

WSPu3a Newsletter

November/December
2023



Festive Broadway

Photo by Ced Shurben

The Committee's Briefs

Contact the Committee

You can use this link to send a message to any of our Committee:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/contact>

Chairman's Chat

Much of what we do at Christmas began in Queen Victoria's reign.
I have always enjoyed "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. My interest was sparked when my teacher morbidly explained the purpose of the kerchief around Marley's head and the phrase "dead as a coffin nail."
But Great Expectations has also been a favourite of mine. In it, Joe Gargery insists that Biddy, who is writing to Pip, reminds him of "what larks" they had together.

Looking back over the past year in the u3a, I hope you can recall "what larks" you've had together. Hitting a six into the car park at Woodhall, being able to identify three different types of native orchid, various pubs in Northumberland and helping each other delve into the lives of our Victorian ancestors are some of my memories.

*Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year to You All!*
Malcolm Capps – Chairman

Volunteering

One of the principles of the u3a is self help. It is run by the members for the members. Like all institutions there is the usual housekeeping of membership, accounts, administration and organisation. But there is also the other role of the Committee, which is encouraging learning, widening our appeal to all who no longer work and improving our members' experiences.

Like everyone else we are looking forward to the New Year. In April we will have an AGM and a new Committee. Under the constitution we are limited to the time we can serve and

there are certain positions that *must* be filled if the u3a is to continue. A number of members who have given sterling service to the u3a have to resign. The Committee will therefore need new members. Last year we had new members who joined us and I hope will continue to hold their posts next year. They will form the nucleus of the new Committee.

It is early days yet. Please talk about it, ask questions of the present Committee and encourage others to think about it.

Malcolm Capps – Chairman

Groups News

Our u3a is in the process of updating its computer system, which has meant a lot of input from some of our Committee members. To try to eliminate unnecessary time and work all Group Leaders have been asked to delete from their group's sheets any members who have not participated in the group's activities for the past three months, unless they have been advised of a reason.

If you think you still belong to a group but haven't been for some time, you might like to check the sheets at the monthly meeting to see if your name is on the sheet. If you still wish to belong, and participate on a regular basis, then please add your name once more. Please remember that Group Leaders should be advised if you can't get to a meeting, or if you wish to leave the group.

Val Shurben – Groups' Coordinator
Groups List

You can use this link to find a current list of the groups we support, and how to join up:
<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/groups>

Obituary

This obituary acknowledges members who have passed away recently.
We remember them for their contributions and for sharing something of themselves with us.

Arthur Platts

We sadly have to report that Arthur Platts has passed away. Arthur was a long-standing member of our u3a and while on the Committee served as Treasurer. He, with his wife Anne, also led the Music Appreciation Group for many years passing on their love of classical music to many of our members. Our thoughts and condolences are with Anne and their family.

Arthur's funeral will be held at Alford Crematorium on Wednesday 13th December at 2 pm..

Sue Smiter

We have also heard that sadly Sue Smiter passed away on 1st December after a brave 18 month battle with cancer. Sue had been a member of our u3a for many years, together with her husband David, and enjoyed being with the Short Walks group. Sue was also a member of Sew & Sew for some years and produced some beautiful patchwork items.

Our thoughts are with David at this sad time.

If you are aware of the recent passing of one of our members, please inform one of the Committee, lest we miss the chance to honour them here.

[Woodhall Spa u3a: Committee and Contacts \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk)

Online u3a

Find out more:

You can use these links to search for ways of furthering your interest in specific subjects, or even take part in some competitions:

Our own website

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/welcome>

u3a – Online Learning Events

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

u3a Radio Podcast November 2023

<https://youtu.be>



Learn about what it is like to be a reporter for Vatican Radio, Hayling Island u3a's Sea Shanty group, a penny farthing race and the 2023 u3a creative writing competition..

u3a Festival

[u3a – Festival 2024](#)

18th to 20th July 2024

Plans are already underway for u3a Festival '24 which will take place in July 2024 in the beautiful city of York.

