

NEWSLETTER
February 2026



SLAY THE NINE-HEADED LERNAEAN HYDRA

For his second task, Hercules had to kill the Lernaean Hydra, a many-headed serpent that lived in the swamps of Lerna. Every time he cut off one of its heads, two more would grow in its place. With the help of his nephew Iolaus, he cauterized the necks after each decapitation to prevent regeneration. He buried the one immortal head under a massive rock and dipped his arrows in the Hydra's poisonous blood, making them deadly weapons.

u3a Chairman's Report February 2026

Hi again. I hope you are all coping with this rain.

I will be glad when it stops!

Have you looked at our website recently? It does need some updating but all the basic information is there. At the moment Rob does the website along with all his other commitments like the photography group, the newsletter and organising the technical equipment. We could do with a dedicated website manager to put the upcoming events on it and report on any trips or interesting events held by our groups. We need someone who has some experience in computing who can be guided if necessary. We need someone who is a member, who attends the meetings and hopefully goes on some visits. If they don't want to take photos to upload, then I am sure other members can provide them. This person does not need to be on the committee but could be co-opted if they wished. Please think about it. You could make a lot of new friends this way! Did you know we also have a Face Book page? So please look and like our posts.

The Chinese New Year is coming up in February. 2026 is the year of the Horse based on the Chinese Zodiac. This is a year of the Fire Horse, starting from February 17th 2026 to February 5th 2027. The Chinese Zodiac - called Sheng Xiao - has a 12-year cycle, and each year has an animal sign. Each

12-year cycle starts with the Year of the Rat. There are also five elements used in turn – wood, fire, earth, gold (metal) and water - which together crate a 60-year cycle, The Horse is the seventh in the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac signs. Besides 2026, the Years of the Horse include 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2038... My birthdate is in one of these years. Guess which. It's not hard really!

The horse was the most frequent transport means in ancient society and it is considered as No.1 of the most important six animals in China. They are strong, powerful and elegant animals. In Chinese culture, horses are always the representative of heroes and talents. People born in the year of the Horse will share some similarities with the horse and thus they are brave, strong, talented and independent. One of the Five Elements is Fire (Huo), symbolising enthusiasm and energy, which entitles Fire Horse people an energetic and enthusiastic character. Do I fit this description? No, don't answer that!

The moon determines the dates of the Chinese New Year. A lunar festival, it begins with the New Moon on February 17th 2026. The festival itself is 16 days long, ending with the Lantern festival on the date of the next full moon - the Worm Moon on March 3rd 2026. It will also be a 'blood moon' total lunar eclipse.

Chinese New Year 2026 in Southampton features a major celebration on February 15th in Guildhall Square and Westquay. This includes traditional dragon and lion dances, martial arts and cultural performances. The Lantern Festival is on February 28th in the same places. There will be various workshops, including lantern making and calligraphy at Westquay.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the meetings in February.

Marilyn.



**u3a trip on Thursday 30th April 2026
to The Kings Gallery next to Buckingham Palace
To celebrate what would have been Queen Elizabeth's 100th
birthday
an exhibition called
Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style**

Discover the remarkable style of Britain's longest-reigning monarch through clothing worn in all ten decades of her life - from birth to adulthood, from princess to queen, and from off-duty style to dressing for the global stage for momentous occasions in Britain's history.

Featuring approximately 200 items, many on display for the first time, this is the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of the late Queen's fashion ever mounted.

Alongside clothing, jewellery, hats, shoes and accessories, explore never-before-seen design sketches, fabric samples and handwritten correspondence that reveal the behind-the-scenes process of dressing the most famous woman in the world and shed new light on the late Queen's close involvement in the creation of her wardrobe.

Highlights include her bridesmaid dress, wedding dress, Coronation dress and the ensemble worn for the wedding of Princess Margaret.

Leaving the Waterside around 9:30'ish. We have timed entry for 12:30 & 12:45 to the Gallery.

