



# Members Newsletter February 2024

## A Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

I know this is a month late, but happy New Year to you all. It is a bit early for spring, but snowdrops are beginning to show in front of my house, so I have photographed them for the background picture on this page.

At the time of writing, the strong winds we have had are beginning to drop, so maybe spring is approaching. We have a good programme of monthly meetings, and the Group activities are well underway after the Christmas and New Year break, so please do keep up your regular activities and perhaps try some new ones. We currently have 29 Groups, so there is an awful lot on offer!

Trevor Robinson

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## Monthly Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### Diana Dors: Film Star, Singer, Writer

At the December Meeting we were treated to an entertaining insight into the life of Diana Dors by Martin Shingler.

Diana Dors was born Diana Mary Fluck on 23 October 1931 in Swindon. Diana's love of films began as a child when her mother took her to the local cinema. From the age of eight onwards her heroines were Hollywood actresses Veronica Lake, Lana Turner, and Jean Harlow.

Physically, Diana grew up fast. At age 12, she looked and acted much older than what she was. Much of this was due to trying to emulate the actresses she studied on the silver screen. After reaching third place in a local beauty contest, this led to work as a model in art classes and she began to appear in local theatre productions.

Having excelled in her elocution studies, at 14 she was offered a place to study at London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), becoming the college's youngest student, and was almost immediately spotted and put into films, making her debut in 1946 in the thriller "The Shop at Sly Corner". She was offered a 10-year contract with the Rank Organisation and joined the Rank Charm School which had been set up to discover and groom British stars to



match Hollywood idols like Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe. During the signing of contracts, at the suggestion of her mother and in agreement with her father, she changed her surname to Dors, the maiden name of her maternal grandmother. "They asked me to change my name, I suppose they were afraid that if my real name Diana Fluck was in lights and one of the lights blew....."

A young Diana Dors

## December Monthly Meeting - Contd

Dors was given a showy comic-support part in "Here Come the Huggetts" (1948), a series that followed "Holiday Camp", playing the lazy niece



of the Huggetts, who causes trouble when she goes to stay with the family. Dors was so well received that she returned for the second movie in the series, "Vote for Huggett" (1949).

She married Dennis Hamilton in 1951. He became her agent, and by 1955 Dors was the highest earner in the UK. Fabricating a colourful personal life, he ensured that the gossip columns were provided with a steady flow of sensational stories and created the image of the 'blonde bombshell', Britain's first sex symbol in the American mould.

Diana Dors in 1968

The couple moved to Hollywood but a contract with RKO came to nothing when the company went bust. During the 1950s she appeared in a succession of uninspired luridly titled crime films with the one exception of "Yield to the Night" when she played the unglamorous character based on the murderess Ruth Ellis. The marriage to Hamilton ended in a blaze of publicity in 1957 and two years later she married a New York comedian, Dickie Dawson with whom she had two sons, Mark and Gary.

Dors with Phil Silvers, 1958, in Sgt Bilko

When her eight-year marriage to Dawson ended, she lost custody of her two sons. After her divorce she returned to the UK to find work, she toured working men's clubs and appeared in stage shows. She met her third husband Alan Lake on the set of "The Inquisitors"; they married in 1968 and they had one son, Jason.



## December Monthly Meeting - Contd

Having turned her life story into a cash flow through interviews and leaked tabloid stories, she started writing her autobiography *"Swingin' Dors"* which was serialised in the News of the World earning her £35,000. Between 1978-1984 she wrote and published a further four books under her own name: *"For Adults Only"*, *"Behind Closed Dors"*, *"Dors by Diana"*, and *"A to Z of Men"*.

In 1982 Diana was diagnosed with ovarian cancer; she collapsed at her home near Windsor with acute stomach pains and died on 4 May 1984, aged 52.



After her death, Alan Lake burned all of Dors' remaining clothes and fell into a depression. On 10 October 1984, Lake walked into their son's bedroom and took his own life by firing a shotgun into his mouth. He was 43. This was five months after her death from cancer, and 16 years to the day since they had first met.

Statue of Dors in West Swindon

**Maureen Sayers**

## Monthly Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### 'It's a Dog's Life' and 'Rescue in Lockdown'

#### Stephen Wylie, founder of SHAK – Cat and Dog Shelter

At the January Monthly Meeting, Steve Wylie gave us an interesting and a very personal account of how a rescue dog changed the course of his life.

The adventure began eighteen years ago when Steve bought his first house, so given his new fiscal responsibilities his social life came to an end, so he decided to get a dog.

On a visit to a local Cat & Dog Shelter he came across a German Shepherd shredding his blanket and “offering” the shredded blanket to Steve through the bars of his cage.