Coming Soon

Upcoming Events list

You can use this link to find more details on all the events in our diary:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/events>

Monthly Meetings

December 7th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

An introduction to gemstones

A hands-on history of precious stones, presented by Jason Middleton

January 4th

2:30pm to 4pm
Coronation Hall

As it is the eleventh day of Christmas, the Committee have decided that there will be no speaker but we should continue our Christmas celebrations. We cannot promise eleven pipers piping but we do hope to have games, a quiz and entertainments for those who wish to take part.

You are invited to bring, for your table, whatever food and drink you would like. Some 20ps for small wagers would also be useful.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Malcolm Capps – Chairman

Group Noticeboard

Outings

Tolethorpe 2024

*Our seats are reserved already for our annual trip to the theatre at Tolethorpe Hall.
Sue will start to take bookings at the January meeting for Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Sue Pollitt – Group Co-Leader

Canasta

We shall not meet in the month of December, resume meetings on THURSDAY 11th JANUARY, and every 2nd and 4th THURSDAY thereafter.

Alan Wright – Group Leader

Around the Groups in 30 days

Croquet

Our 2023 year of playing croquet turned out to be most rewarding, we've all made new friends and from my observations as your coach, watching you play croquet it would appear that a good time has been had by all.

Our new season won't start again until April and I would hope that my regular players will be joining up again for another season and hopefully the April climate will be kind to us.

I would like to say well done to our u3a Champion Terry Tyler who won all his competition matches played throughout the season also for all those who took part.

Members of the Croquet Club have been working hard to improve the playing surface throughout the closed season so our playing experiences of winning those elusive hoops will be more enjoyable.

The Festive season will soon be here to be enjoyed by spending happy times with your families, so from me I'd like to wish all the Croquet Group a *very Happy Christmas and successful new year.*

Best wishes to all

Bob Potter – Group Leader.

Movies

The film seen by the Movie Group this month was [The Miracle Club](#) with Maggie Smith and Kathy Bates. We had more members at this showing than we had ever had before, a staggering 20 members, and as usual those of us that didn't have other engagements met for coffee in The Inn after the showing. I'm pleased to say that everyone, without exception, really enjoyed the film and the average score out of 10 was 9. A few members admitted that they had their tissues out, but it was a gentle, feel good film. Just right for this time of year. A great group of people who have become friends through u3a and joining groups.

Val Shurben – Group Leader



Visiting Churches

Southrey and Stixwold

Our Visiting Churches group saw two very contrasting churches in November.

First, we visited Southrey, a church which wouldn't look out of place in New England. It is a gabled timber building built in 1898 by a local carpenter, Richard Turner, as a temporary structure. The only ancient part is the gravestones from nearby Bardney Abbey (dissolved by Henry VIII) on which it stands.



To commemorate the 100th anniversary of WW1 in 2014, a stained glass window was put in. It pictured everybody from the village who had been killed in action over the past 100 years and is a beautiful, poignant addition.



The church plays a lively part in village life, hosting Knit & Natter groups, children's workshops, speaker evenings, and tea parties. We completed our visit with tea and a rather delicious cake.

Next was a visit to Stixwold, a traditional church with bits in it dating from the original church built in the mid 15th century. There we marvelled at the quaint pew ends (one depicting a lady sticking out her tongue at the devil opposite – picture below); the coffin lid of the last abbess of Stixwold Priory; the ancient carved stone font; and the chancel screen, which comes from the chapel of Halstead Hall.



Continued

Stixwold – Continued

Then, this is what awaited us as we left Stixwold Church... Absolutely beautiful!



Merry Christmas to everyone from all in the Visiting Churches Group

Sally Smithson – Visit organiser

Cribbage

The crib group is now up and running. Although we already have 11 members on our books there is always room for more.

