



Issue No.294 March 2026

# The Deepings u3a NEWSLETTER

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[Deepings website](http://deepings.u3asite.uk)



## Welcome

**New members in February: Nick Nickerson from Deeping St James  
Bryan Munro from Deeping St James**

**NEXT MEETING: 16 March**

Unless otherwise stated, all monthly meetings are at the Methodist Church, Deeping St James. Doors open at 9.30am.

### PROGRAMME OF SPEAKERS FOR 2026:

**16 March 2026: A detective's tale**

Alan Lambert will give us the lowdown about an \$800 million sting.

**20 April 2026: Daffodils**

Johnny Walkers will tell us all we need to know about daffodils.

**18 May 2026: Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies**

Martin Lloyd explains how three passports have played an influential role in the course of history.



### MARGARET'S MUSINGS

**Dear members**

On behalf of us all I want to thank our fellow member Garth Perry for stepping into the breach at the February meeting, when the scheduled speaker did not turn up.

Our speaker finders do a great job assembling the yearly programme and this is a very, very rare occurrence. We have welcomed new members this year, some of you looking to join specific groups.

The easiest way to do this, for you and for longer term members, is to consult the list of groups at the end of the Newsletter, where you will find contact details for group leaders, dates, venues etc.

As the days lengthen, the trees come into leaf and spring bulbs bloom, I send Easter good wishes to you all.

**Best wishes**

**Margaret**

**Chair, The Deepings u3a**

### ITALIAN CONVERSATION GROUP



Our group decided we would celebrate Christmas in February to avoid the crowds!

So, last week, we went to Vesuvio restaurant at Whittlesey for our celebration.

They do a great Italian lunch. An Italian family own the restaurant, but unfortunately the waitress was Eastern European and could not speak Italian! Never mind, we enjoyed the good food and wine.

A good time was had by all!

**Report and Group Leader: Lynne Alcorn**

## CHURCH MICE



February's visit for Church Mice was to the Church of St Botolph in Longthorpe. 25 members of the group listened to Jane Hogg as she told us about the church and people who had been involved with it since its building around 1260. There had been a church since the 11th century, but that was taken down and rebuilt on its present site. The church was a dependency of St John in the city centre and in 1850 became a parish in its own right.

The church is wide with two aisles and the nave interestingly runs on the same level into the chancel. There was a chancel screen but that has now been removed to an attractive space outside the north aisle now used as a meeting room for tea and food. Above where the chancel screen was is now a carving of the crucifixion. There is a good amount of stained glass which makes the interior darker.

After a look round we all adjourned to the meeting room and ate

copious amounts of cakes together with cups of tea.

**Report and Group Leader: Henry Roberts**

## MONDAY WALKING GROUP



Seventeen walkers met at The Feathers, Castor (formerly The Prince of Wales Feathers) where we ordered our food for lunch. It was a bright sunny day, despite a previous forecast of rain, thank goodness.

I had reced the walk on 4th February, one of the few fine days in that month and noticed that the River Nene towards Water Newton had flooded fields making new lakes.

We walked past the cricket ground and then joined the footpath crossing Normangate Field. This area was part of the Roman Trail. Continuing, we headed for the river, where it turned out the flooding was worse than before, so impossible for us to get to

Water Newton. It was decided to try another path south of the River Nene, which was fine until we came across an impassable deep stream draining the flooded fields. I had hoped that these would have receded, but alas not!!

Plan B: we crossed back over the Nene to the north side and followed a path to the weir, again flooded, then we bumped into a couple of walkers who had wellies on.

They advised us to follow the railway line path to Wansford Station, which on the whole was ok, apart from a few muddy, slippery patches, providing some entertaining scenes – walkers trying to avoid falling!!

To reach the station we had to go down the stairs and up the other side through what I would say were swampy conditions. Unfortunately, one of us found a deeper part and as a consequence got a wet foot.

We had a break at the station, some sitting in the sun at about 14°C.

We then headed to Sutton through some more swampy ground, climbing over a fence to avoid a pool at the footpath gate. Through Sutton having traversed a ridged field, as the footpath had been obliterated by the farmer and his tractor, we continued back to the pub.

