u3a Stanway News

NEWSLETTER OF STANWAY u3a NOVEMBER 2026

Registered Charity No. 1171008

WHAT'S ON

13th November AGM 2026 Review meeting - followed by Jacko Jackson talk 'Support our Paras'

26th NOV Day Trip – 'A Day in Bury St Edmunds for the Cathedral Christmas Fair'
Few seats remaining.

27 November Social Xtra - Get into the festive mood with the Colchester ROCK CHOIR

11th December – An afternoon with singer songwriter Danielle Barnett

2027

8th January - Kevin Brown talk Talking Newspapers

22nd January Social Xtra – our Annual Quiz of the Year (2026)

Day Trip Sunday 14th March 2027 Thriplow Daffodil Festival & Country Fair Booking opens next month

'LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL'

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR LINDA ANDERSON

As much as we may not wish to, our thoughts are inevitably being drawn towards Christmas. Halloween and Guy Fawkes haven't happened yet, but that hasn't stopped some shops stocking mince pies and other Christmas 'goodies' already.

I am not a religious person, but I respect people who are and can appreciate that commercialisation of what is a sacred event for them must be dire reflection on way that the world is moving in.

But even I am disheartened by the way that the big corporations/conglomerates are seemingly taken over everywhere.

For example, I recently watched a documentary about shrinkflation in chocolate biscuits. There are about 4 or 5 corporations who control the whole industry behind the original names of the biscuit makers. To make the industry more profitable, the recipes for some of the all-time favourites have been tinkered with to reduce costs and even the chocolate coating isn't considered to be chocolate anymore. It has to be called 'chocolaty' to comply with the food industry rules and guidelines due to the recipe tinkering.

Apparently, it's a similar situation with our favourite chocolates and sweets that we buy in boxes or tubs for Christmas. Where will it all end?

One way of putting things into perspective is by getting out and about, socialising, talking to people and getting involved in something that interests you.

If you would like to volunteer, in whatever capacity, for however much time you have available, please contact anyone on the executive committee, who will forward your details to our volunteer co-ordinator, and she will get in touch with you.

Old ways won't open new doors

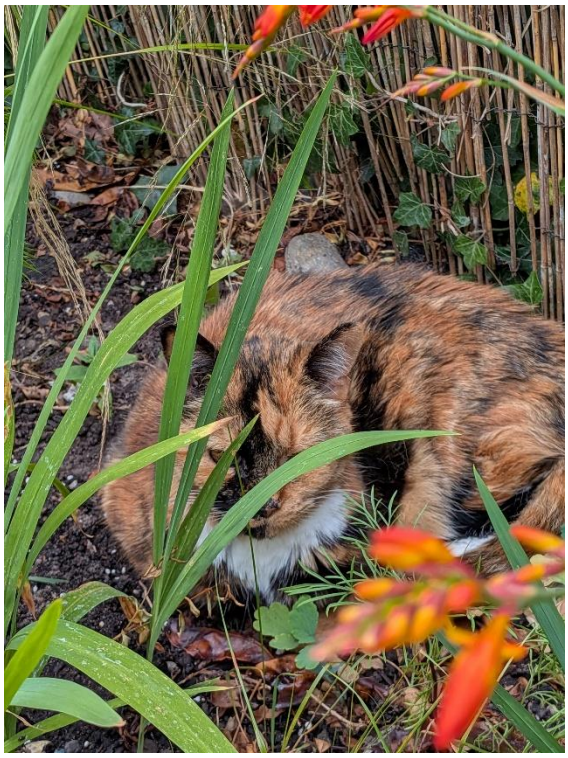
(Anon).

AGM 2026

Voting closes on 3rd November

Not voted yet? Lost the link? Please email the Editor asap on: u3agen57@gmail.com

A MESSAGE FROM VICE Chair & Membership Secretary — Jean Futcher



MEG

It's with great sadness that I have to tell you the Membership Office cat, Meg was put to sleep on 16th September after becoming ill over the last few months. She already had an over-active thyroid which began to affect her coat during the very hot summer, and she was also beginning to suffer with arthritis which aggravated her jumping up onto the sofa and my bed. Then more recently she slowed down and became very lethargic.

I took her to the vet on the Saturday when, Daniel a super Portuguese vet, diagnosed a heart murmur and a mass in her abdomen. I took her home for a few days loving and cuddles, but it became obvious on Wednesday morning that she had had enough.

So, as much as I loved her, I couldn't let her suffer.