Stef Lorenz – Group Leader



Bird Watching and Wildlife

RSPB Frampton Marsh, 27th October 2023

Our party of six set off with the usual degree of optimism despite the overcast, misty and damp weather conditions resulting in very poor light and visibility. With the naked eye the birds on the lagoons were simply silhouettes in the gloom.

However, with the benefit of our optical equipment, identification was possible and as usual at Frampton there was plenty of interest to be seen through the windows of the visitor centre, including a couple of snipe in the open instead of their habitual semi-concealment in vegetation.

On the other side of the reserve two peregrines resting on a barn roof and a buzzard on a gatepost were pointed out to us. We proceeded to the 360 degree hide, while a Cetti's warbler betrayed its presence in a reed bed with its explosive song. On approaching the hide we observed a great white egret feeding in the open, close to the

path, a truly handsome bird, the size of a grey heron, with snow white plumage, bright yellow bill and black legs.

Our visit coincided with a low tide, so many wading birds had departed for the shore and the salt marsh beyond the sea bank.

Nevertheless there was a small flock of dunlin, a few redshanks and a couple of ringed plover as well as good numbers of ducks, including several pintail.

Though we split up into two small groups on the return walk we reassembled at the visitor centre for lunch at the excellent café and debated the merits of cheese scones from various sources. Frampton was awarded high marks by those who sampled them. It was, apparently, "cheese toastie day", which merited a £1 discount on that particular item. The weather didn't improve.

Thanks as ever are due to Ann Fletcher for organising the visit.

Species Recorded:

(Apologies if I've missed anything seen or heard by someone else)

<i>Black-headed Gull</i>	<i>Brent Goose</i>	<i>Buzzard</i>
<i>Canada Goose</i>	<i>Carrion Crow</i>	<i>Cetti's Warbler</i>
<i>Coot</i>	<i>Curlew</i>	<i>Lapwing</i>
<i>Dunlin</i>	<i>Duncock</i>	<i>Gadwall</i>
<i>Great White Egret</i>	<i>Greenfinch</i>	<i>Greylag Goose</i>
<i>Herring Gull</i>	<i>Little Egret</i>	<i>Little Grebe</i>
<i>Magpie</i>	<i>Mallard</i>	<i>Meadow Pipit</i>
<i>Moorhen</i>	<i>Mute Swan</i>	<i>Peregrine</i>
<i>Pied Wagtail</i>	<i>Pink-footed Goose</i>	<i>Pintail</i>
<i>Redshank</i>	<i>Redwing</i>	<i>Ringed Plover</i>
<i>Shelduck</i>	<i>Skylark</i>	<i>Snipe</i>
<i>Sparrowhawk</i>	<i>Starling</i>	<i>Teal</i>
<i>Wigeon</i>	<i>Woodpigeon</i>	<i>Wren</i>

John Watt – Group Member

5 Mile Walking

Whisby

Whisby was a good choice by Bob Aspinall for the November walk. You will remember the storms and the flooding in the October which meant that so many of our usual walks were too wet.

People from Woodhall Spa must feel they are at home at Whisby – Ling (heather) Moor is not far away and there are still areas of that scarce habitat, lowland moor.



Though the day was dry, the bushes gave the walkers shelter from cold wind and they stopped occasionally to watch the tufted ducks, mallards and mute swans. There is also a hide very close to a feeding station which attracts smaller birds.

After the walk quite a few of us gathered in the café for lunch. A bowl of hot soup and their excellent bread and butter was a good choice.



Glaciers have made it an area of sands and gravels. It is a bit further on than our gravel pits. Here the sands and gravels have been excavated, the lakes established and scrub has developed.



N.B. Worth knowing. Whisby Natural World has an excellent free play area with sand and water and climbing frames and also an indoor play area.

Malcolm Capps – Group Leader
Photos by Les Wylde

Poetry

Continuing our series of 'Elements' themes, the one chosen for November's meeting was 'Air'.

