

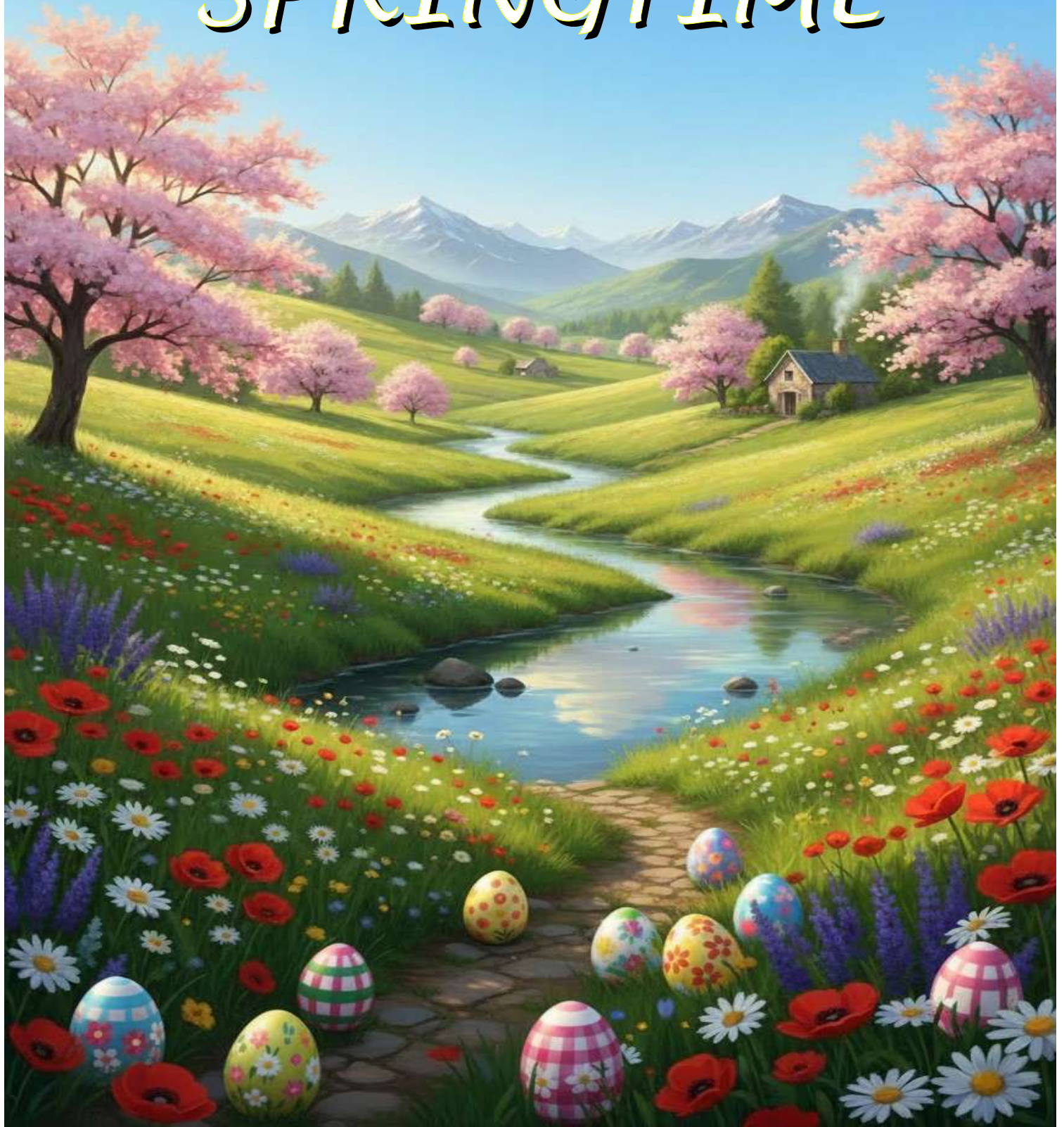
**u3a**  
learn, laugh, live

**NEWSLETTER**  
FLITWICK & DISTRICT BRANCH

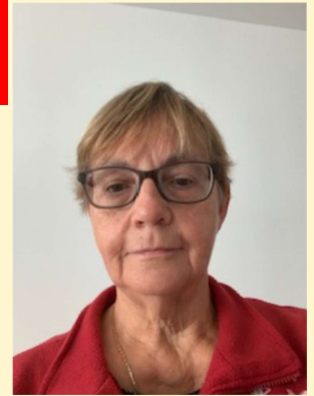
REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1168040

ISSUE 76 APRIL 2026

# SPRINGTIME



## Message from the Chair



This is the first message from me since you kindly elected me as successor to Nick, as your Chair. I wish to express my thanks to Nick for all his efforts as he steps down and wish him well. I hope to justify your faith in me to take the group forward. I wish to also thank Maureen who is stepping down as treasurer after a number of years of service. Thank you both.

