

# Brixworth and District Newsletter

# u3a

## Learn, laugh, live

Registered Charity No 1178196

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### FRONT PAGE INTERVIEW WITH NORAH DAYKIN



Norah is a local member of B&D u3a, having been born and grown up on her parents' farm near Catthorpe. Their barn is still visible from the M1, although when the huge M1/M6 interchange was built in the 1970s, with the M6 planned to be built right in front of their farmhouse, the family moved to land at Dingley (near Market Harborough) where her father converted the Coach House from Dingley Hall as the farmhouse. Norah tells me she loved her childhood on the farm where she helped look after the flock of 400 sheep – especially at lambing time during the Easter holidays. With lots of pets on the farm (there were always puppies, kittens, horses and piglets as well as lambs) one of her “jobs” was to sit with the sows during farrowing to make sure they didn't lie on their newborn piglets.

As one of four (she has a twin brother and two older sisters) she started school in Rugby, where she stayed until the age of 9, when she went with her sisters to boarding school in Solihull, leaving there at 16 when the school closed.

Norah then did a domestic science course in Eastbourne (learning how to fold a tablecloth!) but had a holiday job in the nurses' dining room, before volunteering on the hospital wards at Rugby Hospital. That decided her on doing her nurses training, which she did at Guy's Hospital in London. Those four years I gather were great fun – lots of parties, including on the Ark Royal and at Sandhurst (nurses always being in great demand for parties!), although sharing accommodation with cockroaches wasn't quite such fun. After graduating Norah did a bit of agency nursing and also worked as a veterinary nurse (no shortage of jobs to apply for) ending at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham, eventually being in charge of the Coronary Care unit. She tells me that she is quite amazed at the variety of nursing jobs she did as she never went on any specialist courses – just learning on the job. During this time she moved to live in a cottage on her older sister's farm near Lutterworth, applying for a Ward Sister's job at Lutterworth Cottage Hospital – which is still open as a hospital.

Aged 30, she met and married Kevin, an industrial designer for Maclaren – makers of pushchairs – which were based in Long Buckby, so the couple lived in Newnham and Norah got another Ward Sister's job at Danetre Hospital. Norah and Kevin moved to Hollowell in 1983, to the house they have lived in ever since – their son, Robert, was born a few weeks following the move! Unfortunately, Robert now has special needs and lives in supported housing in Coventry. But two years later, their daughter, Mirren, was born – who is now a very successful textile designer. She worked for Osborne & Little following a degree at Edinburgh College of Art, but is now self-employed.

With two young children, Norah left full-time nursing and undertook a variety of jobs, including working at Coton Manor following a course in horticulture which she enjoyed. More stressful was a job as a Victim Support worker, counselling victims of crime and domestic abuse. But in 2002 Norah went back to nursing, working at Kettering General Hospital in the Outpatients Department for eight years, finally retiring in 2010.

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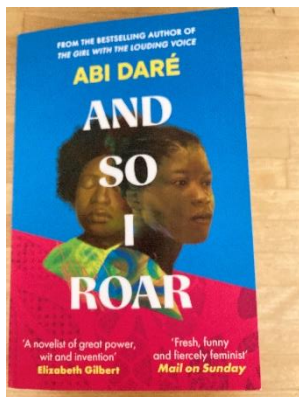
As Norah is now B&D's Art Group leader, I asked her where her love and skill of painting and drawing started. She tells me she has always painted when she could – her husband had bought her a small watercolour set when the children were small - but it began mostly during Covid Lockdown when she was able to use YouTube films to really enhance her skills. She's a great YouTuber, interested in films not only about art but also gut health, especially the gut microbiome. As an artist she makes greetings cards which are sold in a number of local shops, but also wants to improve her art.

Her other interests include singing and joined Northampton and Market Harborough u3as before discovering Brixworth had a Singing for Pleasure group, so joined us instead! She belongs not only to that interest group, but also our Garden and Local History groups, volunteering to take over the Art Group last July after Peter Davies retired and moved away. Starting with just a few members, Norah is delighted that her Art Group now has 15 regular members.

