

u3a
Chess Valley

Registered Charity 1126990

NEWSLETTER

March - May 2024

website: www.cvu3a.uk



Front cover: We were treated to a staggering performance of operatic arias by Emily Yarrow at the December General Meeting. She performs on Saga cruises, so look out for her next time you're on one.

Right: The MOTOs at one of their fortnightly lunches. They also have coffee at their planning meetings in the Elgiva Cafe.

Right centre: This is a u3a meeting... in Senegal. Honest! It looks a bit more relaxed than our Monthly talks.

Lower right: With increasing numbers attending the Christmas Concert of the Singing for Pleasure Group, it was held this year in the actual church at Amersham Free. The audience numbered over 100.

Below: Members of the Gardening Group admire Katherine Hersee's impressive display of snowdrops at her garden in February.



Speakers for monthly talks

All talks start at 2pm
Broadway Baptist Church
78 The Broadway
Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1EG



Simon Keable-Elliott

Thursday 14th March

Utterly Immoral: Robert Keable and his Scandalous Novel

Simon is the grandson of Robert Keable, who was a chaplain in World War One and wrote about life behind-the-lines, the story centring on an affair between a chaplain and a nurse. It was slated as 'utterly immoral' by F Scott Fitzgerald and was mocked in *The Great Gatsby*. Robert Keable also worked as a missionary in Africa and, having left the church, fled to Tahiti where he lived in Gauguin's house and married a Tahitian Princess.

Nigel Lowey

Thursday 11th April

Sir George Gilbert Scott: Britain's Most Prolific Architect

Sir George Gilbert Scott designed the Albert Memorial, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, cathedrals, churches, public buildings, and the Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras. This talk also covers the Industrial Revolution, workhouses, the Victorian Revival of the Church of England, political unrest, and the Great Reform Act which changed our electoral system! Nigel is a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker and many will recall his interesting talk about the transformation of St Pancras Station.

Chris Truranc

Thursday 9th May

How Dabs and DNA Detect Criminals

Chris joined the Metropolitan Police in 1975 and trained as a Scenes of Crimes Officer (SOCO). During his 38½ years in the Met he examined over 25,000 crime scenes ranging from shoplifting to murder and started examining crime scene DNA when in its embryonic stage. Covering the development of fingerprints from the first burglar arrested using them, to the development and use of DNA in 1984, this should prove an interesting and informative talk.

Jem Duducu

Thursday 13th June

History of the Ottoman Empire from 1299 to 1922

Jem Duducu has loved history for as long as he can remember. He read Archaeology and Medieval History at Cardiff University and is the author of several history books from the '100 Facts' series for Amberley along with 'Deus Vult' and 'The Sultans'. Jem charts the rise and fall of the Ottoman dynasty, from the forgotten Sultan Murad IV to the most famous rulers such as Suleiman the Magnificent. Jem covers world changing events such as the fall of Constantinople.



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



Notes from the Chair

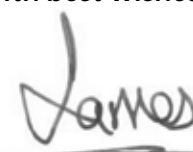
Welcome to our Spring newsletter for 2024.

Chess Valley u3a seems to be ticking along nicely at the moment and numbers are gradually creeping upwards. There is no massive need to grow our u3a, of course, but we do need new members to replace others who we have lost for one reason or another and of course it's always good to receive injections of fresh blood and new ideas. Since most of our new members arrive through word of mouth, I'd like to thank members generally for putting the word about and making sure their friends know what the u3a has to offer to people who no longer work full-time.

May I also draw your attention to the pages in the centre of this newsletter that give advance notice of our Annual General Meeting in June. Further details will be provided closer to the date.

Finally, many congratulations to member Daryl-Ann Hardman who recently received her MBE from the Prince of Wales at Windsor Castle; there's a photo on page 27.

With best wishes



James Cadle
chair@cvu3a.uk

New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Jonathan Adams	<i>Great Missenden</i>	Mac Morrisby	<i>Chesham</i>
Liz Adams	<i>Great Missenden</i>	Trish Morrisby	<i>Chesham</i>
Gilly Brewer	<i>Chesham</i>	Amela Munro	<i>Little Kingshill</i>
Jo Castle	<i>Holmer Green</i>	John Munro	<i>Little Kingshill</i>
Beryl Cockerill	<i>Amersham</i>	Joan Nassim	<i>Amersham</i>
Raymond Cockerill	<i>Amersham</i>	Tony Simmons	<i>Bovingdon</i>
Marilyn Croft	<i>Amersham</i>	Alan Wallwork	<i>Chesham</i>
Hillary Evans	<i>Chesham</i>	Sheila Wallwork	<i>Chesham</i>
Angela Hampson	<i>Gerrards Cross</i>	Maureen Winders	<i>Chesham</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 below.

Chess Valley u3a Committee

Chair	James Cadle	chair@cvu3a.uk	07889 732291
Vice-Chair	Helen Barnard	vicechair@cvu3a.uk	01494 715588
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	Helen Barnard	groups@cvu3a.uk	01494 715588
Web Editor	Valerie Garrod	webmaster@cvu3a.uk	01494 433585
Newsletter Editors	John Bunyan	newsletter@cvu3a.uk	01494 778858
	James Cadle		07889 732291
Speaker Organisers	Michael Cohn*	speakers@cvu3a.uk	01494 763542
	Peter Windsor		07595 776473
Events Coordinator	Jackie Cobb	eventscoord@cvu3a.uk	01494 773718
* indicates a non-voting member			

From the Groups Coordinator

We are in a quiet period at present but I am aware that all of our book groups are in need of new members. Ideal for this time of year!

As ever, if anyone has any problems with Simple Membership please let me know, and similarly your ideas for new groups are always welcome.

Helen Barnard
Groups Coordinator
groups@cvu3a.uk

From the Events Team

Visit to Greenwich, Tuesday 16th April 2024, by coach

Plans for Greenwich have been finalised and there will be a Blue Badge Guide-led tour of the Royal Naval College. This includes the Painted Hall and the Chapel in the morning and, after a lunch break, a guided tour of the Queen's House and time for a brief visit to The National Maritime Museum.

The cost will be between £44-£49 depending on numbers.

Pickups will be at Chesham FC and Amersham Leisure centre.

Anyone wishing to go should please email events@cvu3a.uk.

Fuller details and payment information will be sent in early March.

Please note that, as the buildings are accessed by stairs and circular staircases, regrettably it will not be suitable for wheelchair users.

The Events Team look forward to seeing you on this visit.

Michael Cohn

Visit to Hatfield House Friday 14th June 2024

The intention is to have a guided tour of Hatfield House and a look around the gardens and grounds. Travel will be by coach, with cost in the region of £45-£49 depending on numbers. Further information will follow nearer the time.

To register interest, please email events@cvu3a.uk.

Alan Gray

Rochester Kent (early September)

I am trying to organise a visit to Rochester in Kent. The High Street is full of interesting buildings such as the Cathedral and the remnants of a castle. At Eastgate House, in the gardens, stands Dickens' Swiss Chalet used by the author as his study at his home at Gads Hill where he wrote many of his books. There are also the Guildhall with its museum, a Huguenot hospital and museum and the Six Poor Travellers' House, to name but a few. There are so many historic buildings in the High Street that it is impossible to see all of them in one visit, but a day trip will give us a taster of what is on offer. Then perhaps you will return another day to see what you missed.

