Spire u3a

Newsletter 70 November 2026



From the Watermeadows
by James Monteith

Monday 9 November
monthly meeting
10am for 10.30
Harnham Memorial Hall
- See p.4

From the Chair

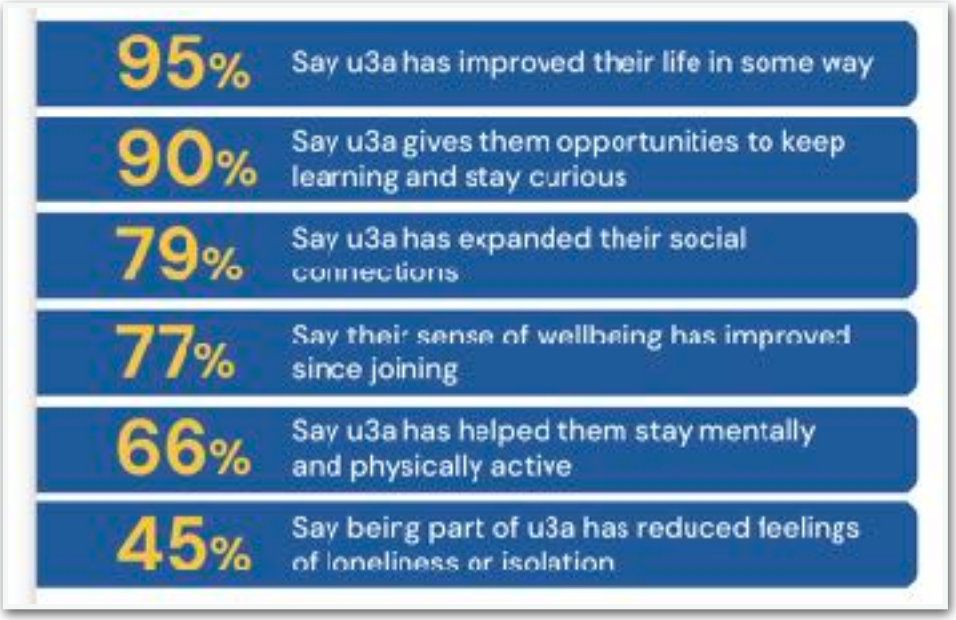
Sometimes we forget what the u in our name stands for but tertiary education at college, polytechnic or university has always been a mix of academic progress, a rich social life and expanding horizons. In Spire u3a we can still incorporate these things into what we do - but thankfully without the exams. Sometimes we receive requests to collaborate with a University Research Project. Our last newsletter included an invitation aimed at our hearing impaired members which sounded rather fun. This month we have another from a trainee psychologist (p. 10).

At the same time u3a UK has launched a new report exploring how members make the most of life after full-time work. Read inspirational stories of u3a members who have found fulfilment in later life. (Link p. 2)

Maureen

Retirement Rewired

"I love the positivity of people at u3a. They are brimming with a zest for life, being sociable, learning new things and supporting each other."



Read the report here …..
https://www.u3a.org.uk/index.php?option=com_edocman&task=document.download&id=3389

& tell your non-u3a friends what they are missing!



Raffle

We will be holding a Grand Raffle at our December monthly meeting in the Memorial Hall. John Holt will be collecting prizes at the November meeting.

(If you are planning to bring a prize on the day of the draw - **Monday December 14** - please let us know beforehand.)
Thank you.

Summer School

During the first week of September I attended the u3a South East Region Summer School. Registration on a sunny Monday afternoon followed by tea with our tutors. My course was Linguistics; Onomastics – What's in a Name. Mike Cooper, our tutor, actually lived in the New Forest so I was not the only person from our area.
Over three days we discovered the origins of surnames, Christian names, place and brand names. It was fascinating and enlightening. Our group was very friendly with the inevitable member who always arrived late for lectures!
The food was excellent: I had to keep a strict eye on my appetite but did try to use the stairs and not the lift.
For entertainment we had a quiz, a visit to the Minerva theatre – the smaller of the two in Chichester – and a speaker on the last night. Three good evenings, plus a welcome drinks party and a farewell drinks party. Hardly a moment to ourselves. A really worthwhile trip and highly recommended.

