

The u3a York Times

A U T U M N 2 0 2 6



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"The u3a York Times", Issue 3, Autumn 2026

Published on 1st October 2026, by u3a York, 15a Clifford Street, York, YO1 9RG

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Printed by incdot Design & Print

Contact: design@inc-dot.com, 01904 477944

Web: www.inc-dot.com



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Chair's Message

One of the reasons I joined the u3a was to go to the Saturday Talks, something I enjoy immensely. Interesting people, often members, with a passion for a subject that comes across as they speak.

It got me to thinking about what subject I might be passionate about. I suspect the answer is the u3a. More specifically, u3a York.

Joining in 2022, before even going to a talk, I had talked myself into taking on the responsibilities of Office Coordinator and, two years later, I became the Chair. I'm often asked, why do you do it? The other question is, how much are you paid? The second question is very easy to answer, nothing! That leads back to the first question, why do it?

A little more complicated but it probably comes down to two things.

Firstly, I am a passionate supporter of an organisation that promotes the positive aspects of ageing. I believe in the u3a and all that it stands for. I believe that providing opportunities for people to rediscover an interest, or find a new one, at an affordable price adds great value to our members' lives.

Secondly, doing something for no financial reward feels good. I didn't join to become Chair, but I am thankful for the opportunity I have been given and the only reward I need is to see the pleasure on your faces as you participate in what is on offer. Being a volunteer for the u3a inspires and fulfils me. Hopefully it does the same for you. I promise that the more involved you become, the more rewarding it will be.

If you haven't already, come join us.

Karen Sawyer
Chair, u3a York
chair@u3ayork.org.uk

News from the Groups

Contact the groups via the link to the group's web page, or by calling in to the office when it's open.

"Shaken ... not stirred" – the u3a York group with their own secret language and much, much more...

The air was static. You could feel people thinking. Concentrating. Eyes locked and their secret language muttered to their partners under their breath – but where are we? On a James Bond film set somewhere hot and glamorous? Oh no. In Monte Carlo? Nope – we were at the u3a York bridge group on Tadcaster road – but with a few black ties and a couple of quintessential Martinis we could have been in a James Bond film. Well ... sort of. Bridge ... the game of Kings.

But what attracts these intelligent, articulate members to this club?



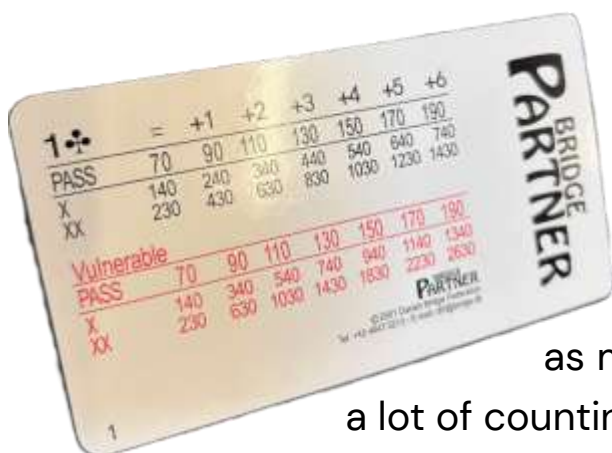
"Keeps your brain going!"

"Social – it's great supporting each other."

"Just been doing it from a child – cards thrust into my hand and the maths stretches the brain."

Well, it's certainly complicated from a non-card player's point of view – apparently you need to count cards and add points and hint to your partner how good your hand is – without telling the other couple. "Cheat" was my game and this seems to be a bit more complicated.





It is very competitive. Oh, and exciting. There are rules under rules apparently. And people just love it!

During covid this group kept going – online! Meeting up via the satellites as much as ten times a week! Now that's a lot of counting. But the plaudits keep rushing in...

"Such a good game. I love building and building and making a good contract and the rush when you win a hand is difficult to beat."

I asked if, like me, you had no experience of bridge, how you could learn, and voices clamoured with ideas and places to teach you.

And now it's 2026 and I was soon told of their latest competitors – ROBOTS.