Our first poem here takes us on an imagined ride into space to inspect the viability of life on other planets; Our second takes us on a walk, closer to home, to feel the effect of the movement of air across our own planet, but comes with a verbal twist in the tale; The third has combined our theme with the expectations of children during the Christmas season.

Airs and Graces	The Wind and the Wind
<p><i>Have you ever gazed towards the stars and thought, If they are big enough, then there really ought To be lifeforms of every imaginable sort. But if you study astronomy (But not at the expense of gastronomy) You see there is something of which they are all short Air, or more correctly, oxygen (that's O2) Therefore they have none to spare. One percent, and sometimes even two, With methane in abundance, acid to share. Nitrogen, helium and hydrogen by the ton. (Obviously visiting would not be much fun.) Whilst I still remember, in case it slips my mind I studied the atmospheric subject, to see what I could find. I have to stay it's all Tom's fault, he is so very kind And so I hope I have the air of one who knows more than one world Shown by my furrowed brow, lovingly furled. Yet that wisdom will not be secret, now it's aired, So with the versatility of the word 'air' is now shared. There is an airundance of transport through wind and hail, Aircraft, airship, airlift, airline, aeroplane, the air is thick; All sending messages, through airwaves or by airmail Through airstream, carried by an airman, feeling airsick. But before you drop off for a quiet, peaceful snooze, Space is definitely somewhere you'll not want to cruise, Except with a spacesuit, Filled with lots of Air</i></p>	<p><i>The wind rustles the leaves as they dance along the grass A pleasing scene in Autumn when all this comes to pass The leaves are dying but in glorious tints Giving us thoughts of more wintry hints Of winter to come with unsettling and boisterous gales Over the land and oceans like gigantic mad whales</i></p> <p><i>Breezes are beautiful and calming and gentle Not like the storms that are driving us mental That tear at the flowers, the foliage and trees We long to return to the lull of the breeze The strong winds do damage to houses, land The wind and the rain can get out of hand</i></p> <p><i>Wind can be refreshing – we like a good blow On the beach, in the hills – on the fields in the snow As long as it's not too wild or distressing We like it to be moderate – it can be caressing The waves can be beautiful on the shore or lake And the leaves on the trees as they rustle and shake</i></p> <p><i>These four letters can also spell wind We wind up our clocks – there are so many kinds We used to have watches with long golden chains Kept in dear little shops in dear little lanes The watchmaker sat on a high legged seat And bids you the time of the day when you meet These days are forgotten now past and long gone But the wind is sometimes still or sometimes strong</i></p>
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Winter Wind

*The wind is blowing
The air is cold and fresh
Everyone rushing around
Oh, Christmas is coming
Kids running around to choose
the Christmas Tree 🎄
The cold air doesn't bother them
What a joyful time of the year
They don't worry about the wind or cold air,
They just wanted their Christmas present from Santa.*

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Continued

Poetry – Continued

As we are approaching the season of goodwill, some of our group have offered their own reflections on the joys and the trappings of Christmas, and how expectations of the main event can bring moments of sadness, too.

