

NEWMARKET U3A

Group Reports to the 2026 Annual General Meeting

Speaker Secretary (read by Roger Worden)

Shortly after having been elected to the Executive Committee last year, I found myself offering to take over the role of Speaker Secretary, when David Soanes announced that he wanted to retire from the role.

David left me legacy of booked Speakers that took me up to December of that year, which I was grateful for.

Carrying where David left off and having been in a similar role with my last u3a, I was able to recall and book the Speakers I had previously booked. Starting in January of this year we have had a good mix of speakers at our well attended meetings, with an average attendance so far of 50 members.

The mix of speaker subjects continues for the rest of 2026 (with Brian O'Leary retuning by popular demand in December), and into 2027 with Speakers booked up until November.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the band of RUM's (Really Useful Members) who help me with the meetings each month.

Antiques Group (read by David Soanes on behalf of David Soanes and Richard Rigby)

Yet again the Antiques Group has had a very interesting year thanks to David Palmer. He has continued to give us an insight into auctioneering and buying and selling at local markets.

His supply and description of objects at our sessions keeps the audience interested throughout. The interplay between him and our members is a unique way of discussing and handling unusual acquisitions.

Members are also encouraged to bring along objects for advice and information as to their background and value.

David cannot always attend these sessions due to clashes with his professional assignments. Where possible, he supplies a back-up but on two occasions Richard and I have run sessions involving our audience in the proceedings. Where else can you meet up with friends and have a free cup of tea or coffee for £2.00 all in?

This year we had a very interesting talk by a member of the Bateman family who are auctioneers based in Stamford.

Our next talk will be on 2nd September at the Racing Centre.

Art Appreciation (read by Anna Smith)

During the last year we have continued with the usual pattern of talks and other activities at the Racing Centre, alternated with visits to exhibitions at galleries and museums locally.

Talks are given by group members and have included such topics as, Ships and the Sea, Davis Hockney, Miro, Matisse and Eric Ravillious. We have also had two "show and tell" meetings. These are popular, and the members seem to enjoy the opportunity to talk about art works they enjoy - or don't! The December lunch at the White Hart went very well.

These kinds of activities attract just over 20 members, but support for our visits has been very variable. A proposed visit to the Henry Moore centre had to be cancelled because of lack of support. We had quite a large group to visit the Murray Edwards college and its collection of works by women artists, but our most recent trip - to Kettles Yard - attracted only five members. It seems wrong to be arranging things which only a small proportion of the group wish to attend, but looking at art is a core activity. I feel that we have a problem here which should be discussed going into the new year, as it would be a shame to lose the enthusiasm and camaraderie which has been such a feature of the group.

Brunch (ready by Judy Herridge)

The Brunch group meet in the Stable Café, High Street, Newmarket around 12 noon on the second Wednesday of each month. It is an opportunity to enjoy a meal tailored to your tastes, meet with friends and with no washing up.

Camera Group (read by John Herring)

Camera Group continues to meet on the first Monday of the month at the Racing Centre. We are working our way through our calendar of monthly photo challenges for 2026.

Members enter up to two 7 x 5 inch prints in each competition. Each month the members vote for their favourite photo judged against that month's theme. After the voting we discuss all the entries and hear how different members approached the challenge.

Our next meeting in August has the theme mostly one colour. The winner is published on the Camera Group web page as is the list of all the challenges for the year for which I am grateful to Chris Timmins who handles that aspect. Kath Gifkins is the third coordinator, and it is the three of us who compile the members' suggestions into an annual list of challenges to match the seasons.

We have about two dozen members on the register and 14 or 15 regularly attend our meetings. As technology has moved on, many winning entries are now taken with camera phones although some members use traditional cameras, but all are welcome.

Carpet Bowls (read by Lorraine Spalthoff)

Carpet bowls has an attendance of approximately 25 people per meeting, the numbers varying slightly from meeting to meeting.