Apparently, robots are very knowledgeable about the game but not great at socialising. Funny that. And for the brightest and best players you can use your newly acquired skill to travel the world on bridge holidays – who knew? Well I certainly didn't, so if you fancy a go, maybe with a martini or maybe not, just email Lorraine or Jo and give it a go. This could be the start of something big...

[Bridge Thursday \(11411\): contact Lorraine Hawley](#)

[Bridge Tuesday \(11403\): contact Jo Norman](#)

Rosy Dickinson
The u3a York Times Reporter

Baby boomers bopping – listen, share and debate...

D'you remember those Saturdays when you were young – you'd rush into your poster covered bedroom with the newest album clutched in your hand – the music would start and you'd listen to those sweet notes

as David Bowie or the Smiths or McCartney filled the room. The smell of baked beans wafting up the stairs, the distant sound of children playing outside. Simple times. Perfect times.

Well now you can relive those days with Alan's vast, and we do mean VAST, record collection (over 200 albums). So vast in fact that he has catalogued them... by theme...

The idea of his group is to choose a song from a set monthly theme and listen to either his music or you can bring your own and then as you're swaying and reliving your happy past you can share those times with others in the group. Perfect.

You can even decide, like Juke Box Jury, whether it's a hit or a miss!



Alan meets on the 3rd Thursday afternoon of the month from 2-4pm at the u3a York Centre

L.S.D. is the name of the group – listen/share/debate.

[L.S.D. Music Club \(12059\)](#): contact Alan Milner

*Rosy Dickinson
The u3a York Times Reporter*

Water Fitness (11311)

There are still places for anyone who would like to join our water fitness group. You do not have to be a swimmer! We meet at Better Energise Pool on Cornlands Road, Acomb every Monday (apart from Bank Holidays) from 1.30 to 2.30pm. The gentle exercises take place in the shallow end, where we have lots of fun whilst contributing to our general

fitness. There is a time at the beginning and end of the sessions for a swim for those who enjoy swimming. The cost is £25 for 8 sessions.

Many of us go to the cafe afterwards for a hot drink and "get-together". We are a gregarious group, who, like all u3a groups, have made many lasting friendships during our time with the Water Fitness Group.

We also meet for lunches, the last one being in April at the York College restaurant, where we enjoyed a delicious meal.

[Water Fitness \(11311\)](#): contact Anne Fox

Sue Tompkin

Jive & Social Dance Instruction (11305)

The group meets every Monday afternoon from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, with the Club (Guppy's Enterprise Club, 17 Nunnery Lane) opening at 1.40pm. Newcomers are welcome as singles or couples, with or without previous experience. Please contact Neal for the answers to any questions.

[Jive & Social Dance Instruction \(11305\)](#): contact Neal Guppy

Neal Guppy

Early Days of Cinema (11501)

Having screened a variety of quite different films since last Autumn (Marx Brothers, Hitchcock, René Clair), we will now take another look at favourites from past years. Thanks to group convenors, we now have access to many good quality DVDs of early films, and although starting at the turn of the last century, we now go up to 1949.



1 Location Shooting

Membership of the group has evolved, and these will be a first viewing for many, but importantly, these films are so good, they repay watching more than once.

One of the great pleasures of this exploration is that there is an Aladdin's cave of extant movies, many of which have not been seen for decades. The emphasis is on comedy, fiction and drama, with two films in one session if time allows. Each screening is followed by a short discussion.



2 The Docks of New York (Sternberg, 1928)

We meet on the 3rd Monday of each month at the u3a York Centre.

[Early Days of Cinema \(11501\)](#): contact [Ian Watson](#)

Richard Beaton

Map Reading and Navigation (12018)

This course had been run very successfully over the past 2 years by Tania Dickinson and Ann Simpson before I joined it. I have been walking and occasionally leading walks with two U3A Groups over the past 16 years. We ten participants had committed to 5 separate days over the summer and gathered in Welburn Village Hall on a sunny day in August.

