

News & Views

Newsletter

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Our Website

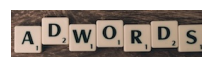
Check out our website at: www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk for lots of information about Charnwood u3a: our meetings, trips, all our Groups and much more.

Welcome

...to the January edition of *News & Views*, the newsletter of Charnwood u3a. We hope you'll find it both entertaining and informative. The content is largely written by members; details for sending contributions can be found on the last page.



Our Next Monthly Meeting: Lost in Translation



See page 2
for details

View from the Chair



Happy New Year Everybody!

Do you have any new year superstitions where you come from? My mother impressed on me the dire consequences of doing the laundry on New Year's Day in case I washed away the relatives. You'll know about 'first-footing' in Scotland, but apparently the Danish bring good luck to friends and family by smashing dishes against their doors. I guess it saves on the washing up, but it could backfire if one of the relatives is just leaving the house...

On the theme of cleaning, I read that January is Clean up your Computer month. There are definitely some murky things on the internet. This is reflected in the 2025 Words of the Year chosen by various dictionaries. The Oxford Dictionary has 'rage bait': "online content deliberately created to provoke anger"; Dictionary.com shortlisted the word 'clanker', a derogatory term for artificial intelligence, while Merriam Webster define their winning word, 'slop', as "low-quality digital content produced via artificial intelligence".

Of course, like most technologies, AI has its positive uses (See the interesting piece by John Bell in this edition, on page 7). I asked ChatGPT "Should I join the u3a?" and the reply was spot-on: "Joining the u3a is absolutely worth considering for its low cost, social connections and range of activity groups." But please don't leave it to AI to promote us: tell your friends, acquaintances – and any random person you meet in the market on Saturday morning – about the u3a. Point them to our website and spread the word that you don't need to be old or fully retired to join. There's no lower (or upper!) age limit, just a fancy to do something you enjoy with friendly, like-minded people.

Have you looked at our website lately – www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk? Is there something new you'd like to do in 2026? If nothing on the current groups list takes your fancy, perhaps you could start a new one? Honestly, it's not complicated – many of our members share the organisation of their group. If you need any advice on starting a group, or just want to share an idea, please get in touch.

My own word of the year is 'snerdle', an 18th century Yorkshire dialect word which means to wrap up cosily beneath the covers and hold off the day for a little longer – my new year tip for avoiding the laundry!

Wishing you all the best for 2026

Pam, chair@charnwoodu3a.org.uk, 07974 946007

Our Monthly Meetings

The monthly meetings of Charnwood u3a are on the **second Wednesday afternoon, 2.15 for 2.30 pm in Emmanuel Church**, Forest Road, Loughborough. The main car park for the church is accessed via Ingle Pingle, to the west of the church. Our monthly meetings are free to all, and we welcome prospective new members attending a meeting as a 'taster'. New members are invited to arrive at 2 pm to meet other members before the main meeting. If you think you'll need any assistance at the meeting, please contact our Chair in advance at chair@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Last month, we thoroughly enjoyed our Drama group's rendition of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, adapted as a radio play by Graham North (*cast shown on right*), which got us nicely into the spirit of Christmas.

If you missed this meeting, you can catch up with it for a few more days via the YouTube link sent by our Chair on 8th December.



Our Next Meeting: Wednesday 14th January

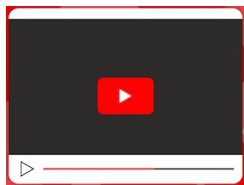
Lost in Translation with Professor Ian Maber

Every day we are bombarded with advertising messages, directions and signage. Often there is a hidden meaning to these messages. This presentation takes a light hearted and humorous look at the meaning behind these messages.

About the speaker: Prof Maber has had an interesting life and career which took him all around the world, living and working in over 40 countries. He has been a teacher, lecturer, illustrator, creative director, started 4 companies and worked with some of the most high profile names in the technology side of the entertainment industry. His unusual style of delivery includes sound, special effects, animation and more, using the principle of 'stand up comedy' combined with technology. For more information, see: <https://www.thetellerofales.com/>

To attend this meeting:

If you wish to attend the meeting in person, no prebooking is required – just turn up on the day, with your Cu3a membership card, if you have one. **If you are a new member, or attending a monthly meeting for the first time, you are invited to arrive at 2 pm.** Otherwise, please aim to arrive about 2:15 for a prompt start at 2:30 pm.



