



# Bicester U3A Newsletter #91

## February 2024

### From our Chairman



The end of a worrying time for me, with four committee members retiring and still missing a vice chairman. I hate to think how many begging emails I have sent and how many requests I have made at all our meetings. But it has all paid off, over the year we have gained a new Membership Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Treasurer, Business Secretary, Programme Secretary AND two candidates for Vice Chairman! I go into committee meetings now and think I have entered the wrong meeting, I don't recognise anyone! But I think we have a very strong team. We've had a great team over the last year and I will sorely miss those departing, but they are not leaving the U3A so they will still be around.

It has been an exciting time, with new groups popping up all over (pun deliberate!). Jan has done a tremendous job, not just on the new groups front, but with the group leaders' folder. She has found it very hard work and if there is anyone who thinks they might be able to help, let me or Jan know. (Not a committee post so no commitment).

Mary found a great new venue for our Christmas Lunch (something to do with being in sight of her house?). Basically very good, lovely room, good food, good atmosphere, but very slow service. I had no problem on table one but table 12 had time to go home for afternoon tea and return before their lunch was served! Food for thought for next Christmas.

We all look forward to a great new U3A year to "Learn, Laugh, Live". Happy New Year!  
Dave Jones

### 2024 Renewal Subscription £15

Please note. Your subscription is now due. If you do not renew by 31 March it will lapse and you will no longer be able to attend groups (as you won't be covered by insurance), receive your copy of Third Age Matters (TAM), or our Bicester U3A newsletters. All members with email addresses were sent an email with a link to a paper renewal form early in January. The form is two sided and requires a signature. Be sure to tick the boxes to indicate your information preferences. You can pay by BACS (bank transfer) to our Subscription account quoting your membership number, or by cheque. (The detail is important as we have more than one bank account). If you have any questions or require help with your renewal, please contact Val our Membership Secretary. A **big thank you** to those who have already renewed. 2024 membership and information cards will be sent to those who included a stamp for this purpose. Otherwise, they will be available for collection at the February meeting. Please remember to place the membership card in the plastic sleeve you were sent in 2023 and to bring your card for scanning at the monthly meetings. We hope that you will renew your membership but, if you decide not to, please let us know so that we do not send you unwanted reminders.

Bicester U3A Committee.

# Executive Committee

Chairman	Dave Jones
Vice Chairman	Garth Perkins
Treasurer	Anthony Lock
Business Secretary	Sylvia Frydland
Membership Secretary	Val Day
Webmaster & GDPR	Tomy Duby
Newsletter Editor	Helena Tuckwell
Group Coordinator	Jan Laker
Programme Secretary	Gill Hawkins
Beacon Administration	George Edmundson
Welcome Liaison	Carolyn Jones

## Welcomers

Carolyn Jones is our Welcomer Liaison. Her helpers are:

Richard Herbert

Wyn May

Alex Sharpe

Marguerite Scott

Pauline Smith

Joy Saville

## Monthly Meetings

4th Thursday - 2.15pm

The Clifton Centre, Ashdene Rd, Bicester OX26 2BH

Thursday 22 Feb	Jeff Evans, Pop on the Box
Thursday 28 March	Rob Brewer, The role of a tv/film extra. Anyone can do it!
Thursday 25 April	Peter Hague, Cliveden: Power, Politics and Scandal
Thursday 23 May	Philip Caine, Barrow to Baghdad and back again

## Christmas Lunch December 2023

Our Christmas lunch was held at the Function Room at Whitelands Farm sports ground. A great venue: local, easy to get to, good parking, lovely room with a great view, plenty of space, and good food. However, the service was very slow and this will have to be sorted before we go back. We didn't know until it was too late that we had to put out the tables and chairs, supply tablecloths and put everything away afterwards.

The lift wasn't working, causing a problem for a couple of members, but will be fixed for next year. I did say you could only qualify for the lunch if you ran two circuits of the playing field, I don't think anyone did it, so we didn't want the food to go to waste, but next year.....

Dave Jones



## Group Leaders' Meeting

Group leaders were invited to join the committee at the Littlebury Hotel for a meeting and afternoon tea. The Chairman thanked the group leaders for their hard work and commitment to U3A principles and fun. The main reason for the meeting was to introduce the new digital Group Leaders' Handbook. Jan Laker gave a summary of the new online handbook which is in line with the national U3A strategy. She has worked hard to produce a complete revision of the old document. George Edmundson gave a short presentation of the features and benefits of the U3A Beacon system. Great for those of us new to the system and a useful refresher for those who know it.







