



**A warm welcome in Normandy  
from our French Twins**

## **Newsletter Summer 2023**

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## Chair's Letter Summer 2023

This past year for Portsmouth u3a has really lifted off with the return of much-loved regular events being restored again. In May we were able to return to Caen in Normandy to be the appreciative guests of the marvellous French hosts who have been putting up their English visitors for many years. Connections with our French friends had been maintained initially through lockdown by Zoom meetings organised, led and trained by Susan Johnson. These meetings were so welcomed by the French that they were continued by both sides as a regular monthly event with a topical or seasonal theme. After our visits to Caen, next year it is our turn to host the very keen French visitors and we do need extra volunteers to put them up. In addition to the Twinning with members of the Caen u3a (they have different initials and links with Caen University) we have been very fortunate to resume the annual four-day residential visit to London of the Architecture group. So 20 members of this group were extremely grateful to Jim Sweasey for starting this up again. It was great to return to our usual Passfield Hall in Bloomsbury and venture out via bus routes (and one river journey) to some fascinating destinations. Apart from those two residential trips we had a very exciting visit in April to the studio of local artist Pete Codling who is the Artist in Residence in Portsmouth Dockyard and who had invited members of the Art Appreciation group to see his massive "Crowd" artwork on a huge sail. Grateful thanks to Rosemary Sirett for organising this. Our splendid groups continue until the week ending Friday 14th July. Following on from then, we start regular Tuesday afternoon events to keep in touch with everybody throughout the rest of July and through August. Our Summer Programme this year has widened into 6 events. Please see the details being publicised about this and also spread the word. Such a fun and enjoyable time to be able to meet up together in different ways.

Have a really good summer break and thank you everyone for your contributions to this great year of being part of Portsmouth u3a. **Barbara Spiegelhalter**



**Morning classes will continue at 10:00 in the autumn term. You can use your bus pass from 9:00 so should give you plenty of time to get to the hub.**

## Welcome to new and returning members

**New :** Lin Sandalls, Mavis Hornsey, Jayne Bennett, Mary Gargent, Shikyba Azizi.

**Returning:** Hilary Nicklin

## Architecture

Our most important event in the last few months has been our reinstated spring visit to London, after the dreary times of Covid restrictions.

But I must first mention two other meetings where we looked at architecture needed because of the physical devastation caused by the WW2, the first being a fascinating presentation by one of our members, Steph Shaw, about Karl Marx Allee, built in East Germany after the war to the greater glory of Communism. This inspired the second talk to describe the corresponding building project in West Berlin, the development of the destroyed Hansaviertel district, to shine a light on the forward thinking of architects to modernism and freedom. It was, if you like, West Berlin's V-sign to the eastern bloc to show the civilised way to the future, not with grandiosity but by building housing for the homeless that would give them comfortable, hygienic homes where they could rebuild their lives.



A competition was held and entered by Europe's finest architects to submit designs which would help to redevelop the shattered Hansaviertel area. Over 50 were selected for this ground-breaking project. The list included such famous names as Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus, Oscar Niemeyer, later the designer of Brasilia, the new capital of Brazil, Le Corbusier, probably the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most influential architect, Alvar Aalto the father of Finnish design and building, the distinguished Dane Arne Jacobsen and a galaxy of star German architects.

The theme of destruction followed by rebirth, the phoenix from the ashes, is, strangely, the link to our London visits. The Hansaviertel and Karl Marx Allee were both born of war. Three hundred years before, the Great Fire of 1666 immolated almost the entire city of London so that the urgent need to rebuild included not only houses for the homeless but the rebuilding of nearly 100 churches, essential houses for the soul. Two of these rebuilt churches were targets for our visit - to see, for real, the work of an architect we had studied in the previous term, Nicholas Hawksmoor. He worked for and in collaboration



with Sir Christopher Wren on the rebuilding required by the Act of Building 50 New Churches, passed by Parliament. As well as overseeing work on Wren's churches, including St Paul's, he built 6 to his own designs, two of which we were lucky enough to explore, Christchurch, Spitalfields and St George's, Bloomsbury. Their exteriors are very different, owing to the restrictions of the site available but also because Hawksmoor was an incorrigibly inventive designer who couldn't resist adding historic references to his facades and steeples. Christchurch is immensely tall and linear, with area filled presence over an area filled with French Huguenot refugees, silk weavers by trade, and Christchurch was a constant reminder of English Protestant dominance whereas St George's façade onto the street has an imposing Roman portico, complete with a pediment, columns and imposing, vertiginous steps to the main doors – quite a challenge to a bride in full skirted regalia, I should think.