The walk was 5.6-6 miles (depending where you parked your car – no car park at the pub). A good meal for 16 was had by all even though the menu was not extensive.



**Report and Group Leader: Steve Hanson**

## LISTENING TO MUSIC GROUP



This month our meeting was held at Phil Jones' house and our listening took on a very different hue. Phil started by displaying a very strange looking stringed instrument (pictured, left) and asked if anyone could identify it as he could not. The rest of us could not either. Any ideas would be welcome!

Phil's programme consisted mainly of pieces that nobody knew and it was lovely to hear a new "repertoire". We heard music ranging from the Royal Albert Hall organ played by his local organist when Phil lived in Walsall, a string quartet by Haydn, a series of birdsong pieces played on a flageolet (a sort of tin whistle) and a cantata by Buxtehude.

With each piece Phil enlightened the listening experience by reading out his well-researched background notes. Thank you, Phil, for such a delightful and intriguing morning.

Our next meeting will be at 10am on 11th March – venue TBA.

**Report by Terry Noble, Group Leader**

## CRAFT GROUP



Thanks to Pam Ready for her hospitality this month and for the idea for an unusual shaped card.

Lots of measuring and folding to get it right and make it stand up!

In March we are going to try something new – modelling air dry clay and we are meeting in Maureen's house, suitably attired in "old" clothes she advises!

**Report: Liz Noble**  
**Group Leader: Pam Ready**

## STROLLERS



Our first outing of this year was a 3.2 miles stroll starting from the Windmill at Orton Waterville. It was overcast with rain threatening as 18 of us set off heading past the local church and through a modern residential area.

Upon reaching Lady Lodge Drive, we turned towards the footpath which leads to Orton Longueville. After a short stretch of this path, we turned into the woods and met the woodland track, known as the Long Walk. This wood is dominated by large tall pine trees, possibly sequoia redwoods, which would have been more appealing if the sun had managed to peep through the clouds. The photograph shows the group along Long Walk.

After leaving the woods we entered Orton Longueville and we stopped to look at the church, before going downhill towards Oundle Road, which we crossed to enter Orton Mere, part of Nene Park.

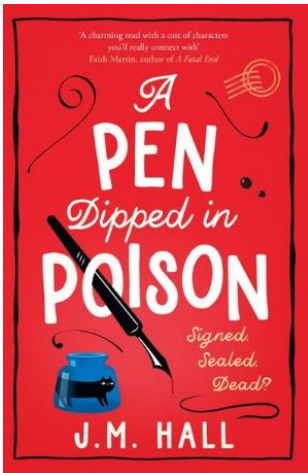
On Osier Lake we saw Canada geese, moorhens, mallards and terns, amongst other water fowl, then we traversed the long footpath alongside the Nene Valley Railway to Golden Lane, which commenced our return to the Windmill and a good lunch.

A good start to the year and as we left the sun was coming out, but at least we did not get soaked.

Our next walk will be on Friday 27 March, with details to be issued nearer that date.

**Report and Group Leader: Bob Deller**

## MONDAY READERS



It's fair to say that this month's book choice wasn't a resounding success! *A Pen Dipped in Poison* by J.M. Hall is the second in a series of 'Retired Teachers Mysteries' in which a group of ex-primary school teachers get together once a week for coffee, cakes, catch-ups, and crime in their local garden centre café.

As you might expect, this is one of the popular cosy crime genre books, with some echoes of Richard Osman's novels. In this particular choice the plot concerns poisoned pen letters which are being sent to various members of staff of the primary school all three of our protagonists used to work at.

The author is a deputy head in a primary school and for the two ex-teachers in our group, the school background was very well done, with the side swipes at academy school ethos being appreciated!

For most of the group, however, the slow burn of the plot was a turn-off, with complaints that nothing much happened for far too long, and some disliking the complex cast of characters which made it confusing.

It was liked very much by one member of our group, who recognised the school setting and characters and thought that the silent, menacing effect of poisoned pen letters on those who received them was very well invoked.