**Chris Rowe**

### **NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS**

#### **BOOK GROUP – “And so I roar” by Abi Daré**



This campaigning book continues the story of Adunni, a young Nigerian girl born in rural Nigeria who featured in the author's previous book: "The Girl with the Louding Voice", and her quest for an education. The book exposes many of the obstacles, exploitation and abuse, that women and young girls experience, in this very traditional male dominated society. As such it does describe many difficult and disturbing scenes.

It is a complex plot, with many sub-plots, which add to the dramatic tension, but may leave the reader a little overwhelmed. Many of the issues were resolved by the end of the story.

Throughout the book, the personality, ambition and resilience of Adunni shine through. The author uses Adunni's broken English to create very expressive thoughts and speech. At times these were comical, at times poignant and often profound. These proved to be the highlight of the book.

**Chris Laukaitis**

#### **KNIT AND NATTER - November report from Sarah Nelson**

Our meeting in November involved sharing many on going projects, one being a lovely baby blanket for the imminent arrival of Lynnes' granddaughter. Thank you for the mince pies Val and chocolate biscuits from Debbie We welcome another new member "Val" and look forward to new year with lots of knitting and nattering.



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY – “Nuclear Power Past & Future”

On November 6<sup>th</sup> last, group member Tim Simmons, gave 13 members of the group an insight into Nuclear Energy – a talk entitled “Nuclear Power Past & Future” starting with the basic physics of atoms and their Isotopes. We heard how there is more than one form of an atom. Although electrically and chemically the same, isotopes differ because the nucleus contains extra neutrons instead of the same number as protons making them heavier.

Uranium the heaviest atom known, with an atomic number 92 (Hydrogen being 1) it contains 92 neutrons. It is extracted from the earth, first Isolated in 1789. The ore contains two isotopes U238 & U235. These numbers are the number of protons and neutrons added together and contained in the nucleus of the atom. U238 is the predominant and heaviest of the two - however it is the U235 isotope which is “fissile” meaning it can be “split” and sustain a chain reaction releasing large amounts of energy in the process. The isotopes are separated and the U-235 portion enriched. A critical mass of material is placed in a heavily shielded reactor with a moderating substance such as graphite and boron control rods to keep the process in check.

A U-235 nucleus splits after being hit by a stray neutron striking an unstable nucleus which is absorbed causing the nucleus to split apart. The two nuclei released together with 3 neutrons will go on to repeat the process, hence the chain reaction, releasing energy and gamma radiation. This will cause damage to animal cells leading to DNA mutation, cancer and death.

Energy released by converting mass into energy was calculated by Einstein to be  $E=MC^2$ . E=Energy M=Mass in kg & C = the speed of light (186,000 miles per second). The energy yield from a nuclear bomb the size of which destroyed Hiroshima was equivalent to the mass of a standard playing card.

Because nuclear energy was used as a weapon in WW2 it had a bad press initially. When used in the 1950s to provide energy to the National Grid for which it has been used ever since, safely, the public view of it has changed and it is now accepted as a very useful source of clean energy. These early reactors are now being decommissioned. At the moment there are 9 working nuclear power stations around the coast of Britain, with two under construction at Hinkley Point Somerset and Sizewell Suffolk.

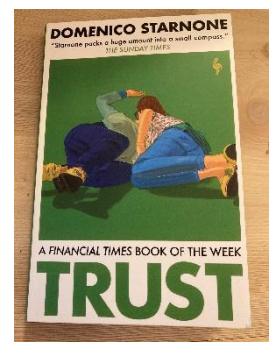
We heard that the future may be with modular factory-built units to be assembled on site, but not in the near future. The Trident submarine nuclear power plant made by Rolls Royce is proof we have in this country the technology to build small modular nuclear reactors.

Colin Rowe

## BOOK CLUB – December report: “Trust” by Domenic Stanone

This book, written by a well-respected Italian author, was a little disappointing. Some members found parts of it boring, and certainly it could have done with a good edit in the middle.

