

Hickling Broad u3a December 2025 Newsletter



**Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year to everyone**

Diary Dates: December 2025

Mon 01 Dec	Country Dancing
Wed 03 Dec	Walking
Thu 04 Dec	Creative Art and Craft
Mon 08 Dec	Country Dancing
Thu 11 Dec	Wildlife
Thu 11 Dec	Crib
Fri 12 Dec	Members' Meeting
Mon 15 Dec	Blurr
Wed 17 Dec	Dining Club
Thu 18 Dec	Wildlife
Mon 05 Jan	Country Dancing
Tue 06 Jan	Croquet/Games
Wed 07 Jan	Walking
Wed 07 Jan	Bookworms
Thu 08 Jan	Discover the Broads/Norwich
Fri 09 Jan	Members' Meeting
	
For sailing dates please see Sailing report	

HBu3a Committee Monthly Update

At our next meeting on Friday 12th December, 2pm at Hickling Barn, we have our annual share a plate Christmas social featuring Jane's Magnificent Table Quiz.

Bring along a plate of savoury or sweet nibbles to share and prepare to test your powers of memory and reasoning as Jane entertains us once more. There is no quiz like Jane's quiz - prepare to be amused and challenged in equal measure. To help get the Christmas spirit going we will, as usual, be serving hot spiced apple juice along with a tot of rum if you wish.

At our last meeting on Friday 14th November our dear friend and renowned broadcaster and presenter Wally Webb returned to present his spine chilling talk on "Ghosts of the Norfolk Broads". There are many ghost stories around Norwich and Norfolk but this talk concentrated on those tales and fables that happen at the waters edge across the Broads. From ancient manifestations to ghostly apparitions steeped in folklore, this enlightening illustrated talk described historic events from the Romans, Saxon invaders, Kings and witches and more recent times walking us safely through these spooky events!

As always your committee sends their warmest thanks to our stalwart cake bakers and magnificent tea team all of whom make our teas a most enjoyable part of our monthly meetings

News from our Interest Groups

Group Contact Co-ordinator

Helen Foster:

Bookworms – Reading Group: 1st Wednesday (2:00 – 4:00 pm) Hickling Barn

Kathy Cooper:

Bookworms meet at Hickling Barn on the first Wednesday of the month 2 - 4pm. Members choose their books from the library list and the member who chooses the book to be discussed that month will lead the meeting.

The book chosen for 5 November was 'The Tattooist of Auschwitz' by Heather Morris chosen by Jennie and below is Jennie's review:

"This is a tale of courage, resilience, optimism, bravery and love. It tells the story of Lali Solokov who gets taken to Auschwitz and manages to not only stay alive but also to help other prisoners. He is chosen as a Tattooist. With that position comes special privileges which he uses to make the conditions of the other prisoners a little more bearable. As he tattoos an identification number on a new prisoner, Gita, he falls in love with her. They contrive to meet throughout their imprisonment and eventually marry once they are released. The horrors of Auschwitz are alluded to but are not graphically described. It is Lali's account of his experiences as he remembers them, told to the author, rather than an accurate historical account."

As you can imagine, the title is a bit off-putting but we all read it and agreed it was well written, even if the subject of the book was not something we would necessarily pick up at the library or a book store. The group gave it 7/10.

No Bookworms in December as we will be having our Xmas lunch at the Boathouse, Ormsby. We will resume in January 2026 to review Keith's choice 'The Dead Lake' by Hamid Ismailov and with a new selection of books for 2026. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Bookworms gang.

BLURR – The Photography Group: 3rd Monday (2:00-4:00pm) at Hickling Barn

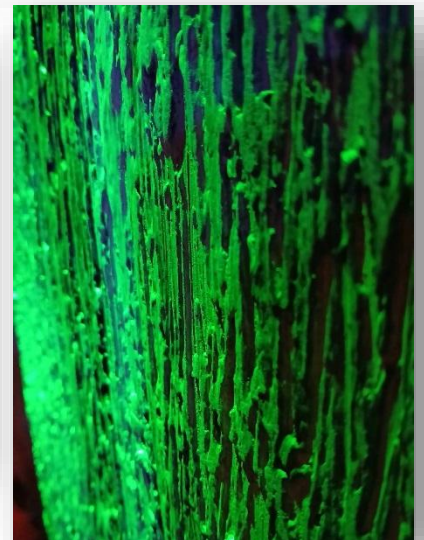
Contact: hicklingu3aphotos@gmail.com

Our Group meets on 3rd Monday of the month, at 2 o'clock in the barn. Our last meeting was on 'Textures' see photos below. 17 members attended with 75 photos to show.

