

NEWSLETTER May 24



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Chairman's May message

How quickly time passes and here we are in May looking forward to Summer and hopefully an end to the period of damp and cold weather that has been masquerading as Spring. Personally, I am astonished that a whole year that has passed so quickly since I was elected to the role of Chairman.

During this time, I have got to know so many more of the members and cannot fail but to be in awe of the friendship and diversity of talent within our group of u3a. Our recent Open Day, in early April had two objectives and it is safe to say that we achieved both of them.

We showcased our Group's activities with a great variety of static and active displays in the Plaza and of equal importance we attracted around 19 new members whom we welcome into the group. I hope that the newbies will fully embrace our ethos to 'Live, Learn & Laugh'. Especially the Laugh bit as it has to be fun.

With any clubs or meeting groups there will be people who have been coming to the meetings for ages and naturally they will gravitate to their familiar circles but I urge you to look out for the new faces and make them equally welcome. Remember that a stranger is a friend you do not know.

On 24th May at Hermitage House on Huntingdon Road, Thrapston we have a new members Coffee Morning between 10.00am & 12.00pm. A perfect event to convert those strangers to friendships that could last for years. It not just for new members and I will also be attending to meet you all.

The AGM looms on 17th May and a new chapter will begin with key members of the Committee stepping down and new roles being bravely adopted by existing members, if sanctioned by the membership to ensure the continuation of our group. There will be even more opportunities to Live, Learn and I look forward to sharing another year of Laughter with you all.

Paul



17th May 2024 Meeting

AGM to commence at 10:15—followed by Presentation at 10:30

Doors open at 9:45

AGM

Followed by

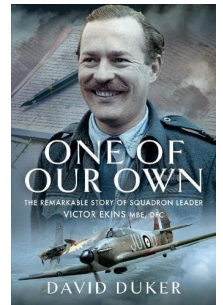
*The Remarkable story of Battle of Britain pilot
Squadron Leader Victor Ekins MBE DFC*

17th May 2024 Speaker: David Duker



This is the enthralling story of a young man who found himself at the epicentre of one of the biggest turning points in recent history—The Battle of Britain. Guided by the diaries that he meticulously kept throughout his wartime experience and that lay unread for over 80 years, Victor Howard Ekins' story is one of duty, loss, friendship and love.

He would meet his wife Kim, a 'plotter' serving at RAF Kenley, during the intensity of the Battle of Britain and their relationship would go on to flourish against all odds. He also rose through the ranks to become a Squadron Leader who was admired and respected by those who served with him.



Life on the Licence Fee - Challenges and Change at the BBC

21st June 2024 Speaker: Alex Leger

Luck played its part when Alex joined the Blue Peter programme in 1975. The presenters were John Noakes, Peter Purves and Lesley Judd. He describes pivotal events in broadcasting and memorable encounters with an erupting volcano, gorillas in Uganda and a life-threatening storm at sea.

These and other events like John Noakes climbing Nelson's Column secured his position as a producer for 36 years. Others caused a stir like LuLu the baby elephant who ran amok and created probably the funniest moment in Blue Peter history.



Thrapston & District U3A Annual General Meeting

May 17th 2024

The Plaza, Thrapston

To commence at 10.15. Doors will open at 9.45.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM
3. Chairman's Report
4. Group Co-ordinator's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Approval of the examined accounts
7. Approve appointment of the Examiner of Accounts
8. The Constitution to be amended to allow committee members in exceptional circumstances to serve beyond the existing three year limit
9. Election of the Committee for 2024/25 - Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Business Secretary, (the Executive Members), and a committee of 8 other members.

Wendy Davies Business Secretary

Registered Charity Number 1179593



“WW2 Double Agent -The Life and Crimes of Agent Zigzag”

19th April 2024 Speaker: Paul Barwick

Paul Barwick made his second visit to Thrapston for our April meeting, this time with his again well-researched and presented talk on the notorious double agent codenamed ‘Zigzag’.