I am ably supported by your re-elected committee members and I appreciate that immensely.

There are a number of actions that we need to undertake in the coming year that involve a full review of all policies and processes. Very tedious, I know, but it is essential for us to have all these legal requirements in place and up to date. More information to follow as we tackle them!

I look forward to a full timetable of monthly speakers and wonderful Away Days in the coming year. Thank you to all the organisers. I know that we have a very full variety of groups and it is wonderful to be able to offer something for everyone. Thank you to all the group leaders and organisers for their contribution to the making of their success. I hope to also be open to suggestions for new groups and encourage everyone to become involved.

Lastly my thanks to those members who support the group at our monthly meetings, but I need to appeal urgently for volunteers to run the raffle, or I regret that we will need to stop offering this little flutter in the future!!

With best wishes for the coming Spring Season

Ann O'Brien

## Your Committee Members

Chairman	Ann O'Brien	07946565309
Secretary	Lyn Fairweather	07927364286
Treasurer	Barry Walden	07804767404
Membership Secretary	Nicholas Rose	01462 713897
Groups coordinator	Lynda Lees	07986539390
Away Days	Carol Smithers	07721030203
Speaker Secretary	Lynda Lees	07986539390
Newsletter	Philip Nichols	07552206495
Committee Member	Richard Bowsher	01525 630335
Committee Member	Maureen Gates	01525 715793

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## FROM THE EDITOR



Hello and welcome to the Spring edition of our Newsletter and I stress the word "OUR". It would be great if you would let me know what you would like to see in future editions in the way of articles.

Better still, send me some copy – news from the groups, photos of activities, stories, poems, anything you like.

Come and talk to me at any of our meetings or contact me using the email address for the Newsletter.

## 2026 General Monthly Meetings and Speakers.

**May 14<sup>th</sup> Andrew Baker** presenting *Charles Dickens*.

**June 11<sup>th</sup> Bill Hamilton** presenting *Good news, Bad news*.

**July 9<sup>th</sup> Duncan Bickley** presenting *Adventures in Helicopters*.

**August 13<sup>th</sup> Dr. Will Pascoe** presenting *The beginning of the end for dementia*.

**September 10<sup>th</sup> Jenny Malin** presenting *A grandmother's legacy: memsahibs and the East India Company*.

**October 8<sup>th</sup> John Pestell** presenting *John Bunyan – his life story*.

**November 12<sup>th</sup> Fran Sandham** presenting *Solo Walk Across Africa*.

**December 10<sup>th</sup> Steve Dimmer** presenting *Christmas Movies*.

There have been some excellent speakers recently. Please have a read of "What You Have Missed" on page 6 and you will be able to see synopses of two of the last speakers in order to allow you to catch up with what you have missed. (There will be more synopses in future editions.) Better still, make the effort to come to as many monthly meetings as possible in the future so that you do not miss out on some fabulous talks

## U3A Notices

If you have moved or changed your address, please let us know, so we can keep in touch with you. Equally, if you know any other member whose details have changed do prompt them to get in touch with us

Nick Rose (membership secretary)  
Contact Details: phone: 01462 713897  
or email: [memsecu3afd@outlook.com](mailto:memsecu3afd@outlook.com)

or write to;  
2 Wilson Close,  
Shillington

SG5 3PN

To join any of our groups you need to be a full member of Flitwick and District U3A.

Please send all your editorials to **our new email address:**

Phil Nichols  
[fdnewsletter@outlook.com](mailto:fdnewsletter@outlook.com)

Our U3A Website address:

[www.flitwickanddistrict.u3asite.uk](http://www.flitwickanddistrict.u3asite.uk)  
Facebook.com

Let us know of future local events and activities

If you have any comments on the newsletter or other matters do let us know.



# YOUR ASSOCIATION WANTS YOU!



## Our Groups

We have as many as 42 groups in our u3a. They vary in subject material and in size. Some are studious, some are less so. And all are about being together to do something different from sitting at home watching the TV. Some of our members take part in a number of groups. Others may only take part in one or even none and just come to listen to our speakers once a month. Whatever you prefer it's up to you. And of course, there are many online options available to you through the Third Age Trust website.

