

u3a
Chess Valley

Registered Charity 1126990

NEWSLETTER

September - November 2023

website: www.cvu3a.uk



Front Cover: Members of the Art Group have been very busy over the summer. This amazing parrot study was created by Chris LeFeuvre as part of an exercise in using palette knives.



Top Left: All of the Striders on their summer walk in the Cotswolds gather at Stanton before some took the high road and some took the low road, and some got to Broadway before others.

Top right: The Wildlife Group visited the Wendover Canal in July where restoration work is progressing apace.

Above: The Walks Into History: Country Group noticed a nine inch long brown trout in the shallow waters of the Misbourne during their walk through Old Amersham.

Right: A coach trip to the great London house of Syon Park in June, saw participants being treated to an excellent guided talk highlighting its classical interior.

Speakers for General Meetings

All meetings start at 2pm

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



Clive Trott

Thursday 14th September

Don't Poke the Bear

Clive was an army officer posted with the UN Observer Mission to Georgia months before the Russians invaded in 2008. During the mission, he was surrounded by Russian troops, was detained, and was involved in negotiations over the partial withdrawal. Since leaving the army, Clive manages long-range communications for the UK Ministry of Defence. Prior to joining the army, Clive was a trained actor.

Robert Seatter

Thursday 12th October

100 (and one) Years of the BBC

Robert is a poet, performer, broadcaster and arts professional. He has won many awards as a poet, as well as judging various poetry awards. He is the head of BBC History Department and will tell the story of the corporation at the heart of national life as well as on the global stage.

Crispin Butler

Thursday 9th November

The Role of the County Coroner

Crispin has been the Senior Coroner of Buckinghamshire since 2016 and will give us details of the Coroner's Court, as well as his role as a judicial office-holder, being completely independent and appointed by the Crown.

Emily Yarrow

Thursday 14th December

My Life as an Opera Singer

Emily has recently moved back to Chesham and has been a professional singer for over 20 years. Her talk is an entertaining one about her background and training and the various jobs she has had over the years, all illustrated with the appropriate songs. Emily recently had a show on a Saga cruise ship, which can be seen on YouTube; most entertaining.



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



Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our summer/autumn newsletter.

At our AGM in June, Colin O'Rourke stood down as our Business Secretary and I would like to thank him publicly for doing such a sterling job for us. West Marshall has taken over the position and I welcome him to our Committee, along with Peter Windsor who has become a 'trustee without portfolio'. You can read profiles of our new Committee Members on page 6.

With best wishes



James Cadle
chair@cvu3a.uk

New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Carole Gardner	<i>Chesham</i>	Barbara Little	<i>Chesham</i>
Jim Gardner	<i>Chesham</i>	Carole Perry	<i>Chesham</i>
Linda Gould	<i>Chorleywood</i>	Marcus Robb	<i>Prestwood</i>
Adele Grass	<i>Amersham</i>	Alan Taylor	<i>Hyde Heath</i>
Jackie Karp	<i>Little Chalfont</i>	Angela Thompson	<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 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 Organiser	Michael Cohn*	speakers@cvu3a.uk	01494 763542
Events Coordinator	Jackie Cobb	eventscoord@cvu3a.uk	01494 773718
Committee Member	Peter Windsor	pwindsor@cvu3a.uk	07595 776473

* indicates a non-voting member

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd November 2023

From the Groups Coordinator

As always, it is a quiet time of year with many of you either holidaying with families or childminding during the school holidays. However I am pleased to say that we have enough people to restart Keep Fit, for which please see later in the Groups' reports. If you are interested there is still time to join, so please contact John Bunyan who is convening the Group.

Otherwise as ever if anyone has any ideas for new Groups please let me know and we will get the idea out for contemplation! Sadly, other than Keep Fit, none of the other recent ideas have had enough response to progress.

Helen Barnard
Groups Coordinator
groups@cvu3a.uk

News from the Events Team

The Events Team are hoping to organise several visits for next year:

- Early spring, a visit to Greenwich, led by Michael Cohn.
- Early summer, a visit to Henry Moore Sculpture Garden & Hatfield House, both in Hertfordshire, led by Alan Gray.
- Early autumn, a visit to Rochester in Kent, led by Jackie Cobb.

This is just the basic information to make members aware of our plans for 2024.

Please contact the Events Team with any other suggestions.

AI

AI today mainly refers to 'Artificial Intelligence' or perhaps occasionally to an agricultural form of procreation, whereas in Yorkshire it can be a friendly greeting.

Those of us of a certain age will I'm sure miss its worst consequences, like driverless vehicles, although I suspect that many cars on the road today are effectively driverless, at least those near me when I am on my bike. But for our kids and theirs, things are likely to be very different.

However, while not everyone will die by the algorithm, there are a few candidates already lining up for immediate redeployment. News readers, sports commentators/pundits, weather forecasters and arguably *The Archers* come immediately to mind, as activities with predictable outcomes, few variables and a limited vocabulary are all in the front line. Football and F1 head the list of sports to be streamlined and, in the case of the latter, the sport itself could be reduced to screen play with 'drivers' home-based or retired.

Politics or politicians could also suffer (or do I mean benefit?) from AI. By having the same characteristics as the aforementioned, we are perhaps already seeing the first signs of this as moves to replace the House of Lords with more of the elected variety will open up (even) more employment possibilities for them.

Apart from being told that my car has an 'intelligent gearbox', whatever that is (perhaps it's just very clever for its age, like everybody's grandchildren), my life is unaltered. But I am curious as to how the world will handle competing forms of AI. Russian drones tend to be used malevolently while UK ones are used to illuminate the night sky with outlines of dolphins and whales. And how does AI even begin to deal with that combination of human emotion, understanding and appreciation that currently ends in a standing ovation?

'Timewaster'

Meet your new Committee members

At June's AGM, two new members were elected to your Committee so here is some information about them:



West Marshall was elected as our new **Business Secretary**.

West trained at Harrow School of Art. Following two years in Canada, working as an art teacher, he moved to Norfolk. He was a self-employed potter for 35 years, latterly specialising in porcelain. During this time he taught ceramics, part time, at the University of Westminster. After moving to Chesham, West was a Samaritan for several years before working for Relate and, after 15 years, he now works from home as a counsellor specialising in relationships. For several years he has been researching the eighteenth century history of India and Indonesia. He also works as an artist with a particular interest in the drawing of plants and people.

Although Yorkshire-born, **Peter Windsor** has lived in the Chesham area for many years. He is a keen walker and an active member of the Striders Group. Recently, he joined the Railways Group and he regularly attends our monthly General Meetings. Peter assists within the Bovingdon Parish Council and is the secretary of a local rifle club. He is married and he and his wife enjoy travel, eating out, festivals, and have three grown-up children.

Before retirement, Peter was a senior manager in the Prison Service, normally working within the high security estate. He also spent some years working in the Balkans (Kosovo and other areas) for the UK government assisting with the development, support and monitoring of overseas custodial institutions.



