

u3a

North Wiltshire Group

covering Chippenham, Corsham & Calne area

Learning for Pleasure

Registered Charity number 1048393



Newsletter Issue No. 243

August - October 2022



Tricia Wilks in tap-dancing mode (See Pages 6-7)



The canal near the Barge Inn, to help get you in holiday mood!

From the EDITORS ...

COPY DEADLINE

for the next edition: **1st October 2022**

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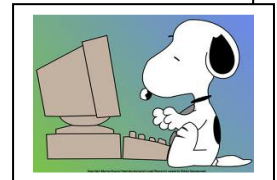
FACEBOOK

N. Wilts U3A Facebook page is at **www.facebook.com/NWU3A**.

EDITORIAL

This is a slightly shorter edition because the summer did not seem to yield as much copy as usual and has therefore allowed us to implement one of the measures under consideration to cut costs a little.

**Frances Alexander
Sue Taylor**



We welcome the following new members:

Sue Haslop, Alison Elms, Evie Gartside, Liz Pearsall.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

are held at the Rotary Hall, Station Hill, Chippenham
on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 11 am.

**Come early for a chat and tea, coffee etc, from 10.15 am.
Actual meeting / speaker will begin at 11 am.**

September 14th

Roger Browne is a man of many talents – actor, singer, lecturer, to name just three. As a jazz pianist he has accompanied many top international and UK based jazz artists. He travels with a key board and he will be illustrating musically 'The Great American Song Book.' (He has a very good web site for more info.)

October 12th

David Maloney talks about the history of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. This canal, which was first opened in 1810 when Swindon was just a village and officially abandoned in 1914 after a delayed Act of Parliament allowing it to do so. Forty years ago the Trust was formed and has grown thanks to the many volunteers who work very hard to protect, conserve and improve the route of the water way to the benefit of local communities and the environment.

YOUR COMMITTEE

Chairman	Pip Higman
Vice Chairman	Dora Emmett
Treasurer	Kathy Tunsley
Secretary	Tricia Wilks
Membership Secretary	Anne Ellis
Speakers' Secretary	Cynthia Spragg
Groups Co-ordinator	Dora Emmett
Gift Aid Officer	Anne Ellis
Welfare Officer	Dora Emmett
Newsletter Editor	Frances Alexander
Website	Pip Higman



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Life seems to have become very busy again and concern about Covid is reduced though I do realise that there are many anxieties still around. Unfortunately, our u3a has suffered quite a bit from the pandemic and although many groups have been active again for some time, we have lost a number of members and groups. At the same time there have been a few suggestions for starting new groups but there seem to be some inhibitions. Starting and running a group should not be so difficult – we 'live, laugh and learn' **together** so that the members of a group are all equally active. It is not like a teacher with a class of pupils; everyone takes their turn. So, if you feel that perhaps do get in touch and a member of the committee will be very happy to give you some help and advice.

But a group needs members too, so how about trying something new? During lockdown many of us improved our computer skills and enjoyed online meetings, lectures, discussions and even 'travel'. We can still take up and learn new things. So how about taking up another interest? In recent months the ideas of 'cryptic crosswords', 'science and technology', or 'philosophy' seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Perhaps in the autumn, before going into winter hibernation, some members might like to branch out on something really new – climbing at The Arc is also on offer.

This year is turning out to be a memorable one; the diamond jubilee which many of us celebrated in various ways at the beginning of June and at the same time the disaster of war in Ukraine with its effects world-wide. Two such opposites, but that is also life with its positive and negative aspects. While not ignoring the troubles we do need to keep a good balance and enjoy the good things. So on that note I would like to wish you all a lovely summer no matter what the weather and hope for new energy in the autumn.

Pip Higman, Chairman

A Misconception

(our new Secretary introduces herself!)

Whenever I met up with a retired teaching colleague in the two or three years before I myself retired from full time teaching, he would inevitably say “Just you wait until you join the u3a, it is a wonderful organisation and you just won’t know how you had time for work”. I thought this seemed very unlikely and imagined it would involve sitting in rows in church halls listening to lectures.

5 years later, how things have changed. I have retired, moved from Exeter to Chippenham, lived through a pandemic and joined the u3a. I picked up a leaflet about the u3a in the Neeld Hall after a Jack Dee comedy show last summer and contacted Pip. How wrong I was in my preconception of the u3a - instead there are monthly meetings with a great variety of fascinating talks, friendly and helpful fellow members and a wide variety of groups which involve anything but sitting in rows being “taught”.

