

# u3a

# Thatcham

Newsletter

June 2025



# u3a Thatcham

*Thatcham u3a*

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*Vice Chair - Vacant*

*Secretary - Kerry Thomas*

*Treasurers - Lynn Stacey & Jan Watts*

*Committee*

*Ann-marie Riddle, Sue Stevenson, Roy Lawson, Julie Campbell and Janet Patterson.*

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*Articles in Word and photos in Jpegs please.*

*Please send all contributions for next issue (No2) by end of November 2025.*

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# Thatcham u3a June 2025 newsletter

## Chair's Report

I have completed my first year as Chair and feel that I am still climbing the learning curve. Thatcham u3a is such an interesting organisation. It is a charity with its own charity number 1112006 and trustees. You elected the executive committee, and they are all expected to accept the role of trustee.

It is a voluntary organisation affiliated to the Third Age Trust. This organisation, which is also a registered charity, provides educational and administrative support to all the u3as in the UK. We pay them £5 (£4 subscription and £1 for the Beacon system) per member, each year, for this support.

To be accepted as an affiliated member we have to agree to abide by the three principles. The first is that membership is open to anyone who is no longer in full time employment. The second is that we all have something to contribute to this self-help environment. The third is that no member receives payment for their contribution so that costs can be kept as low as possible.

I have paraphrased the principles here so as to give you the flavour. While the first and third one may challenge some, the second one is the principle that is truly amazing.

Thatcham Town Council ran a Volunteer Fair back in March. 'Is this something we should get involved with', I wondered. Then I realised that we do not work that way. We are not an organisation that has volunteers rendering service for its members. There is no 'them' and 'us'; no need to attract external voluntary help. Everything that is achieved by Thatcham u3a is made to happen by its members and many of the best bits are not planned or organised.

Thank you for playing your part in this. Recently the nation has celebrated 'volunteer week'. Give yourself a pat on the back for your contribution to Thatcham u3a and remember that your smile is one of your greatest gifts.

*Ann Dibble*

**June 2025**

# Songsters Christmas 2024



## Benefits Derived From Singing

- Singing makes you feel better by releasing endorphins, serotonin and dopamine, the happy chemicals
- Singing counts as aerobic activity as it introduces more oxygen into the blood, leading to better circulation and a better mood
- Singing enhances lung function, increasing your lung capacity and engaging the muscles around the ribcage
- Singing helps you beat stress and relax and is good for releasing anxiety
- Singing helps improve memory, it helps keep dementia at bay and evokes precious memories
- Singing helps build a sense of community and feeling of togetherness
- Singing lets you express yourself
- Singing helps with pain relief
- Singing boosts your confidence. Good posture is a key factor in hitting high notes so you find yourself standing taller
- Singing features in wellbeing studies and it is **FOR EVERYONE!**

# The Ukulele Group and Adagio Singing Group

The Ukulele Group and Adagio Singing Group went to entertain the members of the CAMEO Group at St Mary's Church on Monday 17th March. We had six ukulele players and eight singers, with Lynette also playing the melodica. CAMEO were very kind to us, giving us tea and cake and free tickets for their raffle where several of us won prizes. CAMEO members joined in with the singing and a good time was had by all.



# Life lessons learned from watching movies

1. If staying in a haunted house, women should investigate strange noises wearing their most revealing underwear.
2. If being chased through town, you can usually take cover in a passing St Patrick's Day parade – at any time of year.
3. It's easy for anyone to land a plane, providing there's someone in the control tower to talk you down.
4. Once applied, lipstick will never rub off – even when scuba diving.
5. The ventilation system of any building is a perfect hiding place. No one will ever think of looking for you there and you can travel to any part of the building without difficulty.
6. Should you wish to pass yourself off as a German officer, it will not be necessary to speak the language. A German accent will do.
7. A man will show no pain while taking the most ferocious beating but will wince when a woman tries to clean his wounds.
8. When paying for a taxi, never look in your wallet as you take out a note – just grab one at random and hand it over. It will always be the exact fare.
9. A single lit match will be sufficient to light up a room the size of a football stadium.
10. Medieval peasants had perfect teeth.
11. One man shooting at 20 men has a better chance of killing them all than 20 men firing at one man.
12. It does not matter if you are heavily outnumbered in a fight involving martial arts – your enemies will wait patiently to attack you one at a time by dancing around in a threatening manner until you have knocked out their predecessor.
13. Dogs always know who is bad and will naturally bark and growl at them.
14. Rather than wasting bullets, megalomaniacs prefer to kill their arch-enemies using complicated machinery, pulley systems, deadly gas, lasers and man eating sharks that will allow their captives at least 20 minutes to escape.
15. A detective can only solve a case once they have been suspended from duty.

