

u3a Thatcham

20th Anniversary Edition

December 2025



u3a Thatcham

Thatcham u3a

Chair - Ann Dibble

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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All contributions to the Editor, Andy Stacey, (breakaway@ntlworld.com).

Articles in Word and photos in Jpegs please.

Please send all contributions for next issue by end of May 2026.

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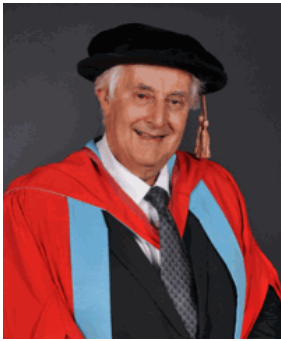
Foreword

The u3a was founded in Toulouse in 1972 – so yes, we have got something to thank the French for. It began in Britain in 1981 and has spread rapidly throughout the country. Interestingly, not only is the British model different from the French one but also each individual u3a in the UK has its own way of doing things. We are independent charities.

Thatcham u3a was registered with the Charity Commission on 10th November 2005. We will celebrate this event with a Big Birthday Bash on Friday 14th November 2025. Margaret Goodhead has volunteered to make us a cake and the Mayor, Petra Pemberton, has agreed to come and share the moment.

This newsletter is a bumper edition as part of the celebrations. We are grateful to all those who have contributed.

Of course, it was not a magic wand that suddenly created Thatcham u3a. The chair of the steering committee was Peter Jarvis. He lived in Thatcham from 2001 and had a lifetime commitment to adult and continuing education. Establishing Thatcham u3a was, probably, one of his last major projects before his death in 2018.



He was ably assisted by an enthusiastic steering committee and a band of committed convenors. There were 11 groups mentioned in the first newsletter in April 2005 and this had risen to 28 by 2009 when Peter Jarvis handed on the Chair to Peter Lavarack.

Thatcham u3a was well established by then and had earned a reputation for being sociable. At this point, 2009, there were four lunch clubs!! Communication was largely through the spoken or written word and a delightful number of photographs. The IT era has improved efficiency and lowered costs, but it has also brought some losses.

There are over 1000 u3a groups in the United Kingdom and all adhere to the same idea of self-help:

- > Membership is open to all
- > Members learn from and teach each other
- > Each u3a is self-funded and members offer their services voluntarily.

Many u3as struggle to find members who are willing to take on positions of responsibility. Thatcham have been particularly fortunate. The constitution allows for the Chair of the Executive Committee to serve for up to 3 years. Our records show that each Chair has done just that:

2009/2012	Peter Lavarack
2012/2015	Julie Wall
2015/2018	Lynette Harper
2018/2021	Maureen Prince
2021/2024	Stephanie Steevenson

The Secretary and Treasurer position has also been filled with capable and committed people and, since the constitution is a little more forgiving about the length of service for these roles, some have given well over the three years service.

We are very grateful to them all. You have established a u3a that Thatcham can be proud of and we can look forward to the next 20 years with confidence.

Ann Dibble

Chair



Founding Members

This is derived from conversations with my Dad -Ernest Prince known to everyone as Ernie.

Mum and Dad were founding members of Thatcham u3a, members 12 and 13 . While Mum was confident around most people Dad in particular wasn't as he'd left school with no academic qualifications. He found leading the Walking group with Peter Jarvis, who was highly educated, a great encouragement. He was able to use skills learned at work to help others, taking care to plan routes suitable for all abilities.

Mum was involved with Discussion and Playreading as well as Walking and Rummikub. Both did the teas and coffees for 10 years and I think they helped organise the summer picnics.

I was working in London and got updates periodically of things they had done and friends made through u3a. While Mum has been gone for 6 years Dad still enjoys going with me to the coffee mornings and open meetings and catching up.

Nick Prince

Have you ever wondered how Thatcham u3a started, back then in 2005

Having found that some of my group members had very low membership numbers, I put on my journalist hat and made enquiries.