He decided there and then that this dog needed rescued, and he named the dog



Shak. It soon became apparent when Steve arrived home from work to find carpets, bannisters, door frames, and laminate flooring all shredded, that poor Shak unfortunately had serious separation anxiety issues. Not once did Steve think of giving up on Shak, and his loyalty was rewarded as Shak did become a loving pet who sadly died of lymphoma despite all efforts to save him.

After leaving his job and volunteering for a pet rehoming charity, at the same Cat & Dog Shelter where he adopted Shak, he did vow to himself “no more dogs”, Many pet owners feel the same when they lose a pet but sometimes

something happens to give you a change of heart.

It was while he was working there that he witnessed first-hand what happens to dogs that cannot be rehomed. His “no more dogs policy” was short lived as he adopted another German Shepherd and a Greyhound!

## January Monthly Meeting - Contd

After selling his share of a mobile phone business he decided to start a rescue project for dogs that were about to be put down. Kennel fees for homing the dogs was proving quite costly, but people began donating cash to help with the project. Steve then opened a charity bank account which became the registered charity SHAK, Safe Homes & Kindness, this gave him the freedom to help the dogs that needed it most.

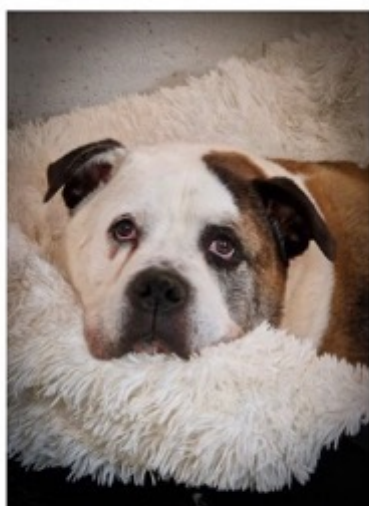


Steve was offered kennels in South Charlton fifteen years ago, which gave him the opportunity to realise his ambition to give care and attention to dogs literally on death row. He is passionate about giving dogs a better life while giving them a home for life.

With the help of a canine behavioural psychologist Steve has spent the last few years rescuing a variety of rescue dogs such as German Shepherds, Rottweilers and Greyhounds who were languishing in pounds and shelters, waiting to be put down.

These dogs are facing the death penalty because they have bitten people, or are too jumpy or have other behaviour or health problems.

For most people they are considered potentially dangerous or uncontrollable – but not to Steve; he sees them as dogs who have usually been let down by humans.



He has been bitten several times by dogs he has rescued. Some of them are aggressive, but he has found that given time, most dogs do come round. He has built up a reputation across the country for rescuing large dogs that otherwise would be put to sleep.

SHAK isn't like any other dog charity, they are different. Different because they help the dogs that really need it the most. Unlike the majority of dog rescues, SHAK isn't a rehoming centre, instead they offer sanctuary to abused, mistreated and neglected dogs that have suffered so badly at the hands of humans that they need somewhere to start their lives all over again.

## January Monthly Meeting - Contd

They are not open to the public to visit, nor do they take in dogs from members of the public. All their dogs are either strays or damaged dogs from vets or pounds. Occasionally they will take a dog from one of their trusted charity partners.

It is also important to point out that they do not actively seek homes for their dogs. After spending time in the care of Steve and his trusty staff, some of the dogs they save move onto other more specialised rehoming charities that they have a trusted working relationship with, a few others go through their own Forever Foster scheme. However, some are so badly damaged that the only option they have is to stay with Steve in South Charlton.

The charity depends on donations from the public and its own fundraising efforts via its three SHAK charity shops, in Alnwick, Amble and Blyth. It is supported by the Kennel Club and other animal welfare organisations.



Maureen Sayers

Photographs courtesy of Steve Wylie

## Christmas Social

We had a most enjoyable Christmas Social after the December meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> December, after the presentation about Diana Dors. So enjoyable that your trusty editor was too busy dealing with the seemingly never-ending requests for mulled wine top ups to take any photos. In fact, the only photo we can find is this one, taken by Colin Platt, in which your intrepid Committee Chair thought it would be a good idea to model Anne McMillan's silly lovely hat. Why did no one stop me? Oh well, better luck next time.



Finally, a big thank you to Meryl McConnell and Elaine Foreman for their splendid table top decorations.

## Tom's Tales

A Vicars wife walked into the kitchen one day to find her husband stalking around with a fly swatter.

"What are you doing? she asked.

"Hunting flies," he replied

"Oh, getting any?"

"Yes," he said "Three males and a female."

"How can you tell them apart?" she asked.

"Three were on a beer can and the other was on the phone."



# Monthly Meetings in 2024

## **FEB 15th** *'Life in Japan'*

**Speaker:** Denise Howe talking about Japanese customs and her time living in Japan.

## **MARCH 21st** *'The Craft of a Wheelwright'*

**Speaker:** Peter Thompson, Member of the Guild of Wheelwrights, the last wheelwright in Northumberland before his retirement.