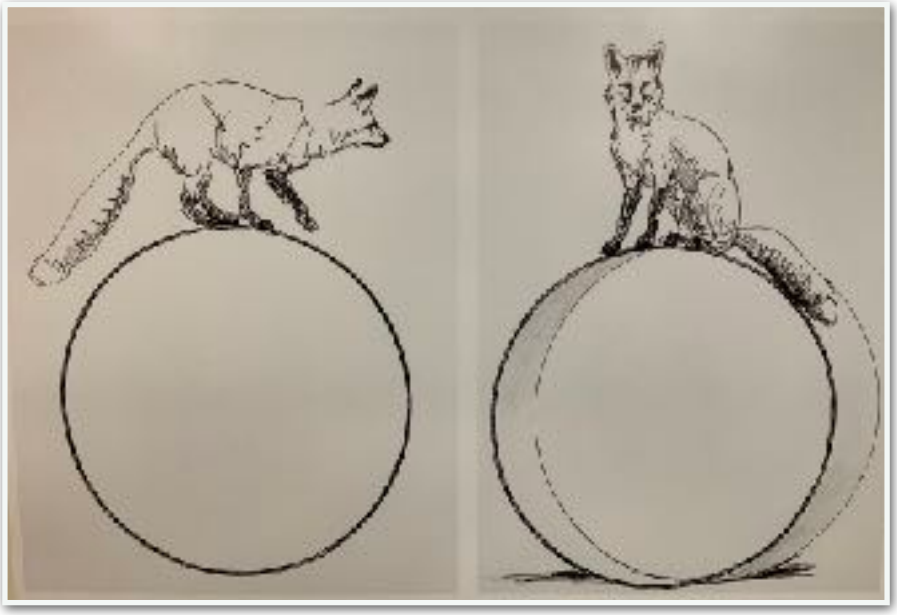
Sally Leaver

October: Harnham Field Notes

"People influence the landscape which in turn creates fragments of art."



Harnham, where we meet and where many of us live, was the focus of a very special conversation at our October meeting. The to-and-fro, between Sue Martin (artist) and Leigh (Engagement Officer at Wessex Archaeology) both arose from a community project, that took place here during the summer, and gave us the background to the October exhibition in the Young Gallery.
We heard about walks across the Wilton Gate archaeological dig area and burial grounds, small groups creating large scale artworks of the landscape, in the landscape itself, and the emergence of personal stories; the links between residents and residence. Murky Turkey, St George's Church, Snowman's Bones, Charcoal, Photographic Paper, Flint, Haiku, Ink and Wax all came into the mix.



So thank you Sue and Leigh for enlightening us all. We shall remember the colours of Harnham Summer 2026 on our walk through the Young Gallery and know exactly what lies behind the designs for wooden benches, the seed pod installations and fox sculptures when they appear in our new Country Park.

"I find words difficult but in Harnham I can feel Home. Grounding. A sense of not being alone."

Next Meeting – 10 am coffee for 10:30 start

Our own Frank Bryant on *Ladies of Lighthouses.*
Monday **November 9** at the Memorial Hall, as usual.

And next month...

Our in-house seasonal entertainment; featuring a bit of drama, the grand raffle and a seasonal presentation by the AI group.
Christmas jumpers, hats, socks, whatever - welcome.
If you are coming by car, and going on to the *Rose & Crown* for lunch afterwards, parking in the hotel car park during the morning has been agreed.

Christmas Lunch

The Rose and Crown - 12.30pm - after our meeting on **December 14.**
Please ensure that we have your menu choices and payment in good time.

- Cash and cheques (in an envelope bearing your name) can be brought to the November monthly meeting.

A common scientific name for fireworks is pyrotechnics, which comes from the Greek: "fire arts".

Interest Groups

Men's Breakfast

A half a dozen of us met at Charlie's Café in Catherine Street for an enjoyable hour and a half's great conversation and good food. We meet on the day after the monthly meeting at 9:30. There is plenty of room for more men to join us. The next date will be Tuesday 10th of November with prospective following dates on 15th December and 12th January. There will be a sign on sheet at the back of the hall during the next meeting or make contact via the website.
https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/mens-breakfast/

You will all be welcome (that's assuming you're a man, of course 🤣)

Alan

Spire Wednesday Book Group

In October we read 'Shot in the Dark' by Anna Britton. It was a murder mystery led by two female detectives with problems in their personal lives. The group enjoyed the book and found it easy to read. The general consensus was that the book pulled in lots of themes from other detective novels; some enjoyed the writing style, the messages, chats and emails which added interest to the story. The cliff-hanger ending was annoying and it was suggested it was only there to make you read the next book.

Sharon

Art & Craft

Four of us met on Tuesday October 27 to make poppies which were taken by Marilyn to be sold in Dauwalders to help raise money for the poppy appeal. Some of the group had already made some poppies and they were brought along to add to our collection. We didn't make all these in one afternoon!
The next meeting will be on Tuesday November 24 when we will be making some fabric Christmas tree decorations: 2pm at 3 Burford Avenue.
No meeting in December.