Should you be interested and able to go in early September, please register your interest to me using eventscoord@cvu3a.uk.

Jackie Cobb

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd May 2024

Not cutting it

It's a little known fact that the guillotine was invented in Halifax in Yorkshire as early as 1280 and was in use until the mid-17th century. This was probably one of the very first 'Great British' inventions originating in the UK but, as later became the norm, a lack of marketing and promotional effort meant that it was rarely used, had little consumer appeal and ultimately failed, not least due to its unattractive name – The Halifax Gibbet.

In contrast, the new, improved and better branded 'Guillotine' was exploited and profited from by other nations, making its greatest impact in France during the Reign of Terror where in just one year, 1793-1794, it dispatched over 17,000 souls compared to the meagre 52 over a period of 370 years in Halifax. Admittedly, market conditions were different, but opportunities, mainly those of export, were neglected.

Meanwhile we reverted to the less efficient but brilliantly improvised means of the noose. The last official hangman, Albert Pierrepoint, worked for 24 years and recorded the record fastest hanging of seven seconds which will probably now stand for all time. Efficiency, despite the equipment and not because of it, was probably the beginning of our love of nostalgia and the first use of an ironic phrase that would sum up our nation state, 'Our future lies in our past'.

But then that is probably better than the USA's efforts to improve on the noose that culminated this year in suffocation by nitrogen, a process that took all of 22 minutes.

Such is progress...

'Timewaster'

(Editor's note: The guillotine was last used in France in 1977 before the death penalty was abolished there in 1981.)

Chess Valley u3a equipment

We have various items of equipment purchased by Chess Valley u3a. These are held by the Groups that requested and mainly use them, but are available for use by other Groups. 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	James Cadle 07889 732291 chair@cvu3a.uk
Data projector 2 (Optoma)	Ian Hutt	
Laptop computer (Windows 10, Office 2016)	James Cadle	Ian Hutt 01494 583955 history@cvu3a.uk
Companion speakers for laptop		
PAT-tested extension cable/surge adapter		
Projection screen 1 (5 ft)	James Cadle	See above
Portable PA systems	Ian Hutt	See above
Projection screen 2 (6 ft)	Keith Hoffmeister	Keith Hoffmeister 01494 766990
Pinboards x 3		
Easels x 3	David Hurd	David Hurd digimaging@cvu3a.uk
PAT-tested 6-gang 2-metre extension leads (x 2)		
PAT-tested 4-gang 5-metre extension lead		
PAT-tested 4-gang 8-metre extension lead		
Rubber mats to protect extension leads (x 2)		

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	Gillian Eastmond	bookgroup1@cvu3a.uk
Book Group 2	Alison Pullinger	bookgroup2@cvu3a.uk
	Sarah Organ	
	Georgina Mead	
Book Group 3	Eileen Overton	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
Digital Imaging	Pippa Greensmith	digimaging@cvu3a.uk
	David Hurd	
Dinghy Sailing	Wendy Barnes	sailing@cvu3a.uk
	Judith Young	
Family History	Sue Broad	familyhist@cvu3a.uk
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	
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

(continues on next page)

Chess Valley u3a Convenors (continued)

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
MOTO	Mo Barnes	moto@cvu3a.uk
MOTO 2	Rodney Newth	moto2@cvu3a.uk
Music Appreciation	Geoff Hayes	music@cvu3a.uk
	Colin O'Rourke	
Patchwork & Quilting	Angela Bratton	patchquilt@cvu3a.uk
	Dee Watson	
Photography	David Hurd	photography@cvu3a.uk
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	Run by a small sun-committee	theatre@cvu3a.uk
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
Walkers 3	Catherine Haridi	walkers3@cvu3a.uk
	Jill Thomas	
Striders 1	Andrew Brown	striders@cvu3a.uk
Striders 2	Ian Lee	striders21@cvu3a.uk
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 Hitchener	wine2@cvu3a.uk
Writers	John & Helene Bunyan	writers@cvu3a.uk

News From The Groups

GROUP MEETINGS

Our Groups all meet in person. All Groups are open to enquiries from new members and, if full, will hold a waiting list. Groups that are inactive 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 and out of the building. Also, make sure you know where the fire exits are.

Art

Angela Spittle & Janice Gray



Following our 'Wintry' theme after Christmas, we moved on to portraits. We decided to address facial features separately in order to accomplish even better portraits in the end.

So, delightfully, we started picking our noses! This caused great hilarity, not just in the theme, but with the results too. We then moved on to eyes; so much to learn about measuring and proportions (in theory)! Understandably, as we progressed, we decided that we needed to see these features together, arranged on a face. So some of us began to do that!

We plan to continue with this theme, moving on to creating the whole portrait. Currently we are using pencil, but plan to explore with other mediums. Watch this space.

Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop



In December we looked at 'Hands in Art'. Our presenter reminded us of the nature of our hands and how important a part they play in our everyday lives. As we looked at our chosen images we were reminded of how expressive the hand can be. One of the most expressive of the choices was the simple woodcuts of hands seen in the work of Japanese artist, Naoko Matsubara, as seen in an exhibition at the Ashmolean in Oxford. Several members chose paintings: In Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*, hands involved in agricultural tasks are prominent. Then there is Max Beckman's *A Family Picture* from the 1920s where hands are used to emphasise the despair of life in Germany at that time. One member chose a gold sculpture of the hands of Arthur Rubinstein, renowned pianist of the last century. Another chose Michelangelo's *La Pieta* from the Sistine chapel, a marble sculpture with the exquisite hands of Mary cradling Christ. Finally we looked at Tibetan cave paintings about 160,000 years old, of hands depicted on a wall, and wondered just what sort of lives those people lived.

In our first meeting of 2024 we focussed on Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Born in Scotland and one of 11 children, he spent his early years in Glasgow. He was articled to a local architectural practice and attended evening classes at the local art school. We heard about his talented life as an architect, designer and artist where he was more than supported by his wife and fellow artist, Margaret MacDonald. Both were influential in Europe, exhibiting at the Vienna Succession in 1900. We studied his design of the Glasgow School of Art, his interior renovation of a Georgian terrace in Northampton and his very recognisable furniture and jewellery. Later in his life he produced unique watercolours, such as a delicate image of tulips and an enigmatic landscape of the waterfront at Port Vendres in France. We agreed that his contribution to art and design seemed revolutionary and underappreciated during his lifetime, but is recognised and valued now.

In February we looked at female Impressionists. We were made aware of the limited opportunities for women artists to study art in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Despite this, many women became known using this new technique. Perhaps the best known is Berthe Morisot as evidenced in her exquisite work, *The Cradle* from 1872, which depicts a mother and child. *The Harbour at Lorient* painted in 1869 was also by her. Several American women studied this new style and helped promote Impressionism in the USA.

(cont.)

Mary Cassatt produced works featuring domestic life as seen in *The Child's Bath* 1893, and *Child in a Straw Hat*, 1886, both intimate scenes of childhood. We also looked at Anna Ancher, a Danish artist who delighted us with her scenes of rural life in Skagen. We particularly liked *The Maid in the Kitchen*, 1886 and *Harvesters*, 1905. Future subjects will be Marcel Duchamp and the Dadaist movement. When the weather warms up we plan a visit to Compton Verney to see their new sculpture park.

Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



Our December meeting was devoted to planning for the next twelve months. We now have a diverse programme of topics planned, which includes 'Pop Art', 'Caravaggio', 'The Art of Spain' and 'Unfinished Paintings'. We shared a delicious Christmas afternoon tea and finished our meeting with a light-hearted Art Quiz, devised by Caroline.

There was no meeting in January due to the Bank Holiday. In February, Catherine gave us a talk on the life and work of William Hogarth, the renowned artist, engraver, satirist and social commentator of the Hanoverian age. Hogarth was born in 1697 in London, the son of a Latin teacher. He was apprenticed to an engraver, though he did not finish his apprenticeship but, by 1720, had established himself as an engraver, designing book plates and shop bills. He is best known for the three series of 'modern moral subjects': *A Harlot's Progress*, *A Rake's Progress* and *Marriage-a-la-Mode*. These works are mainly satirical caricatures of contemporary life, which were mass-produced in print form. They were intended to highlight vices and addictions that he felt were ruining English society. He was an accomplished portrait artist, preferring to paint full-length seated pictures of his subjects, notably the actor/manager David Garrick, a personal friend, dressed as Richard III, and the philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram, who founded The Foundling Hospital in London. Lastly, we looked at *The Bathos*, an engraving done by Hogarth shortly before his death in 1764, a depiction of his own demise.

Book 1

Gillian Eastmond



This friendly Book Group is a little different from other Book Groups in the u3a. We are about eight people and meet on the Third Friday morning of the month. We meet alternately in two different members' homes: one in Chesham Bois and one in Chesham.

We do not all read the same book. Instead, we bring a fiction or non-fiction book that we wish to recommend to the Group. After a brief description of the book's content, we say why we think it worth reading.

Often other Group members have also read the book and can give their comments. Otherwise, we just ask further questions about it. We might sometimes progress to a short lively discussion about the theme of the book or suggest other worthwhile books on the theme. Unless the book is on Kindle, or is a library book, the owner may be able to lend the book to those who want to read it.

I have been to traditional Book Groups and have found that the discussion normally ends after 60 minutes or 90 minutes when comments have run out. Our Group ends after two hours because people have other commitments and must leave. However, it normally could have lasted longer. You will have learned about books you now want to read that you would otherwise not have heard about. However, you will never be forced to read a book you really do not like.

You can always try us for a session to see if we are what you are looking for. Please email or telephone the Convenor to say you wish to come to a meeting.

Book 2

Alison Pullinger, Sarah Organ & Georgina Mead



watch this space.

Book Group 2 is under new management! We will continue to meet in Amersham Library at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month but, after many years as joint Convenors, Liz and Christine have decided it is time to hand over the reins (or paperbacks)! So it's time for new ideas and energy to emerge. This will be provided by three of the most avid readers within the Group, namely Georgina Mead, Alison Pullinger and Sarah Organ. So, (cont.)

We continue to borrow book sets from the Library; therefore we are limited to having 10 members in the group. We currently have a couple of vacancies so if you are interested in joining us, then please get in touch with the new Convenors.

Book 3

Eileen Overton



Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month. Our Group is limited to ten members since that is the number of books we get each month from Chesham Library; we currently have a full complement. We have been informed of the books we will be reading in 2024 and, once again, there is a varied mixture of books we know and others to surprise us. We started the year with *Sense and Sensibility* followed by *The Narrow Road to the North* by Richard Flanagan. March brings us *The Ghost Road* by Pat Barker, and *Munich* by Robert Harris, is our book for April. Our May reading is *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and we look forward to forming our own opinions on this book.

Book 4

Jackie Cobb



Book Group 4 meets in members' homes, and the books we read are chosen by each member in turn. As the book choices are varied, it makes for a good discussion each month. We would be happy to have two new members. Do get in touch, should you wish to join us.

In February we discussed *The Long Song* by Andrea Levy, which was about slavery in the sugar plantations before and during the period of abolition. In March we will read *Brighton Rock* by Graham Greene, and for April, it's *When I Was Ten* by Fiona Cummins.

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. The cost is £4.00 including a cup of tea per session. The winter season runs on Fridays from 13:15 to 15:30 weekly at the White Hill Centre. In the summer we meet each Monday from 13:50 to 16:00 at Holmer Green Sports Association for Outdoor

Short Mat Bowls.

There are vacancies for members who would like to 'try their hand'; experience not needed; tuition given; bowls available. Interested members should contact the Convenors using: shortbowls@cvu3a.uk.

Bridge

John Curtis



The Bridge Group continues to meet at Chartridge Park Golf Club on a Wednesday afternoon to play duplicate bridge to a reasonable standard in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Please contact the Bridge Convenor for more information.

Canasta

Linda Hepworth



The Canasta Group has been rather lacking in numbers and we would like to build up our membership. We always welcome new members, if only initially to see how the game is played. So do come along! We would love to see you.

Chess

Caroline Jenks



The Chess Group is on an upward trend with gradually increasing numbers, but there is room for more! None of us are expert players and some of us are beginners, so any ability level is welcome. The emphasis is on having a go, improving a bit and having a good chat over tea! Just come and have a try: no commitment or cost.



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 their 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. If you are interested, please get in touch with the Convenor for details of our next meeting.

Digital Imaging

Pippa Greensmith & David Hurd



In the past few months we've looked at some fascinating topics in Photoshop: Opening a RAW image in Photoshop Elements, looking at examples of over-processed images found on the Web and using Dodge and Burn to enhance an image. This year we will be concentrating on improving our images, with a few detours into the more frivolous 'fun' edits.

Dinghy Sailing

Wendy Barnes & Judith Young



The start of our 2024 sailing season is fast approaching. Please go to the Dinghy Sailing page on the CVu3a website for details of our forthcoming sessions. We normally meet between the end of April and end of October on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month at Troy Lake, between Maple Cross and Denham. We welcome any members from CVu3a, but for more information please contact either of the Convenors.

Family History

Sue Broad



At our first meeting back after the Christmas break in February, we were lucky to have Barry Walker from Amersham Family History Group visit us to give us a very professional PowerPoint presentation on DNA basics.

So much has improved in the world of DNA as you have most probably seen on the TV programmes. However we don't have the advantage of professional researchers to help us on our trail.

On 5 March we have invited Kirsty Gray: a professional researcher, to give us an online presentation entitled *Searching Surnames, Challenges and the Downright Ridiculous*. On 2 April we have an old friend Colin Chapman, returning to give us a talk on *The Manorial System and its Records*, which might be helpful in researching your ancestors.

Visitors are welcome. As this is a Family History Group, we focus on the life and times of our ancestors, how they lived and what records are available to follow their life journey. We have many members who can help you on how to start researching your family chart. That's Genealogy!

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month in Chesham Town Hall at 2.15pm.

French Conversation

Morag Robertson



The French Conversation Group has continued to meet regularly. We chat about numerous topics, whether in France, other Pays Francophones, or more locally! These may be about favourite buildings, books we have read or can recommend, or television programmes we have seen, some of which may be in French. The aim of the conversations is to revise vocabulary and verb structures so that when we eventually return to France we feel more confident orally and can participate in every day life in France (or other Pays Francophones).

"There's a new book out called 'How To Be Happy With No Money'. Trouble is, if you've got no money, you can't buy the book."