The pickup time for the trip home will be at 4:30 p.m.

Although we have a timed entrance there is no limit to the time spent in the exhibition.

If anyone would just like to come on the coach to London but not visit the Gallery that is always an option too.

Margaret Andrews

What a Day!

Some while ago I wrote in this illustrious journal of the things you should be doing as a medieval person for your Labours of the Month. Now we could explore what has happened on a particular date in history.

Purely random choice so no apologies if your favourite date doesn't appear. The date is **1st February** – the 32nd day of the year and only 333 left this year – it will soon be Christmas.

1327 AD (still AD for me). Edward III crowned while 15 years old so his mother, Isabella, and her accomplice Roger Mortimer actually did the governing. Like many/most medieval kings his main occupation was warfare – largely against the Scots and French although it is said that parliament started to evolve during his reign. He (more likely his troops) won the Battle of Crecy 1346, survived the Black Death 1348 and founded the Order of the Garter.

1793 France declares war of the UK and the Netherlands.

1851 Author Mary Shelley (born 1797) dies. She wrote Frankenstein and gave her name to a park in Bournemouth.

1893 Thomas Edison constructs the first movie studio – probably with a little help from a few brickies etc.

1915 The great Stanley Matthews was born. I had the great privilege of watching him play at Old Trafford. He died in 2000.

1921 Peter Sallis was born – Cleggie in Summer Wine and voice of Wallace.

1952 TV detector vans started prowling.

1953 Violent storms hit Britain's east coast.

1964 The Beatles had their first USA no 1 hit – I wanna hold your hand.

1984 The demise of the halfpenny – that little tiddler.
That's 1/2p not 1/2d for those of us that can remember!

1994 You might want to consult with your grandchildren or such like young people because this was the year Harry Styles was born.

2003 Spacecraft Columbia disintegrates on re-entry into the atmosphere killing all 7 on board including Kalpana Chawla the first woman of Indian origin to have flown in space.

2013 The tallest building in Europe (is it still?) The Shard opens its viewing platform.

It was this date (more or less) that I was in the frozen North (and it really was frozen) in Wilmslow just outside Manchester to start that delight that was square bashing.

Peter Dudley.

**1st
FEBRUARY**

The Otterbourne Theatre Company Pantomime Production 2026 Jack and the Beanstalk

Some of you may remember a speaker from January 2022 when John Pitman came to talk to us – his talk was “Pantomime and the role of the Dame”.

He brought along a selection of costumes from the pantos they had staged over the years and I may be wrong but I think I remember that he had played the Dame on more than one occasion.

It was a very interesting talk and it prompted Margaret and Jeff Andrews, Barbara Miller and Mick and I to buy tickets for the show less than three weeks later.

And aren't we so happy that we did!

It was an evening of fun and laughter and such a great night out that we have been going every year since then.

I think the funniest part of that panto for us was the fact that it was not long after the Covid lockdowns and the stars of the show hadn't had the best of times to rehearse, so a lot of the fun was when they forgot their lines or were at the wrong side of the stage etc but each time that happened there was always a funny aside from them. Nobody minded, it just added to the fun.

That first panto was Cinderella and it was the best ever until this January when we went to see Jack and the Beanstalk.

The others may not agree with me on this but just when you thought it couldn't get any better, it did!



Dame Dotty Dimple was quite simply the funniest Dame I have seen. All of the other characters were excellent but Dame Dotty just held the stage every time.

If you get the chance, get there next year, I promise you will have an evening filled with joy.

The village hall has a bar so you can have a drink before the show begins or in the interval.

They hold a raffle and there is ice cream too.

They have staged a panto here every year since 1981 apart from 2021 which of course was due to Covid.

So, this year was our 5th panto and, if God spares** us till next January, I am sure we will go again.

**My Gran said this at least a couple of times a year for years – in the spring it was “if God spares me till the winter” and of course in spring it was “if God spares me till the winter” She lived to be 96 years and 7 months old!

