

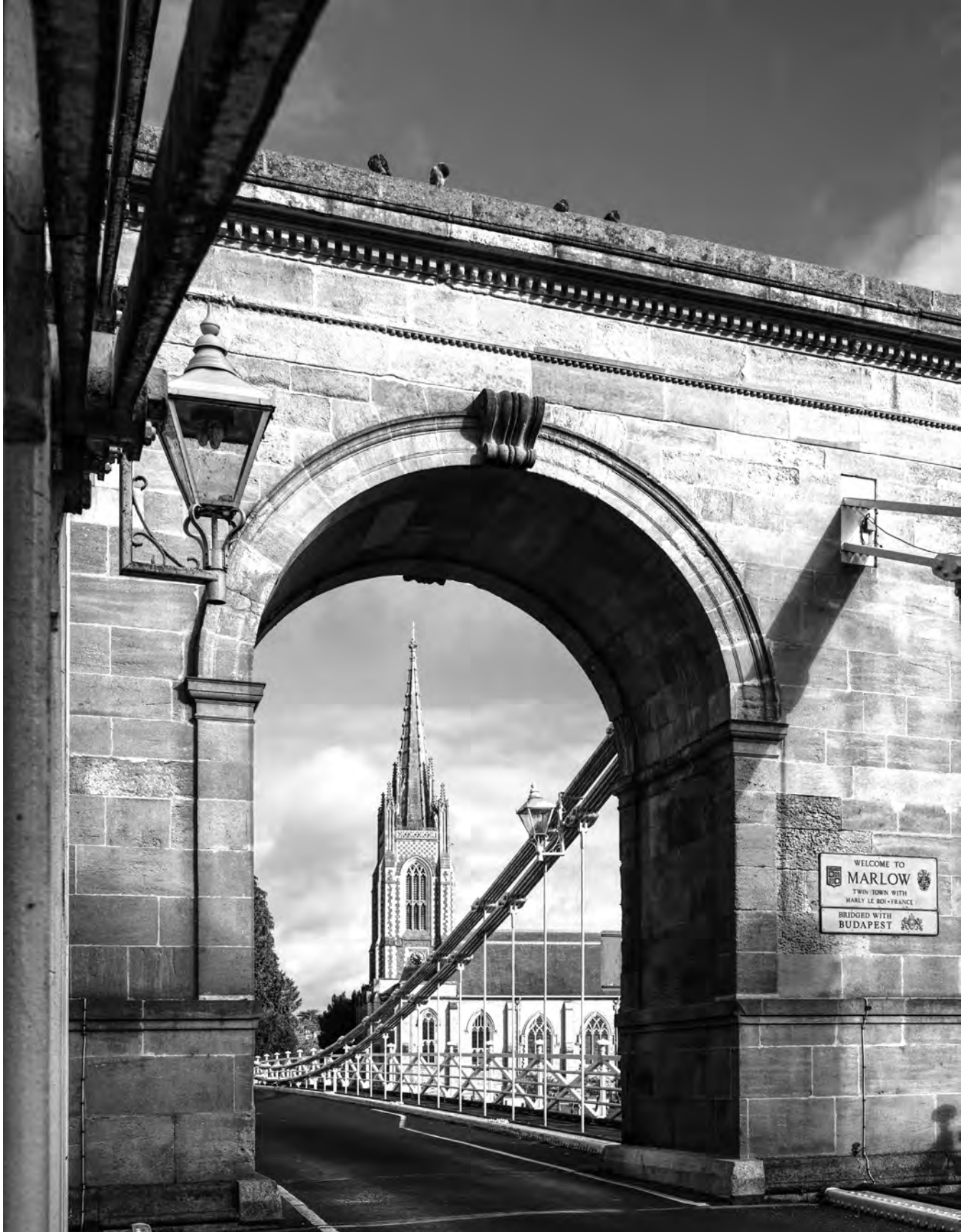
u3a
Chess Valley

Registered Charity 1126990

NEWSLETTER

December 2024 - February 2025

website: www.cvu3a.uk



Front Cover: The Photography & Digital Imaging Group went on a field trip to Marlow in September. This atmospheric composition by Andrew Brown shows All Saints church in the distance.



Top Right: The Walks into History: Country Group went to Bovingdon in November. Meeting first at 'The Bell' pub, they then visited St Lawrence church.

Mid Right: At a visit to the North Portal Construction Site of HS2 in October, our members were split into two groups of twelve, with each learning about the Chiltern Tunnels and Colne Valley Viaduct.



Lower Right: Once again in November, the History Group hosted five students from Chesham Grammar School who gave confident presentations on the causes of World War One, various aspects and how it is remembered today.

Bottom: If you ever wondered what a game of Mah Jong looks like, this is it. They would welcome another player to join them.



Speakers for monthly talks

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



Danielle Barnett

Thursday 12th December

'Tis The season To Be Jolly: Christmas Traditions All Over the World

Danielle has over 30 years in the entertainment industry under her belt, is a signed singer songwriter with five Top Ten chart hits to date, and has managed two worldwide Top Ten chart bands. She was formerly the lead singer for the world-famous number one chart act Urban Cookie Collective who had a big hit with *The Key The Secret* and she has fronted the act for 23 years. We can look forward to her fun look at the weird, wonderful and somewhat wacky Christmas traditions all over the world.

Andy Smith

Thursday 9th January

Prosthetic Perils

Andy is a double-amputee who suggests that life with a disability, while often challenging, can have its lighter side. Since losing his lower right arm and leg in an accident three decades ago, he has had many adventures at home and abroad; though some adventures are best avoided! Andy also shares memories of his childhood years and how a WW2 fighter pilot helped to prepare him for his personal trials to come.

Tony Earle

Thursday 13th February

Charity Shops

Tony has been in and out of charity shops, not knowing what he is looking for but knowing what he wants when he sees it! His talk looks at the history of the shops, what he looks for, and includes examples and information on those overlooked 'treasures'. Expect a relaxed and amusing talk while encouraging some audience participation!

Martin Orkin

Thursday 13th March

The Simon and Garfunkel Story

Martin Orkin will tell us the intriguing story of Simon and Garfunkel. Everyone will enjoy hearing their classic hits again, such as *The Sound of Silence*, *Mrs. Robinson* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. But Simon and Garfunkel's career had more than its fair share of ups and downs, as Martin will explain to us. Prepare to be amazed as well as enthralled by the music and the story!



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



Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our December – February newsletter.

I'd like to start this time by mentioning two changes to our Committee. First, I am delighted to announce that **Sue Broad** has resumed the role of **Groups Coordinator**, which she formerly held between 2014 and 2021. Sue has already come up with some new ideas and she will be organising both a Convenors' Meeting and one for new members early in 2025. I am also pleased to welcome **Jim Campbell** to our ranks as a 'member without portfolio' and I am sure that he will add a lot to our deliberations.

On the subject of the Committee, we have identified that we now need someone to take specific responsibility for spreading the word about the u3a movement in general and Chess Valley u3a in particular. So, we have created a new Committee position of **Publicity Coordinator** and I provided an outline of what the role might entail in my October e-bulletin. Realistically, as social media are so important nowadays, we do need someone with an interest in that, or a willingness to get to grips with it. If you think this could be you, please get in touch.

Lots of groups will be doing something special to celebrate Christmas but can I particularly recommend Singing for Pleasure's Christmas Concert, which takes place in the Amersham Free Church on Monday 16th December, starting at 5:45pm. Admission is free but there will be an opportunity to contribute to a charity chosen by SFP's Choir Mistress, Ali Ponsford-Hill.

Finally, I want to wish you the compliments of the season and express the hope that 2025 brings us a more peaceful world.