My first conversation was with Helen Johnson (no. 2). Helen and her husband Alan, were friends with Peter Jarvis. It was Peter who first broached the idea of opening a Thatcham u3a, he suggested they “give it a go”. Peter asked Helen if she would be secretary.

Ann Allen's husband, Peter, encouraged her to go to the first meeting. He went with her but as Ann had taken early retirement and Peter was still working, he did not join the committee. Ann took on the job of Travel group. Peter was also very involved with the outings for the Historical Society. Ann later found herself volunteering to write the Newsletters. She also advertised in the Newbury Weekly News.

Paula Groves said she first heard about the u3a when she was living in Australia, it was called something else there, she thought it was a good idea. By coincidence, when she came back to England, she heard that Peter Jarvis was inviting people to come to a meeting regarding setting up a new branch of the u3a. She went to the first meeting at the Memorial Hall. Paula said that Peter Jarvis was very keen on education and had travelled the world. At the meeting she was made Members Secretary.

Richard Hyland was Vice-chairman

Peggy Archard was Treasurer

Veronica Chisholm was Publicity

Thus there were 7 people on the initial steering committee.

By April 2005 when the first Newsletter was printed there were 11 convenors:-

Theatre - Pam Fordham

Travel - Ann Allen

Gardening - Jean Bellinger

Music Ensemble - Veronica Chisholm

History - Margaret Thornton

Play Reading - Rita Pocock

Walking - Peter Lavarack and Ernie Prince

Languages – Helen Johnson

Art – Helen Peake

Peter Allen gave the first talk at the July 2005 open meeting.

The singing group came later. The convenor was Marie Curtis. The photograph was taken at the 2008 Christmas meeting at the Memorial Hall.

Rita Bottomley



Memories of Bon Appetit Lunch Club

Howard and I are members Nos 5 and 6 so have been members since the Branch started back in 2005. I remember going to the initial meeting, where signs including Travel and Theatre were spread around the room. As there were long queues for those groups, I stood by Lunch Club and suddenly a lady (Peggy Archard?) came up to me and said, “You can be the convenor for the Lunch Club”! I was quite taken aback as I had never done anything like that before. However, I gained a few tips from the Newbury Lunch Club co-ordinator and soon the Thatcham Lunch Club, which became Bon Appetit, was away! Our first lunch, with about a dozen members, was at the Spotted Dog, Cold Ash, and we would meet on a different day of the week each month to accommodate members’ other commitments (this was frowned upon by some on the Executive Committee, who wanted a designated day!) Soon the group grew to nearly 40 and was becoming a bit unmanageable. Along came Jane Head and I suggested that she started a second group, which she did – and her group is still going. 3 other groups followed in the course of a few years but sadly only 2 Lunch Groups remain. Covid was probably largely to blame, as pubs closed and prices rose, but also we found that transport was getting more difficult as our members got older and gave up driving. So, after 15 years, of trial lunches with Howard and travelling around (nearly) all the pubs within a 12-mile radius of Thatcham, in the midst of Covid I decided to call it a day. I really enjoyed my time as convenor of Bon Appetit; all my members were lovely and appreciative of our efforts, and they still remain good friends today.

Ann Allen would normally take a photo of the group outside the pubs where we ate, as in the attached photo – Jane can be seen on her ‘familiarisation’ visit!

Congratulations to Thatcham u3a on its 20th Anniversary and thank you to the current Committee and convenors for all the work they do to help us “learn, laugh and live”. May the Branch continue for another 20 years – and more!

Elaine Fletcher



How We Got to Here

After health problems and leaving work Andy and I needed something to do with our time. I had heard of the u3a and thought that maybe something we could investigate. Thatcham Festival 2021 came along and we saw that the u3a was having an open afternoon so we went along and were very pleased with what we saw and signed up there and then. Little did we know then how involved we were going to become!

