



## From the Chair

Hi and here is our first News Letter of 2026 !!! Happy New Year to you all.

The first meeting for our Thorley u3a is on the 5th January 2026 and it is our Annual General Meeting. For most organisations the AGM is an important part in the life that organisation. A time to reflect, to thank and to look forward to new challenges. I am sure 2026 will bring a wide range of events and activities that many of you will want to take part in, and that will hopefully meet many of our members' interests.

Now as everyone will know, New Year comes with making New Year's resolutions. Some of us will have given up on this idea, some try but often fail. I would guess the top two resolutions for most over the years have been too loose weight/get fit and take up a new hobby or interest.

Here is an opportunity to do both and at no cost!! Hertfordshire Health Walks run a programme of walks in Bishop's Stortford for all abilities; indeed I know a number of you attended the Grade3 Thorley walk on a Monday at 10 am. I would like to bring your attention to the First Steps walk which is aimed at people who have mobility issues or need that extra bit of support to start walking. This walk starts at the Herts and Essex hospital at Mid-day and is about 20 mins long. On Friday mornings at Castle Park there are two walks a Grade 1 and Grade 2. For full details visit [hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks](http://hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks).

The other opportunity is to learn a brass instrument for free. Bishop's Stortford Band are offering four free half hour taster lessons to anyone over the age of 8 and over (including members of Thorley u3a) They will take place at Herts and Essex High School on Tuesday evenings from 6.15 pm to 6.45pm. Even if this is not for you why not encourage a family member to come and have a go. Full details at [bsbbrass@gmail.com](mailto:bsbbrass@gmail.com)

I am delighted to see that the History group is being relaunched so if this is your area of interest then please give it your full support.

Can I express my sincere thanks to everyone who have volunteered their time over the past year to help deliver and organise all the events and activities and groups over the past year. Also a really big thank you to the Thorley u3a committee for their time and dedication given to ensure we have a successful u3a.

Happy New Year  
Nigel

## Our Meeters and Greeters



**PLEASE NOTE – THE MEETING STARTS AT 2.10 pm IN THE HALL.**

**The meeting starts at 2.10 pm in the Charis Centre with a welcome from the Chair.**  
**The talk from our speaker will follow this.**



Remember – We have step free access by the main entrance where meeters and greeters will take you into the hall. There is also a hearing loop system. To make best use of it, you should sit in the far right-hand corner of the hall, as seen from the stage.

## COMMITTEE NEWS

### Update Your Membership Details Online

Have you moved house or changed your telephone number or email address since joining Thorley u3a? Would you like to add your emergency contact details to your membership record?

You can now do this via the Thorley u3a website.

**<https://thorley.u3asite.uk/>**

At the bottom of the Home Page there is a link to the Membership Page where you can send us your updates by clicking on the button –

**Update Your Details**

## **COMMITTEE NEWS** **AGM & ELECTION OF NEW** **COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2026**



Our AGM will be held at the next monthly meeting on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January.

Nominations closed for new Committee members on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, and we now have 4 members who will join the Committee from 2026.

You have all been sent via Beacon –

- ❖ Agenda
- ❖ Minutes for 2025
- ❖ Accounts of 2025 (These are also available on our website)

We look forward to seeing you all next week.

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**A bit of financial advice from John Bailey for everybody as so many of use Amazon these days, especially at this time of the year.**



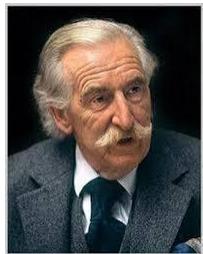
If you need to print a copy of an Amazon order's invoice –

1. Sign in to your Amazon account.
2. Click the **Returns & Orders** link that's beside the Shopping Cart icon in the top-right corner of the window. You should now see a list of the items you have ordered from Amazon.
3. Find the item you need to print an invoice for in the list of items and click the **View invoice** link that located right below the **Order #**.
4. Click the **Print** button that's located near the top of the page.



## SPEAKERS FOR 2026

### JANUARY 2026



Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January

**Cherith Lowry**

**Sir Frederick Gibberd - His life , work and garden**

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### FEBRUARY 2026



Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February

**Mary and Graham Brace**

**Wildlife in Zambia**

## Future speakers for 2026 to include talks on -

- ✚ Ant & Dec – the WI and me as seen on TV

Lindsey Barrrell - who gave the burlesque talk, and who gave the BSL talk later in November.



