



**Merry Christmas!** 



Front Cover: Our dinghy sailors find fair winds and weather towards the end of the season at Troy Lake in October.

Right: Sian Bourn from The Dogs Trust enlightened us at the October Monthly Meeting on the vital work the organisation does, taking dogs in, looking after them, making sure they have happy lives and finding them loving homes.

Below: Jackie has finally finished her wonderful quilt, shown it off to fellow members of the Patchwork and Quilting Group, and proudly displays it here.



Mid-right: Amblers had a successful walk taking them down to the river Chess at Sarratt Bottom in November.

Right: Once again the History Group hosted students from Chesham Grammar School in November. From left to right, Joe, Ellie, Robert, Amy and Mollie gave fascinating presentations on developments in education since the 1944 Education Act, and how they impacted on their own school.



# Speakers for monthly talks

All talks start at 2pm

Broadway Baptist Church  
78 The Broadway, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1EG



Jem Duducu

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025

## *Hollywood Blockbusters and Bombs*

There is no shortage of Hollywood films about historical events, but what do the movies actually get right, and why do they get so much wrong? Hollywood loves a good guy versus bad guys, heroes winning the day, and the guy gets the girl. But we all know real life isn't exactly like that. In a return visit to CVu3a, Jem will take us through years of global history as immortalised and ultimately fictionalised by Hollywood. Along the way, we will also better understand Hollywood's own history, as it evolved from black and white silent shorts to the multiplex CGI epics of today.

Karen van Oostrum

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026

## *Flora of the Chilterns*

The Chiltern Hills form a national landscape of outstanding beauty, shaped by fascinating geology and rich in diverse plant life. This talk explores how the hills were formed and reveals how their underlying geology influences the wide variety of plants that thrive here. Discover some of the characteristic species of Chiltern woodlands and grasslands, and how they are perfectly adapted to this distinctive landscape. Karen has a lifelong love of plants and the natural environment and enjoys sharing her knowledge through courses, talks, and guided walks.

Andy Thomas

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February

## *Paranormal Mysteries and Cover-ups*

Andy explores some of the most famous global mysteries, finding linking threads between them. What is the truth about UFOs, ghosts, the Bermuda Triangle, strange creatures, religious apparitions, psychic phenomena and historical enigmas? Andy is the author of many books and has given thousands of lectures in Britain and around the world over three decades. He is one of the organisers of the Glastonbury Symposium conference, the longest-running annual alternative event in the UK.

Fran Sandham

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March

## *A Solo Walk Across Africa*

Acclaimed author and public speaker Fran Sandham took on the challenge of a lifetime, by walking across Africa from Namibia's Skeleton Coast on the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean near Zanzibar. He was completely alone with no back-up, no support team, no one to carry his gear, no sponsors, no film crew, no journalists, no fuss, no cheering crowds and no strings attached. Fran was an editor at Rough Guides for several years and worked in bookselling and in the voluntary sector before that.



The Broadway Baptist Church is accessible to wheelchairs  
and is equipped with a hearing loop.





# Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our December-February newsletter.

I don't have a lot to say this time around but instead I urge you to look at the piece by our Groups Coordinator, Sue Broad, on page 5. To summarise, we need more members to step up and DO things in our u3a, whether it's assisting Valerie Garrood as Webmaster and System Administrator, or becoming a Convenor (or Co-Convenor) of a Group.

Finally, I'd like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*With best wishes*



**James Cadle**  
chair@cvu3a.uk

## New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Gilly Brewer	<i>Chesham</i>	Julie Micallef	<i>Chesham</i>
John Dunn	<i>Chesham</i>	Amela Munro	<i>Great Missenden</i>
Sandra Eland	<i>Bovingdon</i>	Timothy Phillips	<i>Little Chalfont</i>
Michael Gilhooly	<i>Chesham</i>	Barbara Ritchie	<i>Winchmore Hill</i>
Paula Hamilton	<i>Chesham</i>	Julie Salt	<i>Chesham</i>
Jennifer Hay	<i>Rickmansworth</i>	John Scales	<i>Dunstable</i>
Marjory Hester	<i>Great Missenden</i>	Claire Stephens	<i>Tring</i>
Jill Mace	<i>Amersham</i>	Gayle Sturrock	<i>Bovingdon</i>
Sheila Mathers	<i>Amersham</i>		

If you know anyone you think might be interested in joining, please ask them to get in touch with the Membership Secretary; contact details on the next page.

## Chess Valley u3a Committee

Chair	James Cadle*	chair@cvu3a.uk	07889 732291
Vice-Chair	Position vacant		
Treasurer	Geoff Naylor*	treasurer@cvu3a.uk	01494 434918
Business Secretary	West Marshall*	secretary@cvu3a.uk	07931 433382
Membership Secretary	Jim Wilkie*	membership@cvu3a.uk	01494 782081
Groups Coordinator	Sue Broad*	groups@cvu3a.uk	07780 973979
Web Editor	Valerie Garrood*	webmaster@cvu3a.uk	01494 433585
Newsletter Editors	John Bunyan*	newsletter@cvu3a.uk	01494 778858
	James Cadle*		07889 732291
Speaker Organiser	Peter Windsor*	speakers@cvu3a.uk	07595 776473
Events Coordinator	Jackie Cobb*	eventscoord@cvu3a.uk	01494 773718
Publicity Coordinator	Position vacant		
Committee Member	Jim Campbell	jim.campbell@cvu3a.uk	07702 982209
*Also Trustee of Chess Valley u3a			

# From the Groups Coordinator

## WIFE FOR SALE!

Yes, you read that right!

It sounds like a joke, but it was anything but. Divorce was prohibitively expensive pre 19th century and reserved for the upper classes, so when some lower-class people couldn't get a divorce, they sold their wives instead.

The process had no basis in law and frequently resulted in prosecution, particularly from the mid-19th century onward, but generally the attitude of the authorities was ambiguous.

Now I have your attention please read on.

### Appeal 1

We are STILL seeking a member with some technical background to understudy our Web Master, Valerie Garrood. Simple membership is the lifeblood for communications within CVu3a and if Val is not available to help, or ill, no emails, no notifications, no news; nothing will happen. If you would like more information, we will be more than pleased to help.

### Appeal 2

We have 600+ members in our u3a, with new members joining all the time. We often hear that the Groups they would like to join are full. Please, if your Group is full or there is an interest that YOU would like to join, contact me or any member of the Committee and we would be pleased to help you start up another Group.

### Appeal 3

MOTO ( members on their own). Unfortunately this group is now closed.

MOTO 2 are looking for a new Convenor as unfortunately Brian Harding, who has done a magnificent job, now has to resign due to health issues. We have lots of members who live on their own and this Group is a lifeline to combat loneliness for some. They meet for lunches and possibly outings locally for those who choose. Please don't let this Group close. The Convenor position is not an onerous one and help will be given.

### News update

In October I hosted three one-hour virtual driving sessions in which 30 members took part. The feedback was really encouraging (the lack of replies to emails less so); everyone who took part thought it was very well run and that the virtual driving video gave many helpful hints and emphasised the latest changes in the Highway Code that would allow them to continue to drive longer and safer. Unfortunately, due to the amount of work involved, I will not be running any more sessions.

**Sue Broad**  
**Groups Coordinator**  
*groups@cvu3a.uk*

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2026
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## Upcoming visits from the Events Team

Your Events Sub-Committee has been looking into possible visits for next year and the following are proposed:

### **Eltham Palace and gardens, Thursday 19th March**

A medieval and Tudor royal palace restored in the 1930s by the Courtauld family with extensive gardens; an English Heritage property.

### **Upton House, Banbury, and Chastleton House, Moreton Marsh, Thursday 7th May**

An art gallery in a country house, Upton House has a renowned art collection and extensive grounds. After lunch, we move on to Chastleton House, a smaller country house with faded elegant interiors and well-kept gardens, a compelling time capsule of 400 years of family life. Both of these are National Trust properties.

### **Brighton Royal Pavilion, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July**

The Royal Pavilion, built as the seaside pleasure palace of George IV, has recently been restored and a guided tour will be included. The Museum and Art Gallery is adjacent.

From September through to November 2026 we have these possible visits:

### **V&A East Museum, Olympic Park (planned to open in April 2026)**

An extension to the Victoria & Albert Museum and near the recently opened V&A Storehouse.

### **Trent Park House, Enfield (planned to open mid 2026)**

A Georgian house converted in WW2 for the surveillance and intelligence of senior German officers. Dr Helen Fry, who has proved a popular speaker to our History Group and at our Monthly Talks, is a Trustee.

Please let us know at [events@cvu3a.uk](mailto:events@cvu3a.uk) if you are interested in any of these planned tours so we can have an idea of numbers; there is no obligation at this stage.

Detailed timings and costings will follow in due course.

If you have any suggestions for other venues or destinations, we will be pleased to consider them.