*Kerry Thomas*

# Would you be prepared to eat bugs to save the world?

Several projections have suggested that world population will reach over 9 billion by 2050. This increase in population requires approximately double the current food production. Also, climate change may decrease the area available for food production and could negatively impact food productivity.

So, what are the alternatives to current food production, particularly in protein production?

The Science and Technology Group discussed these issues in March including

1. Meat and dairy analogues with plant protein - look and taste like meat with vegetables, pulses, seeds etc.
2. Cultured or cultivated meat - growing meat in a lab with stem cells from animals
3. Fermentation derived protein (e.g. mycoprotein) - biomass and precision fermentation using microorganisms.
4. Edible insects - so far 4 have been approved in Europe.
5. Algae - macroalgae (seaweed) and microalgae

We even ended up doing a 'Bushtucker Trial'. Whilst most of the members were quite happy sampling the cricket protein bars, even taking some home for their partners, no one was keen on the salted locusts, crickets and mealworms.

*Kerry Thomas*



# Welsh Cakes - Pice ar y maen (cakes on the stone)

The Welsh Cake is a small sweet cake, with a crisp outside and a soft, crumbly inside. It is a fine example of the unique and traditional food of Wales, that has been influenced historically by its predominant industries of agriculture and mining, as they are made from simple pantry items such as flour, sugar, milk and butter and are the perfect size to be slipped into the working man's coat pocket.

The modern day recipe dates from the introduction of baking powder in 1843. Traditionally they were made on a flat bakestone griddle (a portable flat stone placed on or next to a fire) and cooked with plain flour rather than self-raising flour and baking powder, which would have resulted in a much flatter and crisper cake. The bakestone was replaced in the 19th century with a cast iron plate griddle, which in more recent times can also be made of aluminium, or carbon steel.

## Recipe

1 lb plain flour	6oz mixed currants and sultanas
1 teaspoon baking powder	(seedless raisins)
10 oz butter	½ teaspoon mixed spice or mace
6 oz sugar	1 egg
Pinch of salt	a little milk

Mix together the flour, baking powder and salt, then rub in the butter. Add the sugar, spice and fruit. Mix in the beaten egg and just enough milk (about 3 tablespoons) to make it the same consistency as short-crust pastry. Turn out onto a floured board, roll out and cut into rounds about 3 in across and ½ in thick. Cook over a medium heat in a very lightly greased pan or bakestone for 3 – 4 minutes on each side. If they brown too quickly, lower the heat, for the inside to have time to cook properly. It has to have a brittle sandy texture inside. Serve hot or cold sprinkled with sugar. Can be served with butter, jam or honey.



# About Adagio – by some of its members



**Three of our** original members still enjoy singing with Adagio. We moved to the Bluecoat building in 2013 when our rehearsal room at Alice Bye became too small. With Lynette at the helm, our repertoire has grown as we are continually challenged with a variety of music and harmonies. The introduction of the use of ukuleles as additional accompaniment has brought a new dimension and fun to the group. *Alison Stanley*

*Picnic 2024 - Photo by Andy Stacey*



Adagio is a friendly group - we welcome new members! You don't have to be able to read music or sing like an angel.

We have a warm-up first which is vital for singing. The songs are quite varied from folk, pop past and present, from musicals old and more modern, ballads and traditional pieces. Sometimes we sing in parts and sometimes in unison.

Lynette accompanies us on the piano or keyboard and sometimes plays the ukulele with Brian and two of the group which adds interest to the songs.

Singing is good for the soul and definitely lifts the spirits. *Marguerite Shave*

I joined Adagio about 2 years ago, having seen the group perform at the u3a open afternoon. It is a lovely way to spend every other Tuesday afternoon, singing with like-minded, friendly people.

The sessions are well led and organised by Lynette who manages to get the right balance of it being fun, relaxed and enjoyable whilst at the same time having structure and ensuring we get down to learning new songs along with revisiting old favourites and rehearsing them to a good standard.

*Margaret Adams*

If you've been to the Thatcham u3a open day, picnic, or December meeting over the last couple of years you will know who we are - we're the happy looking bunch sitting in the corner in our cowboy/sailor hats or Christmas jumpers singing along to Lynette at the piano or Brian and the ukuleles. As well as our set of songs we often lead community singing for you all to join in.