Christmas	Christmas Eve
<p><i>If you've eaten too much pud And you're feeling not so good Hark the Herald Angels sing Gaviscon is just the thing</i></p> <p><i>If the sprouts have done their worst And your tum feels fit to burst Angels from the Realms of Glory Take a nap or watch "Toy Story"</i></p> <p><i>If you've drunk far too much booze Several pounds you need to loose We Three Kings of Orient are No more leaning 'gainst the bar</i></p> <p><i>Pigs in blankets, what a treat But before you over eat Unto us a boy is born Think how you'll feel in the morn.</i></p> <p><i>Beer and wine can lift you up Yet beware the wassail cup Good King Wenceslas looked out Too much port can cause you gout</i></p> <p><i>If of yule log you've partaken Here's a tip to save your bacon See amid the Winter's snow Walking sure will help, you know</i></p> <p><i>Plates of wonderful mince pies May be sights for your sore eyes Once in Royal David's city Overeating, what a pity</i></p> <p><i>Take it steady Christmas Day I've one more thing left to say It came upon the Midnight Clear All the best for the New Year</i></p>	<p><i>Well the time is nearly upon us – "am I ready" hear me say, Have I finally got everything sorted for tomorrow, Christmas Day. I've remembered to take the turkey out, checked I've got all the veg A sudden panic about the cheese but it's okay we've got a huge wedge.</i></p> <p><i>I've wrapped up and given out the presents, delivered cards by post & hand, Decorated our little Christmas tree – it really does look rather grand. I purchased a nice shiny tv magazine, got boxed games ready to play They'll keep the grandchildren and us amused through the whole of Boxing Day.</i></p> <p><i>Today I'll try to be organised, prepare everything I can in advance Maybe make myself a nice list so I don't leave it all to chance. I'll have to sort out the timings so everything is ready at once, Though cooking isn't really my strong point, gladly I'm not a total dunce!</i></p> <p><i>I'm getting excited about my presents, given them a bit of a prod & a poke, Just remembered I haven't got any crackers with awful Christmas jokes. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us, I'd really rather not have snow Because after I've eaten all that lovely food on a nice stroll I'd like to go.</i></p> <p><i>There will be some sadder moments, remembering those no longer here But people's happiness at Christmas can always bring me some cheer. So here's to getting everything ready, now there's really only one thing to say, I hope that you all have the most wonderful, joyous and Merry Christmas Day.</i></p>
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*On behalf of the Poetry Group I'd like to wish all members of Woodhall Spa u3a
a safe and peaceful Yuletide.*

Tom Sefton – Group Co-Leader

Read more:

Use this link to see what else the group has written this month:

[Poetry \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk)

Woodhall Wanderers

Woodhall Spa

The Wanderers were out in force today with 18 of us setting off for a walk around the village. From The Inn we set off up the Broadway and crossed to head down Idlesleigh Road towards the Kinema. Taking the footpath alongside Tea House we went round the backs of the Tea House, The Old Spa Hospital, The Kinema and The Petwood Hotel to emerge on Monument Road. Whilst on the path we spotted the newly installed outdoor screen at The Kinema. There were also some people hitting little white balls on the grass to our right and they seemed to get quite excited when one disappeared down a hole? No white rabbits though?

Taking a left onto Monument Road we then crossed over Stixwould Road to head down Green Lane. At this point we lost one walker who was recovering from an operation and had walked far enough. Luckily for us not a lot of traffic around as it is quite narrow with unforgiving edges.

Reaching the Viking Way we took a left and headed down the footpath between the houses of the Viking (Golf) Estate to Witham Road. Turning right we lost a further two walkers as they were close to home and we headed off towards our next turn, Abbey Lane. There are some really old buildings down here that are worth a view, notably Kirkstead Old Hall and I do wonder if the building materials came from the derelict abbey just a few yards away?

Arriving at the end of the lane we turned back towards the village and passed the latest developments, McCarthy Stone (Hotchkin Gardens and Gibson Court) and Rippon Homes



(Woodcock Grange). Interestingly Rippon Homes have moved us closer to Lincoln and we are now only 13 miles away, one of the many mistakes in their brochure!

It was good to see that the residents of Arnhem Way have been very industrious sweeping up their leaves, it seems to be a never ending task at this time of year. Taking a left at Stanhope Avenue we were on the final lap to our finish line, The Inn.

Arriving at The Inn with plenty of time to spare as we had our End of Season lunch booked for 1pm, there was no escape as the walkers were trapped and the list for 'volunteers' to lead next years walks appeared! Most months are now booked but there are still a few vacancies, don't be shy!!