*The Events Sub-Committee*  
*[events@cvu3a.uk](mailto:events@cvu3a.uk)*

## Report of visit to the *Secrets of the Thames* exhibition

CVu3a Members, as well as members from Chalfont and Chiltern u3as, enjoyed a visit to the Museum of London Docklands to see the exhibition *Secrets of The Thames*. It was a very interesting exhibition showing all the finds by mudlarks, people who search the foreshore of the River Thames at low tide finding various articles that citizens of London have either lost or thrown into the river over the centuries. A licence is needed to search the Thames foreshore. Articles of varying sizes were displayed from a tiny die to large pots or pieces of clay pots. There were plenty of clay pipes as pipe smoking was most popular for several centuries.

The building itself was very interesting as it had been a warehouse where imported sugar had been stored. Next door was The Ledger Building where the imports were noted down in ledgers as each cargo came in. It is now a Wetherspoons pub where we were able to get a lunch.

Most people seemed to enjoy the visit.

*Jackie Cobb*

# Chess Valley u3a Convenors

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
Art	Angela Spittle	art@cvu3a.uk
	Janice Gray	
Art Discussion 1	Angela Bishop	artdiscuss@cvu3a.uk
Art Discussion 2	Caroline Jenks	artdiscuss2@cvu3a.uk
Book Group 1	Caroline Jenks	bookgroup1@cvu3a.uk
Book Group 2	Alison Pullinger	bookgroup2@cvu3a.uk
	Sarah Organ	
	Georgina Mead	
Book Group 3	Helen Barnard	bookgroup3@cvu3a.uk
Book Group 4	Jackie Cobb	bookgroup4@cvu3a.uk
Bowls (Short Mat), (Chiltern)	Sue Spalton	shortbowls@cvu3a.uk
	Peter Williams	
Bridge	John Curtis	bridge@cvu3a.uk
Canasta	Linda Hepworth	canasta@cvu3a.uk
	Sue Hawksley	
Chess	Caroline Jenks	chess@cvu3a.uk
City of London Churches	Jackie Cobb	londonchurches@cvu3a.uk
Current Affairs	Eileen Overton	currentaffs@cvu3a.uk
Dinghy Sailing	Wendy Barnes	sailing@cvu3a.uk
	Judith Young	
French Conversation	Morag Robertson	frenchcons@cvu3a.uk
French Intermediate	Hilary Alleston	french@cvu3a.uk
Fun Quizzes	James Cadle	quizzes@cvu3a.uk
Gardening	Jenny Beirne	garden@cvu3a.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
German	Jenny Lee	german@cvu3a.uk
History	Claire Paterson	history@cvu3a.uk
	Ian Hutt	
Italian for your holiday	Peter Windsor	italian@cvu3a.uk
Keep Fit for 60+	John Bunyan	keepfit60@cvu3a.uk
Knitting & Other Crafts	Jo Biggs	knit@cvu3a.uk
Line Dancing (Chiltern)	Linda English	linedance@cvu3a.uk
Mah Jong	Ed Perrott	mahjong@cvu3a.uk
MOTO 2	Position vacant	moto2@cvu3a.uk
Music Appreciation	Geoff Hayes	music@cvu3a.uk
Patchwork & Quilting	Angela Bratton	patchquilt@cvu3a.uk
	Dee Watson	

*(continues on next page)*

# Chess Valley u3a Convenors (continued)

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
Photography with Digital Imaging	David Hurd	photography@cvu3a.uk
	Pippa Greensmith	
Pilates (1, 2 and 3)	Christine Ross	pilates@cvu3a.uk
	Liz Howlett	
Play Reading	Joan Barton	playread@cvu3a.uk
	Linda Hepworth	
Poetry	Christine Ogborne	poetry@cvu3a.uk
Railways	Graham Yellowley	railways@cvu3a.uk
	James Cadle	
Singing for Pleasure	Angela Bratton	singing@cvu3a.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
Spanish Conv (Inter)	Hilary Alleston	spanishconv@cvu3a.uk
Stamps & Other Collectables	Steve Epps	stamps@cvu3a.uk
Tai Chi	Sue Broad	taichi@cvu3a.uk
	Meg Brinton	
Theatre	Geoff Naylor	theatre@cvu3a.uk
	Helen Barnard	
Ukulele	Jeff Naman	ukulele@cvu3a.uk
	Heather Sprake	
Amblers	Susan Osborne	amblers@cvu3a.uk
Walkers 1	Stuart Stanley	walkers1@cvu3a.uk
Walkers 2	Sue Rawbone	walkers2@cvu3a.uk
	Michael Ferraro	
Walkers 3	Catherine Haridi	walkers3@cvu3a.uk
	Jill Thomas	
Striders 1	Ian Barrett	striders@cvu3a.uk
	Keith Pittman	
Striders 2	Ian Lee	striders2@cvu3a.uk
	Keith Pittman	
Walks into History: Country	Peter Schweiger	walkshist@cvu3a.uk
Walks into History: London	Angela Shipley	walkslondon@cvu3a.uk
Wildlife	Harry Howlett	wildlife@cvu3a.uk
	Keith Sonley	
Wine Appreciation 1	Pauline & Tom Hohenberg	wine@cvu3a.uk
Wine Appreciation 2	Graham Hitchenor	wine2@cvu3a.uk
Writers	John & Helene Bunyan	writers@cvu3a.uk



# News From The Groups

## GROUP MEETINGS

Most of our Groups meet in person and are open to enquiries from new members. If full, they will hold a waiting list. Groups that are inactive generally do not have an entry in the newsletter.

***In public buildings it is important that the Convenor knows who is at the meeting in case of fire. Please, always sign in to the building. Also, make sure you know where the fire exits are.***

## Art

Angela Spittle & Janice Gray



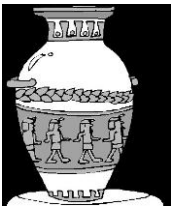
The Art Group has been down in numbers during the last period due to holidays, family issues and grandparent duties, which meant meetings were a little fragmented. Two of our members though had an enjoyable painting holiday in the sunshine in Italy. Those of us who were class-bound used various mediums, producing work under the headings of 'New Beginnings', 'Autumn Colours' and 'Abstract', plus finishing other works of art commenced at home. One member tackling an ongoing project replicating a painting done by her mother years ago is hoping it will be ready for Christmas.

So, although low in numbers, we have been beavering away and, as with all art, you learn from your mistakes, by talking with class members who offer their wisdom and, of course, from those happy accidents.

Our Group is currently full, but we are holding a waiting list.

## Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop



The subject for our September meeting was 'Food in Art'. There is a long history of the depictions of food in works of art. Fish and fishermen appear in mosaics from Pompeii, and William the Conqueror can be seen in the Bayeux tapestry feasting after his victory over Harold. We studied two still life images of food, a detailed pastel called *Fruit on a Napkin* (1792) by Jean Etienne Liotard and an oil, *The White Soup Tureen* (1771), by Anne Vallayer Coster, who portrayed steam arising from the soup most realistically. We compared the comical detail in *A Jan Steen Kitchen* (1995) by Jonathan Leaman with the original Jan Steen painting dating from 1663. Two members chose Norman Rockwell's (1943) image *Freedom from Want*, reminding us how food provides for a communal activity in our lives. We laughed at Beryl Cook's *Little Chef* and *Chinese Restaurant* created in her inimitable style. Finally, we puzzled at Salvador Dali's surrealist image of a lobster perched on a telephone (1936).

In October our subject was 'Water'. We found it fascinating to study how differently the artists portrayed water. We enjoyed the summer in Joachin Sorolla's *A Little Yachtsman* (1909) with its vivid blues of the water and orange reflection of the young man. We looked at several works by JMW Turner of ships at sea, including a mighty storm as in *A Ship Against the Mewstone at the Entrance to Plymouth Sound* (1814) and a later work *The Fighting Temeraire* (1838), the mighty ship being towed ashore across a calm glass like sea. We compared the reflection in water of John William Waterhouse's *Echo and Narcissus* (1903) with Salvador Dali's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937). Lastly, we looked at Renoir's and Monet's works entitled *La Grenouillere*, (1869) and their differing impressionist depiction of water.

In November we looked at Nordic artists. The subject was introduced by one of our members who chose Edvard Munch. Known best for his work *The Scream* (1893), we also looked at his more realistic images like *The Sick Child* (1885), painted at a time of deadly tuberculosis, demonstrating the despair of the mother and acceptance of the child. A more cheerful work was *Young Girls on a Bridge* (1901) with its use of primary colours and reflections in the water. Two members chose artists from Skagen in North Denmark. One chose several images of fishermen painted around the turn of the last century by artists such as Michael Ancher and Peder Severin Kroyer. Another member chose Anna Ancher, known best for her depictions of light, as in *Sunlight in a Blue Room* (1905) and *Harvesters* (1905).

(cont.)

Our last image of the meeting held us spellbound; Hilma af Klint's *What a Human Being Is* (c1910), a work of symbolism with a double helix taking centre ground. We were all intrigued, being aware of the recent death of Frances Crick who, with Watson, discovered the double helix structure of DNA some 45 years later.

