



Newbury



NEWSLETTER

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NEWBURY u3a CHAIR'S LETTER

Welcome to our Springtime Newsletter. The spring flowers have grown so well with all the rain we had in April, but hopefully May will bring sunny weather. As well as being busy in the gardens, we will no doubt all be watching our televisions as the King is crowned at the Coronation Service at Westminster Abbey on 6th May. In addition, there will be local and family celebrations to enjoy over the Bank Holiday weekend so let's hope the weather co-operates too.

This month is full of Bank Holidays. To fit in around all these holiday dates, can I remind you we have arranged an alternative date for our May monthly Talk at St Nic's - now to be held on Monday, 15th May. Tea and coffee served from 1.45pm as usual. We look forward to welcoming Graham Short who will give us a highly entertaining Talk about his amazing art on a minute scale. His exceptional work includes The Lord's Prayer carved on the head of a pin, and the words, 'Nothing is Impossible', carved along the sharp edge of a Wilkinson Sword razor blade. He has made the smallest portrait in the world of the Queen (on a gold disc inside the eye of a needle) and is certainly a speaker not to be missed. Please put the new date of 15th May in your diary.

Our u3a diary for the months ahead looks full of interesting days out and a variety of theatre visits, as well as some new Groups which have recently started, so I hope you are taking full advantage of those events that interest you. New members please

remember that early booking is really necessary to ensure a place at these events as our day trips become full very quickly.

I will leave you to read and enjoy the u3a news at your leisure and look forward to seeing many of you at our next events whether while out on our trips, or at St Nic's for our Talks. I am always happy to hear any ideas you may wish to suggest to enhance our Newbury u3a.

Rosemarie Franklin,
Chair

Chair's Outing

We enjoyed a lovely sunny day out in Windsor at the end of January, After the usual free time in Windsor, we made our way to the Castle where our helpful Blue Badge Guide explained some of the history. We were fortunate to see the changing of the guards before entering the Castle with no need to wait in a queue!



We were able to move at our own speed through the amazing State rooms and marvelled at the gilded baroque style interiors and all the wonderful paintings in the Royal Collection.

St Georges Hall, with the many shields of the Knights of the Garter, has been beautifully restored with the original woodwork interior, all of which had been disastrously damaged by the great fire. With so many memorable sights and with so much to see, we could have stayed there for many more hours and I recommend a visit if you have never been inside Windsor Castle.

However, we moved on to St Georges Chapel and the late Queen's final resting place. Again, we

could spend as long as was preferred in that lovely chapel until eventually our time at the Castle was over and several hours had passed all too quickly. We re-assembled to drive through Windsor Great Park to visit the Royal Farm shop. Tea was enjoyed and purchases were made, all packed in individual bags with the Royal Crest. before we set off for home. It was a lovely day out and very much enjoyed by all.

It was a fitting day to compliment the earlier Chairman's Outing to Buckingham Palace for our u3a Royal celebrations of last year when we little knew it would indeed be the final year of the Queen's reign.

NEW MEMBERS

New and returning Members since the last Newsletter are:

Stephen Antysz; Linda Brown; George Catlow; Marian Challis; Colin Chilvers; Gaynor Clark; Timothy Coleman; Renee Coulson; John Dolan; Jennifer Escuder; Donald Ferguson; Janine Ford; Helen Garside; Clare Gatward; Lesley Godwin; Maureen Heath; Christine Hewitt-Jones; Brian Holley; Margaret How; Toni Judd; Valerie King; Diane Long; Eric Masters; Adrian Meyer; Pauline Monk; Baden Morton; Anne Pearce; Doreen Povall; John Povall; Anthony Puzas; Helen Puzas; Margaret Rabbitts; Lucy Ryan; Paula Shepherd; Susan Tolman; Jane Warren; Robert Weston; Jenny Wright

Welcome all!

AGM

Many thanks to the 151 members who attended the 2023 AGM at St Nicholas's Church on 13th February. We needed at least 66 to be quorate but always seem to attract an even better number.

New members were elected to the Executive Committee but in the absence of any other nominations Rosemarie and Derek agreed to continue in their roles as Chair and Secretary, respectively.

A change to our Constitution was agreed to allow greater flexibility in running the EC. We are always looking for members prepared to help us run our thriving u3a.

Minutes can be found [here](#).