However, both churches are crowned with a Hawksmoor signature, a totally bonkers tower and steeple. Inside, both are filled with light and spaciousness, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century style with galleries and plain glass to let in God's light – gone is the dark medieval Gothic, all is airy tranquillity.

Christchurch was the pivot of our visit to Spitalfields. This area, built outside the City of London, saw an enormous amount of fast-build terraced housing to accommodate the expanding population of French refugees who needed homes and places to work and these terraces replaced many of the narrow, meandering medieval streets. We wandered down some of these remaining alleys and passages, discovering fascinating individual artisan craftsmen's shops and cafes, including a sumptuous branch of Ottolenghi's, its window a perfect still-life of decadence, painted with exquisitely crafted patisserie and clouds of meringues, sprinkled with pink pomegranate dust. Who could resist? As in so much of London today, the new developments around these ancient streets provide a stunning contrast that pinpoints the constant change in a vibrant, living city.

This contrast was further underlined when we travelled down the Thames on the Clipper to our next two destinations, Battersea, and Lambeth, with a constantly changing panorama of old and new, in every style, the horizons filled with the silhouettes of working cranes. On that day, the basic blocks of building – bricks – were very much to the fore. At the newly restored and developed Battersea Power Station and the newly built Lambeth Palace Bishop's Library. We saw bricks of many varieties colours and shapes, handmade and imaginatively used on both sites to create truly impressive and beautiful structures.



Battersea has an extraordinary power in its massive dominating presence. As you approach up a small incline, it gradually fills your entire field of vision until nothing else is visible.

It is indeed a cathedral of industry - inside which you could actually fit a real cathedral, St. Paul's! Built

largely in the 30's, the inside is lavished with Art Deco friezes and ceramic tiles, marble and parquet flooring. Outside is another of those telling contrasts with brand new apartment blocks by Norman Foster and by Frank Gehry in his characteristic style of artlessly thrown-together, curving, apparently weightless shapes. A truly invigorating mixture set against Battersea's velvety textured brickwork and gigantism.

Lambeth Palace Library Archive is altogether more modest, a mere 8 storeys high,



but the different shapes and colours of the handmade bricks have been strikingly and sensitively used to relieve the huge areas of brick wall necessary in what is essentially a storage facility. As you enter, however, into the double height atrium it feels spacious and welcoming, with a wonderful picture window, giving on to what seems to be a country view in the heart of the city. It's a garden, designed by the innovative and eco-aware Dan Pearson (often-time winner at the Chelsea Flower Show)

which features a wildlife pond, edged with reeds and marginal plants, already frequented by birdlife and insects, surrounded by wild flowers and native trees, like the blackthorn and the wild cherry, all in glorious bloom. Apart from the tranquil reading room and the conservation area where we were privileged to visit and see work in progress, the library has a tower with a 360 degree viewing terrace which gives extraordinary views of London in the round, especially, just across the river, an almost close-up vista of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, positively gleaming in their newly cleaned pristineness, in the spring light that blessed almost all our visit with its late but very welcome spring appearance. We were so fortunate to hit a few days of sunshine when we saw London at her best, scrubbed and polished, with fresh green spring leaves unfurling against all that newly revealed Portland stone, looking like the day it was built.

But as always with London, we've barely scratched the surface and there is so much to return to. We will be back.

**Gilly Zeffertt 02392 756856**



## French Experience

This term has been a mixture of some lessons in the hub and a trip to Caen. Jim started off the term with a fascinating look at Baron Pierre du Coubertin who was one of the founders of the modern Olympics. He decided his countrymen were very unfit and thought competitive sport would sort them out. He designed the logo and the motto. The Paris Olympics next year on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the previous one held there. I am sure there will be some reference to this extraordinary man in their opening ceremony.

