

**u3a**  
Chess Valley

Registered Charity 1126990

# NEWSLETTER

June - August 2026

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



Front Cover: Andrew Brown from the Photography with Digital Imaging Group captured this atmospheric picture of the Market Hall in Old Amersham during their May field trip.

Right: Members of the Walks into History Country Group queue for their coffees at 'The Comet Cafe' at the De Havilland Museum which they visited in May.



Above: West Marshall gave a brilliant talk to our History Group in March: *A Teapotted History of Teapots*. A professional potter himself, this wonderful example of his own work (Centre Right) featured in his presentation.

Right: What a lovely duck! This is one of Fiona's creations which, as a member of the Knitting & Other Crafts Group, she completed recently along with a baby's jumper.



# Speakers for monthly talks

All talks start at 2pm

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



Jason Harper

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June

## *Living, Loving and Leaving Iran*

Growing up in a Christian family and leading a relatively sheltered life, a good university degree helped launch Jason into corporate employment, which provided him the opportunity to broaden his horizons and learn more about the world. In this talk, Jason uses story-telling and humour to take the audience through a day in the life of an Englishman living as a student in Tehran. At the same time, he describes Iranian culture and surroundings, finishing up with what has been termed an 'escape' from the country, followed by some recent history. The talk is non-political and is really about giving the audience an eye-opening insight into Iran.

Suzi Clark

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July

## *Butterflies and Baked Beans*

Suzi is an events company director, author and artist. *Butterflies and Baked Beans* is the first in a trilogy and she hopes to publish the sequel, *Honeybees and Heartburn*, by summer 2026. *Butterflies and Baked Beans* describes what happens when you lose your high-powered job and income to become a carer for your slightly muddled dad. It includes stories about the book's setting; her Civil War cottage in Park Street village. There are funny stories about her parents' mixed-race marriage and her experiences of internet dating. Sookie, her heroine, is remarkably like Suzi...

John Tyler

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August

## *The Forgotten River*

John reveals to us the wildlife and history of the tranquil River Thame, from source to mouth and from the Stone Age to the present day. He studied Zoology and Conservation at university and for 22 years was the Warden of the Sevenoaks Reserve in Kent, managed by an independent charity. Although he enjoys all aspects of the countryside, John has a particular fondness for insects and is a former Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. His last talk to us was an entertaining and informative trip along the Ridgeway.

Eleanor Phillips

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September

## *Phantoms of the Chilterns*

Local historian Eleanor Phillips, Chess Valley u3a member and lifelong Chesham resident, regularly brings the town's lost stories to light with talks and publications. Many of her books are available locally with profits going to local charities. Come with us as she takes us through the Chilterns on a journey of the paranormal, visiting towns, villages and the lonely countryside from High Wycombe to Hemel Hempstead. A good fright in time for Halloween?



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



# Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our June to August newsletter. I am writing this in my study, having taken refuge from the unseasonably high May temperatures. Why are we British never happy with our weather, whether it is too cold, too hot, too wet or too dry?

I haven't got a great deal to say this month except to urge you to attend our AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> June. If that isn't enticing enough in itself, it will be followed by what promises to be an interesting, and possibly timely, talk on life in modern Iran. I look forward to seeing you then.

*With best wishes*



*James Cadle*

chair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

## New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Carol Adie	<i>Amersham</i>	Sandra Message	<i>Chesham</i>
Ann Alderson	<i>Chalfont St Giles</i>	Helen Nolan	<i>Chesham</i>
Dorothy Allsop	<i>Holmer Green</i>	David Ouvry	<i>Amersham</i>
Teresa Baggott	<i>Amersham</i>	Wendy Parker	<i>Chesham</i>
Peter Brand	<i>Great Kingshill</i>	Keith Patrick	<i>Chesham</i>
Jacqui Cann	<i>Chesham</i>	Andrew Reynolds	<i>Chesham</i>
Reymund Delahunty	<i>Chesham</i>	Alison Robinson	<i>Bovingdon</i>
Yvette Harding	<i>Tring</i>	Ann St Pierre	<i>Chesham</i>
Mandy Hendrey	<i>Abbots Langley</i>	Des Slade	<i>Chesham</i>
Shilpa Kothari	<i>Rickmansworth</i>	Lynne Williams	<i>Amersham</i>

If you know anyone you think might be interested in joining, please ask them to get in touch with the Membership Secretary; contact details on page 6.

## Recent visits organised by the Events Team

### Visit to Eltham Palace, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026

We were blessed with a warm and sunny day as 41 members made the tortuous journey to Eltham via various tunnels under the Thames.

Eltham Palace offered a fascinating blend of medieval history and 1930's Art Deco design including the Great Hall dating back to Edward IV in the 1470s, part of a Royal Palace where monarchs stayed and hunted for over 200 years.

After centuries of neglect, Eltham was leased to the Courtauld family by the Crown Estate in 1933. The new house was built in three years and the Great Hall was also renovated at a total cost of (then) £2 million. However, by 1944, the family had become tired of the bombing raids, gave back the balance of the lease and built themselves a new mansion in Rhodesia. Eltham was taken over by English Heritage in 1995, when a further £1.5 million was spent on renovations.

After coffee on arrival, we were given an excellent guided tour of the complex, and after a buffet lunch taken outside in the sunshine, we had time to revisit the house or take a stroll in the landscaped garden.

The visit was a great success; the combination of rich history, striking design and beautiful surroundings, enhanced by the excellent weather, made it a memorable experience for all.

*Michael Cohn*

*(reports continue on next page)*

## Visit to Upton House and Hidcote, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026

The weather was cold, bright and with no rain as we started our visit at Upton House. The vast collection of paintings contains works by George Stubbs, Saenredam, Hogarth, Bosch, El Greco and Gainsborough. The collection is still hung as it was defined by Lord Bearsted. From Dutch art in the Long Gallery, to some of our oldest paintings in the Picture Gallery, the wonderful collection remains today as Lord Bearsted intended.

We then moved on to Hidcote Manor. It is one of the best-known and most influential Arts and Crafts gardens in Britain, with its linked garden rooms of hedges, rare trees, shrubs and borders. The gardens were in first class condition, especially the wisteria.

*Alan Gray*

## I'd rather be 39...

In snooker terms, I recently potted, a score of EIGHTY and saw and bought a tea mug from a charity shop carrying the above message, which seemed at the time to express a sentiment that I thought I shared.

It's not that getting to eighty is such a bad thing, as it's usually much better than the alternative. No, it's the surprise or, in my case, the total shock of realising that if time hasn't quite caught up with me, it is trying very hard to and will inevitably succeed.

The maths, or the math as our American friends will have it, are (or is it is?) obstinately correct. I have a birth certificate (probably fake) to prove the fact. But was the Stones' *Aftermath* album really released 60 years ago? I think not. However, at the same time I can vaguely recall that 1966 was the year of some or other football match. And now! I have children who are older than I ever imagined I would be but, worse, I have reached the age my parents were when I was nudging them towards a care home. I feel that time has concertinaed itself or that we are looking at the past through a malevolent distorting mirror. But equally that cannot be, and clearly isn't the case.

Our generation has been, by and large, not merely a lucky generation, but by most standards the luckiest ever: More prosperous (including an unlooked for but pointless 25p weekly addition to my state pension just for being old-ish!), more upward mobility, better health and education, longer lived, less prejudice, no more stultifying class distinction and, at the time of writing, no World Wars...

This is now, particularly the last mentioned, all in the melting pot of a dystopian world for succeeding generations to sort out, but its truth still holds for most of us. More than that, perhaps our generation has been too lucky, too careless of our good fortune and too unsympathetic to our successors.

But, as one of the lucky or luckiest ones, I don't think I want to be 39 again and will return my mug to the Help the Aged charity shop from whence it came and thank my extremely lucky stars.

*'Timewaster'*

**Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2026**

## From the Groups Coordinator

We have now successfully started three new Groups: MOTO 3, German Conversation Beginners, and Bridge for Beginners – and all three have received an influx of members. So, a BIG THANK YOU to Val Littlejohn and Camilla Plummer, Caroline Jenks and Marion Lloyd for volunteering to run the Groups.