After the formal business we were delighted to have Laura Farris MP joining us. Her unscripted presentation on her experiences of politics and Parliament was insightful and entertaining. She gave a delightfully personal account of the life of a Member of Parliament – sittings of the House until 3am were difficult to combine with bringing up a young family, as she does. She also pointed out that over half of the MPs have no connection with their constituency – she counts herself lucky to have grown up in West Berkshire.

Refreshingly, her answers to the questions were clear and concise. It was quite a coup to secure her and thoroughly appreciated by our members.

THE EXECUTVE COMMITTEE



No organisation runs by itself so committee members are sought for the Executive Committee at each AGM. Here is the Committee for 2023, with roles.

The u3a is run by its members for its members.

We are extremely lucky to have an office but this needs staffing of course, so members who are ex-office workers with computer skills are always in great demand.

We are always on the look-out for people to run new groups and every encouragement will be given in setting this up and finding a venue for it – see some of the stories from Group Leaders below! We arrange a monthly Talk where a drink and biscuit are provided and help in the kitchen is always needed; as is the putting out of chairs and tables.

HELP WANTED – YOU OFFERED TO HELP!

Liz Wood writes: “A big THANK YOU to everyone who joined the ‘Go To Group’; it is now up, running well and has been a great help supporting various functions. This group is for members who are willing to help the u3a but do not have time to commit on a regular basis. Members are all volunteers and there is no expectation that they will help at every event. We are great at making tea and putting out chairs. It is on an ad hoc basis as and when needed and so far, we have found that some of us are attending the event in any case. We would love to welcome new members who are willing to join our little group so we can spread the load.”

Derek Child writes: "We are pleased to say that we have successfully recruited new members to help plan our Theatre trips. As a result, we have an exciting agenda of :-

- The Bee-Keeper of Aleppo at Richmond on 3rd May
- Gypsy at The Mill at Sonning on 29th June
- As You Like It at Stratford on 20th July
- The King and I at Woking on 28th September.

Our productions always seem to sell out very quickly indicating a healthy appetite for the Theatre and we can offer them at a very reasonable price as a result of our Group status.

There is always a flyer in advance of the booking form – so look out for future productions and respond as soon as you can. We regularly have a waiting list and if you are on it, keep the date free in case you are contacted due to a cancellation."

NEW REQUESTS FOR HELP

Noeline Rycroft asks "The Travel Planning Group is appealing for help in organising day trips and holidays. Our little team is always grateful for new blood and with some of the members retiring from it later in the year, it is more than ever imperative that we get new faces. If you think you could help, please contact Noeline in the first instance (nrycroft@btinternet.com)"

Sue Chapman writes: "Calling all members who would like to join a book group – well, unfortunately, all five groups are currently full. Would you, however, like to join the new Readers in-Waiting Group? As the Administrator for this, I can keep you informed of any activities, including possible vacancies. This is not a book group but rather a holding list for those who wish to join one. Readers in-Waiting could, nevertheless, be a new book group - should anybody come forward to run it as such.

Please email me on sue_chapman@yahoo.com if you would like to be included in Readers in-Waiting".

GROUP NEWS

Group Leaders Meeting

40 Group Leaders and EC members met on 29th March. Among the items discussed were support for Group Leaders in such matters as using Beacon and hall management; and a number of ways of making u3a more visible to non-members. One idea was the possibility of an event such as a stall at Newbury Market during the u3a week in September. So we may be looking for volunteers to help with this!

Great Artists Group

Sheila Hamblin



With many apologies to the Great Artists Group from the editor – this picture of them enjoying a Christmas coffee and cake was not included in the January Newsletter.

Better late than never, hopefully!

Below is what a number of Group Leaders who lead “active” groups – those engaging in exercise of some sort – said when Carol Swanborough asked:

- **Why did you join the u3a?**
- **What made you offer to run your Group?**
- **Are you looking for new members of your Group?**

June Wilson – Amblers

- I joined the U3a to make new friends and find some new interests.
- I offered to run the Amblers as the group would have finished if I hadn't.
- Yes, we are looking for new members. We walk about 3 miles, it's a very pleasant way of spending a Saturday morning and a Sunday afternoon, twice a month.

Claudette Tillyer – Badminton

- I originally joined the u3a in 2011. I had been on my own for a while and wanted to meet people outside my circle of friends. I have always liked playing badminton, albeit mostly in the garden. So I joined the u3a Group
- After a short while I was asked to run the Group, which I enjoy doing very much. It had its challenging times during Covid but with everyone's co-operation we got through it.
- There are 18 of us at present, a mixed group of male and female players, and I don't feel I can take on any more at the present time but am happy to put anybody on the waiting list. We all have a fair experience of the game and we all, obviously, play to win. The main aim is to enjoy the game, have fun and socialise which I think we achieve.

