



Newbury



NEWSLETTER

November 2023

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NEWBURY u3a CHAIR'S LETTER

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Newsletter. Particularly to all the new members who have joined us since the last newsletter was published, several of whom have joined following our recent market stall.

Thanks to the assistance of several Group Leaders, we had a very successful outcome to this time spent in the Market Place during National u3a week in September. The



main aim of the trial venture was to raise the profile of the u3a and to tell people who we are and what we do. It is surprising that for such an active and busy organisation here in Newbury, lots of retired people still have not heard of the u3a at all.

Overall the effort was well worth it as not only were we able to spread the word about our organisation. We also gained more than 20 new members who joined Newbury u3a directly due to this promotional exercise.

Consequently, recently we had a very busy and lively Newcomers Coffee Morning with over 50 members attending, a record number for this event. My grateful thanks to the group leaders who helped to support that morning and who gave a warm welcome to the

members who have joined the u3a recently. See the photos and what the New Members told us, in the section on Members Events.

As we now start to move towards Christmas, we will hold the usual speaker talk at St Nics on November 13th and this month we have a visit from the RLNI telling us about the amazing work they do. We also have the Quiz and another Skittles evening this month, a new evening event which is proving very popular. There are still a few places available to book for the skittle evening if you do so promptly.

However, in December we slightly change from our usual speaker programme and instead will enjoy a social afternoon with some seasonal refreshments. More details will follow in the Friday Update nearer the time. The Christmas lunches taking place at Newbury College on November 30th and December 6th are already full.

I look forward to seeing some of you at the Quiz and cream tea, with M&S vouchers for the lucky winning table. So with the Theatre trip and the Waddesdon outing also coming up soon, it will be a busy and seasonal run up to the end of this year.

Enjoy reading the rest of the Newsletter and keep sending in your articles for the next one.

With best wishes

Rosemarie Franklin

Chair

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

Please contact any of the Executive Committee via the office if you would like to get more involved.

First, the office would welcome additional volunteers for the Monday. Wednesday and Friday slots.

Second, if you would like to discuss starting a new group, contact the office in the first instance.

Third – but not least - if you are interested in joining the Executive Committee next year – please contact any of the current EC via the office to discuss potential roles - nominations for the Committee need to be in by 31st December.

NEW MEMBERS

New and returning Members since the last Newsletter are:

Albert Borrett, Ali Preston, Andrew Lees, Anne Flach, Tony Burgess, Carol Atkinson, Pam Hough, Catherine Cox-Smith, Charlotte Smith, Christine Humphreys, Christopher Lloyd, Claire Louch, Colin Poyton, Lance Preston, Debbie Martin, Derek Roberts, Dorinda Tanner, Elisabeth Beverley, Ellen Arnold, Fiona Lees, Francis Wirgman, Frank Yeomans, Gill Cutress, Greg Hopkins, Hazel McLeod, Heather Butler, Jim Crockatt, Jane Osborn, Jane Halliday, Janet Montefiore, Jennifer Elliott, Jenny Clark, June Coles, Karen Swaffield, Kay Hopkins, Laura Curtis, Lea Naples, Linda Smalley, Malcolm Curtis, Margaret Jackson, Marion Burge, Martin Sigrist, Martin Hough, Martyn Powers, Michael Humphreys, Michael Newman, Nicolette Riches, Pamela McKellen, Pat Howard, Patricia Joel, Pat Tomlinson, Renee Buttery, Robabeh Powers, Bob Dunbar, Rolf Stricker, Rosemary Lilley, Shirley Vine, Stephanie May, Stuart Atkinson, Susan Geater, Sylvia Suthers, Tom Linley, Trevor Osborne, Val McLarty, Veronica Williamson.

Welcome all!

Older persons Day *Carol Swanborough*

This was an opportunity to raise the profile of Newbury u3a. So October 5th saw me in a mad dash to St Nicolas Church to participate in the Annual Older Persons Day, this year organised by Age concern. Again, lack of advertising meant there was little footfall and many of the stall holders ended up participating in the seated exercise taster and the Dementia UK workshop to become a dementia friend.



It was good to learn that the social prescribers, from Falkland and Thatcham surgeries, recommend us to people they think would benefit. Other services highlighted were the volunteer bureau who run a mobility scheme and provide the volunteer car service. I was somewhat surprised to see a stall by Carole Brindley, a former Newbury u3a member, who was promoting the [virtual u3a](#), where she leads six groups.