Jim also introduced us to this little gem: "Croissant Corner" on Saturdays. BBC Radio 3 usually just after the 7:00am news bulletin. Presented by Elizabeth Alker featuring 3 items of French songs and music – very easy listening.





Just before the anniversary of D-Day we looked at the bombing of Caen by the allies. A bit of an eye-opener as most of us thought Caen had been destroyed by the Germans. On a more positive note, we then looked at the rebuilding of Caen and some of the 600 houses Sweden sent over to rehouse the workers whose houses had been destroyed. These houses are still lived in 80 years on.

Jim came up with another fascinating story about an eccentric Frenchman and the champagne safari. An ongoing thread through the lessons is a video series about 4 young people in a flat. Loosely based on "Friends" it provides amusing scenes in easy to understand French. As you can see we are finding out a lot more about France than just its language and grammar although of course we touch on that as well.

**Susan Johnson 02392669938**



In May 2020 the French twinning trip, planned down to the last detail, had to be cancelled because of Covid. For three years we have maintained our links with our twinning friends in Caen, largely thanks to Susan Johnson who has organised bilingual monthly zoom sessions between language learners on both sides of the Channel, keen to keep the contact alive.

Last month we resumed the twinning visits, albeit in a less rigid format.

Fourteen of us travelled to Caen and surrounding area and stayed with French hosts for 3 nights but instead of following a strict programme of visits, the hosts entertained their guests in their own way, taking them to various places of interest according to their stated preferences.

We assembled as a group for two excellent meals in restaurants and a good time seemed to be had by all. There was plenty of chance to practise our language skills but, most guests and hosts spoke a mixture of French and English and got by admirably.

We were delighted that four new Francophiles joined us on the twinning this year and there were three new host families to welcome us in Normandy too.

Next year the French will be coming to Portsmouth from Tuesday 14th May to Friday 17th May 2024 which will be the 20th anniversary of the first Portsmouth U3A/Caen UIA twinning visit!



There are always more French desperate to join in with the twinning visits than hosts able to welcome them here in Portsmouth or the surrounding area.

As a first-time visitor to Caen under our French class twinning system I went with no preconceptions.

It seems that I was exceptionally lucky with the hosts who proffered accommodation.

My hostess Blanda was German, teaching English and she spoke fluent French having

a husband, Yvon, who was French. We spoke French most of the time and had quite a few laughs 'translating' from one language to another. They were both exceptionally welcoming and both went out of their way to make me feel at home. Each day one of them would drive to various venues where we could stroll around and stop for a coffee or lunch.

We visited Honfleur, Villefranche, Bayeux and others and the 2 cathedrals, one for men and one for women when they were built. My Caen visit turned out to be a visit to Normandy. Standing above the tomb of William the Batard et Conquerant. Strange.

**Ian Pike**

If you feel that you could be a host next year, or just want to know more about it, please contact me, **Fiona Brown (07305337391) or Susan Johnson (02392 669938)**



### The Music Discovery Group.

The Music Discovery Group, now in its second year, continues on its tuneful way. Although the membership of the group is in the low twenties, attendance is averaging out at 10 members per meeting, and those who do attend seem to enjoy the meetings very much indeed, saying that the group is welcoming and friendly. If you haven't had a 'taster' session do come along and give the group a try! In the last year the group has welcomed a couple of new members and we have also entertained the occasional guest. Most meetings are 'themed' and increasingly members are bringing music of all kinds to the meetings, which is exactly as it should be. I intend to continue exploring capturing music videos from YouTube, which will give the assembled company something to look at as well as listen to! I am also going to explore the possibility of 'trips' to hear music at the Guildhall and other local venues such as Petersfield Festival Theatre. Onward and upward!

**Contact Andrew Barrow 07849 678357**

### FRENCH READING GROUP, Mondays



Mais Non! It's that time again! Time to tell you about the French Reading Group. We continue to enjoy reading and speaking French. We are a relatively small, relaxed group, and we meet once a fortnight at the hub. Suggestions as to what we do are always welcome, as is the break half-way through, when we catch up on a personal level.