2024 u3a diaries now on sale



Pocket u3a diaries are now on sale at the 'brand centre' within the national website (<https://u3abrand.org.uk>). They cost £4 each but postage is extra (a minimum of £2.70) so it might be an idea to get together with some friends to order them.

Compared with previous years, two changes are evident:

- The notes pages that used to face the day pages have gone but the space available in the day pages is slightly increased.
- The diaries are about 2.5 centimetres taller, although the width remains the same.

The colour this year is a rather striking orange which should make the diaries easy to locate on a crowded desk.

Chess Valley u3a Convenors

(All phone numbers are prefixed by 01494 unless otherwise indicated)

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
	Mavis Earnshaw	
Book Group 2	Liz Howlett	bookgroup2@cvu3a.uk
	Christine Ross	
Book Group 3	Eileen Overton	bookgroup3@cvu3a.uk
Book Group 4	Jackie Cobb	bookgroup4@cvu3a.uk
Bowls (Green), Outdoors (Chiltern)	Margaret Stickland	bowls@cvu3a.uk
Bowls (Short Mat), Indoors (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
Folk Music	Richard Skepper	folkmusic@cvu3a.uk
French Conversation	Morag Robertson	frenchcons@cvu3a.uk
French Intermediate	Hilary Alleston	french@cvu3a.uk
Gardening	Stephanie Rothwell	garden@cvu3a.uk
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	Sue Rawbone	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)

(All phone numbers are prefixed by 01494 unless otherwise indicated)

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
MOTO	Mo Barnes	moto@cvu3a.uk
MOTO 2	Rodney Newth	moto2@cvu3a.uk
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	Claire Paterson	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 group	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	Jane Towers	walkers3@cvu3a.uk
Striders 1	Andrew Brown	striders@cvu3a.uk
Striders 2	Ian Lee	striders21@cvu3a.uk
Walks into History: Country	Peter Schweiger	walkshist@cvu3a.uk
	Tony Biddle	
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

Groups are now meeting 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



Considering many of us have been away on holiday, we have achieved a couple of fun activities: Experimenting with a palette knife to get different effects was one, using acrylic or watercolour. Still much to explore on that one!

Then a couple of weeks ago we sketched animals, including alpacas, pigs, hens and horses out on a farm; a bit more difficult as they wouldn't keep still! Room for improvement again, but all good fun and out in the fresh air!

Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop



Our June meeting was entitled *A Living Artist Whose Work You Enjoy*. As usual our Group chose a wide variety of exhibits. One member chose local artist Brian Bennett, who portrayed the Chiltern countryside. Another choice was the work of Louis Turpin, working in East Sussex with his appealing images of gardens. A third chose two printmakers and painters, Barbara Rae and Bill Jacklin.

Our July meeting featured David Hockney. There was much to find in his long career of painting. His use of the iPad in his later works was featured as well as his immersive experience, *Bigger and Closer* currently being shown at the Lightroom, Kings Cross, London. One member chose his Normandy series (2020-2021), another, one of his vibrantly cheerful works depicting the seasons of East Yorkshire (2000 onwards). There was much agreement that he brightens our troubled world.

Our August meeting was our regular summer lunch in the garden of one of our members. Our hope was for kind weather. We discussed our future meetings and said goodbye to our ever-patient IT member who has collated our images for display on a screen. Christopher is moving to Bedford with his wife Ursula; we are so grateful for his expertise and we send him and his wife our very best wishes in their new home.

The Group is now at our maximum size for the format of our meetings.

Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



We enjoyed a 'Royal' meeting in June, subsequent to the Coronation of Charles III, looking at different aspects of royal portraiture. We began with an elegant Egyptian relief from the Temple of Horus at Edfu c184BCE, of the Pharaoh Ptolemy VIII being crowned by the goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt. Moving forward by more than 1500 years, we looked at one of a series of 12 pictures by Peter Paul Rubens, one being a monumental portrait of Marie de Medici being crowned the day before her husband Henry IV was assassinated! Spanish royalty was represented by Francisco Goya's portrait of Charles IV and a luminous portrait by Joaquin Sorolla of Queen Victoria Eugenie. We were spoilt for choice with images of Queen Victoria, who apparently sat for 545 portraits in her lifetime. Several artists would be invited at the same time to expedite the process. We ended the afternoon with the first official portrait of the newly crowned Charles III by young artist Alistair Barford and a very glitzy double portrait of Katherine and William looking very 'Hollywood', by Jamie Coreth. We had festive nibbles and cakes to finish this meeting. (cont.)

'Secret Artists' was our July meeting's theme. Elaine gave us an extremely interesting presentation on people famous for other things, turning their hand to painting. The parallel with the creative arts, music and acting, was obvious when we considered these multi-talented people. Work by this diverse group of artists included watercolours by King Charles III, a colourful image of Bob Dylan by Pierce (James Bond) Brosnan, portraits by George Gershwin, a naive picture of a rose by Marilyn Monroe and some charming townscapes of New York and Paris by Barry (Dame Edna) Humphries. We were aware of some of the better-known artists like Ronnie Wood, Vic Reeves and Winston Churchill, but were interested to know that President George W Bush found time to paint.

In August we discussed the legality of art and art ownership, fakes and forgeries and restoring art to its original owner; a very complex subject with no clear solution. Should items be returned that were obtained by colonialist interference and, if so, to whom? What about the art that was seized by the Nazi regime in Germany? And what to do with looted artefacts from Egypt and the Middle East, the Benin Bronzes and the Elgin Marbles ... the list is endless. What about the art that has only survived by being taken to another country? This was a very controversial and interesting meeting for our Group. We should also have had a picnic in Caroline's garden, but of course Summer 2023 had other ideas.

Book 1

Gillian Eastmond & Mavis Earnshaw



This friendly Book Group of about eight people meets on the third Friday morning of the month. We meet in three different members' homes in rotation, as this spreads out geographically the places where we meet.

We bring a fiction or non-fiction book that we have found interesting and so want to tell the Group about. After a brief description of the book's content, we say why we thought it worth reading. Often other people have also read the book and can give their comments, or 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 that we have read. 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.

If you want to join us, please email a Convenor to tell them you wish to come. You can always try us for a session to see if we are what you are looking for.

Book 2

Liz Howlett & Christine Ross



Book Group 2 continues to meet at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month in Amersham Library. We've read and enjoyed three very different books over the last months:

The first was *The Bureau of Second Chances* by Sheena Kalayil, where Thomas, a mild-mannered and reserved widower, returns to his childhood home in Kerala after spending most of his life in England. He is forced into unexpected situations where he has to make decisions that he is unused to. He could not be more unlike the strong and feisty young woman who was the heroine of our next read by Malala Yousafzai. *I am Malala* was a book we'd had on our wish-list from the library for some years! It was a captivating story, and still topical in view of all the news we currently hear about the Taliban and the on-going suppression of women's education and rights. And finally: *Small Things Like These*; a novella by Claire Keegan, which was beautifully written and touched on a topic that also can still make headlines today. It confronts the truth about one of Ireland's infamous Magdalene laundries. Based in 1985 in County Wexford, the hero of the book decides to take a stand against the church and convent for its ill treatment of unmarried mothers, despite the cost to him and his own family. We all felt we'd learned from the three books in terms of history, geography and religious beliefs.