MEMBER EVENTS

Member events cover College Lunches, the monthly talks on the second Monday of the month at St Nicholas's Church Hall, New Members coffee mornings – we aim to start including more coverage of these in future Newsletters.

New Members Coffee morning

40 new Members joined Group Leaders and some of the Exec in a Coffee Morning on 16th October. As they chatted, we asked if they would help us know more about what attracted them to Newbury u3a.



In response to the question “how did you hear about Newbury u3a?”, more than half (23) said friends and family. 12 had seen leaflets in public places such as the library or at the Market Stall. Other sources were the NHS, “always known” (2) and the internet. So maybe members might make sure they mention u3a to people they meet, as word of mouth is so important to us!



In response to the question “why did you join Newbury u3a?”, (people could tick more than 1!)

15 said meet new people,
10 said learn new skills,
11 said “holidays and trips”,

The largest number (20) named Activities run by Groups – Amblers, Badminton, Bridge, Crochet, Gardening, History, Pickleball, Pilates, Table Tennis and Tai Chi.

Monthly Talk at St Nicholas’s Church Hall

Recent discoveries in Astronomy – Tony Hersh – 14th August

Tony Hersh has a medical background having run clinical trials for big pharmaceutical companies for all his career. He is interested in Astronomy and has been a committee member of Newbury Astronomy Club for many years and helped to organize their talks. He has also been a Magistrate in North Hampshire for several years.



Tony presented an interesting talk entitled 'Recent Discoveries in Astronomy' which was very well received by an audience of just over 100 u3a members. His talk highlighted some of the more fascinating recent discoveries in astronomy and some of the still unexplained phenomena that have been observed.

It was amazing to hear that both the Moon and Mars have water, encased as water-ice which might be accessible to support life there in the future. The absence of any atmosphere means that there would be significant and potentially deadly exposure to radiation caused by solar flares. Life could be supported on the Moon by living underground in larva tubes that formed during the eruption of basaltic lava flows. When the surface of a lava flow cools, it hardens, and the lava can channel beneath the surface in a tube-shaped passage. Once the flow of lava diminishes, the tube may drain, forming a hollow void. These larva tubes have been exposed by the impact of meteorites, potentially offering access and a refuge from solar radiation for astronauts.

Who knew that Saturn has a hexagonal feature at one pole which is nearly 1000 miles long at each side. No-one knows how it formed or what its function is.

The scale of the universe was shown in a series of slides and was noted as being 98 billion light years in diameter. The Sun is one of a few hundred billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy which in turn, is one of a few hundred billion galaxies in the observable universe. Earth is just one small planet in this galaxy.

There may indeed be life out there, somewhere...!

[The Questionable History of the TV Quiz Show – Jeff Evans – 11th September](#)

Jeff is a freelance journalist and author of 30 books on numerous subjects – in particular television history (including The Penguin TV Companion). His latest book, Rock & Pop on British TV, combines his fascination with television with a passion for pop music he has had since he was a toddler in the 60s. Jeff also writes questions for several TV quiz shows, including Mastermind.

This entertaining talk covered the whole colourful history of the TV quiz show from its earliest days in the 1930s to today, showing how the format developed, celebrating the good, the bad and the ugly, and unearthed some very dodgy dealing along the way. Indeed, one US quiz show supplied the answers to a favoured contestant just to drive audience number up! It was interesting to discover how the TV quiz shows we watch today evolved from televised radio shows that were intended to educate and



inform – 'What Do You Know'? became 'Brain of Britain' and 'Ask Me Another' became 'Eggheads' of which Jeff was a panellist. The talk concluded with the observation that 7 people to date have become millionaires by winning 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' and only one of them had to return their winnings...due to a member of the audience coughing inappropriately!

We had lots of warm memories and smiles, plenty of surprises and lots of 'I didn't know that' moments in this entertaining talk.

We are the British Army – Captain Mike Every – 9th October

Captain Mike Every is currently a member of the Army Engagement team whose role covers outreach to schools, businesses, MPs, Lords and peers and Community groups such as the U3A. Captain Every originally joined the armed services as an officer in the Royal Navy, serving in submarines. He has since held a variety of posts including the Royal Engineers where he had experience in tanks, as a commando and in bomb disposal.

We heard how the Army 'protects our nation' and is structured to 'win wars on land'. To do this the Army has to be always combat-ready, and must have trained, equipped and motivated soldiers. The UK Government decides where, when and why the Army is mobilized. Captain Every demonstrated how new technology is helping to protect our soldiers. The use of the robot dog was entertaining, albeit that it is used where it is considered too dangerous for a soldier to enter.