This term, we started with "Gigi" by Colette. It's the classic story of a young girl whose innocence triumphs over the Parisian demi-monde. Andre Gide said that, "I know of few works which have today offered me such an amused and perfect joy." I hadn't read it before, but I think that most of us will have seen the film with Maurice Chevalier and Leslie Caron. Colette's use of language and her style were intriguing, to say the least.

Recently, we have been reading "Regarde les Lumieres mon Amour" by Annie Ernaux. The title, "Look at the lights, my love",



refers to a passage in the book where a mother is urging on her child to look at the Christmas lights in the supermarket. She won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2022. She is eighty years old, and obviously, received quite a lot of publicity, but since winning the prize, she has been unable to write, and says she never wanted to win the prize!

The novel is a meditation on class and consumer culture, a dryly charming look at the way the French live now, seen through visits to the hypermarche at various times. We all recognise those moments: the person taking ages at the checkout, the snippets of conversation as you walk around – but, unlike most of us, she has written it all down. It engendered much amusement and droll conversation.

We have also continued to read articles from “Le Monde”, keeping us informed about French politics and how the French view us now, after Brexit.

For the future, I think it is probably time that we did some poetry again, for at least one session next term. We are certainly going to tackle French “Trivial Pursuits”, although, maybe, we will just study the questions, and see if we can answer any of them, in a non-competitive way! We have already played French Scrabble, which did turn out to be quite competitive and revealing.

Following on from such greats as Camus, Simenon, Jean Anouilh, Pagnol and masters of modern short stories, we have been inspired by “Gigi” to read some more short stories by Colette.

So, there you have us! Bonne Chance!

**Jane Helliwell 07778 484974**

## German Studies

We have had a diverse programme this term. Notably discovering a German tv company filming a soap opera in Cornwall which is a very successful programme with German audiences. The scenery of Cornish villages and the friendliness of the local population ensures the tv company will continue to use this venue.



Germany is closing all its nuclear plants which will take hundreds of years to decommission. Most other countries in Europe are increasing nuclear power as concerns over climate change and environmental damage are emerging.



We have looked at the writing of Herman Hesse who in 1946 received the Noble Prize for Literature. During the first world war he volunteered to look after prisoners of war as he was unfit to serve in combat areas. He was strongly against anti-semitism, he exiled in Switzerland where he continued to work against the Nazi ideology.

Younger Germans faced the rebuilding the country from the ground up and saw potential rather than defeat. Debate continues about whether Germany should stop atoning for the Nazi past while others

believe it's essential to keep alive the memories of the country's inglorious past.

We reviewed life in Berlin during the “Roaring twenties” with extreme poverty and the financial crash world wide.

We are looking forward to examining the Hitler Diaries, the history of the Volkswagen car (the people's car) and its association with Nazi ideology and Cruising on Germany's rivers.

**Jean Morgan 02392816949**

## Spanish



After a delayed start to the term, because of the French twinning trip, we retained the theme of royalty, post Coronation, by looking at news of 17yr old Leonor, heir to the Spanish throne. To our surprise she has been studying for the international baccalaureate at Atlantic College, an international

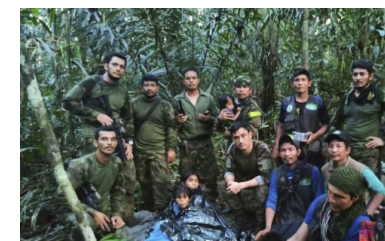
boarding school based in a castle in Wales!

King Felipe and Queen Letizia were the proud parents present at her leaving ceremony.

Ian Pike then continued the topic of royalty by telling us anecdotes from the years he spent serving on the Royal Yacht and meeting not only the Queen and Royal Family but British and foreign dignitaries.

Besides overseeing the smooth running of the ship, he enjoyed wonderful food and the chance to play his ? clarinet with the orchestra and, judging by his suntan on the photos, plenty of relaxation on deck!!

Our recent news article, read in Spanish and translated between us, concerned the astonishing story of the 4 children aged 1, 4, 9 and 13, rescued from the Columbian rainforest after 40 days of fending for themselves. Their mother and 2 other adults had died as a result of their plane crashing.