Being brought up very near Marble Arch and being a teenager in the 1960s in London was exciting and exhilarating. We lived in a second floor flat and I would revise for my O and A levels in a deckchair in Hyde Park with our poodle, Mischa, by my side. My mother was German and summer holidays were spent with my grandfather in a small town near Hanover. After studying Modern History and French at university and a brief spell as Information Officer for the Sand and Gravel Association (known as SAGA before what we think of as SAGA !), I went into teaching. I had a very happy 44 year career, teaching mainly History in London and Exeter in a variety of schools and colleges. I still miss being part of a school community and working with young people. My favourite role was Head of 6th Form.

Like quite a few people I have chatted to in the u3a, I moved after retiring to be nearer family and Chippenham seemed to fit the bill very well. I knew nothing about the town except that it was very near the Box Tunnel which had featured in the last A level History course I taught about Brunel. It has been very enjoyable getting to know the area and its fascinating history. The museum is a great resource and a recent town walk provided the startling information that some angry citizens threw smashed up grave stones from St Andrew’s graveyard at houses in St Mary Street in the 19th century, in protest against what they considered unfair electoral arrangements - Not the peaceful haven it appears today.

I have not yet quite settled into my new life as a retired person and am still working out what I want to do as opposed to what I should do. I enjoy my weekly tap dancing classes (see photo on Page 2) and being a

school governor of my old school in London, and do a little one-to-one tutoring of home-schooled students. I hope to become involved in more u3a activities and maybe contemplate setting up a new group. In the meantime I am delighted to be able to contribute in a small way to the running of the organisation as secretary and I look forward to the monthly Rotary Hall meetings and the Book Group. Thank you to all of you who have made me feel so welcome- three cheers for the u3a - I must remember to tell my former colleague how right he was.

Tricia Wilks

New Group ?

Creative Writing Group

Until about 5 years ago when it closed, I was part of a small and very enthusiastic **creative writing group**. I have missed it! Browsing through past pieces, my desire to write again has been strongly rekindled! The usual format was to agree a ‘set’ subject in advance and then share our various responses (narrative, discussion, poetry, etc.) at the next meeting – and there was usually time for writing a spontaneous few lines on something else, after a cup of tea!

If you are a lover of words and ideas and enjoy putting pen to paper or fingers to computer keys, **please get in touch so that a suitable day and time can be arranged!**

Frances Alexander

Possible New Experience!

Climbing at the Arc

The manager at the new Arc climbing centre in Chippenham has offered us an introductory group session at a special rate for up to 9 members. If we opt for a 1½ hour session, safety aspects of the climbing will be covered and you could be signed off for bouldering (i.e. use of the lower no-rope walls) unsupervised in future. **After attending this session, over 70s can visit free.** Suggested dates/time are: 10 - 11.30 am on one morning in the first half of September. Fee: £5 per person. Please let **Sue Taylor** know if you are interested and your preferred mornings.

Summary of Groups

For **Leaders' names & phone numbers**, see following pages.

Costs vary from nil or a nominal charge for refreshments to a sum per session to cover hire of room / hall / expenses etc, where relevant.

Group	Day	Week	Time	Where
Archaeology	Please ring	if you're	interested	
Art	Thu	wkly	10am	The Cause, C'ham
Book group	Fri	3 rd	2pm	Leader's home
Bridge	Tue	Mainly	10.15am	Club room at
Calligraphy	Tue	wkly 2 nd /4 th	10am	St Andrew's Room at rear of Neeld Hall, C'ham
Common Thread	Tue	4 th	2pm	Scout hut, Derriad's Lane, C'ham
French Conversation 2A	Tue	fortnightly (approx.)	2pm	Members' homes
French 3	Thu	wkly	10.15	Members' homes
French (new group)	Fri	every other	10.15	members' houses
German Conversation	Thu	3 rd	2pm	Small hall, St Andrew's Chippenham Museum
History & Archaeology	Fri	2 nd	10.30	Indoor Bowls Club
Luncheon Club	Sun	1 st	12.30	Bowles Court
Mahjong	Wed	wkly	2.30	Leader's home
Music Appreciation	Thu	1 st	2pm	Member's home
Opera Appreciation	Thu	3 rd	2pm	Leader's home
Play Reading	Fri	1 st /3 rd	2pm	

If there are any changes or errors, please let me know asap.

BOARD GAMES!

I am thinking of re-starting this group on the Monday or Tuesday afternoon of the week which includes the monthly meeting. Therefore the first meeting would be at 2 pm on 12th or 13th. September. Please let me know if you are interested and your preferred afternoon.