## **APRIL 18th** *'Paintings from the Northumberland coastline'*

**Speaker:** Katherine Renton, a Northumberland based artist, explaining her work as she uses paints which she makes from coastline debris like sea coal, and brick fragments. Through her unusual medium she explores the social and environmental effects of industries such as coalmining.

## **MAY 16th** *'The History of Lindisfarne Castle, Past and Present'*

**Speaker:** Nick Lewis, Collections and House Officer, National Trust, Lindisfarne Castle.

## **JUNE 20th** *'The Dialects and Music of Northumberland'*

**Speaker:** Musician Kim Bibby-Wilson will talk about aspects of the Northumbrian dialect, illustrated with songs, and recordings of local poets and speakers.

## **JULY 18th** *'The Life of a Submariner'*

**Speaker:** Craig Weir, retired submariner, will talk about his experience of having been a submariner.

## **AUGUST – NO MEETING**

## **SEPTEMBER 19th** *'The Buildings of William Newton'*

**Speaker:** Richard Pears, Durham University Librarian, will talk about William Newton, architect of over forty buildings, including Howick Hall and Lemmington Hall.

## **OCTOBER 17th** (AGM 1st) *'How Emergency Surgery has changed over my lifetime'*

**Speaker:** Alnwick u3a member, George Nasmyth, retired general surgeon.

## **NOVEMBER 21st** *'The Northumberland Hedgehog Rescue Trust'*

**Speaker:** Jen Stephenson joined the Trust 2 years ago wanting to work with wildlife after retiring from teaching. The Trust was set up over 25 years ago.

## **DECEMBER 12th** (also Xmas social) *'Hidden Gems of Northumberland'*

**Speaker:** Alnwick u3a member Richard Booth has combined his interests in hill walking, photography, history, and archaeology since moving to Northumberland. He will illustrate the story of Northumberland's early history through images of historic sites still found in the landscape.

## Committee Members 2023/24

<b>Trevor Robinson</b>	Chair (and Newsletter Editor) chair.u3a.alnwick@gmail.com
<b>Carollyn McDonald</b>	Vice Chair
<b>Maureen Sayers</b>	Secretary secretary.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com
<b>George Ellames</b>	Treasurer
<b>Pat Ashton</b>	Membership Secretary membership.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com
<b>Anne McMillan</b>	Groups Coordinator groups.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com
<b>Kathy Platt</b>	Speaker Secretary
<b>Mary Brazier</b>	Facebook Secretary
<b>Shelley Willis</b>	Member

The Committee members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, which is usually held in October. The current Committee members were elected at the AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023, except Mary Brazier, who was co-opted at the Committee meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The next AGM will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

# February Photos

Flowers by Alan Sayers



## General Knowledge Quiz

- 1 Who wrote Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang: The Magical Car?
- 2 In which part of your body would you find the cruciate ligament?
- 3 What is the name of the main antagonist in the Shakespeare play Othello?
- 4 When was the movie the Titanic released?
- 5 What element is denoted by the chemical symbol Sn in the periodic table?
- 6 How many of Henry VIII's wives were called Catherine?
- 7 What was the most popular girls name in the UK in 2021?
- 8 What is the name of the 1976 film about the Watergate scandal, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman?
- 9 Which comedian was the second permanent host of Never Mind the Buzzcocks after Mark Lamarr?
- 10 What is the capital of Finland?
- 11 Which popular video game franchise has released games with the subtitles World At War and Black Ops?
- 12 In what US state is the city Nashville?
- 13 Which rock band was founded by Trent Reznor in 1988?
- 14 What is the currency of Denmark?
- 15 Which Tennis Grand Slam is played on a clay surface?
- 16 In which European country would you find the Rijksmuseum?
- 17 How many films have Al Pacino and Robert De Niro appeared in together?
- 18 What was the name for a Snickers bar before it changed in 1990?
- 19 Who was the Japanese head of state during the WW2
- 20 What is the smallest planet in our solar system?

# Odds and Ends

Who else remembers when they had a “left knee” and a “right knee”, instead of a “good one” and a “bad one”?

Why do they have signs in hospital car parks that say “thieves operate here”? I’d feel much safer with a surgeon.

I’ve often wondered if deers are left-handed or right-handed. I’ve now come to the conclusion that they are Bambidextrous

My friend told me that his kids refuse to eat fish, and he asked me what might be a good replacement. I said cats. Cats love fish.