We started with going to the Coffee Mornings and General Meetings, I joined Barn Dancing, Craft and Adagio. When Jean decided to stop being Convenor of Barn Dancing I decided I could take on the job to save the group. It's very rewarding to be the Convenor of Barn Dancing, everyone has fun and laughs a lot!

Andy took on being the Convenor of the Art group for a while and then became the Webmaster and Beacon Admin.

When Stuart Armstrong decided he didn't want to be Thatcham u3a Treasurer any more I thought that maybe I could take it on, I didn't have any experience of accounts but I'm good with figures, so I volunteered. Thankfully Jan Watts also volunteered on the same day and we share the job, it's a partnership made in heaven as far as I'm concerned.

The Third Age Trust decided that they would roll out new websites for all u3as and Andy, as Webmaster, would need to learn how to set up a new website for Thatcham u3a. We decided that we would do the training together so I could help him and that is what we did – it took a few months to complete but we are proud of what we achieved and of course we keep updating it.

The u3a is a self-help organisation that will only continue if members volunteer to take on Committee roles, to lead groups and help with other tasks like refreshments – please consider what you can do to help, especially now that older members who have been in roles for many years are deciding it is time they have a rest.



Lynn & Andy Stacey

Thatcham u3a Wordsearch

C	G	A	S	T	F	A	R	C	A	Y	E
T	N	S	S	R	M	R	I	T	S	R	E
R	I	I	E	H	M	N	H	H	H	L	E
E	K	N	H	C	K	G	E	A	W	U	F
A	L	G	C	H	R	A	R	T	W	N	F
S	A	I	D	C	I	E	G	C	I	C	O
U	W	N	S	E	H	S	T	H	N	H	C
R	B	G	G	R	C	A	R	A	E	T	E
E	E	H	A	E	N	H	I	M	R	T	T
R	M	A	H	J	O	N	G	R	B	Y	H
H	E	T	N	E	G	A	B	B	I	R	C
D	A	N	C	I	N	G	R	R	C	H	H

Thatcham
Coffee
Singing
Lunch

Chair
Tea
Dancing
Mahjong

Secretary
Wine
Walking
Cribbage

Treasurer
Craft
Art
Chess

Peculiar Phrases from around the World

You might not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, a phrase which means not being very smart in Britain, but do you know any of these peculiar phrases from around the world?

Not my circus, not my monkey (Polish) - that's not my problem

Swallowing camels while straining at gnats (Swedish) - missing the forest for the trees

To have tomatoes in your eyes (German) - being oblivious to what's right in front of you

To slide in on a shrimp sandwich (Swedish) - a spoiled person who has had it too easy

To jump from the rooster to the donkey (French) - changing subject abruptly in conversations

To give someone pumpkins (Spanish) - to reject someone romantically

To buy a cat in a sack (German) - being tricked into buying something you can't see

There is no cow on the ice (Swedish) - everything is fine, no need to worry

As clear as dumpling broth (Russian) - when something is confusing or murky

When elephants fight, it's the grass that gets hurt (Kenyan) - fights of the powerful only hurt the little guys

The pillow is the best advisor (Swedish) - sleep on a problem and see how you feel in the morning

If the world flooded it wouldn't matter to a duck (Turkish) - things that are bad for you, aren't always bad for everyone else

To live with wolves you have to howl like a wolf (Russian) - in difficult situations, try and blend in

To have a face like a dropped pie (Australian) - someone not conventionally attractive

A hungry stomach has no ears (French) - you can't concentrate when you are hungry

He who digs a pit for others will fall into it himself (Romanian) - what goes around, comes around

There's a bad potato in every sack (Welsh) - there's a bad influence in any group of people

The egg thinks it's smarter than the hen (Polish) - young people think they know everything

Fruits from the same tree have different tastes (Chinese) - members of the same family have different personalities

When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion (Ethiopian) - with teamwork, the small can defeat the mighty

Kerry Thomas

Science

FROM KISSING TO STICKING

We have all heard of the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe at Christmas. It is thought that the tradition likely originated in 18th century England, where it was believed that anyone caught beneath the mistletoe should share a kiss, as refusing could bring bad luck. The practice is linked to various myths, particularly in Norse mythology, where mistletoe symbolises love and peace after the goddess Frigg declared it a plant of affection following her son Baldur's death.