If you are unable to attend in person and would like to follow the meeting online (via YouTube), again no prebooking is required. All members who have supplied an email address will be sent a link to the live stream a few days beforehand in a reminder email from the Chair.

Looking Ahead:

In **February**, we have a talk by Dr Jack Matthews on **Charnwood Forest Geopark**, telling the story of Charnwood Forest: celebrating our internationally important geology, connecting people to our history, and securing a sustainable future. Then in **March**, we have our **AGM**, when we hope to have some group presentations, and in **April** we welcome musician Andy Smith who will present '**A Life in Music**'.

More information on upcoming meetings will appear in future issues of *News & Views* and on the **Monthly Meetings** page under the 'Our Events' menu on our website <https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk> (login needed to see details beyond title/speaker).

Group News

Days of Interest Group – Christmas Trip to Bakewell

We didn't venture far on our last – and Christmas themed – trip of 2025. Our destination was Bakewell's Christmas Market. Considering the weather in the days before the trip, with widespread yellow weather warnings, the day started well. I think that everyone managed to get onto the coach without getting wet – which on the night before I hadn't expected.



The trip to Bakewell did take rather longer than had been anticipated, largely because of flooding on the roads. The rivers really were full. Unfortunately, when we got to Bakewell, the road to the coach park was closed, due to flooding, which did lead to a bit of consternation. The super cool driver didn't panic and just dropped us somewhere in town – actually closer to the Christmas Market and the town than we would have been.

I think that we all spent time wandering around the Christmas markets, which had some very unusual decorations, small gifts, chocolates, cheese and exciting alcoholic drinks along with lots of other things. There was also a Salvation Army band to get us all into the mood. Many of us then moved onto the local shops and indoor craft fairs. Some of us walked up to the lovely Church, where it was surprisingly difficult to find the entrance.



I suspect that the weather had reduced the number of visitors, so it was fairly easy to find a nice warm café in which to take a break and have a coffee and a cake, or indeed a Bakewell pudding. Also for most our visit there was only the occasional patch of drizzle, so we managed to keep pretty dry.

When we got back on the coach the driver explained that he had spent the entire day sat on the coach, parked on a double yellow line, along with lots of other coaches. He was pleased to be able to say that the traffic authorities seemed to studiously ignore them –

as there wasn't anywhere else for them to go. This turned out to be his first Day Trip for Winson, so not so much trial by fire as trial by water.

Despite the weather we did all seem to have a good time and lots of early Happy Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year were exchanged.

If you are interested in joining the Days of Interest Group, please contact Pauline May by email at DaysofInterest@charnwoodu3a.org.uk or by telephone on 07455 167929 for details.

Next EDI Meeting

**Monday 12th January, 2 pm,
Gorse Covert Community Centre**

At our next EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) meeting on 12th January we plan to review TAT advice documents and Cu3a Safeguarding Policy, discuss the possibility of setting up a buddy system and a possible Members Survey.



We will also discuss any other topics members wish to raise.

If you have any comments or suggestions on EDI matters, or if you might be interested in joining the EDI team – who normally meet once every two months at Gorse Covert – please email newsletter@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Helen Reid

Notices for Members

Have you done away with your home phone?

Many of us have now decided not to have a landline home phone, electing instead to rely on a mobile as our only phone. If you have made such a change we ask that you update your Charnwood u3a membership records and delete your former landline number and put your mobile number in the 'main phone' field. This will then help our group leaders if they ever need to contact you by phone (as it is the 'main phone' number that they can access). If as a group leader you need a reminder, phone numbers are in the listing of group members found in 'View Group Details'.

Please also check your details, if you are not certain whether we hold the correct number for you or if you need to add, or change, your Emergency Contact.

If you need a reminder as to how to go about checking personal records on our system, then just contact me to ask.

Martyn Speight, Cu3a Web Manager
Email webmanager@charnwoodu3a.org.uk



East Midlands u3a Workshop

**11 March 2026, 10 am – 3.30 pm
at Braunstone Civic Centre, Leicester**

An event for all u3as in the East Midlands, courtesy of East Midlands u3a Council Rep John Lewis, aiming to:

- Inspire and support u3as
- Provide and share information
- Provide an opportunity for members to meet

The provisional programme includes:

- A keynote address from Allan Walmsley, Chair of the Third Age Trust, on how u3as may need to change to accommodate future working patterns and varied retirement ages. This will be followed by group discussions.
- A workshop on recruiting, valuing and supporting committee members and group leaders within your u3a. This issue is an ongoing concern for most u3as and this workshop will explore possible solutions.
- A workshop on attracting new members, staying lively and having an interesting 'offer'.