With best wishes



James Cadle
chair@cvu3a.uk

New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Suzanne Chapman	<i>Chesham</i>	Sandra Jones	<i>Little Chalfont</i>
Joan Clark	<i>Chesham</i>	Brian Lawrence	<i>High Wycombe</i>
Tony Daniel	<i>Hazlemere</i>	Peter Letheren	<i>Amersham</i>
Wendy Daniel	<i>Hazlemere</i>	Marion Lloyd	<i>Chesham</i>
Margaret Fishley	<i>Chalfont St Giles</i>	Linda Miller	<i>Chesham</i>
Den Gardner	<i>Chesham</i>	Kay Russell	<i>Chesham</i>
Marcus Hamilton	<i>Chesham</i>	Helen Salmon	<i>Chesham</i>
Joyce Hayes	<i>Amersham</i>	Nick Smee	<i>Chesham</i>
Sue Ingold	<i>Amersham</i>	David Smith	<i>Chesham</i>
David Jones	<i>Little Chalfont</i>		

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

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd February 2025

Chess Valley u3a Committee

Chair	James Cadle	chair@cvu3a.uk	07889 732291
Vice-Chair	Position vacant	vicechair@cvu3a.uk	
Treasurer	Geoff Naylor	treasurer@cvu3a.uk	01494 434918
Business Secretary	West Marshall	secretary@cvu3a.uk	07931 433382
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Groups Coordinator	Sue Broad	groups@cvu3a.uk	01494 718128
Web Editor	Valerie Garrod	webmaster@cvu3a.uk	01494 433585
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	James Cadle		07889 732291
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Events Coordinator	Jackie Cobb	eventscoord@cvu3a.uk	01494 773718
Committee Member	Jim Campbell	jim.campbell@cvu3a.uk	01494 434822

Report on a visit to the HS2 North Portal site

Two groups of 12 people visited the North Portal Site at Denham/Colne Valley for a tour organised by ALIGN JV who are working with HS2 to deliver construction of the Chiltern Tunnels and the Colne Valley Viaduct.

After an introduction at the Visitors' Centre, we inspected a model of 'Florence', one of the two tunnel boring machines, named after Florence Nightingale who lived in Buckinghamshire.

This amazing machine is 170 metres long, moves at up to 16 metres per 24 hours, 24/7, weighs in at 2,000 tons and has 17 engineers (known as miners for obvious reasons) aboard. The only time it stopped in the entire operation was under Shardeloes, and the vibrations when it restarted were said to have caused the infamous sinkhole there.

We toured the site in a minibus including a stop at a viewing platform where we saw the two tunnels as well as an exit structure known as a 'porous portal', designed to dissipate air and prevent a sonic boom as the trains enter and exit at speeds of up to 250 mph.

We then went to the viaduct crossing of the River Colne where divers were carrying out underwater works to the piers in the lake. The Colne Valley viaduct is the longest railway viaduct in the UK, an amazing and beautiful construction with over 1,000 unique segments, to support 56 arches over the 3.4km aqueous crossing. You can take a look at it along the North Orbital Road between Denham and Rickmansworth.

It was interesting to hear that ALIGN are nearing the end of their work, expected by the end of 2025 by which time the Chiltern Tunnels and the Colne Valley viaduct will be fully complete and handed over to the railway operators.

At the conclusion of the project, virtually all the work sites will revert to more or less what they looked like before construction began.

Our guide, Paul Ryan, was very informative and fielded our questions with skill.

Even if one questions the need for HS2, overall the feat of engineering on the largest building project in Europe was outstanding. An excellent visit

Michael Cohn



Merry Christmas!



Report on a visit to Chartwell

After a period of prolonged rain in Bucks we had a very pleasant, dry visit to Chartwell, Churchill's home in Kent. The National Trust has recently carried out an extensive review of the house and collection, which has greatly improved their presentation. The M25 was good to us in both directions for a change.

Alan Gray

News from the Events Team

The Events Team met recently to discuss the visits for 2025. The possible visits are (not in any particular order) Anglesey Abbey near Cambridge, Eltham Palace, the Thames Barrier, and the Museum of London Docklands to see an exhibition on *Mudlarking London's Lost Treasures*.

We'll provide further information once our plans are finalised.

The Events Team

From Peter Windsor, Speaker Organiser

I would like to suggest a new year's resolution for you. Why not treat yourself to tea or coffee and a chocolate biscuit and listen to an entertaining and informative talk once a month at the Broadway Baptist Church in Chesham? We would love to see you there and it may be a good time to catch up with old u3a friends or meet new ones. The talks planned for January to March are described on page 3 of this newsletter but, to whet your appetite, here is what we have planned for the rest of 2025.

Chess Valley u3a Talks Programme 2025

Rob Brewer

Thursday 10th April

Being a TV/Film Extra

Rob is an ex-soldier and a retired police officer and he fell into the entertainment industry as an TV/film extra after a visit to his local library. He has been an extra for six years, on over 40 different features. His work has ranged from Hollywood blockbusters to low-budget films, to TV dramas, soaps and comedies and even a couple of adverts. Rob talks about some of the productions that he's been in, and explains how he became involved in the industry and how anyone can do it. There is a certain amount of audience participation, but not too much.

John Tyler

Thursday 8th May

The Ridgeway

The Ridgeway can claim to be one of the oldest trackways in Europe, stretching nearly ninety miles from Ivinghoe to Avebury and over 5,000 years from the Stone Age to the present day. This talk offers a blister-free walk along this ancient chalkland path, describing both its prehistory and the rich wildlife that it supports today. John Tyler has always been fascinated by wildlife; having studied zoology and conservation at university, he worked with the Trust for Urban Ecology, creating and managing urban nature reserves. He spent many years as the Warden of the Sevenoaks Reserve in Kent, a string of flooded gravel pit lakes fringed by woodland.

Chess Valley u3a Talks Programme 2025 (continued)

Helen Fry

Thursday 12th June

'The Walls Have Ears'

Latimer House was once described as 'a very secret place'. It was here in WW2 that British intelligence bugged the conversations of German prisoners-of-war, including some of Hitler's generals. Unaware that the place was 'wired for sound', the prisoners spoke to their roommates about some of Hitler's most closely guarded secrets, including the V1 ('doodlebug'), V2 and atomic bomb programme. For over 60 years the secret listeners who recorded the conversations never spoke about their work, not even to their families. Historian Dr Helen Fry has written a number of acclaimed history books including Waterstones' top history books for 2021. Helen appears frequently in TV documentaries and she is a popular and regular speaker to groups including u3as.

Neil Sadler

Thursday 10th July

The Clink!

Which country has a quarter of all the world's prisoners? Who were the real three men who escaped from Alcatraz? Did George Best ever play for the HM Prison Ford football team?

All this and more will be covered by Neil Sadler, a former police officer who visited many UK prisons and met some 'colourful' characters. Their stories might surprise you. Let Neil guide you in (and luckily out of) a few well-known prisons.

Tony Long

Thursday 14th August

Midsomer Murders

In this illustrated talk, die-hard fans of the TV show *Midsomer Murders* can tour the picturesque locations where the numerous killings take place. Tony Long, who is also the organiser of Midsomer Tours of Thame, takes the visitor on a journey through Thame and some of the quintessentially English villages used for filming. This talk is based on his book, *A Midsomer Day Out*, that provides a detailed itinerary for more than 60 filming locations.

Richard Marks

Thursday 11th September

Women in World War Two

Historian Richard Marks examines how women contributed to Britain's armed forces during World War Two. He explores the roles and responsibilities of women in the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and the Army, as well as the medical services associated with them. He also reveals how women from different parts of the world participated in Britain's military efforts. Richard addresses questions such as: What kinds of jobs did women perform in the armed forces and why were they vital? Did women face combat situations and if so, where and how?

Sian Bourn

Thursday 9th October

The Dogs Trust

Since 1891, the Dogs Trust has been working for a better future for dogs and the people who love them. "When a dog is in distress, we care for them. When a dog needs a home, we find them a loving family. When an owner needs a helping hand (or paw) – or they just can't cope, we're ready to step in. For every dog, for every owner, we're by their side through thick and thin, throughout their lives. The bond they have is special to us. It changes lives, making each day happier and more complete. It's why we believe A dog is for life® ". (From the Dogs Trust website.)