Paul has worked as a casino croupier before served in the Police force for 34 years in a variety of roles, initially as a uniformed officer then into plain clothes. He joined the Metropolitan Police investigating organised crime and in the SO15 Counter Terrorism section.

Arnold Edward Chapman was born in Burnopfield, County Durham in November 1914 and from the very outset he resented authority. In spite of this at the age of seventeen and a half he joined the 2nd Battalion of the Coldstream Guards even engaged in protecting the Royal family in London. However military discipline was not for him and he went AWOL but was eventually picked up and spent time in the army prison at Aldershot.

Chapman was apparently a man with great charm and was able to manipulate authority to his own advantage even to becoming a trusty in prison working in the Governor’s garden. The Governor found that his trust was misplaced when Chapman stole some of his clothing and promptly escaped.

War came in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland, Chapman, on the run from the police because of his bad deeds, had gone to Jersey with a glamorous woman named Betty Farmer and was living the high life there until the Nazis eventually occupied the Channel Islands in June 1940.

In October 1941 he set up a Barbers Shop in St Helier which was visited by German soldiers. About this time the Abwehr, (German Military Secret Service) took an interest in him as a man with a complete knowledge of the British way of life. No doubt Eddie Chapman saw an opportunity for himself and joined up with the Germans.

Now code named ‘Fritz’ by his Nazi handlers he received training in making explosives, firearms, radio operation and parachute use. He developed his French and learned to speak German in about 8 months. He had impressed his German handlers and plans were made to infiltrate him into Britain. Chapman loved the importance of the role.

In December 1942 he was parachuted into Cambridgeshire and on landing he made contact with MI5 who were already aware of his activities through Bletchley Park code breakers. After 8 months a plan was hatched for a simulated attack to blow up generators at the Hatfield factory of DeHavilland where the Mosquito fighter bomber was built. With the assistance of a camouflage expert and subterfuge the dummy explosion misled the Germans into believing he had achieved the objective.

Eddie Chapman was involved in many escapades, operating on the shady side of life in peace and war time. Intelligent, adaptable and charming, a womanizer, perhaps even a likeable rogue?

In November 1944 Eddie Chapman was finally paid off by MI5 with £5,000 and soon returned to his old haunts in Soho still preoccupied with his desire for female companionship, but his desire was to re-establish contact with Betty Farmer whom by a remarkable coincidence he met in the restaurant of the Berkley Hotel.

Eddie and Betty were married in October 1947 although Betty knew it would be a challenge, their daughter Susanne was born in 1954 and they lived together for 50 years. In his final years he was nursed at home by Betty until his death on 11th December 1997.

Paul Barwick finished the talk posing a question. Who was Eddie Chapman really working for? Britain, Germany or only himself? We were left to ponder the question and make up our own minds.



This months story “Stephanie Simpson

For 16 years I worked at the BBC in Central London in a variety of departments and I can honestly say I enjoyed each job. My career took me from Engineering, Radio 2 then to television in the Drama department, Continuing Education and the Quiz Unit and I was lucky enough to work with many well known TV and radio personalities.

My first job in Radio 2 was working on the Terry Wogan Show as a Production Secretary. I could not believe I was being paid to file records and type up record scripts for the daily show. He was a great, warm and humorous person to work with. Unlike many DJs he loved to receive all listener’s mail, the ruder the better, he thought nothing of being called a peat bog trotting Irishman which he would read out on air! Whilst working on the show “The Who Shot JR” in Dallas was at fever pitch with everyone and Terry was whipping up his listeners with their theories. Larry Hagman, JR, was in London and he visited Terry in his Radio studio along with the press. I was tasked with obtaining a gun to be used in press shots and a BBC Armourer brought the gun to the office and although there were no bullets I was told not to let people fire the gun and had to keep my eye on it at all times. The interview was a great success with listeners and the press and Larry Hagman was a real gentleman and handed out fake signed dollar bills to everyone.