There are **two** places available for each u3a in the East Midlands. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. **There is no charge to delegates for attending, but booking is essential.**

As this event clashes with our AGM, our Committee members will be unable to attend. If you wish to go, please contact our Secretary Debra Hardwick on secretary@charnwoodu3a.org.uk by **Monday 26th January** at the latest and she will book for you. Please let Debra know of any dietary and accessibility requirements.

IT for Everyone Support for u3a members from u3a members

Fix IT Clinics

Drop in sessions where you can get help using your laptop, tablet or phone. Bring them along to:



John Storer House café

Tuesdays, 10.30 - 12.00

These Fix IT Clinics restart after the Christmas break on 6th Jan.

One to One Support

Get help with using your laptop, tablet or phone for a particular task. Just contact us:

email helpdesk@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

phone Phil/Mary 07855 702302
Garry 01509 213655

If you have a problem with logging into, or using, the u3a website, contact Martyn, our Web Manager, by emailing

webmanager@charnwoodu3a.org.uk



Our London Marathon Runner

Congratulations to Charnwood u3a member Clive Anderson, who has been chosen by the national u3a to complete the London Marathon in April 2026. The purpose is to raise funds for u3a. Look out for a profile of him appearing in the national magazine (*u3a matters*) in March.

January 2026 Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
<i>Please note: Whilst every effort has been made to show the dates/times of meetings as accurately as possible, errors and changes may occur, so you should check with group leaders for confirmation. Please send any amendments for future issues to: newsletter@charnwoodu3a.org.uk</i>				2 Jan 10.00 Mahjong 10.00 Table Tennis 7 12.00 Lunch Club 13.30 Pilates 1
5 Jan 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Craft+Self Help 11.00 Table Tennis 1 13.30 Canasta 2 14.00 Chess 14.00 Current Affairs	6 Jan 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 10+ Walks 10.00 Spanish 10.30 Fix I.T. Clinic 10.45 Pilates 3 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.30 Active Seated 2 12.00 Pilates 4 13.30 Active Seated 1 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Canasta1Quorn 15.30 Pickleball	7 Jan 10.00 German 10.00 Golf 10.00 JigsawBookEx 10.00 Mini Tennis 10.00 Scottish Dance 10.30 Papercraft 11.00 Table Tennis 3 14.00 Cribbage 14.00 French Improve	8 Jan 10.00 Sci+Tech 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.00 Line Dance 2 19.00 Canasta 3	9 Jan 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mahjong 10.00 Needlecraft 1 10.00 Scrabble 1 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Photography 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1
12 Jan 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Craft+Self Help 10.00 Poetry 1 11.00 Table Tennis 1 14.00 Archaeology 14.00 EDI meeting 14.00 Quiz group	13 Jan 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 Scrabble 3 10.30 Fix I.T. Clinic 10.45 Pilates 3 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.30 Active Seated 2 12.00 Pilates 4 13.30 Active Seated 1 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Eng Parish Ch 15.30 Pickleball	14 Jan 10.00 Committee 10.00 Golf 10.00 Mini Tennis 11.00 Table Tennis 3 14.30 Monthly Meet 19.00 Canasta2Quorn	15 Jan 09.45 CC Walks 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.00 Line Dance 2 14.15 Scrabble 4 14.30 French Conv	16 Jan 09.00 Badminton 10.00 German RTC 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mahjong 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1 14.00 Art Apprec'n
19 Jan 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Craft+Self Help 11.00 Table Tennis 1 12.00 Gardening lunch 13.30 Canasta 2 14.00 Chess 14.00 Painting	20 Jan 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 6+ Walks 10.00 Recorder 10.00 Spanish 10.30 Fix I.T. Clinic 10.45 Pilates 3 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.30 Active Seated 2 12.00 Pilates 4 13.30 Active Seated 1 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Sing4Pleasure 15.30 Pickleball	21 Jan 10.00 German 10.00 Golf 10.00 Mini Tennis 10.00 Poetry 2 10.00 Scottish Dance 11.00 Table Tennis 3 14.00 Cribbage 14.00 Family History 14.00 French Improve 14.00 Italian Conv	22 Jan 10.00 Philosophy 2 10.00 Thurs 6 Milers 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Architecture 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.00 Line Dance 2	23 Jan 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mahjong 10.00 Needlecraft 1 10.00 Scrabble 1 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Photography 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1
26 Jan 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Craft+Self Help 11.00 Table Tennis 1 14.00 Local History	27 Jan 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 ETHEL 10.00 Scrabble 3 10.30 Fix I.T. Clinic 10.45 Pilates 3 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.30 Active Seated 2 12.00 Pilates 4 13.30 Active Seated 1 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Philosophy 1 15.30 Pickleball	28 Jan 10.00 Golf 10.00 History 10.00 Mini Tennis 11.00 Table Tennis 3 14.00 Classical Music 14.00 Reading Group 14.00 Travel Group 18.30 Supper Club	29 Jan 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.00 Line Dance 2	30 Jan 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mahjong 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1 19.30 Wine Apprec'n