All in all, though, an acquired taste, perhaps, (and easier to acquire if you start with book one in the series, as it is referred back to in this one).

**Report and Group Leader: Liz Waterland**

## PACERS GROUP

After a change to the planned route due to the wet conditions underfoot, a group of seven pacers led by Geoff Fitzjohn set out from the Birchtree Café at Easton on the hill.



The route took us firstly to the pocket park where the newly constructed Polish servicemen memorial is sited. It is a pleasant location with a pond, and the snowdrops just making an appearance.

Climbing up the hill and turning right into Church Street gave us a lovely village scene with the Collyweston stone roofs and the church coming into view.

After a loop out of the village, we returned back to the churchyard with more snowdrops and then, passing the allotments, we turned down past the impressive house where Captain Lancelot Skynner who commanded the ill-fated HMS Lutine lived. The ship's bell hangs in the Lloyds of London building and is sounded when a vessel is lost.

Passing the small National Trust Priest's House, which amongst other things has artefacts relating to the mining and processing of Collyweston stone roofing, we made our way back to the Birchtree Café for a very enjoyable lunch.

For anyone who passes through Easton on the Hill on the A43 but has never turned off into the village you would find a stop at the café, a stroll to the church and visiting the Priest's House worthwhile.

**Report by Geoff Fitzjohn**

**Group Leader: Margaret Beardshaw**

## FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

In our February meeting we looked at 'Free sites for Family History', including looking at those for worldwide investigations.

We had a lively discussion with some great ideas. Now all we need is the time to research and bring back our successes to the next meeting.

If you are interested in joining our group contact me on 07849798748.

**Group Leader: Maureen Hudson**

## NATURAL HISTORY GROUP



Penfield Nature Reserve in Langtoft has certainly been developed well, balancing inclusive access with nature conservation. Our photo shows us at the new bench on the viewing area. From here we enjoyed looking out over the reserve and watching the birds visiting the feeding station. As we walked along the lakeside path, we were delighted to see different finches feeding in the alder trees, including siskins, goldfinches and a redpoll. The more knowledgeable bird watchers in the group spotted 29 species. We all agreed that it was uplifting for us to have spent time amongst nature (and kept dry!).

**Report and Group Leader: Beverley Tegala**

## THURSDAY WALKING GROUP



In February, 12 walkers met at the Riverside Inn, beside the A16, on a dull, overcast morning. Initially the inn was beside a railway line and was then known as the Railway Hotel.

We set off by heading west, along Station Road, with the River Glen to our left. This road took us into Surfleet at the junction with Surfleet Road and Gosberton Road.

On our right stood the impressive Church of St. Laurence, dedicated to St Laurence who was a deacon to the church in Rome.

Originally Lawrence was responsible for the material

goods of the Church and the distribution of alms to the poor. Upon giving away most of the church treasures the Prefect became so angry that he punished him by having a great gridiron prepared with hot coals beneath it and had Lawrence placed on it.

After the martyr had suffered pain for a long time, the legend concludes, he cheerfully declared: "I'm well done on this side. Turn me over! Because of this, St. Lawrence is known as the Patron Saint of cooks, chefs, and comedians.

Because of his suffering the weather vane, on the top of the spire, takes the form of a gilded gridiron.

The tower and spire have a distinct lean, as the foundations started to sink in the soft Fenland soil when the tower was built (1270-1350). The tip of the spire is leaning 6 feet, 4½ inches from the perpendicular.

Local legend states that the tower bowed to a passing knight! A few steps south along Surfleet Road, over the road bridge, we crossed the River Glen and then headed back, north along the opposite side of the river. The footpath led us through the grounds of Spalding Golf Club. This path gave us excellent views of the different types of riverside landscaping created by the home owners on the opposite banks. The last few yards led us alongside properties, mainly prefabricated, situated scarily close to the water's edge.

We now turned left, once again crossing the River Glen at Surfleet Sluice. The Sluice is the point where the river Glen is tidal and becomes salt water, hence the name Seas End. The river then flows a further five miles to discharge into the Wash.