*Christmas 2024 - Photo by Andy Stacey*

If you'd like to join in even more, we meet in the Old Bluecoats' School on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 2.00 pm for warm-up exercises, singing for our own enjoyment and practice for the next event where we can sing to all our friends in Thatcham u3a. We also enjoy the tea, coffee, biscuits and chat at half time!

We sing from a wide range of material, including classic pop songs, songs from stage shows, from musicals, from animated films, folk songs, and Christmas carols (in season). The only restrictions are firstly that Lynette likes them, and secondly, they are suitable for unison or two-part harmony singing. The group is formed of those who can reach the high notes ("the sopranos") and those who can reach the low notes ("the altos") - there are currently only two male voices, so little chance of four-part harmony. Many of the songs we sing have no sheet music, just the words to sing along to well-known tunes, so anyone who likes to sing can join in.

*Mark Backhouse*

Basically, we all enjoy singing, both ladies and gents. An ability to read music is useful, but not essential. Why not just come along to one session and see for yourself!

*Heather McKelvey*



## Dad Jokes

Went to a new cafe in Newbury yesterday, Dan's cafe. The experience was spoilt by non-stop Wham and George Michael music. I'm never going to Dan's again.

Red Riding Hood was found in a critical condition. Paramedics have stabilised her condition but she's not out of the woods yet.

Wife; "You never pay attention to me when I'm talking to you". Husband; "Sorry I was thinking about something to post on Twitter". Wife; "something to tweet". Husband; "Thanks, I'll have a chicken sandwich."

How do you get down from an elephant? You don't. You get down from a goose.

My friend just left his job at BMW. Of course he gave no indication he was leaving.

I accidentally swallowed some food colouring. The doctor said I'd be fine but I feel like I've dyed a little inside.

Just played football against a team from the lemonade factory. They were 7 up by half time.

# Dad Jokes Continued

I'm being moved to a different department in the prosthetics factory. It's so annoying. I'm up in arms.

I don't know how to say this without sugar coating it but Frosties are the same as Corn Flakes.

My brother was a lion tamer, but he went bankrupt. They took almost everything but at least he's still got his pride.

I have CDO. It's like OCD but the letters are in alphabetical order as they should be.

I am not, repeat not, selling my Fleetwood Mac record collection .....It's just rumours.

I have developed a mobile app for tracking prescriptions, but it only works on tablets.

I told the doctor today that I can't hear anything in my left ear. He said, "are you sure". I said "yes I'm definite".

My father worked 14 hours a day just to put food on our table. Lovely man, really poor cook.

I told my friend that my aunty is in hospital and passing the time playing draughts, mahjong, ludo etc. "Any chess?" "No, she's gone private."

I made a cake to apologise for all the fights I've started ..... Come on then, who wants some.

I'm really pleased about my vegetable patch. I haven't craved a vegetable for weeks.

My Grandad remembers "fighting them on the beaches" ..... Lovely man but he had a short fuse as a deckchair attendant.

*Kerry Thomas*

# Thatcham U3A Theatre Group



The Theatre Group of the u3a was disbanded some time ago due to the difficulties in filling coaches for theatre trips. The executive committee agreed however for u3a members to become members of Kennet Theatre Club and Paul Roberts (that's me) would be the convenor for the group and contact details are below.

Any u3a member can become a member of Kennet Theatre Club and this facility has been on offer to members for several months but there is quite a number who are unaware of this. I know this from meeting members at open meetings. There will always be forms available at open meetings to enrol in the Theatre Club. As Kennet Theatre Club is a well-established separate entity from the u3a, it necessitates completion of a form which is valid for the club year, October to September.

The club operates like this:

A newsletter is sent every month with full details of the next monthly theatre trip. There is always adequate notice of trips, generally about six weeks.

Members need to apply by sending a cheque with requests for tickets to the club secretary. The best way to ensure a good chance of obtaining a ticket is to send requests on the day of receipt of the newsletter. There is sometimes a waiting list for shows but members on the waiting list are often successful in obtaining tickets due to others dropping out for various reasons, the most common being medical appointments which rarely have a six weeks notice period.

The club has flourished for over 50 years and is very well established and on a sound financial footing which allows for early bird group ticket offers to be taken advantage of and this is reflected in the cost of shows. For example, in January members were able to see Les Miserables in London for an inclusive cost of £65.

At time of writing, we have booked 11 future trips including big name shows such as Mamma Mia and Blood Brothers.

Transport to and from shows is with Barnes Luxury coaches and there are four pick up points in Thatcham and two in Newbury. We visit theatres in London, Cheltenham, Oxford, Richmond, Milton Keynes, Woking, Guildford, Bath, Bristol and Sonning.