PLUS at Weekends: Sunday Lunch Club (11th January)

Robert's Recommended Reads

Something of a change for the first month of the New Year. Four books to consider: Doris Lessing's three Booker Prize shortlisted novels and a complex thriller from Eric Ambler.

Doris Lessing

Born in Persia (now Iran) in 1919, Doris Lessing moved to the UK in 1949. Her three Booker shortlisted books cover very different themes but are equally fascinating and brilliantly constructed. Doris Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007.

Briefing For A Descent Into Hell

(Shortlisted in 1971) is an example of what Lessing called 'inner space fiction'. A compelling but disturbing book, mixing fantasy and realism as the reader follows the hallucinatory journey of Charles Watkins. Cleverly blending Watkins's reality and imaginings with the struggle of the medics' attempts to diagnose and cure the patient, Lessing provides a dark but thrilling experience.

The Sirian Experiments (Shortlisted in 1981). This powerfully inventive book is the third in a series of five novels collectively known as *Canopus in Argos: Archives*. The series presents an interstellar society's efforts to accelerate the development of other worlds, principally Earth. An excellent, sublime narrative with sharply observed human (and alien!) behaviour.

The Good Terrorist (Shortlisted in 1985). This book is in my top ten of all 330+ Booker shortlisted books, going back to the Prize's inception in 1969. *The Good Terrorist* is a witty and satirical examination of radical politics in 1980s Britain. Alice, the main protagonist, is one of Lessing's most enduring characters. If you haven't yet read Doris Lessing, my suggestion is to start here!



Doris Lessing
pictured in
The Guardian
18 Nov 2013.
Photo: Associated
Newspapers/Rex

Epitaph for a Spy by Eric Ambler

published in 1938

John Le Carré, Len Deighton and Mick Herron are very likely the authors that many place at the top of their list of masters of the 'espionage thriller'. Having recently discovered the work of Eric Ambler, I would unreservedly add him to my personal list. For those (like me until a few months ago!) unfamiliar with Ambler's books, Orson Welles' superb film version of Ambler's novel *Journey Into Fear* might ring a few bells.

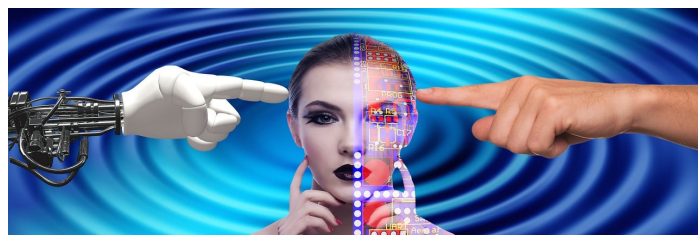
Eric Ambler was born in 1909. By the late 1930s he had established himself as a bestselling author of pacey, gripping thrillers. *Epitaph for a Spy* is one of several Ambler novels re-released by Penguin Modern Classics in 2009 to celebrate the centenary of Ambler's birth.

When first published, *Epitaph for a Spy* introduced a new, more realistic form of the 'spy novel' where the main protagonist is not so much a hero as a victim. Taking his first break for years, Paris-based Hungarian refugee and language teacher, Josef Vadassy is staying at a small hotel on the Riviera. Taking his holiday snaps to be developed, Vadassy is mistaken for a German agent and is charged with espionage. No more details here, lest I spoil the outstanding plot.