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Chess Valley u3a Talks Programme 2025 (continued)

Mike Barbakoff

Thursday 13th November

The History of Bletchley Park

This talk provides an overview of the history of the Government Code and Cypher School and Bletchley Park as its WWII war station. Specific areas covered include: Why Bletchley Park was chosen; the challenge of the Enigma ciphering machine; selection of the workforce and the development of Colossus, the world's first computer. Mike is a volunteer at Bletchley Park serving as a Guide at the BP heritage museum. He is currently writing a second book on the use of Hollerith punched cards in WWII codebreaking.

Jem Duducu

Thursday 11th December

Hollywood Blockbusters and Bombs

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

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England's Coronating Glory

Fred Trueman was once asked how to liven up cricket. He suggested shortening the wicket to 10 yards and allow throwing and, in many ways, today's 'Hundreds' version of the game gets very close to Fred's vision.

This summer, the Olympics seemed to be going in a different, more complicated direction. The original games in 776BCE had just one event; running. This was then stretched out over the following decade to a total of eight athletic events including pankration. This last addition was not a very early Easter tide confection, but a no holds barred combination of wrestling, boxing and violent brawling - think Australian political debate. The original version of the Olympics then stayed the course for over 1000 years until early wokeism stopped it in 393AD for being too competitive.

After a short hiatus the Modern Olympics were launched in 1886 and they are still with us but, with an increase in the number of events from an original 43, which included six fine arts 'events', to a stonking 329 in 2024 and this is with no arts prizes. But it did give us the more traditional sport of breakdancing. Now, there was so much to like about the Paris games (apart from the repeated use of the word 'coronated'), but breakdancing? Hopefully it will suffer the same fate as the women's 800 metres, which was introduced in 1924 but immediately dropped for being 'too strenuous for women' (then of course called ladies) and amazingly only reinstated in 1960.

An equally short-lived Olympic sport was cricket, appearing only once in 1900 when France won a silver medal, but the winning team, England, was the only other competitor and the French team did include 10 Englishmen in their 12 (yes 12) man team.

Returning to Fred's brilliant suggestion for brightening up cricket, I would like to suggest mine for soccer. Have the penalty shoot-out first and only then the match to confirm or reverse the penalty result. Better still just the penalty shootout?

'Timewaster'

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
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
Dinghy Sailing	Wendy Barnes	sailing@cvu3a.uk
	Judith Young	
French Conversation	Morag Robertson	frenchcons@cvu3a.uk
French Intermediate	Hilary Alleston	french@cvu3a.uk
Fun Quizzes	James Cadle	quizzes@cvu3a.uk
Gardening	Jenny Beirne	garden@cvu3a.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
German	Jenny Lee	german@cvu3a.uk
History	Claire Paterson	history@cvu3a.uk
	Ian Hutt	
Keep Fit for 60+	John Bunyan	keepfit60@cvu3a.uk
Knitting & Other Crafts	Jo Biggs	knit@cvu3a.uk
Line Dancing (Chiltern)	Linda English	linedance@cvu3a.uk
Mah Jong	Ed Perrott	mahjong@cvu3a.uk
MOTO	Mo Barnes	moto@cvu3a.uk
MOTO 2	Brian Harding	moto2@cvu3a.uk
Music Appreciation	Geoff Hayes	music@cvu3a.uk
	Colin O'Rourke	

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Chess Valley u3a Convenors (continued)

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

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
Patchwork & Quilting	Angela Bratton	patchquilt@cvu3a.uk
	Dee Watson	
Photography with Digital Imaging	David Hurd	photography@cvu3a.uk
	Pippa Greensmith	
Pilates (1, 2 and 3)	Christine Ross	pilates@cvu3a.uk
	Liz Howlett	
Play Reading	Joan Barton	playread@cvu3a.uk
	Linda Hepworth	
Poetry	Christine Ogborne	poetry@cvu3a.uk
Railways	Graham Yellowley	railways@cvu3a.uk
	James Cadle	
Singing for Pleasure	Angela Bratton	singing@cvu3a.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
Spanish Conv (Inter)	Hilary Alleston	spanishconv@cvu3a.uk
Stamps & Other Collectables	Steve Epps	stamps@cvu3a.uk
Tai Chi	Sue Broad	taichi@cvu3a.uk
	Meg Brinton	
Theatre	Geoff Naylor	theatre@cvu3a.uk
	Helen Barnard	
Ukulele	Jeff Naman	ukulele@cvu3a.uk
	Heather Sprake	
Amblers	Susan Osborne	amblers@cvu3a.uk
Walkers 1	Stuart Stanley	walkers1@cvu3a.uk
Walkers 2	Sue Rawbone	walkers2@cvu3a.uk
Walkers 3	Catherine Haridi	walkers3@cvu3a.uk
	Jill Thomas	
Striders 1	Andrew Brown	striders@cvu3a.uk
Striders 2	Ian Lee	striders2@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 Hitchenor	wine2@cvu3a.uk
Writers	John & Helene Bunyan	writers@cvu3a.uk

News From The Groups

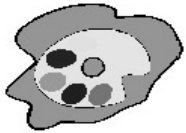
GROUP MEETINGS

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

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

Art

Angela Spittle & Janice Gray



Our Group has been experimenting with teabags: who knew how many ways to use them were out there? But we had fun having a go as usual with varying degrees of success! We discovered along the way that fruit tea bags were handy, but pink ones dried more blue!

Then, more recently, we couldn't ignore autumn leaves and, again, found different ways to express those colours. At least during spells of miserable weather we found fun during our art sessions: definitely good therapy! After Christmas we'll take another look at nature and be inspired to pick up our brushes once more.

Angela

Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop



In September we looked at the art of illustration in children's books. It proved an uplifting morning taking us all back to our childhood reading and looking. Some illustrators were accomplished writers of children's fiction, like Judith Kerr with her *Mog and Tiger* series and Eric Carle with his *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Others were artists who used their skill to enhance the story. E.H. Shepherd, a renowned *Punch* cartoonist, was responsible for the pen and ink drawings in the *Winnie the Pooh* books. Quentin Blake, with his recognisable figures, illustrated the books of Roald Dahl as in *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Matilda*. Our morning finished by giving credit to Herge with his *Tin Tin* series, Arthur Rackham's illustrations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books and the unknown artists of the Ladybird Series.

In October, with the onset of another winter, we looked at artists that we found uplifting. Yet again our choices were broad. They ranged from the Spanish 17th century with Esteban Murillo, the 19th century British and William Nicholson, to David Hockney and Eric Ravilious in the 20th century. One member reminded us of the pleasure that we are fortunate to enjoy in viewing original works in galleries, where we can consider the technical skills of the artist at first hand.

Picasso was our subject for November, with his long life and enormous influence on modern art. We considered his early work, viewing his self-portraits of 1896 and 1907, the latter already predicting his later cubist style. We considered the effect of his anti-war protest work, *Guernica*, dating from 1937. We looked at his ceramics depicting bulls, from a permanent collection at Seurat. We were made aware of how well known his *Dove of Peace* from 1947 is in our troubled world. One member brought us down to earth with his cheerful line drawings of animals on placemats purchased in Madrid.

Future subjects are the Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid and 'Doorways'.

Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



Our September meeting was on 'Important Art Collections'. We had examples of collectors whose patronage encouraged young artists and whose collections are on public display, e.g. Charles Saatchi, who is leaving his collection to the nation, and collectors who are philanthropic but choose to keep their collections private, e.g. Philip Niarchos and Ezra and David Namad.

(cont.)

There were a surprising number of women collectors, including sisters Margaret and Gwendolyn Davies: Welsh ladies who amassed a formidable collection of art including paintings by Botticelli, Turner, Manet, Monet and Cezanne. This collection was bequeathed to The National Museum of Wales on their deaths. Other notable collectors were Peggy Guggenheim, Isabella Stewart Gardner and Etta and Claribel Cone. One collection not to be missed is of British art in Bournemouth, assembled by Sir Merton and Lady Annie Russell-Cotes, housed in East Cliff Hall and named in his honour.