However, scientists are exploring whether mistletoe could be used as a surgical glue. Dr Nick Aldred, of the School of Life Sciences, said mistletoe's potential as a glue has been "known about for thousands of years".

As far back as 50BC the Roman author Pliny described the use of mistletoe berries in the creation of birdlime, which is used to trap birds in hunting.

During the Second World War, birdlime was also used to create British sticky bombs. Dr Pallavi Singh, who is working alongside Dr Aldred, said mistletoe is "really understudied" and "could have a wide range of uses – including high-quality surgical glue".

"Mistletoe also has the largest genome of any plant to be sequenced in the UK, meaning the research could have wide-ranging impacts in biotech and how we understand the world".

The research is in its early stages, with a series of experiments to follow as the project develops to see if mistletoe and mistletoe-inspired glue can be developed commercially.

Kerry Thomas



Sticky residue being squeezed from a mistletoe berry

Credit: University of Essex

Memories in the u3a

As a member who attended the first Thatcham u3a meeting, I was asked if I could put to paper my recollections of the u3a. My first reaction was “Oh heck, I cannot remember what happened yesterday”. So, perhaps you will forgive me for any inaccuracies in my rambling on.

I cannot remember much of that day other than I volunteered to start up the Gardening Group. I did not know much about gardening other than I mowed my lawn and grew runner beans. We were a band of around 6 members who met monthly at my house and exchanged plants and discussed our successes and failures. I was delighted when Catherine Hamblin volunteered to take over from me and turned it into one of our most successful groups.

I also joined the Walking group and later the Discussion group which was held at each other's houses. The group grew rapidly to around 14 members and we soon had to start up a second group.

I would like to mention the comradeship and community spirit amongst our members. Many of first Discussion group will remember Jackie Manley, unfortunately now deceased, who hosted a New Year's Eve party every year for us members

I have enjoyed many holidays and day trips run by Ann Allen. Ann did a lot of research and took us to places many of us would have never visited on our own. They were quite memorable and still sorely missed by all.

After the Pandemic, I took over the running of the Barn Dancing group and as we did not have sufficient members to fund it ourselves, we were joined by the Newbury u3a. I handed this over to Lynn Stacey who is doing a great job.

I will conclude by saying that I have made so many good friends from the u3a and I thank them all for their friendship and hospitality.

Best wishes, *Jean Bellinger*

Marguerite's Memory

My memorable and most moving occasion with Thatcham u3a was in March this year when both singing groups, Adagio and The Songsters, joined with the choir at St Mary's Church to take part in the funeral service for a special lady, Edith Hutchings. She and her husband were a significant force in the founding of Thatcham u3a and the very hall where meetings are held is named after Frank.

Marguerite Shave

Personal memory

When Mary and I moved to Thatcham in early 2015 we found in the u3a not only a means of taking part in a great range of activities, but also a ready-made source of great friendships and support. Being totally new to the area, strangers in a strange land you might say, this was invaluable in helping us to settle in and find our feet early on. Things we particularly enjoyed were Ann Allen's Travel Group outings, especially the October weeks away, Mike and Joan's Walking Group and Adagio under Lynette, which Mary joined very early on. Perhaps more importantly, many of those early friendships have lasted into the present which has been a great blessing.