We were then entertained by an amusing and clever magician. Some, like myself, cynics, were thoroughly amazed by some of his tricks.

We then enjoyed a cream tea to round off an enjoyable and informative afternoon.  
Garth Perkins

## Photographic Competition Winners 2023

The response to the 2023 competition was good, with 66 photo entries. Many thanks to everyone who entered and those who voted. Members at the November meeting voted for their three favourite photographs. A total of 240 votes were cast. Congratulations to the winners.



**1st place**

David Thornton with the robin

**2nd place**

Ibraheim Abo El Noir with the spider



**3rd place**

Viv McKay with Fiddle Leaf Fungi



## Residential Holidays

Thirty-four of our members are booked on the Northumbria trip in June this year. Lindisfarne, Craggside, Beamish and Alnwick are all confirmed, and we have booked stops at National Trust properties on both outward and return journeys. Final balances are due in mid-April, and I will be contacting passengers during March regarding payment.

Looking ahead to 2025 I have a provisional booking at The Duke of Cornwall Hotel in Plymouth from 1-7 July. There are a number of single rooms with no supplement, as well as double and twin rooms.



Plymouth is on the border of Devon and Cornwall and is ideal for visiting a host of attractions. The cost would be in the region of £850 per person, depending on where we decide to visit. If this trip appeals to you, please let me know and, depending on numbers, I can take the booking further. There is no commitment at this stage, but I would give preference to those who have responded first.

If you know the area and have any ideas for places to visit, I would appreciate it if you would share your knowledge.

Audrey

## Group Coordinator News

In every newsletter I thank our group leaders, but over the last couple of months, the committee has tried to emphasise the gratitude that is due to all of them. Sometimes the group leaders know how much they are appreciated because their group members remember to tell them. Sometimes there are times when group leaders wonder if members realise how much preparation goes into a meeting. At Christmas each group leader received an individualised Christmas/thank you card from the committee.

On 31 January we held a thank you cream tea for all group leaders. I was part of the event team that organised it. With my group coordinator hat on, I announced the launch of the digital version of Bicester U3A Group Leader's Handbook. It gives easy access to a wide variety of information that is useful for group leaders. I talked of the National U3A Strategy called "Fit for the future" which gives a context for the digital format of the handbook. Group leaders will be invited to a series of smaller meetings over the next two to three months. These will provide an opportunity to discuss the new policies (available to view on the Links page of the Bicester U3A website) and provide an opportunity to discuss anything else relevant to individual leaders. Overall, I would like to say that I enjoyed the afternoon very much, as I hope group leaders did.

On another note, part of the National U3A Strategy encourages collaboration with others where appropriate. I'm delighted to say that one of the local residential homes has approached Bicester U3A and we are beginning to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with them. For us they have offered space for one of our groups to meet. For them ready-made leisure activities will potentially be provided for any of their residents who care to join Bicester U3A.

## **Group News**

Pam Wakeling stepped down as leader of the Current Affairs group after leading it for about six years. Many thanks for continuing for that long Pam. Full of enthusiasm, Pam is moving on to new pastures. She is starting two new groups in February. A Local Affairs group and a Sunday Sandwich Lunch group. Both have had good interest. Look out for a third group likely to begin in March to be led by Pam with support from me. This will be an Interfaith and Comparative Religion group. Many thanks to Gill Hawkins who has taken over leadership of the Current Affairs group, I'm sure you will do a great job, and hope you enjoy the role.

Christine Cox has stepped down from leading the Art Appreciation group. Many thanks Christine for doing a great job for a number of years. This group will now be in the capable hands of Val Day, who is also our Membership Secretary, and Steve Procopiou, who has a wide range of experience in Bicester U3A including Committee roles and leading groups.

Chris Neville restarted a Beginners French group and is now running morning and afternoon sessions alternately.

The three new Mah Jong groups are proving a great success. Almost everyone (around 30 people), who started in the beginners' Mah Jong groups before Christmas, are continuing in the groups that are now overseen by George Edmundson. I'm extremely grateful to George for helping me to find a way for the groups to continue, and for the members of the groups who are helping George by performing various tasks.

The new Cycling group has started meeting at intervals through the winter when weather permitted. Congratulations to Martin and the ride leaders on making this happen!

The Family History group is about to launch and will be offered by Charlie Wrench on a one to one or a one to two basis at a time to suit individuals. Charlie has years of experience in family history research and this new kind of format will be a great asset.

