



# NOT SO IDLE TIMES

**Retford U3A Newsletter - FEBRUARY 2026**

**CHATTER "FROM THE CHAIR"**

Hello and welcome to this issue of the NSIT. Thank you for taking the time to read it & thank you to the Editor Chrissie Cook who puts it all together.

It has certainly been a pretty wet and soggy month, with very little sunshine or blue skies. Fortunately both walks for the Steppers and Striders walking groups had dry days-surprising, as both had forecasts of likely rain. The mud lived up to expectations!

The Membership Secretary, Pat Lockett, shared some very good news at our Committee Meeting earlier this month. We now have 601 members. What a positive start to the year.

The plan to circulate to members a satisfaction survey is 'on hold' at present, but we expect it will be available later this year.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) approaches on April 23rd. I urge you to put the date in your diaries as it is an important event in the U3A calendar. Only full members are permitted to vote. Associate members are excluded from doing so. We need to have enough Full Members attending in person to ensure we have a quorum to hold the meeting. So do attend if at all possible. There will be a booked speaker for after the meeting.

Please join me at the next General Meeting on Thursday 26th February at The Well, Hospital Road Retford. This is a reminder of the new meeting format. There will be plenty of time to meet group leaders and committee members before and after the talk and notices.

- ◆ Doors open at 1.00pm

***Please do not arrive before then***

- ◆ Refreshments 1.30pm - 1.50pm
- ◆ Notices 1.50pm - 2.00pm
- ◆ Speaker 2.00pm - 3.00pm
- ◆ Notices 3.00pm - 3.15pm
- ◆ Meeting closes 3.30pm

I am looking forward to welcoming our speakers, Naomi Feldman and Robin Stokes (who are replacing the advertised speaker Ranald MacDonald). The talk is unchanged. They will be telling us about Aqua Boxes (water filters and humanitarian aid sent to disaster areas). An unknown subject for me so it will definitely tick the 'Learn' part of the U3A strap line Learn, Laugh, Live.

Pippa Ramsay  
[chair@retford-u3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@retford-u3a.org.uk)  
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**2026 SPEAKER PROGRAM February - May**

Date	Speaker	Title of Talk
26 <sup>th</sup> February	Naomi Feldman & Robin Stokes	Aqua Boxes. Talk about water filters and humanitarian aid sent to disaster areas
26 <sup>th</sup> March	Neil Harrison	Inn & Out at the top. A humorous talk about running the highest inn in Britain in 1980s
23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Claire Syrenne	Experience of a MasterChef finalist 2025 Professional chefs and their kitchens
28 <sup>th</sup> May	Pat Hall	Life can be a Laugh Observational comedy, poems and anecdotes

## INTEREST GROUP NEWS

### WATERCOLOUR PAINTING GROUP



"A night scene in the rain". A challenging subject with good results. For February our topic will be "Creating texture in watercolour" at 9.30 on Thursday 26th February in the Maypole Court Community Centre Wellow. If you are interested in coming along please contact Andrew Young via the link on the group's page at the U3A's website."

### FUN WITH FLOWERS GROUP



Tulips were the traditional Valentine's flower. The theme was tulips and roses for Valentine's day.

### PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP



This months theme was **OPPOSITES**

- 1. Analogue & Digital - Adrian Hetherington
- 2. Alive & Dead - Marie Thompson
- 3. Full & Empty - Pippa Ramsay

- 4. Sweet & Sour - Andy Paul
- 5. Back & Front - Sally Telfer
- 6. West & East - John & Christine Dunn

## INTEREST GROUP NEWS

### THE BALLET 2026

Several people have asked me if we are going to the ballet this year. I am afraid I am not in a position to put a trip together this year.

I have contacted the Royal Centre in Nottingham and so far they only have one ballet coming; Matthew Bourne 'The Car Man'. This is being performed on September 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>.

So far, the Northern Ballet, whom we usually see are not booked in.

If you wish to go independently to the Royal Centre, the number to book on is - 0115 9895555. Best wishes

*Brenda Wilson*



### PROPOSED NEW GROUP

#### Harmonica/Accordion Jam

Calling all Harmonica and Accordion players to a proposed new group, to meet the first Wednesday morning of the month in Retford. Playing either with tabs/music or by ear.