Oddities from television and film:

"She thinks I'm too critical. That's another fault of hers." (*Arrested Development*)

"Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room." (*Dr Strangelove*)



Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month. Our Group's size is governed by the ten books we get each month from Chesham library. However due to members moving away two vacancies have occurred. Please contact the Convenor if you are interested in joining us. We've had a run of two very enjoyable books, *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *All the Light We Cannot See*, and hope it continues with our current book *Waiting for Sunrise* by William Boyd.



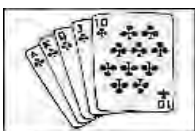
We all meet in each other's homes. Everyone chooses a book, which we all read. The last three books were by authors Simone du Beauvoir, Willa Cather and Elspeth Barker. As we were unable to have our annual December luncheon due to bad weather, we met in August and discussed the Willa Cather's book *My Antonia*. There is still room for another member, if you are interested.

From May to September, CVu3a members can join Chiltern members for the season of weekly outdoor bowls on Wednesdays at Amersham Bowls Club, Hervines Park, from 10.30 to 12.30. The cost is £40 for the season. The season concludes at the end of September. Contact Margaret to check on the availability of places, on bowls@cvu3a.uk.



Chiltern u3a extends an invitation to our members to join them in playing Short Mat Bowls. In the summer we meet each Monday from 13.50 to 16.00 at Holmer Green Sports Association, for Outdoor Short Mat Bowls. The cost is £4.00 including a cup of tea per session. The winter season changes to Fridays from 13:15 to 15:30 weekly at the White Hill Centre.

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.



The Bridge Group continues to meet on a Wednesday afternoon to play duplicate bridge to a reasonable standard in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. A number of new members have recently joined the Group, which is encouraging but means we've had to start a waiting list. If you wish to join it, please contact the Bridge Convenor.



The Canasta Group has been rather lacking in numbers throughout the summer. 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.



Wonderful news in the world of Chess! An announcement has been made recently of government funding which could be used to train more young players. Don't let us older and wiser folk get left out of the action: come and learn to play the game yourself, brush up your skills or help us teach beginner players. You will be welcome in this small friendly Group whatever your ability level. The emphasis is on having a go, improving a bit and having a good chat over tea! We meet at the Convenor's house and, weather permitting, even play in the garden. Just come and have a try: no commitment or cost.

City of London Churches

Jackie Cobb



I'm sorry it has been such a long time since we did our last church visit. I have arranged a guide, Joanna Bogle, to take us around Wren's City of London Churches on Thursday 28th September. We will meet outside St Paul's Cathedral at 11:00 am. The cost is £5 donation on the day.

Contact Jackie Cobb at eventscoord@cvu3a.uk if you wish to join us on the day.

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 which are in the news and we listen to everyone's point of view. We learn so much from our fellow members who have a variety of skills and knowledge. Come along and join us for a fun discussion. If you are interested, please contact the Convenor for details of our next meeting.

Digital Imaging

Pippa Greensmith & David Hurd



We continue to meet every fourth Monday in Little Chalfont Village Hall. Topics covered during recent meetings include: creating a fish eye lens effect, adding starbursts and lens flare to night photography, and enhancing light rays in our own images. We also experimented with putting images into a bubble photograph. Future meetings will concentrate on improving faulty images.

There will be no meetings in September and October. We next meet on Monday 27th November.

New members and visitors are welcome at any of our meetings.

Dinghy Sailing

Wendy Barnes & Judith Young



We have enjoyed varied weather over the last few months; wind, rain and sun, and we have had to adapt our sailing accordingly. If very windy, we reef (make smaller) the sails. On most occasions we have had three boats on the water with two or three of us in each ... always one very competent person in charge, and with a safety boat on the water. The club now have a new electric boat so it's no longer a problem starting the engine! Our midsummer BBQ was an enjoyable occasion despite the inclement weather! Dave did a splendid job cooking and others helped with the washing up.

We have had several new recruits but could cope with more so, if sailing interests you, contact one of the Convenors. We will continue sailing from 1pm till 5pm on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Wednesday of each month until the end of October, always stopping for tea half way during the afternoon.

In November we set aside one day to clean all the boats we have used during the season and afterwards have lunch, which is a very sociable occasion.

Family History

Sue Broad



In July we had a talk from lecturer Chris Broom who has been researching his family history for some years. His talk was entitled *Humour in Genealogy* and he engaged our members with amusing anecdotes about items that he had come across while searching the births, deaths, marriages and census returns about his own family, but not necessarily connected in any way. We do not meet in August and there is no actual meeting on 5th September but instead 22 of us are meeting in Brunswick Square, London, for a tour of the Foundling Hospital, Britain's first home for children at risk of abandonment.

Every week desperate mothers would queue up to try and place the baby that they were unable to care for, in the hospital. They were each given a coloured token, sent away and at the end of the day they would return to the hospital to find out if their babies would be accepted. Only mothers with a certain coloured token were chosen to leave their babies, the rest were sent away and had to return the following week to try again.

(cont.)

Each mother left a small item/token to be kept with the baby's records so that, should they return at any time to reclaim their baby, who would have been renamed, they could prove their parenthood by knowing what item was left with the baby.

The museum holds more than 275 years of London history, which can be explored through their objects and stories, and continues today as the children's charity, Coram. Artists such as William Hogarth and the composer George Frideric Handel are central to the Hospital story, having donated their art and music to the museum.

We meet in Chesham Town Hall on the first Tuesday of the month at 2.15pm, and welcome new members.

Folk Music

Richard Skepper



We have enjoyable sessions but sometimes issues among our members conspire to make us too thin on the ground. As reported before, we are in need of some new members so if you are interested in singing and/or playing any acoustic instrument on the second and fourth Wednesday afternoons of the month, then please give us a go. Do feel free to contact me for a no-commitment chat. We are having a break during August so September will be a good time to join the reinvigorated Group. We will meet at the Amersham Free Church from then on as the rooms there have better acoustics than the previous location.

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).

French Intermediate

Hilary Alleston

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

Gardening

Stephanie Rothwell & Camilla Plummer



Attendances at meetings continue to grow and we were pleased to see a good turnout for our talk in May entitled *Successful Fuchsia Growing*. The speaker, Peter Anderson, is a local enthusiast and an experienced grower of fuchsias. He gave well-received advice and information about growing and maintaining these exotic-looking plants. He also brought several examples to sell, which were quickly snapped up, the proceeds of which Peter donated to the Red Cross Ukraine Appeal.

In June a small group of members travelled to Lower Denham to visit a garden featured in the National Garden Scheme brochure. The garden's owner, Ron, gave us a guided tour of his beautiful plot, which featured a chalk stream and several unusual trees and shrubs. The tour ended with a very welcome cup of tea and slice of cake.