## **Communications**

You will, I hope, have noticed that I have started using a link within an email for members to express interest in new groups. From my perspective this seems to be working very well. Sometimes I get expressions of interest in a new group within minutes of sending out an email to the whole membership. If you have any comments about this way of informing membership about groups I would be pleased to receive them.

Bicester U3A now has 38 groups running; people have kindly offered thanks to me as group coordinator for this. Of course, it's not entirely my doing. I give as much support as I can but it's the people who have the ideas and are willing to come forward to lead groups that make new groups possible.

I look forward to even more groups getting established. As always if you would like to discuss possibilities of hosting a pop-up gathering (see <https://U3Asites.org.uk/bicester/page/128631>) or would like to start a new group please contact me.

Jan Laker

## Bicester U3A Interest Groups

<u>Group</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Meets</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Any Type of Good Music	Richard Herbert	4th Mon pm	Members' homes
Art Appreciation	Val Day Steve Procopiou	2nd Thurs pm	Bucknell Village Hall
Arts and Crafts	Debbie Cooper	1st & 3rd Mon pm	Tesco Community Space
Blues Appreciation	Andrew Thomas	2nd Friday pm	Members' homes
Book Group	Audrey Luff	2nd Friday am	Bicester Library
Bridge	Denise Thornton Dave Thornton	1st, 3rd & 5th Tuesday pm	Launton Grange Care Home
Bus Pass Adventures	Rennie Buxton	4th Wed am	TBA
Camera Club	George Edmundson	1st & 3rd Thurs am	Emmanuel Church Cafe
Canasta	Doreen Shirley	Weekly Wed pm	Members' homes
Creative Writing	Mike Wyatt	4th Friday pm	Members' homes
Current Affairs	Gill Hawkins	2nd Monday am	Members' homes
Cycling Group	Martin Williams	TBA	TBA
Drawing and Painting	Janet Hartley Joy Saville	2nd & 4th Mon pm	Tesco Community Space
Exploring Classical Music	Tomy Duby	1st & 3rd Thurs am	Zoom
Family History	Charlie Wrench	TBA	TBA
French Conversation	Julie Evans	1st and 3rd Wed am	Members' homes
French Beginners A&B	Chris Neville	Fortnightly, Tues am & pm	Members' homes

Garden Visits	Dave Jones	2nd Wed pm or all day	TBA
Gentle Exercise	Joy Saville	Monday am	St Edburg's Church Hall
German	Brenda Strohm	2nd & 4th Mon am	Zoom
Improvers' Bridge	Audrey Luff	2nd & 4th Tues pm	Launton Grange Care Home
Jazz Appreciation	Andrew Thomas	3rd Wed pm	Members' Homes
Local affairs	Pam Wakeling	2nd Thurs am	Members' homes
Mah-jong	Doreen Shirley	1st & 3rd Mon pm	Members' homes
Mah-Jong Beginners	George Edmundson	Tues, Weds, Thurs am	Littlebury Hotel
Murder Mystery Book Group	Mary Herbert	4th Wed pm	Members' homes
Qi Gong	Audrey Luff Denise Thornton	Weekly Tues am	Chesterton Com Centre
Rock Group	Doug Irvine	2nd Tues pm	Members' homes
Rummikub	Sheila McKechnie	1st & 3rd Wed pm	Lamb Inn
Scrabble	Sue Barden	1st & 3rd Thurs pm	Members' homes
Short Walks	Mary Gough	2nd Tues am	TBA
Sunday Lunch	Sandie Stevenson	1st Sunday 12.30 pm	Local Pubs/ Restaurants
Sunday Sandwich lunch	Pam Wakeling	3rd Sunday	Members' homes
Table Tennis	Christine Cox	Weekly Thurs am	Chesterton Com Centre
Ukulele Group	Bill Jeffries	2nd & 4th Wed pm	Blackthorn Village Hall
Wider Horizons	Joy Saville	2nd & 4th Fri am	Lamb Inn
Wine Appreciation	Richard Herbert	3rd Thurs evening	Members' homes



# Group Updates

## Any Type of Good Music

At a recent meeting one of our members trawled through his CD collection and played us a series of favourite tracks beginning with a band or performer starting with the letter A and going through the alphabet to Z. This brought up some very interesting tracks in multiple genres from Electronica through Jazz, Rock, Pop and Blues. Currently we are a fairly small group and have space for new members. If you like listening to Any Type of Good Music in a convivial and friendly atmosphere come and join us. Contact me or the group coordinator for more details.