Our next meeting is on 15th December when our topic will be 'Book Titles' plus a small social please bring a plate to share.

Our January topic will be '13 different objects in one photo'. February will be a practical afternoon so bring along your cameras phones etc. and we may be able to help with any questions you have.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year to you all.
Keep snapping!





British History: 3rd Thursday

Steve Whitby:

We take our annual end of year break with no meeting being held in December. We return on Thursday 15th January when Janet will give us a talk about the Walls and Towers of Yarmouth. Usual time and venue, 2 p.m. in the Barn. All are welcome, why not give us a try and see if you want to join us.

Our November meeting saw Steve present the tales of three disasters - the London Beer Flood of 1814, the Great Gorbals Whisky Flood of 1906 and the Bradford Humbug Poisoning of 1858. Not widely known about these three disasters accounted for over 30 deaths with many more injured.

Humbugs, whiskey and beer were on offer but (strangely enough) most of our group members preferred the traditional HBU3A offering of tea and cake!

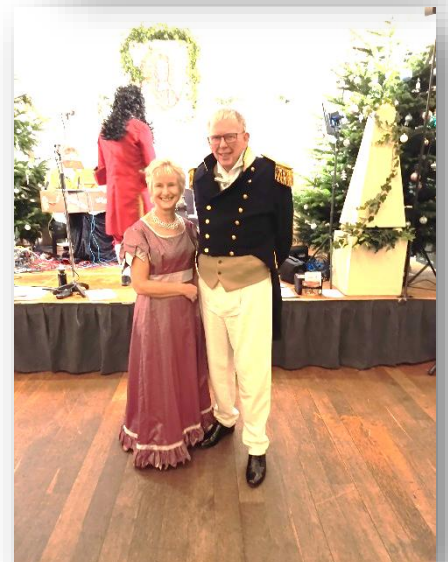
Country Dancing: 1st and 2nd Mondays (2:00 – 4:00 pm) in Hickling Barn

Dinah Slatter:

On the evening of Saturday November 15th, 18 members of the Country Dancing group stepped down from their carriages and entered Norwich Assembly House for this year's Playford Ball. Suitably costumed - John had enlisted in the Royal Navy for the occasion and gained swift promotion to the rank of Captain - we made a colourful crowd, waiting eagerly for the dancing to begin.

Sessions of dedicated practice paid off: the rehearsal beforehand of the Triple Minors had discouragingly resembled an unseemly fray, but on the night we carried off those called by the MC with aplomb and were justifiably pleased with ourselves. Fortified only by ginger and shortbread biscuits at half-time (thanks to Jane and Helen) we danced for 3 hours.

The date of next year's Ball - November 21st 2026 - is already on our calendar!



Creative Arts and Crafts: 1st Thursday (2:00 – 4:00 pm)

Rose Pigula:

We are a small, friendly group who enjoy a range of different art and crafts including knitting, crochet, embroidery, needle felting, textiles, painting and sketching. If you would like to join us just contact Rose on the above email. You will be most welcome.

Crib: 2nd Thursday, Hickling Barn (2:00 – 4:00 pm)

Roy Smith:

16 of us enjoyed an afternoon of Crib and tea and cake. If interested contact Roy.



Croquet/Games Group: every Tuesday

Several hardy members continued to play Croquet during the cold weather but the rest of us enjoyed the warmth of The Barn while playing games! There will be no Croquet/Games during December on the 9th (Festive Lunch) and 23rd and 30th for the Christmas period and we will start again on January 6th. If you would like to join us, please contact keith_burton@hotmail.com or dianafossett1@gmail.com.

Dining Club: 3rd Wednesday (various locations)

Diana Fossett:

Members of the Dining Club proved their adventurous nature this month by heading south. Braving the roadworks on the A47, we convened at The Huntsman on the outskirts of Strumpshaw. Selecting from both the Classic menu and the seasonal special of the Festive menu, we were promptly served and tucked in. As ever, the conversation ranged freely over numerous topics whilst we enjoyed our meals. There haven't been any reports of members getting lost taking the imposed diversions in the lanes getting around the roadworks, so we hope we shall all be meeting up again for the next lunch at The Lodge, Salhouse on Wednesday, 17th December 12.45 for 1.00 p.m. If you would like to join the Dining Club or require further information, please contact dianafossett1@gmail.com.