Another favourite plant was the focus of our July meeting. Graeme Hollingdale came to tell us all about the different varieties of sweet pea and how best to grow them. Graeme is an expert on this particular genus, having written many articles for prestigious magazines, and is the holder of numerous exhibition awards. Graeme's professional colleague, Alison Shreeve, co-presented the meeting. They brought along numerous examples of sweet pea, which they displayed beautifully, their heady fragrance filling the hall.

There is no meeting in August, but we reconvene in September when the speaker, Terry Cann, will be reminiscing about the late great Geoff Hamilton, who many years ago was presenter of *Gardeners' World*.

Full details of the Group, together with the rest of this year's programme, can be found on the CVu3a Garden Group webpage.



Our friendly Group continues to meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month in each other's houses. I am always amazed how such a small Group has been to so many interesting places and seen so many different things, so there is always so much to talk about in German. Did you know learning a foreign language can help protect the brain from the ravages of ageing? So, fingers crossed!



In June, our member Sheila Pitman gave a fascinating and most informative talk on *The History of Sheep in Britain* with many colourful pictures of the different breeds. There are around 1,800, the oldest being the horned, brown, woolly Soay sheep probably introduced into Britain by Neolithic settlers around 4,000 BCE. Our landscape has evolved through farming sheep with different terrain suiting different breeds. Half the wealth of England came from sheep and their wool, through exporting it and the textiles that were being woven from it. Currently there are 60 different breeds in Britain, more than in any country in the world. We learnt about Castlemilk Moorit, Jacobs, Boreray, Shetland, North Ronaldsay that eat seaweed giving their meat a distinctive flavour, the predominantly black Hebridean, Portland Long Tailed and so many more. Some with black faces and some white, some with horns and others without, some short coated others long; an incredibly varied subject which Sheila presented well, interspersed by vocal 'baaas'.

Our talk in July was by our Co-Convenor Ian Hutt. It was entitled *Two Important and Remarkable Women of Whom You Have Probably Never Heard*. The first was Fanny Lucy Houston nee Radmall, always known as Lucy. Born in relatively humble circumstances, at just 16 she was on the London stage. Almost immediately she eloped with Freddy Gretton, aged 33 and very wealthy. Never marrying, they remained together for 10 years until his death in 1888, leaving her £6,000 a year. Three weeks later she married Francis Brinckman, son of Sir Theodore Brinckman. They were unhappily married for 12 years before divorcing.

She then proposed to George Byron, Lord Byron's cousin. He was bankrupt and as part of her proposal she agreed to settle his debts. She became an active suffragette and purchased 615 parrots, which she trained to shriek "Votes for Women".

Her husband died on 30th March 1917. Almost immediately she married Robert Houston, a wealthy industrialist. He died in 1924 leaving her £7,000,000! By now she was very wealthy indeed and when the government refused to fund the development of the Supermarine Seaplane, the predecessor of the Spitfire, she agreed to cover the cost. Without her, the Spitfire would not have been built and we may not have beaten the Luftwaffe in the Second World War; a remarkable woman in many respects.

We then moved on to the prodigiously talented 13-year-old Hazel Hills. She helped her father with the complex maths, which enabled him to convince the RAF to increase the armament on the Spitfire from four guns to eight. Would the Spitfire have been anywhere near as effective in the Battle of Britain if it had been under-armed? Probably not, and the outcome of the battle may have been different.

So, two very important women at the pivot point in the development of the Spitfire, indisputably the most iconic British aeroplane of the Second World War.

Summer! And our visit this year was to Dorney Court, the manor house of Dorney Village and recorded in the Domesday Book. It's a Grade 1 listed building, designated as being of outstanding architectural and historical interest and it certainly lives up to that description. It has undergone many changes over that time and is presented now in Tudor style. Lived in for nearly 500 years by one family, the Palmers, much of their history is in the house and shown through paintings, heraldry and documents together with evidence of the many films that have used the house in their production. The house is only open to the public for the month of June. We booked a tour with a guide for each of our three groups and thoroughly enjoyed stepping back into such a long past. The 12th century Church of St James the Less was also included in our tour.

There is much more to see and do at Dorney Court; the estate and gardens, a garden centre with walled garden and an excellent cafe. We made use of it all and were blessed with only a very little rain.

Keep Fit for 60+**John Bunyan**

The Keep Fit 60+ has a new Convenor, John Bunyan, but unfortunately will not be starting immediately this autumn. It wasn't possible to reconcile certain administrative issues. Continuing with this Group depends very much on securing an Instructor so, if anyone, currently in the Group or outside of it, knows of a suitable Instructor, please can they put them in touch with John or Helen Barnard, the Groups Coordinator. We would like to retain the names of those members who have already registered their interest and invite other members of CVu3a to join the list. Current scheduling plans are obviously suspended and will be reviewed when we can restart. Contact Helen, the Groups Coordinator, or John on keepfit60@cvu3a.uk

Knitting & Other Crafts**Sue Rawbone**

We meet in our own homes on the first and third Mondays of the month and can welcome one more person if anyone is interested. Currently we are having a break but will start up again in September.

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 presently 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**

Since our last report, the MOTOs have continued to meet for their fortnightly convivial Sunday lunches at local restaurants and hostleries. These include 'The Pomeroy', 'Amersham House', 'The Nag's Head', 'The Old Swan', 'Jasmine Thai' and 'The Boot and Slipper'. We also spent an enjoyable day out in London to see *The Mousetrap* at St. Martin's Theatre and to stroll around Chinatown, through its interesting streets and alleys. This, of course, included a stop for refreshments! Monthly planning meetings were held at the Convenor's home over coffee and cakes. The Group is presently full.

MOTO 2**Rodney Newth**

We continue to meet at a different pub for lunch at 12.30 on the second Saturday of the month. We normally have between six and eight members at each lunch, which makes for a good convivial meeting. From September we are planning to have an additional tea/coffee meeting each month after the General Meeting, and we will visit various tea/coffee establishment in Chesham.

We are open for new members.



In addition to making quilts, wall hangings and many other examples of quilting and patchwork projects, we use different techniques such as embroidery or applique using machine stitching as well as hand worked pieces. The scope is endless for anyone who can thread a needle: so many examples to explore. We get inspiration from visiting exhibitions of the work of home sewers as well as professional and mixed media artists.

A recent example was a visit to St Albans Cathedral to see some stunning colourful wall hangings depicting the story of the Days of the Creation. We also intend to see some Japanese works displayed at their embassy and the Brunei Gallery, both in London. A trip to Sandown Racecourse to see a summer quilt exhibition by truly talented sewers was enjoyed, with the opportunity to indulge our passion for buying more lovely fabric. At our workshop each month and at home we continue to enjoy this pastime. One of our members has been showing us how she made a lovely bag and some of us are following her expert tuition to make our own. Our August meeting included our summer cream tea with home made scones and strawberries and cream.

If any CVu3a members would like to visit us with a view to joining us, please contact us to arrange a date. All levels of experience are welcomed.