With over 500 members it is sometimes difficult for new members to join in. And many of us like to try something different now and then. The beauty of u3a groups is that they should be fluid and will change over time. With this in mind I am hoping to get together groups of members who might be interested in some new groups.

Topics that might be interesting to you include Genealogy, Storytelling, Poetry for Pleasure, Backgammon, French Conversation and Film Studies. I'm hoping that a Backgammon group will be able to start in the near future. But, to start any of these groups we need one person with the time and commitment to lead the group. It can't happen otherwise. Please do let me know if you are interested in taking part in any of the groups I have suggested. Even better, I would love to hear from you if you feel that you can give that little bit extra and be a group leader. There is support for each of the subjects I have suggested from a national subject adviser so you wouldn't be on your own. And I can help with getting the group together locally.

Lynda Lees

Groups Coordinator.



## U3a Coffee Morning



On the 6<sup>th</sup> February, some of the u3a Committee, aided by some very able volunteers, held a coffee morning at the Village Hall on Market Day. We dished out innumerable cups of tea, coffee and slices of cake (donated by members). It was good to see so many of you who came along to support us. All in all, we felt that it had been a great success and we intend to repeat the occasion next year.



## WHAT YOU HAVE MISSED

At the December meeting we were entertained by Richard Stark with a hour of songs and Christmas carols old and new.

In January, Andy Smith, a performance Poet gave us some of his very humorous, poetic looks at life. Some of these poems involved his dog, others talked about mishaps with his false leg and arm. One in particular involved his false leg beginning to slip while riding a fairground attraction at the seaside, endangering two old ladies sat underneath!

February saw Amanda Sutherland talk about her “Creative Journey”. She attended Ware College where she won “Fashion Student of the Year”. She then attended the London College of fashion where she built up a number of contacts in the fashion world. After working as a buyer for the Royal Opera House she moved, via being a theatre Wardrobe Assistant into high end Bridal wear and the supplying costumes to the media. Becoming a mother she branched out into artisan markets specialising in fascinators and hats building an online business as well. She specialises in recycling and repuposing; making jewellery from Coke cans and plastic milk bottles.

### *Awaydays 2026 Team*

**We now have a list of Awaydays up on our branch website. Please have a look.**

**There will also be information given out in our monthly meetings**

# LITERATURE GROUPS

As a member of Literature 1 and now group leader of Literature 2, it's very interesting to see the types of books we read and how we choose them. I contacted Marion from Literature 4- we don't have a Literature 3- to find out what they've been reading and how they choose their books.

In Literature 1 & 2, each member chooses about book and as we are very diverse in our choices, I have found new authors and read genres, I perhaps wouldn't have considered reading prior to joining the groups. In Literature 4, they have a mixture of ways to choose their books; they choose 4 books from the Library Book List, 4 named authors and 4 members recommendations.

Here is the list of the books we enjoyed last year. Hope it inspires you to find a new author or gives you ideas for gifts for the bookworms in your lives.

- The Dentist - Tim Sullivan, this is a crime series and the first of eight books
- The Forgotten Garden - Kate Morton - a family saga with a twist
- Greetings from Bury Park- Safari Manzoor - the autobiography of a Pakistani girl growing up in Luton
- When All Is Said And Done - Anne Griffin - an 84 year Irish man looks back over his life
- Precipice - Robert Harris- a political thriller telling the story of Asquith's affair with a young woman on the eve of WW1
- To Serve Them All my Days - R.F. Delderfield - a 20th Century classic celebrating a generation's courage and humour in the aftermath of WW1
- The Nightingale - Kristin Hannah - the story of women in WW2
- The Salt Path - Raynor Winn- before it became controversial - a story of homelessness, human strength and endurance
- Small things Like These - Claire Keegan - how a small community in Ireland was controlled by the Church to keep a complicit silence about the Magdalen Laundry
- Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen - to celebrate her 250th birthday

I know that both Literature 2 & 4 would like a new member each, so if you are interested, please contact the group leaders via our website [www.flitwickanddistrict.u3asite.uk](http://www.flitwickanddistrict.u3asite.uk)

Lyn Fairweather

## GARDEN GROUP 1

Our group, Garden Group 1, comprises of members with a keen interest in gardening. In the past that has meant sharing successes and failures in the garden over the past month at a member's house. Now we are combining that with trips to gardens, generally with a cup of tea and cake involved. During the winter months, our meetings are normally restricted to a lunch get-together while planning the next year's visits. At present, the group is full.

Eyleene Timothy

## BRIDGE CLUB

The Flitwick & district U3A bridge club is held every Tuesday morning from 10-12 in the British Legion hall in Station Road Flitwick.