(Brad Ashton)

28th February 2024

Notice that the **16th Annual General Meeting (AGM)** for the Chess Valley u3a will be held on **Thursday 13th June 2024 at 2.00pm** in the **Broadway Baptist Church, Chesham.**

The purpose of this advance notification is to enable you to:

Make nominations of candidates for election to the committee at the AGM. There is currently one vacancy for a new committee member and two candidates standing for re-election.

Notify the Secretary of any motions you wish to be dealt with at the meeting.

You may wish to nominate someone to become a member of the Committee. To assist you in making a nomination, enclosed is a form which you should complete and return to the Secretary by 10th May 2024.

If you wish to propose any other matters for discussion these must be put in writing, proposed and seconded, and forwarded to the Secretary (via email at secretary@cvu3a.uk, or via post to the below address) by 10th May 2024.

The meeting will be followed by our usual Monthly Talk.

Chess Valley u3a
Business Secretary
118 White Hill
Chesham
Bucks
HP5 1AR

Chess Valley University of the Third Age
Annual General Meeting 2024

Proxy Voting Form

The following matters are to be presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Chess Valley u3a (CVu3a) on Thursday 13th June 2024 and I, the undersigned, authorise the Chair of the Meeting or to vote in accordance with my instructions:

	Yes	No	Abstain
Approval of the Minutes of the 15 th AGM of CVu3a held on Thursday 8 th June 2023			
Approval of Accounts of CVu3a for 2023/2024			
Re-election of Geoff Naylor as Treasurer			
Re-election of Jim Wilkie as Membership Secretary			
Reappointment of Ernest Newhouse as Examiner of CVu3a's accounts			

I wish to ask the following question:

.....

Signature: Date:

Name (print): Membership No:

To be returned by Friday 7th June 2024 to:

Chess Valley u3a, Business Secretary, 118 White Hill, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1AR

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. In January we enjoyed a French-themed lunch to celebrate the New Year. New members are welcome.

Fun Quizzes

James Cadle



The Fun Quizzes Group meets on Zoom during the winter months, from November to April, when the evenings are dark and people are less inclined to venture out. We take a break during the summer. We call them Fun Quizzes because we don't have teams in the usual sense (although several couples take part) and there are no winners and losers. Participants are simply pitting their knowledge against the question setters.

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 one hour and has five rounds of 10 questions each.

If you would like to join the Fun Quizzes Group, please contact the Convenor.

Gardening

Stephanie Rothwell & Jenny Beirne



At our first meeting of 2024 we welcomed Katharine Hersee who lives locally in Great Missenden and is an expert and aficionado of snowdrops or, to give them their Latin genus name, Galanthus. The sight of a clump of snowdrops always lifts the spirits and is a sign that winter is on its way out. Katharine explained about the different botanical parts of a snowdrop and then proceeded to show us slides of some of the many variations of snowdrop that exist today. They are an ever-evolving species, as breeders continue to create new varieties. Some of the rare and more exotic specimens can cost upward of £70 per plant!

On the 23rd February, 24 members of the Group visited Katharine's garden in Great Missenden for a guided tour and to view some of her varieties of snowdrop. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't kind to us but, being hardy perennials, we braved the rain to explore the garden and were duly rewarded with a welcome cup of tea and home-made cake at the end of the visit.

The 28th February saw a long-standing friend of Garden Group: Brian Fisher, another local gardener, giving his talk *Wildlife in the Garden - Working with Nature*. Members of our u3a Wildlife Group were invited to join us. In March, volunteers from 'Amersham in Bloom' are coming to talk to us about the project.

Later this year we shall be making two garden visits: one to the Herb Garden at Amersham Museum where we will have a guided tour by the Curator. In September we have planned a trip to Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire.

We still welcome new members so if you would like to join us, then please contact one of the Convenors. Details of the Group, together with this year's programme, can be found on the Garden Group page of the CVu3a website.

German

Jenny Lee



Our small but very friendly Group continues to meet twice a month in each other's houses. Here is a bit of German Humour:

'Warum können Elefanten nicht fliegen? Weil sie zu schwer für das Flugzeug sind.'

ie Why can't elephants fly? Because they are too heavy for the aeroplane

This joke is a classic play on words. In German the word for aeroplane is Flugzeug, which translates to 'flying thing'. So the joke is based on the idea that elephants can't fly because they are too heavy for a flying thing!

If you come and join us, the jokes will be better.



Our December meeting encompassed the traditional nod to the festive season with mulled wine, mince pies and other tasty goodies. Our Speaker was a most engaging and excellent storyteller, historian and author: Anne Fletcher.

Her story, *Widows of the Ice* gave us a completely new perspective on the Polar Expedition to the South Pole by Scott and two others of his team, Ted Wilson and Edgar Evans. We all know about this ill-fated exploration, but have we ever thought about the wives of these passionate and brave men who they left behind?

Anne told their stories: Kathleen, Scott's bohemian and artist wife, Oriana, the devout wife of Chief Scientist Wilson who lost her faith, and Lois the Welsh working-class wife of Petty Officer Evans.

When the news came of the tragic end to their adventure, the men became heroes with the consequential publicity and newspaper coverage. Their wives had to come to terms with the fact they had been widows for many months. They were forced to grieve in public view, keeping a stiff upper lip whilst the world praised their husband's sacrifice. Though they had little in common other than that their husbands had died together, their shared experience was to shape the rest of their lives. They have drifted to the outer edges of the Antarctic narrative but Anne brought them to the forefront of our knowledge of the event we thought we already knew all about: A story of imperialistic dreams, misogyny and class, but also of enormous courage, high ideals, duty and above all, love.

In January, Ramji Abinashi, a Chiltern u3a member, gave us a talk on the Chola Dynasty. The Cholas were a Tamil dynasty from Southern India. References to the Chola date from the third century BCE. Eventually they ruled over an expansive maritime empire. The dynasty, from 907 to 1215, was at the peak of its power in the 11th century, becoming a military, economic and cultural powerhouse. Several naval campaigns resulted in the capture of Sri Lanka, the Maldives and the Malabar Coast. Under the Cholas, the Tamil country reached new heights of excellence in art, religion, music and literature. Monumental architecture in the form of majestic temples and sculpture in stone and bronze, reached a degree of finesse never before achieved in India. In general, Cholas were followers of Hinduism.

Ramji gave an overall narrative of the important players in the dynasty, their many ruler kings, and the areas of South and South East Asia that they conquered over the period. Generally they were fair and cultured, forming civilised societies. This was a dynasty most of us knew nothing of, apart from those few who had visited India and been lucky enough to see some of their temples.

I don't believe any of us realised that fugitive slaves, many from America, came to Buckinghamshire. The 1772 Mansfield Judgement concluded that slavery did not exist in England and Wales, and this was an encouragement for many to risk their journey to freedom.

Kathy Chater, a Genealogist, came to tell us of some of them and their stories. One Henry Box-Brown travelled over 350 miles nailed into a crate for his escape. Another married couple came with the wife disguising herself as a man to enable their acceptance. In 1833 with the abolition of enslavement in the British colonies, an increasing number arrived to speak of their experiences. They joined Abolition movements and participated in lecture tours, particularly after the passing of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act in America. Their venues included Aylesbury, Haddenham and Great Missenden and John Brown, a field hand, spoke in Chesham in the Temperance Hall. Kathy revealed what they said and how they were received. They were met with no animosity and their tales of the barbaric treatment many received at the hands of their owners shocked these small communities: A most unusual topic, which with Kathy's research, had revealed a part of our local history of which most of us were completely unaware.