Doreen

Armchair Geology

Our monthly sessions are progressing well, with just one indoor meeting (**November 17**) before our Salisbury City Geotour on December 15. By then we should be able to recognise local use of Chilmark Stone, Ham Hill Stone, Devonshire "Marble" and also Purbeck "Marble". Do please join us from November, when all will be revealed!

Stuart

Playing Simple Music

Our final session this year will be November's (on **Monday 23**), as the 4th Monday in December (28th) is a Bank Holiday. Unfortunately this group has become unviable - due to a number of resignations. So at November's meeting we will play ourselves out!

Stuart

Walking in the Countryside



Last month we had a smaller group of seven for our walk around Cranborne which was enjoyed by all. Again, we saw some magnificent Fungi amongst the other Flora and Fauna we observed. Great fare was consumed after the walk in the Garden Centre Café and enjoyed by all.

Details of our next walk on November 20 have been sent out to members and anyone else who has not previously joined us will be very welcome, just let Dave know through the website.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/exploring-the-countryside-walking/

Each walk starts at 9.30am and we try and end near a coffee shop for those interested in partaking. Interesting local facts will be part of the format of each walk. On a previous walk through the Avon River Park to the open meadow we heard a Cetti's warbler and a few lucky ones glimpsed a kingfisher.

Dates for walks up to December 2026 are as below:

November 20 – Breamore and the Mizmaze – 5 miles Start at Breamore House tearooms and returning for a coffee at the end.
December 11– River Bourne Community Farm to Clarendon Park– 4.5 miles. Coffee at River Bourne Community Farm Café at the end.
January 8 2027 - Broad Chalke, Fifield Bavant and Bower Chalke - 5 miles. Start at Broad Chalke Church Car Park and finish at the Broad Chalke Community Cafe.



Bangers, mini-rockets, jumping jacks, and erratic-flight fireworks were banned in the UK in 1997 under safety and nuisance regulations.

Photography Groups

The Practical Photography Group met at a Member's house and had an excellent Presentation by James Monteith of *How to take photographs of Animals/Birds in Nature.* This was followed by Lunch at The Pelican Inn and then onto Langford lakes to practise taking photos of animals and birds in a natural environment. The rain precluded us from moving away from the shelter of the cafe area but we all managed to set up our cameras ready for any birds etc. - we all got a few shots.

The Photo Editing Group showed their homework which was Montages, but we also saw some really good Collages and Compilations. Richard Temlett showed his photos from Bristol Air Balloon Show.

- Contributions to the Zoom Fee are now due.

Terry





Montage of images taken at Roche Court by James Prain.

Also an Image by Richard Temlett where he has creatively combined a number of images from the Air Balloon Show.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/digital-imaging/

The law says you must not set off or throw fireworks (including sparklers) in the street or other public places.
You must not set off fireworks between 11pm and 7am, except for:

- Bonfire Night, when the cut off is midnight
- New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year, when the cut off is 1am



OBC

This reading group will meet at 3.30pm at 3 Burford Avenue on **Tuesday 10 November** and again on December 8.
Our current theme, travel writing, has taken us from England's Hollow Ways, to Constantinople, Mount Athos, round the Mediterranean, to India and Xanadu.
Future topics? A novel set in Wilts, the book I had for Christmas and Sally Rooney.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/book-club/

Onward

An opportunity to share and discuss scientific and technical advances with others of like mind: on the first Friday of the month at 10am.

- Contributions to the Zoom Fee are now due.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/onward/

Coffee Companions

Like Tipple Time, the two lunch clubs and Men's Breakfast this is the ideal event to keep in touch and get to know more people, especially if you miss the monthly meeting.
More information and contact details here……
https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/coffee-companions/

Sunday Lunch Club

Visiting pubs in and around Salisbury on the third Sunday of each month - please book with (Pink) Pauline in advance through the website.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/sunday-lunch-club/

Lunch Bunch

Ladies-who-lunch, generally somewhere in Salisbury where we are waited on at table. Ably organised by Judy; if you would like to join, please make contact through the website.
https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/eats-and-treats/

