

# Keeping In Touch

## Hitchin U3A

[www.u3asites.org.uk/hitchin](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/hitchin)

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November 2023



### *Chairman's Comments from Heidi Ebrahim*

## Chairman's Chat December 2023



Hitchin u3a has had another really good year. We now have almost 300 members, which is about a 50% increase during the last couple of years. We've had a variety of popular events, including 3 musical evenings (with another booked for 15th January) plus a very popular quiz and curry, besides all the speaker meetings and social events, visits and holidays and regular coffee mornings.

All this wouldn't happen without our large number of volunteers, and we would like to thank everyone who helps our u3a in any way, without all of you we wouldn't be able to function. It would be great if we could recruit even more people to help, whether for something regular or a one off - please speak to any of the committee at speaker meetings, or send a message from the Contact Page on the website if you'd like to help. Thank you, it really does make a huge difference.

Please remember the next meeting is the Christmas Social Event on Monday December 11th from 2.15 till 4pm at the Town Hall. Everyone is welcome.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who's contributed to the newsletters throughout the last year. We've had a great variety of articles and photos and I've enjoyed putting them all together. The next magazine will be published at the beginning of March, so please try and save any bits and pieces for then. I'd especially welcome something from groups that haven't been featured this year, especially with a photo or two. Thank you.

# Craft Group

The Craft Group have been busy making Christmas wreaths.



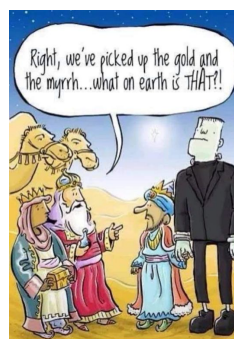
They meet on the third Monday afternoon of each month at 3pm at The Sun Hotel.

**New members are welcome**

## Christmas Jokes

**Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?**

**A mince spy!**



One night a Viking named Rudolph the Red was looking out the window when he said, "It's going to rain."

His wife asked, "How do you know?"

"Because Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear."

**Snowman for sale, needs repairs. £10**



**Q: Who's never hungry at Christmas?**  
**A: The Turkey. He's always stuffed!**

**Q: What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus?**  
**A: Claus-trophobic**

# Writing Group

*Here's a charming story from the writing group for you to enjoy.*

## Tea

"Just humour her" my mother used to say "All she ever predicts is gloom and doom".

My Irish grandmother, an avid reader of tea leaves, bemoaned the arrival of tea bags. "How can we prepare for disasters if we don't know they are going to happen?" she cried. She always used loose tea leaves, no tea strainer, and eyed my mother's caddy of tea bags as if it were Pandora's box, full of the evils of the world. Could tea bags possibly be responsible for climate change, floods and fires or even the hole in the ozone layer? Well, there's a thought! If you believed grandmother, it was certainly a possibility.

Her whole life had been ruled by signs and superstitions. She claimed she had once seen a banshee who had put a curse on her but she was saved by the finding of a very rare four leafed shamrock. Her weather predictions were second only to those of the Met Office; who needed satellites when one had only to use one's eyes? Red sky morning or night, rain before seven, enough blue sky to make a pair of Dutchman's trousers, ring round the moon, St Swithin's Day, an abundance of nuts and berries forewarning a cold winter. Who needed a televised weather forecast?

And it didn't stop there. Cracked mirrors, open umbrellas in the house, spilt salt, new shoes on the table. Always say Good Morning to a magpie. Despite our scepticism I am sure there is nobody who could say they have never crossed their fingers for good luck, probably the most common superstition of all. Or avoided walking under a ladder. Grandmother's whole life seems to have been ordered and restricted by her belief in signs and symbols.

She left instructions for her funeral, mirrors and clocks to be covered and a window to be opened to let her soul out; my parents drew the line at an Irish wake but at the Irish farewell blessing tears were shed: "May the road rise to meet you, May the wind be always at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face, The rains fall soft upon your fields" In my mind's eye, under a clear blue sky, I see a black cat on the road following my grandmother.



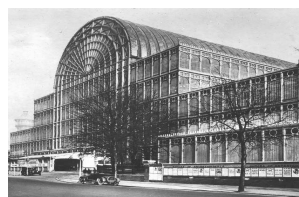
However, she was a great teller of tales about the little folk, the leprechauns, her childhood in an Irish village and it was good to sit down with a cup of tea, whether made with tea leaves or tea bags, to listen to her stories. Much of what she said could be taken with a pinch of salt but she surely left us a legacy of magical memories.

# Architecture

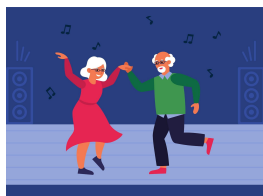
The restarted Architecture Group has now met twice. It has a wide remit, 'Architecture and the Built Environment', to give members plenty of scope for their interests. We shall continue to add topics as we go along, but they are already varied. The list so far includes amongst others, Gothic, Georgian, Bauhaus, Brunel, Hitchin, and Underground Architecture.

Unable to book a room for December, the next meeting is planned for 10.30 am 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at the Sun Inn. This is the second Wednesday in the month, which is when we plan to continue. We shall have a brief focus on 'The Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 Great Exhibition', and then hope to compile a programme for the next few months, with further presentations from members, and discussion of possible visits.