Keep Fit for 60+

John Bunyan



Personal circumstances have conspired for the Convenor, making it difficult to progress immediately in the new year. An instructor has also yet to be secured. Enquiries from members are, however, being taken. If numbers permit, the class will take place. If it is cancelled, any pre-payments will be refunded. If you are interested please contact John on keepfit60@cvu3a.uk No payments are being sought at this stage.

Knitting & Other Crafts

Jo Biggs



Meeting at members' houses twice a month, we cover a wide variety of crafts including knitting, crochet, patchwork and embroidery. It's really lovely to see projects completed and to have fun working together. There is always great conversation and cake involved! We currently have space for one more person so please get in touch with the Convenor if you would like to join us.

Line Dancing

Linda English



The Line Dancing Group is run by Chiltern u3a, but we also welcome members from Chess Valley u3a. We normally meet in the Methodist Church, Bellingdon Road, Chesham, HP5 2HA on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 10am. Meetings last one hour and we pay our teacher each time we attend a class. No experience is necessary and the emphasis is on enjoying ourselves, exercising body and mind and having fun. Parking is available at the venue. We currently have a waiting list. Please contact the Convenors if you wish to be put on it.

Email: u3alinedance@chiltern-u3a.org.uk

Mah Jong

Edward Perrott



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, 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. We currently have a vacancy for an additional member of our Group - if you would like to join us please contact the Convenor by email.

MOTO (Members On Their Own)

Mo Barnes

The MOTOs have continued to meet for their convivial fortnightly Sunday lunches at local pubs and restaurants. These have included 'The White Hart', 'The Crown' (Ley Hill), 'The Boot and Slipper' and 'Amersham House'. We look forward to further outings to gardens and other places of interest as the weather improves. Monthly planning meetings are held over coffee and cakes at the Elgiva Cafe.

MOTO 2

Rodney Newth

We continue to meet for lunch at a different venue on the second Tuesday of each month. Recent visits have been to the 'Crown' at Ley Hill (which always seems to be busy and has a great atmosphere) and the 'White Hart' at Chalfont St Giles. In March we meet at 'The Bell Inn', Bovingdon. Normally about eight members attend each lunch. There is no formal structure although at the next meeting we will be deciding where we will eat during the next few months. Members join and leave but there are still many who attended the coffee meet in 2022 when the Group reconvened. We are open for new members.

Music Appreciation

Geoff Hayes & Colin O'Rourke



The new Music Appreciation Group has started very well. We have about 12 members so far with room for more. Our first two meetings have been well attended and have been both enjoyable and interesting. We meet in Chesham Town Hall Lowndes Room, on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm till 4. So that's the 7th March, 4th April, and 2nd May for our next three meetings.

Each member of the Group brings along a recording or two of their choice related to a chosen theme and we listen to each in turn. To make it more interesting, the recordings are played from computer, so sometimes we can also play the video recording of it being played or can show related information. (cont.)

The programme of music is determined by the members so, as the musical tastes of members are diverse including Jazz, Pop, Classical, Blues, modern and old, the playlist is equally varied.

The theme for the March meeting is 'Spring' so it's a opportunity for members to be inventive with titles, composers and performers, related to Spring. I wonder what we'll listen to: Bruce Springsteen, Vivaldi Four Seasons, Dusty Springfield? Maybe you have a suggestion to bring along?

For more details, contact the Convenors on music@cvu3a.uk

Geoff

Patchwork & Quilting

Angela Bratton & Dee Watson



Another Christmas behind us, but it's not too early to think of the next one, with time to finish off the projects we didn't have time to complete, or maybe start new ones. Patchwork is not something that is run up in a spare hour or so. It takes time and thought so that the finished result is something to be proud of. It can be described as a pastime, a way to pass the time. Somehow our busy ladies would love to have more time to devote to their craft but we enjoy what we do. One of the beautiful projects lovingly made by one of our members (a wall hanging based on *The Nutcracker* story) was completed before Christmas, to be delivered to her family now living overseas, for them to enjoy.

New year resolutions for those who sew include the task of completing our unfinished projects, but it is so exciting to move on to something new. Our February meeting included both of these things and meeting as a group inspires us all to either finish off existing work, or be inspired to meet new challenges. We look forward to another year of productive sewing.

We welcome anyone who would like to take up this hobby or maybe pick up their needles and fabric and join like-minded people. We meet at the Village Hall in Hyde Heath on the third Wednesday each month (9.30am-3.30pm). Do contact us if you would like to come along to see us at one of our sessions (no obligation).

Photography

David Hurd



The Photography Group meets on the third Wednesday in the month and new members are always welcome; come along and give us a try! At each meeting we generally look at members' photographs and show a video to demonstrate photographic techniques. We also arrange field trips from time to time.

In December last year the Photography and Digital Imaging Groups had a joint meeting to look at members' photographs taken in 2023 for their projects. Subjects included cathedrals, Chesham, and the Chess Valley.

In January, the meeting discussed the proposed programme for the year, which will follow a similar format to previous years, with selected photographic topics and field visits. The topics at each meeting will form the project for the coming month with members' photographs being shown at the following meeting. It is hoped this will give a more structured progress for members to gain knowledge and experience in different types of photography. In February the Group looked at photographs members had taken over winter, with some excellent shots of flowers, birds...and the occasional steam engine! The topic for the meeting was 'shadow photography' and we looked at examples of how shadows and silhouettes can produce some striking images, with videos and techniques for using shadows in the studio and in street photography.

The next meeting is on March 20th where we will be looking at our members' own shadow photographs and learning about intentional camera movement (ICM) photography.

Our Programme from March to May is as follows:

20th March: 'Shadow and Silhouette photographs'. 'Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) photography'.

10th April: Photo field trip to Ashridge House.

17th April: ICM and Ashridge House photos review. 'High flyers: Ideas and Techniques'.

10th May: Photo field trip to Chiltern Open Air Museum.

15th May: 'Objects in the Air' and Chiltern Museum review. 'Photographing Fast Speeds and Movement'.



After the excesses of the festive season, including a hugely enjoyable and well-attended Pilates Christmas lunch, it has been good to get back to our Monday exercise. The three Groups, Pilates 1, 2 and 3, meet at the Jubilee Scout Hall in Amersham. We carry on with the winter term till Easter, without a mid-term break: such is the dedication of our brilliant teacher Sue, and we happily do whatever she says!

Play Reading

Joan Barton & Linda Hepworth



We welcome Joan Barton as our new Co-Convenor. She will be taking over from Claire Paterson who has done an excellent job helping to run the Group for the past few years: Thank you Claire.

In the last two months we have read *Mr Peters' Connections* by Arthur Miller and *The Orchard Walls* by R F Delderfield. Our next play will be *The Hollow* by Agatha Christie. Surprisingly, this will be the first time we have read a play by her. This is set in the home of Sir Henry and Lucy Angkatell.