Richard Herbert

## Art Appreciation

Surprisingly, we had never had a talk on Salvador Dali, and so it was ideal that Gillian Flynn had chosen the life and work of this surrealist Spanish artist for the November meeting. Over the years she has spent a lot of time holidaying in Catalonia and has visited the three buildings that make up the so called Dalian Triangle – his house at Port Ligat, his wife's castle and subsequent mausoleum at Pubol and his Teatro-Museo at Figueres. She was able to use her own holiday photos mixed with internet-researched pictures of his many artworks, which covered a range of genres from paintings (in both classical and surrealist styles), sculptures, jewellery and furniture design (including the famous Mae West sofa) and novel writing. It was interesting to discover his links with the Oxfordshire market town of Faringdon. If you are there in future, take a moment to search out the sculpture of the diver's helmet with its accompanying explanation, in the town's market square.

For our Xmas meeting, we used the same formula as last year, this time members bringing a piece of glass, china or pottery, old or new, to talk about and say why they liked it and how it came to them. Was it a gift from someone special or just a reminder of an event or person? Sixteen of us took part and what a variation of stories and things we got! Many had brought glass, ranging from Venice, Caithness, America and Scandinavia so perhaps there's a whole subject that we could explore in the future. Afterwards, we had a Christmas tea with lots of fattening goodies and it was a lovely social afternoon to round off the year.

After seven years at the helm, I've resigned as Group Leader and I'm delighted to tell you that Val Day and Steve Procopiou have joined forces to run the group, which didn't meet in January. It gave them time to sort out the programme for the year. I'll still be a member and look forward to more interesting afternoons. We are always open to new members – that's the advantage of meeting at Bucknell Village Hall. You don't have to be knowledgeable, only interested in finding out more - with a very friendly group. Do get in touch with Val or Steve and come along to see whether you like it.

Christine Cox

## Arts and Crafts

Before Christmas we were very busy making Christmas cards. Unfortunately we were unable to meet in December due to constraints on the room at Tesco. In January we enjoyed trying out Zentangling (a type of artistic doodling) and calligraphy.

Debbie Cooper

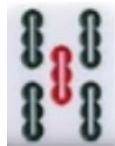
## Beginners' Mah Jong

Following a whistle stop introduction to Mah Jong, 29 of us decided we wanted to continue to play and learn. It was decided that I would act as leader of this group in an administrative capacity, I have no more knowledge of the game than the rest of us. We split into three subgroups called: Bamboo, Characters and Circles. These are the names of the suits in Mah Jong. Each group has one or two facilitators who organise the weekly or fortnightly games. We use the Littlebury Hotel. They have once again allowed us to use their bar area three times a week. This is working very well and judging from my subgroup we all have a great time and are learning something new each week. We are a very supportive group as we are all starting from scratch.

George Edmundson



Bamboo



Character



Circle



## Book Group

We met in December to review *Exposure* by Helen Dunsmore. The Cold War is at its height, and a spy may be a friend, neighbour, colleague or lover. At the end of a suburban garden, in the pouring rain, a woman buries a briefcase deep in the earth. She believes that she is protecting her family. What she will learn is that no-one is immune from betrayal or the devastating consequences of exposure. After a slow start this became a gripping story, well written, with plenty of twists and turns and very difficult to put down. We wanted to know what happened next! We had an excellent discussion with most members of the group praising the book. A really good choice.

*The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare, was the choice for December. In a small Nigerian village, fourteen-year-old Adunni dreams of getting an education and giving her family a more comfortable life. Instead, her father sells her to become the third wife of an old man. Tragedy strikes and Adunni flees to the wealthy enclaves of Lagos where she becomes a house-girl to the cruel Big Madam and prey to Big Madam's husband. Adunni is a very believable character and we found her quite inspirational. Life in Lagos, the vast divide between the rich and the poor, the anger and brutality is well described. There are some wonderful characters in the book. Everyone in the group really enjoyed it and we would recommend it as a good read.

Our first meeting in January 2024 was to discuss *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan. An Irish town in 1985 and Bill Furlong is facing his busiest season as a coal and timber merchant. Just 128 pages but this beautifully written book gave us a great deal to talk about. The main thrust of the book is about the young 'fallen' girls in the convent. There was talk and disquiet in the community, but no-one would speak out for fear of the Church and the state. The social history of the time and the daily simplicity of family life at Christmas add to the interest of this amazing book. Most of us had heard of the Magdalene laundries and the heartless treatment of the unmarried mothers and their babies. Do read this one, we all enjoyed it very much.