The British Army has multiple roles including dealing with global terrorism, cyber-attacks, migrant crossings, aiding refugees, providing support for people in disaster zones (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes) and more recently in the Covid-19 pandemic and as honour guards and security for the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the following coronation of King Charles III.

The British Army has over 200 different roles. Most recruits spend a year doing basic training then specialize through further training or take on an apprenticeship to become a specialist. The protection of our nation and deployment of troops to support conflicts in other countries is achieved with just over 103 thousand soldiers of which around 70% are front-line troops. The British Army is the smallest in number that it has ever been.

GROUP NEWS

Art History Group

Jayne Hipkiss

The Art History Group visited the ARC in Winchester in early October to see an exhibition of 21 photogravure prints of major drawings by Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986). O'Keeffe was one of the most important artists in 20th century American art who balanced abstraction with her innovative style. She painted organic forms – including flowers and bones and both rural and city landscapes. As her art is seldom shown in the UK, this was a wonderful opportunity to see and then discuss her work.



As a bonus, the Winchester Art Group were staging an exhibition there too and we had an equally interesting time deciding what and why we liked certain paintings, some of which were very accomplished. We concluded with a light lunch and a chat in the ARC café. A very enjoyable and social day trip!

The exhibition continues until November 15th.

Seated Exercise to Music

This new Group has now started, it is, on Mondays, from 12-1, at St Joseph's Hall. The cost is £5 per session.

There is plenty of parking and room for a few more members. If you are interested in joining this fun group, please contact Katrina on kaworthington1@outlook.com.

Katrina Worthington



Table Tennis

Juliet Franks

Some members of the Newbury u3a Table Tennis Groups are taking advantage of a new activity and think that other members might be interested. The Newbury Table Tennis Association is trialling open evenings at Fairclose Centre, on Thursdays from 7 to 9pm. The aim is for people to enjoy playing and to learn skills they would benefit from. There is a charge of a few pounds to cover the hire of the hall. The first session was on 19th October.

Seven members of the Newbury u3a Table Tennis Groups took part in the first session and were given advice and practical help on forehand and backhand strokes. More is promised for future weeks.

Table tennis is always said to be a good activity both physically and mentally and so it proved to be as we learnt new skills,

Group Leader spotlight – Discussion Group

Barry Packham

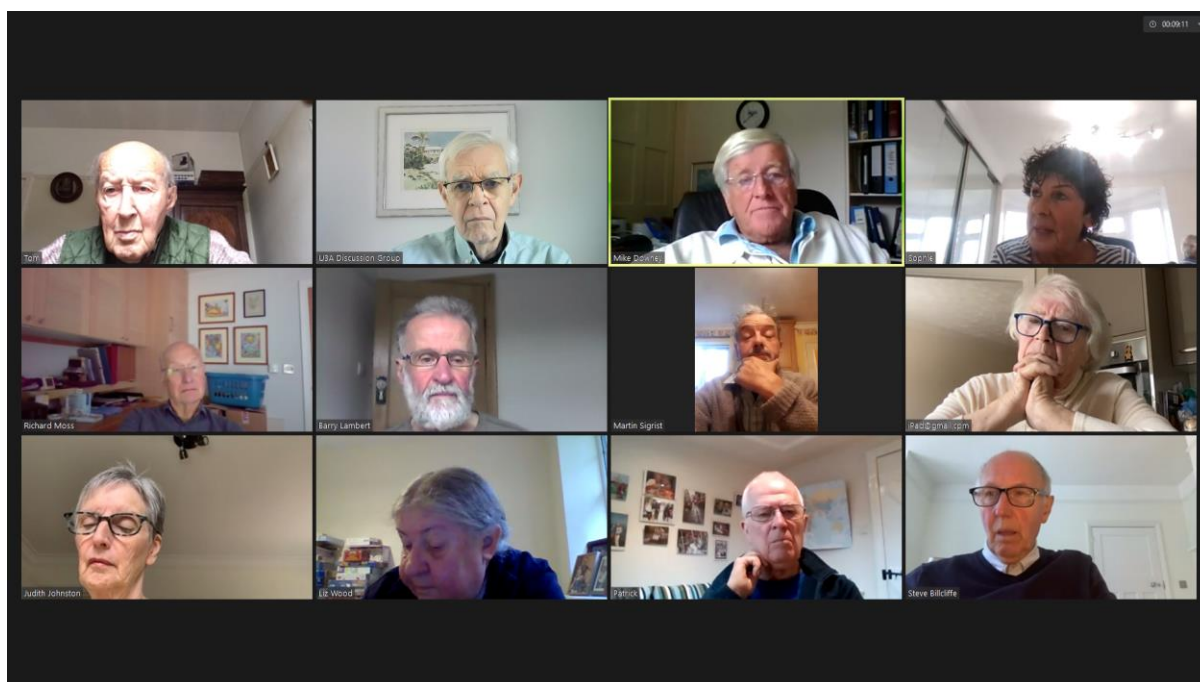
Discussion Group first met in February 2012 with monthly meetings at Broadway House. After a while the interest was there for the Group to meet twice a month (1st Friday and 3rd Tuesday of the month) this continued up to March 2020 when COVID struck. But rather than give up the Group opted to meet weekly throughout the pandemic via the Zoom video conferencing app. Since then, we have conducted approximately 200 virtual meetings with a core of 12 -16 members. In March 2023 we started a hybrid model of meetings, resuming Face to Face meetings at Broadway House again on the 1st Friday and 3rd Tuesday of the month with Zoom meetings on Thursdays in the other weeks.