The Sun is at present reviewing its arrangements with U3A, and the group may have to support a small charge; this will be settled by the time of the next meeting. We hope to continue in the Tavistock Room (beyond the bar) since this is accessible to a member in a wheelchair. It is a nice large room, so there will continue to be a warm welcome for any members who still wish to join us. Please contact Bren if you are interested.



## New Dance Group?



As a fan of Strictly Come Dancing I'd love to see a ballroom/latin dance group formed. Or maybe a Ceroc group? Anyone else interested? Do we have any 'teachers' out there who are willing to show us the ropes? Please contact me if you're interested. June

# Theatre Group

The theatre group on their last trip for 2023 to see The King & I on 8th November

There's a couple of comments to read beneath the photo.



*November saw the Theatre Group travel by minibus to Milton Keynes, to witness a truly "regal" production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The King and I". And "regal" sums up the quality of the production perfectly. Fully deserving of the theatre's full house.*

*Based upon the story originally penned by author Margaret Landon, and in turn upon real-life events, the musical's plot largely depicts the relationship between the King of Siam and Anna, a school teacher employed to teach his children. In truth, I Have (long) Dreamed of the opportunity to see this show, and the Milton Keynes production certainly did not disappoint. Indeed, the chemistry between Anna and the King was quite mesmerizing, whilst the antics of the monarch's brood of children were a delight to behold. Costume, scenery, orchestral music and choreography were all stunning, swiftly transporting us to the exotic, faraway lands of the Orient. Magical!*

*As a group, then, we were most definitely party to Something Wonderful on that rainy and windy afternoon. And, as such, could wend our way homewards, Whistling a Happy Tune!*

*With many thanks to Carol, for organising this enjoyable event.*

This was my first theatre trip with the U3A & the day might have started with rain but it was certainly a delightful way to spend it.

Introduction on the bus set us chatting all the way there & back.

We were dropped outside the theatre door and only had a few steps to get to our lunch venue.

Settled in our theatre seats we were treated to a super production of the King and I.

A tale about a school teacher who develops a relationship with the King of Siam in the 1860s. The balance of storytelling, music & comedy was very well done & the young children were so enthusiastic.

A most enjoyable show.

# Theatre Group Programme for 2024



## Pretty Woman

1. **Pretty Woman** Wed 27<sup>th</sup> March – 2.30 p.m. £46.00 – SOLD OUT

The smash hit musical with all the iconic moments from the movie!

2. **The Woman in Black** Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> April – 2.30 p.m. £ 41.00  
(few seats left)

The legendary West End production of Susan Hill's chilling ghost story. It is an unmissable classic that brilliantly delivers atmosphere, illusion and horror!

3. **The Syndicate** Wed 29<sup>th</sup> May - 2.30 p.m. £43.50 – SOLD OUT

Kay Mellor's new play directed by Gaynor Faye – as seen on TV

The Syndicate tells the story of 5 supermarket workers whose lottery syndicate numbers come in, just as their jobs and livelihoods are under threat. Will a share of the jackpot make their dreams come true or their nightmares a reality?

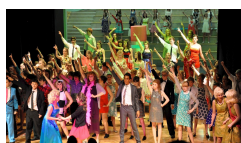
4. **Hairspray – The Musical** Wed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024 £ 48.50  
(few seats left)

Tony Award-winning Hairspray continues to be one of the most widely produced musicals today, not only because of its wit and charm, but also because of the beautiful message of acceptance and progress that it portrays. The bright, energetic story of Tracy Turnblad teaches us all to look past the colour of one's skin and fight for every human being's rights.

5. **An Officer and a Gentleman** Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 £ 42.00

The musical invites you into a world where dreams and destinies intertwine. Based on the award-winning 80s movie, this timeless story of love, courage and redemption will make your heart soar and leave you breathless, longing for more.

## Hairspray





# Photo Group

***Enjoy these gorgeous photos from the group, based on 'One dull day in October'***



***They show some of the beauty to be found around us, even at this time of year.***

# 40k for MND

## Or an extended pub crawl?

Steve Pullinger

In the last newsletter we reported that we would take part in the 40k walk for MND (Motor Neurone Disease) charity. This had been a year in the planning and training to raise funds on behalf of my brother. The walk took a circuitous route from Kempston to Shillington.

Our daughter, in the main picture, had set off at 6.30 am, along with about 20 others, in what turned out to be perfect weather conditions. Marian, our son and I joined just short of half way, at Shefford, and at the much more reasonable time of 9am. The White Hart pub had very generously opened to provide us all with bacon butties. Feeling refreshed we proceeded at a cracking pace to Clifton to pose outside The Admiral pub – my regular in my youth. Sadly too early for a swift half there. On to an eatery at Lower Stondon for lunch. But can't stop too long – we have a challenge to complete. Off to Pirton and the Motte and Bailey for drinks and snacks.

Finally a 'short hop' to Shillington and the big finish (main picture). for congratulatory burgers and beer. Why this route – my brother lived in Clifton before moving to Shillington where he met, and married, his wife. And they now live in Kempston. Why 40k – it was their 40th anniversary this year. How romantic.