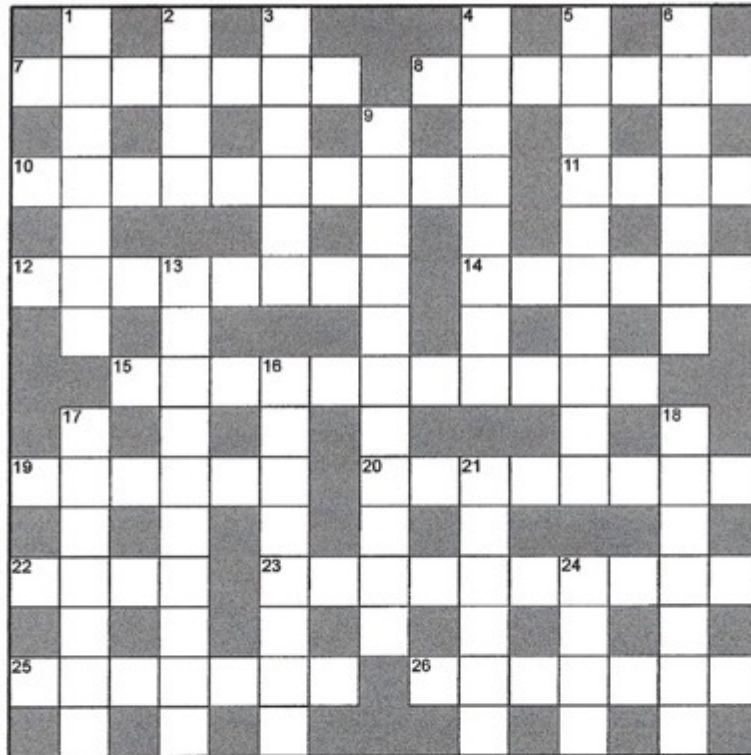
Just opened a tin of alphabetti spaghetti and noticed a warning that said “This tin may contain N U T S”.

Someone ripped the pages out of both ends of my dictionary today. It just goes from bad to worse.

Hmmm, I tried to take a picture of myself in the shower, but it’s too blurry. I think I have selfie steam issues.

I went to see my doctor and told him about my fears of large green spaces where people and dogs roam. He said it’s a common condition.

## Crossword – courtesy of Alan Sayers



### ACROSS

- 7 It's about where the event took place and the income that it generated (7)  
 8 The amount of stock in a bookshop (7)  
 10 It's what all the birds ask for when going to the hair salon (10)  
 11 Everyone in the teaching profession (4)  
 12 You'll end up here if and when the wife starts barking at you (8)  
 14 Imposed tax which the French struggled with (6)  
 15 Evasive action now that the chase is on (3,3,5)  
 19 Appear just to discredit someone (4,2)  
 20 Old sheet of paper measured in feet and inches (8)  
 22 Wine that comes in a plastic bottle (4)  
 23 Choose to make a speech to all those who are able to vote (10)  
 25 Scare in a way that's poisonous (7)  
 26 Losing yours will make you mad (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Red rose turns up in church (7)  
 2 Departed within twenty minutes (4)  
 3 The month gold was found in Alaska (6)  
 4 You may wish to pay a visit to this temporary outbuilding (8)  
 5 He needs first-rate eye protection to do his job (10)  
 6 Collected something that achieved the price wanted (7)  
 9 The one in charge of the prison van has one in his tool box (11)  
 13 Maitre d'hotel at the front of the queue (4,6)  
 16 Order a dessert! (5,3)  
 17 Those who go running after drinks (7)  
 18 One who dances around the fairground (7)  
 21 He works down under (6)  
 24 Teases someone about what's to go on the barbecue (4)

# Photos of Alnwick Garden Lights

Taken by Trevor Robinson on New Year's Eve



## Quiz Answers

1	Ian Fleming	11	Call of Duty
2	Knee	12	Tennessee
3	Iago	13	Nine Inch Nails
4	Tin	14	Krone
5	1997	15	The French Open (Roland Garros)
6	3	16	Netherlands
7	Olivia	17	Four (The Godfather Part 2, Heat, Righteous Kill, The Irishman)
8	All the President's Men	18	Marathon
9	Simon Amstell	19	Emperor Hirohito
10	Helsinki	20	Mercury

## Crossword Answers

**ACROSS** - 7 Revenue. 8 Volumes. 10 Feathercut. 11 Each. 12 Doghouse. 14 Levied. 15 Cat And Mouse. 19 Show Up. 20 Imperial. 22 Asti. 23 Electorate. 25 Arsenic. 26 Marbles.

**DOWN** - 1 Reredos. 2 Went. 3 Juneau. 4 Portaloo. 5 Supervisor. 6 Fetched. 9 Screwdriver. 13 Head Waiter. 16 Apple Pie. 17 Chasers. 18 Waltzer. 21 Pitman. 24 Ribs.

## End Piece

*Winter*

*Renewal time*

*When the greyness dissolves*

*With the emergence of the white*

*Snowdrop*

**Mary Atkinson**