'Pop Art' was the topic of October's meeting. This movement of the 1950s and '60s, inspired by commercial and popular culture, proved to be a hugely enjoyable romp through so many varied styles of art, all under the Pop Art umbrella. We discussed an extremely diverse selection of work by artists including Eduardo Paolozzi who designed the mosaics at Tottenham Court Road Station, Peter Blake and his unforgettable album cover for The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and Roy Lichtenstein's *Whaam*. Less well-known artists included Wayne Thibaud, Charles Demuth and Richard Hamilton.

November's theme was 'Spanish Art', which we think has been rather eclipsed by the output from Italy and northern Europe. Beginning with the Baroque period, we looked at work by Francisco de Zurbaran who was known primarily for his religious paintings in which he used chiaroscuro for dramatic effect, and Diego Velasquez, a court painter, whose monumental picture *Las Meninas*, was an enigma, which we tried to interpret. Another court painter was Francisco de Goya who painted in the Romantic style, but in his latter years embarked on his 'Black Paintings', which had haunting themes, reflecting his bleak outlook on humanity. In complete contrast, the 'Master of Light', Joaquin Sorolla, excelled in representing light and the colours of Spain. He painted social and historical subjects, not shying away from reality, as well as beautiful portraits. We finished with Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory*, another enigmatic composition representing the Theory of Relativity, or is it melting cheese, as Dali suggested? It was an extremely interesting and educational meeting.

Book 1

Gillian Eastmond



This informal, friendly Book Group meets at 10.00 am on the third Friday morning of the month at a member's house in Chesham, Amersham or Great Missenden. This evens out the distance anyone must drive. We usually miss out an August meeting.

We bring a fiction or non-fiction book to the meeting, which we wish to recommend to the Group. After giving a brief description of the book's content and saying why we recommend it, members ask questions about the book and often others have read it and will comment on it. We can also have a short discussion about the theme of the book and recommend other similar books.

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.

Our Group ends after two hours because people have other commitments and so must leave. However, it normally could have lasted longer. You will never be forced to read a book you really do not like but you will have heard about books that you otherwise would not have read, but are now tempted to try.

If you wish to try us for a session to see if we are what you are looking for, please email Gillian Eastmond at bookgroup1@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Book 2

Alison Pullinger, Sarah Organ & Georgina Mead



Our fully subscribed Book Group continues to meet at Amersham library on the first Wednesday of the month. At present we are an all female group whose reading tastes outside of the Group are quite varied, so we are able to talk about any books that we have enjoyed and would recommend. Within the Group our chosen books are from different genres.

We started this quarter with *The Other Side of the Bridge* by Mary Lawson, which was enjoyed by all. This was a story set in rural north Ontario in the fictional town of 'Straun'. It's remote, extremely cold in winter and the majority of people are farmers. There are two timelines, the mid 1930s and a generation later in the '50s.

(cont.)

The story focuses on two brothers, Arthur and Jake, the dynamic between them and the consequences of what happens on 'the other side of the bridge' in the first timeline. We recommend this novel.

Our second read was Kate Adie's *The Autobiography: The Kindness of Strangers*. Most of us are familiar with seeing Kate Adie reporting for the BBC. Not many of us will realise that this girl who grew up in Sunderland had never intended or expected to become a reporter in many of the world's trouble spots. Often in dangerous situations, she gives us frontline reporting from Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Tiananmen Square and the Gulf War of 1991. She tells how it was to be working as a woman in a predominantly man's world. She had some very near misses with her life and we felt that she was very lucky to still be alive. This was a fascinating and interesting read, which can be enjoyed by everyone. If you are looking for a book to give for Christmas, this would certainly keep someone busy for a while.

Finally we had *The Herd* by Emily Edwards. This book is contemporary and deals with an issue that many of us are facing right now: whether to vaccinate or not. It takes two families and particularly focuses on the women who are wives, mothers and best friends. It explores the balance between social responsibility and personal choice. The story contains a secret, a traumatic event and an unexpected twist. This is definitely a book to read and then discuss with others. In our discussions we spoke about our thoughts and feelings and also shared personal experiences. It is a very emotive topic and definitely brings out strong feelings.

Book 3

Eileen Overton



Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month. Availability is governed by the ten books we get each month from Chesham Library; we currently have a full complement of ten members. Our past choices have been a little disappointing but we read every book with high hopes. We are finishing off the year with *Shuggie Bain* by Douglas Stuart and *The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle* by Stuart Turton.

We have sociable meetings as well as informative: it is interesting to hear different opinions.

Book 4

Jackie Cobb



We meet in each other's homes on the third Thursday of each month at 10:00am.

The members each choose a book for the whole Group to read. We all source our own copies. We have read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and will read at our December meeting *The Cricket on the Hearth* by Charles Dickens. We hope to have a small pre-Christmas get together as well.

We would welcome any new members wishing to join us.

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 £3.00 including a cup of tea per session.

In the winter we meet each Friday from 13.15 to 15.30pm at Chesham White Hill Centre for Indoor 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 Wednesday afternoons, playing ACOL Bridge in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. There is currently a small waiting list to join the Group but, if you are interested, please let us know and we can add your name to the list.

Canasta

Linda Hepworth & Sue Hawksley



We meet on the third Monday of the Month at a member's house. It would be nice to have a few more members so if you're interested please contact us at: canasta@cvu3a.uk

Chess

Caroline Jenks



Exciting news in the Chess World: the BBC has announced that a new Chess programme is being recorded for BBC2. Twelve amateurs will be followed playing through a series. Chess is apparently the fastest growing sport in the world: come and be a part of it!

The Chess Group is keen to attract new members. 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.

Current Affairs

Eileen Overton



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

Dinghy Sailing

Wendy Barnes & Judith Young



Our season finished at the end of October and we will start again at the end of April 2025. We have enjoyed some good sailing over the summer, with members from various u3a Groups coming together to learn, practice and improve in the picturesque surroundings of Troy Lake. For more information, please contact either of the Convenors.

French Conversation

Morag Robertson



The French Conversation Group meets twice a month. We take it in turns to host a meeting and to suggest a topic for discussion. This allows some preparation of vocabulary before the meeting. Occasionally we meet in a cafe and we have plans to go out to lunch. We often talk about programmes that we have seen on the television (Is *Emily in Paris* better than *Astrid*, *Murder in Paris*?) or share information on good books.

French Intermediate

Hilary Alleston

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

Fun Quizzes

James Cadle



The Fun Quizzes Group started its 2024/25 season on 12th November. We meet on Zoom during the winter months, from November to April, and take a rest during the summer. We call them Fun Quizzes because there aren't teams in the usual sense (although several couples take part) and there are no winners or 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 an hour and has five rounds of ten questions each. If you would like to join in, please contact: quizzes@cvu3a.uk.

"Q: What do you call it when a cat wins a Dog Show? A: A Cat-has-trophy" (beano.com)



In September our Group visited Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire where we were given a conducted tour. Despite floods before our arrival, we were able to dodge the rain and enjoy a wealth of autumn colours. Our guide was very knowledgeable about the history of Waterperry, as well as about the many beautiful plants. Fascinating facts emerged, for instance, that Waterperry had developed a fine reputation as a school of gardening in the 1940s under the redoubtable Beatrix Havergal. Consequently, it was one of the first gardens in Britain to receive seeds of the *Metasequoia* (the Dawn Redwood), discovered in 1940s China and thought previously to be extinct. This is now to be found in many parks and gardens in the UK. Waterperry's own tree is tucked away, probably unnoticed by many visitors today, despite its heritage.

Our October meeting featured Matt Biggs, well-known garden writer and broadcaster, perhaps most famous for his regular sessions as a panel member on *Gardeners' Question Time*. Because of Matt's popularity, we had decided to offer spaces at the session to CVu3a members outside of the Garden Group, and were amazed at the huge response. Matt did not disappoint, entertaining a capacity audience on the subject of *Perfect Plants in Problem Places!*

As we go to press, our November meeting is coming up. This is traditionally an in-house meeting with a pre-Christmas festive theme.

There is no meeting in December, but we have a full programme of monthly events lined up for 2025. Our January meeting features medicinal herbs, with the intriguing title *Pharmacy, Plants, Pots and Poisons*.