Discovering the Broads/Norwich: 2nd Thursday

Chris Foster:

For November we met up at Norwich Castle. Everybody enjoyed a catch up and coffee in the cafe before embarking on a look round the new and very expensive refurbishment. There is a lot to see and at first it seems a little disorganised as displays and information boards are on various levels and quirky spaces. However the money has been well spent on spectacular displays, lots of glass and clever lighting in the older parts of the castle explaining its history and construction techniques. The changes in the medieval keep are a little marmite with some gaudy decoration which is almost a disneyfication of medieval Norwich. It is educational and there is an atmosphere, but it takes a bit of getting use to. I would recommend the digital "film" that runs every half hour in the Keep. We also enjoyed great views up on the roof which offer 360 degree views of Norwich and it was a beautiful day. The group finished up by enjoying a very well presented lunch back in the cafe. The day we visited many of the lifts were not working and certainly if you want to enjoy the views a fine day is recommended. A great day out for families especially with children.



Gourmet Diggers: 4th Monday (2:00-4:00 pm) at Hickling Barn

Jane Brooker: Kate Fletcher:

Here we are again at the end of another year of Gourmet Diggers. We held our Christmas do in November as there is no meeting in December. We all brought in a small selection of food. Thoroughly enjoyable.

We started off with our Gardening and Food Quiz. Barry was the winner.

We all presented our home grown Leeks (or are they Spring onions) to see who had won this year's competition. Glenda once again was the winner coming in at a whopping 5in diameter. I think Leek soup was on the menus that evening.

We chatted about Christmas, past and present, what we were eating or cooking for the big day, how the festivities had changed thought the years. Was turkey still on the menus or was it something else?

We finished off with our tribute to Molly (not forgetting Fred) playing her now famous game "right and left".

A very Happy Christmas and New Year to everyone.



IT and Computer Learning : 4th Monday (12:00-13:30) at Hickling Barn

Kate Fletcher:

We started our November meeting discussing the recent U3A online events and social media platforms covered at the previous meet. We then looked at Generative AI and how it could assist us with research, admin, learning, creativity and transcription. ChatGPT made an introduction to the group and informed us how it was designed to understand and generate human-like text. It answered questions from the group and engaged in conversation to help us understand where it sourced its information and how it was able to process it so quickly. The fun interaction covered horticulture, local vocabulary/history, plagiarism detection, autonomous vehicles, autumn budget and summary generation of the groups recently read novels with impressive results. December U3A online events of interest are, Making your Apple smartphone easier to use on the 9th and AI news on the 19th.

We will not meet in December, but all are welcome at our meeting on 26th January 2026

Sailing: Every Tuesday and Friday

John Stacey: hbu3asailing@gmail.com

If you ever fancied a go at sailing there will be opportunities next May as we are offering a repeat of this year's sailing experience. This will include a half day taster session in April where you will be given an opportunity to sail on Barton Broad with an instructor. Followed, if you have been bitten, by a 3 day course. This will achieve a Level 2 RYA and will be followed up by joining the main group's sailing days on Tuesdays and/or Friday mornings with either an instructor or an experienced sailor. We sail in Yeomans that are a small keel boat and nearly impossible to capsize, unlike dinghies, they have super manoeuvrability and just good fun without getting wet. We sail out of Neatishead with the Nancy Oldfield Trust who can provide all your sailing equipment save for footwear and headwear. The Trust is equipped for all abilities and has equipment for all types of physical infirmities. They have cruisers with lifts for getting on and off the pontoon/staithe and a hoist if required for entering and exiting the Yeomans. There is also a Yeoman fitted with a wheel for those not able to manoeuvre within the boat.

For those that have sailed before would like to join us we can arrange for an assessment session and, provided that you meet the Nancy Oldfield competency level, you can also join the main sailing group with either an instructor and or experienced sailor until confidence/ability meets a level for safe sailing.

Further details will be posted in the New Year but if you are already interested please contact Ros. Spaces are limited to 6 for the 3 day course but there is possible wriggle room for more. It will be on a first come first serve basis as we share these particular sessions with the Wymondham U3A.

The dates and times of the sessions have yet to be finalised but this year saw the taster session in April and the 3 days course in May at cost of £20.00 for the taster and £120 for the 3 day course. We do not expect there to be too much of a rise in the prices.

The main group sails from April until end of October providing the weather is suitable. We normally will not sail during very heavy rain or when the wind is beyond 20 miles per hour and gusts above 30, but is subject to the Nancy Oldfield Trust keeping us and all volunteers safe and comfortable.