We then revised vocabulary and expressions relating to illness and, as seniors, had no problem finding aches and pains to describe our sufferings to one another!

This class is always fun and relaxed with Susan finding Spanish jokes to make us laugh and, probably our favourite activity, understanding various topics explored in the company of two amusing Mexican friends on a language learning video.

It's not a beginners' class but new people often join us with varying levels of Spanish and all are welcomed. A visit to a tapas restaurant is how we usually finish the end of term so we are a friendly group! **Fiona Brown**

For more information contact: **Susan Johnson 0239266 9938**

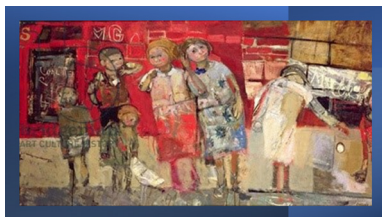




## Art Appreciation

With all the bank holidays this term we have been lucky to fit in any classes. WE started by looking the Thomas McGoran who took up painting when he retired and has had his first exhibition at the age of 94. Never too late. His paintings capture Glasgow in the 1930s. A time of hardship and poverty but great community spirit too. His paintings capture a different time. WE

also had a look at a painter of the Gorbals in the 1950s. Same poverty and same community spirit. Joan Eardsley painted different members of a family with 12 children who lived near her.



Our real treat this term was to visit "The Crowd" A sail covered in charcoal drawings by our local artist Pete Codling. We had arranged to meet Pete there in his studio in the dockyard and he explained what he was trying to do. If you haven't already seen it, it is worth going to visit. The whole history of Portsmouth is there.

Our next subject was George Stubbs, renown for his paintings of horses but did you know he produced an illustrated textbook on midwifery and also painted what he thought a kangaroo would look like from just the skin. I have been trying balance male artists with female artists and so our painter of horses was Lucy Kemp-Welch. Nobody had heard of her, but she was famous in her time and illustrated the first editions of Black Beauty and was a war artist in the first World War.



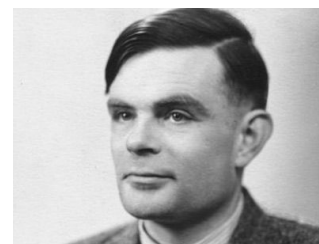
For extravagance and sumptuous costumes we looked at Tisset and his paintings of beautiful women in amazing outfits. The numbers of feathers used to adorn beautiful women led a group of women to protest and try and stop the wholesale slaughter of birds simply to provide feathers. With the backing of Queen Victoria this society turned into the RSPB

Elaine Lawson stepped in again to give us her expert view on Winslow Homer. A prolific American artist who was fascinated by

the sea and portrayed 19<sup>th</sup> Century life in America. As you can see we cover a wide range of subjects and try and find something for everyone.



Susan Johnson 0239266 9938



## History

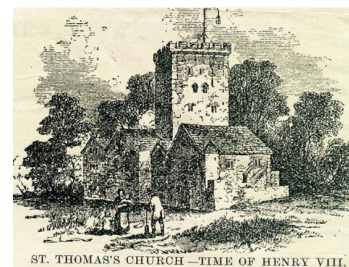
The last few History sessions have been a mixture of local and national history. I think it shows just how diverse History can be from small details that affected people's everyday lives to huge national events.

In March Susan Johnson gave an interesting presentation about her visit to Bletchley Park. Bletchley Park is an English country house and estate with beautiful gardens

near Milton Keynes, 50 miles north of London. In 1938 Bletchley Park came into the possession of MI6 and became a vital British intelligence centre. When Adolf Hitler's campaign to invade Europe intensified, Bletchley Park was thought to be the perfect place to move the Government Code and Cypher School in the event of war.

During the Second World War a team of British codebreakers at Bletchley Park— then known by the codename Station X — managed to decipher the machinations of Enigma, the highly effective code encryption machine used by the Nazis. This enabled the British government to intercept German messages, decipher them, and begin to map their enemy's military movements.

This team of codebreakers included mathematician Alan Turing who is widely considered to be the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence. It has been estimated that the work of Turing and his team at Bletchley Park shortened the war in Europe by more than 2 years and saved the lives of around 14 million people.