The show only runs for a few nights – this year it was

9th to 18th January

I will try to remember to let you know when the next show is.

(oh yes, I will!)

Trish Franks

Otterbourne Theatre Company Previous Pantomimes	
1981 Dick Whittington	2003 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
1982 Aladdin	2004 Pinocchio
1983 Sleeping Beauty	2005 Cinderella
1984 Robinson Crusoe	2006 Babes In The Wood
1985 Cinderella	2007 Little Red Riding Hood
1986 Jack and the Beanstalk	2008 Beauty and the Beast
1987 Puss In Boots	2009 Humpty Dumpty
1988 Dick Whittington	2010 Aladdin
1989 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	2011 Sleeping Beauty
1990 Little Red Riding Hood	2012 Jack and the Beanstalk
1991 Aladdin	2013 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
1992 The Pied Piper of Hamelin	2014 Cinderella
1993 Pinocchio	2015 Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates
1994 King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table	2016 Goldilocks and the Three Bears
1995 Peter Pan	2017 Rapunzel
1996 Cinderella	2018 Dick Whittington
1997 Mother Goose	2019 Beauty and the Beast
1998 Sleeping Beauty	2020 Aladdin
1999 Jack and the Beanstalk	2021 Cinderella
2000 Dick Whittington and His Cat	2022 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
2001 Dick Turpin	2023 The Little Mermaid
2002 Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp	2024 Alice in Wonderland
	2025

Chairman's Welcome

Welcome once again to the gloriously silly and reliably enjoyable Village Pantomime, the result of over 4 months of hard work from the 70 amazing people who make up the Otterbourne Theatre Company. After some 46 productions we turn once again to one of the great pantomime classics, Jack and the Beanstalk, an English fairytale going back to 1734 but with many a rewrite since!

We have newcomers of all ages making their OTC debuts this year:

Cerys Prideaux and Rhianne Lewis have joined our delightful junior chorus, while the adult ranks have seen the welcome addition of three men - Cameron Gray, Pieter du Toit and Brian Rowe.

Joining the Company as lighting and general tech assistant is Roy Shufflebotham. We also have had the all-round technical help of young Milo Blackledge.

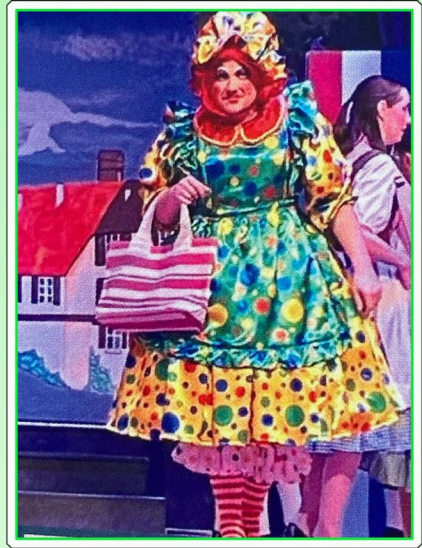
And now the essential message:

Thank you so much for coming and do please boo, hiss, clap, laugh, weep, interject or sing as the moment grabs you.

Long live the pantomime tradition and see you next time!

Richard Daniels

We would like to dedicate this production to the memory of Penelope Chamberlayne-MacDonald who died recently. She personally contributed to the original building of our Village Hall in the 1980s and was a great fan of our annual pantomime. Her presence in the front row on the final Saturday of every production will be greatly missed.



Why not join a new group this year,

if there is not one that appeals to you why not consider starting your own – there are probably other members who would be interested in joining in with any activity or interest. The committee would be pleased to give all the advice they can. Have a think and we can let everyone know at the Tuesday meetings and advertise it in the newsletter.

You would definitely find it stimulating and rewarding.

Otherwise, please see below



ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

We would like to have a few more volunteers, to help setup St. Andrews hall for our regular Tuesday meetings. Some people to put out the chairs at the beginning would be very welcome, the people who have been doing it could do with a rest!