We are a friendly bunch of people who enjoy sessions of social competitive bridge. Following the sad unexpected death of John Milton in January last year the running of the club was taken over by Bob Ross and over the last year we have welcomed several new members.

You don't need to be a bridge expert to join us , you just need a basic knowledge of the game. We encourage new members. Tea coffee and biscuits are provided and weekly subs are just £2.

Please contact Bob or Sue if you'd like more details  
(01525712115/bsross2@googlemail.com)'

## **Garden group 3. ( formerly Garden Group 5)**

**We managed to recruit 3 new members last year so we now average a good twelve for our visits to various gardens. We so hoped to visit Woburn Abbey this year but alas restoration is still being undertaken. We had one of our first meetings at Woburn and who can forget our magical Christmas lunch at Waddeson in 2011. We arrived in brilliant sunshine and whilst we were having lunch the skies opened and we were almost snowed in.**

**Yes we have been going for quite some time! We have even taken a trip abroad to Keukenhof Gardens for the tulips. Last year's trip to Bedford Embankment was almost a disaster. I arranged the visit on the very date on which the tulips had been dug up the day before! Plenty of other gardens meant we spent a pleasant afternoon after lunch at the Higgins Museum. This year we are taking no chances we are visiting the Tulley's tulip fields in Hertfordshire and already have our tickets which were released a couple of weeks ago. We are risking a visit to Benington Lordship for the snow drops. On our very first visit there some of us turned blue with the cold. Our guide was wearing shorts!!**

**Membership has varied over the years but I think we all have something to contribute. Most of us have our own gardens Two have been opened to the public under the NGS scheme. Some of us have had to alter focus with a new interest in pot plants both indoor and out. Alas tall plants don't survive in a roof garden! Mediterranean plants do reasonably well on a sheltered balcony or in a conservatory. We are hoping to visit the National Citrus Collection later in the summer. We visited a tropical garden last in Dunstable of all places. Most amazing !There is also the chance to visit Botanic Gardens. We are trying out Oxford this year having visited Cambridge Botanic Gardens at least twice. We have also visited Kew for the Orchid festival in the past. Two of us are going by train this year.**

**Our planning meeting takes place in January usually with coffee and cake. Thanks to Nick who hosted this year's meeting. November we tend to have a quiz and a bring along a dish for general consumption. Doreen is Queen of our Christmas lunches which she arranges in a local hostelry.**

# BENNINGTON LORDSHIP



Snowdrops in the moat





## JAZZ & BLUES APPRECIATION GROUP

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month, starting at 10.30 for a couple of hours or so. Originally there were two of us presenting the music but my partner in crime (who was the Jazz man) has had to retire due to ill health, so the programme of music is more blues than Jazz these days. So what music do we cover? Well, blues-wise, everything from Bessie Smith to Joe Bonamassa. This means a spread of 100 years or so from the early 'classic' and country blues through electric blues to the modern day. I began listening and collecting in the 1960s, so people like Alexis Korner and John Mayall along with bands like Fleetwood Mac, Savoy Brown, Canned Heat and Paul Butterfield were my start point. Looking at LP sleeve notes (remember them?) and song credits led me to B B King, Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, John Lee Hooker and the like. My collection has grown over the years and now includes as well as blues, elements of blues-rock, 50s rhythm & blues, some zydeco and a bit of gospel. I also have blues from all over Europe, Australia and even Brasil! My jazz collection is much more modest but I try to include jazz that links with the blues tunes/songs in each programme.

If any of the above piques your interest then get in touch and come along to a session. The usual format is 2 sets of music with a tea (& biscuits!) break in the middle.

R Jim Greaves



# Where on Earth...?

(Or at least in Flitwick and District)

How well do you know the local area?  
Can you identify the following pictures?  
Hint—there is a common theme to them all.