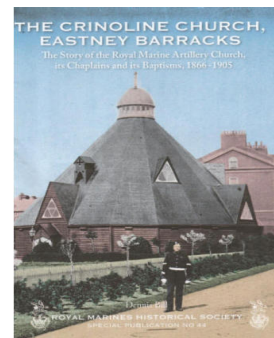


In April we moved nearer to home and looked at some of the churches in Portsmouth. There are 101 places of worship still in use today including - 76 Churches, a Mosque, a Synagogue, and a Gurdwara.

Portsmouth has two Cathedrals. St Thomas Anglican Cathedral probably founded in the 12th

century, initially as a church, it only became a cathedral in 1932 and St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral opened in 1882 making it the first cathedral in Portsmouth.

Portsmouth also has the "Domus Dei" the Oldest Military Garrison Church in the world built in 1212, it was bombed during the infamous night of January 1941 during WW2



Other churches with an interesting history include St Marys, the Mother Church of Portsea Island. It is thought the first St Marys was built in the 12th century and was in use until its demolition in 1843. It was in this first church that Charles Dickens and Isambard Kingdom Brunel were baptised. A second church was built by the architect Thomas Ellis Owen, but this one was fairly quickly demolished, and the foundation of the present church was laid in 1847.

St Jude's in Southsea built in 1851, by Thomas Ellis Owen, was

the church where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle attended debates and had discussions in the garden with the Curate.

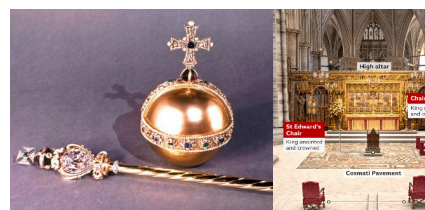
I must also mention The Crinoline Church a temporary structure first used in the Crimean War and then used in Southsea while other churches were being built to accommodate the growing population. A sundial commemorates this church at the site of what was the



Royal Marines Barracks in Eastney.

At the end of April, the group went out on a visit to Pete Codling's studio in Portsmouth Dockyard. He is the Artist in Residence at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Pete is working on a replica Canvas Sail of HMS Victory, drawing over 1,000 portraits of people who have lived and worked in Portsmouth. The sail shows the history of the City of Portsmouth and Its Dockyard.

In May we couldn't ignore one of the events of the century The Coronation of Charles III. We followed the history of coronations from the first English King, Edgar (975-959) up until the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, Westminster Abbey built in 1065 has been the Coronation Church for every coronation since William the Conqueror who was crowned on Christmas Day 1066. Charles III was the 40th monarch to be crowned in the Abbey.



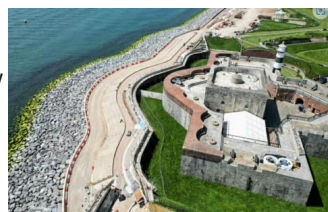
We explored the history and traditions of the coronation - The coronation chair, the oldest piece of furniture in the world is placed in the centre of the unique Cosmati Pavement laid down in 1268 by Henry III. We discovered the history of the Crown Jewels which had to be remade for Charles II following their destruction after the Civil War.



We looked at the history of the Golden Coach built by George III and The Diamond Jubilee Coach built for Elizabeth II with the crown on top made of wood from HMS Victory. We also looked at the meaning behind some of the pictures on the official Invitations to the coronation, sadly no one in our u3a group had received an invitation. Haha!

In June we returned to Portsmouth to look at how Portsmouth defences have grown over 1,000 years. From the Romans building Portchester Castle to defend against pirates and barbarians to Henry VIII building Southsea Castle and watching from there as the Mary Rose sank in the Battle of the Solent against the French. The Round Tower was standing when Henry VII built the first dry dock in Portsmouth and The Hot Walls and Square Tower were added by Henry VIII

The Navy, the Dockyard and Portsmouth continued to grow but, in the 18th, and 19th centuries France threatened again. The British Government were worried, Lord Palmerston ordered the building of 5 Forts on Portsdown Hill and 4 in the Solent, others were built in Gosport



and along the coast. This was the greatest works of fortifications ever undertaken in peacetime. (The map shows how heavily Portsmouth was defended). However, the threat had passed before they were completed so they were never used as intended and became known as "Palmerston's Follies." Portsmouth continued to be defended during two World Wars and helped to defend other territories such as the Falklands Islands.