Although our Group is growing in numbers, we still welcome new members. Please contact one of the Convenors if you would like to join us. Full details of the Group, together with the programme for 2025, will be found on the Gardening Group page of the CVu3a website.

Stephanie Rothwell and Jenny Beirne

German

Jenny Lee



The German Group continues to meet on a regular basis in each other's houses.

Let's hope the December weather will improve on the grey November. In German the word is 'Dunkelflaute' which aptly describes the dismal depressing gloom. But otherwise, one might say: 'Dieses Wetter gibt 50 shades of grey eine ganz neue Bedeutung': 'This weather gives 50 Shades of Grey a whole new meaning!'

History

Claire Paterson & Ian Hutt



We were very pleased to welcome Dr Helen Fry to our September meeting: she is such a bubbly and accomplished presenter. Her subject was *Women of Intelligence*. Helen's interest is in the British Secret Service from before the First World War up to more recent times. She has written about many aspects of the Service, the people involved and particularly the tactics used to spy on an enemy.

This talk was in praise of the women who worked in the field and contributed so much to Allied success in the two wars: Women who ran spy networks and escape lines, interrogated prisoners of war and even parachuted into enemy territory. Apart from Mata Hari, executed by the French as a double agent and Edith Cavell, executed by the Germans for running an espionage organisation, their contributions have been undocumented and unappreciated until now. Helen's research is meticulous and she revealed many of their methods including sitting outside cottages in France knitting, a totally unremarkable sight to the enemy though vital to the service as the knitting patterns contained messages. She told us about many of the women, though information on some is still classified to protect current family members. Her passion to honour these women was palpable from her inspirational talk.

Our Convenor, Ian Hutt's, talk in October was about the famous pair, Burke and Wills, who are credited with opening up Australia by walking from Melbourne in the south to the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north. Ian's interest had been aroused when young by a book he read called *The Overlanders* by Gerry Hogg. (cont.)

In the Australia of 1855 there were perceived economic benefits from setting up a telegraph network connecting Australia to the new telegraph cable in Java. The Government of South Australia offered a reward of £2,000 to encourage an expedition to find a route between the south and north coasts, a distance of approximately 2,000 miles, for this purpose.

An expedition was organised by the Royal Society of Victoria in 1860. At the time most of the inland of Australia was unexplored and unknown by European settlers. An Exploration Committee was set-up and, ignoring objectors, appointed Robert O'Hara Burke, an Irish born ex-officer with the colonial forces, as leader and William John Wills as surveyor, navigator and third in command. Burke was not an explorer and had no skills in bush craft, though Wills was more adept at living in the wilderness. 23 horses, 6 wagons, 26 camels and nineteen men set out on 20th August 1860 from Royal Park, Melbourne. Very few came back.

The whole journey was a disaster: a catalogue of bad management, totally stupid decisions and bullying from an egotistical man with zero empathy, an abrasive personality and with hostile behaviour. When Wills was at the end of his abilities through sickness, Burke beat him to make him carry on which contributed to his death.

It was a fascinating, enlightening and at times funny talk by Ian when we learnt of the ridiculous and incredulous decisions made. In some ways the tragic expedition was not a waste: it completed the picture of inland Australia and the various rescue parties sent from different parts of the continent added to the understanding of the land they crossed.

We extended our traditional invitation to Chesham Grammar School History students to present a topic of their choice at our November meeting. Being Armistice Day, they chose the First World War. Topics covered 'Causes of WW1' by Charlotte and a debate by Oscar of the familiar cry 'Lions Led by Donkeys'. Grace spoke about 'The Role of Women' and Harrison told us about 'The Christmas Truce'. The final presentation by Chris, was on 'How We Remember and Memorialise WW1': a very thought-provoking ending bringing to the fore the reasons we wear a poppy: do we really think about it and what does it mean to the young today?

The students presented with confidence, answering questions from the audience of 50 members confirming their wider understanding of their subjects: no mean feat for young people who had never spoken to such a large group before. They were a great credit to their school, their parents (two of whom attended as our guests) and to themselves. We do so much enjoy their yearly visits.

Our Christmas meeting will involve some mulled wine, tasty treats and a talk by Brian Withington from Chiltern u3a on *A Roman Villa at Yuletide*.

Keep Fit for 60+

John Bunyan



An instructor has yet to be secured for this class. Enquiries from members are being taken and the class will be scheduled once an instructor is in place. To register your interest, please contact John on keepfit60@cvu3a.uk No payments are being sought at this stage.

Knitting & Other Crafts

Jo Biggs



We meet in members' houses on the first and third Mondays of every month. The meetings offer an opportunity to share ideas and skills. This month Helen started knitting a winter jumper as autumn is definitely with us now and Jo's throw inched towards completion!

As always we enjoyed cakes, coffee, tea and friendships made with thread, wool and cloth. We currently have room for one more person, so please get in touch with the Convenor if you would like to join us.

Some Jokes for the History Group: about Archaeology (from beano.com):

"Archaeologists say that Roman cement was stronger than it is now...but we need to see some concrete evidence."

"Archaeologists found a mummy covered in chocolate. It was Pharaoh Rocher!"

"Q: Why did the Archaeologist ask a diamond out to dinner? A: She was Carbon-Dating."



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 and chatting with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit. Anyone is welcome from beginners to more experienced players. We meet on the second and fourth Mondays (except Bank Holidays) at 2pm in the Free Church, Amersham. 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

As usual, the MOTO Group has continued to hold their fortnightly Sunday lunches with convivial conversations at local pubs and restaurants. These have included 'The Pomeroy', 'The Swan', 'The Boot and Slipper' in Amersham and 'The Junction' and 'The White Hart' in Chesham and Whelpley Hill. Our monthly planning meetings are held at 'The Elgiva Café' over coffee and cakes.

MOTO 2

Brian Harding

Convenor Rodney Newth has decided to retire from this role and continue his recuperation following surgery. He set the Group up three years ago and has led it very successfully. Members expressed their thanks to him for all the time and effort he has put into the role. His choices of the various local pubs for lunch on the second Saturday in the month were excellent and enjoyed by all.

Rodney will remain a member, and will no doubt try to ensure the new Convenor meets his high standards.

Music Appreciation

Geoff Hayes & Colin O'Rourke



Our Group remains vibrant and is developing, with helpful suggestions from our members making the meetings even more interesting. Our themes for September and October were 'Blues and African music' and 'Autumn and France' (to acknowledge the Olympics): needless to say, these resulted in very interesting selections.

In November we chose the themes of Keyboards and Memories to guide our choices of music which resulted in diverse selections such as *Village Green Preservation Society* by the fantastic folk singer Kate Rusby, *Inédit pour Ondes Martenot & Piano, IV*, by Olivier Messiaen as performed by Christine Ott, *I'm still Standing* by Elton John and *C Jam Blues* by Oscar Peterson.

For December we are continuing with keyboards and a new theme chosen by the Group, which is, not surprisingly, Seasonal Music.

Our selections at each meeting are logged and circulated afterwards so that members can re-visit anything of particular interest to them.

We are a very friendly and welcoming Group so please come and join us: you will be most welcome. We meet in Chesham Town Hall on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm till 4. So the next meetings are 5th Dec, 2nd Jan and 6th Feb. Music is just the thing to cheer everyone up during the cold and dark months.



At Christmas time, many of our projects are taken out of storage and, along with years of familiar and loved decorations, displayed with pride. There are table runners, tree decorations, Christmas tree skirts and many others. It doesn't matter that they were made many years ago when our families were young (and so were we) because it is part of our tradition, but each year new ones get made to add to the collection of items that can only be associated with Christmas.

Recently, one of our members (Jacky) made a fantastic wall hanging of a snow globe, which was one of the many items displayed at an exhibition of a local quilting group in Coleshill. Our new girl (Katie) also had items displayed and those of us who were able to go to the event were truly inspired by what our quilting friends can produce. Our friend Margaret also won an award for a spectacular quilt at a national quilting show, which encourages us all to be proud of what we can achieve, by showcasing our work. Jacky also designed and made a very unusual piece of work based on her family history, using fabric owned by her late father, and made into a map of Sussex with many details about family members. It was stunning and has recently been shown in an exhibition in Henley. Well done, ladies!