Future subjects include 'Reflections' and the architect, Frank Lloyd Wright.

## Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



Our September meeting, presented by Caroline, was themed 'Unfinished Paintings'. We looked into the many and varied reasons why paintings were abandoned, which included commission not being paid, personal antipathy between sitter and artist and, of course, the ultimate reason, the death of either the artist or the sitter. Looking at these unfinished paintings, we were also able to appreciate the methods used by the artist in creating their work. Titian, later in his career, was a serial abandoner of paintings and this 'unfinished style' would later influence other artists. Michelangelo appears to have walked away from his painting *The Entombment* (1500), in order to focus on his sculpture of *David*, as he considered that working with marble was his true calling. Benjamin West's *Treaty of Paris* (1783) remained unfinished when the British delegation refused to pose, as it commemorated their defeat in The Revolutionary War; quite understandable, given the circumstances. A more modern example was Natalie Holland's *Oscar Pistorius / The Interrupted Portrait* (2015). After the sitter was found guilty of murder the artist could not face completing the canvas. So, a fascinating afternoon's presentation.

'Stained Glass' was the theme for our October meeting, and we each chose examples of either religious or secular stained glass. The earliest examples date back to Mesopotamia and Assyria, where formulations to produce glass have been discovered. In Britain, the earliest example of stained glass in situ is in Canterbury Cathedral, where it was installed in 1184. We looked at several examples of medieval church windows, notably Milan Cathedral, Notre Dame and St Peter's Basilica, their lustrous jewel-like colours bathing the interiors of these monumental buildings. In 1885 Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne Jones, in collaboration with William Morris, created four vibrantly coloured windows in Birmingham Cathedral, depicting The Nativity, The Crucifixion, The Ascension and The Last Judgement; a stunning example of Pre-Raphaelite art.

Nearer to home, several Buckinghamshire churches have windows designed by the Nuttgens family, both father Bernard and son Joseph, creating windows in Great Hampden, Bledlow, Prestwood and Princes Risborough in both Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

We couldn't have a discussion about stained glass without mentioning the wonderful window designed by John Piper in Coventry Cathedral. This stunning window is 26 metres high and has 198 panes, each with an individual abstract design, a dazzling modern masterpiece. Other examples of secular stained glass were familiar to us, including the stylish Louis Comfort Tiffany's lamps and windows inspired by nature to adorn home interiors across the globe. Glass is made by melting silica sand at very high temperatures, then rapidly cooling the molten material and adding a few magical ingredients for colour and stability. How inventive of mankind to discover this wonderful material.

In November one of our members gave a long-anticipated presentation about the Spanish artist, Joachim Sorolla y Bastida (1883-1923), known as the 'Master of Light'. Our member had visited an exhibition at the National Gallery in 2019, the first UK exhibition of his work for over a century. None of us were very familiar with Sorolla's work, despite his prolific output. Some of the exhibition reviews from the time give a flavour of the artist and his style: "One of Spain's great unsung heroes gets the showcase he deserves"; "Ecstatic celebrations of life by the sea" and "A sun-drenched treat".

By the end of the presentation, we all agreed with these sentiments and the wonderful, warm, sunny pictures were a real treat on an early November afternoon in Chesham! We were enchanted by Sorolla's use of colour, the fabulous portrayal of facial expressions and varied personalities of his human subjects as well as the story of his life and the way he painted. This included painting directly onto huge canvasses, 'en plein air' and the use of a large palette of colours. In the studio he reportedly used a palette the size of a grand piano lid with three-foot long paintbrushes to reach the top of his canvases. It truly was an eye-opener to a wonderful painter, recognised as a hero in Spain, though largely unknown in the UK.



This is the Book Group with a difference: it is for those who are already keen readers, or who wish to expand their knowledge of books. You read and tell the Group about any books you like; so you also hear what others do, or don't, recommend. We have a wide variety of tastes, both in subject matter and style, so there are always interesting, but definitely friendly, discussions. Here are some of our recent recommendations:

*The Immune Mind* by Dr Monty Lyman was described as popular, readable science: the brain and the body were traditionally seen as separate entities, but now we realise how closely linked they are and how medicine should be holistic. (This led on to a fascinating discussion about willpower and chocolate biscuits!) *Howards End is on the Landing* by Susan Hill is beautifully written about the books the author had read over the course of a year.

There are some thought-provoking books in the popular genre of historical and mythical stories told from a feminist point of view: *Babylonia* by Costanza Casati and *Disobedient* by Elizabeth Fremantle were both recommended. *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt is a brilliant book about friendship and caring; and makes you realise how amazing octopuses are! (Don't confuse this book with *Remarkable Creatures* by Tracy Chevalier about fossils.) Other recommended authors included David Nicholls, Val McDermid and Ted Hughes.

We cover mainly fiction, but also non-fiction; whatever a member chooses. You never have to read anything you don't want. We could now consider taking one more member, so please contact the Convenor if you are interested.

## Book 2

Alison Pullinger, Sarah Organ &amp; Georgina Mead



Book Group 2 meets every first Wednesday of the month at Amersham library at 2 pm. We currently have a full membership of 10 for the sets of 10 library books we get each month. At the beginning of December, we shall be meeting in a member's home to enjoy tea and Christmas bakes.

Our books this quarter have focused on mysteries and crime.

The first book we read will be known to many people who may have seen the film of the same name which is currently doing the rounds, *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman. The book is the first in a series of cosy crime novels. Four elderly friends meet once a week to investigate unsolved murders. Their characters are quite different as were their professions; a former spy, a retired union leader, a psychiatrist and a nurse. They find themselves investigating a real murder when a property developer is killed in their community. Many of us were reading this book for a second time but still found it a good read.

Our second read was *The Angel Tree* by Lucinda Riley. The main character Greta, who has amnesia, returns to her past at Marchmont Hall. Lost memories are uncovered after finding a child's grave. This novel covers themes of family, mother-daughter relationships, memory and psychological trauma. If you don't have time to read the book you could watch the film of the same name. We recommend this book as a real page turner, but as not entirely plausible.

Finally, we have book 11 in the Simon Serrailier detective series, *A Change of Circumstance* by Susan Hill. Although these books can be read as stand-alone novels, we felt that this was left open-ended and not a crime that could be solved and the case closed. Personally, I have gone back to the beginning and am now reading my way through the whole series and am very much enjoying getting to know all the local characters who live in and around the fictitious town of Lafferton. This novel is a blend of crime fiction and family drama. It deals with the contemporary problems of the county lines drugs trade, the threat to young people, the exploitation of children and consequently the overall threat to the community at large.

*"I tried to pull a book off the shelf in the library. But it was really hard, and it made a rasping sound. I asked the librarian about it. She said I was in the 'Friction' section."*

(anon)

### Book 3

Helen Barnard



We continue with monthly meetings at members' houses to discuss a library book read by all. Our November reading was *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and for December we move on to *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman.

The Group has no vacancies at present.

### Book 4

Jackie Cobb



We meet in members' home and the books we read are chosen by each member in turn. We purchase our own copies. As the book choices are varied, it makes for a good discussion each month.

At our last meeting on Thursday 20th November, we discussed the book *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis. In December we will read *Joseph Knight* by James Robertson.

### Bowls (Short Mat)

Sue Spalton & Peter Williams (Chiltern u3a)

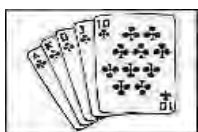


Chiltern u3a extends an invitation to our members to join them in playing Short Mat Bowls. In the winter we meet each Friday from 13.15 to 15.30 pm at Chesham White Hill Centre for indoor sessions.

The cost is £4.00 in the winter, including a cup of tea per session. So, if you would like to "try your hand" then get in touch: experience not needed; tuition given; bowls available. Please contact the Convenors before attending, for more information and season start dates: [shortbowls@cvu3a.uk](mailto:shortbowls@cvu3a.uk).

### Bridge

John Curtis



The Bridge Group continues to meet at Chartridge Park Golf Club on Wednesday afternoons, playing ACOL Bridge in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. There is currently a small waiting list to join the Group but, if you are interested, please let us know and we can add your name to the list.

### Canasta

Linda Hepworth & Sue Hawksley



We continue to meet at one another's houses on the afternoon of the third Monday of the month. We still have room for a couple of new members so if you're familiar with the game do come along. Please contact us at: [canasta@cvu3a.uk](mailto:canasta@cvu3a.uk)

### Chess

Caroline Jenks



The Chess Group is running successfully, but we would love to have a couple more members. Do come for a taster session, no commitment. Meetings are held in the Convenor's house and are now on the fourth Friday morning of the month, 10.30 to noon; morning drinks and biscuits provided.

As well as playing games, we try (very easy) chess puzzles together. The Group is open to anyone, those who want to learn and those who can help teach us.

There is a French proverb, "You cannot play at chess if you are kind-hearted". I don't think that quite applies to our Group; we're a very friendly lot, but if you do have a competitive streak, we'll indulge it!