Today Portsmouth is once again building its defences "The Coastal Defence Scheme", this time it's against the sea itself.

We have one more session in July, when in the spirit of the u3a, two of our members, Elaine Lawson and Ian Pike will be the speakers. Something to look forward to.

**Rosemary Sirett 07540597804**

## POETRY and POETRY & DRAMA Groups, Wednesday & Thursday

Oh frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!

We chortle in our joy,

And gyre and gimble in the wabe,

As poetry and drama outgrabe!

I go to both sessions, and document them fully, so apologies to Tony Stutters, who runs the Wednesday group! I'm sure he'll have a different take!

The unbridled pleasure both groups seem to generate must be contagious, since they are now growing in size. We have recently asked people to focus on their favourite poets / poems, and we have ranged from e e cummings to Duffy, Wordsworth to Marvell, Yeats, Hardy and Auden to Larkin. We have been rude and down to earth with e e cummings ("My Sweet Etc"), and reflective with Duffy ("Wood", where she revisits childhood haunts).

To avoid complacency and habit, we have sessions on new finds – challenging ourselves to go out and explore new poetic horizons. We ended up in Oz, listening to an anonymous lamenting convict, and in Ireland, listening to Otana Pádraig reflecting on reconciliation. Another fabulous find was Rupī Kaur, whose "Lesson from Mama" gave thoughtful advice to her daughter.

Occasionally, we look at song lyrics, and consider the merits (or demerits!) of either setting poems to music, or writing them especially. Differences of opinion can be expressed powerfully – Vernon Scannell was quite scathing about the quality of Paul Simon's lyrics as free-standing verse! One thing we haven't done, is look at opera librettos – and what about Gilbert and Sullivan? Food for thought.



A recent theme was "Joy and Jolitude"! (Well! If poets can make up new words, why can't we?) We explored humanity's never-ending inventiveness in discovering new sources of joy and solace – and jolitude! As well as the more obvious ones, of course!

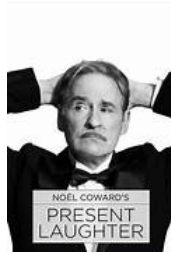
Our Thursday drama group considered, among other things, the humour to be found in Shakespeare's Richard II. If you don't believe me, find





Mark Rylance's exquisite performance. He won't have you in stitches, but, you'll definitely discover yourself smiling wryly in the most unlikely of situations!

We also had an enjoyable time with Noel Coward's "Present Laughter". As you would expect, we revelled in his lever repartee. It's of its time, but also has something to say, in its decadent way, about modern celebrity culture.



Our free choice sessions roam far and wide in theme, mood and period – and much else. Amongst other reflections, we all agreed that Phillip Larkin was a misogynistic grumpus, but that his poems are, nevertheless, among the greats. We also wondered if Shakespeare is giving lust a bad name, in his 129th sonnet!

Our future ramblings in the world of poesy and drama will include the Ben Travers farce, "Rookery Nook", and poetry themes to do with "family" and "abroad". No doubt they'll be interpreted broadly and interestingly!

And 10 out of 10, if, like me, you've just noticed my linguistic slant in this piece towards, roaming, travel, discovering and exploring! That's what it's all about! And don't get me started on exclamation marks!

**Floyd Pattison 07778 484968**

## Philosophy

Philosophy gathers dust in diverse places, not only in historic niches but can also be found especially deeply encrusted in the ivory towers of academe. Of late we have shunned both these sources of enlightenment to thrust our musty noses into the glossy offerings of the YouTube prophets and suppliers of spiritual balm and emotional embrocation.



It has proved an enjoyable diversion as we followed Alain de Botton in a less than calming tour of his School of Life. This was redeemed by his exploration of the Course of Love which proved the source for much deeper personal self examination and group discussion. More of this is in the offing but the spectres of Mind and Body made a Hamlet's Ghost-like appearance toward the end of the last session.