During that time, we have discussed an incredible range of topics ranging from the conflict in Ukraine to the Pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street and of course Brexit! None of this would have been possible without the help of the two co-leaders, Barry Lambert and Glenn Wycherley, and of course the active participation of the Group members. Our discussions are friendly, if somewhat opinionated at times, and

everyone is given equal opportunity to express their opinions and question the views of others.

We are relaxed about commitment with some members preferring attending by Zoom, and others coming to Face 2 Face meetings and Zoom meetings.

We are open to new members and whilst women represent about a third of the Group, it would be lovely to see more ladies to join and give their perspective.



Screen shot of recent Zoom meeting

Travel Group

Lynne Clements and Wendy Walker

Just in case you are not aware, we are the new joint leaders of the Travel Group. Noeline stood down at our last committee meeting, not lacking in enthusiasm, but rather in the ability to manage the paperwork with her deteriorating eyesight. We are very grateful for everything she has contributed and also to Anne Bennett who has stepped back, following many years of service.

We hope we will be able to make this group as fun and exciting as it has been over the last few years, full of new ideas and places to visit including holidays in the UK and abroad.

We have had quite a busy summer programme of visits this year including the following since the last newsletter.

The Wye Valley trip which Wendy led in August was sold out very quickly. I am told the sun refused to shine that day but it did not spoil their enjoyment of this beautiful area. The photo of the canoeists by Pat Gamalatge is not of the u3a group!



In September a group visited Polesden Lacey.... It was a very hot day but also very rewarding and a good location. All who went enjoyed the day.

Just recently returned is our 6 day group holiday to Northumberland and Durham led by Anne and Noeline. I have heard only good things about it and Janet Ruckman has contributed the trip description below.

On November 29 Wendy has organised a trip to Waddesdon Manor again. We are looking forward to this as both the house and gardens will be beautifully decorated and lit up for Christmas.... not to mention the Christmas market and fair.

Plans for 2024

Of course we have lots of plans for 2024 including our first trip abroad since Covid restricted our movements.

In the UK there are plans for a boat trip around Poole Harbour along with a morning visit to Compton Acres, which has always proved so popular before.

A walking tour around Oxford with a guide to some of the interesting buildings and the possibility of a boat trip.

Chatham dockyard, the home of Call the Midwife, will be advertised after Christmas.

We are trying to make the programme more varied and appealing to many more of our members. i.e., Wimbledon Tour and the Poppy factory in Richmond.

Please look out for these details after Christmas. You will usually find them in the Friday updates and certainly in the newsletters. But always on the u3a website.

Finally, we have already launched the holiday to the Dolomites in Italy next June. It has proved to be very popular. At first, we were not sure if members would want to travel abroad again but we can see by the response that there is a great desire to do so. Barnes coaches will be driving for us, we have a great driver who has taken groups to this wonderful location previously and he has plenty of ideas to keep us happy, busy, and challenged. There are still a few twin rooms left so if you would like to come, please look on the website for information and how to book. Bookings close by the 7th of November.

We are always looking for new people to join our committee with all their new and innovative ideas.... if you are willing to give a little of your time and help shape our way forward, we would greatly appreciate that.”