We hold an AGM (audio visual presentation) in early November at Kennet School and we have a subsidised club lunch at Crookham Golf Club in December which includes a free raffle.

We look forward to seeing you on a trip soon!

*Paul Roberts*

**YOU ALREADY KNOW YOU'RE  
GONNA LOVE IT!**

**BENNY ANDERSSON & BJÖRN ULVAEUS'**

# **MAMMA MIA!**

**THE SMASH HIT MUSICAL** BASED ON THE SONGS OF **ABBA®**



**THE WHIP CRACKIN' MUSICAL CLASSIC**

**UK AND IRELAND TOUR**

# **CALAMITY JANE**

**STARRING CARRIE HOPE FLETCHER**



# My Experience as an Independent Visitor

Hi! My name is Elaine and I became an Independent Visitor (IV) in March 2023. I first learned about the volunteer role of an IV due to an online advert. I had no idea that this kind of support for Young People (YP) existed! It sounded like something that I would be interested in because who wouldn't like the opportunity to make a positive difference in a YP's life? After all the usual safeguarding checks and online training I was introduced by my co-ordinator to the child that was to become my YP for the next two years.

Once a month I visit my YP in my area and we go out for a couple of hours to somewhere they would like to go to (cinema, indoor rock climbing, crafting etc) they get to choose! You can either join in or just watch them enjoying themselves! You are allocated a small budget to help towards the cost of the activity and travel mileage is reimbursed. You could see your YP more than once a month if you like, depending on what you both decide upon. I have mostly seen my YP one weekend a month which suits us both and which I believe is the norm and it's something we both look forward to. Reliability and commitment to the visits is important to your YP because it builds up a trusting relationship between you both.

All of the IV's have a co-ordinator whom we have support from and they can be contacted easily should you need advice etc. We've even got an IV WhatsApp group where the IV's post details of places to go with your YP that give discounts for carers etc.

I have honestly found it to be a very rewarding volunteering experience overall and if anyone would like to have further details about it please use the contact details on the attached literature or, if you are in Thatcham, feel free to contact me personally.

*Elaine Cross*

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

JOINING OUR INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE, YOU TOO CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE!

Independent Visitors are adults who offer support to children and young people who are living with a foster family or in residential care. They are separate from social services and independent from family, school and social services.

Why become an independent visitor?

- Make a lasting difference to the life of a child or young person
- Share fun activities, sports and hobbies with a young person
- Pass on your skills to the next generation - talk about life choices, help with homework.
- Be a positive role-model
- Develop a long-term trusting relationship
- Gain experience of working with a young person in care

Benefit from excellent training, support and being part of an ethical, diverse and caring organisation

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0800 0209 858



VOLUNTEERS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED!

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# It's big, really big!

Quills meets twice a month and, at each meeting, a writing trigger is set. Members write about that trigger and read their offering at the next meeting. When I write in verse, I normally set it out as below, like bars in music, to indicate the metre (the rhythm of the poem). The trigger for this poem is 'Growth'.

The things in the universe,      of which I can't get the hang,  
Include the fact that it      all started with a big bang!

It's been going for billions      of years, or more  
But I can't figure out      what was there before

Still, there's one thing      of which I'm knowing  
No matter what,      the blighter keeps growing

How can it keep up      this growing immensity? -  
While it's growing in volume,      it's decreasing in density

The 'Law of Conservation'      says things stay the same  
After all that effort,      it does seem a shame

I wonder what it's      all about, because,  
It could have saved the effort,      and stayed as it was!

*David Chapman  
April 2025*

## Bereavement Group

We would welcome anyone from Thatcham u3a, or anyone else locally, who has just lost a partner, sibling, child, parent or close friend and feels desolate in grief to come along on a Saturday lunchtime to meet up with a bereavement group to have a chat, perhaps a tear, and a cup of tea or coffee. We sympathise and offer advice from our joint knowledge. If you would like to come along at 12.30pm to Thatcham Discovery Centre but feel frightened then do give me a ring in advance.

Hilary Beckingham (As many will know I have been a member of Thatcham u3a for many years.)