Photography

David Hurd



The Photography Group meets on the third Wednesday in the month and new members are always welcome; come along and give it 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 June the Group visited Beaconsfield to photograph the church and the surrounding area. We were slightly thwarted in the church as a film crew had set up and were recording, so we had to leave to give them silence, but we did manage some good photographs: You can view these on the CVu3a Photography Group webpage. At our regular meeting in June we looked at photographs from the field trips to College Lake, Amersham at night and Beaconsfield, as well as the photographs from our table top practical session in May.

In July six members visited Battersea Power Station to photograph this iconic building, which has been transformed into an up-market shopping centre. These photographs were shown at the July meeting as well as videos on some creative effects for members to try out; results are awaited!

There was no meeting in August and the future programme is as follows:

- 20th September: Members' summer photos. A presentation on 'Classic Photographs'.
- 18th October: Abstract Photography.
- 15th November: Members' projects: 10 minute presentations.
- 20th December: Members' projects: 10 minute presentations.

Pilates

Liz Howlett & Christine Ross



All is quiet at Pilates at the moment as we are on our summer break.

Our members continue to benefit from the stretch, balance and core work that Pilates provides. Several of the Group have returned from having hip, knee or shoulder replacements and all are doing well. We are a bit of a u3a bionic group; even the members who have had cataract operations can now see the instructor, so all is well.

The September to December classes are all full but I am happy to report there is currently no waiting list.

"I saw a bank that said '24 Hour Banking', but I don't have that much time."

(Stephen Wright)

"Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it a thousand times."

(Mark Twain)



From January 2017 we have read 48 plays and viewed three TV productions during Covid. Amazingly though, we probably cannot remember many of them. That sounds bad, but concentrating on reading a part is quite different from seeing a play staged. A production is of course someone else's interpretation of the writer's intent. We make up our minds in a very short space of reading time. It certainly makes you appreciate the director's work; very much so with comedies which can come across as being quite banal. An example of this is *Abigail's Party* which I am sure we all know. It seemed almost a different play when reading it. So why do we do it? I think it is just a good exercise in a vocal interpretation of characters and we do enjoy the company and cake!

A case in point is our play read in July, *By a Hand Unknown* by Charles Neilsen Gattey and Z Bramley-Moore which clearly did not leave its mark as we could not recall anything about it ... oh dear!

June's play by Frank Vickery, *All's Fair*, was an interesting one and tested our abilities in reading with Welsh accents. Set in the Rhondda in 1942 it captures the claustrophobic yet protective atmosphere of life in the Welsh Valleys in wartime. Dilys is in love with a GI and Sophie is frustrated at being unmarried and therefore happy to settle for Dilys's dull brother. Mother feels she is nearing the end of her life and precocious Brenda is on the cusp of adolescence. It is an astute observation of female relationships.

We have just read *Flowering Cherry* by Robert Bolt, the screenplay writer of *A Man For All Seasons*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Ryans's Daughter* and others. This was hailed at its premiere in 1957 as the British *Death of a Salesman*.

Jim Cherry sells insurance but dreams of selling apples from his orchard in Somerset. He is a fantasist and thus a little bit of a liar. His wife Isobel is at breaking point. When, out of the blue, he says he has quit his job, Isobel calls his bluff by seriously giving her blessing to selling the house enabling them to buy an orchard in Somerset and so give Jim the life he so wishes for. Jim prevaricates; he is clearly not committed, and Isobel, in complete and utter desperation, declares that she is finished with this confused man and at the end of the play she walks out.

Very much a play of its time, walking out on one's husband in 1957 would have been quite a rash and brave step for a suburban housewife. The complexities of Jim's fantasies were probably a new subject for a play then as well, in the dying era of lounge dramas in well-to-do households. Originally Jim was played by Sir Ralph Richardson and Isobel by Celia Johnson, so you can see why this play achieved its accolades.

In September we hope to read Emyln Williams' play *Someone Waiting*.

Poetry

Christine Ogborne

Our Group meets on the fourth Thursday each month and for our meeting in June we read the poetry of Philip Larkin. Choices included *An Arundel Tomb*, *The Whitsun Weddings*, *Aubade*, *Church-Going* and *The Explosion*. In July our subject was 'Family and Childhood' and a wide variety of poems were chosen and read: Sylvia Plath's *Morning Song*, *The Collier's Wife* by Seamus Heaney and *Piano* by D H Lawrence were some of those chosen. For our August meeting we looked at Welsh poets: Dylan Thomas, Gillian Clarke and Dannie Abse were just a few of those whose work we enjoyed.

Future meetings will be:

September: Animals & Insects
 October: Poets Laureate
 November: Clive James

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

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it." (Groucho Marx)

"My husband can't stand to see trash and garbage lying around the house. He can't stand the competition." (Phyllis Diller)



Our Group had a very interesting talk, a very interesting visit and are hoping for a quiet August enjoying the sun.

16th June: Chris Ardy: *P2 Prince of Wales*. What a splendid locomotive the P2 Prince of Wales was when it was a Pacific locomotive under the name of 'Cock o' the North'. With 21st Century technology it is being restored as the 'Prince of Wales'. With 3,400 horsepower, a length of 22.55 metres and a build cost of £6 million pounds, it is one mighty engine! Evocatively and interestingly brought to life by Chris.

23rd July: Visit to Fawley Hill. What a great place to visit! 24 of us made our way through very winding country lanes to Fawley Hill to ride on the Steam train which went down (and back up) the steepest gradient you will find for a standard gauge railway, while also traversing the estate. We viewed deer, stags and wallabies on the way. This was superbly arranged by the Fawley Hill staff and volunteers, and very much enjoyed by all. To top it off, their model railways were running over some distance and the museum was such a collection of eclectic railwayana from small pieces to very large pieces that you could have spent all day there.

Our programme continues as follows:

15th September: Our next meeting will be a showing of one of Christian Wolmar's excellent Railway DVD's.

20th October: James Cadle: *The District Line*

17th November: Bernie Rowell (Head of Rolling Stock for HS2) *HS2*

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

2024

19th January: Keith Hoffmeister: *HS2 in Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire*

16th February: Ian Arthurton: *The Metropolitan 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 summer term ended with a grand finale on 17th July when we performed to a large audience of family and friends. In fact, so many guests attended that extra chairs were needed!

Our repertoire was a mix of different genres including rock, pop, country and traditional pieces. Two of the sopranos, Sue Hurd and Sheila Clarke, hit the high notes perfectly when they sang the opening lines of 'Blackbird' by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. We were superbly accompanied as usual by our pianist, Gwen, and conducted enthusiastically by our choir teacher, Ali.

Members of the audience donated generously and raised £175.00 for 'Shine Dementia', a charity chosen by Ali. The charity funds professional musicians to support patients in care homes through music therapy.

The new term begins on Monday, 4th September at the usual time of 5.15pm at Amersham Free Church when we'll find out what Ali has in store for us. It will soon be time to start rehearsing for the end-of-term Christmas concert!

There are still spaces in the Group so if you enjoy singing and would like to join us, please contact one of the Convenors. Full details can be found on the Singing for Pleasure page on the CVu3a website. You will be given a warm welcome.