As we introduced ourselves, the common theme was wanting to be more confident in planning and leading walks using OS maps and compasses. I realised, with relief, that none of us felt like experts. The first day was about de-mystifying OS maps and an enjoyable short



walk, maps in hand, identifying where we were, the grid references and map symbols. A kindly local asked if we were lost! We ended in Welburn cafe – a treat that we looked forward to each week.

Week 2 we revised our new learning and added scale, distance and elevation. Our newly bonded group set off to measure distance and explore how this translated into what we could observe on the ground. This was becoming an adventure.

Week 3 was, for me and I think for several others, the most challenging – the Navigational Compass. The session was both informative and fun, especially attempting to apply it on our walk.

Week 4 was planning and leading a walk, focussing on hazards and how to keep a group safe. In preparation for Week 5 we divided into small groups to plan a walk from scratch. I had previously always used walk routes from books or online, so this was new for me, but hugely enjoyable with support from my team.



The Final Day – each group of 2/3 went out with an observer/helper and took turns to lead, but with lots of support. We soon realised that how things appear on the map may be very different in reality. – such as a farmer blocking the footpath with an electric fence or trees not being where they should be. But fear not, we now had the skills to adapt our planned walk. Finally, we gathered in Terrington Village Cafe to celebrate and share our experiences over tea

and cake. A cheerful end to a brilliant course, which I would wholeheartedly recommend.

A huge thank you to Tania and Ann for being such effective trainers and for your humour and kindness.

[Map Reading and Navigation \(12018\)](#): contact *Tania Dickinson*

Sylvia Richardson

Cycling (11804)

The weather forecast for the day of our September ride was decidedly off-putting which is why there were only a select few of us who turned out for a trip to Askham Richard to have lunch at the garden centre cafe. Ha! All those who chickened out because of the forecast missed a really lovely ride in a pleasant temperature. I did have to get my waterproofs out for about five minutes on the return journey but not until I was very close to home.

Personally, I've been a bit lazy with the cycle group and have been opting for my e-bike, but I've decided that I'd rather plan shorter journeys and use my "proper" bike more – hence a ride out to Askham Richard on my Trek. There's been a bit of a drop in numbers on our rides this year. It seems to have been either very hot or very wet, so it was good to be out again and thanks to those who ignored the dire warnings about non-existent rain and came out with me. I enjoyed it and I'm planning to have a few more of these shorter rides so that some of us can use our legs more and our batteries less.



Having said that, I still love my e-bike and appreciate the fact that we can go so much further in the e-bike group – I'm just pleased that my ageing legs don't complain too much when I make them work that bit harder. Obviously, we still have riders on all types of bikes, and everyone is welcome. We always try to make sure that the pace we go at suits everyone so if you think you'd like to join us but have been unsure, just come along and try us out. We don't leave anyone behind!

[Cycling \(11804\)](#): contact Doreen Magill

Doreen Magill

Digital Photography (11901)

Why do I need a camera?

“Why do I need a camera? I have a smartphone!” is the conversation that is taking place. A lot of what used to be taken on your camera can now be just as easily taken by a smartphone – the advantage is, it's always with you, for instance at a concert, unless you are forgetful!

So here are a couple of reasons why you should still have a camera of some description.



- You are a grandparent with an 8-year-old grandchild who loves animals and you want to encourage them to become the next David Attenborough, but you would fall foul of their parents if you gave them a smartphone. You could give them a compact camera instead, or even a bridge camera. You're likely to be better off – the cost of even the cheapest smartphone is £300 or £400.

- You are off on holiday to far distant lands where your Smartphone would be just too big a temptation to local thieves. A cheap camera for £100 may be a better option.



Now we get on to reasons why you need an SLR or even a Mirror-less camera. If you want to take photographs of flower or insects you will need a camera which has a close focus lens.



If you want to be in with the action on a motor racing circuit or some other sport then you will need a lens that will get you as close as you want to catch that dramatic moment of the cricket match!