Radio 2 was a really enjoyable and friendly place to work in Charlotte Street. I was secretary on different music shows like Country Club, European Pop Jury, Nelson Riddle Concerts and then working on the Paul Daniels Magical Music Show. The Show was pre-recorded twice weekly over a 3 month period as Paul Daniels was going off to Las Vegas to do a residency of Magic Shows. After one of the radio recordings the Producer, Paul and I attended a record promotion lunch for Julio Iglesias and always the practical joker Paul Daniels tried to persuade the press attending the event I was the latest singing sensation. Luckily they did not believe him as I am unable to sing a good note!

After 7 years at Radio 2 I worked in television on a new show called “EastEnders” as the Producer’s Secretary to Julia Smith, I had my own office but had to share it with “Roly the Poodle” the dog owned by Dirty Den in the series. After filming in the studio Roly would come back to the office and sleep on the couch. I often took him for a walk and typed up his grooming expenses. He was the best work colleague I ever had. We were sworn to secrecy about future storylines. Leading up to the recording of the famous Christmas episode the Producer and scriptwriters asked me for dramatic effect to serve the unseen script just to the actors of Den and Angie whilst they were on the Queen Vic set in the studio where they would act the scene when Den served Divorce Papers to Ange in an iconic episode which was watched by 25 million viewers. The next cliffhanger on the was who was the father of Michelle’s baby and it captured the public’s attention. Whenever we went out socially with friends all they wanted to discuss was EastEnders which particularly annoyed my boyfriend (now husband).

After 2 years on EastEnders I was promoted to Production Assistant in Continuing Education. I was responsible for setting up recording studios at television centre, taking timings and calling shots in the studio or arranging filming in the UK or abroad. One amusing story was whilst filming in Majorca on a photography programme called “Snap”. Jon Pertwee, former Dr Who, who lived in Majorca was filming with us and I arranged with the hotel receptionist to order a taxi to pick up Jon from his home in the morning. Jon arrived the next day looking somewhat bemused as 8 taxis had arrived for him at 8 am. Luckily he saw the funny side of it, Finally I worked at BBC Elstree on Quiz shows like Going for Gold with Henry Kelly and Matchpoint with Angela Rippon. The Unit was known as the Quiz Factory as we recorded up to 5 shows in the studio per day. The department eventually moved to BBC Manchester and I had just had our son Oliver so I decided it was time to put my studio stopwatch away and leave the BBC to enjoy motherhood for a while.

OPEN DAY

The Plaza, 6th April 2024

To stage an Open Day for our u3a is certainly an ambitious undertaking especially when one considers that the whole enterprise is undertaken entirely by volunteers. There is so much planning to be done and it appears to me that flexibility with one's plans is the key to a successful event. It just impossible to plan everything down to the final detail and even up to the 10.00am opening on the Saturday morning ideas were being tweaked to ease matters.

Being too rigid at the outset is stifling and although we have had open days in the past there is an evolution of ideas and never a thought that as we have always done it like this then we will continue down the same path.

No one has the monopoly of good ideas and life is always a learning curve. Traditionally we have had a Tombola and it was the same this year and what a tremendous success it was with over one hundred prizes at the outset and all of them won at the end of the day. I noticed that the Mayor had a armful, all won fair and square I am pleased to note.

Who would have thought that a stall selling Jigsaw puzzles would be so popular but some people did and what's more organized the collection, storage, setting up the stall and selling them on the day. Well done, fresh idea and a good result.

The live displays on the stage demonstrating Tai Chi and Music Making for two sessions each during the course of the day showed what talent there is in our u3a group. In addition there were nearly thirty static displays of other activities by the diverse groups in our u3a, all again presented by volunteers.

Occupying a round table in a corner close to the stage, the Art group were busy painting and what a show of talent with completed pictures and on-going art works, such a friendly group of people and immersed in their painting for the whole day.