For more information please contact Ros and John Stacey on 07771914672 or [email hbu3asailing@gmail.com](mailto:hbu3asailing@gmail.com)

Voices of Hickling

Steve Whitby:

No meetings are planned at present

Walking: 1st Wednesday (usually 10:00 am) Various locations

Roy Smith:

On a warm (for November) Wednesday an intrepid band of members made a brave crossing of the A47 roadworks to assemble for a walk around Beighton. In only a morning they experienced the delights of 2 churches, South Burlingham and All Saints, Beighton. The latter received an inspection of it's restored interior by the group. South American camelids were spotted as we passed the Alpaca farm. Views of the sea would have been pointed out, had the sea mist not obscured the wind turbines off Caister. A palace of earthly delights came into view at a distance - we later visited it (The Cantley Cock) for a good lunch. From afar we also saw an example of agricultural mass production, but didn't venture any closer to the Cantley sugar factory.

All this within four miles, who doubted the educational value of u3a?

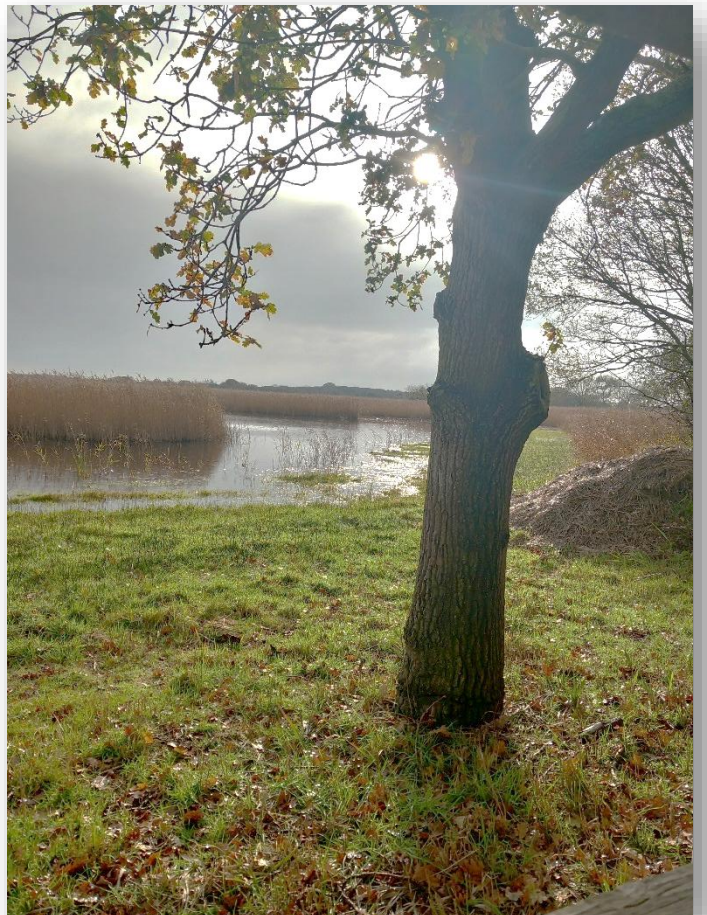
After the walk, and lunch, most had to navigate the back lanes to reach the safety of Acle and onward to home.



Wildlife Group: 3rd Thursday (10:00 am) Various locations

Chris Foster:

We decided to visit NWT Hickling Broad Nature reserve. Obviously we all knew the site well but the decision of where to go was determined by the flooding and the hail and snow storms. Short breaks in the weather allowed us to dodge from one hide to another with reasonable comfort but the temperature meant we did not stay too long anywhere. The wildlife was hunkered down and mostly out of view due to atrocious weather but we had the odd display from marsh harriers and Mike saw a bittern when everybody else saw a cormorant. The highlight of the morning was hearing an elephant call until we realised Paul was playing with his phone. We all warmed up with soup and or curry in the Pleasure Boat for lunch.



Members Corner

What's on at our next meetings:

December 12th: Share a Plate Buffet with Jane's Table Quiz

As a finale to our year, we will enjoy our share a plate celebrations along with Jane who has kindly agreed to return with her popular, challenging and fun fact filled table quiz.

2026

January 9th: Andrew Pettit NWT

In the finale of his trilogy of presentations, Norfolk Wildlife Trust Hickling Project manager Andrew Pettit returns to tell us how their strategic development of the Hickling Estate has progressed.



*Would you like company this Christmas?
You are welcome to come to our free event*

Catfield Community Christmas

Christmas Lunch
with afternoon entertainment

Catfield Village Hall
Thursday 25th December
12:00pm – 4:00pm

Please book in advance by December 15th

Email: dianarackham@hotmail.com
Phone Monica and Barry 01692 581 587

If you would like to help or support this event in
anyway, please also use the contact details above

stationerytree.com

All items for the newsletter should be sent to hbu3anews@gmail.com