Audrey Luff

## Bridge

For the last year we have been very fortunate to be able to use the Library as our venue, however, they are now asking us to pay an amount that we cannot afford, so we have to leave. Luckily we've been able to find a super new venue at Launton Grange and started there at the beginning of February. We will be able to start all our sessions at 2pm. If anyone would like to have a game of duplicate bridge please contact me. If you are worried about the level of play or have not played duplicate before you can always come along and have a look, we are a friendly crowd.

Denise Thornton

## Bus Pass Adventures

Our October adventure was a double adventure. Four of us caught the bus to Oxford Parkway and crossed the road to wait for the X4 bus to Banbury. A few Kidlington buses slowed to see if we were waiting for them and then the Banbury bus came along and sped past us without slowing down. As we stood and decided what we should do, a Witney bus came along, so we jumped on that. It was a mystery tour as it took us through Kidlington, Woodstock, Enstone, back through Woodstock, through Long Hanborough and then to Witney. By the time we reached Witney we decided to combine coffee and lunch in the Marks and Spencer café. After refreshing ourselves we visited the Witney Blanket Hall and discovered a beautiful U3A wall hanging made by the Witney U3A. After a cup of tea we headed home (on a direct bus!).

Our adventure for November was to Brackley. We caught the number 500 bus from Bicester. After a warming cup of coffee we followed the Brackley Heritage trail looking at the many different buildings. While walking up the hill away from the town we passed the old Fire Station café which looked like a good place for lunch. Turning off down Church Road we went off to look at St Peter's Church. We thought we had taken the wrong road as we kept on walking, but eventually there it was around a corner. After looking around the church we walked back up to the High Street and headed back towards the town for lunch. Having refreshed ourselves and as it was getting quite cold we headed to the bus stop and home.

Rennie Buxton

## Camera Club

As the weather becomes more unpredictable we've been less adventurous. For November I set a challenge which I called 'on your door step.' The idea was to look for things you see every day but don't really notice. Although this sounds daunting everyone rose to the occasion and we had some great results. I decided to use old photos of Brill Brickworks and try to find any remaining evidence of its existence.



Although I was able to identify the locations they had changed beyond recognition in the intervening centuries. Ian did very well documenting the contradictions between Bicester's stated goal and reality.

We became a little more brave in December catching the bus into Oxford and visiting Bailliol College. I challenged the photographer to find evidence on academic study. This proved more difficult than I had imagined. However there were great examples of architecture and some evidence of indulgence by those privileged to study there.

We still meet regularly at St Emmanuel Church Cafe to review our pictures and also indulge in coffee, cake and a friendly chat. We're a companionable bunch and anyone is welcome to join us. You don't need any specific equipment, members use a range from smart phones to advance DSLRs. The only requirement is that you enjoy taking photos.  
George Edmundson



Bailliol College

## Canasta

This group is going well, varying in numbers each week, as many of the members are in other groups.

Doreen Shirley

## Creative Writing

New Year - new start!

The Group all enjoyed the pre-Christmas 'Bring and Share Christmas Munch'. Now we have rolled up our sleeves, sharpened our pencils and wits and started in earnest! This January meeting (meant to set the tempo for future gatherings), revolved around a long discussion of why do we write; what inspires us; and how memory plays its part. All members enjoyed looking back to their childhood memories and careers as useful sources of inspiration. We discussed the kind of reading we each enjoy: both fiction and non-fiction and the genre each preferred to follow when writing. It is not surprising to find that the majority of what the members enjoy is somewhat diverse: which makes for a rich tapestry to our endeavours. The members have been tasked to write a fictional eulogy to bring to the next meeting. I look forward with anticipation to their results!

Mike Wyatt

## Current Affairs

Current Affairs is a relatively small group and we have had some changes since the last Newsletter. Most notably, our founding leader has stepped down and we say a big thank you to Pam for her long-standing commitment to the group. Following an interim period, I have now assumed control! After lengthy discussions, all the members have had a say in how we think the group should progress from now on. We have decided to keep our numbers at a maximum of ten. This is because we meet in members' homes where space (and parking) can be limited. We are now holding meetings only once a month. No subjects will be banned from



our discussions. We have decided not to pre-arrange subject matter but to discuss whatever we find of interest on the day.

Gill Hawkins

## **Cycling Group**

January is typically a quiet month for cycling, icy roads, and the inevitable increasing size of potholes. But as the end of January approaches the days are starting to get longer and there's a hint of spring in the hedges. Watching the weather there have been some mild days so there is some hope of getting back on the road. Living in a village just outside Bicester I see the cycle clubs are getting started again so I am hopeful we can get things going next month.

Ride suggestions include Stowe, Claydon and Quainton; all with excellent coffee shops!