### Current Affairs

Eileen Overton



Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the first Thursday of each month. We discuss all sorts of topics that are in the news, and we listen to everyone's point of view. We learn so much from our fellow members with various skills and knowledge. We are a small but very friendly Group; this means that everyone has a chance to speak, which is not always possible in a large Group. Come along and join us for a fun discussion. We try to solve the world's problems but have failed so far. If you are interested, please get in touch with the Convenor for details of the next meeting.





As we come to the end of our sailing season, we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the running of the Group, from the competent helms who teach and encourage newbies, the volunteers who man the safety boat, the tea and cake makers and all the members from various u3as who have recently turned up to scrub down the dinghies. We welcome members from other u3as.

Our season runs from the end of April to the end of October, and we normally sail on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month at Troy Lake, between Maple Cross and Denham.

For more information, please visit our page on the Chess Valley u3a website.

### French Conversation

Morag Robertson



The French Group meets twice a month and chats informally about many topics, keeping abreast of events avoiding politics or controversial subjects! We try to keep up to date with any films or television programmes in French. The Channel 'More 4' is proving a useful resource for foreign language programmes.

### French Intermediate

Hilary Alleston

We enjoy our monthly meetings, trying to use plenty of French while we learn about the culture and traditions of the different departments of France. New members are welcome. We are a very sociable Group.

### Fun Quizzes

James Cadle



The Fun Quizzes Group started its 2025/26 season via Zoom on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November. We call them Fun Quizzes because participants aren't competing against each other, just trying to beat the question-setter!

Quizzes usually take place on the second Tuesday of the month, starting at 7:30pm, with people being admitted to the Zoom meeting from 7:15 onwards. The Zoom invitations are sent out by the Convenor a few days before each quiz. Each quiz lasts for about an hour and has five rounds of ten questions each. If you would like to join in, please contact: [quizzes@cvu3a.uk](mailto:quizzes@cvu3a.uk).

### Gardening

Stephanie Rothwell & Jenny Beirne



Timothy Walker was our guest speaker in September. Timothy lives locally and has an eclectic range of garden-related talks. As the autumn season was fast approaching, we thought his *A Blaze of Glory* presentation would be appropriate. And what a good choice it was!

For well over an hour, we travelled around the world with Timothy who, through superb photographs, showed how different plants from each continent display their colours during the autumn season. Even differing shades of green can put on quite a show.

Timothy is an engaging, entertaining speaker who delivers his talks with humour and, at times, healthy cynicism. He was very well received by all attendees.

At this meeting, we trialled the CVu3a card reader for which the Convenors had had previous training with Geoff Naylor, CVu3a treasurer. Geoff very kindly gave up some of his time to oversee the launch of this new technology which is proving to be very popular with our members.

In October we were delighted to welcome Katharine Hersee once again to our meeting. This time her talk was in sharp contrast from her previous one about Snowdrops as she demonstrated how to give our gardens a tropical vibe. Her excellent presentation, enhanced with high quality slides, gave us inspiration to use more exotic plants in our gardens. Amazingly, many plants which we would consider too tender to survive our winters are more resilient than we think.

November's meeting is traditionally an opportunity for members to mingle and socialise. A garden-related fun activity for small groups of members to enjoy was organised instead of booking a speaker. This was followed by a choice of festive refreshments.

(cont.)

There is no meeting in December; we reconvene on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> January when the speaker will be Katrina Roche whose talk is entitled *Resilient Gardens*.

Although our membership is increasing, we are still able to accommodate new members. Please contact the Convenors if you wish to join the Group. Details can be found on the Chess Valley Garden Group web page where the full programme for 2026 can be viewed.

Jenny Beirne and Stephanie Rothwell

## German

Jenny Lee



In our German Conversation Group, we have such interesting chats at the beginning of each session, hearing about what we have been doing and where we have been, all in German of course. We sometimes have a theme to explore, which could be about anything. We then end the session by reading a little of our German book, all very friendly and good fun.

What do you call a German bowler who takes three consecutive wickets? A Geriatric!

## History

Claire Paterson & Ian Hutt



*Women of Chesham who Made a Difference* was the title of the talk given at our September meeting by Group member Eleanor Philips. She gave us in depth insights into at least 11 or more women who deserved that description.

Margaret Mee, born in 1909, became involved politically in the Spanish Civil War. Having attended Camberwell School of Art she became a brilliant botanical artist after going to live in Sao Paulo with her husband. She developed a deep concern for the tribal peoples of the Amazon Forest and lived among them. She was awarded Brazil's Order of the Southern Cross. Mildred Frances Wheeler was born in 1897 and educated in Chesham. With a

colleague she founded the Medical Comforts Depot which enabled those nursing the severely ill at home to access the necessary equipment. Entirely funded from voluntary donations, it operated for 60 years. She was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1969 for services to the community, particularly regarding the St. John Ambulance Brigade in Chesham.

Avis Joan Parsons was born in Waterside in 1916. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1939. As Leading Aircraftwoman Hearn, she was posted to Poling Radar Station, West Sussex. She stayed at her post during a bombing raid and was awarded the Military Medal for continuing to pass information to Fighter Command HQ at Bentley Priory even after her telephone line was cut.

Many ladies were mentioned; Lady Susan Trueman, the first woman JP in Buckinghamshire, and Reverend Margaret Hall, Lay Worker in Great Chesham, who was a Deaconess when in 1987 women were at last allowed to become Deacons and she was ordained in that role. Emily Brandon was actively involved in the WPU and arrested for campaigning for Women's Suffrage. Sadhana Ghose was dedicated to improving race relations, representing the Black Media Workers Association in the 1970s. Marjorie Bell founded the Chesham Voluntary Hospital Car Service and Joan Gardner was a film star. There were more from the 1930s.

In October Kathy Chater made a return visit to our Group with a presentation on the Huguenots. We knew the word, but did we really know anything about them? Well, Kathy gave an all-encompassing history of their origins:

Huguenots were a religious group of French Protestants following the Calvinist tradition. They were persecuted under Louis XIV who tried to forcibly convert them, finally revoking all their rights. By 1685 they were reduced to 1% of the population and forced to flee as refugees or convert to Catholicism. The word comes from the French 'refugia', a place of refuge. This created a void in France as many of them occupied important places in society. The remaining Huguenots faced continued persecution under Louis XV. By 1774 Calvinism had been all but eliminated in France.

Most of the Huguenot emigres fled to Protestant countries, England, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Prussia, Africa and the colonies. England had patronised and helped protect Huguenots from the mid-1500s with Kent hosting the first congregation around 1548. Queen Mary expelled them, but they returned with the accession of Elizabeth I. They founded the silk industry in England, and many settled in Stourbridge in the Midlands where raw materials enabled them to continue their glassmaking tradition and it became the most important glass region in the country.

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In November we again welcomed the history students from Chesham Grammar School; a tradition going back more than 10 years. Their presentation was on the 1944 Education Act, especially as it related to their school. It was quite an eye-opener as to how much had changed over the last 80 years of education.

Joe spoke about the development of the 1944 Act from its inception to the present, under successive governments. The Act made secondary education free for everyone and introduced the tripartite system of grammar, secondary modern and technical schools. Chesham opened as a Technical School in 1947 with just six pupils, all boys. Changes over time included increased standards, league tables, 'Sure Start', reduced class sizes, increased subject choices, the 'Pupil Premium' and Covid. Ellie told how the Logbooks (1947-2021) were a good insight into the changing school structure and wider events such as sports days. Robert gave some history of the sixth form instigated in the early 60s. Prior to that, only five percent of students from the school went on to university. Now it is 50%, Birmingham University being the most popular. Amy told how in 1917 Chesham had much industry and therefore a modern technical school was required to provide boys with the necessary skills. It was converted to a Grammar school in the 60s with girls admitted from 1962. Mollie spoke about 'O' and 'A' level exams in 1962 when there were 400 students in the sixth form. The 80s were a big turning point with the abolition of corporal punishment and the introduction of detention in its place. A bit of a surprise for us, from the past, was the allocation of a smoking room for sixth formers!

Joe, Ellie, Amy, Mollie and Robert presented their research concisely using the school archives and brought with them precious ledgers for us to view. They fielded questions from members with confidence, showing how well they had collated their research. It was a good afternoon and, as ever, we very much enjoyed their visit.

#### Italian; Get By on your Holiday

Peter Windsor



The new class has taken off quite well, meeting once a month at the White Hill Centre where we are led by our great teacher, Elisa, who has provided workbooks to support our learning. Let's see if we can order our vino bianco (or rosso) in Italian, on our next holiday! There are some vacancies in the Group, so please contact the Convenor if you are interested in joining us.

#### Keep Fit for 60+

John Bunyan



We may have an instructor lined up for this class. More details were included in the Chair's e-bulletin at the end of November. If enough people register, a trial class will take place, most probably at the White Hill Centre. Date and time will be detailed in the Chairman's Bulletin.