Epitaph for a Spy brilliantly depicts the dread and terror that filled Europe immediately prior to the outbreak of World War Two. Chilling and laced with foreboding, it is an enthralling reflection of those dark times.



Picture from article about Eric Ambler
entitled 'Dangerous Games' published in
The Guardian, 6 Jun 2009.
Illustration: Izhar Cohen



Artificial Intelligence - AI

AI is here – and it's not going away. According to Alan Freeland, the new u3a Network Lead for AI, 1,000 u3a members have taken the plunge and are using AI for a variety of purposes including research, administration, creative purposes, technology and learning.

How does AI differ from the computers we are already familiar with? What is ChatGPT?

With a computer, the user (or strictly, its designer) dictates every step it takes. This is written into a code that controls the machine. You want to make a payment from your bank account? Go online to your account, fill in the form and press go. The bank computer then follows pre-written steps in its code, with yes/no steps to check the cash is there, that the payee codes are correct, that you approve, then makes the payment.

AI is different. It has been “trained” (ChatGPT = Generative Pre-trained Transformer). It has arrays of very expensive chips (electronic circuits) arranged in a unique manner, somewhat reflective of the structure of our brains. It has “read” most of the books in the world, “read” most things on the internet – and everything else the designers could lay their hands on – to the chagrin of authors world-wide, still screaming for compensation. It looks at your instruction (called a “prompt”), looks at the required answer – and starts from there. It develops a crude answer then starts to refine it, checking, changing, improving and in a startlingly short time, prints out a response.

The arrangement of the chips in GPT models are based on decades of original technical work, recently and notably that carried out in London by a British company called Deep Mind, who made headlines in 2016 after its AlphaGo program beat the Go (a board game more difficult than chess) world champion, in a five-game match.

Inevitably (sorry to say) Deep Mind was acquired by a US company, Google, for £400M (bargain) and operates from Google's offices in Kings Cross.

Want to get involved? There is lots of information on Google about AI, and you could start by signing up for the monthly newsletter on AI in the u3a at <https://subjectadvisers.u3asite.uk/ai-for-everyone-subject-network>

John Bell



Participants Needed for NHS Study

Volunteers over the age of 55 years old are invited to take part in a research study, looking at visual function and eye health.

The purpose of the research is to develop visual assessments that monitor changes in eye health associated with age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

What's involved?

Testing will take place at Leicester Royal Infirmary. Testing involves one 40-minute testing session, which includes:

- An optical coherence tomography (OCT) scan of the retina in one eye
- Completing four visual assessments

Optional: You can volunteer to complete one 15-minute visual assessment, on a separate date, completed online and from home.

Who can take part?

- Adults over the age of 55 years old
- with no history of eye disease (e.g., AMD, cataract, glaucoma)

Compensation

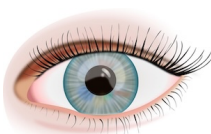
You will be compensated for your time and any travel costs you may incur.

Contact

If interested, please contact Michael Hisaund at mh486@le.ac.uk or 0116 252 5855 for more information or to sign up.

Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

The researchers thank you for supporting clinical vision research!



The (S)Train Gauge



We used to enjoy trips on the trains but the increased density of passengers and my own increased disability due to Parkinson's Disease made us give up train travel. My disability is such that I struggle to negotiate steps and I can't lift things above my shoulders, so I was worried whether I'd cope. Over recent years, journeys by train had become such a strain that we had to gauge whether the journey merited the efforts and difficulties.

However, about a year ago I thought of trying a train journey again after a long gap. Since then, we have again experienced travel by train in England.

What drew us back to the trains?

Passenger Assist was part of the solution. This service, run by the combined train operators, provides extra staff to help the disabled get on/off the train, free wheelchairs, ramps and friendly help with lifting bags and finding your seat. Because the Assist staff are in radio contact with the train and the operators, you can relax to a large extent without the fear of being left behind!

We tried a long distance trip consisting of four separate journeys (Loughborough to London, London to Brighton and back). After this proved successful, we took the same journey again several months later. We also had a shorter day-return trip from Loughborough to Lincoln.

Taxis were used for trips between home and the station in Loughborough, and we were given lifts by friendly natives in Lincoln and Loughborough.