It would be a terrible omission on my part not to mention the wonderful refreshments made and served by the Cake & Bake group that lubricated the day with a special offer of free replenishments for coffee or tea once an original purchase had been made for a drink and a cake or a delicious savoury. The minced beef and onion pies were deliciously warm, straight from the oven.

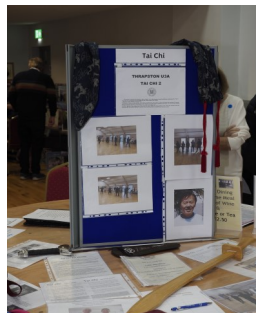
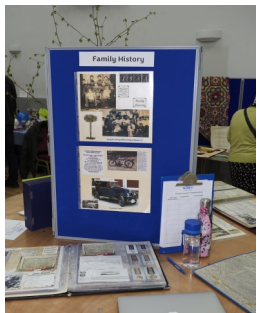
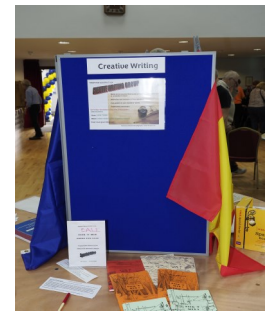
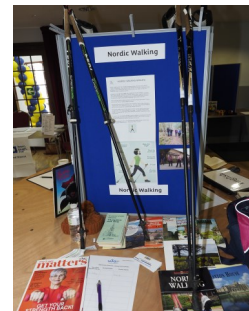
You will see also in this Newsletter a selection of photographs taken by the photographic group leader, some of which the Mayor has asked to use in his annual presentation.

Our event coincided (not entirely by chance) with the monthly Farmer's Market and a scattering of 'flyers' in the town brought in a steady stream of visitors keeping everyone in the Plaza occupied fielding their questions.

By mid afternoon the crowds had thinned out and almost sadly it was necessary to dismantle everything packing it away for when it will be used again. It was an agreeable event and resulting from this we are welcoming thirteen new members to join us; I know you will make them feel at home. Many thanks to everyone who helped with the event.

Paul Ollett Chairman

Selection of Photos from the Open Day taken by Paul Ollett





Stars in their Eyes

Did you ever regret not going on the stage when you were younger? Are you better than the actors on The Archers? Did that Drama School lose your letter? Now's your chance - either as an actor or sound effects maestro.

We are delighted to inform you about the formation of **RaDA u3a** - the u3a Radio Drama Academy - will perform a pantomime version of A Christmas Carol at our December meeting.

The pantomime will be performed as a radio show, but with a live audience. Actors will read their lines from a script and there will be no costumes. However, as we will perform in front of an audience we will have plenty of visual, as well as auditory, gags. The cast, including sound effects will be no more than a dozen and some cast members will take more than one part. A draft of the script has been produced so we already have material to work with. The panto will be as silly as we can make it, and so far it's very silly!

We need actors, and sound effects people so that we can start casting over the next month, and full rehearsals beginning after the summer holidays. Learning lines isn't necessary although we will need to learn how to deliver them to get the best audience reaction.

If you are interested please contact Alastair Henderson-Begg. alastairhbeigg@gmail.com or 07918 950205

Paul Ollett



COFFEE MORNING

**Our next New Members Coffee Morning will be at
Hermitage House, Kingfisher Road, Thrapston
on the 24 May - 10-12pm**

Parking is available on site.

They have very kindly offered to let us hold this meeting and will supply a good selection of coffees or tea with cake for £3. Could you please bring cash with you as I will be collecting the money and then paying the staff by card machine.

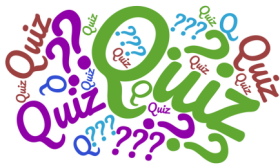
I hope many new members from the past year will be there together with Group Leaders and any members who would just like to join us for a 'cuppa' and a chat.