**Interesting fact:** The Co-operative movement was started by the Rochdale Pioneers (a group of flannel weavers in 1844. Their first shop was in Toad Lane, Rochdale. It is now a museum celebrating this.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

## Answers

1 Clophill	2 Wixhams	3 Stewartby	4 Marston Mortaine
5 Barton-Le-Clay	6 Silsoe	7 Flitwick	

# GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD by ASHLEY CARTER

GK23

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**Across**

1. People to whom Paul wrote his First Epistle, now forming the 7th book of the New Testament (11)
8. German city on the Danube(3)
9. Name of ducal castle in Perthshire (5)
- 10 Nephew of King Arthur and one of the Knights of the Round table (3,6)
12. One of the five rivers of the Greek Underworld (5)
13. Acronym for a computer network covering a small area (3)
14. Turkish commander (3)
16. A common name for cannabis (5)
- 18 & 28. Medieval European map of the world (5,5)
21. Old name for any venomous snake found in Egypt (3)
23. 22<sup>nd</sup> letter of the Greek alphabet (3)
25. 4<sup>th</sup> letter of the Greek alphabet and multiple river mouths (5)
26. Drug used as a stimulant (9)
28. See 18
29. Oozing yellow matter emanating from infections (3)
30. Common British broad leaf tree, Latin name *Betula pendula* (6,5)

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І	С	О	В	І	И	І	Н	І	У	И	2	У

**Down**

1. Metallic element with the atomic number 27 (6)
2. N American Estate Agent (7)
3. General name for Scandinavian languages (5)
4. American rock Musical (4)
5. ----Dorati, Hungarian born composer and conductor (5)
6. Largest country in Africa (5)
7. ----Knox, American girl convicted of the murder of her room mate Meredith Kercher (6)
11. Name applied to a faster than light propulsion system in Sci-fi (4)
14. ---Briggs, famous British historian (3)
15. Unit of electrical power (3)
17. Arthur ---, winner of Wimbledon Men's Singles in 1975(4)
19. A pale lager named for a city in the Czech republic (7)
20. Himalayan mountain guide (6)
22. Territorial unit served by a church (6)
23. Game played on a board with 64 squares (5)
24. short, rustic poem (5)
25. Band formed in 1978 by guitarist Terry Elcock and reformed in 2001 (5)
27. Land surrounded by water (4)

# SPRING – A NEW START AROUND THE WORLD

Spring is seen as a time of new starts and the reawakening of nature. This spring has also seen a number of important religious festivals, some of which run with the theme of the start of the new.

Although not strictly religious, the 17<sup>th</sup> March marked the start of the Chinese New Year. This year will be the year of the horse.



The Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi/ Baisakhi (14<sup>th</sup> April which is seen as the birth of Sikh identity and the beginning of the new growing season.

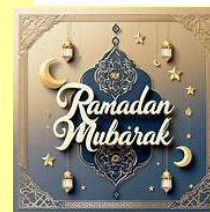


For Hindus, Holi (March 4<sup>th</sup>) is a festival of colour, love and spring. It marks the end of winter and the hope for good crops and is celebrated by throwing coloured powder and water over each other.

Passover (Pesach) commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Passover begins on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar, which is in spring in the Northern Hemisphere, and is celebrated for seven or eight days. It is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays.



The date of Ramadan varies from year to year as it is based on a lunar cycle. This year Muslims will celebrate Ramadan between 17<sup>th</sup> February and 19<sup>th</sup> March. This involves fasting during daylight hours. Ramadan comes to an end with Eid-ul-Fitr with a special feast eaten during the day.



Also a moveable feast is the Christian celebration of Easter which, with the Resurrection, also marks a new beginning. Easter takes place after the 40 days of Lent which also involves giving up something, usually a particular type of food or drink. Although the date can vary, it always takes place in the spring season.

**Cards made by members of the Papercraft Group are on sale at the monthly u3a meetings. On alternative months there will also be Jewellery available for sale. A percentage of the sales are donated to the Air Ambulance.**

**Personalised cards can be made to order.**

**Jewellery orders can also be taken.**

**Contact Colleen at the Monthly meeting or**

**Email: [uk.whitehouse@ntlworld.com](mailto:uk.whitehouse@ntlworld.com)**

**Phone: 01525 752040**

**HANDMADE CARDS AND JEWELLERY  
BY COLLEEN**



## **Some myths and legends concerning Spring**

### **Persephone's Return (Greek Mythology)**

Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the harvest was abducted by Hades. Persephone was taken to the underworld, plunging the earth into barrenness as her mother grieved and refused to let any crops grow. A deal was struck Persephone would return to Demeter but, because she had eaten four pomegranate seeds while in the underworld she would spend four months of the year with Hades (autumn and winter) and return to the earth in spring, bringing life and renewal with her.

### **Eostre and the Hare (Germanic Folklore)**

The goddess Eostre, from whom Easter takes its name, was celebrated by early Germanic tribes as the bringer of spring. According to legend, she transformed a bird into a hare, which then laid coloured eggs in her honour. The hare, a symbol of fertility, and eggs, a sign of new life, became central themes in spring celebrations.

**NEXT NEWSLETTER ISSUE—AUGUST 2026**