It doesn't matter what standard individuals achieve: as a group, we welcome anyone who just loves to sew, to learn new techniques and to make items of which they can be proud. Come to see us at Hyde Heath where we have a monthly workshop in a friendly atmosphere, and maybe you will be inspired to join us and share in this lovely pastime. Ring 07889 263207 if you want more details.

As we finish off items (possibly for Christmas) and get enthusiastic about new projects that we just haven't yet had time to make, we wish you all a very happy, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year festive season, and send all good wishes for 2025, whatever it brings.



We have had two meetings this last quarter. Topics covered include themes such as Symmetry, Humour, the Baroque Diagonal and Monochrome photography. We also spent time analysing common errors in landscape photography. Tools such as Dodge & Burn, and the Recompose tool were explored during the Digital Imaging sessions. Our field trip to Marlow in September produced some beautiful images of this lovely riverside area (see front cover: ed.)

In November we host a presentation by the ever-popular and informative Steve Brabner, and our final meeting for the year in December will focus on our year-long project titled *My Five Minutes of Fame*.



Pilates continues to run at full capacity: we are now in our ninth year and many of our original members are still with us, and benefiting from it.

Pilates is a type of exercise and body conditioning where each part of the body is worked. This is particularly suited to our age group as it enhances muscle tone and stability.

We are nearing the end of this term and looking forward to our Christmas party. Soon it will be 2025 and we will resume our exercising once again.



In September we read *Hay Fever* by Noel Coward, which I think we all enjoyed: a portrait of a VERY odd and rude family and their unfortunate guests, written in Coward's inimitable style. October saw us reading a short Agatha Christie play called *The Patient* which turned out to be very disappointing: not much in terms of characterisation and a very woolly ending with nothing really tied up. Our

November choice, much more serious, was *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller: a good old drama with a moral message...and some good American accents! We have decided not to meet in December as it is too near to Christmas, so will start again in 2025.

Our Group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in each other's homes. We enjoy reading and discussing our chosen poems and poets. The Group is full at present but contact the Convenor to join the waiting list for membership.

In September we read poetry by the American Pulitzer Prize winner Mary Oliver. Her poetry reflects nature and wildlife vividly. October saw us trying a different approach with just two poems 'at first sight': both were about autumn and we delved into their content and meaning in depth. The first was *In The Woods* by Craig Raine and the second was *Field of Autumn* by Laurie Lee. It was a good exercise and one to be repeated. November's meeting was all about Shakespeare and several sonnets of his were enjoyed, along with poetry about his life and times.

Future meetings will be:

December: Christmas Meeting

January: Dylan Thomas

February: Time and Clocks

Railways

Graham Yellowley & James Cadle



Again, we have had more great speakers in recent months:

September 13th: *The Reunification Project at the Great Central Railway*: Tom Ingall: One of the best speakers we have had, Tom really brought to life a very interesting project to reconnect the Great Central Railway to the mainline: not an easy task and not a cheap one either. The presentation was first class and Tom was very engaging and enthusiastic about the project to combine the two surviving halves of the GCR to create an 18 mile Heritage Railway. We will be inviting Tom back for another talk as soon as we can.

October 18th: *The Liberation Line*: Christian Wolmar: A return visit by Christian to talk about the building and use of the railway in the Second World War, which both delivered supplies to the troops and brought the injured soldiers back again: an unsung piece of history that Christian thought remained so because 'it did its job too well'. The numbers involved were amazing: 50 Hospital Trains (200,000 men transported in them) and 1,200 Bailey Bridges built with over 50,000 men involved, building 9,000 miles of track. Christian also brought along copies of his book *The Liberation Line*, which he signed on purchase.

November 15th: *The Cambrian Coast Express*: Francis Gomme: Francis returned to give us a fascinating talk on this service, which connected London Paddington with Pwllheli and Aberystwyth. Operated from 1921 to 1967, the total journey time from end to end was some 8½ hours. Francis traced the often-tortuous route taken, which included High Wycombe, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury. He also showed a wealth of photographs illustrating the trains themselves, the stations involved and the wonderful and ever-changing countryside through which the service passed. As he usually does, Francis also provided a series of side anecdotes, including that at one time British Railways also operated the Inter City Express, which took passengers from London to Birmingham in just over 2½ hours. HS2 anyone?

Our next meetings are:

December 20th: *Oxford to Cambridge: Then and Now*: Dick Crane

January 24th: Visit to St Pancras Hotel and Station: Graham Yellowley

February 21st: *Metroland*: Oliver Green

March 21st: *Preserving the King of Diesels: 40 Years of Deltic Preservation*: Murray Brown

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.

"Interviewer: Can you perform under pressure?"

Job candidate: No, but I'll give Bohemian Rhapsody a go!"

(Peter Schweiger)

(one for our various Music Groups)



The focus of rehearsals this term is for our annual Christmas Concert on Monday 16 December, from 5.45 to 6.30pm, at Amersham Free Church.

The programme consists of seasonal songs and carols. This year will be extra special as we have our musical director's young nephew joining us for the first time. Please come and support us and there will be a charity collection at the end of the performance if you wish to contribute.

We are hugely grateful to both Ali, our director, and Gwen, our accompanist, who lead us each week with enthusiasm and good humour. New members are always welcome, with further information available on our Group page 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 the last meeting of the Stamps and Collectables Group we were treated to a wonderful display and talk by John Bunyan about his extensive collection of cameras.

We learned how diverse cameras are, from tiny miniature ones to an enormous ex RAF camera with a 7 inch lens that had been mounted to a wartime plane. There were some beautifully designed and crafted vintage models.

John also helped members of the Group with information about their own cameras, using his catalogues, which must include almost every camera that there has ever been!

Our next meeting in January will be a members' day with Group members showing items from their own collections. If anyone not a member of the Group but who is a collector has anything they would like to show us, please get in touch.

Tai Chi

Sue Broad & Meg Brinton



Our Tai chi classes continue despite occasional challenges such as injuries, holidays, and temporary lapses of memory: learning the 8, 16, and 24 forms is incredibly good for our little grey cells, and it's also useful to recognise when and where a set of postures are repeated in another form.

This summer our tutor, Peter Warr, accompanied four of his students (not from our class!) to the 4th World Taijiquan Championships in Singapore, where they won silver and bronze medals, with placings of 4th and 5th, 7th and 8th, never before achieved by a British team at a world championship! We are nowhere near that level of expertise, but we love doing it and are so lucky to have Peter as our tutor.

The Group is still full.

Theatre

Helen Barnard & Geoff Naylor



We are a large and ever expanding Group and try to cover a wide range of different shows. This year we have offered *Guys and Dolls*, *Moulin Rouge*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Fawlty Towers*. Our next trips are to *Hamilton* on 21st November and *ABBA Voyage* on 30th January. Both of these are now fully booked. We are happy to accept new members, so please email the Convenors. If anyone has ideas for any particular trips, please let us know. Ideally these should be shows where we can buy tickets at group prices in

order to make them financially viable. If you wish to go to any show, once advised, early application is needed as the tickets often sell out quickly.



Our Group has continued to practise new songs throughout the year, mostly successfully! We have performed quite a few gigs throughout the summer, one at a beach party at a residential home, which was great fun. We are holding a 'family and friends' singalong event on the 17th of December, 2.30pm at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, where we hold our fortnightly meetings. We would love u3a members to come and visit us, especially if you think you may wish to learn to play the ukulele sometime in the future.

Jeff Naman 07976 633798

Walking Groups

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

Amblers (3 - 4 miles)

Sue Osborne

Our November Amblers walk began in Stony Lane, Little Chalfont. It was the most beautiful bright sunny day with autumn colours in full display. We meandered through woods along paths covered with leaves, leading us to reminisce about our childhoods and kicking up such leaves! We finished our walk with coffee, cake and conversation at the local garden centre. What a lovely way to pass a November morning!