**Please register your interest by contacting**

[co-groups@retford-u3a.org.uk](mailto:co-groups@retford-u3a.org.uk)

### NEWSLETTER CONTACT

Design, Production & Printing Christine Cook

Contact

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The next edition of the newsletter will be March 2026 and the last date for receiving articles will be Friday 20th March 2026

### ITALIAN CONVERSATION & INTEREST GROUP



"It's still early in the new year, so how about a new activity / interest?"

Our Italian Conversation and Interest Group has been meeting since October 2024. We started very much as a group of beginners to the Italian language. But we've come on nicely since then.

With another recent new member, we are now very much a mixed ability group in our command of the Italian language. We've had good fun, enjoying improving our Italian conversation. However we also enjoy spending part of our sessions sharing (mostly in English, with a few Italian phrases mixed in) our thoughts and experiences of different aspects of Italian culture, cooking, lifestyle or any other Italian theme.

Owing to ill health or other commitments, a few of our members have had to drop out of the group. So we're looking for two or three new members. We would welcome anyone interested, whether you're a beginner or you're proficient in Italian, to come and share your interest in the Italian language and enjoyment of all things Italian.

We meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday afternoon (2.00-4.00 pm) of each month at Betty's home in Sutton cum Lound.

For anyone who is interested in knowing more about this group and would like to meet us, please do contact Betty, and you are welcome to come and sit in on one or two of our group meetings.

Betty Merrick

Group Leader of the Italian Conversation and Interest Group"

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## MEMBERSHIP

In the committee meeting we discussed the cost & the use of membership cards. Printing on a personal printer, printer ink, card and time spent with a guillotine, was compared with a quote from a local Printing Company that was much more expensive than expected. In addition, many members never arrange to collect their card.

This led to the question of 'What is the purpose of the card'? It is only needed once a month to prove your U3A membership at the Savoy Cinema in Worksop. We are aware that other U3A's, in the Nott's Network, are sending out Digital Membership cards by email, that can be printed out or saved onto their phones.

The decision has been made to move 'Online'. Retford U3A Digital Membership cards 2026-2027 will be sent by email. There are now very few members who are not using email and a physical card will be provided for those members.

Pippa Ramsay Chair Retford U3A

## URGENT - YOUR U3A NEEDS YOU

**WE NEED YOU**

The position of Chair of Retford U3A will become vacant at the AGM on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2026. This is due to unforeseen circumstances where the person who was due to be nominated has needed to stand down.

Please consider if you could fulfil the role. It is not rare for new members to take on committee roles. In fact most of the committee stood for committee positions within months of joining!

***Without a Chair in post the U3A cannot function.***

You will be well supported from within the committee and through various U3A networks and peer support groups.

Please contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss this further.

I look forward to hearing from you  
Pippa Ramsay

[Chair@retford-u3a.org.uk](mailto:Chair@retford-u3a.org.uk)

Mobile 07971 525294

## OBITUARY FOR BOB BLATCHFORD

I first really became aware of Lieutenant Commander Robert Blatchford RN (Ret) about twelve years ago, when I was invited to attend a meeting of Retford Men's Probus Club. At the time he was President and he basically said to me you're a likely looking lad, how about being George Teasdale's number two, which means you'll be President in two years time? He of course was a natural for our new U3A Military History group and helped at the beginning advising me on how to arrange speakers and finding the correct style of venue. Along with Bryan Gladstone and Wing Commander Adrian Sumner RAF (Ret) the four of us have created a group which has gone from strength to strength.

A number of you will remember Bob's presentation of how he and Patty went to Canada and met a local magistrate in Yellowknife. On the wall of the magistrate's office was a picture of a sailing boat and by a remarkable coincidence it had been Bob's company who had supplied the rigging. Bob was invited back to Canada to visit the high North to see how justice is administered.

Bob was a valid member of Retford's U3A and had attended as many meetings as he could. He will be sadly missed.  
Roy Evans