#### Knitting & Other Crafts

Jo Biggs



We meet at members' houses on the first and third Mondays of each month. The meetings provide an opportunity to get together, share our progress on projects, swap ideas and see finished results.

Helen has completed a fabulous Christmas jumper (see colour pages, ed.) and others are working on knitting, embroidery, crochet and tapestry projects.

We currently have a waiting list. Please contact Jo Biggs if you are interested in the Group.

#### Line Dancing

Linda English



The Line Dancing Group is run by Chiltern u3a but they also welcome members from Chess Valley u3a. We normally meet in the Methodist Church Hall, Bellingdon Road, Chesham HP5 2HA on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. From January 2026 the sessions will run from 9:30am to 11am, the first half hour dedicated to new beginners, with the more experienced dancers joining at 10am. We pay our teacher each time we attend a session. No previous experience is necessary. The emphasis is on exercising the body and mind and having fun. Limited parking is available at the venue. We currently have a waiting list, so please contact the Convenor if you wish to be put on it. Email: [u3alinedance@chiltern-u3a.org.uk](mailto:u3alinedance@chiltern-u3a.org.uk)



Mah Jong is a game played with tiles, which originated in China. It's a very sociable and fun game played by two, three or four people. There is no competition involved as each person plays their own game and any mistakes are easily hidden!

Don't worry if you haven't played before: If you have ever played the simplest of card games, you will quickly pick up the basics of Mah Jong. This is a friendly group of people who enjoy each other's company for an afternoon playing and chatting with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit. Anyone is welcome from beginners to more experienced players. We meet on the second and fourth Mondays (except Bank Holidays) at 2pm in the Free Church, Amersham. The Group is currently full.

**MOTO (Members On Their Own)**

Unfortunately, this Group is currently closed.

**MOTO 2**

**Brian Harding**

At the November meeting Brian Harding, the Convenor, said that due to mobility problems he could no longer continue in 2026 after the Christmas lunch. He requested that the members consider if one of them could take over and prevent closure. This would be a pity since it is small friendly Group which has been successful for some time.

**Music Appreciation**

**Geoff Hayes**



Calling all music lovers, of music of any genre. Do you enjoy listening to music? Then the Music Group is for you. Once a month we get together and share interesting and enjoyable pieces of music that we have chosen. Based around an agreed theme, we bring along our personal suggestions of something to listen to from the immensely wide catalogue available on YouTube. We play each piece through a large interactive screen, often with accompanying video, and afterwards exchange a few comments and snippets of information.

Our recent themes have been for September, simply the letter 'S', resulting in classical works by Shostakovich and Saint-Saens, popular works by Stevie Nicks and Steely Dan, a fabulous sitar number by Anouska Shanker as seen at the Proms festival, and much more besides. October saw us saying goodbye to our joint Convenor Colin O'Rourke, who we do need to replace. Fittingly the theme was 'Farewell' which gave us plenty of scope including *Good Riddance* by Green Day! Colin took all of this with his usual good humour. November gave us 'Fireworks' of course, which resulted in music ranging from Handel to Katy Perry.

We meet on the first Thursday of each month between 2:00 and 4:00pm at the Town Hall in Chesham. It's a great opportunity to listen to music, some of which will be familiar to you and some, new. I always come away having learned something new and in a better mood than I arrived.

The theme for our meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> December is 'Christmas Music' but excluding Carols. Come along and give us a try. You will be most welcome.

**Patchwork & Quilting**

**Angela Bratton & Dee Watson**



As we leave the long hot summer well and truly behind, we have moved into autumn and experienced the fabulous colours of the changing leaves and a different landscape. For some people this can be depressing, knowing that the winter season will soon be upon us with even shorter days, and often cold or miserable weather. However, those who indulge in crafts of any kind can take inspiration from changing colours or changing seasons and their work will reflect that. Lovers of sewing and patchwork are certainly no different and often produce work with very different palettes of colour ranging from gentle themes for spring, vibrant jewel colours of summer and, of course, the rapidly approaching Christmas season with so much inspiration to choose from to stimulate our minds.

(cont.)



We embrace the chance to create things, but the changing of the seasons can make sewing a very welcome pastime to look forward to and then enjoy at any pace in the comfort of our own homes and not worry about the weather outside. Winter days and an absorbing hobby can motivate and restore spirits no end. However, we continue to meet each month at the Village Hall in Hyde Heath throughout the year and, as always, we welcome a visit from anyone when we are there, whether just wishing to see what we do or maybe thinking about joining us. If you do want to come, please ring Dee on 07889 263207 first, so we know when you are coming.

For now, from all of us in the Patchwork Group, we wish everyone a very happy, healthy, festive Christmas season and a peaceful 2026 with everything you wish for yourselves.

### Photography with Digital Imaging

Pippa Greensmith & David Hurd



The meeting in September was attended by 10 members with only one member from the Wildlife Group, to which an invitation had been sent. This was a shame as we were treated to a fascinating talk by Patrick Hudgell on brown hares and a display of his excellent photographs. Patrick had spent many years researching and observing hares, getting up early and late, as they are predominantly crepuscular, to photograph them in

their natural surroundings. He gave us many hints on photographing them, such as staying low (take a low seat) and keeping still, which I guess was obvious. Zoom lenses were not always useful as one only had a short time to see them close by, the best time being dawn. There were hints on camera settings; manual adjustment being important, with high ISO and wide aperture values. The trick for setting exposure is to expose for the grass or sky, correcting with slight under or over exposure respectively.

There was no meeting in October, and members were asked to produce some 'spectacular photographs of the unspectacular' and 'autumn colours' for the November meeting.

There were eleven members at the meeting on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November which was run by Pippa. We looked at photographs that members had taken over the summer and autumn and attempts at 'spectacular photographs of unspectacular subjects', a difficult topic as was proved! Alex showed us his video of photographs from his trip to Japan in April; a wonderful collection of images which gave a comprehensive impression of life there, in the cities and countryside. It was a treat to watch. Well done, Alex!

We also watched a video extolling the virtues and advantages of taking photographs in manual mode rather than relying on camera auto settings. This will be a subject for a future project.

A short discussion was held on topics for next year with members confirming their interest in field trips. One suggestion was a visit to Kew and the possibility of a visit to Highgate cemetery. Members were also reminded that the Chesham Christmas lights will be turned on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November for some nighttime photography. The programme for next year will need further development.

The last meeting of the year in December (17<sup>th</sup>) will be the usual 'Five Minutes of Fame'.

### Pilates

Liz Howlett & Christine Ross



#### PARTY TIME AT PILATES!

Everyone at Pilates is looking forward to the Christmas party on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December when all three Groups gather for drinks, a hot buffet and a fun quiz. What's not to like! It's a delightful reward for all the stretching, bending, twisting, balancing (and wobbling) that our teacher Sue has so enthusiastically encouraged throughout 2025! Huge thanks to her, and we'll raise a glass to more of the same in 2026. Cheers!

### Play Reading

Joan Barton & Linda Hepworth



Our September play reading was a thriller by Francis Durbridge, *House Guest*. For October we went up in the world to high society in *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde (or 'Butch Oscar' as Baldrick called him in *Blackadder*) and then in November chose one version of *Sailor Beware*. I discovered later that there are two versions of this but the one we read was the English one originally starring Peggy Mount, whose character made life as difficult as possible for her family and friends, so there were some interesting parts to read.



Our Group chose Edward Thomas as the poet to study for our September meeting, and we enjoyed reading and discussing such gems as *Aspens*; *Celandine*; *Home*; *The Bridge* and *Adlestrop*. In October we were treated to surprise poems to discuss at our 'Poems at First Sight' meeting. Two poets, Nancy Cato and Natalie Tretheway, impressed us with their very moving verse. November saw us reading poems by Fleur Adcock, a New Zealander, never afraid to express strong feelings in her poetry.

Future Meetings:

December: Christmas Meeting

January: Derek Walcott

February: 'Parents and Children'

## Railways

Graham Yellowley & James Cadle



The celebrations for the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first public train ride on the Stockton and Darlington Railway were attended by over 100,000 people with over 40,000 of them along the route of the replica Locomotion number 1 between Shildon, Darlington and Stockton.

Meanwhile we have had another great visit and some excellent talks:

September 18<sup>th</sup>: Claire Mann: Talk by the COO of Transport for London (TFL), Report by James Cadle. Nineteen members of the Railways Group visited the HQ of Transport for London in Southwark, where we received a warm welcome and were given an excellent presentation by TFL's Chief Operating Officer, Claire Mann.

Claire, it turns out, is a life-long transport professional who started her career as a train driver with the then newly established Heathrow Express. Since then, she has occupied several increasingly senior management roles in transport, with both bus and train companies, culminating in her current position. The sheer breadth of her responsibilities was amazing, including London's buses, Underground and Overground trains, and embracing issues like the 'Boris' and Lime bikes, taxi licensing and even dynamic management of traffic lights to smooth traffic flows in London. In the hour that Claire could spare us, and it was amazing she could carve out even that, given her responsibilities, she made us aware of the many challenges in keeping London running smoothly. We went away highly impressed by the woman herself and the organisation she manages.