Martin Williams

## **Drawing and Painting**

We continue to meet at Tesco although there will be only one meeting a month from April to June. However we will continue with the 2nd and 4th meetings in the month from July until the end of the year. Hopefully we can resume our usual meetings next year, but I will be contacting Tesco as they requested in August. Our group hope to have an exhibition of our work at the February monthly meeting.

Janet Hartley

## **Exploring Classical Music**

Our membership is growing! We have two new members. So does the Interest Group's Online half of the group. Recently we had about 13 members in our twice-a-month Zoom meetings. But what is more important for those of us who took part is the music that we explored. Last time, for example, we had a presentation on classical Irish music. We learned, that John Field (born in 1782 in Dublin) travelled widely in Europe and finally settled in Moscow where he died in 1837. He was the first to use the term Nocturne for a brief composition for piano with a beautiful melody. He wrote 20 of them. Today they are overshadowed by the more popular Nocturnes of Frederic Chopin. Is it because he wrote 21?

The first meeting in 2024 was dedicated to oboe music. It turned out that there is much more beautiful music for this woodwind instrument than the Oboe Concerto by Albinoni which you may hear when you are put on hold. We closed 2023 with our variant of the Desert Island Disk a meeting where everybody contributed a few minutes of music worth exploring. The music spanned a wonderful example of guitar from Andalusia to a folklore-based composition from Taiwan. And almost everything in between from Bach to Poulenc that we could squeeze into 80 minutes of music...

Tomy Duby

## **French Beginners**

The French Beginners group (a) has now been going for three months and is making good progress. We have learned how to construct sentences and we sang Christmas carols in French. We also listened to and enjoyed Edith Piaf and Sacha Distel. The grammar book we are using automatically does revision after each five chapters, but as it is always more difficult to learn something new at our age, we revise as often as is necessary which is often done by playing games or through songs. As this group is full I am starting Group (b) in February.

Contact me (my details are on the information card) or the Group Co-ordinator.

Chris Neville

## French Conversation

The French Conversation Group meet on the first and third Wednesday of the month and take it in turns to host the session and provide tea or coffee. We have no set agenda for our meetings and discuss such things as recent holidays, general everyday inconveniences, likes and dislikes. In fact any topic which a member might raise, sometimes serious and sometimes not so serious. The hour and a half session usually passes very quickly!

Julie Evans

## Garden Visits

There have been no visits since the last newsletter, so I have been busy preparing this year's programme. I hope the first will be to Kew to see the Orchid Festival. See photos below for a taster. Followed by:

March: Castle Ashby

April: Canon's Ashby

May: Chenies

June: Kiftsgate & Hidcote

July: Waterperry

August: Basildon Park

September: RHS Wisley Flower Show

October: Coughton Court.



Unfortunately my minibus licence runs out in September and I won't be renewing it, so unless we have a member of the group who can drive it, we will be back to using our cars as the group did before I took over leadership.

Dave Jones

## Gentle Exercise

We now meet every Monday at 10.30am for our bit of exercise. All feeling the benefits, I am sure, especially the balance exercises which are very important as we get a bit older. I keep adding a few more exercises and any feedback from the class is welcome. Use it or loose it!

Joy Saville

## Improvers' Bridge

Despite losing some of our members, the group continues to thrive, and, although the brain cells hurt sometimes, we do find that the teaching is helping with our game. We have all been playing for some time, but the clever techniques explained by Denise bring a new challenge. Denise, assisted by Dave, guides us through practice hands at a speed to accommodate even the slowest player. We are currently learning how to make the contract when bidding is complete. We are a friendly group and there are no recriminations if we get things wrong. We have moved from the library as the room we used is no longer free of charge.

From February we start playing at Launton Grange Care Home. We have been offered a lovely room and made to feel very welcome. Hopefully none of us will require any of their other services in the near future!

Audrey Luff

## Local Affairs

Just to let everyone know that I am starting a new group on the second Thursday of the month at 10 - 11.30am. Many of you will remember that I started and ran Current Affairs for a few years and felt it was time for a change. We will be concentrating on Local Issues and how they affect both ourselves, family etc. I realised that having been in Bicester for nearly ten years I knew little of what went on, so this is an opportunity for me and others to look more in depth at Bicester and it's close environs. Please contact Jan Laker (Group Coordinator) who is collating interest or myself. I have about four spaces left.

Pam Wakeling

## Mah Jong

This group is going well, with an extra member joining recently.