Poetry

Christine Ogborne

Meetings are held in members' homes on the fourth Thursday of each month. We enjoy reading and discussing our chosen poems and sharing a few thoughts about the poets who wrote them. In December our meeting was near Christmas and we all chose favourite Christmas poems, such as *Christmas Traffic* by U A Fanthorpe; *At Nine of the Night* by Charles Causley and *Christmas* by John Clare. January, and our meeting was on the poetry of W H Auden. We heard the haunting *Stop All The Clocks*, *Musee Des Beaux Arts* and *The Composer*, to name but a few. Our February meeting had the simple subject of 'London'. We enjoyed just a fraction of the many poems written about our capital city.

Future meetings will be:

March: Robert Graves
 April: Poetry of the 1960s
 May: John Betjeman

Please contact the Convenor if you are interested in joining our Group.

Railways

Graham Yellowley & James Cadle



It's 'Full Steam Ahead' for 2024 with a full programme and an expanding Group. We have great support from our Railways Group members, as always.

December 15th: Robin Addison and Denis Weller: *Swiss Railways in the 21st Century*:

A really interesting talk on the main Swiss Railways, which was enhanced by large size maps allowing the Group to see the coverage of the lines being talked about: A very comprehensive overview of the Swiss Railways, locomotives and geography as well as ferries and other connecting modes of transport.

January 19th: Keith Hoffmeister: *HS2 in the local area*:

Keith was up at 4:30am completing his talk for us as he had only just finished photographing the HS2 sites. But we benefited from this with another wonderful presentation by Keith. The extent of the engineering and landscape scarring was very evident throughout and Keith's access to HS2 sites gives us a very close up view of the activities in and out of the tunnel.

February 16th: Ian Arthurton: *The Metropolitan Line*:

This was another excellent talk by Ian Arthurton, this time on the Metropolitan Railway. Full of interesting facts, it spanned the days of the pre-Metropolitan Railway through to the 150th anniversary and beyond. If you thought you knew everything about the Metropolitan Line beforehand, you certainly do now after this talk.

(cont.)

Our next meetings are:

March 15th: Francis Gomme: *Atlantic Coast Express*
April: Visit to Epping & Ongar Railway (date to be advised)
May 17th: Chris Hillier: *The Ebury Line*

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

Singing for Pleasure

Stephanie Rothwell & Angela Bratton



The grand finale to last term was our annual Christmas concert for family and friends at Amersham Free Church. We had a very good turnout on the evening and lots of positive feedback about our performance. Our repertoire was a mix of seasonal and secular songs while Peter Carey and Stuart Hampson, two of our basses, each raised some laughter with a couple of humorous readings. One of Ali's friends, a professional soprano singer, gave a solo rendition of *O Holy Night*: an awe-inspiring experience.

Earlier the same day a group of singers performed for the Totteridge Stroke Group at Winchmore Hill Cricket Club. They are always a very appreciative audience and it is rewarding for us too to give pleasure to those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

This term Ali has chosen a new selection of pieces to challenge us. One is The Lord's Prayer sung in Russian! We have been invited again to sing at a meeting of the Amersham Branch of the National Trust later this year. We sang at one of their meetings a couple of years ago, so we can't have been that bad!

Ali continues to inspire and enthuse us to improve our singing technique while Gwen, our accompanist, covers our mistakes efficiently on the piano. We are very grateful to them both for giving their time for rehearsals.

If you would like to join the choir, then please contact one of the Convenors. Full details of the Group can be found on our webpage on the CVu3a website.

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



At our last meeting Michael Cohn brought his hoard of coins, medallions, tokens and commemorative silver ingots from around the world gathered during his international career: A fascinating collection with some interesting stories about the commemorative items. Thank you Michael. Following this he decided that perhaps he is a collector and has joined the Group. Also Harry Howlett showed us his display of stamps, postcards and covers on the theme of 'Edinburgh Castle'.

Our next meeting will be at the end of March and we do not have an outside speaker so we will ask the Group members to bring some things from their own collections.

Tai Chi

Sue Broad & Meg Brinton



Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese martial art, sometimes called shadow boxing or meditation in motion. It is a series of different postures that flow into each other in slow movements. But, although it looks gentle, studies suggest it is as effective as conventional exercise for reducing body weight and visceral fat.

Because Tai Chi is a mix of exercise and meditation, your brain gets a work-out too, leading to better brain function. It improves heart health, and has even been shown to boost your immune system. Unfortunately the class is full and learning Tai chi is a lifetime of learning.

Theatre

Helen Barnard & Geoff Naylor



Our next trip is to *Guys and Dolls*, which by the time you read this will probably have taken place. Subsequent to that we have *Moulin Rouge* on 2 May, which I am booking as I write this.

Our subsequent planned trip will be at the other end of the spectrum: Hopefully a day in Stratford (18th July) to see *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. New members are always welcome and, once added to the Group list, you will receive emails about all upcoming trips. If there is anything you would like to see please let us know and we will see if it is possible. Email theatre@cvu3a.uk

Ukulele

Jeff Naman & Heather Sprake



Our Ukulele Group continues to flourish, and it is fun. Back by popular demand, we held a family and friends Christmas singalong with one young member of the audience signing to the songs! We also held a gig in January for residents of a venue in Amersham: Song sheets were handed out and we all enjoyed it.

We continue to practise new songs at the meetings and love the suggestions from members. Our fortnightly meetings are held at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, Chesham starting at 2.30pm.

If you want more information on the Group and our activities, please contact me for a chat.

Jeff Naman 07976 633798

Walking Groups

Walking Groups are now fully active. Individuals from the Groups are also walking individually to scout new routes.

Amblers (3 - 4 miles)

Sue Osborne

On a grey gloomy February afternoon, a small group of hardy Amblers braved persistent drizzle and claggy mud to walk from the Nature Reserve lay-by in Weston Turville to Halton Tennis Club and back.

We passed the reservoir where members of Aylesbury Sailing Club sail their boats (all laid up for the winter) and trudged through woods to the towpath of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The canal path has recently been resurfaced and it was a relief to find a firm surface under foot.

In the dry of Halton Tennis Club we enjoyed a chat with our coffee and flapjacks. Returning to our cars, we glimpsed a couple of young swans lurking disconsolately on the reservoir. Amazingly, we all agreed we'd had an entertaining afternoon and felt very refreshed!

Sue Osborne

Walkers (5 - 7 miles)

Walkers 1

Stuart Stanley

The Walkers 1 Group meets at various locations on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 10:00. Walks are usually between four and five and a half 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 and published every three months, and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate.

For the fourth quarter, our walks were in Hawridge, Little Gaddesden, Ley Hill and Sarratt. For the first quarter 2024 our walks were, or will be, at Winchmore Hill, Amersham and Wiggington. Further walks are to be arranged.

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

"Q: How do you know when you're walking too much?"

A: Your feet let you know who's boss."

(punsteria.com)

Walkers 2

Sue Rawbone

Walks continue as normal with visits to the areas of Belsize and Cassiobury Park near Watford, as the leaders try to devise walks without too much mud!

We walk on the fourth Thursday of the month and also have the opportunity to join Walkers 3 on the first Wednesday, space permitting.

We welcome new members but please contact the Convenor first.

Walkers 3

Jill Thomas & Catherine Haridi

Our December walk and Christmas meal was kindly arranged by Sue Rawbone from Walkers 2. Thanks Sue.

Our January walk was organised by Pauline and Pearl. We started off from the lovely village of Denham, then it was around the golf course, and along the canal: Just what we all needed after all the festivities.