- ✚ Fraud and Scam awareness



- ✚ Dad's Army – the nation's favourite comedy

- ✚ Old Movies saved my life

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- ✚ My adventures in helicopters

- ✚ The National Garden Scheme and the Mount Garden in Roydon



- ✚ Adventures of a ghost hunter

- ✚ Churchill's intervention in the Russian Civil War

- ✚ Sing and song of Christmas

**All the details of these speakers are now on our website.**

Please do come along to our monthly meetings. We always try to get a variety of speakers that will interest many of our members. Some of the speakers have been recommended to us by our own members. Attendance at our monthly meetings during 2025 has been very good. This is very positive, and we hope to see this continue in 2026.

## ***Discounts in 'Stortford – All offer 15% Just show your Membership Card***

We are very grateful to the following traders in Bishops Stortford for their generous offers of discounts for our u3a members. [All these offer a discount of 15%](#)



Coopers – Bridge Street



Garden Terrace café



CaffelInn (Florence Walk)

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### ***GROUP NEWS FROM ANNIE COMPTON***



Annie Compton has a table in the Charis Centre at the back of the hall for our monthly meetings. New members are welcome to have a chat with Annie about any group in which they may be interested. Equally, if anyone is interested in becoming a group leader, would like to assist in running an existing group, forming a new group entirely, or joining our Committee, Annie will be more than happy to talk through what would be involved.



Suggestion Box. You can put your suggestions in the box about Groups, and for the Committee. If you prefer to email a suggestion, Here are the email addresses –

Annie Compton - [groups.thorleyu3a@gmail.com](mailto:groups.thorleyu3a@gmail.com)

## Pickleball update 4 Thorley members now in the group



The Sawbridgeworth u3a Pickleball Group has now got 4 of our members. Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the world for all ages. It is a bat and ball game played as doubles on a smaller tennis court. All very informal and friendly.

The group meets at Sawbridgeworth Tennis and Pickleball Club, Springhall Road, CM21 9ET, FREE parking, every Monday from 10am – midday.

It is outdoors so weather permitting. First session is FREE, thereafter £5 per session.

If you would like to try your hand at Pickleball (like Taylor Swift) then come along and have a go, or express an interest by emailing [info@sawbridgeworthtennis.org.uk](mailto:info@sawbridgeworthtennis.org.uk)

## Group Leader wanted for Customs and Cultures



Our Customs and Cultures Group is our largest group with almost 200 members. There has not been a leader for the past 3 years. For many years before then, there were successful trips and talks each year, and even dinners out to restaurants. There have been occasional coach trips to interesting places recently which come under this heading, but there is still the need for somebody, or even a small team of 2 or 3 to organise much more.

If anybody is interested, please contact me. I have a long list of all the things that were organized before.....and a lot more ideas for the future.

**Dave Willett**

## A message to all our groups who use South Mills Arts



**Good afternoon to all our lovely regular bar groups,**

I just wanted to give you the overview of the festive period timings and the access available to the bar for your groups. I also wanted to take this opportunity to wish you a wonderful festive season and a pleasant new year. Thank you for your continued custom and support of SMA.

Please note the below and ensure you pass on to your relevant members so they know when the bar will not be available during our Panto Season. Many thanks in advance.

**\*U3A Thorley – I do not have contacts from some of your groups directly on email, so please can the groups co-ordinator ensure this is passed on to them directly to share with all attendees.**

School's Panto Shows from now until Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December:

During the week, in term time, we have usually 2 shows a day which are attended by schools so at certain times, the foyer and bar area will be busy and noisy, but groups are welcome as usual.

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December:

The bar will be closed off from 3pm for an event set up, so any groups will have to vacate by this time please.

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December:

The bar will be closed off for a private function from 12noon, so any groups will need to vacate by this time please.

Christmas Week; Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> Boxing Day:

We are open for Panto shows only, no bar access for groups will be possible as all shows are very busy.

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December:

We are CLOSED

New Year week: Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> – Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2026:

We are open for Panto shows only, no bar access for groups will be possible as all shows are very busy.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2026:

We are CLOSED

**Please note: We return to a normal timetable  
from Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

If you intend for your groups to continue in 2026, please just confirm back to me that is the case. Also, if you have a different contact please let me know too.

Any queries, drop me a line.