Stuart Armstrong

Memories of Peter Jarvis

Mary and I were intrigued to discover very early on that one of the founders, some would say the founder, of Thatcham u3a, Peter Jarvis was a retired Minister in our church, Thatcham Methodist Church. Peter, who died in 2019, was a great character, much-loved and respected by the congregation. He was a leading academic in the field of Lifelong Learning, of which the u3a is arguably the most well-known and popular manifestation today, both in the UK and across the world. To see Thatcham u3a thriving so well 20 years after its founding is a testament to the hard work and commitment of both its leadership and all those volunteers running groups, and a legacy which would no doubt make Peter proud.

Stuart Armstrong

Things to ponder:

1. What if my dog only brings the ball back because she thinks I like throwing it?
2. If the poison expiration date is past does that mean it's less or more poisonous?
3. Which letter in "Scent" is silent.....is it the S or the C?
4. Do twins ever realise that one of them wasn't planned?
5. Why is W pronounced "double U" instead of "double V"?
6. What if oxygen is killing you but it takes 75 to 100 years to work?
7. Every time you clean, you make something else dirty.
8. 100 years ago, everyone had a horse but only the rich had a car. Today everyone has cars but only the rich have horses.
9. If you replace the "W" with a "T" in "What, Where and When", you would have the answer to each one.
10. If you rip a hole in a net, you have less holes than you started with.

Kerry Thomas

More Dad Jokes

I can't believe someone has stolen a tree from my back garden
Bring back the birch I say.

Tonight, I will be reorganising my bottles of red wine.
It's time for a Cabernet reshuffle.

Just lost a 100m race against a Mother Superior
The most embarrassing moment of my life second to nun.

A lorry carrying Worcestershire sauce has crashed with a van loaded with quinoa in front
of a charcuterie shop.
When asked what happened, a police spokesman said, "It's difficult to say".

My Dad always used to say, "money? You can't take it with you".
A great Dad but we had some terrible holidays.

If anyone wants any leaflets about the treatment of haemorrhoids, let me know. I've got
piles.

Been researching my family history recently. found out my Grandad was killed by a Zulu.
Apparently, he was in the toilet at Whipsnade zoo when the roof collapsed.

I thought I'd file my nails with an emery board.
It was awful but I liked it.

My wife says I can be an idiot sometimes.
Pretty cool of her to give me permission like that.

I was reading the dictionary in bed last night.
I got up to P.

I'm trying really hard to get over my obsession with Tipperary but there's a long way to
go.

I always thought my grandad was a war hero. But actually he was hit by a number 12 bus
going to Uxbridge. He was killed in Acton.

The world's oldest paperboy dies at 82.
The couple at 84 complained that their paper still hasn't arrived.

My grief counsellor has just died.
He was so good that I couldn't care less.

My wife texted me this morning and said, "Your great". I replied "No, you're great". She's
been in a great mood ever since.
I should correct her grammar more often.

Kerry Thomas

Sandra's Retirement

Since Covid our u3a 2nd Helpings Lunch Club has met in the White Hart every month. Today we all said a fond farewell to the landlady Sandra and wished her a long and happy retirement.

Over the years we have always received a warm welcome, delicious meals at very reasonable prices, amazing patience with those who forgot it's lunch day or need personal requirements to their menu choice. Nothing seemed to faze her and we will all miss her.

Our members donated towards a personalised embroidered apron and a bee mug to remind her to relax, also a collection for her to buy something for her new home.

I remembered my duties as Convener by handing her one of our bright new leaflets to join u3a and a welcome to our lunch club when she's settled in her new home.

Jane Head



Torpenhow Hill, Cumbria

When the Saxons arrived, they asked the Celts the name of that hill. They replied “pen” which means “hill” in Welsh. So, the Saxons used their word for hill, “tor” and called it Torpen (hill hill).

When the Norsemen arrived, they followed the same process and added their word for hill “hou”. So now it was Torpen Hou (hill hill hill).

Later the English called it Torpenhow Hill (hill hill hill hill).

Isn't language awesome.