Turning left again, we headed back towards our destination along the quiet Reservoir Road which then became Seas End Road. Finally, crossing back over the A16 we returned to the Riverside Inn. Here we were all treated to an excellent senior citizen three course lunch with prices that were comparable to many years previous.

The distance walked was 5.3 miles and thankfully the threatened rain never came to spoil an enjoyable walk. Many thanks to Godfrey for buying us all a drink to celebrate his birthday and to Brian and Helen for organising a very pleasant day out.

**Report by Group Leader: Richard Coulson**

### **JAZZ, SWING AND BIG BAND GROUP**

February's Jazz, Swing and Big Band meeting was held at Terry Noble's house which, given that the February meeting of the Music Group was at Phil Jones' house, made one feel as if patting your head whilst rubbing your tummy! However, the morning started with two numbers by Cool Vibes - *Delauney's Dilemma* and *Love Me or Leave me* – not surprisingly led by the vibraphone. Then two numbers by the Modern Jazz Quartet before hearing *Last Minute Changes* from 6 Pac, a particularly talented group of students from the Royal Northern College of Music (in years gone by).

Terry then led us to two pieces by Dave Brubeck. The first, *It's a Raggy Waltz* before the unforgettable *Take 5* (named after its unusual 5/4 time signature).

Tim Kliphuis is a Dutch jazz violinist who modelled himself on Stephane Grapelli and we heard the former's interpretations of Night and Day and The Nearness of You. In preparation for the Jacques Loussier Trio's version of JS Bach's *Pastorale en Do (C) mineur*, Terry played the original version (BWV 590) by Veronika Raibaut.

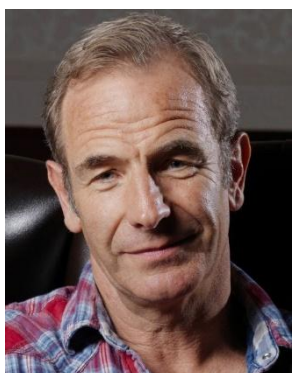
To illustrate the difference between the styles of Kliphuis and Grapelli we heard the latter playing *Anything Goes* before Glenn Miller reminded us how foot tapping his music was with *American Patrol*. As the sun rose higher in the sky!! we were treated to a Louis Armstrong rendition of *High Society*, complete with the unforgettable clarinet obligato originally transcribed by Alfonse Picou from one for piccolo from a late nineteenth century marching band number. Our most interesting morning finished with two "trad jazz" numbers from Chris Barber – *Petite Fleur* and an alternative version of *High Society*.

The next meeting of the Group is on Wednesday 25th March at Phil Jones' house.

**Report by Phil Jones  
Group Leaders: Phil Jones, Anne Jones**

### **ART APPRECIATION GROUP**

Today's talk was a joint presentation from Barbara, and Robson Green!



Barbara introduced the talk and told us about her childhood, growing up in a coal mining village in Derbyshire where her father was a surveyor. She spoke about the social life within the village and brought back memories of the terraced houses that were built for the miners and that had very little in the way of facilities (i.e. outdoor toilets, and tin baths hung on the backyard wall).

Robson took over and told us about growing up in a mining village in Northumberland which was very near to Ashington where the Pitmen Painters became world famous. His village was similar to Barbara's.

Robson was, of course, on a DVD and although some of us had heard about the Pitmen Painters in a previous Art

Appreciation talk many years ago, the new DVD included previously unseen footage.

We had a discussion at the end about the following:

Leaving school at 12 or 14 years of age

Going straight down the pit after leaving school

Working hard all day and the desire to better oneself in the evening

Always wearing a collar and tie

The Workers Education Association



It was a very interesting morning and was extremely well attended. Thank you to everyone who supports the group.

Next month the talk will be Equine Art and the speaker is John Dewis.

**Report by Group Leader: Sandra Jones**

### WEDNESDAY GARDENING GROUP



The group spent a very enjoyable morning, hosted by Angie Dorward, with Stella Joyce giving us an interesting and lively flower demonstration. Stella demonstrated two different styles of flower arranging using a lovely mixture of spring flowers with some beautiful roses and lilies. A wide variety of foliage was used and there was lots of discussion about growing and propagating the different types, coupled with how best to condition and prepare them in order to prolong their life.