Thank you, Meg, for being a wonderful and affectionate companion.

For those of you who are asking – will I have another cat? Watch this space and next month's newsletter !!

SPEAKERS CORNER — Linda Anderson Speakers & Publicity Secretary



For our monthly talk in October, Martin Lloyd came along to give us his talk; 'Becoming a Famous Author'.

As some of you may remember, Martin has visited us before, in 2019 with his talk Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies.

On this occasion he deftly and amusingly described the trials and tribulations involved in getting a book published. Who would have thought it was such a complicated process? But he must have learnt the ropes as he now has 10 books published and counting.

Fortunately for our Writing from the Heart, creative writing group, our two anthologies were self-published through Amazon, so no such shenanigans.

Thank you, Martin for an amusing and informative afternoon

Friday 13th November at 2pm Stanway Village Hall (doors open 1.30pm)

Stanway u3a AGM 2026 Review

Our talk will commence immediately after the conclusion of the business of our AGM

Jacko Jackson how to 'Support our Paras'

Browse our book and puzzle stall.

Join us for Tea, Coffee & Biscuits and chat to friends after the talk.

Admission & refreshments free!

For our Monthly meeting in November, we welcome Col (Retd) Andrew B Jackson –aka 'Jacko', CEO of the Support Our Paras Charity.

Andrew Jackson was commissioned into The Parachute Regiment in 1992 as a graduate and served for 30 years.

During that time, he completed multiple operational tours worldwide, being awarded a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS) for service in Afghanistan, plus extensive overseas exchange service in both USA and Pakistan. He also commanded the unit which trains and selects all paratroopers.

His last appointment was as Deputy Commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team.



On leaving the Army, Andrew worked in the financial sector before returning to the regimental fold with PRAFC (The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Charity).

His wider interests include running, field sports and skiing.

His talk will explain the work of the charity SUPPORT OUR PARAS is the only charity which exists solely to support The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces, looking after veterans, serving soldiers and families within the Airborne community. They are there for our nation's paratroopers through the good times and the bad, from the moment they join the para family to the sounding of the last post.

Colchester u3a Monthly Meetings

Highwoods Community Centre 1:45pm Wednesdays (talks start at 2:00pm)
18 November Our Changing Wildlife - Dr. Chris Gibson.

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For our Social Xtra at the end of September we had the pleasure of the company of Lucy Lewis who was the very first British female bomb disposal officer, in the British Armed Services.

Lucy joined the Army on the spur of the moment and after training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst was chosen in 1989 to become the first woman to operate as a Bomb Disposal Officer with the Royal Engineers.

She subsequently served with the Royal Military Police in Germany and Northern Ireland, retiring in the rank of Major to start a family.

In 2018, Lucy made history for a second time by becoming the first woman to be appointed University Marshal at the University of Cambridge and now leads one of the oldest Constabularies in the world. Thus, giving her the opportunity of meeting people who she admires but possibly would not have met under different circumstances. A case in point meeting Bianca Jagger and having her photograph taken with her, Lucy was beyond thrilled.

Lucy was a skilled raconteur, providing us with an informative and amusing talk and all without a script.

Social Xtra Afternoon

Friday 27th November at 2pm Stanway Village Hall (doors open 1.30pm)

A Musical Afternoon with Colchester Rock Choir

Tea, Coffee & Biscuits will be served during the mid-afternoon interval.

Admission & refreshments free!



For our final Social Xtra Afternoon of 2026 we are delighted to bring you an inspiring musical afternoon.

Colchester Rock Choir is a vibrant community choir that brings together singers from various backgrounds to perform uplifting music. They are known for their engaging performances and have a strong presence in the local community.

They do not charge us a fee. During the afternoon they will make a collection in favour of MND the Motor Neurone Disease charity.

STANWAY u3a DAY TRIPS — Doreen Willers Trips Co-Ordinator

Thursday 26th November A Day in Bury St Edmunds for the Cathedral Christmas Fair

We still have a few seats available for this trip. Price £18 each member full details in August and September newsletters. **Booking closes on 13th November**.

Parking available at the hotel in Marks Tey at £6 per car payable in cash on the day (car reg required at time of booking)

Open to Stanway and Colchester members.