October 17<sup>th</sup>: Nigel Lowey: *George Gilbert Scott*. It was a very welcome return of Nigel Lowey who previously gave us an excellent talk on St Pancras Station and set a high bar for subsequent speakers to beat, including himself. Nigel's talk on George Gilbert Scott was just as excellent.

Not only did we find out about the life story of GGS and the many, many buildings he was involved in, but also the historical and social context which provides a holistic view of himself and his numerous achievements; he designed over 880 buildings including 427 churches and cathedrals, the Amersham Workhouse, the Foreign Office in Whitehall, the Albert Memorial and so much more.

November 21<sup>st</sup>: Tom Ingall: *San Francisco Cable Cars*. What a great presenter Tom Ingall is. We were treated to a lovely exploration of the fabulous cable cars, their rise and fall and then their resurrection. We learned of the people involved, the mechanisms used, how the cable gets 'gripped' and how a north/south car crossing over the east/west car tracks doesn't get stuck on the other cable. Everything you wanted to know all was seamlessly put together in a lovely presentation with audio and Tom's great presentation style. We need to book him again.

Our next meetings are:

December 19<sup>th</sup>: *South Africa*: Adrian Palmer

January 16<sup>th</sup>: *Back to Brunel*: Francis Gomme

February 20<sup>th</sup>: *Watkins' Dream*: Francis Gomme

March 20<sup>th</sup>: *Waterloo Station Tour*: Rachel Kolsky

Please contact the Convenors if you wish to join the Group; you will be very welcome. The Railways Group talks are held in Christ Church Hall, Chesham



Rehearsals are well under way for our annual Christmas Concert which this year takes place on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December at Amersham Free Church.

Ali, our musical director, has chosen some very different pieces for us to perform which have proved to be quite challenging! Our repertoire will include pieces by John Rutter and Bob Chilcot, some traditional festive folk songs and some well-known favourites from previous Christmas performances. All in all, it promises to be a great concert so please come along and support us.

Ali has invited one of her professional soprano colleagues to come and sing along with us (or rather we shall be singing with her) for some of the pieces. We are looking forward to sharing our concert with such a prestigious singer.

The concert will begin at 6.00 p.m. and last 45 minutes approximately. We request that you wait quietly from 5.45 pm onwards in the foyer before being admitted into The Sanctuary. Entrance is free but, on leaving the hall, there will be a voluntary collection for a music-related charity of Ali's choosing.

### Spanish Conversation (Intermediate)

Hilary Alleston



We are often travelling and enjoy hearing about each other's experiences, whether in a Spanish-speaking country or not. We are great readers and keen to share ideas for new books to try, as well as discussing current events. The Group is still full.

### Stamps & Collectables

Steve Epps



The Stamps and Other Collectables Group meet every two months and either Group members or outside speakers talk about items from their collections, which could be anything collectable. If you are interested in coming to a meeting to show something you collect, please let me know.

### Tai Chi

Sue Broad & Meg Brinton



The basic principles of Tai Chi involve maintaining a relaxed and calm state of mind while performing slow and fluid movements. The movements are designed to be smooth, graceful and continuous, without any sudden or jerky movements. The breathing techniques used in Tai Chi help to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

Our Group members continue to enjoy their Tai chi sessions, unfortunately Peter our instructor less so. He despairs sometimes over our lack of memorising the sequences. However, we all go home feeling better than we arrived, Peter included.

Due to interest, we are still looking out for another tutor to take a Beginners Group. Please let me know if you know of anyone: [groups@cvu3a.uk](mailto:groups@cvu3a.uk)

### Theatre

Helen Barnard & Geoff Naylor



The Theatre Group has enjoyed many excursions this year and looks forward to many more next year. This year we have seen *ABBA Voyage*, *Les Misérables*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Operation Mincemeat* along with our summer trip to Stratford-upon-Avon to see *The Winter's Tale*. *A Man for All Seasons*, *Phantom of the Opera* and, by the time you read this, *Oliver!* conclude our visits this year.

Next year we already have *Twelfth Night*, *I'm Sorry Prime Minister* and *Shadowlands* booked.

Included in the price of our trips is a coach journey to and from the theatre. These trips are always popular. Book early to secure your place!

We do accept new members but please note all trips mentioned are already sold out, although we always maintain a cancellation list so tickets may become available.



We hold our fortnightly meetings on Tuesdays at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, Chesham starting at 2.30pm.

As the festive season approaches, we are starting to consider Christmas songs to practise along with our new music additions this year. Along with other choirs, we have been asked to perform again at St Michael's Church in Amersham on the 6<sup>th</sup> December, when the church holds a fundraiser for a homeless charity. We would love to see other members of the u3a there, come and say hello!

New members are always welcome to give the ukulele a try. If you are somewhat nervous, give me a ring for a chat. Our new members, never having played before, are enjoying our meetings.

Jeff Naman 07976 633798

**Walking Groups**

Each Walking Group accepts participants from other Groups with prior notification. Members of the Groups also walk individually to scout new routes.

**Amblers (3 - 4 miles)****Sue Osborne**

Our October walk began in the village of Great Hampden. It was a perfect day with a clear blue sky. Our small group of amblers set off across parkland towards Great Hampden Church and Hampden House. Walking towards the church, we passed a Sweet Chestnut tree heavy with maturing chestnuts. Arriving at Hampden House, the former home of John Hampden famed for his refusal to pay Ship Money Tax to King Charles 1<sup>st</sup>, we noticed in the grounds of the house a magnificent centuries old Cedar of Lebanon tree which we greatly admired. As we strolled on further through the fields, we were also fortunate to see some Parasol mushrooms. Sloes and blackberries were in abundance heralding the arrival of autumn. It was a lovely walk which we all enjoyed.

**Walkers (5 - 7 miles)****Walkers 1****Stuart Stanley**

Our Group meets at various locations on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 10:00. Walks are usually between 4 and 5.5 miles long and are led by members. We usually meet for a picnic or pub lunch (optional) after the walk.

Walks are planned with walk leaders, published every three months and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate. During the third quarter of 2025 we held walks in Penn Street, Prestwood, Sarratt Green, Bledlow, and Little Gaddesden. For the remainder of 2025 and running into 2026, our walks were or will be in Bovingdon, Chenies, Cliveden, and Chalfont St Giles.

New members are welcome, including members of other Walking Groups.

**Walkers 2****Sue Rawbone**

The walk in September started in Whippendell Woods and included a walk through the grounds of 'The Grove', which was described as 'the posh hotel'. Here there is evidence of a settlement as far back as 700bce, long before a country house estate was built for the Earl of Clarendon in the Reign of Elizabeth I. It made for an interesting history lesson which was enjoyed by all who took part.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the walk in October as the weather was awful and it rained most of the day, so we hoped for better weather on our November walk which started in Little Chalfont.

The main piece of information about the Group is that I am standing down as Convenor after 14 years and Michael Ferraro has volunteered to take over from early 2026. My thanks go to everyone for coming forward to lead walks over the years and it has been a pleasure to get to know you. I shall continue to walk with the Group, and I wish to thank Michael for being willing to take over.



In Walkers 3, new walkers are always welcome. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month.

Our September walk was led by Susan Russell around Wheeler End and Cadmore End, with stunning views, enjoyed by all. Our October walk had Gillian and Jill Cooper as our walk leaders, and they took us around Sarratt where the rain just about held off. Our latest walk was led by Valerie and Rodney, around Old Amersham and Coleshill, with the promise of a few up and downs. It was very invigorating and enjoyable. Many thanks to all our walk leaders.

**Striders 1 & 2 (7 - 15 miles)****Andrew Brown & Ian Lee**

As Bob Dylan once sang "The times they are a 'changing'". As from January, Striders will be under new management: Andrew Brown, who has been Convenor of Striders 1 for six years, has already stepped down; and in January, after completing 10 years as Convenor of Striders 2, Ian Lee will also step down. But we are very pleased to announce that the Convenorship of Striders will pass to younger, and very experienced, walkers Ian Barrett and Keith Pittman, both of whom are already actively involved in the decision-making and operation of the

Group.

Meanwhile this very successful Group has continued over the last three months to walk regularly every Tuesday, with longer walks organised by the indefatigable Jill Smith on the fifth Tuesdays in the month over Summer. After 2024, when the total walking mileage achieved by the Group unaccountably dropped, it looks as though 2025 will produce a record total (incomplete at the time of drafting this Newsletter entry of course).

As in previous years, members of Striders have continued to make voluntary £1 donations into a gate fund on every regular walk. This year we have already used the accumulated fund to pay for two gates to replace decrepit stiles. One is near South Heath, funded in collaboration with the Walkers Groups in memory of Antoinette Ferraro (see colour pages, ed.) and the other is in Hawridge Bottom near Chesham; a third gate has now been commissioned close to Pressmore Farm near the A416 Chesham to Ashley Green road and will be dedicated to the memory of another former Strider, Stuart Mann. Finally, we have also made a £500 contribution into the Thames Valley Air Ambulance fund.