Marion Semple – Barn Dancing

- We were looking for things to do in retirement so my husband joined the golf group and I took up yoga. I enjoy the day trips and have helped man the office.
- I stepped up to help keep the Barn dancing group running. It is a joint group with Thatcham u3a.
- Yes, new members would be welcome. No experience is needed to dance. Mike, our caller makes light of our mistakes and a fun time is had by all.

Richard Knight - Mid-week Walking

- We joined the Newbury U3A before we were even residents! Having just retired and were fed up watching all our favourite walking places around Bracknell being built on, we decided to move 'into the country' but at that time, my parents (and some of Chris's family) were still living in Bracknell, so we couldn't move too far. So we joined the u3a for the town we planned to move to mainly so we could pick up on local knowledge of where to (and not to!) live and what the local area was like. As it happened, we moved to Thatcham instead (no regrets!) so we joined their u3a as well.
- Mike Harris and I took on the group after Kate Donato announced that she was standing down (after many years of running the group) and we didn't want to see it fold. Mike knows the people, and I don't mind doing the admin. We use email to organise things, which Kate didn't - it makes life so much easier! Similarly, Chris took on her Cards and Games group after Olwyn died, as it looked like no-one else would.
- No, we currently have a waiting list of two! Not enough for a new group. Also, I'm not volunteering to run two groups, so someone would need to volunteer to take any new group on.

Bob Jacobs – Pub Walks



Bob Jacobs writes: "The Pub Walks Group combines healthy activity with leisurely eating, drinking and socialising. There's no pressure on members to attend regularly, so sometimes we have lots of people - about 18 made a recent tour of Newbury's Blue Plaques - and sometimes (especially in bad weather or for more strenuous walks) we just have 3 or 4. Usually it's somewhere in between. The important thing is that we all enjoy it and we all contribute to each other's health and welfare by

socialising and helping each other to find new treats, or, indeed, to revisit old favourites. While we encourage all members to choose and lead walks, we don't pressurise them too much - we have one or two people with no sense of direction or

confidence in being able to lead a walk - that's OK, they can still take part and have a good chat along the way."

- It's this atmosphere of sharing and participating in pleasurable, social activities that drew me to the u3a.
- Its encouragement of contribution and sharing was one of the reasons why, when the previous leader felt it necessary to hand over the leadership, I volunteered to take over.
- Although the Beacon entry states that our group is limited to 40, I don't know where this limit came from and I don't pay it too much attention - so currently we have 45 members, though I think three or four are soon to lapse because they haven't paid their membership fees - but that's OK - we can cope with any number of members, so new members are always welcome.

Juliet Franks - Table Tennis

- I joined u3a to have a chance to meet like-minded people and enjoy some fun and exercise. Table tennis provides this, with challenges that demand mental and physical exercise. Laughter is said to be good for us and we certainly find that we laugh a lot at our successes and failures.
- I waited several years to get into the group as the chap who ran it only wanted 10 people. Finally, I got in and maybe a year later the chap wanted to give up as it was the only thing he did with u3a and I think he wanted to play more golf. So, Dave Norman and I were left and Dave wanted to hand 'the bag' on. Dave did Spanish and probably played too seriously to be tied to the group, so it was 'my bag'! Then the fun started as St Nic's wanted their storage room back, so we lost the hall. Then they wanted to give the table to St Nic's primary. It was difficult to find a venue where we could store tables but the Fairclose Centre said OK and u3a bought us first one table and then a second. Dave has been a great support over many years. I had still got a long waiting list so managed to expand to two and then Maria suggested a third. Numbers have been tricky after Covid and hall costs rocketed, but we survive!
- We have added new members to our groups recently but still have spaces in groups 2 and 3. We meet on Monday afternoons at the Fairclose Centre.

Angela Sutton – Yoga

- At the time I was looking to do some volunteering so I looked at possibilities on the Newbury Volunteer Centre website. Amongst the list was Newbury u3a who were looking for a secretary. I thought, although I have never been a secretary in my working life, that this sounded interesting and something I could do as I had been Parish Council Clerk for over 30 years. So I applied and the rest is history. Mary Blake was Chairman at the time and Gill Baron was Treasurer. I was secretary for 5 years.
- Then the yoga sessions that I attended in our village came to an end. Consequently I suggested to our yoga teacher that the u3a might be a good place to start up a Yoga group and so it proved to be the case. (Since then I have also been a member of the Wednesday Walking Group and am still a member of the Recorder Group and the Art History Group and have expressed

an interest in the new Dickens Group. There is always plenty to do and choose from in Newbury u3a).

