of reedbed, open water, scrub, conifers and coastal dunes.

This is the time of year for birds' post-breeding moult, when they tend to remain hidden and silent to avoid the attention of predators while their ability to escape is impaired. Consequently, they also evade detection by human observers, and we ended with a much smaller species count than usual. However, being with others who have a shared interest and whose company one enjoys still makes for a pleasurable experience. Somehow, we did arrive at the Huttoft cafe rather earlier than is usually the case, for a light lunch on the roof terrace and in the sun.

Below is the alphabetical list of species seen, or in some cases simply heard, only 20 in all:

<i>Blackbird</i>	<i>Black-headed gull</i>	<i>Blue tit</i>	<i>Buzzard</i>
<i>Carrion crow</i>	<i>Dunnock</i>	<i>Goldfinch</i>	<i>Herring gull</i>
<i>Linnet</i>	<i>Magpie</i>	<i>Moorhen</i>	<i>Robin</i>
<i>Reed bunting</i>	<i>Reed warbler</i>	<i>Swallow</i>	<i>Swift</i>
<i>Sedge warbler</i>	<i>Whitethroat</i>	<i>Woodpigeon</i>	<i>Wren</i>

John Watt

Find out more:

[Bird Watching and Wildlife 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.

Many thanks.

Tom Sefton – Editor