Photography has become cheaper because you no longer need to develop films, and most camera have a screen, so you know if you have the photo you wanted. All you require is a laptop, a tablet or even a television to view or display your photographs. Editing your photographs is an option but you will need a laptop or tablet and some software to allow you to manipulate your image, as Eric Smith's flower photo here shows.



[Digital Photography \(11901\)](#): Contact Stuart Calvert

Stuart Calvert

Event Reports

The u3a York Choir Summer Concert, 11th July 2026

On a lovely sunny summer's Saturday morning in July more than 100 u3a York members gathered to enjoy a Summer Concert by the u3a York Choir.



The Choir has been in existence for many years, is currently organised by the Group Leader Valerie Severn, and has 43 Choir members. The Musical Director is Don Pears who is prominent in the York choral music scene. He is a composer and arranges much of the Choir's music. The Choir regularly contributes to the u3a York Christmas Concert, as well as performing concerts at other times of the year. This was their first venture regarding a bespoke summer concert, and we very much hope that this also becomes a regular event.

The concert was a delightful mix of choral music, solos, and readings of prose and poetry – some poignant, some very funny – performed by John Ellis (pictured), Carolyn Jacques, and Gabriel Crux.



The musical selections were arranged by themes including film, love, and aging. The audience tapped their toes to old favourites such as "Hernando's Hideaway" and "The Entertainer", laughed at "When I'm 64", and perhaps had a lump in their throats when hearing "Somewhere my Love". Musical solos were performed by Paddy Neligan (pictured) who

accompanied the Choir on the flute for the song “Flying Free” and John Muskett who entertained the audience on the guitar with well-known Beatles tunes.

The Choir provided a delightful morning’s entertainment and wonderful start to the summer break. We are looking forward to seeing them again at the Christmas Concert and hopefully to a repeat of this summer event.

Beryl Oppenheim & Valerie Severn

Travel Team Reports

u3a York Trip to Suffolk

The first event in June for Travel was the 5-day trip to Suffolk, when 46 u3a members had an interesting trip to various landmarks around the county and beyond. The weather was mixed, but that did not deter most of us. I will never forget the walking tour at Lavenham where we stood under umbrellas for an hour listening to interesting stories about that historic village (see picture). It was a dry-out job that evening in the hotel!



We also had an excellent guide at Sutton Hoo (see picture), when we stood on the burial grounds and listened to how they were discovered. It was wet again at Flatford, and the guides were not so good, but it was nevertheless interesting to see where John

Constable had done so much of his famous work. The artist Thomas Gainsborough was brought up in Sudbury where our hotel was situated, so we had an afternoon to visit his childhood home, now a beautiful art gallery.

On our way south we visited Burghley House and gardens, and on the way home we spent time at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire. Both were fascinating.

A more detailed report on this and many earlier trips can be found on the [travel pages](#) of the [u3a website](#).

Day Trips in June and July

June

Later in June we had a day trip to the Auckland Project in Bishop Auckland. The rich investment manager who is behind both Kynren and the Auckland Project has brought a lot of interesting activities to Bishop Auckland. There are the fantastic Spanish Gallery and a fascinating



museum in the Bishop's Palace as well as revitalised gardens and eating places. Our ticket gave us entry to all the parts of the project that day and for 12 months – there was a lot to see.

July

Our day trip in July took us to Northallerton on market day and Nunnington Hall (pictured). Northallerton was very welcoming, greeting us as we left the coach and giving us a booklet of vouchers to use in their shops. After coffee in one of the various establishments



offering a money-off voucher, most of us strolled around the lovely market, many of us coming away with a variety of purchases. Then we enjoyed a beautiful summer's afternoon at Nunnington Hall. The gardens were lovely and the hall inviting. Some of us even saw the peacock babies being guarded by the peahen under some bushes!

August

There was no day trip organised for August since the Team needs a rest and many members are on holiday. However, we are already planning a special trip for August 2027, to visit the new day performances at Kynren: The Storied Lands. Two of the Team did a recce soon after this special event opened this year, and we think that it would be an exciting trip for 2027 – watch out for our publicity next year!

Sheila McKilligan
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