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.



Following the decrease in the number of members in our Group, Brian Feakes has stepped down as Convenor and I have taken over as there is enough enthusiasm in the remainder of the Group to carry on.

So first, thanks to Brian for his time and effort running the Group for several years. To increase the scope and hopefully, interest in the Group, we have decided to expand it to encompass other collectables such as postal history, postcards, coins etc.

We meet every two months and, with the current numbers, we meet in members' houses; if numbers increase we will go back to using Hervines Park pavilion. If you would like to join our informal Group, please contact me at stamps@cvu3a.uk Steve

Tai Chi

Sue Broad & Meg Brinton



Like most Groups, we do not meet in August but we return on 12th September with a 'stand in' tutor. Peter our loyal tutor is having a break for some medical treatment but we are so pleased that Haidee, his 'student' of 19 years, has agreed to travel all the way from North Buckingham for a few weeks to take the class in his absence.

Unfortunately the Group is full and we are unable to take new members. We would be pleased to help a new Group start up if anyone would offer to be the Convenor.

Theatre

Helen Barnard & Geoff Naylor



We have *Hamnet* organised at present and that is fully booked. Also now in hand is *Crazy for You*, which we are, at the time of writing, taking bookings for and that will be on 4th October. Others are hopefully in the pipeline and if we can confirm these we will be in touch. Our main problem is finding shows offering reductions to groups; otherwise the prices are just sadly too high!

As ever if anyone has suggestions, please do let us know and the Group is able to accept new members, so please do email us on: theatre@cvu3a.uk

Ukulele

Jeff Naman & Heather Sprake



We continue to enjoy our fortnightly meetings at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, Chesham starting at 2:30pm. If anyone would like to come along and meet us, you know where we are. We have been performing gigs since our last update with song sheets given to the audience for participation, which they have all enjoyed, and so have we.

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 rather grey drizzly and unseasonable August day the Amblers walked from Copperkins Lane through the fields down to the back of Chesham Football Club. On our way we spotted a metal detectorist who apparently had been searching the fields for 20 years, finding mostly old coins.

By the time the drizzle turned into steady rain we were on our way back through the woods, where one intrepid member enjoyed a swing on a suspended rubber tyre! We arrived back rather wet but enjoyed coffee, cakes and interesting conversation.

Walkers (5 - 7 miles)

Walkers 1

Stuart Stanley

Our 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, which are published every three months, and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate. For the second quarter 2023, we held walks in Asheridge, Harefield, Lane End, Frithsden, Redbourne, and Little Gaddesden. For the third quarter our walks were in Little Marlow, Wiggington and Skirmett. Further walks are to be arranged.

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

Walkers 2

Sue Rawbone

Our walks these last few months have taken us into the fields and woodlands around Ashley Green and Chesham and our August walk is along the Thames path via Bourne End and Little Marlow.

At the end of our walks we collect a voluntary contribution of £1, which goes towards replacing stiles with gates for the Chiltern Society and a donation to the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. We now have sufficient money in the collection to fund another gate, so any ideas as to where a replacement for a stile is needed would be very welcome; please contact the Convenor if you have a suggestion, whether you are a member of the Group or not.

We walk on the fourth Thursday of the month and welcome new members, but please contact the Convenor first.

Walkers 3

Jane Towers

June's walk was a little different from most: Daryl-Ann Hardman took us from Pinner to Northwood. Who knew that it would be so rural or so pretty? July's walk was led by Jill Thomas and Catherine Haridi and was a circular walk around Hawridge and Cholesbury. David Flett led August's circular walk around Winchmore Hill, The Chiltern Way and Penn. September's walk will be over at Cassiobury Park. My thanks to all those who have led walks this year.

Walkers 3 walk on the first Wednesday of the month and there is plenty of room for more walkers out there. Come and join us.

Striders 1 & 2 (7 - 15 miles)

Andrew Brown & Ian Lee



Each year Striders have a summer walk away from the local environment and this year we walked in the Cotswolds starting at Winchcombe and ending at Broadway. While eight Striders did the full 12 miles most Striders did a seven or eight mile route starting at Hayles Fruit Farm and then dividing at Stanton between the high route and low route. The Cotswold villages we encountered are a delight. One of the leaders had researched the history of Hailes Church with its pre-1300 wall paintings so we had an instructive pause

here. The weather co-operated and we only had some brief showers until we were relaxing under cover in the refreshment venues in Broadway when the downpour arrived. One member of the Railways Group, and several Striders recovering from operations took advantage of the coach to enjoy a day out on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway. Thanks to those who volunteered to be leaders for the three different walks. (See the colour pages for pictures of the summer walk: ed.)

Back in the Chilterns, our regular walks continue in spite of the variations in the weather. We have enjoyed walks from Flaunden, Prestwood, Bovingdon, The Lee, Chenies, Ley Hill and, slightly further afield, Dorney among other places. At each walk we ask for a £1 donation from each Strider and these funds enable us to pay for stiles to be converted into gates as well as providing donations to Thames Valley Air Ambulance. In July we donated £500 to the Air Ambulance who have pointed out that, over the years, we have raised £4,500 for this cause. Now that the 'donate-a-gate' scheme run by Buckinghamshire Council and the Chiltern Society has been restarted, we will be able to progress with funding a gate. (cont.)

Jill Smith's programme of longer all-day walks started in May with a walk led by Joe Hardman in Oxfordshire from Hambledon to Stonor Park and the return. The programme will continue at the end of August with a walk on the Berkshire Munros led by Keith Pittman. They are an opportunity for Striders to explore different areas, sometimes further afield, at a more leisurely pace.

In November, as a variation to walking, we will have a refresher on first aid in a session run by a St John Ambulance volunteer; it has been some years since our last session on this topic. And by the time of the next newsletter we will have organised our Christmas walk and lunch, so please save the date of 5th December.

The Convenors of Striders 1 (Andrew Brown) and Striders 2 (Ian Lee) will continue to welcome any new members from the Chess Valley u3a membership. Striders 2 walk on the first and third Tuesdays of every month; Striders 1 walk on the second and fourth Tuesdays. Please contact Andrew or Ian if you would like to join one of the Striders' Groups or need any further information about them.

Walks into History: Country

Tony Biddle & Peter Schweiger

Old Amersham: Wednesday 12th July



Our Amersham Walk began inside the Friends Meeting House in Whielden Street with a coffee, biscuits and a brief introduction to the early years of the Quaker movement, which found fertile ground in the non-conformism of Amersham and its surrounds.

The name Amersham is derived from the Old English for "Ealhmund's village (hām)". Early records indicate it was known in Saxon times as Agmodesham, and through the ages it has suffered a number of totally unpronounceable iterations, eventually arriving at its present form, no doubt aided by the establishment of Dr Challoner's Grammar School in 1624 which must have improved the locals' ability to spell consistently, by a considerable margin.