Kind regards,

Jo.

Jo Fegan

Event Supervisor

*\*Please note my working days & times vary – for urgent enquiries please call 01279 710200*

**At the heart of the local community**



### Film Club update

Only three people have expressed an interest at present. This may possibly be incorporated into Rosemary Hoskins Book Club.



### Wine Tasting update

Four people are interested so far.



### Creative Writing

Only two people have expressed an interest in this. Annie may do something. Watch this space.



## Craft Group

Crafts that may be undertaken are cross-stitch (pictures/cards), quilling (pictures/cards), tissue paper flower making, marzipan/sugarpaste figures or flowers for decorating cakes, patchwork, pressed flowers etc.

Members can share their skills so that everyone can have a go at different crafts.

The group will meet at the home of Anne Willett on Mondays for 2 hours from 10.00am.

Contact Anne via email [annemwillett@gmail.com](mailto:annemwillett@gmail.com) on 07904 150595



## History Group relaunched !

From January 8<sup>th</sup> 2026 the revived History Group will meet every second Thursday of the month at the Emmaus Centre\*, Thorley Lane, from 10am to 12 noon. The programme of talks for the first six months of the year is as follows:

January 8th	The Battle of Hastings 1066	Dave Willett
February 12th	1769 – The Year that changed Stortford forever	Tim Howard-Smith
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	The Tragedy of Prince Lee Boo	Dave Parker
April 4 <sup>th</sup>	The Bishop's Castle – Waytemore and BS	Mike James
May 14th	A short history of the London Stump	Dave Parker
June 11th	TBA	Dave Willett

More speakers are needed for the latter half of the year – all suggestions gratefully received.

**Membership will be £20 per calendar year, with a £2 contribution to venue costs at the door. (Non-U3A members £3). Volunteers to look after the reception desk also needed.**

Dave Parker is the current organiser, ably assisted by Dave Willett and Annie Compton.

My contact details are: e-mail:

[daveparker796@gmail.com](mailto:daveparker796@gmail.com)

mobile 07889619747

home address: 12, Mayfield Park, Thorley, CM23 4JL

- For those not already familiar with the Emmaus Centre, it's the modern low-rise building tucked away behind the St.Barnabas Centre. There is plenty of free car parking and very few steps.

**Dave Parker**



## The Art Group

The Art Group had 17 people attended our Christmas Lunch at The Hunter's Meet this year, this was most enjoyable and good value for money, 3 course meal, and entertainment.

At our last meeting of the year we had a free raffle with 6 gifts also small Christmas gifts for all, followed with Mince Pies and a hot drink.

We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year in



2026.

Rita Foster & Pauline Bullions



## What the Papers Say



January's month's theme will be –



**Are you a fan of social media ?**

**Venue - Emmaus Centre**

**Date - Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January**

**Time - 10:30 am - £2 at the door.**

If this will be your first visit, Welcome!

And maybe drop a text to Tom on 07977 574 454, so I bring enough biscuits.

Tom McNeeney

**NEW MEMBERS WELCOME TO 'SOUND OFF' AND EXPRESS YOUR OPINIONS. NUMBERS HAVE DROPPED OFF RECENTLY, AND IT WOULD BE GOOD TO GET A FEW MORE MEMBERS TO ATTEND.**



# 2026 events

This year will be another busy year for our u3a.

There will be holidays, theatre trips, garden groups visits, History group trips, Customs & Cultures group trips, and a lot more besides.



So read the Newsletter, and look at our website regularly for all the details.

**Keep up to date so that you don't miss out**



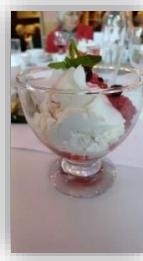


## REPORTS FROM OUR GROUPS



### Christmas Lunch – 2<sup>nd</sup> December – Great Hadham Golf Club

Our annual Christmas lunch took place at our regular venue for 90 people. A three course lunch with wine, followed by coffee and a mince pie was enjoyed by everybody.



Many members have said how much they enjoyed the occasion. The food was hot and served efficiently. The atmosphere in the hall was ideal. There was plenty of opportunity for people to talk, and to circulate and talk to other friends as well.



## BSL (British Sign Language)

Following the successful talk from Lindsey Barrell in November, 26 people have expressed an interest in learning BSL. I am hoping to set up some sessions in 2026. More details to follow.