The premise of the book was very interesting, but there was a long wait to see if the ‘Trust’ given by two of the characters would be broken. Towards the end of the novel, the pace dramatically increased and there was real tension as it worked towards the climax; and it ends with a chilling closing sentence.



### Forthcoming titles:

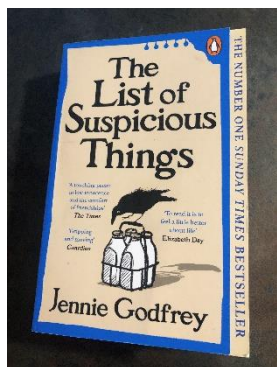
6<sup>th</sup> January: Love Untold by Ruth Jones

3<sup>rd</sup> February: A Pale View of Hills by Kazuo Ishiguro

3<sup>rd</sup> March: The Island of Sea Women by Lisa See

## BOOK WORMS – November report and photos from Celia Moss

At our November meeting we discussed two very different books. The first was **'The List of Suspicious Things'** by Jennie Godfrey which was first published in 2024 and the second **'The Diary of a Nobody'** by George and Weedon Grossmith published in 1892.



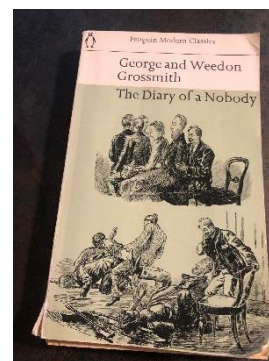
**'The List of Suspicious Things'** was set in Yorkshire during the 1970s and the time and place were described in extensive depth and detail. It was the period of the Yorkshire Ripper killings and the effect of this on the characters was chillingly portrayed. Miv and her best friend Sharon decide to make a list of all the suspicious people and events in their local area in order to help catch the Ripper. In doing this, they do not help catch the Ripper but they do discover many of their neighbourhood's secrets. Perhaps Miv really wants to find out what had changed her mother so badly that she now refuses to speak?

We all enjoyed this book although some found the 'list' idea a bit artificial. It was certainly thought provoking, dealing with themes of rape, racism and domestic violence but counterbalancing these with the importance of friendship and community. The characters were well drawn and Omar and Albert in particular provided good male role models. In many ways this is a rite of passage 'growing up' story and the power of first love is well conveyed.

**'The Diary of a Nobody'** was first published in Punch magazine in instalments.

It is the diary of Charles Pooter, a clerk in London during the the 1890s and his suburban life with his wife and son. We learn a lot about the food, fashion, etiquette and the manners of the period. This is a lighthearted, easy read which has never been out of print.

We liked Pooter even though we laughed at him throughout. He is fundamentally a decent, hardworking man who loves his family. He is socially insecure, however, and wants to be seen as superior to tradespeople and other 'common' types. Much of the humour comes from his misguided sense of his own importance and how often this is punctured by his own gaffes and minor social humiliations.



It reminded us of Hyacinth Bouquet in 'Keeping up Appearances' who is much the same type as Pooter. Her delusions of grandeur were similarly undercut by the arrival of Onslow in his noisy car, for example, or her rows with the postman who, she feels, is not delivering her enough first class letters.

Some of us felt the book was a little repetitive but we did enjoy the funny moments.

## LUNCH CLUB



In November, seventeen members of the Lunch Club sampled the Retirees Menu at the Bold Dragoon in Weston Favell.

A pleasant restaurant, tasty food, friendly, efficient service and very good value was the general verdict.