This was enjoyed by everyone and we all picked up some useful hints. The lucky raffle winners were able to take home the flower arrangements and some surplus flowers.

A vote of thanks was given to Stella for a very entertaining demonstration. Thanks also to Angie for hosting and for the delicious cakes she provided for us.

Next meeting will be a visit to Rasell's Nursery at Little Bytham but there may be a last-minute change of plan depending on the weather. Information will go out to members by email.

**Report: Julie Fitzjohn  
Group Leader: Jean Foster**

### GOOD FOOD GROUP

We had our February lunch on the 9<sup>th</sup> and our theme was low-cal, usually our January theme but we didn't have a meeting in January.

Our first course was a healthy butternut squash soup, followed by a delicious courgette and cheese flan.

Our main course was a sweetcorn risotto with Harissa chicken and bulgar wheat salad.

Our dessert was a filo tart with raspberry and cream cheese, a recipe from a library slimming book.

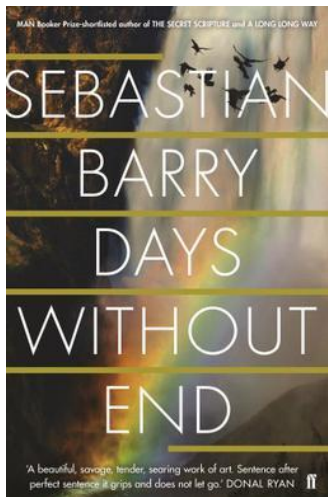
Following the sad death of Ian Tanner, a founder member of the Good Food Group, we have just six members and would welcome new U3a members to our group.

Although scheduled to meet the first Monday of the month, we change our date to suit those who can attend.

Our next lunch is Mexican food. If you fancy joining us, we are not great cooks – we just look up a recipe and follow it! And for your first meeting, you don't even need to bring a contribution – come and meet us and have lunch! Contact Hilary or me.

**Report: Sheila McGurk  
Group Leaders: Hilary Aken and Sheila McGurk**

### BOOKWORMS



*Days Without End* by Sebastian Barry. The narrator of this moving historical novel is teenager Thomas McNulty, one of two million Irish escaping the horrendous consequences of the Irish Potato Famine (1845-1852). From Ireland, he crosses finally into America, impoverished and barely human, where he meets John Cole, and the two become friends, then lovers. They find work in a saloon bar as cross-dressers; a few years later they join the army, where they experience the brutality and horrors of both the Indian Wars – adopting a young Indian native girl - and the American Civil War.

The Group agreed that this was not a comfortable read. The horrors of war are described in graphic and unsparing detail, revealing man's inhumanity to man. Perhaps a novel to admire rather than enjoy, but one where some incidents linger in the mind long after the final page.

But most agreed: much of the novel's power (it won four awards) comes from the Irish author's words and thoughts, voiced through Thomas' naïve wonder as he narrates all he sees. The simple but poetic and lyrical language acts as a counterpoint to the harsh realities of his life. (Some found the

audio tape, emphasizing the Irish lilt of Thomas' uneducated language, enriched their reading experience). As fellow Irish writer Oscar Wilde opined: 'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars'. Thomas reminds us that being born into great poverty and witnessing the horrors of war need not be a barrier to attaining hope and happiness. Through his indomitable spirit, he can perhaps glimpse the stars. Well worth a read!

**Report and Group Leader: Tom Baldwin**

### POETS AND THEIR POETRY

For a pleasant change we met on a beautiful sunny afternoon. Our theme this month was "Animals, Birds, Fish, Insects" The first poem was *The Bees Last Journey to the Rose*, by Brian Pattern. Next *The Donkey* by G K Chesterton, followed by *The Bells of Heaven* by Ralph Hodgson. We heard *The Owl* by Edward Thomas. We then had local poet (another of our favourites) John Clare, and *The Skylark*. Aso, we had *Insect Hotel* by Simon Armitage and next a lovely poem by Sita Selvadurai, *Black Swans*. A cluster of owls and cats was next with *The Owl*, Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Cats Sleep Anywhere*, Eleanor Farjeon. *The Owl and The Pussy-Cat*, Edward Lear, and *Pinkle Purr*, A A Milne. Lastly and a complete change, *The Connoisseuse of Slugs* by Sharon Olds. A really lovely afternoon kindly hosted by Chris.