We have received several requests to pay by bank transfer. Payment details:

Sort Code 08-92-99 A/C 65691441 Payee: Stanway u3a – NO 3 ACC

Ref: Your Surname/Bury Please ensure you quote this so that we can properly identify your remittance

Please email stanwayu3atrips@gmail.com to confirm you have arranged remittance

Please complete the online booking form by following this link https://forms.gle/qG3dLy1vj2HVHmcj6

Or to pay by cheque pick up a booking form at the Monthly meeting. If you have any questions, please email me on the above address or call me on 01206 330300.We can only confirm your booking once form and full payment received. Thank you



Sunday 14th March 2027

Thriplow Daffodil Festival & Country Fair

Full details and booking opens in next newsletter

Heathers trips with SMAC

Wednesday 10th MARCH 2027 – PLEASE NOTE THAT PAYMENT HAS TO BE MADE by 10th November latest. In order to secure our booking with the Albert Hall

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA - PLAYING BEST OF BROADWAY at the ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

Evening performance 7.30pm PARKING at the Delta Hotel coach departing at 4.15pm,

Parking is available at the hotel in Marks Tey at £6 per car payable in cash on the day. Please do not pay the hotel, - Heather will collect the money when you check in with her. Car registration required at time of booking.

Cost £72.00 each

If interested, please contact Heather Wragg - email smac.wragg@btinternet.com

phone 01206 860084 / 07920 864160

Alec Anderson **TECH Support, IT and Data Security Officer**

WhatsApp Usernames

Some time ago I wrote an article to remind members that when they are asked to join a u3a, family, friends or other WhatsApp group, to be aware that other members in those groups are able to see your mobile number.

If that put you off joining, then a fairly recent change may help you change your mind.

WhatsApp users are being, or have been, given the option to create a unique Username that you can use to be added to a WhatsApp group instead of your phone number.

With a Username set up, your phone number will not be visible when you message or call anyone who doesn't already have it saved in their contacts. You can give people your Username, instead of your phone number, to let them contact you on WhatsApp.

Your Username is different from your display name, the name that appears in your WhatsApp profile.

Note:

- A phone number is still required for your own WhatsApp account.
- Even if you have a Username set up, people can still contact you by your phone number if they have it already.
- Usernames aren't searchable, so you will need to give your exact Username to anyone that wants to contact you for the first time on WhatsApp or to add you to a WhatsApp group.

How do I create a Username?

You can only do this in the WhatsApp mobile app; you cannot do this in the desktop version.

There are different steps for Apple and Android devices, visit this article to check how to do this on your device:

https://faq.whatsapp.com/2535820043482794/?cms_platform=android&helpref=platform_switcher

Stay safe.

Alec Anderson

Stanway u3a IT and Data Security Officer

GROUPS NEWS — From the Group Support Team

At Stanway u3a, we currently offer 66 active groups. However, we recognise that it can be disappointing when many of our most popular groups are full and only available to new members via a waiting list.

To help meet demand, several group leaders have generously agreed to run additional sessions, with some groups now meeting three or four times each week. As all our group leaders are volunteers, we are extremely grateful for their continued dedication, enthusiasm and commitment.

To expand opportunities for members, we need more volunteers who are willing to help coordinate additional sessions or work with us to establish new groups.

We are currently exploring the feasibility of a number of potential new groups and hope to share more positive news with you early in the new year.

We were delighted to meet James Bush at our recent New Members meeting, even more so when he did not hesitate to raise his hand as a volunteer to introduce two new Groups.

PROPOSED NEW GROUPS

Proposed New Dining out Group(s)

There are a number of Stanway U3A members who would like to be in a dining group but can't find one to join as the existing dining groups are full and cannot take any new members.

If you would like to be a member of a new dining group, please send your name and contact details to Group Support details on bottom of this page

We can then explore together what form such a new group (or groups) should take.

Proposed MOTO Group - Many U3A organisations in other towns and cities have a MOTO group (and Stanway U3A once had one too) MOTO is an acronym for "Members On Their Own"

If you are on your own and would like be part of a group run by people on their own, for people on their own Then send an email with name and contact details to Group Support details on bottom of this page

and we can have a meeting together with the others who also respond to discuss how such a group could be of benefit to us all

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"A ydych chi'n siarad Cymraeg?" **(Do you speak Welsh?)**

.The Welsh language is one of the oldest living languages in Europe and holds great cultural significance. Would you be willing to help us start a new group or short course ?



Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" **(Do you speak German?)**

We have received several enquiries from members about a German Group. Could you help us set-up a new group?