## BRIDGE REPORTS – from Brian Collett

### THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2025 – DUPLICATE RESULTS

FINAL RESULTS TABLE					
	IMPS	%	Players	Tops	Joint Tops
1 <sup>st</sup>	52	61.9	Roger Atterwill & Tony Nixon	6	1
2 <sup>nd</sup>	49	58.3	Richard Hartley & Bea Bennett	4	0
3 <sup>rd</sup>	45	53.6	Jill Snedker & Rosemary Heaver	3	1
4 <sup>th</sup>	43	51.2	Denise Cowling & Lynda Stevenson	3	3
5 <sup>th</sup>	42	50.0	Del Smith & Gila Gwinn	4	1
6 <sup>th</sup>	42	50.0	Jim Wardle & Mavis Sturgess	2	1
7 <sup>th</sup>	36	42.9	Gareth Cox & Steve Sercombe	2	1
8 <sup>th</sup>	27	32.1	Brian Collett & Karen Brown	0	2

### FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2025 – DUPLICATE RESULTS

FINAL RESULTS TABLE					
	IMPS	%	Players	Tops	Joint Tops
1 <sup>st</sup>	82	64.1	Tony Nixon & Katie Lindenbaum	3	3
2 <sup>nd</sup>	81	63.3	Brian Collett & Paul Jarvis	4	2
3 <sup>rd</sup>	69	53.9	Hazel Barr & Gila Gwinn	1	4
4 <sup>th</sup>	67	52.3	Paula Jones & Lynda Stevenson	2	2
5 <sup>th</sup>	63	49.2	Ruby Cole & Chris Williams	2	2
5 <sup>th</sup>	63	49.2	Roger Atterwill & Ann Maynard	2	1
7 <sup>th</sup>	62	48.4	Jane Davis & Del Smith	3	2
8 <sup>th</sup>	60	46.9	Kathy & Roger Morgan	1	2
9 <sup>th</sup>	58	45.3	Anne Weddle & Chris Russell	2	2
10 <sup>th</sup>	57	44.5	Helen Coghill & Mary Parker	1	0
11 <sup>th</sup>	42	32.8	Sheila Jones & Sharon Hammond	1	1

## ART GROUP NEWS – by Norah Daykin

In November we learnt how to paint metal. Everyone had different objects in stainless steel. They had to observe not only how to make them into an object, but to depict the different colours that were reflected in them.



For December's meeting we painted fruits, leaves & twigs. Some used watercolour pencils. The paintings were all very different. I cannot believe how much everyone has improved.

It was a fun session, with tea & mince pies.



## CYCLING GROUP NEWS FROM COLIN ROWE

**After 8 years the cycling group has regrettably been disbanded.**

John Thompson founded the group in December 2017 and he arranged monthly rides for the next two years. In 2019 he resigned and Colin Rowe took over the leadership continuing to arrange monthly rides until this year, but has been unable to ride, due to an injury, for most of 2025. Due to this and the low numbers attending the rides in recent months he has decided to end his leadership forthwith. He offers thanks all those riders who have made the group viable over the years.

### **u3a BRIDGE GROUPS – YEAR END REPORT & DECEMBER DUPLICATE RESULTS**

At the start of 2025, the Thursday evening group was close to coming to an end with a dramatic fall in attendance numbers. This would have been a great shame after fifteen successful years, during which time numerous u3a members have been introduced to this very exciting, sometimes frustrating, card game. Those brave souls who now play the game, fully understand there will be highs and lows but, when it gets into your blood, it can become an addiction – a good one for the memory, and great for socialising. In order to rescue the ailing Thursday group, we started a new beginners' course in February, when 12 u3a members stepped forward. Some realised, after a few weeks, that it was not for them, with eight seeing it out to the end, and some of their names can be found in the two result tables below. It takes time and lots of practice, with it being very worthwhile in the end, and very enjoyable once everything clicks into place.

A quick look at the Thursday results table includes 5 players who started and completed the course, with high-flying ex-member of the RAF, Roger and his partner Del, snatching a creditable second place against some formidable opposition. The popularity of the monthly duplicate session can be clearly seen in the two results table, when we had five tables on both occasions, very normal for Friday, and an encouraging sign for Thursday.