Many thanks to John for leading the walk and The Inn for a very welcome lunch.

John Cotton – Group Leader

Home Computing for Fun

Christmas Quiz – Can you Identify this Old Technology?



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

Continued

Christmas Quiz – Continued

9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



Continued

Christmas Quiz – Continued



(Answers at end)

Can you Identify Old Technology? – Answers

1. Atari 2600
2. Floppy disc
3. "Rotary" phone
4. VCR (Video cassette recorder)
5. Pager
6. Audio cassette tape
7. Game Boy
8. Modem
9. Calculator watch
10. Car cigarette lighter
11. Television
12. Slide projector
13. Fax machine
14. Polaroid camera
15. Boom Box
16. Dot Matrix printer
17. 8 Track player
18. Sony Walkman
19. Telex machine
20. VHS (Video Home System) camcorder
21. Washing machine
22. PDA (Personal Digital Assistant)



"One day, son, all of these perfectly good A.C. adapters, which have long outlived the products they were originally designed for, will be yours."

Happy Christmas Everyone!

Heather Maslen – Group Leader

Find out more

If you have any questions about these articles, **or have topics you would like me to cover**, please contact me by clicking on the bird on the Home Computing for Fun page on the Woodhall Spa U3A website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/page/115109>

Outings

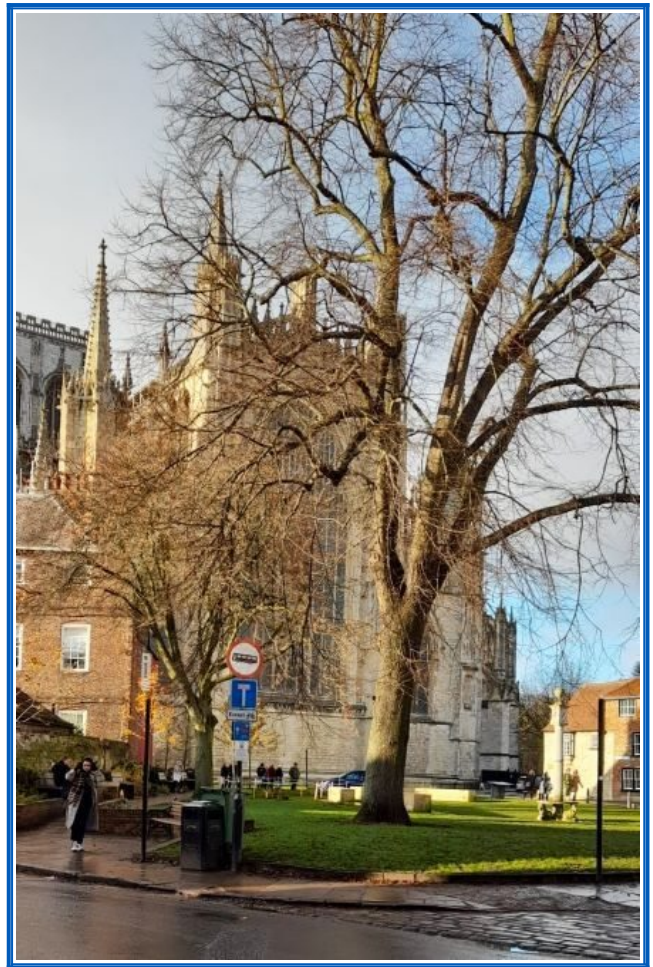
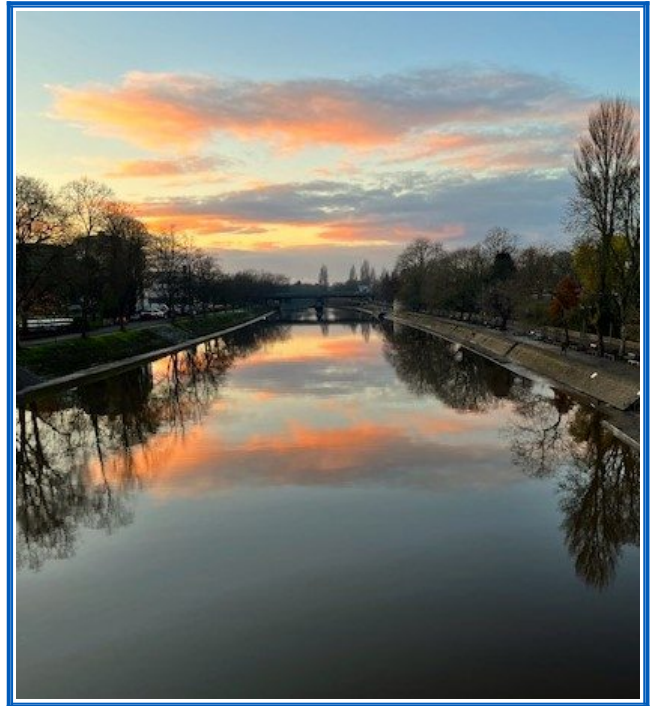
York