Another possible Group could be Sitting Yoga, but once again we would need a volunteer to act as Convenor. If anyone would be interested, please contact me at [groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk) and we could take it a stage further.

On Friday 10 April we held our annual Convenors' Meeting. We chose a Friday as there are very few Groups meeting on that day. We have 60-plus Convenors, and of those 26 attended and we received 12 apologies. The attendance was a bit of a disappointment but everyone who attended was happy to participate in the cream tea which was provided during the break half way through the meeting. The newest members of the Committee were introduced to the Convenors and the remaining Committee Members gave updates on what has been happening throughout the year. We are still looking for a Publicity Coordinator so if you know of anyone looking to make new friends and for an interesting outlet after retiring, please speak to any Committee Member.

An updated version of the Group Convenors Guidelines has been printed and copies were distributed to the attendees at the Convenors' Meeting. Please let me know if you would like a copy. Alternatively a copy can be found on our website: [www.cvu3a.uk](http://www.cvu3a.uk). Log in and the document is under the 'Groups' tab.

**Sue Broad**  
**Groups Coordinator**  
[groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)

## Chess Valley u3a Committee

Chair	James Cadle*	<a href="mailto:chair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk">chair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk</a>	07889 732291
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	James Cadle*		07889 732291
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Publicity Coordinator	Position vacant		
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Committee Member	Jim Campbell	<a href="mailto:jim.campbell@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk">jim.campbell@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk</a>	07702 982209
*Also Trustee of Chess Valley u3a			

# Chess Valley u3a Convenors

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

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
Art	Janice Gray	art@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Art Discussion 1	Angela Bishop	artdiscuss@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Sarah Organ	
Art Discussion 2	Caroline Jenks	artdiscuss2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 1	Caroline Jenks	bookgroup1@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 2	Alison Pullinger	bookgroup2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Georgina Mead	
Book Group 3	Helen Barnard	bookgroup3@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 4	Jackie Cobb	bookgroup4@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Bowls (Short Mat), (Chiltern)	Sue Spalton	shortbowls@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Peter Williams	
Bridge	John Curtis	bridge@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Bridge for Beginners	Marion Lloyd	startbridge@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Canasta	Linda Hepworth	canasta@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Sue Hawksley	
Chess	Caroline Jenks	chess@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
City of London Churches	Jackie Cobb	londonchurches@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Current Affairs	Eileen Overton	currentaffs@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Dinghy Sailing	Wendy Barnes	sailing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Judith Young	
French Conversation	Morag Robertson	frenchcons@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
French Intermediate	Hilary Alleston	french@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Fun Quizzes	James Cadle	quizzes@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Gardening	Jenny Beirne	garden@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
German	Jenny Lee	german@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
German Conversation Beginners	Caroline Jenks	startgerman@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
History	Claire Paterson	history@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Ian Hutt	
Keep Fit for 60+	Kay Johnson	keepfit60@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Jackie Cobb	
Knitting & Other Crafts	Jo Biggs	knit@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Line Dancing (Chiltern)	Linda English	linedance@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Mah Jong	Ed Perrott	mahjong@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

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## Chess Valley u3a Convenors (continued)

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	Ted Harrington	
MOTO 3	Val Littlejohn	Moto3@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Camilla Plummer	
Music Appreciation	Geoff Hayes	music@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Patchwork & Quilting	Angela Bratton	patchquilt@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Dee Watson	
Photography with Digital Imaging	David Hurd	photography@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Pippa Greensmith	
Pilates (1, 2 and 3)	Christine Ross	pilates@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Liz Howlett	
Play Reading	Joan Barton	playread@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Linda Hepworth	
Poetry	Christine Ogborne	poetry@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Railways	Graham Yellowley	railways@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	James Cadle	
Singing for Pleasure	Angela Bratton	singing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
Spanish Conv (Inter)	Hilary Alleston	spanishconv@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Stamps & Other Collectables	Steve Epps	stamps@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Tai Chi	Sue Broad	taichi@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Meg Brinton	
Theatre	Geoff Naylor	theatre@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Helen Barnard	
Ukulele	Jeff Naman	ukulele@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Heather Sprake	
Amblers	Susan Osborne	amblers@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 1	Stuart Stanley	walkers1@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 2	Michael Ferraro	walkers2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 3	Catherine Haridi	walkers3@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Jill Thomas	
Striders	Ian Barrett	striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Keith Pittman	
Walks into History: Country	Peter Schweiger	walkshist@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walks into History: London	Angela Shipley	walkslondon@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Wildlife	Harry Howlett	wildlife@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Keith Sonley	
Wine Appreciation 1	Pauline & Tom Hohenberg	wine@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Wine Appreciation 2	Graham Hitchener	wine2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Writers	John & Helene Bunyan	writers@chessvalley-u3a.org.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

Janice Gray

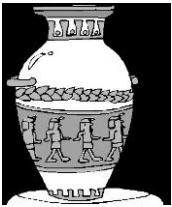


Our Group has welcomed a new member after a shout out in the last Newsletter, but we still have space for another to join. The last quarter saw us working on Barbadian and Caribbean pictures; full of uplifting bright colours, which was the attraction. Some members have started their calendar pictures, each having a 'lucky dip' on what month they will be tackling.

Decisions have to be made on subject matter and the medium for the painter to choose, conforming to the same size. Some members will need to do more than one month!

## Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop & Sarah Organ



The subject of our March meeting was 'Turner and Constable', timed to coincide with the exhibition at Tate Britain. They were contemporaneous artists; last year marked the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of J.M.W. Turner and this year, the same for John Constable. Both took landscape painting to a new level. Whilst Constable is renowned for his portrayals of everyday rural life, with great attention to detail, Turner is most well-known for his dramatic, atmospheric scenes, with much less detail. It was a pleasure for all of us to view their less familiar works. Several members had seen the exhibition and enjoyed their sketchbooks, including one image by Turner, a small graphite view of Cader Idris, from 1798. Constable in 1821-22, whilst residing in Hampstead, made many studies of clouds showing the myriad effects of the weather. We found Constable's *The Wheatfield* a pleasing image of rural life during harvest, with everyone at work, bringing their lunch and their obedient dog. In contrast, we saw the industrial revolution in action in Turner's *Sheilds, on the River Tyne* (1823), a masterly view of coal being shipped up the river for the furnaces, at moonlight. Finally, we wondered whether Turner had influenced Monet with his work, *The Scarlet Sunset: A French Town on a River* (c1830), with its bright yellow squiggle as the setting sun was reflected on the water.

The topic for our April meeting focused on some of the artists often dismissed by critics and thus missing from our more prominent galleries, as well as artists we felt should be better known. We started with Jack Vettriano (1951-2025), arguably Scotland's most popular artist. From a working-class background and largely self-taught, we looked at some of his iconic images, including *The Singing Butler* (one of the most reproduced paintings in Britain), *Bluebird in Bonneville*, *The Billy Boys* and *Dance Me to the End of Love*. Another Scottish artist, Caroline Walker (born 1982), depicts the everyday lives of women, often on large canvases. Her subjects range from quietly intimate portraits, such as her series *Night Feeds*, depicting a mother feeding her newborn in the early hours, to the all-women medical team in *The Theatre*, a giant portrait of NHS workers in an operating theatre. Another popular artist we considered was Beryl Cook (1926-2008), who drew inspiration from her home city of Plymouth. Her paintings of ladies bowling, pub scenes, and *Sailors and Seagulls* made us all smile. Two Cornish based artists we looked at were Terry Whybrow (1932-2020), whose still life paintings depict pottery in a very tactile way, and Harold Harvey (1874-1941), who painted scenes depicting Cornish working people as well as landscapes and interiors. We were captivated by Harvey's depiction of light in the garden in *The Letter*, amused by the painting *Leading the Donkey to Water*, and interested to note the details in *The Tea Table*, depicting furniture and furnishings of a bygone age. We considered some of the work of Richard Eurich (1903-1992), a war artist who moved to the New Forest, where he painted seascapes.