Durham Holiday 8th -13th October

Janet Ruckman

After an early start we met our coach driver, Robert, who proved to be a great character and a great driver. We set off for our first stop at Ripon, a pleasant city and great Cathedral. We were a punctual lot and after managing lunch and sightseeing we continued to Durham and our 4 star hotel overlooking the river. The hotel was very comfortable and some of our party were lucky to have views overlooking the river and town from their rooms. We knew our visit would be busy and we were not disappointed.

Beamish Museum was great and most of us enjoyed the trams and the old shops and houses, the contents of which brought back many memories.

On our route back to Durham we stopped to look at the majestic “Angel of the North” that towers over the A1(M) near Gateshead.



Tuesday took us sightseeing around Newcastle and the surrounding area with a blue badge guide.

Next day was Bamburgh Castle which although a great edifice from outside proved very different inside from what some of us expected. It has been created from a ruin into a home in the late 19th Century and some of the atmosphere of a castle was missing.

We were lucky with the weather and we had great views of Lindisfarne and The Farne Islands. We also had a short stop in Seahouses.

I suppose for a lot of us the highlight was Durham Cathedral which did not disappoint.

A trip around the Durham dales followed which was delightful. On the way home we even managed a stop at Thirsk to see the James Herriott Museum before the rain descended.





For me, this break was not only the chance to see new places and not to have to cook and wash up! It was also for the company of a great group of people, some whom I knew and some whom I had the pleasure to meet for the first time. This had been a super break and very well organised.

This was much appreciated judging by the gifts given to Noeline Rycroft and Anne Bennett. We even managed to keep things secret until the presentation on our way home!

Thank you both of you.

Theatre Group

Derek Child

We continue to flourish thanks to the great support given to us by members. It is gratifying that tickets are requested so soon after they go on sale even though the event may be months ahead but it is the best way to secure very good seats at affordable prices.

“The King and I” at Woking on 29th September proved to be a great experience for all members attending with Bob and Jill Bosley organising it so well.

“Peter Pan Goes Wrong” at Bath on 8th November is a sell-out and we hope it is only the play that goes wrong!

The Committee have planned for the first six months of 2024 as follows:-

30th January

- o “Everyone’s talking about Jamie” at Woking – the booking period has now closed but a waiting list is in operation.

27th March

- o “2.22 a Murder Mystery” at Richmond – tickets are now on sale and details are on the website.

29th May

- o “Drop the Dead Donkey” at Woking – watch for the flyer and ticket details.

Remember that every event keeps a waiting list if it is fully booked up, and invariably tickets become available at the last minute. Keeping the date free may provide an unexpected day out.

M.E.E.T – “Members Enjoying Events Together”

Carol Swanborough

Well we didn't “go to the dogs” as planned in September as the venue were not overly helpful, but we are running another skittles evening on Monday November 13th 7.30pm at The Club. Check with Ramesh before mailing a booking form as it might be sold out.

Wine tasting is our next event on December 12th , at St Francis de Sales church in Wash Common. We have engaged an expert who will talk to us about white wine from Italy as we sip them (not enough that you won't be able to drive home safely, nibbles will be provided). At the time of going to press only a handful of tickets are left.

We hope you might venture out in the cold and dark of January to a quiz night. We settled on the 24th but have yet to book a venue.

And moving into March we have engaged thespians to write us a murder mystery which takes place on the 15th at the British Legion in Pelican Lane. We shall have a fish supper whilst we unravel the plot. Watch out for a booking form in the new year.

If you have any suggestions for future evenings or would like to be part of the planning team, email the office, office@newburyu3a.com

u3a NEWBURY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Events Page [events](#) on the web site is the best source of up to date information on trips, groups, and other activities.

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK

Mary Blake

Here are some of the events being planned for our information and entertainment by the Events team of the TVN.

Wednesday 15th November – ABBA.

A presentation from Clive Aronson at 10:30

The fee for this event is £1.00 per device. To view or download the flyer please click on the link below

[Abba flyer](#)

Applications will not be accepted after Sunday 12th November.

Thursday 30th November- “My Falklands War”. A talk by Dr. Chris. Parry at 2.30pm.

Friday 8th December – Winter Quiz at 2.30. Questions set by Avis.

Monday 15th January – Genetics of Ancient Populations in Britain.
A talk by Dr. Tom Booth at 2.30.

Further information can be found on the Thames Valley Network website [here](#).

NATIONAL u3a

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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Well done for reading to the end.

Copy deadline for the next issue: 20 January 2024

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