- Any new people will always be welcome. We generally have room for two or three. Our Yoga teacher caters for all abilities. We could do with more men because it is, I suspect, a bit daunting to find you are the only male in a group of 20. Our sessions are always varied so we do not get the same old routines week after week. Our yoga teacher has written at least three books of exercises and has many years of experience to call upon.

Gardening Group Report

Sylvia Knight

Our New Year kicked off in February with a talk by John Buckley, showing how to enhance photographs of their favourite flowers submitted by Members - with a view to creating our very own calendar for 2024. John will be visiting us in September with the completed calendar, ready to take orders.

In March, the meeting was a "Members Help Clinic". Members, in tables of 6, debated gardening problems. At the end of the meeting we shared - with some amusing and interesting results.



At our April meeting Ray Broughton – a Senior Lecturer at Sparsholt College - gave a very interesting talk on plants for small gardens, he will be visiting us again next April. The photo is of Ray's talk.

Now the weather (hopefully) is improving we are starting our trips. The first is to Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens, on 26th April.

Travel Planning Group Report

Noeline Rycroft

The Travel Planning Group is delighted that the first of our trips for 2023 has taken place.



This was to the British Library, and despite the difficulties in getting into and out of London because of strikes on the day, was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants. It was a baptism of fire for Karen Barraclough's first trip but she did an excellent job and we hope will be inspired to undertake more. Thank you, Karen, for a stimulating and

unusual day – here are some of us as we shared our impressions from the day.

By the time this Newsletter goes out, the next trip on our calendar will have taken place - to the Royal Mint. It is currently fully booked and will, I'm sure, be a fascinating day, especially as there may be a chance to see the new coins being produced to replace those of the late Queen.

In May, we have a trip to two nearby National Trust properties - Baddesley Clinton, a moated manor house with late medieval, Tudor and 20th centuries histories, in the Forest of Arden, and its near neighbour, another Tudor mansion, Packwood House. At the time of writing, there are still some places available for this [trip](#).

June sees a trip to Mottisfont, where the roses will hopefully be in full bloom [Booking form](#).

Later in the month, there is the three-day trip to Harlow Carr and the surrounding area. Bookings are closed for this: expect to see photos and a report in the next newsletter.

July sees our first trip to an English vineyard, which looks as if it will be a very popular event. This is now full but you can apply to be added to the waiting [list](#).

August sees a return to the Wye Valley, with stops in Monmouth and Tintern Abbey before a short cruise on the river. This trip is now full but you can apply to be added to the [waiting list](#).

On September 6th there is a day trip to Polesden Lacey. This was the Edwardian country retreat of socialite, Margaret Greville. It is still home to her extensive collection of paintings, books, ceramics and fine French furniture. Outside, highlights include a 1,600-acre estate with exceptional views, a walled rose garden, herbaceous borders, and the Graham Stuart Thomas-inspired winter garden. [Booking form Polesden](#)

The Travel Planning Group are working hard to plan further trips for later in the year and we shall, of course, have the holiday to Durham to look forward to as well. This is now closed to new applicants.

As always, we aim to advise you of new trips as they become available to book, via the Friday Update and/or the Newsletter.

u3a NEWBURY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Events Page on the website lists [events](#).

Stephanie Gilliam say "Come and enjoy a lunch at the College. For this summer activity we will be having a barbecue, outside ----- dependent on the weather of course. The lunches will be on Wednesday, June 14th and Friday, June 16th. Prices etc to follow. Watch the website for the forms."

Contact 01635 38537 or sgillima47@hotmail.co.uk.

Stephanie will be hosting the next popular quiz afternoon on November 9th.

NATIONAL u3a

u3a members from all over the UK will descend on Hadrian's Wall on 10 May 2023 to celebrate the building of the wall and the influence that the wall has had on our creative lives.

[u3a - Off the Wall](#)

The National u3a web site has links to a wide range of online (zoom) events and educational series, [u3a - Online Learning](#). Talks and Open Space events are led by u3a members – and cover topics from climate change to numismatics to mindfulness.

There are also [Subject Networks](#) covering topics from astronomy to a new initiative, a u3a Walkers Exchange.

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