Doreen Shirley

## Murder Mystery Book Group

November 23

### Case Histories by Kate Atkinson

This is a complex and moving literary detective story that made me sad but also laugh out loud. Cambridge is sweltering during an unusually hot summer. To Jackson Brodie, a former police inspector, turned private investigator, the world consists of one accounting sheet - Lost on the left - Found on the right and the two never seem to balance. Surrounded by death, intrigue and misfortune, his own life haunted by a family tragedy, Jackson attempts to unravel three disparate case histories and begins to realise that in spite of apparent diversity, everything is connected.

January 2024

### The Moving Toyshop by Edmund Crispin

Richard Cadogan's Oxford holiday becomes a mystery solving adventure full of unexpected twists and turns. After an eventful journey, Cadogan arrives in Oxford late at night, only to realise he has forgotten exactly where he is staying. Relying on a distant memory of the place that he boarded years ago, he enters a Toyshop that he thinks is being burgled. He finds the dead body of a woman, gets knocked out and locked in a store room. When he awakes he finds the body has gone and the toy shop has turned inexplicably into a grocery shop. Luckily for the puzzled poet, his old university friend, Gervase Fen is there and ready to plunge into the midst of this mystery.

Mary Herbert

## Qi Gong

Many of our Qi Gong exercises have an animal theme or name. There is The Tiger, The Monkey and various Bear movements. The latest addition to our collection is Running like a deer which is to strengthen the kidneys, bladder, and bones. If you were watching through the windows, you would no doubt wonder why a group of people were trying to form their hands and fingers into antlers! Sometimes there is amusement, as the lessons are quite light-hearted, but we do really feel the benefits of our weekly classes. Qi means breath, energy: Gong means work.

Posture, breathing and the gentle exercises are very important at any time, but particularly as we grow older. We are very grateful to Tania for her teaching and dedication to the group.  
Denise and Audrey

## Rock Group

New year and new things to work on. Santa brought me a new guitar pedal that emulates a sitar so I have had to dig out my double neck (guitar and bass) and lots more cables! We have been offered a few gigs for 2024 so we will be working hard to get a set list put together that flows well and add a few more tunes. I know I'm supposed to add photos to this short note but it's difficult to take photos and play at the same time. If anyone fancies an opportunity we are at Bucknell village hall 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month 2-4pm.

Doug Irvine

## Scrabble

It's been a slow start for our group. We planned to have our belated Christmas get together lunch on the first Thursday in January, due to illness it had to be cancelled. I'm pleased to say that we were able to meet on the 3rd. Sandie was also back from her Christmas break so we all had a very pleasant lunch at Zayka the Turkish restaurant near to St Edburges church. It's back to normal, meeting on the first and third Thursdays to start playing and enjoying each other's company.

Sue Barden

## Short Walks Group

In November the group walked around Bicester. We met at Bure Park shops and set off through Bure Park Nature Reserve. The route took us across to the Kingsmere Estate and then alongside Bicester Village to the station. There was a lot of surface water around so we had to be careful crossing the road. We returned to Bure Park via Garth Park.



*The Oxford Canal*

The weather continued to be very wet in December. We attempted to walk from Lower Heyford along the Oxford Canal. The tow path was very wet and muddy. We almost reached Allen's Lock but were prevented because the flood water was too deep. Consequently, we had to retrace our steps. There wasn't a walk in January as I was on holiday abroad. I look forward to seeing some of you on our future walks.

Mary Gough

## Sunday Sandwich Group

This is a relaxed opportunity to meet at a bring your own lunch. I will provide coffee/tea. After my husband died, nearly three years ago, I realised that often the weekends are difficult for those living alone. I am aware of the Sunday lunch group on the first Sunday of the month, so went for the third Sunday of the month. I can only fit 10 at a maximum and the first meeting is Sunday 22 Feb from 12 noon to 2pm. There has been an excellent response and I look forward to the first of hopefully many monthly sandwich sessions!

Pam Wakeling



## Table Tennis

We've been playing for over 10 years now. At first, we had a coach but not any more, which is why we can't take complete beginners. If you've played before, even if it was ages ago and would like to join, please get in touch. We haven't got a waiting list at the moment and numbers have been down recently through injury or illness, so it's a good time to suss us out! We play doubles mainly on four tables and everyone mixes in as there is no better way of improving than playing with all levels of ability. I've got a couple of spare bats to lend out if needed until you get your own, and balls are provided. It's only £2 a week at the moment, so what are you waiting for? Just get in touch.