Walkers (5 - 7 miles)

Walkers 1

Stuart Stanley

Walkers 1 meet at various locations on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 10:00. Walks are usually between 4 and 5.5 miles long and are led by members. And we usually meet up for a picnic or pub lunch (optional) after the walk. Walks are planned with walk leaders and published every 3 months, and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate. For the third quarter of 2024, we held walks in Harwell, Little Marlow Hill, Sarratt, and Aldbury and for the fourth quarter our walks were in Little Gaddesden, The Lee, Berkhamsted, Little Hay, Chorleywood and Cliveden.

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

Walkers 2

Sue Rawbone

Walkers 2 meets on the fourth Thursday of the month and the walks are normally five to six miles in length.

The last few months have found us walking around the Lee, Ley Hill and Winchmore Hill, and mostly with good weather. Now we are approaching the winter months, which means mud and inclement weather but always we have the pleasure of the company of other walkers. We have also had new people join the Group, which is great.

The picture is of the gate, which has been installed by the Chiltern Society in memory of Martin Cooper and has been funded by our £1 donations given by members of Walkers 2 & 3. It can be seen on the road between Chesham and Great Missenden directly opposite the turning into Hyde Lane. As always we welcome new members, but please contact the Convenor first.



Walkers 3

Jill Thomas & Catherine Haridi

Another three lovely walks to report back on, starting with Libby's walk around Bois woods and the dreaded Jacobs Ladder. In October we were in Chorleywood, for Jan and Bernie's walk around Chenies and down to the Chess Valley, which was damp and muddy in places, but very enjoyable as well. In November Lynne took us on a very informative walk around Boxmoor. Many of us hadn't walked over that way before, and her local knowledge added to the experience: A big thank-you to our walk leaders. Our walks are approximately five miles long, on the first Wednesday of the month. New members are always welcome.



Both Striders Groups have continued to be as active as ever over the last three months, with regular Tuesday walks, occasional longer all-day walks on fifth Tuesdays (in what are loosely called 'Summer months' in this country of ours!) and planning for future events and walks. Most of our walks have been in the Chilterns, but some groups have walked further afield in foreign parts like Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire and even London.

We continue to receive voluntary donations of £1 from each walker on our regular walks and use the accumulated money to pay for replacing tired old stiles, which are often a hazard for walkers, with more user-friendly metal gates, with the assistance of the Chiltern Society and Bucks County Council. So far this year we have raised enough for the installation of two such gates: one in the Bellingdon area and the other, to which the Walkers' groups have contributed half, we hope will be installed in the Great Missenden area in memory of one of the long-term members of both Striders and Walkers: please look out for our plaques when you are out walking in the Chilterns.

Our next forthcoming event will be the annual Joint Christmas Walk and Lunch, which will again be based in Cholesbury. Two groups will set off in opposite directions on a circular walk via Bellingdon, where we will meet up to share a convivial glass of mulled wine and mince pies, to finish at Cholesbury Village Hall for a light lunch and some musical entertainment. As usual, we will find out which of our members will inherit the titles of Champion Walkers in the Two Groups; and also how far across the world our cumulative mileage would have taken us in 2024. We will once more be holding a raffle with prizes contributed by our members, the proceeds of which will this year go to that wonderful organisation, The Chiltern Society, which does so much in our area to nurture and preserve the land and heritage around us. I wonder how many of us realise that the Chiltern Society has now been in existence for some 60 years!

Both Groups have walk leaders in the process of arranging our regular and additional ones in the first six months of 2025. Both Convenors would like to place on record our grateful thanks to those members who willingly give up their time to recce and lead our walks: without them, the Groups simply could not function. In the spring and summer of 2025 it is possible that we will offer more longer all-day walks with a picnic lunch halfway, sometimes slightly further afield than usual.

Our Groups continue to grow, with younger CVu3a members joining and lowering the average age of the Group as a whole: excellent news for the longer-term future of Striders. There is however no waiting list for either Striders Group. So, if you would like to join one or other of the Groups, please contact either Andrew Brown (Striders 1) or Ian Lee (Striders 2). Striders 1 meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month; Striders 2 meets on the first and third Tuesdays.

Walks into History: Country

Peter Schweiger



West Wycombe Caves: September 2024

Twenty adventurous souls met at the Walled Garden car park in West Wycombe on the 11th of September. It was a very crowded café so we went outside to be briefed about the walk to the caves. They are not true caves really, but tunnels that were dug out in the 1740s to give work for the local villagers whose harvest had failed. The landlord, Sir Francis Dashwood, paid 100 men one shilling a day for a year, to dig out nearly a quarter of a mile of tunnels under the hill. The spoil was used to build a road to High Wycombe replacing the one that ran in the valley.

These caves were then used as a tourist attraction and for the first six years as a meeting place for the Hell-fire club. The members got up to all sorts of pranks including dressing up a baboon as the devil. It was concealed in a trunk and Lord Sandwich was persuaded to open it. He immediately recanted all his many sins.

The tunnels lead on to various small chambers with figures dressed up, a banqueting hall and, further on, a bridge over the river Styx just before you get to the end at the Inner Temple. That is more or less underneath the church with the gold ball on top. We then walked over to the 'Apple Orchard' restaurant, where we had delicious lunches in several small cosy rooms. (cont.)

Bovingdon: November 2024

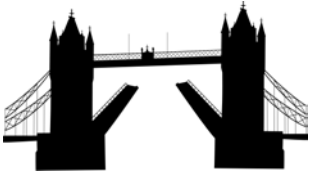
November 13th was a perfect sunny day when 14 of us went for a walk around Bovingdon. We were very lucky to be led by 92 year old Peter McClelland, who was a mine of information about the history of this village. A leading member of the history society, he was full of interesting facts. We met in the excellent pub 'The Bell', progressed to the church and then round the village. We learned that Bovingdon had been a self-sufficient farming community and that the Ryders, a family of Victorian benefactors, funded the church, school and also bought running water to the Village. They were remembered with a memorial, which looks like a well. We learned about the Bovingdon poisoner and walked to the outskirts of the prison where we were regaled with more stories. We had a very successful walk and finished with an excellent lunch at 'The Bell'.

Walks in London

Angela Shipley

Treasurer: Mick Rothwell

Regents Canal: 14th August 2024



Granary Square is one of London's newest places to be seen and, if you want to know how to get there, then follow one of our volunteer Inland Waterways guides as seconded by London Walks. They are indeed knowledgeable and enthusiastic in equal measure. Our fees were donated by LWs to the Inland Waterways this time, for the upkeep of the canals in London.

Firstly, pause to admire the roof of Kings Cross station. This Grade One listed Victorian yellow brick turreted building was the work of Lewis Cubitt and is now topped, following restoration in 2009, by a towering metal and glass mosaic of diamonds and triangles, in the style of the Gherkin and the ceiling of the British Library. Out in the air, we passed the Google/Facebook building that surpasses, in its length, the height of the Shard if it were laid on its side.

Over the bridge of the overshadowed canal and back in time a couple of hundred years, you arrive in Granary Square and face the 1080 water jets playing from the paved ground. Originally the work of Lewis Cubitt in 1852 and the home of canal boats and the goods they offloaded, it is now a place of entertainment since its revamp in 2012. The square is backed by his vast grain store where, back in the day, 5000 tons of grain was turned into four million loaves every four days. Now it is an art school. The 1850 Coal Drop Yard speaks for itself and once housed half million tons of coal! It now sports, beyond belief, a curving 'Kissing Roof' of 80,000 slates, atop its shops and restaurants. Behind, four of twelve gasometers remain on-site and within these metal circles reside the owners of their new luxury apartments: A penthouse here will set you back £8,500,000.

Lest we get too impressed by the modern, we dropped to the canal path, back in time again where the two ton gates of St Pancras Lock were operated by women in World War Two, and even further back when the industry was coal and lime and the cargo, crockery from the Midlands, dragged by pack horses, and legged through the tunnels of 6000 bricks, by human crew. Horses were precious and we searched in the water for the remnants of several horse ramps to aid the rescue of any who fell in, and further along, a hospital for 500 horses. The cargo nowadays are human and we waved to some enthusiastically getting tipsy, singing away on a barge on some hen-party type of event. We followed the history along the towpath to Camden where our senses were shocked back to the present by the colour, noise, food smells and chaos of the market, bustling High Street and diverse culture that is London today.