Kerry Thomas



Tenby Winter Swimmers

Please refer to page 18



Ten Commandments for Thatcham u3a Members

1. Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.
2. “In style” are clothes that fit.
3. “One for the road” means peeing before you leave the house.
4. Your people skills are just fine. It’s your tolerance of idiots that needs work.
5. The biggest lie you tell yourself is, “I don’t need to write that down. I’ll remember it”.
6. “On time” is when you get there.
7. It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the tumble drier for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle free and three sizes smaller.
8. Lately, you’ve noticed people your age are so much older than you.
9. Growing old should have taken longer.
10. Age may have slowed you down but it’ll never shut you up.

Kerry Thomas

Mari Lwyd Procession

Please refer to page 18



Kerry Thomas

Rhyming Animal World

This puzzler is all about rhyming words with connections to animals. Just fill in the gaps.

- Example: - Obese Feline (3.3) F - - C - - Fat Cat
- 1 - Uncommon Ursine (4.4) R - - - B - - -
- 2 - Squashed Biting Insect ((4.4) F - - - G - - -
- 3 - Whispering Equine (6.5) H - - - - - H - - - - -
- 4 - Licit Bird of Prey (5.5) L - - - - E - - - -
- 5 - 3-legged Mule (5.6) W - - - - D - - - - -
- 6 - Adder aiming a Rifle (6.5) S - - - - - V - - - -
- 7- Tugs at Male Cattle (5.5) P - - - - B - - - -
- 8 - Nocturnal Mammal always Borrowing (6.6) C - - - - - B - - - - -
- 9 - Recovered Canine (5.5) F - - - - H - - - -
- 10 - Gander has Escaped (5.5) L - - - - G - - - -
- 11- Inexpensive Ovine (5.5) C - - - - S - - - -
- 12 - Herd Ready to Fight (6.6) B - - - - - C - - - - -
- 13 - Lonesome Lawn Destroyer (4.4) S - - - M - - -
- 14 - Inebriated Stinker (5.5) D - - - - S - - - -
- 15 - Chubby Cheeky Ape (6.6) C - - - - - M - - - - -
- 16 - Fowl Playing Tiddlywinks (7.7) F - - - - - - ' C - - - - -

Answers can be found on page 19.

Jan Watts

Nadolig Llawen

For my sins I am trying to re-learn a bit of Welsh, long forgotten from my early childhood. So, I thought I might share some old and new Welsh traditions that take place over the Christmas and New Year period.

Welsh poet and writer Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* paints a rich picture of the country's festive traditions. But how many of these are you aware of?

THOMASING

Happened on St Thomas's Day (23rd December) when women went from house to house to beg for flour to make loaves and cakes for Christmas.

PLYGAIN

At 3am on Christmas morning in the 18th and 19th centuries, Welsh churchgoers would leave their houses by torchlight or candlelight to go to Plygain. They would sing mainly unaccompanied, three or four part harmony carols in a service that went on until daylight.

NOSON GYFLAITH

Christmas Eve, or as it was known in some areas, Noson Gyflaith (Toffee Night). Slabs of toffee would be made around the fire as games were played, and tall stories told. *Noson Gyflaith* was also the night for decorating houses with holly and mistletoe, before going to Plygain.

MARI LWYD (GREY MARY)

An old South Walian tradition enjoying a revival in recent years, the spectacle of a Mari Lwyd parading around town is one you're unlikely to forget. The Mari itself is a horse's skull carried on a long pole by a person hidden under a cloak, led around by a gaggle of wassailers. Traditionally, this group would knock doors in their village between Christmas Day and Twelfth Night, and engage in a rhyming ritual called *pwnco*, in exchange for food and beer. Today, the Maris are also often seen, eccentrically decorated, in local festivals through December and January.