Our Walk took us along The Platt towards Chimney Cottage, down past the former Kings Church and site of the British School circa 1843, and onto the wide High Street, once the venue for a thriving sheep market. This may have inspired the local aristocracy to appoint two MPs for the area, until so-called 'Rotten Boroughs' were swept away by the Reform Act of 1832.

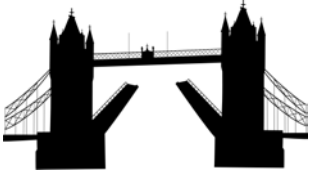
Continuing along to Mill Lane, which crosses the Misbourne ('bourne' being derived from the Old English 'burna' for stream or river), we learned that Amersham used to have a swimming pool! Quite literally, it was a pool by the river, but the extraction of water upstream means it is sadly no more. We noticed in the river by the bridge next to the former mill, a brown trout about nine inches long, which was another surprise as the river is quite shallow at that point.

Our walk continued past the Maltings, once owned by the Weller family who were, together with the Drake family, substantial local landowners. The brewery itself is believed to have been in Badminton Court nearby. The brewing and malting activities are thought to have ended circa 1929 when the premises were sold to Benskins Brewery of Watford.

Close by, we saw three white gable-ended houses that were originally tithe barns for the local church, itself a significant landowner until the time of Henry VIII. It was entitled to collect a tenth of the income of local parishioners. A downpour made us seek shelter in the space below the former Market Hall where we watched an impressive display put on by Amersham's Fire Service, on how to extinguish a restaurant kitchen fire. Unlike the 1520s, it is probable that only burgers were burnt here, and not burghers.

Whilst there, we discovered that the Market Hall space also houses Amersham Old Town's gaol. It was empty on the day, suggesting that most Old Town residents are of reasonably good standing and behaviour. On a point of interest it has to be said that the facility in Top Amersham is much superior, boasting several 'custody suites', as the Old Town's gaol would have been a bit of a squash for more than one resident. The spelling 'gaol' it seems, was in more common use in the UK until the mid 1930s. We ended our walk in the comfortable and friendly surroundings of 'The Saracen's Head' and gave grateful thanks to Peter and his wife for their hospitality at the Friends Meeting House and for organising and researching the outing. For more information, the Amersham Museum in the High St is well worth a visit.

David Flett



Along the Thames: Wednesday June 14th

Along the Thames, north bank and south bank, this walk took us on the usual 'Ancient and Modern' adventure which identifies a London Walks tour. It started with the monks at Blackfriars and ended amongst the brothels of Southwark.

What is there not to like? Normally an evening pub walk, London Walks agreed to preserve the dignity and decorum that befits the standards of the u3a by taking out the pubs at 11am in the morning. Shame, but only I knew that.

Of course there was a river or two. First we had the Fleet, on which we stood for a moment. Now part of the city's flood defences, its outlet into the Thames can be seen at low tide at Blackfriars. Then 'Old Father Thames' itself, responsible for life as we know it, when the Romans came with an army of 60,000, and established the first 'Place of Significance' in 55BCE, choosing the tidal upriver site as being safer than the coast. Today, now canalised, the huge tidal flow takes five hours to come in and seven to go out. We crossed it by Norman Foster's Millennium Bridge, better known to all of us as the Wobbly Bridge, the first horizontally suspended bridge in the world when opened in 2000, closing after a few days due to the alarming movement set up by the percussion of human feet crossing it. It took eighteen months to fit shock absorbers to cure the problem and we paused at Tate Modern to peer closely at one of them, where you could just make out the movement in the metal doing its thing to keep us all safe.

We did find pubs, we just didn't go in any: The 'Blackfriars', with a statue of one of them over the door, had been conveniently built next to a monastery dating from 1200, until Henry the VIII came along, and we all know what he did to monasteries. The 'Cock Pit', still with its balcony from the 18th century, was where punters paid to bet on one bird to kill another with these hapless creatures wearing gilt spurs to increase the torment; likewise a bit further on, 'The George' where a similar gruesome custom of bear baiting took place.

No London walk is complete without its churches and the inevitable mention of Christopher Wren who rebuilt 52 of the 87 destroyed by the Great Fire of London. St Andrews by the Wardrobe, famous not for its spiritual prowess but for being next to the warehouse where the King kept his clothes and Shakespeare bought a length of red velvet for a special occasion. St Pauls, a place of worship for 1000 years, rebuilt for the third time in 1675 by CW himself, taking 35 years and when the money ran out, they pilfered the funds of Westminster Abbey, dedicated to St Peter, giving rise to the saying "robbing Peter to pay Paul". We ended at Southwark Cathedral, perhaps the best of them all, wherein lies buried the 28-year-old Edmund Shakespeare, whose more eminent brother paid 20 shillings for the privilege.

Angela Shipley

Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



Over the last three months the Wildlife Group has been out and about on field visits to refresh our learning in the classroom of Amersham Common Village Hall. A visit to Road Farm near Great Missenden in June drew our attention to the collective actions of the farming community in improving the habitat for wildlife.

In July, we were brought up to speed on the restoration of the Wendover Canal and the efforts of volunteers to enhance the ecology around the waterway. Built in the early nineteenth century, the canal was first used to supply water to the Grand Union Canal but soon became a navigable commercial waterway for the upcoming trade in the Wendover area.

In August, we found ourselves in Latimer Meadows with a visit to the River Chess. Here we saw techniques to measure water flow and determine excess contaminants like phosphates and nitrates, using a spectrophotometer in a field-based laboratory. How good is that! For all three visits, 30 to 35 of us were treated to excellent weather, so we can count ourselves lucky!

(cont.)

Looking forward to September, we are returning to Stockers Lake at Rickmansworth in the hunt for bats, Pipistrelle and others, hosted by a ranger from the Herts Wildlife Trust. Come October, we will come face to face with bird ringing in Prestwood. Then in November it's inside the hall to learn more about lichens, followed by a members' get-together in December. Secrecy surrounds the programme for 2024, but you can take a chance and join us if you feel the subject of wildlife might be of interest to you. Currently the membership stands at around 80.

Wine Appreciation 1

Pauline & Tom Hohenberg



May's meeting at the Clarkes featured 'Unusual Grape Varieties', which produced a wide range of offerings from a reduced number of attendees. First up was a Terret Blanc called *Villa Blanche* from the Languedoc-Roussillon region via Waitrose at £8.99 less 25%. This was followed by *The Society's Exhibition*, a Douro from Portugal from The Wine Society at 14%. Then we had a *Luccarelli Negroamaro* from Puglia (literally Black and Bitter) and available from Lidl at £8.49 and £12.95 elsewhere. Finally, there was a *Zinfandel Lodi* from California, which at 14% was much like a Primitivo and available from Waitrose at £10 reduced to £8.

In June at the Brattons the theme was 'Wines You Wouldn't Normally Buy'. This again produced some interesting items. After Tesco's Finest *Blanquette de Limoux*, we had a *Rose Chateau D'Angles* at 13% from Waddesdon. This was followed by a white Rioja, *Vina del Cura* (Wine of the Priest) from Tesco at £9. Then there was *Corte Alle Mura*, a Chianti Riserva from Tuscany via Lidl at £6.49 and finally a special treat, a *Graticciaia Vendemmia* from Puglia at 14.5%, which retails at £46.95!