Give me the peaceful towpath of our ancestors any day, but maybe not their smells.

Angela Shipley

Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



The Wildlife Group were looking forward to their last outdoor session of 2024 but sadly it had to be cancelled on the morning because the weather wasn't suitable to have a display of Birds of Prey so we will be looking to re-schedule for 2025. October saw us return to Amersham Common Village Hall when we had an interesting talk from the bird vet Alan Jones. He talked about Parrot-watching in Brazil, but covered much more than parrots, including the conservation work being done there. (cont.)

In November we had a return visit from Lindsay Engers of Chiltern Heritage Orchards with five members of the Chiltern u3a Veg Patch Group joining us. He updated us on general progress in looking to re-introduce several species of fruit that are no longer grown commercially. He then spoke about the importance of looking after the soil and how nature has very effective ways of working, such that fruit and veg crops of all sorts can be successfully produced organically without the need for any fertilisers, pesticides, etc: lots of useful information.

Our December meeting will be our usual social gathering which will include an appropriate fun quiz as well as a look forward to our programme for 2025, which currently includes talks about deer, 'volcanoes and dragons', swan-apping, hedgehogs and squirrels.

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 during the autumn and winter months.

Wine Appreciation 1

Pauline & Tom Hohenberg



In August we were at the Broomby's and sampled several excellent wines from the Loire Valley.

We were delighted, in September, to host a tasting delivered by Eddie, the manager of Laithwaites in Beaconsfield. He took us through all the wines that are on special offers until Christmas, ranging from Champagne to Rioja.

In October we assembled at the Curtis's for Spanish wines, excepting Riojas, of which there were a surprising number and range.

Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



September's meeting was hosted by Robert. The theme for the evening was 'Wines from Croatia, Austria and Italy', all from Laithwaites. It would have been lovely to say that the wine from a slightly more unusual wine-making country like Croatia came out on top. Sadly, this wasn't the case and it was again Italy that won the night's scoring with Sicily's flagship red *Nero d'Avola* with its rich spice and blackberry notes that won by some distance.

Jan hosted the October meeting and her theme was 'WA2 Winners Revisited': do we still recognise and enjoy them? These were winners from the past couple of years and unsurprisingly, most scored well again, showing that either our palates haven't changed too much or we do actually know a little bit about wine! Again, the reds tended to outscore the white wines and the overall winner was *Aprimondo Appassimento Sangiovese 2022* from Tesco at £9.25 (before any discount offers). Appassimento means the partial dehydration of the grape providing an intense wine with flavours of fig, date, prune and vanilla. This wine is my particular recommendation for this quarter. Do give it a try particularly when Tesco have their offers.

November's meeting was hosted by Tina and Michael, who gave us some interesting wines chosen by fellow slurpers at Brian Elliott's (an online wine expert) Mid-Week Wines blog. On this occasion, the white wines scored better overall but, despite this, it was again an Italian red that outscored the others by some distance. This was called *Terre di Chieti*, which is a really nice example of a Primitivo from Puglia in the southern 'heel' of Italy. It is available from Tesco, normally at £8 but at the time of writing is just £6 if you buy 3 bottles and have a Club Card. It was a close run thing between October's overall recommendation and this wine

I should say that I do not have shares in Tesco and hope that we will choose a non-Italian winner next quarter! The difficulty with this is that Italy certainly does have a huge variety of excellent wines at sensible prices. As they say in the media "other wines are also available!" (cont.)

"I've trained my dog to bring me a glass of wine...it's a Bordeaux Collie."

"What's the secret to enjoying a good bottle of wine? Open the bottle to let it breathe.

If it doesn't look like it's breathing, give it mouth-to-mouth."

(vincarta.com)

Also, can I add another recommended wine ideal for the festive season? This one is a bit left field, but some excellent bubbles are available from the Co-op and at less than a tenner. It's Co-op Irresistible *Fairtrade Tilimuqui Sparkling*. It's just £9, made from the Torrontes grape, which is Argentina's flagship white grape but more usually found in still wine: Lovely flavours of peach and red apple but with sherbet lemon acidity.

Cheers!

Graham's recommendations: *Aprimondo Appassimento Sangiovese 2022*: Tesco, £9.25. For the festive season: *Fairtrade Tilimuqui Sparkling*: Co-op, £9

Writers

Helene & John Bunyan



We are delighted to welcome a new member to our Group: very good to have you on board Garry. Again we have had to juggle our meetings to work around our members' other commitments, but even so, we have had three very good sessions this last quarter: September's topic, 'Musical Instruments' attracted varied anecdotes, while in October, the subject, 'In At The Deep End!' gave rise to some imaginative fiction pieces, though at one point in the reading, we weren't sure whether we were listening to fiction or fact!

In celebration of Garry joining our Group, our November topic was 'The Newcomer'. Again we had varied and lively contributions. 'Something Inherited' is our topic for December.

We have room for more members if anyone would like to join us. Our meetings are generally at 2.30pm on the second Friday of the month in a member's home. We agree a topic for our next meeting but members can present from any work that they may have in hand.

Good Hours

I had for my winter evening walk —
No one at all with whom to talk,
But I had the cottages in a row
Up to their shining eyes in snow.

And I thought I had the folk within:
I had the sound of a violin;
I had a glimpse through curtain laces
Of youthful forms and youthful faces.

I had such company outward bound.
I went till there were no cottages found.
I turned and repented, but coming back
I saw no window but that was black.

Over the snow my creaking feet
Disturbed the slumbering village street
Like profanation, by your leave,
At ten o'clock of a winter eve.

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963)

Chess Valley u3a Groups Schedule

FIRST in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Art Discussion 2 (pm)	Walkers 1	Walkers 3	Wildlife	
Pilates Classes 1,2 and 3 (am/pm)	Striders 2	Patchwork & Quilting (am)	Current Affairs (pm)	
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)	Music Appreciation (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Ukulele (pm)	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Book 2 (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Wine 2 (eve) (pm)		

Monday Groups' schedules are sometimes interrupted by public holidays; contact the Convenors for more information

Tai Chi meets in school term-times only

SECOND in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
History (pm)	Amblers	Walks into History OR Walks into London (alternate months)	Art Discussion 1 (am)	Writers (pm)
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders 1		Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	Line Dancing (am)	Monthly Talk (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	French Conversation (am)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Dinghy Sailing (pm) (April-October)	Bridge (pm)		
	Fun Quizzes (eve) (November-April)			

The Chess Valley u3a Committee meets on the first or second Tuesday of each month, two days before the Monthly Talk

THIRD in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Walkers 1	Patchwork & Quilting (all day)	Book 4 (am)	Railways (am)
Canasta (pm)	Striders 2	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	Book 1 (am)
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)		
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Book 3 (pm)	Photography and Digital Imaging (pm)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		

Stamps and Collectables meets in members' houses every two months

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

MOTO (Members On Their Own) have an 'anchor meeting' on the first Saturday morning of each month

MOTO2 meets for lunch on the second Saturday of each month



Above: Helen Barnard of the Knitting & Other Crafts Group created this magnificent Batman jumper for one of her friend's children.

Above Right: Striders enjoy good weather on their October walk around the parks and gardens of London. Here they are at the statue of 'Serenity' in Hyde Park.

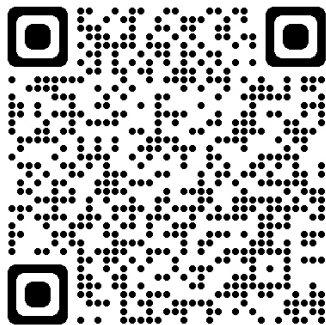
Right: Walkers 3 during their November walk around Boxmoor.

Below: Back in August, the Walks in London Group visited the Information Centre for the new development behind Kings Cross Station: their guide was Richard Cohen.





In Keeping with the season, members of the Art Group have been producing some wonderful work around autumn leaves and, in the case of the robin, investigating the use of...teabags! Fruit teas proved useful for providing different colours.



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