Annie Compton



## Family History Group



The final meeting of 2025 saw Dave Willett entertain the family History with stories of the Cultures and Customs associated with Christmas. His talk ranged from Carols to Pantomimes and on the way touched on Father Christmas, Christmas cards and of course Food. Following festive refreshments members added their own tales of Christmas Past and Present.

We meet again on the last Friday in January when Dave Annal will be using local newspapers to help us to add colour to our ancestors' lives. Subs for the group are £20 per year, but non-members are welcome to any meetings at £4 including refreshments.

Sue Swan

### Garden Group 3

On Tuesday 9th December a small group of us braved the wind and rain to visit The Mount. The owners put on an extraordinary Christmas lights display every year and donate the funds to the local school.



Unfortunately on the night we visited (the first night is Rotary and U3A members) Santa was engaged elsewhere however we were easily consoled by mulled wine and mince pies!



When we visited this garden in the summer we struggled to find the drive but no such problem this time as the entire drive was magically illuminated.

Magical Christmas lights, fantastic hospitality and the icing on the Christmas cake - harmonising Reindeer.

Linda Maxwell

## A Choral Christmas Cracker



With 110 people in the audience, there were more people than ever before at the Thorley U3A Singers' sell-out Christmas concert on December 6th, conducted by choir director Sue Hickman and accompanied by pianist Michael Smith.

Highlights of the evening included Mozart's life story sung in just two and a half minutes and a Beatles medley, as well as lots of festive favourites such as John Rutter carols, Walking in the Air from the Snowman, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas and the Twelve Days of Christmas.

The choir now has a substantial men's section which brings much more depth to our music. The gentlemen brought the house down with their comic rendition of the Carol Singers, performed with flat caps and a policeman's helmet and truncheon.

Not to be outdone, the ladies sang an entertaining version of Sisters from the film White Christmas, accompanied by much play-fighting.

There were lots of opportunities for the audience to join in and everyone enjoyed mince pies and wine during the interval. All in all, it was a great start to the festive season!

The following week saw the U3A Singers entertaining the residents of Elm View care home, where one of our former choir members now lives.

Regular choir sessions will start again on January 8th. The U3A Singers meet every Thursday at the Havers Lane Community Centre, from 1.45-3.45pm. Music for the next few months will include an Andrew Lloyd Webber medley, Elvis Presley's Can't Help Falling in Love, Mama Mia and lots of folk songs.

New singers are welcome. We don't audition and you don't have to be able to read music – just to be able to hold a tune.

For more information please contact –

**Carmen Konopka at [carmen.konopka@btopenworld.com](mailto:carmen.konopka@btopenworld.com)**



## COMMUNICATION



To all our members

Remember that there are two easy ways for you to find out everything you need to know –

The monthly Newsletter

**JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER**

and our website



## **NATIONAL U3A ZOOM LECTURES**



These are to be found on our own website.

Open the website page.

Click on u3a at the top

Now click on Events and Workshops

Finally, click on On-line learning events

A drop down menu will appear. Just click on the one at the top - Online Learning Events and you will see lots of interesting Zoom talks. There are links to Radio podcasts and free Zoom lectures - **JANUARY** talks include.

# Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> – 10am – How do your medicines work?

# Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> – 2pm – Understanding in-line content and misinformation

# Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> – 2pm – How to build confidence in later life

# Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> – 1pm – Smart cities with u3a

#Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> – 11am – Why snails might hold some answers to age-related memory loss

**These are only some of the talks.**

**Check them all out and you may find something that interests you.**

## Finally.....something funny to end on .....

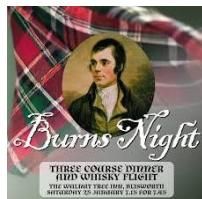


### Learn

Commemoration dates for January



# 4<sup>th</sup> – World Braille Day



# 25<sup>th</sup> – Burns Night



# 27<sup>th</sup> Holocaust Memorial Day



### Laugh

### Live

#### New Year's Resolutions for senior citizens

- "My New Year's resolution for this year was to lose 10 pounds... I only have 15 to go."
- "I was going to quit all my bad habits for the new year, but then I remembered that nobody likes a quitter."
- "May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!"
- "My New Year's resolution is to see my cup half-full... preferably with rum, gin, or vodka."
- "I don't need to make more New Year's resolutions; the ones already on the books aren't being enforced."