The next Striders' event, currently at an advanced stage in planning, will be the annual Striders' Christmas Walk and Lunch, which this year will be based at a new venue in the 'House of Tree' café at Pressmore Farm. Two groups will set off in slightly different directions from Pressmore Farm, meet halfway through the walk in Bellingdon for a convivial drink of mulled wine and mince pies, and then continue back to the 'House of Tree' for a light lunch followed by a little entertainment and a raffle to raise funds for the Chesham Foodbank. Champion walkers in both Groups will leave the event with chocolate Santas as their reward!

There is no waiting list for Striders, so any of you reading this may contact either Ian Barrett ([striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)) or Keith Pittman ([striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)) about joining either Group. Our regular Tuesday walks are between seven and nine miles in length and always finish before lunchtime. Our longer walks on the fifth Tuesdays in Summer months are between 10 and 15 miles, but we take all day over them. They are often further afield, and we enjoy a picnic lunch together at a convenient location.

**Walks into History: Country****Peter Schweiger****Redbourn: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

About 12 of us met for coffee in the cricket pavilion on the extremely large Redbourn Common. The common is a wonderful asset for Redbourn, being open with tarmacked paths criss-crossed by lime tree avenues. We then made our way to the village museum where we were met by a very knowledgeable local lady who showed us around a small Georgian house that used to be part of a Brooke Bond Tea factory. It had also been involved in silk processing and straw plaiting and was crammed with artifacts and information about the village. Redbourn had been settled since Saxon times and occupied by the Romans. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book and had a priory which existed as part of St Albans, which is only four miles away.

(cont.)

We then took a circuitous route to the high street which was full of old coaching inns. It is a wide, straight road with very little traffic. As it is situated on Watling Street, used since Roman times as a route from London to the north, it was a major hub for coaches and horses. Now it is bypassed locally and by the M1. The result is a quiet village, peaceful in a way we can only dream of.

After our walk around the village, we made our way to St Marys, a beautiful grade-one listed church dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. It was a fitting end to a very enjoyable walk through history.

Lunch at the 'Holly Bush' pub was marred by having to wait nearly an hour for our pre-ordered food, as we were drowned out by a seven-piece jazz band that made conversation impossible. Still, the food was tasty.

Val Littlejohn

### ***St Albans: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025***

On Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of November the Walks into History Group went to St Albans. We met at the 'Inn on the Park' Café near the museum. Our guide was Nigel Seabrooke who lives in St Albans and knew the area well. After we had had a coffee, we walked to the hypocaust building that was surrounded by a very green area. We were in Verulamium which was the third largest Roman city in England. It covered nearly a square mile which is about the size of the City of London. Most of it now is grassed over. A lot of the area was excavated in the 1930s by archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler. At the hypocaust building we could look down onto a beautiful mosaic that had been inside a villa. It had been covered by earth for hundreds of years and that had protected it. There was a trench in one corner showing the pipes that had created the underfloor heating. The Romans certainly knew a thing or two.

We went onto the town wall and the remains of a gateway which had been very imposing, consisting of four floors. Other parts of the town wall were very evident as was an iron age moat. Part of the walk was alongside the river Ver and it was muddy, until we came to the road. Nearby were the remains of a Tudor mansion house known as Sopwell Nunnery.

Our next point of interest in the High Street was Ryder Hall. It had been built by Mr Ryder who founded the Ryder Cup for golfers. Not much further on was the Abbey and Cathedral. Its massive walls were built with a mixture of flint and Roman bricks. Close-by was the grave of Archbishop Ramsey who had been a resident of St Albans.

We had lunch at the 'Six Bells' where the acoustics were better than the 'Inn on the Park', and I had a BBC (bacon, brie and cranberry) sandwich, that was very good and made a suitable end to this sociable walk.

Peter

**Walks in London**

**Angela Shipley**

**Treasurer: Mick Rothwell**



### ***Jack the Ripper London Walk: October 10<sup>th</sup> 2025 (X Rated, so Beware!)***

The Setting: We began on Tower Hill overlooking, arguably, the most famous castle in the world; home, prison, place of torture and execution. The 2000-year-old Roman wall nearby once surrounded the City of Londinium in a two-mile loop. Outside The City, the East End housed the poorest inhabitants while the rich lived out west where the 'stink' was less discernible. By the 1880s, there were 80,000 prostitutes living in doss houses, trying to survive their reduced circumstances by offering their services at fourpence a go, and downing gin to make it all bearable. Along comes Jack the Ripper. His real name was never known, but Britain's first serial killer committed his first murder on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1888. Our guides did not hold back on the detail but if you want all the gory bits, you should have come on the walk because his actions are unspeakable and I am not going there except to tell of his trademark, slitting throats and opening abdomens to spill the contents over the victim's shoulders. All the victims were prostitutes.

The Victims: Officially the first victim was Mary Anne Nichols, discovered on 31<sup>st</sup> August in Bucks Row, Whitechapel. Then on 8<sup>th</sup> October Annie Chapman, an alcoholic who had been kicked out of her doss house, was found with similar injuries, mutilation and the ritualistic placing of personal possessions around her body. Three weeks later on September 30<sup>th</sup> Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes were both found exactly where we stood in Mitre Square, the inept police having entered an alleyway to view one body only to emerge in the square to find another new victim a short time later.

(cont.)

They had the same cutting of throats, disembowelling and gross mutilation, executed at speed and with surgical precision. Nine weeks after the first killing, on November 9<sup>th</sup>, Mary Kelly, a high-class prostitute and the only one to be found in her own home in Millers Court, became the last victim.

The Suspects: Montague Druitt is our first. He was a lawyer and rich middle-class failure in life who lived in the area with his brother, a doctor, thus giving him access to surgical implements. After he committed suicide, drowning in the Thames, the killings stopped. Secondly, we have the Freemasons, since removed from suspicion, because of the ritualistic nature of the murders. Suspect Aaron Kosminski, a Polish barber, was arrested and committed to an asylum. The killings stopped at that point. William Gull, Queen Victoria's doctor, who had the skill and tools to mutilate at speed the two victims in Mitre Square, was a suspect, as was Victoria's son, the wayward Prince Edward, who regularly visited prostitutes for his pleasure.

The walk wasn't all murder and violence. We saw a well-preserved section of the arched Roman wall; experienced the stark contrast even today when crossing from the city to the East End with its lively, noisy market atmosphere of street food with queues of City office workers lining up for their lunch, and finally through Spitalfields Market where we hoped to discover who Jack really was. Alas, nobody knew for certain, but the smart money is on Aaron Kosminski.

Angela Shipley

## Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



Impressive support from 'Wildlifers', amounting to some 40 plus in attendance, marked the start of the Autumn period. Spirited talks on the Galápagos Islands, and nearer to home, nurturing wildlife in the garden, were enjoyed by many. Travelling to Ecuador and the islands is some undertaking, but our speaker explained the scientific significance of the species at this location and, for some in the audience, it was a trip down memory lane.

In November, the focus was on our own backyards and what we could do to promote a meaningful habitat for wildlife. Our speaker reinforced the need for the diversity of wildlife in our gardens and its conservation, as well as explaining some of the myths and scientific truths of wildlife gardening, and the challenges for the future. Our meeting in December will have a social feel with a review of the past year and a quiz to inspire us to do more. Why not come along and find out what drives our passion for all creatures large and small?

Planning ahead, we will give January 2026 a miss as the first and second Thursdays of the month are either New Years Day or the date of the CVu3a monthly meeting. In February, we have a speaker very much engaged in Urban Wildlife. It's not unusual to see foxes, badgers or deer roaming our streets when dusk falls, so let's find out more from an expert. In March we have lined up a speaker to tell us about amphibians and reptiles. The timing of this talk in March is linked to the migratory behaviour of frogs, newts, and toads. Forty years ago, the annual migration in this area was very much in evidence but less so now, so what's happened, we hear you say. It is certain that the speaker will have the answer, so that's another reason to come and join us. As a reminder, we meet on the first Thursday of the month at Amersham Common Village Hall, starting at 2pm.

## Wine Appreciation 1

Pauline & Tom Hohenberg



In August, at the Howletts, the theme was South Africa. We started with a *Creation 100% Chardonnay* from the Cape Coast via M&S at 13.5%. This was closely followed by a splendid *Tierhoek Chenin Blanc* 13.5% from the Western Cape, available from the Wine Society for £15. Another Chardonnay *Focal Point*, this time from Stellenbosch, was also 13.5%. We moved on to the reds with a *Journey's End Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon*, 13% from the coastal region of the Western Cape and available from Tesco for £12.50. Finally, we sampled a *Gable Lodge Shiraz* at 13.5% also from the Western Cape via M&S.