Also, a couple more to set up the laptop/projector and the sound system.

None of these jobs are particularly complicated, but without support it will be difficult to come in, sit down, and appreciate the speakers presentation.

We would like several people capable of these tasks, so we could perhaps take it in turns and to cover when others can't make it.

Please come along before the meeting and all will be explained.

Do you have an article, story, or something that might be of interest to other u3a members. There is sometimes a half page (or more, see below) available and it would be great if someone would like to contribute something.

If you ar not sure if it is suitable, then feel free to contact the editor and we can discuss. Almost anything considered!

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a Microsoft Word contribution!

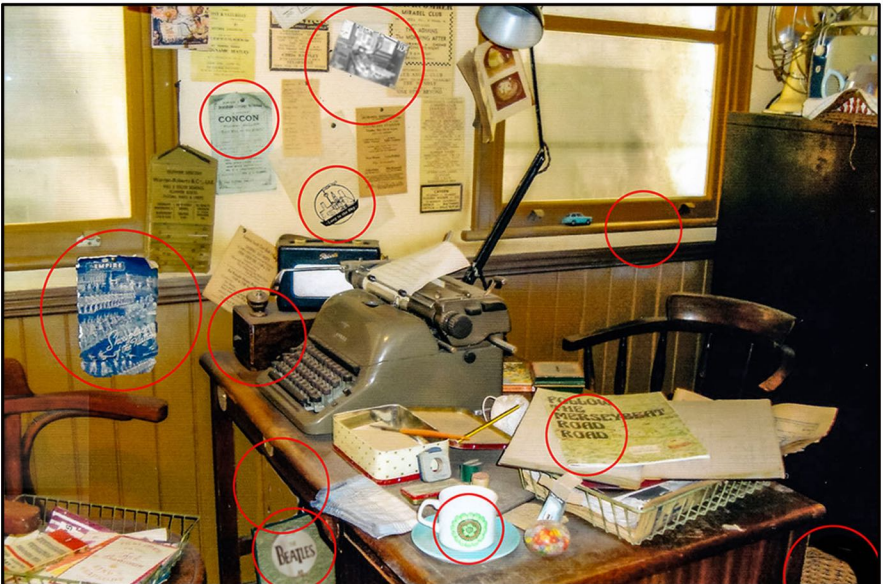


**PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR
MOBILE OR TURN IT TO SILENT
DURING MEETINGS**

**But don't forget to switch it back on
at the end!**

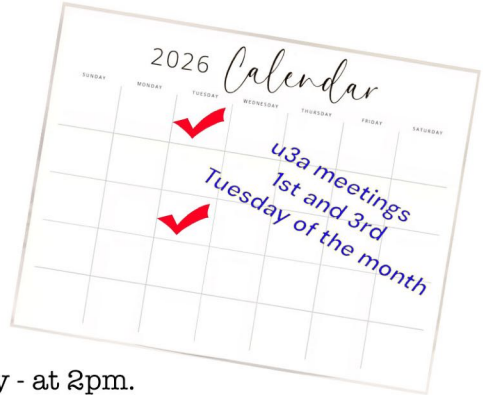
QUIZ

normally there are ten differences - but I got carried away!



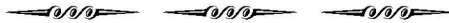
COMING SOON

MEETINGS:



◇ Our forthcoming talks
at St. Andrew's

- ◇ Tuesday : 3rd February - at 2pm.
Subject : "The Wild Coast"
Speaker : David Boag
- ◇ Tuesday : 17th February - at 2pm.
Subject : "Hampshire -
supporting farming through the ages"
Speaker : Ruth Kerr
- ◇ Tuesday : 3rd March - at 2pm.
Subject : "Southern Water"
Speaker : Tim Eaton
- ◇ Tuesday : 17th March - at 2pm.
Subject : "Patient Champions"
Speaker : -



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