(cont.)

We also looked at some of the work of two artists associated with 'Outsider Art', both of whom spent a large part of their lives in institutions where they created their work. Adolf Wölfli (1864-1930), a Swiss artist who created very detailed works including books and images, and Friedrich Schröder Sonnenstern (1892-1982), a German artist, who created imaginary, often disturbing figures. We were introduced to a Buckinghamshire artist, Jill Blakey, who uses mixed media to create often large vibrant abstract artworks, full of texture and detail, and often with a chessboard or mathematical theme. Other living artists we considered were Bill Jacklin (born 1943), who depicts urban subjects, often seen from above, and Rob Barnes (born 1934), whose work is inspired by his native Norfolk.

In May we looked at the work of Francis Bacon (1909-1992), whose dramatic works are complex and disturbing. Although we all found his work perplexing and sometimes difficult to understand, it was interesting to learn more about him and be challenged by a selection of his work. Born in Dublin, he had a troubled childhood, with a particularly difficult relationship with his father, and was raised largely by the family nanny, to whom he was close. He left home in his late teens, drifted in and out of various jobs in London, Paris and Berlin, drank, gambled and explored the homosexual underworld. He began to focus seriously on painting in his late twenties. We looked at his early works, *Crucifixion* (1933), partly based on Picasso's *Three Dancers* (1925), and his *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), which established him as a painter, using a triptych format which he used subsequently. Another variation he commonly used was that of male portraits isolated in rooms or cage-like structures, including his 'Screaming Heads' and portraits of popes. He painted around fifty pope portraits, though he destroyed many of them. We looked at his 'Head VI' (1949) and his *Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953), alongside the Velazquez painting that inspired his pope paintings. Looking at some of his portraits, we wondered how these were viewed by his sitters, although it was interesting to look at his 'Figure in a Landscape (Miss Diana Watson) (1957) and note its almost impressionistic influence.

## Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



'The Golden Age of Dutch Painting' was the theme of our March meeting, a period in art history roughly spanning the seventeenth century. The Netherlands and Flanders were the most prosperous nations in Europe, their wealth generated mostly from trade. The wealthy furnished their homes with luxurious goods and decorated their walls with exquisite paintings. Art guilds proliferated and their artistic output grew exponentially. There was a hierarchy of genres in painting during this period, the order being: history, including religion and allegory, portrait painting, scenes of everyday life, landscape and finally still life. Some genres were considered better than others but did not sell so readily. We looked at Hendrick Avercamp's perfect winter scenes, depicting life in the icy winters of the seventeenth century's 'Little Ice Age'; Pieter de Hooch and Johannes Vermeer's interiors, painted with such lightness and precision; Jan Steen's humorous and satirical pictures of family life; and Aelbert Cuyp's pastoral scene with windmills; all well-known artists of the period. Lesser-known female artists during the Golden Age were Michaelina Wautier and Judith Leyster. Both had been successful in the male-dominated world of art, but history had somewhat overlooked them. Indeed, some of Leyster's work had been mis-attributed to Frans Hals, such was her mastery.

'Windows and Mirrors, Reflections and Views', was the topic of our April meeting. Artists through the ages had featured reflections and mirrors to add further dimension to their compositions, the earliest example which we looked at was *The Arnolfini Portrait*, by Jan van Eyck, a circular convex mirror placed centrally to reflect the artist himself, as though he were a guest being invited into the Arnolfini chamber. Edouard Manet's *Bar at The Folies Bergere* defies logical perspective and continues to intrigue the viewer. Victorian artists John William Waterhouse, John Singer Sargent and Ken Howard, a twentieth century RA, all used the mirror to reflect the timeless beauty of women. American artist and illustrator, Norman Rockwell's *Triple Self-Portrait* was a clever whimsical take on portraiture. We see his back view, his unfinished portrait on the easel and his face reflected in a mirror. His *Girl at a Mirror* pictured a young girl staring at her reflection, hoping to see herself as a beautiful movie star, with a cutting from a magazine featuring Jane Russell in her lap. Another American artist, Edward Hopper often used windows in his compositions. In *Night Windows*, we are looking into an illuminated room and in *Western Motel*, we are doing the opposite, looking out through a large window at the passing traffic.

(cont.)

Pop Art's David Hockney's *Splash* and *A Bigger Splash* exude warmth under cloudless Californian skies, and he uses reflections on the water to add excitement to otherwise static compositions. Mirrors and reflections proved to be a very varied and interesting topic; another enlightening meeting. There was no meeting for us in May due to yet another Bank Holiday!

### Book 1

Caroline Jenks



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

Members have recommended some non-fiction books recently, including: *All That Glitters* by Orlando Whitfield, about fraud in the art world; *I Swear – My Life with Tourette's* by John Davidson; and *Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad* by Daniel Finkelstein.

We heard about two books which were challenging to read in style or content, but which raised important issues for discussion about the Māori people of New Zealand: *Once There Were Warriors* by Alan Duff and *Aue* by Becky Manawatu.

Fiction we have enjoyed recently included: *The Rose Code* by Kate Quinn, set in Bletchley Park; *The Boy from the Sea* by Garrett Carr about a baby washed up on the coast of Donegal; *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by T G Klune, a dystopian fantasy raising issues of prejudice and tolerance; and *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams.

A new member has just joined, so we are full again, but please let the Convenor know if you want to join a waiting list.

### Book 2

Alison Pullinger & Georgina Mead



We continue to meet in Amersham library at 2 pm on the first Wednesday of the month and receive a set of books from the library. We have one vacancy at present. Please contact the Convenors if you would like to join us

We read three very different books this quarter:

The first was *Violeta* by Isabel Allende. It's probably one of her most ambitious novels as it deals with the 100-year life story of Violeta, born in an unnamed South American country, and includes a pandemic, the Great Depression, loss of family wealth, political upheavals, marriage problems, estrangement and eventual peace. During the 2020 pandemic, Violeta decided to write her life story to her grandson. Allende's storytelling is, as usual, interesting and gripping. But does she bite off more than she can chew?

Our next book was a collection of 10 short stories by different authors, *Stories to Make You Smile*. Some of the stories were amusing, and others, less so, but not without interest. They were stories of modern life, so did provoke discussion. The consensus was that novels allow the author to develop the narrative and themes more fully.

Our final book was *Wrong Place, Wrong Time* by Gillian McAllister. This book is a reverse time travel thriller. A mother witnesses her son commit a murder. She then attempts to prevent this from happening. Every morning on waking she finds that she has travelled further into the past. Meanwhile she is also trying to uncover the motives behind the crime. This book split the Group. Most of us found it difficult to follow the narrative but others persevered and enjoyed the book.

Georgina Mead and Alison Pullinger

### Book 3

Helen Barnard



Our Book Group continues to vary between classics and more modern tomes! This month we will be discussing our own copies of *Wuthering Heights*, but next month move back to library books with *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. There is usually a lively discussion, and a popular part of the meetings is the tea and biscuits/cake! The Group meets in members' homes and currently has no vacancies.



We meet in each other's homes. The books are chosen by individual members of the Group, and we purchase our own copies. We have recently read *The Go Between* by R P Hartley. We have also read *The Promise* by Damon Galgut which was discussed at our May meeting.

We would be pleased to have another member in the Group. If you are interested, please contact Jackie Cobb, the Convenor.

### Bowls (Short Mat)

Sue Spalton & Peter Williams (Chiltern u3a)

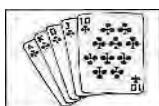


Chiltern u3a extends an invitation to our members to join them in playing Short Mat Bowls. Summer sessions are held outdoors at Holmer Green Sports Association each Monday from 13.50 to 16.00. The cost is £3, including a cup of tea per session. So, if you would like to "try your hand" then get in touch: experience not needed; tuition

given; bowls available. Please contact the Convenors before attending, for more information: [shortbowls@cvu3a.uk](mailto:shortbowls@cvu3a.uk).