*Hilary Beckingham*

# 20 Historical facts that'll distort your perception of time

1. When the great pyramids were built mammoths roamed the earth 2580 BC.
2. All humans born before the 1820s had never heard of dinosaurs.
3. The guillotine was still in use when the Star Wars Film came out in 1977.
4. It only took 66 years to land on the moon after the Wright brothers made their first successful flight, 1903-1969.
5. The Berlin Wall came down the same year as Taylor Swift was born, 1989.
6. Ann Frank and Martin Luther King Jr. were born in the same year, 1929.
7. Oxford University (established 1096 but not recognised as a university until 1231) is older than the Aztec Empire 1428.
8. The Titanic sank in the same year that Oreo Cookies were invented, 1912.
9. Spain was still run by the fascist dictator Franco when Bill Gates founded Microsoft, 1975.
10. Vincent van Gogh painted his masterpiece 'Starry Night' in the same year that Nintendo was formed as a company (although their first products were playing cards, not video games) 1889.
11. The iPod was launched in 2001, five years before slavery was abolished in Mauritania, the last country on earth where it was still legal.
12. The Battle of Crecy between the British and the French 1346, was revolutionary for its use of the crossbow (a brand-new weapon at the time) despite the Chinese using gunpowder in bronze guns in 1332.
13. The last person in Utah, USA to be executed by firing squad was killed on 18 June 2010, the exact same day 'Toy Story 3' premiered in cinemas.
14. Pablo Picasso died in the same year Pink Floyd released their iconic album 'Dark Side of the Moon' 1973.
15. Coca-Cola was concocted only five years after Italy officially became a country 1886.
16. The Human Genome Project published the sequence of Chromosome 1, the last piece of the human genetic code, at the same time that the Sentinelese tribe (considered one of the most uncontacted tribes in the world – one of the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean) killed two Indian fishermen who ventured too close to their island, which outsiders were banned from approaching.

17. President John F Kennedy was assassinated on 22 Nov 1963. The next night the first episode of Dr Who aired on the BBC. The episode had to be repeated the following week as media coverage surrounding JFK's death overshadowed the 25-minute episode called 'An unearthly child'.
18. Sir Isaac Newton changed physics forever when he published his three laws of motion. Five years later the Salem Witch Trials began in America. Rather odd that something so scientific and so superstitious could be happening at the same time.
19. Swiss women were finally granted the right to vote at a federal level in the same year that the crew of Apollo 14 landed on the moon, 1971.
20. On 15 May 1940, brothers Dick and Maurice McDonald opened a small hamburger stand in California, called McDonald's Bar-B-Q. Within a month, the first prisoners were transported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

*Kerry Thomas*

## Cyber Security

The Science and Technology Group organised a talk on cyber security by Hiro Taylor of the Thames Valley Police Cyber Security Team on 18 June 2025. Hiro originally came from the Philippines but came to this country to study Computer Science at University. His first job was as a 'White Hat Hacker'. This is someone who is employed by companies to try to hack their systems. If successful they then recommend solutions to prevent these hacks taking place. The 'Black Hat Hackers' are the criminals. Hiro then joined the police and helps companies, organisations and individuals who have been hacked or scammed. Another enjoyable part of his job is presenting to companies, organisations and charities on how to be safe online.

His presentation was both informative and entertaining. He handed out a brochure with advice on how to stay secure online. It contained 7 steps to protect yourself from most cyber attacks.

1. Create a unique strong password for your email account – If a cyber criminal accesses your email, they can use it to reset all your other account passwords.
2. Create strong passwords – cyber criminals can easily guess weak, short passwords. So, create a long password by combining three random words and include numbers and special characters if allowed. e.g. Pudd1ngT0rchPizza!
3. Save Passwords in your browser – Most web browsers (such as Chrome, Safari and Edge) will offer to save your passwords for you. It's safe for you to do this. Letting your browser do this means you can use unique, strong (and long) for all your important accounts.
4. Turn on 2-step verification (2SV) wherever possible – 2SV simply means you'll be prompted for a second piece of information when signing into your account. This is usually a code which will be sent via text or email.

5. Update your devices – you should update your apps and your devices software when prompted. You can make things even safer by turning on automatic updates.

6. Make sure your important data is backed up – a backup is a copy of your important data such as photos, documents and other personal data. Apple, Google and Microsoft offer systems to be able to backup your data on the internet.

7. Report suspicious messages – if you've received a suspicious email or text message that doesn't feel right, or visited a scam website, don't panic.

- Forward suspicious texts to 7726
- Forward suspicious emails to  
[report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)
- Report scam websites to the NCSC by visiting  
[nsc.gov.uk/report-scam-website](https://nsc.gov.uk/report-scam-website)
- If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at [actionfraud.police.uk](https://actionfraud.police.uk) or by calling 0300 123 2040

*Kerry Thomas*