We have just completed our February walk, which was from Maple Cross, through some beautiful countryside, a few damp bits, but a lovely friendly crowd. Thank you to Valerie and Rodney for organising it.

Striders 1 & 2 (7 - 15 miles)

Andrew Brown & Ian Lee



Striders' annual Christmas Walk and Lunch took place on the fifth of December. The six mile walk started in Cholesbury, included a pit stop in Bellingdon for mulled wine and mince pies and finished with lunch in Cholesbury Village Hall with some entertainment and a raffle. Our tradition is to use the event to raise money for a charitable organisation, and this year we raised £395 for the Chiltern Food Bank. Thanks to all who helped in the organisation of the event.

We are pleased to report that the scheme to replace stiles with gates, run jointly between Bucks Council and the Chiltern Society, has now been restarted and so we have been able to fund a gate using the £1 voluntary donations from each Strider on each of our regular walks. The gate will be installed in the Botley area in late March and will carry a plaque in memory of Michael Fogg, a former member of Striders. We will ensure that a route for a Striders' walk in the weeks following its installation incorporates the gate. We are actually in the position of being able to fund another gate and have asked Striders for suggestions of a stile that is either in a poor condition or in a challenging location and needs replacing.

Our day-long walks are normally reserved for the fifth Tuesdays of the summer months. This year however there are very few, so eight intrepid Striders were out on 30th January for a 10 mile walk, but stayed local this time, walking in the Chipperfield area.

Our numbers continue to grow, and we are delighted to report that younger CVu3a members are joining and both walking and leading regularly, which augurs well for our future. However, we do not operate a waiting list for either Group and will welcome more members who wish to join our friendly walkers. If you would like to join one or other Group, please contact one of our Convenors: Andrew Brown (Striders 1) and Ian Lee (Striders 2). Striders 2 walk on the first and third Tuesdays of every month; Striders 1 walk on the second and fourth Tuesdays. Walks are usually 7-10 miles in length, but, as mentioned, during summer, we have longer all-day walks with a picnic lunch in locations further afield on any fifth Tuesday in the month. Please contact Andrew or Ian if you would like more information about either Group.

Walks into History: Country

Peter Schweiger



Frozen Chesham: January 10th

How cold does it have to be to prevent 14 hardy souls/soles walking around Chesham? Well, we did in the freeze on the 10th January. Our first call was at the Old Knacker's Yard off Church Street (see colour photo, ed.) Fortunately everyone got out alive, and we cheerfully wound our way along the High Street. This was originally built with residential houses but changed over the centuries. Church Street had been the road then with the shops.

We warmed up with coffee at the Baptist Church where this poem written by Lewis Carroll, (a visitor and resident of Chesham), was read: (cont.)

'You are old, Father William, the young man said,
And your hair has become very white,
And yet you incessantly stand on your head,
Do you think at your age, it is right?

In my youth, Father William replied to his son,
I feared it might injure the brain,
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.'

Walking across Lowndes Park, we admired the lake on our way up to the Church. To our delight it was open and warm. Brian Harding could check out the floor tiles. He did not think they were the same as the famous Penn tiles that had been used in Westminster Abbey and other historic churches. Adventurously, we went down to 'The Bury', a major country house of the Lowndes family for five generations. There we walked on the wide terrace and spotted bricked up windows from the times of the window tax.

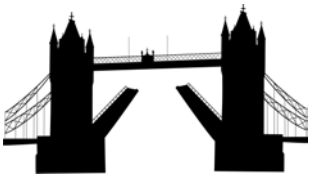
Our meander along the River Chess brought us to the 400 year-old Alms houses from where it was an easy step on to 'The George and Dragon' for lunch. There we had a private upstairs room and were pleased by the modest prices compared to some other places.

Our next Walk into History will be on Wednesday 13th March. We will be in Pinner, with its Heath Robinson Museum and the house where he lived. Peter

Walks in London

Angela Shipley

Treasurer: Mick Rothwell



City Churches: February 14th

It was probably not my best move to choose this walk on Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day, meaning there was limited access to the interior of the churches and busy lunch venues. However two of the best London Walks guides more than made up for it. Facts first: My brain fails to grasp how one human being managed to rebuild 51 churches in 20 years when presented with a blank canvas after the Great Fire of London in 1666. Of course, Christopher Wren had help from other architects of the day, all of whom learned on the job with no formal training. Today, there are 30 of those churches left, many having been destroyed in WWII, others decommissioned or taken down as the population of the city changed.

First to St Magnus the Martyr, flying the Orkneys flag with which he was associated and an atypically high Anglican church smelling strongly of incense and with plain song softly playing in the background. Typical in its square form, it had a heavy, dark wood pulpit and altar surround. Built near Billingsgate Market, its stained glass windows on one side were soon bricked up to minimise the smell of fish.

Such churches are nestled in between buildings old and modern, so they provide an element of surprise around every corner. So, soon we were at St Stephen Walbrook, in my book the best of them all, not least for the pure, magical voices of a small female choir rehearsing for a lunchtime service; one unbeatable bonus of the importance of the day. I am vindicated. It is also said to be the most perfectly proportioned building in the world and the first domed building in Britain. It also sports a massive marble central altar, circle in the square, designed by Henry Moore. Outside, it was pointed out that we were standing in the firing line of the tower if it should fall, noticeably leaning 11 inches to the right after the deep foundations to a modern glass job were dug right next to it.

We visited St Mary Abchurch, whose dome is supported with no columns or buttresses, and the church of St Pancras, destroyed by fire and now a tiny peaceful courtyard which is passed by without notice by most. St Mary Aldermary is no longer a parish church, but a community church encompassing some services, meditation groups and a very popular café at the back. There are six or seven St Marys requiring them to have a distinguishing addition to their name. By the time we came to St Mary le Bow, it was closed for a service, so we stood outside admiring its 12 bells held in its impressive separate tower, and the dragon weather vein which looks directly at that of the grasshopper on the Royal Exchange. (cont.)

There was just time to put our heads around the door of St Vedast and end in another quiet courtyard away from the city bustle of lunching office workers. A tribute has to be paid to the volunteers of the Friends of City Churches who, by their presence, allow so many churches to be open for all.

Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



The Wildlife Group finished off 2023 with a pre-Christmas celebratory get-together and a review of activities and interests over the last seven years. All agreed that much had been achieved over this time and we should continue into the New Year as planned. January 2024 brought us face to face with fish in our waterways. Dick Pilkinton from Tring Anglers shared his knowledge with the Group and enabled us to separate one species from another (at least in theory!) taking examples from our two nearby chalk rivers, the Grand Union Canal and local reservoirs. Most were surprised to learn that trophy specimens had been pulled out of Tringford Reservoir near Marsworth, and photos had adorned the front page of fishing magazines.

In early February, some 40 of us were treated to a talk on British mammals by Brian Clews. Hopefully each Wildlife member is now able to recognise a stoat from a weasel, a hare from a rabbit and a roe-deer from a muntjac. Looking forward, our programme extends to a talk by Mick Jones, a ranger at Dancers End Nature Reserve, and the return visit in April of Adrian Porter who will update us on the Chalk Streams Project and, in particular, progress on the River Wye in Desborough Park in High Wycombe. If you are interested in wildlife matters, come and join us. We meet on the first Thursday of the month at Amersham Common Village Hall for talks, and on site for field visits.