The Passenger Assist service was very good, but not perfect – there are still some chickens and eggs (what comes first?). For example, do you buy the tickets and then the Assist or the other way round? Both ways work but it's easier as Tickets → Seat reservations → Assistance (via the website). Plus something else before you set up the Assistance...

Given the significant cost these days, you'll want to reduce the cost of the train tickets as much as possible. There are several cards available depending on your age and circumstances. In our case a Senior Railcard was the type we'd need. Using such a card reduces the cost of the general tickets by 30%. There are also 'split tickets'.

However, the discount tickets generally have special conditions that apply, some of which defy logic! For example, split tickets require your train to stop at the relevant intervening station. Others prevent you using a ticket for a journey that gets into a particular

station before the "morning busy period" where the "morning" extends beyond 12:00 noon! Unfortunately some journeys to/from London are included in these special arrangements.

Overall benefits of the Passenger Assistance service are:

- they are in radio contact with the train etc. so no driving off without you
- other passengers are more likely to offer to swap seats, or to help with your luggage
- generally less rushed
- travel docs (seats, tickets, etc) pre-checked or fast-checked at barriers, bypassing these.
- any lifts required tend to give way to any wheelchairs under official control

Negatives are:

- The booking may not have registered fully at your station. This happened to us once in London when a wheelchair had been booked but not the member of staff to push it. They allocated someone pretty quickly, so we didn't miss our connecting train!
- the website is unclear about order in which to book things (plan journey → book seats → book assistance works best)

Overall the Assistance worked very well:

- very friendly staff, kept you informed
- less stressed than without it
- able to use long trains with 8 or more carriages (wheelchairs save you from the long walk)

Accessibility Matters?

The message that "accessibility matters" is spreading ever more widely. Unfortunately, not wide enough. This is a particularly awkward issue when it comes to toilets, especially onboard trains. During our test train journeys above, one train had 4 broken toilets and one working toilet, which was not accessible. Also, station toilets were very variable with some not accessible at all.

Overall

Passenger Assist proved to be very helpful and the positive and friendly attitude of the staff involved made train travel something to look forward to once again.

To GAUGE the efforts involved previously, what was a STRAIN is once again a pleasant journey by TRAIN.

Peter Reid

Upcoming Local Events

Charnwood Orchestra

**Saturday 17th January, 7:30 pm
at Humphrey Perkins Community
Centre, Barrow Upon Soar**

Charnwood Orchestra will once again ring in the New Year at Humphrey Perkins, Barrow on Soar, on 17 January at 19:30.

Following the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Strauss in 2025, their 2026 programme has a wide variety of music to delight and entertain.

They will be “dancing into 2026” with works by Suppé, Dvořák, Elgar, Mussorgsky, Chabrier plus favourite Viennese waltzes, polkas and marches.

Tickets may be reserved in advance by emailing tickets@charnwoodorchestra.org.uk or from their website at:

<https://www.charnwoodorchestra.org.uk>

Prices: £16 Adult, £14 Concessions, £5 Students and U18s.

Please visit www.charnwoodorchestra.org.uk for more information.



the Charnwood Orchestra
Music Director Nic Fallowfield
Patron Thomas Bowes
Est. 1973

Dancing into 2026

**Saturday
17th January 2026
7:30pm**

**Humphrey Perkins
Community Centre, Cotes Road,
Barrow upon Soar LE12 8JU**

**Conductor and violin
Nic Fallowfield**

Suppé	Die Schöne Galathée Overture
Dvořák	Slavonic Dances Nos.6, 7 and 8
Elgar	Salut d'amour
Mussorgsky	A Night on a Bare Mountain
Chabrier	Joyeuse Marche

and finishing with your favourite Viennese waltzes, polkas and marches!

Tickets:

- The Orchestra website
- tickets@charnwoodorchestra.org.uk
- Taylor's Florist, 17 High Street, Barrow upon Soar LE12 8PY
- Members of the Orchestra
- At the door, cash and card payments

£16.00 (£14.00 concessions)
£5.00 -18s and under or NUS members

[/charnwoodorchestra](https://www.facebook.com/charnwoodorchestra)
[Charnwood_Orch](https://www.instagram.com/Charnwood_Orch)

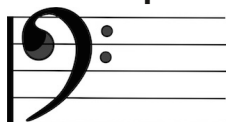
Next Concert: 28th March 2026 - please see website for details
www.charnwoodorchestra.org.uk

The Charnwood Orchestra is a Registered Charity in England and Wales. Registered Charity No.1206690

Lunchtime Concert at Emmanuel Church

Thursday 15th January, 12:45 – 1:30 pm

Stewart Kempster | bass
Jeremy Kimber | piano



Stewart has worked in all branches of the singing profession including an extensive career in Opera, Oratorio, Recital and film music.