If you could help with these or other language groups, please contact our Group Support Team member Doreen Willers on doreen.willers@btconnect.com or call 07922 032886 for a chat

OVER TO YOU

This month we are pleased to feature the first of our runners-up from our Short Story Competition. Ladies & Gentlemen please meet Ralph

MY DOG RALPH
By Geoff Carder

I just couldn't believe it, I was shocked. This is a dream, I thought. This is wrong; it can't happen. But it did, and looking back it is surprising how soon I became used to it. Now it feels ordinary. Yet it is so unique.
A little over a year ago I was with my dog Ralph, walking in the woods; a regular Sunday morning exercise for us both. He was off his lead, and as usual I threw a stick and said, "Go fetch it Ralph". He sat down on his haunches, looked up at me and said, "Go fetch the ruddy thing yourself". Unlike him, I was speechless, I leaned against a tree feeling slightly dizzy and looked at him in disbelief. "You go and get it" he said. "You threw it".
I didn't wake up when I pinched myself, and I didn't think I was mad, so I had to accept that it was for real. I could only stand and stare at him.
"Sorry" he said "but I didn't know how to break it to you gently. Sit down old boy".
I slid down the tree trunk and sat there wide eyed, and still speechless while he told me that he first realised he could talk about a week ago. He just woke up one morning and he could talk.
"I could always understand you" he said, "and I had been trying to speak for ages, and then suddenly I could!"
His voice sounded deep and thoughtful like some learned professor. Strangely it was very Ralph, it suited my beloved standard poodle well.
"Are you pleased" he asked.
"I err" I mumbled, still in a state of shock.
"Look Bob" he said in his refined sounding voice "or do you prefer dad? You are a sort of father to me; and yet in dog years I'm older than you".
"I don't mind" I said weakly.
"And" he continued "I was only joking about you fetching the stick. I didn't mean to be rude. I never cared much for that game. I knew you loved it, so I never refused".
And then he jumped up, put his front paws on my shoulders and licked me to death.

Once Ralph could talk, the words poured out of him, he wanted to tell me everything; what he thought, how he felt and what it was like to be a dog. I loved to listen to him, he had so much to say about everything, and now he could say it. What a joy it was to converse with my intelligent newfound friend.
I'd often imagined that when Ralph lay on the carpet watching t.v. or listening to the radio, that he was taking it all in. I now know that indeed he was. He seemed so well informed.

Ralph was not reserved about giving praise or paying compliments. In the middle of a serious conversation about religion - initiated by him of course - he suddenly said
“You know Bob, one of the loveliest things about you is your beautiful smell”.
“Thanks Ralph” I said patting his woolly head, which was laying in my lap.
“I wish I could say the same about you pal” and I held my nose. He got the joke and tried to laugh, but that was something he couldn’t master; it came out as a muffled doggy sounding clearing of the throat.
One thing Ralph could master, and very quickly too, was reading. He had a great desire to read, and with my help he was soon past basic “puppy books” as he called them and on to the classics, devouring every book or magazine he could lay his paws on.
I walked into the lounge one morning and there was Ralph sitting in the corner armchair reading the current edition of Philosophy Now. He slowly and deliberately laid it down and said, “I would like to be a vicar Bob, would that be possible?”
I knelt down beside him “Sorry Ralph; it wouldn’t be easy”
“I have a calling” he answered, taking off his spectacles (of plain glass which he insisted on wearing when he was reading; to give him “some dignity”)
“I’ll be honest with you Ralph, I can’t see it happening” I replied. Of course, it didn’t happen and he soon dropped the idea.
“Anyway” he said later in his droll way. “At least I’ve got the collar!”
He was constantly going through phases of wanting to do or be one thing or another - all impossible for a dog.
“No Ralph you can never be a Formula One driver, or an astronaut” or whatever, I was always telling him. I began to feel a little sorry for him, he had a brilliant mind full of plans and ideas that could never come to fruition, and I could sense his frustration. He was lovely company, so kind, caring and polite, and would often sit and read to our fluffy little cat Maggie. Enjoyable as they were the deep meaningful conversations were becoming a little tedious; he did so want to show how intelligent he was all the time. I missed the old more playful Ralph. How content and happy Maggie seemed to be, with her uncomplicated routine life, and how I wished sometimes that Ralph had never been able to talk or read.

However, he was still a dog; we still had our woodland walks together - albeit with more talk than play - and Ralph being an energetic standard poodle still loved to run around sniffing and scuffing on the ground with his paws. And then something magical happened; two days ago, walking in the woods, I bent down and picked up a stick. I was about to drop it down again when Ralph looked up at me and said “Go on throw it then, I don’t mind, really. In fact, I insist”.
So, I did.
He galloped off to retrieve it and turning his head, he gave a very doggy woof of pleasure.
It felt so good.