Christine Cox



*The Table Tennis group Christmas meeting - we don't usually dress like this to play!*

## Ukulele

The last half of the year was very busy for the group, performing at the following clubs: the Bicester Forget Me Not group, two performances for Spencer Court at Woodstock and a single performance for Valentine Club at Steeple Aston. We've been asked by The Bicester Forget Me Not group to play for them on a monthly basis and have seven bookings for the coming six months.

Bill Jeffries



*The Ukulele group*

## Wider Horizons

We have now decided to meet at 10.30m instead of 10am as in the cold weather we were struggling to get there for 10. We meet at The Lamb at the top of Sheep Street every 2nd and 4th Friday. We had a lovely Christmas lunch there just after Christmas, enjoyed by all.

Before Christmas we visited Warwick Castle, on the train, to look around the castle dressed for Christmas and do the Light Trail in the grounds. A very cold day but the rain kept off so it was a magical day out which got us in the mood for Christmas.

A few trips out are planned so come along and see what we are up to, all U3A members welcome.

Joy Saville



*The Wider Horizons group at Warwick Castle*

## **Wine Appreciation**

For our October meeting we had an interesting selection of wines to taste. The theme was a tasting comparison of two great houses with a white, a rosé and a red wine chosen from each of the houses' wine shops with the wines as close a match as possible. The two houses being Chatsworth and Waddesdon. The whites were Sauvignon Blancs, one from France and one from New Zealand with the latter getting the popular vote. The rosés were both French with a Cotes de Gascoigne just edging out a Bordeaux. The reds were both from the Bordeaux region with an Entre Deux Mers coming out ahead of a Bordeaux from Les Legendes. The final score put the Waddesdon wines somewhat ahead of the Chatsworth selection in the opinion of the 12 amateur tasters at the meeting.

In January we started the New Year with a selection of wines from a mixed case supplied by Virgin Wines comprising three whites and three reds. The whites were a Pinot Grigio from Italy, a Chardonnay from South Africa and a Jumilla from Spain. The Pinot Grigio was deemed the favourite, and to some the top wine of the night. The reds included a Grenache from Carinena in Spain, a Shiraz called "Ripper" from SE Australia and an obscure grape called Feteasca Neagra from Romania. The Grenache came out favourite with members not sure about the Romanian oddity.

We currently have spaces for two more members if anyone is interested in joining our happy bunch. No need to be a wine expert, we aren't, just enjoy tasting wines in a jolly atmosphere and learn how to buy a wine you like on your next trip to the supermarket. If Interested please contact me or the group co-ordinator.

Richard Herbert

# Bicester U3A General Notices

## **News of Members:**

If you know of someone who is ill, PLEASE let one of the Committee know so that we can arrange to send a card or perhaps have someone make a visit.

**Honorary Members:** When existing members reach the great age of 90 years, we like to mark the occasion by sending them a card and making them Honorary members of Bicester U3A. As we have no record of dates of birth, we rely on group leaders and friends to let us know when these happy events are approaching.

**Internet and Email:** If you have internet access and are able to receive future editions of the newsletter by email, please contact the Membership Secretary. We try hard to deliver paperwork to members with no email but sometimes it is necessary to use the post, which does increase costs.

**Personal Details:** The Membership Secretary keeps a master list of your personal details. Please remember to advise her if you move house, change your telephone number or email address in order to keep our records up to date and keep in touch.

**Equipment Register:** These items are available to borrow by U3A interest groups. Contact the keeper to arrange a loan

**Committee Members:** Dave Jones (Chairman), P.A. System and digital projector, screen, "iRoar" P.A. System and blue tooth speaker. Mike Luff, Nobo 3 panel desktop display boards (with cover). Audrey Luff, Laminator and free-standing flip chart stand/whiteboard. Mary Herbert. Guillotine.

**Clifton Centre:** Hinged notice board, floor standing projector screen, projector stand, U3A banner. tea urn with stand.

**Refreshments:** Refreshments at monthly meetings are prepared by group members. Sue Wilde will approach leaders with a request for assistance and compile a rota. Please help if you can. Supplies are maintained by Sylvia Frydland.

**Raffle:** The raffle at monthly meetings is organised by Jan and Alan Marshall. Donations of prizes are always gratefully received.

Don't forget that up to date information about groups and events can be found on our website at [u3asites.org.uk/bicester](http://u3asites.org.uk/bicester)

[www.u3asites.org.uk/bicester](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/bicester)  
Registered Charity Number 1094759

*Press Dates: Any item for inclusion in the May newsletter must reach the newsletter editor before 30 April NB this is an absolute deadline. You can contact the editor via the website contacts page or from details on your information card.*

*Thank you Helena*