It is held on the second and fourth Thursday of the month from 10.30 to 12.30 in the Racing Centre, it is £1.50 per person and £1 for coffee or tea and biscuits

Creative Writing (read by Sarah MacManus)

The Creative Writing Group has had a very successful year as our numbers have swollen to the point we are thinking about starting a waiting list to join.

So, if you were thinking about joining the group, do so now before you're too late!

Our new members who joined in the last year;

Kim, Willow, Bill, Robin, Ian and Susan, have all contributed some very good work to the group and are much welcomed by the original members.

Tim Young has been publishing a story from the group in the last few newsletters. Please feel free to feedback to us if you read the contributions.

Tim has also asked us to put together a selection of our stories, which we are working on currently.

Discussion Group (read by John Herring)

Meets at the Racing Centre at 2:30 in the afternoon of the second Tuesday of every month. We don't have a set theme of topics to discuss but rather are guided by the group about the things they would enjoy discussing over a cup of tea or coffee.

Discussion is a smallish group of regulars although on occasion we have made double figures.

Family History (read by Bridget Kerle)

The Family History group is one of our newer groups. We have a core of friendly and interested members who meet and share experience, discuss issues and progress projects on how we can both research our own family history and look at how we can preserve and pass on our results.

The aim is very much to support each other and to share experience. Some members of the group are highly experienced researchers and others are beginners looking to learn more. If you want some help or if you want to help others, everyone is welcome.

We identify a core topic for each meeting, and all members can contribute to the discussion. We have also welcomed an external speaker and visited Ely Museum to discuss how to preserve family documents and artefacts with the curators there, followed by a lovely lunch in Ely.

Garden Group (read by Margaret Webb)

The Garden group meets monthly on the third Wednesday of the month in the Racing Centre. We are a large group with over 60 members, but a friendly group and we welcome new members. Our

programme is varied during the year. We like to take advantage of the good summer weather and visit some interesting gardens that members might not have visited before. This year we have visited two gardens in Essex, Markshall and Green Island Gardens which both displayed quite beautiful but contrasting gardens. And of course, no garden visit is complete without the enjoyment of lunch and Markshall did not disappoint as it has an excellent café. Our second garden visit was in contrast, a guided tour with afternoon tea at Downing College, Cambridge.

We invite gardening experts to talk to the group and this year we have had speakers on a variety of gardening topics, but all the experts share their experience and knowledge in an enjoyable way with the group. We are grateful to our members who have supported the group by bringing plants for our plant sale or gifts for our raffles as the money raised helps to pay for our expert speakers. In gloomy January, we lift our spirits by holding a lighthearted gardening quiz and begin to look forward to the emergence of our spring bulbs.

History Group (read by Denise Cioffi)

The history group meet on the first Friday of each month, at 2.30pm in the Moller Room at The Racing Centre.

Unfortunately, our History Group leader, Niddy Walpole has now had to give up her role following a horrific car crash in August 2025

There was no meeting in September or October 2025 whilst decisions were being made for the way forward for this most interesting group.

It was decided that although not one member could take this on, but certainly 3 of us could which includes Di Angus-Smith, Tim Young and myself

In November 2025 Tim gave a talk on Ada Lovelace, an English mathematician widely recognised as the world's first computer programmer.

In December I arranged a whole group Christmas dinner at The White Horse, Exning which was greatly enjoyed by all and put us in the festive spirit.

There was no meeting in January 2026 due to the bank holiday but in February I gave a talk on Niddy's behalf on 1905 v 2005 which she had researched with Tim kindly giving me tech support.

In March Tim gave a talk on Mary Anning who was an English fossil collector, dealer and palaeontologist

There was no meeting in April, again due to a Bank Holiday but in May 2026 Niddy returned as a very much welcomed guest speaker and gave a talk on 'old bridges'.

In June I gave a talk on the History of Royal Tiaras with Tim's tech support and we had great fun trying on replicas of tiaras that I had purchased from eBay.

In July we had a guest speaker, Bridget Kerle titled 'Augustus: The first Roman Emperor and in September it will be about The History of Underwear by me. Hopefully again I may be able to purchase some artefacts!