More modern traditions

THE WELSH WINTER SWIM

Most people spend Christmas Day and Boxing Day in repose or recovery, but hundreds of Welsh water babies also take to the waves. Porthcawl has hosted a Christmas morning swim now for over 50 years, while Boxing Day is the day for chattering teeth and icy limbs in Tenby's North Beach and Cefn Sidan in Pembrey. Abersoch, Whitesands, Morfa Nefyn and Saundersfoot also host swims but on New Year's Day; most events around the country are raising money for charity. Standing on the shingle or sand to cheer people along as the squeal in wintry waves is also encouraged.

NOS GALAN ROAD RACES

Nearly 2,000 runners descend on the Welsh valleys town of Mountain Ash on the afternoon of New Year's Eve. They're there to commemorate Guto Nyth Brân, a runner who lived in the village of Llwyncelyn in the early 1700s. So fast was he, legend says, that he could run to Pontypridd and back – a distance of seven miles – before his mother's kettle had boiled.

Founded in 1958 by local runner Bernard Baldwin, the Nos Galan Road Races begin with a church service at Llanwynno, where a wreath is laid on Brân's grave, and a torch lit (Welsh Olympic hurdler Colin Jackson and Welsh rugby captain Sam Warburton have been at this ceremony in recent years). The torch is then taken to the town, with competitions being held for both adults and children. The races used to end at midnight to welcome in the New Year; they now end at a more family-friendly 9.30.

HEN GALAN

While January can be a gloomy month as we return to work with the post-Christmas blues, things are a bit different in one part of north Pembrokeshire.

The Gwaun Valley, near Fishguard, is one of a handful of places which celebrates the New Year according to the old Julian calendar, which means it's on January 13 (hence Hen Galan: the Old First Day).

Celebrations used to involve farmers brewing their own beer, and locals visiting each other's houses; it still involves a feast on a par with the traditional Christmas dinner, and a trip to local institution, The Dyffryn Arms, known locally as Bessie's, to quench the thirst.

Nadolog Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.

Kerry Thomas

Answers to Quizzes Below

- 1 – Rare Bear 2 – Flat Gnat 3 – Hoarse Horse 4 – Legal Eagle 5 – Wonky Donkey
 6 – Sniper Viper 7 – Pulls Bulls 8 – Cadger Badger 9 – Found Hound 10 – Loose Goose
 11 – Cheap Sheep 12 - Battle Cattle 13 – Sole Mole 14 – Drunk Skunk 15 – Chunky Monkey
 16 – Flickin' Chicken



U3A Beginnings

In April 2005 Peter Jarvis organised a meeting in the Memorial Hall to talk about having a u3a in Thatcham. My husband, Peter, and I decided to go along since I had retired from my teaching job and he only had a few years to go. Obviously volunteers were needed and seven people at the meeting agreed to become members of the steering committee. I was one of them and I volunteered to produce a Newsletter, which I continued to do for twelve years. Volunteers were also needed for Conveners of interest groups. My husband was keen to start up a Travel Group but couldn't do it as he was still working, but he knew a lady who could. Ten other people volunteered to run interest groups. An excellent start for the Thatcham u3a! The first Newsletter had information about all the groups so that members knew the times and locations of the activities.

By July the Travel Group had fifty-two members, had enjoyed two day trips, Lacock and the Hop Farm Country Park, with a trip to Coughton Court, National Trust, arranged for the September. From the very beginning there was much enthusiasm and support from everyone. Peter and I walked the streets of Thatcham putting information letters through people's letterboxes. Sadly my husband died in 2009 but the Travel Group went from strength to strength. I carried on on my own and the group really helped me through a very difficult time. Over the fourteen years I ran the Travel Group we had five day trips a year and one residential trip of 5 days. We were able to fill a 63 seater coach easily and on two occasions had a double decker bus! Our last trip was in 2019 just before COVID and sadly there is no longer a u3a Travel Group. It was such an enjoyable time and a wonderful way to make lasting friendships. It would be fantastic if someone reading this thinks they could become Convener for a new Group.



Berrington Hall, Herefordshire 2006



Holiday to Suffolk 2014



Ann Allen