### Bridge

John Curtis



The Bridge Group continues to meet on Wednesday afternoons at Chartridge Park Golf Club and plays ACOL bridge to a reasonable standard in a friendly atmosphere. The Group is currently at full capacity with a small waiting list. Should you wish for your name to be added, please contact the Convenor.

Within the Group that meets on a Wednesday afternoon, we cannot offer any form of teaching, but a new Group has started meeting on a Thursday afternoon with the intention of providing tuition for both beginners and those who haven't played for a while. Should you wish to either learn bridge or revise your knowledge, please contact Marion, Convenor of the new Group, via their new web page on the CVu3a website.

### Bridge for Beginners

Marion Lloyd



Our new Group has had a good start. We have met on four separate occasions, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive!

If you want to learn to play, or you want to revise a long-lost skill, you are all welcome. There is no formal teaching, we operate a coaching model with a small number of very experienced players. Each one sits with a group at a table and plays the game, explaining as they go.

Most people struggle to come every week as there is lots going on with other interests, family and holidays. Despite this we seem to be able to accommodate everyone. We meet most Thursday afternoons at Chartridge Park Golf Club from 2 to 4pm, when we can use the resources of the Club.

For further information please feel free to contact Bridge for Beginners, through the website.

### Canasta

Linda Hepworth & Sue Hawksley



We continue to meet at one another's houses on third Monday afternoon of the month. We still have room for a couple of new members so if you're familiar with the game do come along. Please contact us at: [canasta@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:canasta@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)

### Chess

Caroline Jenks



Have you ever played Chess? If you thought it was people sitting deadly serious and in silence, you'd be surprised how sociable this Group is. Do come for a taster session, no commitment. Meetings are held in the Convenor's house and are now on the fourth Friday morning of the month, 10.30 to noon; morning drinks and biscuits provided. We

now spend more time mulling over chess puzzles together and learning how to play, than actually playing games. We are not competitive!

The Group will welcome anyone: those who want to learn and those who can help teach us.



Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the first Thursday of each month. We are an informal Group, which means that everyone has a chance to speak, which is not always possible in a large Group. We enjoy listening to our members as they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Group. If you are interested, please get in touch with the Convenor for details of our next meeting.

## Dinghy Sailing

Wendy Barnes &amp; Judith Young



Our sailing season began in April and we welcomed several new members from various u3a groups in the area. We normally sail on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month, but please check our web page for the dates of our sessions. Gates open at 1pm when we start rigging the dinghies. We are able to use the boats which belong to Rickmansworth Sailing Club which include a Wayfarer, a Wanderer, two Laser 2000s, a Comet Versa and an Enterprise, and a couple of single handers for the more experienced sailors. The cost is £10 per person which includes two sailing sessions with tea and cake at 3pm. For more information please contact either of the Convenors.

## French Conversation

Morag Robertson



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

## French Intermediate

Hilary Alleston

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

## Fun Quizzes

James Cadle

The Fun Quizzes Group is now on summer recess and will resume in November. Details to follow.

## Gardening

Stephanie Rothwell &amp; Jenny Beirne



In March we were pleased to welcome once again Kerrie Lloyd-Dawson and Pete Stevens to our meeting. This time the topic of their presentation was 'Border Bulbs'. A bonus was the opportunity to buy potted bulbs which Kerrie had brought for sale.

Enhanced by superb photographs of featured bulbs blooming in their own garden, they showed us how to create colour throughout the gardening year. From early snowdrops to hardy autumn cyclamen, with tulips, fritillaries and alliums in between, our borders need never be dull! Kerrie is a passionate gardener and an inspirational speaker whose enthusiasm for plants is contagious. She and Pete regularly open their garden in Hertfordshire for the National Garden Scheme.

Our speaker in April was Dr Catherine Horwood. Catherine came to talk to us a few years ago about the unsung gardening heroines of ancient times. The subject of her talk this time was Beth Chatto, a very well-known and respected gardening heroine of modern times. Catherine dwelt on Beth's life rather than on her plants. With superb pictures, Catherine showed how she and her husband had transformed their own garden, creating the nurseries named after Beth.

May's meeting saw a new speaker for us; Sandra Lawrence. She told us about the folklore and superstition around fungi which was very intriguing. Members of the History Group were invited to attend if they wished.

Our annual garden visit this year on the 24<sup>th</sup> June will be to the Adwell Estate near Thame. Last year, Colin Roberts from the estate came to talk to us about Salvias. He will give us a guided tour before we indulge in a cream tea! Fingers crossed for good weather.



Our very friendly German Group continues to meet every first and third Wednesday of each month in each other's houses. We are certainly never short of things to talk about. Sometimes we read our German book and occasionally we do a 'Hangman' with a very long German word which can be challenging! The longest German word formerly recognised has 63 letters and the longest word in the Guinness Book of World Records has 79 letters! Viel Spaß. Have fun

### German Conversation Beginners

Caroline Jenks



By the time you read this the new Beginners' German Group should have held its inaugural meeting. We have enough people interested to start the Group but would be very happy to welcome a few more members.

We are for complete beginners or people who learnt German so long ago that they want to start from scratch again. (Their existing knowledge will be a great help to the beginners.) The idea is for mental stimulation and social chat, regardless of whether members have ever had, or hope to have, the pleasure of travelling to Germany.

Meetings are held at the Convenor's house on the 4th Friday afternoon of the month from 3.30 to 5pm, afternoon tea provided.

### History

Claire Paterson & Ian Hutt



Our History Group member West Marshall, who is a retired potter and artist, gave us a talk in March on *A Teapotted History of Teapots (all you never realised you wanted to know about the history of teapots)*.

He gave a great talk with humour and a bit of quizzing on the various parts of a teapot that a potter has to consider when producing them. The body is usually round as that is good for keeping the tea hot. The handle must be placed in such a way that the pot is balanced for pouring and the holder does not receive a burn to the knuckles because it is too close to the teapot body. The spout must also be at the optimum point to enable a good pour.

We will never look at pottery teapots again in the same way; they are clearly a technological masterpiece. He showed us some visuals of teapots past and present, quirky, comical and practical, together with their history, countries of origin and how it all began.

In April we welcomed two presenters who have visited us on previous occasions, and we were really happy they both agreed to give two short talks.

Colin O'Rourke spoke about the *Priestley Riots* in 1791, which most of us had never heard about. The riots were caused by a few people in Birmingham. Joseph Priestley was a chemist, Unitarian, natural philosopher separatist theologian and classical liberal political theorist. So, a clever man who conducted many experiments and wrote extensively on religion and politics. He is credited with his independent discovery of oxygen. He strongly believed in the free and open exchange of ideas, and advocated toleration and equal rights for religious dissenters which prompted him to help found Unitarianism in England. He was a member of the Lunar Society; a group of manufacturers, inventors and natural philosophers (which still exists), who met once a month to discuss their work. What had happened in France (the storming of the Bastille and removal of the monarchy) influenced them. Priestley and several Dissenters arranged to have a celebratory dinner at an hotel on Bastille Day, a provocative action in a country where many disapproved of the French Revolution and feared it might spread to Britain. Rioters gathered outside the hotel and attacked attendees as they left. Priestley had been given an early warning and stayed at home, but the rioters torched Priestley's house destroying everything. There was extreme violence and 26 Dissenters' homes and five churches were burned in the three-day riot.

It was argued by Pitt's administration that Priestley and other Dissenters wanted to overthrow the government. Latterly historians believe the attacks were planned and condoned by local Birmingham magistrates, due to their careful execution, and the subsequent farcical trials. Priestley and his family moved to France where he was celebrated, and eventually to America in 1794.

(cont.)

Ross Panter followed this with a talk on the Tolpuddle Martyrs of 1834. They were six agricultural labourers from Tolpuddle in Dorset who were arrested and tried for swearing a secret oath as members of a friendly society. Led by George Loveless, the group had formed the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers during a labour dispute over a wage cut which reduced their income to near starvation levels. The British government invoked an obscure 1797 law against 'unlawful oaths' and the men were convicted and sentenced to penal transportation to Australia. An act in 1825 legalised trade unions but severely restricted their activity. Landowners were gradually lowering agricultural wages and the Tolpuddle labourers refused to work for less than 10 shillings a week, although by this time wages had been reduced to seven shillings and even down to six shillings. James Frampton, a local landowner, wrote to the Home Secretary to complain about the union and it was recommended that the Unlawful Oaths Act be implemented. The men were arrested and found guilty of swearing secret oaths.