We are yet to decide on October (but probably will be a talk given by Tim) and November I am hoping to present a talk on the first Lord Fairhaven and the history of Anglesey Abbey.

In December we will arrange a Christmas lunch for the year's end

As you see, the presentations are quite varied with something for everyone. We are open to any topics which members would like to know more about and of course we are more than happy to accommodate any member wishing to give a talk themselves

Do come along and join us.

Mah Jong (read by Susan Stallman)

After a slow start, the new Mah Jongg club got up and running in the spring. We meet at 10am on the third Wednesday of the month at the racing centre. We have had a minimum of two tables at each meeting. Our players have done really well at getting the hang of the game. Having experienced players will make it even easier to teach new players going forward.

Model-making and Coffee and Cook Off (read by Stephanie Ellington)

We are a fairly small and a very friendly group meeting at the Racing centre on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. First the 'crafters' arrive at around 10.30am bringing a wide range of crafts, including model making, knitting, felting, crochet etc, and demonstrating an impressive range of skills. Sympathetic expert advice is always available.

Then the 'bakers' turn up at 11.15 with their goodies. Each month members chose a recipe to try for the following meeting generally alternating between sweet and savoury items and the recipe is circulated to all. Some members follow the circulated recipe; others not at all but we all sample each other's baking and discuss hints, techniques and outcomes hence learning a great deal including many useful, and usually successful, short cuts. Coffee is provided by the racing centre so we can eat, drink, chatter AND learn new tricks-of-the-trade.

We have had several new members in the group recently who have brought fresh ideas and new skills. New members are always welcome to join our friendly and informal group.

MOTO – Members On Their Own (read by Bridget Kerle on behalf of Rosemary Foreman)

The MOTO group have enjoyed various activities over the past year. In September we joined the Garden Group in a visit to Anglesey Abbey and in October once again attended Kirtling church Friends' Day. Other events have included lunch at Scotsdales at Horningsea, morning coffee at Fordham and a visit to Chippenham Park to look at the Spring flowers, where some of us also had lunch. In June we went to The Porter's Lodge at Cavenham, where we enjoyed a walk round the gardens and lunch or afternoon tea on a lovely day.

In August, a group of us will be joining up with Cheveley Evergreens for their annual visit to Felixstowe and we will no doubt be going to Kirtling church in September/October for their Friends Day.

It would seem that our members enjoy any visit which includes lunch or tea but I would also like to arrange other visits so any suggestions would be welcome.

Music Appreciation Group (read by Richard Unwin)

The Music Appreciation group meets at the Racing Centre at 2.30pm on the third Friday of the month. We watch and listen to a 75-minute music video using the audio-visual equipment in the Moller Room. Mid-meeting we have a break for tea or coffee and a chat.

A varied selection of classical music of all ages and genres is presented - orchestral, instrumental, chamber, operatic, ballet, etc. We aim to cater for all tastes, mixing the popular with something new. The presentations are compiled from the vast range of excellent performances available on the internet.

All U3A members are very welcome to come along for a taster to see if they would like to join our friendly group. Just sit back and enjoy the music!

Finally, I would like to thank Mike Jocelyn and Judy Herridge for their presentations over many years. Thanks also to Tara and her staff at the Racing Centre.

Portraits (read by David Watson)

I think that this has been a successful year for the Portrait Group. We have met 9 times (no meeting in July, August or near Christmas) and from a group of 10 enthusiasts we might expect to get 8 attending any one session. We started meetings two years ago in Ashley Pavilion but, due to the Pavilion floor, have recently had to move to the Racing Centre who were able to accommodate us at short notice. We meet at 2-4pm on the 4th Tuesday of each month and on occasion this year we have been fortunate to have a volunteer model/sitter. Do let me know (daje4546@gmail.com) if you would like to model for us in a session.

It might be possible, after the summer break, to introduce some variety to our afternoons. For example, it might be possible for us to join, for just a morning or afternoon, another group who had already arranged a demo – in order to share costs.