BOARD GAMES

The Board Games Group currently has vacancies. We meet fortnightly at Thrapston library from 1 until till 3pm. If you would like to come and join in the fun why not come along to the next two meetings which are Tuesday 21st May and 4th June.

Lynn



Mayor's Quiz & Chips – 4th May 2024

Now for something completely different! Thrapston Town Mayor holds an annual quiz night in the Plaza to raise funds for his preferred charity and this year quite spontaneously we entered two teams of six from our u3a. These were the u3a Chancers and the u3a All Stars.

University Challenge it certainly wasn't but a great deal of fun it definitely was as we delved deep into our memory banks to solve eight sheets of questions on General Knowledge, Geography, History etc. After a fiercely contested first half we dined on excellent Fish & Chips provided by Ben's local chippy.

The Plaza was filled with teams and you could practically hear the cogs whirring, some of them being liberally lubricated with products from the bar.

I think it is sufficient to say that we did not come away with the top prize but our All Stars team did us proud and we didn't leave empty handed as you will see from the photographs. After all it is not about winning but merely the taking part!

Paul



To all Thrapston U3A gardeners and allotment holders :



Free stable manure, for the Autumn garden

Can be easily bagged up or put in a trailer.

Contact John Percy on

01832 720130 or johnpercy1947@gmail.com

Day Trips & Outings



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Although the original trip to see the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace on the 19th September is full, I still have vacancies for the earlier coach trip on **Monday 2nd September**. The cost is **£54**.

Either see me at the monthly meeting, text me on 07736 445 658, or email me on peterandjeanmole@btinternet.com together with your mobile phone number. Jean



TURKEY & TINSEL

This year's Turkey & Tinsel is from **Friday 6th to Monday 9th December**, and the cost will be **£265** to include the coach and 4 days/3 nights at The Suncliff Hotel in Bournemouth. If you haven't been before, full details for this very popular event will be available at the next monthly meeting.



JACK & THE BEANSTALK

For those of you who are coming to Turkey & Tinsel, I have booked 50 seats to see the pantomime, Jack & the Beanstalk, on **Saturday 7th December** at the Bournemouth Pavilion. The cost of the tickets are **£35** per person, to include a free ice cream!



THURSFORD CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

I have booked 50 matinee tickets for this event on Friday 15th November. Unfortunately the cost of the tickets has jumped since our last visit and the price for the coach & entry to the show is now **£73**. However I have managed to get really good seats in the front centre section of the auditorium. For those of you who have never been to this show, it is the biggest variety show in the UK and people come from all over the country to see it. A non-stop extravaganza of singing, dancing, dazzling costumes, humour and variety from a cast of over 130 professional singers, dancers and musicians. Thursford Christmas Spectacular is a unique show that's guaranteed to get you into the festive spirit.

Please see me at the next monthly meeting or e-mail me on peterandjeanmole@btinternet.com to book your place. Jean



PRETTY WOMAN (The Musical)

I have booked 30 seats at The Royal & Derngate Theatre to see this brilliant show at 2:30pm on **Wednesday 11th September**. It is self-drive (no coach) but if necessary, I am happy to try and match up drivers with those who can't drive. The cost of the tickets is **£56** per person. Please see me

at the next monthly meeting or e-mail me on peterandjeanmole@btinternet.com to book your place. Jean



Telephone numbers given in the newsletter are usually preceded by the Thrapston STD code—01832.
Any Raunds numbers (indicated by R) need the STD code 01933

Thrapston and District U3A Committee 2023/2024

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A note from the Editor

This newsletter is published on behalf of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A, or of the U3A Trust.

Please note that items for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the Editor by the last day of the month.

Editor and publisher : Tina Jones - email: editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Website : www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk where details of the committee and their roles can be found along with details of all the groups.

You can also join us on **Facebook** — **Thrapston and District U3A**



Thrapston & District U3A is a registered charity number 1179593