At the Connors in September, a slightly depleted gathering enjoyed wines from Provence, starting with *Peyrasol Les Templiers 2024* containing Syrah, Grenache and Cinsault grapes. This is available at Majestic for £15. Next was a rose, *Chateau d'Angles 2020* from the Languedoc with Mourvedre grapes substituting for the Syrah. Then a *Cuvee de l'Aubade* from Virgin Wines, reduced from £16 to £12. Finally, a *Paul Mas Reserve Pays D'Oc Merlot* from Tesco £10 at 14%.

(cont.)



October's theme at the Curtises was Wines from the Danube. This was liberally interpreted from a geographical point of view! We started with a Slovenian *Dveri Pax Sipon Furmint* grape from Waitrose at 12%. This was closely followed by a *Black Tower Sauvignon Blanc* at 12.5%. Then we had a *Muller Riesling* from lower Austria and Lidl at £8.99. The last of the whites was a *Domane Wachau* from the Danube made from Grune Weltlein grapes at 12.5% from Tesco. We then had two reds, starting with a *Kunstler Assmannhauser Rotschiefer Spâsburgunder Rheingau 2019* - a Pinot Noir from The Wine Society and moving on to an *Indvido Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon Chateau Vartely 2022* from Moldova at 13.5%, also from The Wine Society.

## Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



Robert presented six wines from the new Waitrose 'Blue' range, which is a fair bit cheaper than their normal wines, at under £10 a bottle. A very reasonable Claret at just £7.25 topped the selection. Waitrose wines featured again in October but this time with an organic promotion hosted by Jan. Once again, the reds outscored the whites and an organic merlot came out on top. November's meeting was hosted by Tina and Michael who used some of wine pundit Brian Elliott's midweek wine recommendations for their selection. An Italian Primitivo red, *Duca di Sassetta* won by a considerable margin and is this quarter's recommended wine. It's priced at £8.49 from Lidl. If you don't know Primitivo wine, it is a fairly bold red fruit wine with just a little bit of tannin, normally from Puglia in the heel of Italy. It's a firm favourite with our Group and goes great with a spag bol!

## Writers

Helene & John Bunyan



It's been a bit of a roller coaster ride with the Writers Group only able to manage two meetings this last quarter. Our September meeting fell by the wayside, having to be cancelled at the last minute due to a combination of holidays, illness and emergencies. The topic would have been 'One Person Missing', which was put back to the October meeting, where some excellent work was presented. 'The Unexpected' was the topic of our November meeting, which again drew some varied and imaginative contributions. For December our topic is 'The Room at the End'.

Our Group welcomes new members so, if you write in any capacity, maybe you would like to join us. Our meetings have now come forward half an hour to start at 2pm, generally on the second Friday of the month in a member's home. We agree on a topic for our next meeting, but members can present from any work that they may have in hand.

Our Chess Group recently set up a collaborative game at one of their meetings, for fun. The board ended up in this interesting position: White has lost her Queen, Knight, Bishop and three Pawns. Black has lost his Rook, Bishop and two Pawns.

Black seems to be winning; Black has been on the attack trapping the White King in the corner with the Black Queen, Knight and Bishop. But Black hadn't been considering the defence of his King.

It is White to play. How can White checkmate in one move?

If it were Black to play, what would Black's best move be, and how might the game proceed?

If you want to know the answers, then contact Caroline, the Chess Group Convenor. Better still, join the Group.





## Yuletide musings

This time of year is nostalgic for reasons both good and bad, our generation also claiming that nostalgia itself is not as good as it used to be. Words themselves have also changed their meaning with a translator now needed to have any conversation with our grandchildren. Memories, as well as being faulty, hark back to things no longer seen or heard. Whistling, now replaced by ear buds, no longer issues from the milkman; not really surprising as he (or they) has now almost ceased to exist. Does anyone gargle anymore? Google, yes, but gargle? I think not. Memories also date by colour-code, by which I mean that some of them are sepia and others coloured. I remember once being introduced to a moderately famous cricketer, saying that I only remembered him in black and white. He was less than impressed!

An acquaintance of mine and I happily reminisce over the glory days of motor racing when accidents were common and often fatal. Teams were small and drivers were not verging on the same absurd levels of reward as footballers. However, our dire predictions are proving to be correct in that there is now an Autonomous Racing competition with Super Formula cars with no drivers at all!

Old(er) age does however have its compensatory benefits. As we 'mature', it is a fact that time passes as quickly for us as it does slowly for young people.

But I now know why. Very subtly one week a month has been removed from 11 months of the year and added to January, making it, as we already know, almost as long as the whole of the rest of the year, especially if you indulge in a dry one.

I often bang on about language, its use and abuse and feel no need to make this an exception. As I was walking in Wimbledon, (so much more prosaic than doing the same in Memphis), I came across a sign outside a seemingly respectable house announcing, 'Adult Sewing Lessons'. With 'Adult' having certain connotations, I mused as to what seedy goings on this was advertising and in Wimbledon of all places! Finally, Radio 4's *Today Programme* has always had its own language, now added to with the universal, 'I'm sorry to interrupt you' which of course means the exact opposite. Even if God came to us on Christmas Day Nick Robinson would utter the phrase to prevent any delay to the sports report, the weather forecast or even *Thought for the Day*.

*'Timewaster'*

### Chess Valley u3a equipment

We have various items of equipment purchased by Chess Valley u3a. If you would like to borrow any of this equipment, please contact the relevant custodian.

Equipment	Custodian	Contact details
Data projector 1 (Epson)	James Cadle	<b>James Cadle</b> 07889 732291 chair@cvu3a.uk
Data projector 2 (Epson)	Harry Howlett	
Laptop computer (Windows 10, Office 2016)	James Cadle	<b>Harry Howlett</b> 07780 522388 wildlife@cvu3a.uk
Companion speakers for laptop		
PAT-tested extension cable/surge adapter		
Projection screen 1 (5 ft)		
Projection screen 2 (6 ft)	Ian Hutt	<b>Ian Hutt</b> 01494 583955 history@cvu3a.uk
Pinboards x 3	Keith Hoffmeister	
Easels x 3	Keith Hoffmeister	<b>Keith Hoffmeister</b> 01494 766990
Portable PA systems	James Cadle	

# Chess Valley u3a Groups Schedule

FIRST in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Art Discussion 2 (pm)	Walkers 1	Walkers 3	Wildlife	
Pilates Classes 1,2 and 3 (am/pm)	Striders 2	Patchwork & Quilting (am)	Current Affairs (pm)	
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)	Music Appreciation (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Ukulele (pm)	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Book 2 (pm)	Tai Chi meets in school term-times only	
Monday Groups' schedules are sometimes interrupted by public holidays; contact the Convenors for more information		Bridge (pm)		
		Wine 2 (eve) (pm)		

SECOND in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
History (pm)	Amblers	Walks into History (Country) <b>OR</b>	Art Discussion 1 (am)	Writers (pm)
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders 1	Walks into London (alternate months)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	Line Dancing (am)	<b>Monthly Talk</b> (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	French Conversation (am)	<b>The Chess Valley u3a Committee</b> meets on the first or second Tuesday of each month, two days before the Monthly Talk	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Dinghy Sailing (pm) (April-October)	Bridge (pm)		
	Fun Quizzes (eve) (November-April)			

THIRD in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Walkers 1	Patchwork & Quilting (all day)	Book 4 (am)	Railways (am)
Canasta (pm)	Striders 2	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	Book 1 (am)
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)	<b>Stamps and Collectables</b> meets in members' houses every two months	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Book 3 (pm)	Photography with Digital Imaging (pm)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Italian for your holiday (pm)		

FOURTH in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders 1	French Conversation (am)	Walkers 2	Chess (am)
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	French Intermediate (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Line Dancing (am)	Poetry (pm)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Dinghy Sailing (pm) (April-October)	Wine 1 (eve)	
		Gardening (pm)	<b>MOTO2</b> meets for lunch on the second Saturday of each month	
		Bridge (pm)		





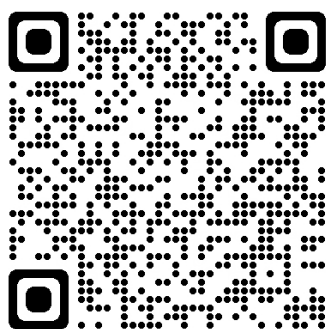
Top: The Walks into History: Country Group outside a small Georgian house at Redbourne Museum, that used to be part of the Brooke Bond Tea factory.

Mid-left: Striders at the new gate at South Heath, which they raised the funds for and is dedicated to former Strider, Antoinette Ferraro.

Above: This is a replica of 'Locomotion No 1', part of the 200th anniversary celebrations of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, as photographed by Graham from the Railways Group.

Left: The Dinghy Group on 'Cleaning Day' at Troy Lake in October, where they were helped by members of other u3as.





[www.cvu3a.uk](http://www.cvu3a.uk)

Above: Helen from the Knitting and Other Crafts Group has completed this wonderful jumper, just in time for Christmas.

Right: Blue Tits and Abstract subjects featured in recent work by our talented Art Group members.