Our last trip of 2023 was to York to help us get into the spirit of Christmas. We were lucky to enjoy a dry, but very cold day after driving through patches of snow.



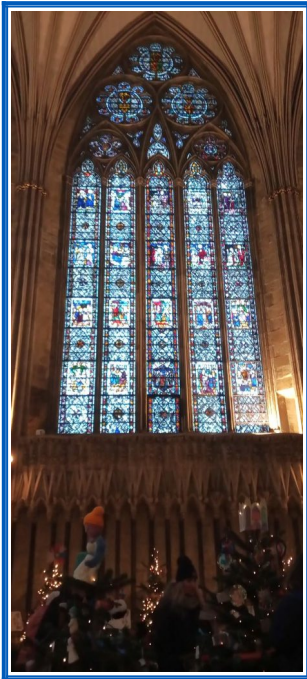
Some members visited the Minster, some the Guildhall and I think most wandered through the Christmas Market.

One or two may have sampled the 'alcoholic spirits' on offer!

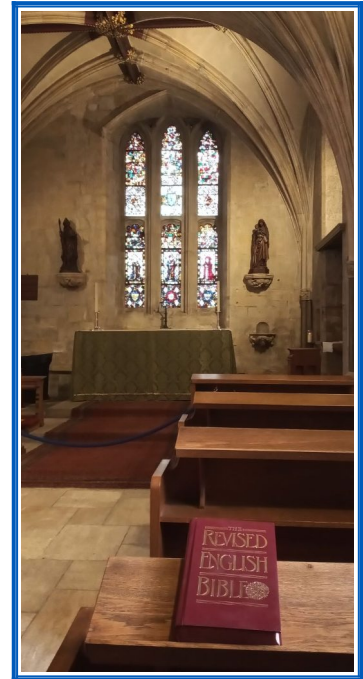


Continued

York – Continued



The Minster was looking particularly festive, with decorations and Christmas trees in abundance, and also, thanks to the strong Sunlight pouring through the windows, a dazzling display of its superb stained glass. Some of our members took to one of the smaller chapels for some quiet time, away from the hustle and bustle.



*We wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Looking forward to seeing you on our 2024 trips.*

Jackie Stevens – Group Co-leader

The Final Word

Feedback

You can use this link to view past issues of the Newsletter, or to send a note to the Editor:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodhall-spa/page/113917>

If you have any suggestions or comments about the Newsletter I'd be happy to read them. You can email them to me via newsletter@woodhallspa-u3a.org.uk, or use the link above.

I am indebted, as always, to all those who have taken time to contribute to this edition. Many thanks.

*I wish you all a very happy Yule, and I hope we can all look forward
to a more peaceful and settled New Year.*

Take care,
Tom Sefton – Editor

u3a
learn, laugh, live