Deported to Australia in horrific conditions, having been on anchored convict ships for months then facing an eight-month voyage, they were eventually assigned to various farms. This time spent on the voyage was not removed from their sentences.

They became popular heroes in England. Their supporters organised a political march, the first successful civil march in the UK. They were eventually pardoned in 1836. By 1839 they were all home, however five of them emigrated to Ontario, Canada where there is now a monument in their honour. One James Hammett, stayed in Tolpuddle and died in the Dorchester workhouse in 1891. A plaque on the Mayflower Steps in Plymouth commemorates their arrival. This was an inspiring presentation which led us to wonder how they all survived their travails and the cruelty which they received, as did all transported convicts.

In May were welcomed Alex Higginbottom, Volunteer Manager for the Canal and River Trust with two of his fellow volunteers and many really interesting objects relating to family life and work on the canal boats in the past. The Trust look after 2500 miles of canals, a task achieved by volunteers.

The canal network played a vital role in the Industrial Revolution. It allowed raw materials to be transported to places of manufacture, and finished goods to be transported to outlets. Canals were built by private individuals to improve their businesses. The Third Duke of Bridgewater commissioned an engineer, James Brindley, to build a canal to enable coal to be transported from his mines to Manchester. The boats could carry 30 tons, and one horse could tow more than ten times the amount of a cart. It was a highly economical system using horsepower. This canal which included an aqueduct over the River Irwell was entirely funded by the Duke. It proved huge financial success with its cost repaid in a few years. Another manufacturer, Josiah Wedgwood, benefitted by being able to bring clay to his factory doors and send his precious pottery cargo safely to market.

The canals were dug by navvies with just pick axes, shovels and wheelbarrows; quite incredible! Locks for changing water levels, tunnels and huge aqueducts over rivers and valleys, were all part of a wonderful new era of transport and prosperity. Built by blood, sweat and tears and a huge amount of very clever mathematics.

Traditionally, the women did most of the work: lock winding, unloading and loading and keeping all clean. Whole families lived on the narrow boats with up to 12 children; can you imagine? The Education Act stated that because of their peripatetic life, children need only attend 35 days of school a year, of course many did not achieve even that.

Built between the 1770s and 1830s, they were extensive and included great feats of civil engineering. It was a relatively short period, but an amazing achievement which increased the wealth of this country. The growing railway network led to their eventual decline. However, today they are being revived by hundreds of volunteers and are used by boat owners, both for living on, and for leisure.

Our next talk on 8<sup>th</sup> June will be given by Peter Hague on those London icons, The Ritz, The Savoy and Fortnum & Mason. The following meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July will feature Helen Tippins: *Oranges and Lemons*, based around the churches in the nursery rhyme.

*"The earliest physical evidence of tea-drinking dates back to the Han Dynasty in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE, over 2,200 years ago. (funfactsabout.com)*



Our Keep Fit classes are going very well with our instructor Carolyn taking us through various exercises suited to our ages. We're not ready for the Marathon yet but watch this space. Our next session will be concentrating on balance.

Carolyn works with us very well and takes great care to monitor us as we partake in the exercises.

The Group is full at the moment, but we have a waiting list if you wish to join it. Classes are held at the White Hill Centre every Wednesday from 2.00 to 3.00pm

### Knitting & Other Crafts

Jo Biggs



We meet at members' houses on the first and third Mondays of each month. The meetings provide an opportunity to get together, share our progress on projects, swap ideas and see finished results. In May, Fiona has completed a lovely jumper for a baby and a fabulous little duck. We currently have a waiting list of one. Please contact Jo Biggs if you are interested in the Group.

### Line Dancing

Linda English



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

### Mah Jong

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 so please contact the Group Convenor if you are interested in joining us.

### MOTO 2 (Members On Their Own)

Joan Barton & Ted Harrington

We try and go to a good variety of pubs for Saturday lunch and we have found some very pleasant local ones.

In March we tried 'The Cricketers' in Sarratt, one we have been to before but some time ago. April was 'The Pomeroy', White Lion Road, Amersham ... not one of my favourites, but only because it's too big; I prefer the small country pubs. Nothing wrong with the food and service though.

We selected 'The Plough', Belsize, in May. Three of us had already tried this one out and found it very good and friendly with tasty food. The only problem when we all went was with the very slow service ... presumably they're not used to catering for so many at the same time. But I'd go back for their curly chips any time!

As usual, it wasn't only the food but also the friendly chat that we enjoyed.

*"The world can be divided into 10 groups of people: Those who understand binary numbers and those who don't."*

(anon)

We are a new MOTO Group set up on 21st April as MOTO 3. We aim to meet every second Sunday of the month for lunch. The aim is for members on their own to meet on a usually 'dead' day of the week for socialising and friendship. We are very new and so looking for new members. We have ten members at the moment and are happy to expand to 15, although our lunch gatherings will be limited to eight. Our very first lunch was held at 'The Cricketers', Sarratt on the 10<sup>th</sup> May and it was very successful and a good time was had by all. Our next meeting will be at 'The Firecrest' on Sunday 14th June. We have two Convenors, Val Littlejohn and Camilla Plummer.

### Music Appreciation

Geoff Hayes



At the time of this Newsletter, we haven't quite decided what our musical theme for the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June will be. Now that the warmer weather and longer days have arrived, it could be a reference to summer, as suggested by one member, or as people are taking holidays more now, it could be travel / journeys as suggested by another.

Whichever we choose I am confident it will result in a fantastic and varied selection of tracks for the Group to share and enjoy.

So far this year we have enjoyed music associated with George, in honour of St. Georges Day; so, we had music by George Gershwin, George Handel, Georges Bizet, George Michael, and tracks with George in the title such as *Midnight Train to Georgia*. In March, we explored Marches and military music including the *RAF March Past* played by Central Band of the Royal Airforce, *Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March*, and even *Mull of Kintyre* by Wings, chosen because of the Scottish bagpipers who feature on the track.

So, if you enjoy music at all, I am sure there will be something for you at our meetings. It is very easy to participate; we play the music through the screen at Chesham Town Hall so there is usually a video to watch as you listen. If you wish, you can contribute selections of music to share with the Group, join in the conversation after each track, or just come along and listen.

We meet for two hours on the first Thursday of the month at the Town Hall starting at 2pm. New members are most welcome.

### Patchwork & Quilting

Angela Bratton & Dee Watson



How do you like to occupy your time? If you are a member of a u3a then you will have no problem finding many things to attract your attention, and belonging to a group of like-minded people allows us to share time and ideas, whether learning new things or reconnecting with something familiar.

Being part of a group has so many social benefits and our Patchwork and Quilting Group is no different. Even if we are leading busy lives, we make time to meet up to share our pastime, to broaden our horizons, learning as we go with the satisfaction of productive hours spent in good company. How much nicer to meet with friends over coffee / cake / chat and be able to sew and socialise rather than be alone, and we generously share our advice and knowledge. Some of our members have incorporated visits to patchwork communities whilst on holiday either in the UK, or overseas.

We still meet up in a hall in Hyde Heath each month but sometimes our Group numbers change as people move away or maybe are not able to come any more, so we would be delighted to welcome anyone who has an interest in sewing, even if not having done patchwork before, to come along to see what we do and see whether you would like to try it out. If this appeals, don't be shy, ring Dee first on 07889 263207 for a quick chat and we can arrange a visit for you.