<b>FINAL RESULTS TABLE – Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025</b>					
	IMPS	%	Players	Tops	Jt Tops
1 <sup>st</sup>	80	62.5	Jim Wardle & Tony Nixon	3	2
2 <sup>nd</sup>	75	58.6	Roger Atterwill & Del Smith	4	3
3 <sup>rd</sup>	73	57.0	Denise Cowling & Lynda Stevenson	3	3
4 <sup>th</sup>	68	53.1	Ruby Cole & Chris Williams	2	4
5 <sup>th</sup>	66	51.6	Paul Jarvis & Brian Collett	2	3
6 <sup>th</sup>	64	50.0	Richard Hartley & Bea Bennett	3	2
7 <sup>th</sup>	63	49.2	Belinda Collett & Chris Hill	3	2
8 <sup>th</sup>	61	47.7	Gareth Cox & Steve Sercombe	1	2
9 <sup>th</sup>	60	46.9	Jill Snedker & Rosemary Heaver	1	2
10 <sup>th</sup>	30	23.4	Mavis Sturgess & Karen Brown	0	0

Some members of the Class of 2025, have requested a follow-up refresher course, which could start sometime during January, with some 'new beginners' hoping to join in at the same time.

The last Friday Duplicate afternoon of the year was a momentous occasion for Paula Jones and partner Lynda, with a best-ever outcome for the new pairing of Mary and Helen, who only got together following the summer departure of Dilys Spokes and Carol Phillips.

**FINAL RESULTS TABLE – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

	IMPS	%	Players	Top	Jt Top
1 <sup>s</sup>	84	65.6	Paula Jones & Lynda Stevenson	6	3
2 <sup>nd</sup>	78	60.9	Mary Parker & Helen Coghill	5	2
2 <sup>nd</sup>	78	60.9	Brian Collett & Paul Jarvis	3	2
4 <sup>th</sup>	69	53.9	Ruby Cole & Roger Atterwill	2	3
5 <sup>th</sup>	65	50.8	Katie Lindenbaum & Tony Nixon	2	2
6 <sup>th</sup>	62	48.4	Mavis Sturgess & Jim Wardle	1	2
7 <sup>th</sup>	61	47.7	Judy Peck & Ann Maynard	1	2
8 <sup>th</sup>	58	45.3	Sheila Jones & Tim Smith	1	5
9 <sup>th</sup>	52	40.6	Hazel Barr & Del Smith	2	1
10 <sup>th</sup>	33	25.8	Chris Russell & Anne Weddle	1	0

And finally, a major ‘THANK YOU’ goes to Tony Nixon who, for the past eighteen months has been kindly arranging the 16 Boards we need to have for each of the two monthly duplicate sessions. The 32 packs of cards are fed into a computer-driven shuffler/sorter where, previously, it needed a whole weekend to design each of the two sets of 16 hands manually, 2 week-ends every month!

**Brian Collett**

**TABLE TENNIS & BADMINTON GROUP – Christmas get-together**

On December 18th, fourteen members of the Badminton and Table Tennis Group enjoyed an excellent Christmas Lunch at "The Olde Cobbler" in Kingsthorpe. Good Food and Good Company : enjoyed by all.

**Report & photo by John Nicholso**

**WRITING FOR “FESTIVE” FUN – report and photo by Jackie**

A lovely photograph of the group enjoying our last group meeting of the year and celebrating Christmas so this month’s group wrote stories centred around Christmas. We all had some key words to use within the story and a three or four-word phrase to start the story off. They were mostly funny stories although one or two had some emotional content. Over coffee and cakes we had a chat about some of the stand out things of the year. During 2025 we welcomed some new members and a couple moved on to different groups, notably our resident “Pam Ayres” style poet is missed since she moved on to play netball.



Thinking about the year drew us back to the early days with two members having been with the group since its inception but despite Creative Writing renamed Writing for Fun having been going for some 9 years the stories remain diverse with each member bringing their own unique style to the story even though we all start with the same title. Some write ghost stories, many are humorous and occasionally people bring their hearts into the story by including real experiences thereby raising everyone’s emotions. It’s a dedicated group who often send their stories to be read out even when they are on holiday or unable to attend. One of the members said that the group was the highlight of her month, we laugh a lot, chat, exchange stories, drink coffee and eat lots of cake. Here’s to 2026 and a happy new year to all the B&D U3A members.