*Roost* Simon Armitage  
The sun fizzles out.  
Bats unhug themselves and fly-  
they will eat the night.

*Hibernaculum* Simon Armitage  
Spiky boxing gloves,  
hedgehogs curl up below ground.  
Winter shakes its fist.

**Report and Group Leader: Susanne Hoadley**

### THURSDAY GARDENING GROUP



Our March meeting was held at Baytrees Garden Centre where members enjoyed coffee, scones, exchanging gardening tips and some retail therapy.

Our journeys to Baytrees started in fog but this soon gave way to blue skies and bright sunshine enabling us to enjoy the acres of golden daffodils and the white blackthorn blossom en-route. Signs that Spring is definitely with us. Hurrah!

Once again Sandy and Mike Bowers were very much in our thoughts. We send them our very best wishes.

Our April meeting will follow a similar format at the Blue Diamond Garden Centre, Springfields.

A picture of David's Daphne omitted form last month's report (right).



**Report: Ann Pettitt**  
**Group Leaders: Kay Parker and Ann Pettitt**

## HISTORY GROUP



Today we welcomed back one of our favourite Local History experts Liz Parkinson who gave a very interesting talk about The Deepings in WW2, bearing in mind that what happened in The Deepings was similar to many small towns and villages throughout the country.

Her display boards reflected life during the war and a map showed the area of the Deepings where something out of the ordinary had happened such as a plane crash or where the military were based.

(There was a Radar station in the Deepings/Langtoft area.)

Slides showed residents of the time and also service-men who had signed up to save our country. The constabulary was represented

through the person of Sergeant Crowson. He kept meticulous records of the day-to-day occurrences of the area. Special constables were also employed.

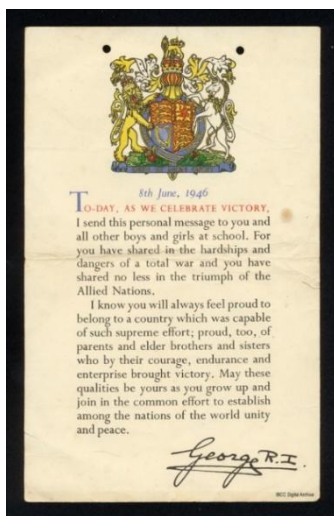
Buildings were shown that are still in use today. Pubs were

frequented by soldiers from America and Poland. Often the special constables had their work cut out to stop drunkenness, calling on military police to help if necessary!

Evacuees came from Hull and were billeted with local families. The schools had to find places for the children which also meant extra double desks.

Apparently, the military vehicles coming through Church Street prior to D. Day, meant that it was actually difficult to cross the road and afterwards the bridge in Deeping had to be re-tarmacked!

It was a sobering talk. Would we still be as accommodating today? Would we put up with the hardship? The letter below, from the King summed it all up:



Thank you, Liz, for a very interesting look back in time.

Thank you to everyone who helped today. Also, to everyone who attended. It was a full house!

Next month Brian Thornthwaite will be talking about: Finland. The Constant War.



**Report by Sandra Jones  
Group Leader: Sandra Jones**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS  
2025/26**

Chair	Margaret Beardshaw
Secretary	Mary Martin
Treasurer	Stuart Wilson
Membership Secretary	David Perkins
Group Co-ordinator	Tom Baldwin
Gift Aid Secretary	Anne Burton
Committee Member(s)	Phil Jones

**Non-Committee/Supporting  
roles**

Speaker Arrangers	Gill Godden Lynn Ayres
Newsletter Editors	Sandra Jones Ruth Griffiths
Newsletter Distribution	David Scott
Newsletter Distribution Coordinator	Liz Noble
Webmaster	David Perkins
Media Equipment Co- ordinator/Asst. Webmaster	David Scott

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