Angela Bratton and Dee Watson

*The world's most famous Georges: 1<sup>st</sup>: George Harrison, lead guitarist of 'The Beatles'.*

*2<sup>nd</sup>: George Washington, First President of the United States.*

*3<sup>rd</sup>: George Lucas, creator of the 'Star Wars' and 'Indiana Jones' film series.*

*4<sup>th</sup>: George W Bush, 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States.*

*(ranker.com)*



At our March meeting, we listened to Keith Hoffmeister's account of progress on the Chiltern section of HS2. We have been impressed at both his dedication to this major construction work and his super photographs. I see a book one day! We also looked at members' photographs and a short video giving tips on monochrome photography located here: [https://youtu.be/TcIXyzS5YHo?si=iUAX-HU3NCew81\\_R](https://youtu.be/TcIXyzS5YHo?si=iUAX-HU3NCew81_R)

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, Jeanette Lendon gave us chapter and verse on using your mobile phone as a camera, as well as some tips on in-camera editing; a very entertaining and informative meeting which was attended by u3a members outside of the PDI Group.

Our first field trip of the year was a visit to Old Amersham on the 6th May. Five members spent the morning wandering around Amersham, creating some memorable images which were shown at the May meeting attended by 10 members. We were treated to an excellent presentation by Alex on the American photographer Saul Leiter. Saul had a unique take on photography. He refused to analyse or explain his own work, saying "I don't have a philosophy; I have a camera." He predominantly photographed people, including models for fashion shoots and many of his photographs were indistinct, impressionistic, or included extraneous objects. I think many of his photographs, if we had taken them ourselves, would have been discarded.

We also looked at the photographs taken on the Amersham field trip and a selection of monochrome photographs that members had taken. Alex showed us his techniques for producing monochrome photographs which was enlightening. Barry showed us his presentation on the exhibition *Wright of Derby: From the Shadows* at the National Gallery, dedicated to the British artist's 'candlelight' paintings. We will explore Chiaroscuro, the balance and pattern of light and shade in a painting or drawing, at a future meeting. We ended without defining a project for the next meeting, but as the photographs of Saul Leiter were so original, members were asked to try to replicate his work in photographs, to show at the next meeting. You can view some of his photographs on <https://www.saulleiterfoundation.org/> under dropdown 'images'.

David Hurd

### Pilates

Liz Howlett & Christine Ross



Our Pilates Groups continue to be successful with a total of 66 members regularly attending the three Monday morning classes; predominately ladies, with a few gentlemen.

This term runs through to August with several breaks for Bank Holidays; that's the downside of classes being held on Mondays.

Sue is an amazing instructor, knows every single person's medical issues and, being the u3a, there are plenty. She gives alternative exercises to those who are struggling, encouraging them to do their best. She manages this in a very discreet way, so no one feels singled out. We all enjoy classes and there is lots of laughter. We all feel the better for attending, so long may it continue.

### Play Reading

Joan Barton & Linda Hepworth



The play for March, *All Balls and Ashes*, was originally written for the BBC as a pilot to replace *Last of the Summer Wine* but was never used as this series went on much longer than expected. It was quite a funny play with some good characters, though a bit hard to follow at times.

Our April play was *Tiptoe through the Tombstones* by Norman Robbins. Like *Tomb with a View*, to which it was a sequel, the number of corpses that turned up was almost unbelievable but, despite, or maybe because of that, it was really quite amusing.

Our May reading was *Panic Stations*, a farce by Derek Benfield. It turned out to be a VERY long play and, to be honest, was rather boring! We gave up after Act Two and settled down for a chat instead, accompanied by Mavis's delicious cakes. This is the first time we've not bothered to finish a play, certainly since I joined the Group, so that's not bad considering many of them are ordered from the library 'blind'.



Our Poetry Group used our March meeting to look at the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, a previous Poet Laureate. We enjoyed her diverse poetry subjects and her ability to put memories into her poems. *Mrs Tilscher's Class, Parakeets, Elegy, Empty Nest* and *Liverpool* were just a few of those we chose to read. In April we chose the Welsh poet R S Thomas who seemed to be against change or modernisation, especially to his home county. Reading *The Village* and *View from The Window* among others, showed this to be true. For our meeting in May we had Robert Frost as our poet with many favourites being chosen, such as *The Road Not Taken*.

Future Meetings:

June: Birds and Birdsong

July: Louise Gluck

August: Sun, Moon and Stars.

## Railways

Graham Yellowley & James Cadle



With meetings on the topics: Waterloo, Editorial Soundbites and HS2, it's been another very interesting few months:

March 20<sup>th</sup>: Rachel Kolsky: *Waterloo Station Tour*: Rachel led two tours for us, one at 11:00 and the other at 14:30. She was very entertaining and took us to parts of the station that we would normally pass by without noticing, or to parts where things used to be, but are no longer; these prompted quite a few reminiscences from Group members. Even the walk outside the station through Leake Street (also known as Graffiti Tunnel) was interesting.

April 17<sup>th</sup>: Murray Brown: *Confessions of an Editor*: Murray Brown previously gave us a talk on the Deltic Preservation Society, but this time came to talk about his role as Editor of *Rail Magazine*. Without PowerPoint, photos or a script, Murray kept us in laughter throughout his talk. He gave us his working life story, focusing on his editorial stint. As well as some very funny anecdotes, Murray also conveyed the complexities and pressures facing editors at that time; a thoroughly enjoyable talk.

May 15<sup>th</sup>: Bernie Rowell: *HS2 / Rolling Stock and Washwood Depot*: Good to have Bernie back to give us an update on his areas of responsibility within HS2, which have grown substantially since his last talk to us. He gave an update on the construction phase followed by an update on the rolling stock, and a very interesting section on Washwood Depot. This used to be the Metro-Cammell works but has now been razed to the ground in preparation for the HS2 Depot. There will be 16 tracks, each capable of storing two full HS2 sets, so 32 full HS2 sets as well as a test track and numerous associated buildings, including the control centre, simulator training and crew rest areas. The pictures of the site gave a sense of vastness, so it will be interesting to see how the site has progressed in another couple of years; another very good talk.

Our next meetings are:

June 19<sup>th</sup>: *Sri Lanka Railways*: John Scales

July 29<sup>th</sup>: Quainton visit: Sandy Harrison

August: no meeting

September 18<sup>th</sup>: *The Route of the Master Cutler*: Dick Crane

October 16<sup>th</sup>: Hidden London tour

November 20<sup>th</sup>: *High Speed Rail*: Christian Wolmar

December 18<sup>th</sup>: *The Glasgow Metro*: James Cadle

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

*"A man complains to a Railway Guard: 'What's the point of having a train timetable if the trains are always late?' The Guard replies 'How would you know they were late if we didn't have a timetable?'"*  
(upjoke.com)



We were delighted to welcome back our musical director Ali, after her sabbatical touring and performing around Europe.

This term we are preparing for our end-of-term concert in July, but Bank Holidays in May cause disruptions to our rehearsal schedule. However, we hope to perform a mix of older pieces as well as new material such as a Beatles Medley, *Bright Eyes* and *Nobody Does It Better*.

## 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 &amp; Collectables

Steve Epps



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

## Tai Chi

Sue Broad &amp; Meg Brinton



A Report from The Fifth World Taijiquan (\*Wushu) Championship in Bulgaria via Peter Warr, our fantastic tutor. Peter's own comments feature in the report:

With 44 participating nations and 400 athletes, the championship surpassed the previous record set in Singapore in 2024 (32 countries, 320 athletes) by a substantial margin, a clear indicator of Taijiquan's continued growth as a global competitive discipline.

The championship welcomed some of the most influential figures in the global Wushu (Tai chi) movement. The praise from veteran observers was equally clear. Peter Warr, Ex President of the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts and a 32-year IWUF veteran, summed it up: "I've worked for the IWUF for 32 years and have been around the world and seen many competitions. This one rates very highly as a well-organised competition."

We had a very small team of four competitors but returned with one gold, three silver and three bronze medals. Many congratulations to the team.

Our Tai Chi Group were unable to attend as we couldn't synchronise our schedules. Maybe next year, if we have enough notice.

\*Wushu is a more challenging form of Tai chi

## Theatre

Helen Barnard &amp; Geoff Naylor



Our trips are usually to matinee performances and include theatre tickets and coach transport from Chesham and Amersham to the theatres and back.