Explore AI

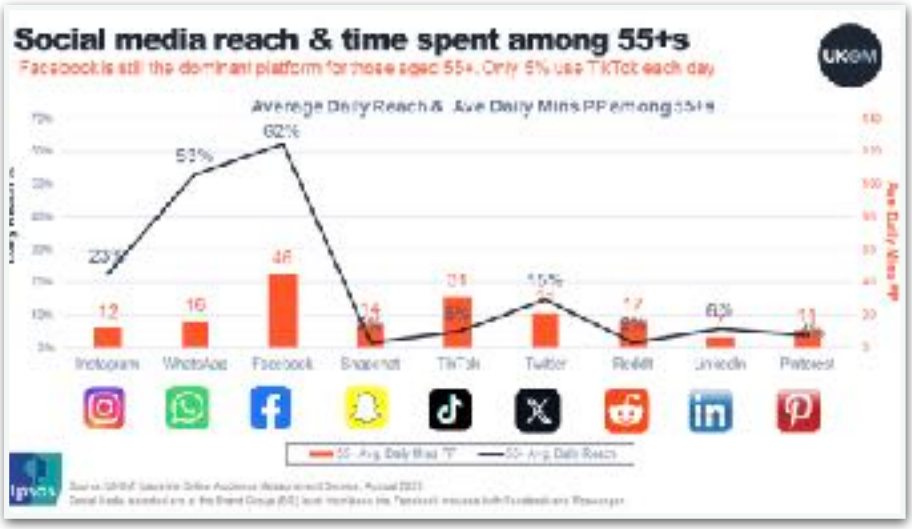
https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/exploring-ai/



The opening session included a brief history and looked at examples, using ChatGPT and Google. Michael talked the group through several processes, explaining pitfalls, terminology and issues of privacy and copyright.
Next meeting **November 20.**
Meanwhile, it is time to start work on the Chairman's Challenge (p. 10) for the December Monthly meeting.

Learn, Laugh Live

Whilst WhatsApp groups are useful within Interest Groups the graph below, supplied by the u3a Chairs Forum, shows why we stick with Facebook. In 2026, 86% of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) were using social media, notably Facebook for 46 minutes per day, on average.
On Facebook - Spire u3a (Salisbury) - is where we post urgent messages, details of events (Spire u3a and local ones that might appeal to you), local authority and Police messages aimed at our age group. Recent posts include a burglary alert and tips from Which? for hearing aid users.



Chairman's Challenge 2026

Design - Compose - Invent - Something Seasonal & have fun doing it!

No prizes this time, but you never know, fame & fortune might follow……
Using AI, (ChatGPT or whichever you choose) compose a Christmas poem, song or limerick, paint a wintery picture, design a Christmas Card or sheet of wrapping paper, make up a recipe for mincemeat that Rudolf might like or engineer a sleigh for the 21st century.
Please send your results, good, bad, brilliant and indifferent to Michael who will compile them for showing at our meeting on **Monday December 14**.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=4055

Christmas Tree Festival

Tuesday **December 1** to Sunday **December 6**
Come and seek out Spire u3a tree. There will be refreshments available and a continuous programme of music to enjoy.
Many thanks to our Walking in the Countryside members for dressing our tree and helping to make Spire u3a more visible.
https://stthomassalisbury.co.uk/welcome-to-st-thomass-church-salisbury/ctf/

Bangers came in two different categories: gunpowder bangers and those made with flash aluminium. The difference between the two was in power; flash powder is incredibly powerful.

Fraud Research



Are you over 65 and have been let down by someone you trusted with your money? Shannon Edwards, trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Leicester, is conducting doctoral research on something that doesn't get talked about nearly enough: fraud committed not by strangers, but by people we know, such as a partner, a family member, a friend, or even a professional we trusted.
If this has happened to you, we'd be honoured to listen. It's a one-to-one conversation, up to 75 minutes, on Microsoft Teams or telephone, or alternatively the interview can be conducted via email. Completely confidential and fully ethically approved by the University. All eligible participants will be given a £20 Love2Shop voucher as a thank you for your time. What you share may help to shape how psychologists and clinicians actually support people in this situation, because right now, there's very little out there. Email Shannon Edwards at se220@leicester.ac.uk

Fireworks originate from China and the ancient practice of exploding bamboo sticks to ward off spirits. In the 9th Century Chinese alchemists discovered gunpowder. Mixing saltpeter, charcoal and sulphur, artisans began packing gunpowder into paper tubes to create shapes and effects.
https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/where-do-fireworks-come-from/

Dig In

Wednesday 25 November
A short (free) talk from Wessex Archaeology will start in The Playhouse Community Room at 11am but do arrive earlier for a chat over coffee and cake!
In September we heard about the Verwood potteries from ancient times to living memory.
In October we learned about the evidence for brewing in the archaeological record.
As ever, the topic for November is a surprise!

Tipple Time

The topic for November is long journeys - interminable road trips, with or without children, delayed rail journeys, trans-continental adventures - and let's work out who had the longest journey home from school.
6pm Friday November 20

All welcome. Just click the usual link at 6pm to join the conversation –

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/tipple-time/

Roman candles eject 'stars' as the shells explode into the sky.
Catherine wheels spin; sending the sparkles and flame shots out in a vortex like pattern.

Some zoom links and contact details are omitted from the online version.
You can usually make contact via the website.