Sue Taylor

Information from Groups

ART

Rosemary Mace

We meet every week in The Cause, Chippenham and have space for a few new members - More men would be especially welcome! Currently we charge £2 a session to cover the rent. The more artists, the less the rent!

BOOK group

Pip Higman

Nothing changes very much. We read mostly novels and discuss them and often the topics which they bring up. Recently we read 'This Boy', the first part of Alan Johnson's autobiography which gave us plenty to think and talk about. His life has been quite remarkable but his sister perhaps more so although she has kept a lower profile as an adult. We are currently each reading our own choice of Thomas Hardy. Autumn choices are still open.

BRIDGE

Contacts: Ann or Wendy

We now meet in the Club Room at St Andrew's Church in Chippenham. This is a small venue, which is ideal as our numbers are depleted compared to pre-Covid. A few more players would be most welcome. The aim of the group is to play bridge in a friendly, sociable atmosphere using simple systems. If interested, ring me, Ann Green.

CALLIGRAPHY

Tricia Weaving

The Calligraphy group's final project, before the summer break, dealt with Lombardic capitals, designing an alphabet with these decorative letters.

COMMON THREAD

Lynda Clifford (contact)

Common Thread has changed the date for future meetings to the fourth Tuesday of each month commencing 26th July 2022. Our meeting venue remains the same (see P.8). During August we will be taking the usual u3a break, regrouping again in September. We continue to work on our individual projects accepting help, which is generously given, when needed.

FRENCH Conversation (2A) Chris Perkins

French 2 continues with our established format, meeting in our homes fortnightly, the host having chosen the subject for discussion. There are sometimes fewer of us these days as, being released from restrictions, those who can are making up for lost holiday time and others are contracting COVID, but fortunately mildly. Recently we have discussed *Nostalgia*, *Traditions*, and the forthcoming subject is *If at first you don't succeed.....*

FRENCH Conversation (3) Vincent Pycroft

A very small group which is studying from a monthly French book called 'Rendez-vous'. Any new member would have to buy a copy.

FRENCH Conversation Lesley Jefferson

This is a conversation group, aiming to improve listening and speaking skills. We take it in turns to prepare a topic and meet every other Friday at 10.15 in each other's houses. Do ring if you would like to know more, but the group is currently full.

GERMAN Conversation Dora Emmett

The German Group are continuing to meet in the room at St. Andrews and would welcome more members with some knowledge of German.

HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY David Shockley

For the new sessions starting in September we will take as our general topic the half century 1825 -1875, a period when across much of the world horizons were starting to expand. Not only was it the time of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, but in many other countries changes were happening in areas including exploration, science, medicine, literature and social reform, moving towards a world which we might begin to recognise.

Our first meeting will be on Friday 9th September at 10.30a.m. in the Education Room at Chippenham Museum. We are able to welcome new members so if you are interested in joining us, please give me a call.

LUNCHEON CLUB Tony & Wendy Reeves

The August meeting will be on Sunday 7th at 12.30 for 13.00 meal start. Prices for a main and dessert course : £11 for beef or chicken, £12 for salmon or lamb, with gratuities at own discretion. Please advise us as soon as possible should you wish to attend any lunch meeting. (All meetings are now at N. Wilts. Indoor Bowls Club).

MAHJONG Celia Hall

Due to many hospital appointments, I have had to step back from the mah-jong group. I would very much like to thank the other members for carrying on with the regular meetings and I plan to join in some games very soon. We meet in Bowles Court where there is a Function Room with more space. Meetings start at 2.30pm and there is parking available.

MUSIC & OPERA Appreciation Ann Seyfang

Our small **Opera Group** has been enjoying watching opera DVDs. I have tried to vary the offerings and it seems to be working well. We now get monthly emails from the national U3A Opera Groups contact. Colin Davison keeps us updated about online performances which are worth tuning in to, and he also sends reviews of some DVDs for our attention.

We have **varied the dates** we meet a bit so it's probably best, if anyone is interested in joining, that they ring me for information

David has also now started the **Music Appreciation Group**. I suggest you ring David (01249 659806) for further information. My only wish is that more people would join us and that I could persuade our group to listen to more CDs, of which we have many! (1st Thurs, 1.45 at David's house)

PLAY READING Contact: Mary Henning

The Play Reading Group continues to enjoy our afternoons together. We really would welcome more members to join us, as our numbers have decreased owing to people moving. We are a friendly group and enjoy conversing over a cup of tea half way through the meeting. If anyone feels like joining, please ring me