Wine Appreciation 1

Pauline & Tom Hohenberg



The theme at the Broombys in November was 'South America'. We started with a *Montgras de Vine Reserva* Chilean Chardonnay from Waitrose at £9.49. This was followed by a *Luis Felipe Edwards Viognier* from Chile via Waitrose at £8.99. Turning to the reds, first up was a *Los Vascos Cromas Syrah Gran Reserva*, weighing in at 14.5% from the Valle de Colchagua in Chile and available from Waddesdon for £10.95, reduced from £16. We then turned to an *Errazuriz Max Carmenere* from Chile's Aconcagua Valley, reduced from £12 to £10 at Tesco. Finally, we tasted a *Catena Malbec* from Mendoza in Argentina, available from Waitrose for £13.99.

Our Christmas meeting at the Connors featured wines you would serve at Christmas. We started with an M&S *Cremant de Loire* and moved swiftly on to a *Jean Chausson Chablis* from Waitrose at £16.99. Then we had another Chablis: *Premier Cru Chateau de Fleys* from Waitrose, reduced from £19 to £15. This was followed by a *Louis Latour Bourgogne Chardonnay* available from Tesco, reduced from £18 to £14.50. Moving on to the reds, first up was a *Faustino 14% Rioja 2011 Gran Reserva* reduced from £16 to £14 at Tesco. We then tried a *Chateau Margerots Bordeaux 2018* at £11.99 from Waitrose. Last up was another Bordeaux: *Chateau la Platus 2016*: £10 from Aveyrs.

January is traditionally Burns Night at the Howletts and they did us proud with the full haggis, neeps and tatties experience plus whisky. We started with *Vignerons Wife Cremant de Bourgogne* from Naked Wines. The smoked salmon was accompanied by a *Kooliburra Chardonnay* from South Australia and a *Cave des Roches Vouvray Chenin Blanc* from Tesco. The haggis was set-off by a *Macalan Highland Park 12 year old single malt whiskey*. This was followed by a *Herederos del Marques de Riscal Rioja Reserva 2016* and an *Ultima Edizione Villa Farnia*: a blend of Montepulciano, Sangiovese and Negroamaro grapes: £15 reduced to £10 from Aveyrs. All in all, a very satisfying evening!

Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



In December we sampled a selection of wines chosen by Richard and Fiona Sabido, entitled 'Keeping it in the Family'. The three whites were all from Majestic with the run-away winner being a *Picpoul/Sauvignon* blend from southern France near Beziers. This was ahead of a *Chenin Blanc* and a *Sauvignon Blanc*, both from France. Ripe and fruity, it was a hit with over 90% of the members. Three red wines followed which, for a Group that normally prefers the reds, were very disappointing, with none scoring anywhere near the lowest scoring white. (cont.)

The red judged the best was a rich and full Merlot from Stellenbosch in South Africa. This was ahead of a *Carignan/Caladoc* blend from France and a *Grenache/Carignan/Syrah/Mourvedre* blend, also from France.

In January we got together at 'The Boot and Slipper' for a post Christmas meal instead of the usual wine tasting: A good meal with good company.

In February the vino choice was provided by Alan & Muriel Gray, who opted to go Italian. It was a small gathering owing to holidays and sickness but it didn't stop us enjoying ourselves. Sampling three whites, the *Loriato* from *Emilia Romagna* just scraped home ahead of a *Pecorino*, also from central Italy and a *Sangiovese* from the north. Made from the Trebbiano grape in central Italy, it's best enjoyed 'the Italian way' with good food and friends (so the label says)! Moving on to three reds, things didn't go quite so smoothly when the third red was found to be 'corked', so impossible to drink. This was a pity because red wines two and three were made in different vineyards from the same blend, one being a light red and the other full-bodied. The two remaining reds were however, like the whites, very closely matched with a blend of *Corvina*, *Rondinella* and *Molinara* grapes just scraping home ahead of a Chianti. This wine from Verona is reputed to go well with fish, when lightly chilled.

Writers

Helene & John Bunyan



Our Group continued to meet across the new year and the topics covered were: 'Something I Bought', 'Clocks' and 'Winter' (not a surprise!) Some excellent stories were presented and well received. Our March topic is 'Food'.

The Group currently meets in one of our member's homes at 2:30pm on a day mutually convenient during the second week of the month (currently Friday). We are very keen to attract new members to the Group and extend a warm welcome to any CVu3a member who writes, in any capacity, and would like to share their work. So get in touch at

writers@cvu3a.uk

There's room for a spring poem:

Today

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,
so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze
that it made you want to throw
open all the windows in the house
and unlatch the door to the canary's cage,
indeed, rip the little door from its jamb,
a day when the cool brick paths
and the garden bursting with peonies
seemed so etched in sunlight
that you felt like taking
a hammer to the glass paperweight
on the living room end table,
releasing the inhabitants
from their snow-covered cottage
so they could walk out,
holding hands and squinting
into this larger dome of blue and white,
well, today is just that kind of day.

Billy Collins

Chess Valley u3a Groups Schedule

FIRST in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Art Discussion 2 (pm)	Walkers 1	Walkers 2/3 (occasional)	Wildlife	Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)
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)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Family History (pm)	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
<i>Monday Groups' schedules are sometimes interrupted by public holidays; contact the Convenors for more information</i>	Ukulele (pm)	Book 2 (pm)	<i>Bowls (Green) meets every Wednesday of the month during the season</i> <i>Tai Chi meets in school term-times only</i>	
		Bridge (pm)		
		Wine 2 (eve) (pm)		

SECOND in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
History (pm)	Amblers	Walks into History OR Walks into London (alternate months)	Art Discussion 1 (am)	Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders 1		Keep Fit (currently suspended)	Writers (pm)
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	Line Dancing (am)	Monthly Talk (pm)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Tai Chi (am)	French Conversation (am)	<i>The Chess Valley u3a Committee meets on the first or second Tuesday of each month, two days before the Monthly Talk</i>	
	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)	Art Discussion 3 (pm)#	Book 1 (am)
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Book 3 (pm)	Photography (pm)	<i>Stamps and Collectables meets in members' houses every two months</i>	
	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		

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



Left: On a very cold January morning the Walks into History: Country Group's first port of call on their walk around Chesham was the Old Knacker's Yard off Church Street.

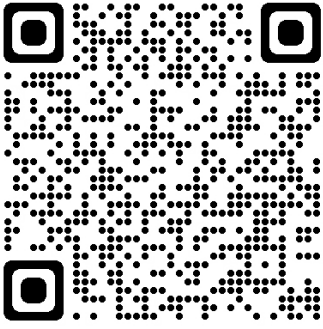
Left centre: On the same day as their evening Christmas Concert the Singing for Pleasure Group performed earlier for the Totteridge Stroke Club.



Lower left: The Striders February walk was a circular one, taking in Bradenham to West Wycombe. This is the Dashwood Mausoleum built on the site of an ancient hill fort in West Wycombe.

Below: Our member Daryl-Ann Hardman has been working tirelessly for orphans in Belarus. She was presented with her MBE by Prince William at Windsor Castle.





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In December, members of the Digital Imaging Group sent out their Christmas cards. Here are two beautiful examples that exploit the features in Photoshop. The out of focus background to the Robin is known technically as 'Bokeh'.