In 2012 he became an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, an award given to former students who have distinguished themselves in the music profession.

The concert starts at 12:45 pm but a Soup and Roll lunch will be served from 12:00.

This is a free event, but donations are most welcome to cover expenses.

<https://www.facebook.com/emmanuelconcerts>

Loughborough University Choir Taster Sessions

**Mondays 5th & 12th January 7 – 9 pm
Cope Auditorium (Edward Barnsley)**

Are you considering joining the University Choir but don't know if it's for you? For the first two weeks of term, the Choir are running their rehearsals as taster sessions. Potential new members can come along and give it a go before joining.

The Choir is open to students, staff and members of the local community aged 16+. Rehearsals take place in Cope Auditorium on Monday evenings during term time from 7 pm – 9 pm. No previous experience of singing in a choir is required and all abilities are welcome.

If you choose to join the Choir, membership is £15 for the spring/summer term (January to June) for staff and the community and free for LU students. Further information on the Choir can be found at: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/arts/get-involved/societies-groups/groups/university-choir/>

More Upcoming Local Events

January Challenge at Loughborough Library

Friday 9th January, 10:30 am – 12 noon

Start the new year by trying something creative and nature-inspired! A hands-on Natural Birdfeeder Activity with The Conservation Volunteers.



Craft your own beautiful birdfeeder using recycled materials – and take your creation home to welcome wildlife into your garden.

This is a **free, adults-only event**.

Spaces are limited so book your spot today, at:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-new-year-tickets-1972568356053>

MMC Repair Café The Fix It Group 23

**Sunday 25th January, 10 am
105 Leicester Road, Mountsorrel**

20 skilled volunteers ready to help breathe new life into your much-loved items!

- Sewing – toys, clothes, bags
- IT support – software & hardware
- Sharpening – garden tools, kitchen knives, etc
- Costume jewellery repairs
- Household & small furniture fixes
- Electrical & electronic appliances

How it works:

- Free, drop-in service – no appointment needed.
- Register each item on arrival & wait to be called
- Donations welcome to help them keep running
- Save money, reduce waste, and give your broken items a second chance – all in a friendly, community atmosphere!

Loughborough Orchestra January Concert

**Saturday 24th January, 7:30 pm
Trinity Methodist Church,
Royland Rd, Loughborough**

Loughborough Orchestra's next concert, *'From Romantic Fire to Modern Flair'*, features:

- J. Sibelius: Overture: 'Finlandia'.
- G. Bizet: Symphony in C.
- G. Brown: Trumpet Concertino - Soloist: George Hilliam.
- A. Dvořák: Slavonic Dances, Op. 46, Nos 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Tickets £14 (£12 seniors, £6 children/students) are available at:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/select/lzxrxydqvze>

For more information, go to:

<https://www.loughboroughorchestra.org.uk>

For other local events, see:

<https://www.discovercharnwood.co.uk/events>

<https://allevents.in/loughborough/january>

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/events/>

LOUGHBOROUGH ORCHESTRA

From Romantic Fire to Modern Flair – Bizet, Dvořák, Sibelius & Brown's Trumpet Concertino

OVERTURE: 'FINLANDIA'
J. SIBELIUS

SYMPHONY IN C
G. BIZET

TRUMPET CONCERTINO
G. BROWN

SLAVONIC DANCES
A. DVOŘÁK

SOLOIST
GEORGE HILLIAM

24 JANUARY 2026

07:30 PM

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, ROYLAND ROAD, LOUGHBOROUGH, LE11 2EH

FOR MORE INFORMATION

TICKETS

£14 (£12)

WWW.LOUGHBOROUGHORCHESTRA.ORG.UK

Help shape Charnwood Borough Council's new Customer Service Strategy

The folk at Charnwood Borough Council are refreshing their existing Customer Service Strategy, and want to ensure it is shaped by the people who use their services every day. To do this, they need a clear understanding of customers' needs, preferences, and experiences.