We have enjoyed a busy programme recently, with plenty of variety, laughing at *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister*, being deeply moved by *Shadowlands*, and having our eyes opened by *The Producers*.

Upcoming shows include *The Marquise* at Theatre Royal Windsor, *High Society* in London, and *As You Like It* in Stratford-upon-Avon.

These trips are currently sold out, but tickets do become available, so if you would like to join us, please do get in touch.

*"My Uncle Bill used to tell me that the secret to great theatre was to 'always leave them wanting more' .... He was a lovely bloke, but a terrible anaesthetist."* (upjoke.com)



Our repertoire just keeps getting longer with all members of the Group coming up with great new suggestions. Our latest additions include *I'm the Urban Spaceman*, *American Pie* and *I'm Gonna Be (500 miles)*.

New members are always welcome to give the ukulele a try. Many of us had never played before, but are enjoying our meetings, singing songs and playing well in such a short time. It's good fun!

We hold our fortnightly meetings at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, Chesham, starting at 2.30pm. The next meeting is on Tuesday June 16<sup>th</sup>. Give me a ring if you would like to know more or come and meet us.

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

Intrepid Amblers Triumph Again!

Once again, our fearless Amblers Group has conquered a walk of 2'ish miles. This sojourn around The Lee took us through fields, past wild garlic in bloom, and up a hill where we bravely faced some very fat cows! One Ambler went so far as to pat a horse on the nose!

There were a couple of boring bits, but also some lovely views, and most of the amble took place in very welcome sunshine.

Roy Masters

## Walkers (5 - 7 miles)

### Walkers 1

Stuart Stanley

Our Group meets at various locations on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 10:00 and 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, published every three months, and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate.

For the first quarter of 2026, we held walks in Chipperfield, Asheridge, Old Amersham, Cliveden, Studham and Croxley Green. For the second quarter, our walks were or will be in Great Hampden, Wigginton, Piddington, Littlewick Green and Sarratt

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

### Walkers 2

Michael Ferraro

We normally meet at 9:45am for a 10am start on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday each month for a walk of around six miles, with a bring-your-own coffee stop, part way.

Our March walk was led by Bob Odell around Tring and Wigginton, a stile free walk of just under five miles through beech woodlands and along the Grand Union Canal, starting from Wigginton café. A gentle descent to Cow Roast was followed by the towpath of the Grand Union Canal towards Tring station before a return uphill to the cafe.

Jane Towers led the April walk of about five miles from Ley Hill to Bovingdon Green and back along some really pretty footpaths with carpets of bluebells. Some of the paths were narrow with nettles, so long trousers came in useful; a couple of inclines, but nothing steep and no stiles.

May's walk on the 28<sup>th</sup> is a stile-free ramble of about six miles, with gradual ascents totalling 460ft, led jointly by Jan Weir and Pearl Howlett; running from Winchmore Hill, following the edge of West Wood towards Coleshill, then passing Coleshill Windmill onto Magpie Lane and Luckings Farm.

(cont.)

The farm was built around 1620 and currently includes a field of beautiful, calm and friendly horses! From there the walk will continue through woods to some lovely views towards Seer Green and Beaconsfield before re-entering woods to the east of Knotty Green and back along Fagnall Lane to Winchmore Hill Common.

New members are welcome, but please check with the Convenor first. There is no fee for membership, but we usually request a £1 optional donation on the day which funds either gates replacing stiles (through the Chiltern Society) or a donation to the Air Ambulance.

### Walkers 3

Jill Thomas & Catherine Haridi

New walkers always welcome. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month.

In March Daryl-Ann, very kindly led us around Little Chalfont, and many local paths that were new to us. Luckily the weather stayed kind. Then in April we were off to Great Hampden for a walk led by Jan and Pearl; beautiful views, and quite a bit of local history. In May we had a beautiful walk, led by Helen, around the Penn area.

### Striders (7 - 15 miles)

Keith Pittman & Ian Barrett



The last three months have seen Striders out every week, except for one when the weather was so bad that, for the first time in a long time, we officially cancelled the walk (although two hardy souls did venture out regardless). We've been to Chipperfield, Wigginton, Leavesden, Little Hay, Ley Hill, Chesham Vale, Coombe Hill, Amersham, Ashridge, Wendover, Chenies, Studham and Penn (A certain Johnny Cash song comes to mind ...). Since the start of the year, turnout has been gradually increasing, and we now have a healthy 20 or so people regularly on our walks. Or is that 20 healthy people?

Looking ahead, our Summer Awayday this year will be to Box Hill, near Dorking; plenty of time to train for that.

If you wish to join us, contact: [striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)

### Walks into History: Country

Peter Schweiger

#### *De Havilland Museum: May 2026*



On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, the Walks into History Group went to the de Havilland museum near London Colney.

A good place to be, avoiding heavy rain showers. The showers were so loud that they nearly drowned out the roar of the mighty 12-cylinder Merlin engines that once powered a Mosquito plane. I found out that Sir Geoffrey de Havilland, who founded the company, was interested in insects, and that was why many of the planes had names like Mosquito or Tiger

Moth.

We could go into some of the actual planes the company had built. I had flown on a Comet when it was operated by Dan Air. There were so many information boards and stewards who were enthusiastic story tellers that in no time it was lunchtime, and time for toasted sandwiches in the 'Comet Café'. Peter Windsor donated an emergency axe that was for use in gliders.

Our next walk will be on 8<sup>th</sup> July around Cookham.

Peter Schweiger

### Walks in London

Angela Shipley

Treasurer: Mick Rothwell

#### *Shakespeare's London: April 2026*



We met at St Paul's station on what turned out to be the warmest day of 2026 so far and had a very informative walk in the sunshine. Our guides were two of the five Richards in London Walks, Richard Burlip and Richard Roques ("Richard III" as he calls himself) and this report relates to the latter.

Richard began with a briefing about Shakespeare's life, what little we know about it, and about others who have been suggested as authors of his plays including Christopher Marlow and Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> herself. (Both were of course dead long before Shakespeare's later plays appeared.)

(cont.)

We then moved to St Paul's Churchyard which, in Shakespeare's time, was where people went to get the latest news. Of course, Shakespeare would have known the earlier Gothic Cathedral, lost during the Great Fire of 1666. Richard sketched out the Bard's early life as the son of a successful glovemaker who had raised himself to the status of gentleman before being fined for some unspecified offence; possible being a recusant: someone who still clung to the Catholic faith in Protestant England.

We set off through the city streets, stopping first at a plaque commemorating the 'Bell Inn', where the only known letter to Shakespeare was found, from Richard Quinney asking to borrow £40 in 1598. Shakespeare never got the letter but loaned him the money anyway which, Richard pointed out, showed that he was quite a sharp businessman.

The next stop was Wardrobe Court, where we learned about Shakespeare's involvement with the King's Men, established by King James 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Shakespeare was one of a thousand or so Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, which showed his growing prominence.

We next inspected a plaque in St Andrew's Hill, marking where Shakespeare owned a house in 1613. It was a 'buy to let' as he lodged elsewhere with a Huguenot family.

Playhouse Yard was where the Blackfriars Priory stood before the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the building apparently provided a covered space for the performance of plays in Shakespeare's day.

Now we crossed the river to Southwark, site of playhouses, brothels and bearbaiting in Shakespeare's time. We stopped at the revised 'Globe Theatre', the initiative of director Sam Wannamaker, opened after his death in 1998. Richard explained how the replica had been constructed and then we visited the site of the actual Globe which is some distance away.

We then proceeded past the replica of Drake's 'Golden Hinde', Southwark Cathedral (where Shakespeare's brother Edmund is buried) and Borough Market, before ending another excellent tour at the 'George Inn', the only surviving galleried inn in London, now owned and operated by The National Trust.