Do let me know if you have any questions about joining the group.

Realm of Books (read by Sabine Deering for herself and Stephanie Ellington)

The Realm of Books continues to offer its members the opportunity to discuss a number of books throughout the year. In October the group members were invited to participate in the selection of books to be read for 2026. A reading list was then drawn and made available online to all.

The books we read are varied and range from fiction, nonfiction, murder mysteries, historical novels... giving each one of us the opportunity to read books we may not necessarily have chosen to read, as well as books that suit our literary tastes and interests.

At the meetings we review the book of the month. Members express their likes or dislike of the book in question, and lively discussions follow. When a member cannot make a meeting, their own review of the book to be discussed can be sent to the group leader and shared at the meeting. Some reviews of the books are also made available on the U3A website.

Several new members have joined this well-established group. Some regular attendees have been attending the monthly meetings since the creation of the Realm of Books by Margaret Jocelyn many years ago. But newcomers are always made welcome.

We meet every 4th Friday of the month at 2.30pm at the Racing Centre. Don't hesitate to join us or contact me with any query.

All in all, the Realm of Books group has had another enjoyable and successful year.

Rummikub (read by Kath Gifkins)

Regretfully Rose Baxter had to step away from leading the group after the meeting in June due to ill health. I have stepped in hopefully temporarily, until someone agrees to take over the group on a more permanent basis.

Rose set up the group around 10 years ago, starting off in her own home and using several venues before the group settled at Brampton Manor Care Home on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

Our hosts at Brampton Manor supply tea, coffee and cold drinks along with biscuits.

There are regularly 3 or 4 tables of 4 playing the game, which can become quite addictive! It is relatively easy to pick up and fun to play.

Why not come along and give it a go.

Scrabble (read by Janet Neville)

We continue to enjoy a pleasant afternoon learning new words from each other every week, but there is still room for a few more.

We are a friendly group and don't take things too seriously there is always time for a chat and a drink.

Walking Group (read by Bridget Kerle on behalf of Rosemary Foreman)

The walking group continues to thrive and I'm very grateful to Kath and Annie for leading most of the walks, with thanks also to Thelma and John for helping out at other times.

Over the past year, walks have included round Ashley, Borough Green, Mildenhall, Burwell, Exning, Stetchworth, Ely, and a walk along the Newmarket chalk stream. Most of the group then enjoy lunch at the various nearby pubs!

We meet at 10.30 am on the first Wednesday of each month.

As most of you know, I will no longer be arranging the walks so if anyone would like to take on this role, please let me know.

Wings Wheels and Water Group (read by Tim Young)

"Wings, Wheels and Water" is the rather romantic working name for Newmarket U3A's transport group. We primarily look at man's efforts to develop and improve his life and surroundings through the invention, design, development and employment of moving machines. As the title indicates, this may be on land, on, or underwater or in the air. In addition to the machines, we look at those who operate the machines and the ancillary facilities necessary for their safe and efficient operation.

Over the last 10 years that this group has now been running we have met on approximately 100 Monday mornings and considered some 70 aspects of our themes.

Over the last year, since August 2025, we have met 11 times and the presenting team has grown considerably, providing A wider variety of topics and presentation styles. Over this year the team has consisted of David Soanes, Richard Rigby, John Wallace, Alistair Nobbs, Clive Davies and me. The topics have ranged from Richard's Lighthouses to John's Narrow Gauge Railways of WW1.

Choosing a theme, preparing an illustrated talk and delivering it to our audience is a time-consuming task, which, in addition to studying the subject and writing the talk, demands mastery of the ever-developing technological world. Nevertheless, it keeps the brain active and provides valuable mental stimulation.

In the days of the Gredley Bus we made numerous visits to museums and sites of interest. This has become much more difficult since our transport was removed, and we have spent our monthly sessions in the Racing Centre this year. However, our members do make visits to various places of interest, and you can read reports of these on our group page of the U3A website.

It has been an interesting and informative year of WWW sessions, and we look forward to many more in the coming months.