The theme in July at the Connors was 'Greek wines'. A brilliant evening but it is hard to find Greek wine available in most outlets! So much so that three out of five participants bought the same white wine! This was called *Assyrtiko* and was from Majestic. A second Greek white was recommended from Aldi and this proved to be a good flavoured white; it was described as a 'Greek Chablis' by the Sunday Times. The evening will be remembered for the Ouzo being offered before the Wine tasting, which everyone who tried it enjoyed, some coming back for more!

Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



With the supposed summer upon us (hah hah), all our summer meetings were held at members' homes, but only two managed to get out in the garden as planned!

Mirit & Greg hosted our June meeting and offered two whites and four reds. Aldi's *Pinot Gris* (much nicer in my opinion than the more widely offered *Pinot Grigio*) comfortably beat the much-maligned (it's that petrol-like odour that does it!) *Riesling*, to win the battle of the whites. In the reds category the overall winner was *Black Stump*, which is apparently Laithwaites' best seller, which just pipped a Sicilian *Nero d'Avola* by a point.

After a lot of rain earlier in the day, we actually managed to sit out in Althea & Laurie's beautiful garden for July's meeting. Food and drink always seems to taste nicer outside, doesn't it? All the wines for the evening were supplied by Naked Wines; the first was a *Viognier* from the Languedoc and this won the whites category. However, the overall winner was a *Cotes du Roussillon*, which is a GSM (grenache, syrah and mourvedre blend) and just edged out a couple of other wines.

The monsoon was with us again for the August gathering so we had to squeeze into Gill & Graham's kitchen/diner. The theme for the evening was 'Jancis Robinson's recommendations from The Wine Society'. The pick of the whites was the Society's *Limari Chardonnay* from Chile but the overall winner was a delicious *Weinert Carrascal Corte Tinto Mendoza* from Argentina. An interesting fact from our scoring was that the bottom three wines were all French, whilst the top four were all from South America: a changing of the guard?

From Dorothy Parker:

"The first thing I do in the morning is brush my teeth and sharpen my tongue."

"I don't know much about being a millionaire, but I'll bet I'd be darling at it."



Our Group was devastated to hear of the death recently of one of our members, Chris Mead, who was suffering from Parkinson's disease.

A teacher by profession, and a fanatical follower of cricket, he was a founding member of the Writers Group and valued both as a contributor and for his dry sense of humour, which enlivened our meetings. We had all been aware of the relentless progress of his condition and admired his resolve in continuing with us for as long as he was able. Sadly though, he had not been with us for the last 18 or so months.

If you wish to make a donation in Chris's memory, the family are inviting them for Parkinson's UK.

The Group currently meets in a member's home at 2:30pm on the second Tuesday of the month. 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

A poem for autumn:

Pleasant Sounds

The rustling of leaves under the feet in woods and under hedges;

The crumpling of cat-ice and snow down wood-rides,
narrow lanes and every street causeway;

Rustling through a wood or rather rushing, while the wind
halloos in the oak-toop like thunder;

The rustle of birds' wings startled from their nests or flying
unseen into the bushes;

The whizzing of larger birds overhead in a wood, such as
crows, puddocks, buzzards;

The trample of robins and woodlarks on the brown leaves.
and the patter of squirrels on the green moss;

The fall of an acorn on the ground, the pattering of nuts on
the hazel branches as they fall from ripeness;

The flirt of the groundlark's wing from the stubbles –
how sweet such pictures on dewy mornings, when the
dew flashes from its brown feathers.

John Clare

Mini quiz

History: The man who became King George I of England was the Elector of which German city-state?

What was a 'Mulberry' in World War 2?

Which British Prime Minister became the 1st Earl of Avon on his retirement?

Literature: What was the title of the Sherlock Holmes story in which he allegedly dies?

Who wrote *The Name of the Rose* (in Italian *Il nome della rosa*)?

Which was George Eliot's first novel?

Sport: Which Premier League football team is known as The Blades?

Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) defeated which boxer to become World Heavyweight Champion in 1964?

Prior to Andy Murray (in 2013), who was the last British player to become Men's Singles Champion at Wimbledon?

Music: The play and film *Amadeus* concerns the unproven story that Antonio Salieri murdered which other composer?

Syd Barrett, Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Rick Wright were the original line up of which rock band formed in London in 1965?

Which American city is considered the birthplace of Jazz?

Transport: The world's first public railway to use steam locomotives opened in 1825 between Stockton and which other northern town?

Which ocean liner was the last holder of the Blue Riband of the Atlantic?

In cars, what do the initials 'ABS' stand for?

Geography: What is the second highest mountain in the world?

Which British city is nicknamed 'Auld Reekie'?

The city of Chennai in India was known in colonial times as?

Art: Who painted *Ophelia* in 1851-52, a depiction of Shakespeare's character from *Hamlet* singing before she drowns in a river?

The Three Graces, displayed in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, was sculpted by which artist?

Which painting technique is similar to watercolour but is designed to be opaque?

(Answers in the September e-bulletin.)

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)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Family History (pm)	German (am)		
<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>
		Bridge (pm)		<i>Tai Chi meets in school term-times only</i>
		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)	
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	Line Dancing (am)	General Meeting (pm)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Tai Chi (am)	French Conversation (am)		
	Dinghy Sailing (pm)	Bridge (pm)		<i>The Chess Valley u3a Committee meets on the first or second Tuesday of each month, two days before the General Meeting</i>
	Writers (pm)	Folk Music (pm)		

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>MOTO (Members On Their Own) have an 'anchor meeting' on the first Saturday morning of each month</i>
	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		<i>MOTO2 meets for lunch on the second Saturday of each month</i>
		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)	Wine 1 (eve)	
		Gardening (pm)		<i>Stamps and Collectables meets in members' houses every two months</i>
		Bridge (pm)		
		Folk Music (pm)		



Top: The Chess Group get out into the Convenor's garden in good weather to play chess, chat and have tea. They're looking for more players, if you want to join them.

Above: Everything you ever wanted to know about sweet peas: The Gardening Group were treated to a wonderful presentation by award-winning experts Graeme Hollingdale and Alison Shreeve at their July meeting.

Above right: These are the Striders that made it all the way up the hill above Winchcombe during the Group's summer trip to the Cotswolds.

Right: Gordon Rogers was our speaker at August's General Meeting. His subject, 'Winston Churchill's Toybox' covered the experimental weapons department that he created. This picture shows the one occasion he met the great man himself...or does it?



Left: The Digital Imaging Group have been working with fish-eye and bubble effects recently. Here is one example of what you can fit into a bubble.

Below: Members of the Photography Group went on a July field trip to Battersea Power Station. This wonderful picture was shot by Keith Hoffmeister.

More of the excellent work created by the Digital Imaging and Photography Groups can be seen on their Group pages on the CVu3a website.