## ART APPRECIATION – Janet Womack

The last meeting of 2025 on December 10<sup>th</sup> saw the group completing our year's study of Scandinavian Art. We looked at the work of Olifur Elliasson, an Icelandic-Danish artist known for his sculptured and large-scaled light installations, and also at the beautiful, luminous paintings of Anna Ancher, one of Denmark's most celebrated and pioneering artists.

During the past twelve months, members have introduced us to Viking Art and the work of artists such as Edvard Munch, Carl Larson, Peder Krøyer, Harriet Backer, the Skagen artists colony in the very north of Denmark ( a bit like St. Ives), and also jewellery designer Georg Jensen and sculptor Gustav Vigeland.

For our September meeting, we took the opportunity to visit Lamport Hall for the Central Exhibition of Northamptonshire Open Studios.

I hope the members enjoyed our Scandic journey as much as I have.

In 2026 we "travel" to Spain.

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to B&D u3a and look forward to meeting you at the monthly meetings or at our Interest Groups.

Terrie Wardle

Barbara Yamada

Jan Abel

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our December meeting started with Bucks Fizz and ended in mince pies – many thanks to everyone who helped to make the afternoon suitably festive.



Entertainment was by musical duo Two of Diamonds (Rob and Sally) who entertained us so well last year. This time they interspersed some Christmassy music with appropriate tunes from their musical year – starting with some Scottish jigs for Burns Night events, followed by more romantic songs for Valentine's Day – then to two songs from Belfast and Dublin representing St Patrick's Day . Time constraints meant they only got up to summer – so hopefully they will return at a later date to play us their music for the rest of the year!

The afternoon progressed with Sally helping draw the membership numbers of our nearly 300 members who then won £50 John Lewis/Waitrose vouchers. This is the first time we have done this – but hope to do it again next year – spreading a little seasonal cheer from the committee.

**The winners are:** Diane Fenton, Ann Tyrrell, Ricki Stevenson, David Beames and Christopher Hanger

**Ann Tyrrell receiving her gift voucher**



## **FUTURE MONTHLY MEETINGS:**

January 7 <sup>th</sup>	History of Ladybird Books, Mark Temple
February 4 <sup>th</sup>	A Downstairs Maid, Jo Golby
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	My Year as a Lighthouse Keeper, Norman Wilson
April 1 <sup>st</sup>	Unknown Icarus, Roy Smart

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY GROUP UPDATE**

The group met (13 members) for the final time in 2025 on 4<sup>th</sup> December to hear from the group leader a summary of the content of the last 12 meetings. The group title has now been changed to add to **Science and Technology – “Earth Sciences”** to include geology, meteorology and environmental issues such as pollution and waste disposal.

In the last 12 meetings the subjects discussed have been diverse: Heat exhaustion, Artificial Intelligence, food myths, rocket technology, printed electronic circuits, doom of the ship Titanic, a visit to the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air ambulance base at Coventry airport, the history of weights and measures, the Imperial inch and how tomatoes changed the world and finally the history of nuclear fission.

We meet again in February, on the 5<sup>th</sup>, when we will hear about nuclear fusion.

**Colin Rowe**

## **CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

Over 50 B&D u3a members met at the Northamptonshire Golf Club to enjoy a two/three course Christmas lunch on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December. Huge thanks must go to Yvonne Swallow for all her hard work in arranging this event. I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear that Yvonne has already provisionally booked the golf club for our 2026 Christmas Lunch for Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December next year!

I took the photo of one of the tables while people were milling around and greeting old friends – certainly before the crackers were pulled and the festive hats were worn, so apologies for being a bit hasty, but I didn't want to forget after a couple of drinks! All that is left to say is I hope you all have a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and a healthy and happy NEW YEAR! See you in January!

**Chris Rowe**