What didn’t feel so good though, was when yesterday I bumped into
Maggie in the library …….

. **Our Swiss Holiday Adventures 2026 – Part 2**

By Linda & Alec Anderson

Last month we left Linda and Alec as they arrived in mountain resort of Zermatt, located at the foot of the mighty Matterhorn.

After a tour of the town of Zermatt with a local guide, we took the Gornergrat Mountain Railway up to the Alps' second largest glacier, where weather permitting there could be sensational views of the Matterhorn.

The weather had been lovely in Zermatt, but at 3089m above sea level, the clouds were low over the peak, so we didn't see it. We just did what normal people do, we took some pictures, bought some souvenirs and had a coffee.





By that time, we had been on the mountain for about two hours, and we both started to feel the effects of the high altitude so decided that we would return to the town below. Nevertheless, it had been an exhilarating, but at the same time humbling experience. Looking across at the glaciers and mountains and seeing how small the people walking along the paths were in comparison, it can give you a different perspective on your world view.

I have always liked the idea of being able to observe how chocolate is made (rather like the Lindt advert on tv), but despite our best efforts, we were unable to find anywhere close to where we were staying in Brig.

However, Italy is only 35 minutes by train from there and on our last free day we decided that we would go there and explore.

It was an unusual experience, because not only did the language change, but so did the currency. In Brig we were using Swiss francs, but in Domodossola, it was euros. But as a compensation, we were actually able to find somewhere to watch chocolate being made!!! Naturally we bought some, it was lovely, but different to Swiss chocolate, but I wasn't complaining.

It was a family run business, and they don't make chocolates for companies, they specialise in taking on commissions, i.e. wedding cakes, birthday cakes etc. but they also create everyday items in chocolate.

They had presentation boxes on display which included Lego (in all the correct colours), vintage handbags (about $1_{1/2}$ x $1_{1/2}$ inches square), a medical kit, with a syringe, thermometer and tablet bottle etc. all made from chocolate. It was amazing.



Schloss Spiez with Lake Thun behind.

As our last hurrah before leaving the following day, we travelled by rail through the 21.5-mile Lötschberg Base Tunnel arriving in the quaint town of Spiez. Our destination being Spiez Castle (Schloss Spiez) set in beautiful grounds beside the crystal-clear waters of Lake Thun.

The castle dates from the 10th century and has in its grounds a rustic church, reported to be even older. It has conical turrets and a central keep with dense stone walls making it look like a fairytale castle.

Following our exploration of the castle, we got the ferry to cruise Lake Thun, with mountain views in every direction, including the forest-blanketed Niederhorn that slopes into the water, and the pyramid-shaped Niesen. Along the shore, pitch-roofed chalets and church towers peeked out of the trees.



A view from the ramparts of Schloss Spiez

We even had the opportunity to watch young people on the water with a sport none of us had seen before called hydrofoil surfing.

Our final day travelling back to the UK was pretty uneventful. We were due to change trains in Geneve for Paris, but then we were informed it was going to be Zurich.

Then when we arrived in Paris one of the group got lost in the crowd and due to his age and declining mental capacity, we sent out a 'search party' to look for him. All the while, there was coach waiting to transfer us to Gard du Nord for the Eurostar.

Fortunately, he was found safe and well fairly quickly and we completed the onward journey with no more hiccups.

So, all in all a good time was had by all.

If you have something you think other members would enjoy, a poem, story or tell us about an interesting hobby or something you are passionate about please share it with us.

Please send contributions for inclusion in the DECEMBER newsletter to the editor at email: u3agen57@gmail.com by latest 15th NOVEMBER (*earlier if possible).*

Any contribution should be in *Word* and photos/illustrations sent as jpeg. THANK YOU

Since Linda tempted us with her ad for Swiss and Italian chocolate, we thought it appropriate to conclude this month's edition of u3a Stanway News with this little bit of escapism from Geoff Carder.

CHOUXCHOCCYLICIOUS

Can you resist them I ask?
Heavenly, creamy and yummy.
Oh I can't resist them at all,
Cos they so delight my tummy.
One is never enough.
Lots and lots I crave.
And when I pop my clogs I'll,
Take some to my grave.
Each one should be savoured.
Each one should be praised.
Chocolate, cream and choux pastry,
Let's all be amazed.
And let's grab one when we can,
In any situation.
Rejoice with every mouthful,
Surely they're our true salvation.