To this end, they have created a short Customer Service Survey to gather feedback from residents, tenants, landlords, businesses, community groups, visitors, and anyone who interacts with Charnwood Borough Council, to provide an insight to help them:

- Understand what is working well
- Identify where improvements are needed
- Ensure services are accessible and customer-focused
- Base the new strategy on real customer experiences rather than assumptions

The survey takes no more than five minutes to complete. All responses are anonymous and will be used solely to improve how the Council deliver their services.

By completing this survey, you are helping shape how the Council design and deliver customer services for the future.

Complete the survey at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/10MBCV/>

Deadline for responses is **Monday, 12th January 2026**.

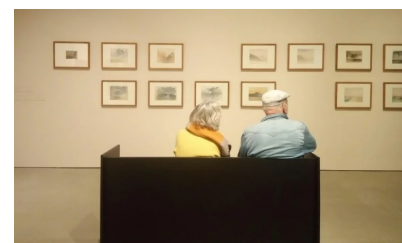
National u3a News



Virtual Visits:

A new learning activity, *Virtual Visits*, is underway with presentations on the u3a website (u3a.org.uk), from various exhibitions including ones from The British Library and The Vietnamese Museum of Fine Art in Hanoi. Now your contribution is needed: when you're next visiting a gallery, museum or garden, take photos and write a short visit record. This will then be turned into a presentation to be shared with members across the UK. Together we can travel much further than we could on our own. See more at:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/learning-activities/virtual-visits>



Online Learning Events this month:

A wide variety of free online Zoom events are on offer this month, including talks on how medicines work, understanding online content and misinformation, how to build confidence in later life, Roman Britain to the Dark Ages, accounting for time, wellbeing taster, snails and memory loss, AI in healthcare and lots more.

For details of all these, including how to book, go to: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

More from National u3a:

Register to receive the National u3a **Friends** newsletter regularly at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter>. Also access the latest u3a news at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news> and find more learning initiatives at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities>. The u3a learning blog **Sources**, with posts by u3a members covering a wide range of topics, is at: <https://sources.u3a.org.uk>

Obituary

We were saddened to receive the news recently of the deaths of two of our members: Michael Roberts (who belonged to the History group) and Trevor Draper. Both had partners who are members of Cu3a.

Our condolences go out to their families and friends.

Items for News & Views

Do you have an announcement, story, poem – or even a short comment – to share with your fellow Cu3a members? All contributions are very welcome, and we can preserve your anonymity if you prefer that your name does not appear in the newsletter.

There is a limit of around 500 words per item, and photos are very welcome – but please ensure you have permission of anyone identifiable in the photos.

To enable the newsletter to be compiled in time for delivery to members at the start of each month, the deadline for receiving items will normally be the last day but one of the previous month. The deadline for the **February** issue of **News & Views** will be **Friday 30th January (12 noon)**.



Please send your contributions to the Newsletter Editor at: newsletter@charnwoodu3a.org.uk
I always acknowledge all emails received, so if you don't get a reply within a few days, please contact me again as some emails do go astray!

Please make sure you include your contact details with your item, and try not to leave it until the last minute if at all possible.

The Editor reserves full editorial rights as to length and suitability and the Editor's decision is final.

News & Views is sent to all Charnwood u3a members by email link (or, for those without email, by post) before the monthly meeting. It is also available to read on the Charnwood u3a website each month at <https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk> under the News menu.

Thank You!

Helen Reid
Newsletter Editor
Charnwood u3a



Committee, Support Teams and Group Leaders' Details

Names, photos and email links for all the current Committee members can be found on our website under Home → Our Committee, along with details of our Support Teams. In the case of our Membership Secretary and Web Manager, phone numbers are also given, as are those of our IT Help Desk Team.

The names and generic email addresses of Group Leaders for each group can be found on that group's dedicated website page, accessed via the Groups Lists.

Note: Where personal contact details appear in News & Views, these are included with permission.



Committee Meetings

Don't forget that members are always welcome to attend any of our Committee meetings on the **second Wednesday of the month** (10 am – noon) in John Storer House, by prior arrangement, as observers. If you would like to attend one of these meetings and see what we do, please contact our Chair on chair@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Some other useful u3a web addresses:

National u3a: <https://www.u3a.org.uk>

The Association of East Midlands u3as: <https://www.eastmidlandsu3as.org.uk>