James Cadle

## Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



June is upon us, which means that the Wildlife Group will give up the comfort of its meeting hall for outdoor field visits. Yes, our June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will be to College Lake near Tring, to revisit the fauna and flora of the Chilterns. We will be accompanied by BBOWT\* rangers selected for their knowledge of the landscape, so we are looking forward to the information they will impart. Moving on to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, we are planning a return visit to Roadfarm to witness hedge laying at its best, by the Chiltern Society. You may have spotted this on the A413 road between Great Missenden and Wendover. We hope to get an insight into 'Pleaching' and the impact on the wildlife habitat. Thursday August 5<sup>th</sup> will bring us a visit to The Dogs Trust at Harefield. It is here that many dogs find sanctuary before being re-homed. Numbers arriving at Harefield have increased exponentially so, what's the reason for owners abandoning or rejecting their pets? We hope to have some answers. In September, we return to Amersham Common Village Hall with three planned presentations on Bees, Musical Plants and Medical Detection Dogs.

As you can see, the scope of our talks is wide-reaching. In the past three months, the membership has enjoyed talks on amphibians and reptiles, wildlife in Namibia and the aspirational vision of treating sick wild animals at Pumpkins Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre at Rickmansworth. Over the last two years, we have covered schemes to protect the Chilterns, their chalk streams and their terrain for growing historic apple varieties. Several of our invited speakers (Adrian Porter, Lindsay Engers and Nick Marriner) took part in the BBC showing of *Countryfile* on Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>. This can be viewed on the BBC iPlayer through catch-up. Should subjects like these be of interest to you, come along and see what we have to offer.

\* Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

*"Harvest mice are Britain's smallest rodent, weighing as little as four grams. They weave nests out of grass and have semi-prehensile tails with which they can pick up morsels of food."*  
(wildthingsfood.co.uk)



In February the theme at the Connors was Eastern European wines. We started with a *Feteasca Alba* from Romania called *White Maiden*. This was 11% and came from M&S at £8. This was followed by another *Feteasca Alba*, called *Carpe Diem*, this time from Moldova. This one was 13% and was available at Majestic at £9. Then there was a *Dimyati 2024 from Bulgaria*, 11.5% from M&S at £8. The reds were a *Wanderwyld Primitivo* from North Macedonia, 13% from Waitrose, reduced from £9.25 to £7, a bargain! Finally, a *Mosinieri Superavi 2020*, a personal import by the Convenors from Georgia at 14%.

In March our numbers were somewhat depleted for Southern Italian wines at the Broombys. We were treated to some Taittinger Champagne to start, nothing to do with the theme, but fully appreciated! We then sampled a *Fiano del Salento Paololeo* at 12.5% from Waitrose for £14. Then a *Bialento Malvasia Fiano* from Puglia at 12% and finally a *Terrarida Primitivo de Maduria Riserva*, 14% from Avery's.

## Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



Ian and Jenny hosted an evening of the new 'Found' wines from M&S, plus a solitary red from Aldi. The Aldi *Moldovan Rara Neagra* wine shared first place with a Macedonian *Kratosija* (easier to drink than pronounce!) and a Sicilian *Nerello Cappuccio*. All the wines scored well and all priced at £8 or under.

Andrew presented, to the best of my recollection, the best six wines we've ever had! They were all bin ends from Laithwaites and, even better, bought for well under a tenner! in second place was a lovely white Grenache Gris and Vermentino called *Domaine La Sobilane* and the winner on the night was an old friend, *Black*

*Stump Durif and Shiraz* blend

In May, Mirit offered a selection of wines from five different supermarkets. the clear winner on the night was a *Cotes du Rhone Grenache Syrah and Mourvedre* (just call it GSM) from the Tesco Finest range at £12 before discount.

Recommended wine for this quarter? *The Black Stump* from Laithwaites! (see right)



## Writers

Helene &amp; John Bunyan



Despite being on another Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, our meeting in March on the topic 'Superstition' went without incident. This was followed by presentations on the topics 'Libraries' and 'Out in the Woods' at our April and May meetings respectively. Though we were down slightly in number at the meetings, some excellent work was presented and well received. Our June topic will be 'Traces We Leave Behind'.

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

*"Then followed that beautiful season ... Summer ... Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape Lay as if new created in all the freshness of childhood."*

(H W Longfellow)

*"It's a smile, it's a kiss, it's a sip of wine ... it's summertime!"*

(Kenny Chesney)

*"Summer is a promissory note signed in June, it's long days spent and gone before you know it, and due to be repaid next January."*

(Hal Borland)

*"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time."*

(John Lubbock)

# Mini-Quiz

- Political history:** Which Labour politician (and minister) lost his seat in Smethwick in the 1964 General Election and then also lost Leyton in a by-election in 1965 that was supposed to get him back into Parliament?
- How many General Elections were won by Margaret Thatcher?
- Who was the last Liberal Prime Minister of Great Britain?
- Foreign words and phrases:** What German word has found itself being used in English to mean someone's perspective or world view?
- What Spanish word is often used in English to indicate a rather relaxed approach to time and time-keeping?
- Is it a condemnation of English cuisine that, when we want to wish someone an enjoyable meal, we use a French phrase? Anyway, what is this phrase?
- Sport:** As of 2026, which football club has won the FA Cup the most times?
- Who defeated Muhammad Ali in 1978, in a split decision, to become the undisputed World Heavyweight Champion in boxing?
- What nationality was the World Champion racing driver Jochen Rindt?
- Cartoons:** What is the name of Charlie Brown's canine companion?
- Who is the cat who stars in the cartoon series started by Jim Davis in 1978?
- Who is Andy Capp's wife in the cartoon strip of the same name?
- Music:** Roger Daltry, Pete Townshend, John Entwistle and Keith Moon are regarded as the 'classic' line-up of which group?
- Whose 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony is titled the 'Rhenish'?
- Which Walsall-born musician, the recipient of the Queen's Medal for Music in 2009, is the leading exponent of the Northumbrian small pipes?
- Weather:** What is the name of the cool phase of the El-Niño-Southern Oscillation climate pattern?
- When winds tend to be light and blow clockwise in the northern hemisphere and the descending air reduces cloud formation, resulting in settled weather, is this due to high pressure or low pressure?
- The trade winds are prevailing winds that flow in which direction?

*(Answers will be supplied with the June e-bulletin or, if you don't have email, call me on 07889 732291 and I will post you the answers. **James Cadle**)*

# Chess Valley u3a Groups Schedule

FIRST in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Art Discussion 2 (pm)	Walkers 1	Walkers 3	Wildlife	
Pilates Classes 1,2 and 3 (am/pm)	Striders	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)	Bridge for Beginners (pm)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Book 2 (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Keep Fit (pm)		
		Wine 2 (eve)		

*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)	Ambler's	Walks into History (Country) OR	Art Discussion 1 (am)	Writers (pm)
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders	Walks into London (alternate months)	Bridge for Beginners (pm)	
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)	Keep Fit (pm)		

*The Chess Valley u3a Committee meets on the first or second Monday of each month, three 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	German (am)	Bridge for Beginners (pm)	Book 1 (am)
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)		
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Book 3 (pm)	Photography with Digital Imaging (pm)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Keep Fit (pm)		

*Stamps and Collectables meets in members' houses every two months*

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

*MOTO 2 meets for lunch on the second Saturday of each month*

*MOTO 3 meets for lunch on the second Sunday of the month.*

Right: Amblers spotted this topiary snail on their walk around Prestwood and Great Missenden in early May.



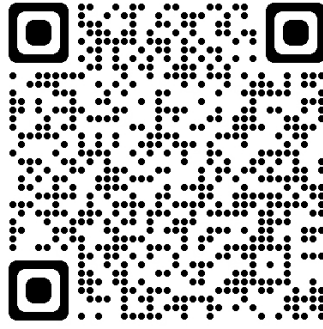
Below: History Group members discuss artefacts connected with the canals, following an excellent talk in May by Alex from the Canal and River Trust. Goods transported on the canal network featured.



Centre Right: The Amblers Group came across some horses on their recent walk around The Lee.

Right: Striders numbers are increasing and they are out almost every week. Here they are at Wendover woods, making friends with a Gruffalo.





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



The Art Group have been working on Barbadian and Caribbean themes and these are just a few examples of their fantastic work.