**Tony Stutters 07739 832774**



## World of Books

### The Muse by Jesse Burton

The Muse follows two separate storylines - set in different time periods, settings and with different characters - which run in parallel before converging in the final pages.

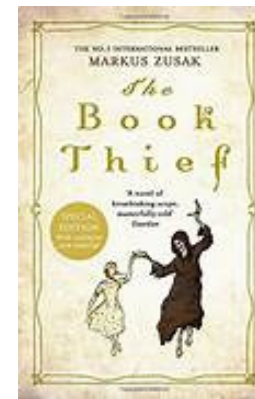
First we are taken to 1960's London and meet one of the protagonists, Odelle - a girl who has emigrated from Trinidad - who has become disillusioned with a life far removed from the marvellous picture she was given. Five years on, she successfully

applies for a new job at an art gallery. It's there that she meets, and becomes attracted to, a man who has inherited a painting of a lion and two women. The man believes the painting is of value and enlists the help of Odelle to prove its provenance.

We are then transported back in time 30 years to a village in Spain at the outbreak of the Civil War. Here we find a family of English and German heritage who employ a local brother and sister - the former a recognised artist - to run the household. Olive - the young daughter of the family - also paints (albeit in private) and dreams of pursuing an education and future career in art. This is met with disapproval by her father - who repeatedly derides her efforts - but she finds encouragement and support in the shape of the Spanish maid. She resolves to get Olive's talent recognised, devising a plan to substitute a painting by her brother - which is due to be scrutinised with a view to being exhibited - with one of Olive's.

We later learn that Olive's picture is the artwork that the young man in London has inherited, and the remainder of the book deals with this discovery as well as the revelation of its true creator. Olive - still hoping to maintain her anonymity - has travelled to London under a pseudonym and befriended Odelle. With her health declining, she persuades Odelle to keep her secret - and allow the truth about to remain concealed. Upon Olive's passing, Odelle dutifully carries out her friend's wish.

The book provides a vivid insight into contrasting scenes - the bitterness and horror of the Spanish Civil War juxtaposed with an intriguing detective story in 1960's London. The group found this to be a gripping read, with both artistic and historical features, and a cast of memorable characters.



The second book studied was "The Book Thief" - written by Markus Zusak - which proved a great success with the group.

Set in Nazi Germany during the 1930's, it paints a brilliantly evocative picture of the lives of its inhabitants as the Second World War approaches and eventually breaks out. The key events are very succinctly chronicled by an unexpected choice as narrator - Death - but embellished by the experiences of Liesel - a young German girl in whom Death takes a particular interest.

Liesel life with foster parents in a small town demonstrates a broad spectrum of emotions, ranging from humour to shock and horror. The tension ebbs and flows in the incident-packed early chapters before revealing the brutality of the war in the closing stages. Alongside the appalling atrocities of some, there

are examples of staunch resistance and amazing courage from others. Above all, though, the power of friendship and love to offer hope and relief shines through.

Through her adolescence, Liesel is liberated by learning to read and being to articulate her thoughts and feelings; strengthened by the love of her foster father and her friend Ruby.

The group found the depiction of Death as a character quite comforting, with his mission being simply to gather the souls of the dead and transport them to the afterlife. A compelling read. **Contact Audrey Thorpe 02392 372954**



## Poetry - English Poetry

This group has grown to require three tables to seat all the contributors. A fourth table may soon be needed if the group continues to grow. But never mind the width, feel the quality! The poems, the introductions, the comments, the experience and humour of the group members make this a vital session. The cafe, too, serves a vital function for free chat and social bonding.

Often a theme is offered to ease the problems of choice but poems always remain a matter of personal preference and significance so any offering is welcome and received with appreciation. Do drop in if you're free on a Wednesday morning.

**Tony Stutters 07739 832774**



## Creative Writing Group

One of the best motivations for writing is entering competitions so we will discuss how rules vary and the importance of reading them carefully. The writing group was paused earlier in the year because of low numbers. Ideally, we need A minimum of 5 to 6 people so that we can listen and provide feedback on a range of genres. Thankfully, it would seem that we now do have enough numbers to start up again.

We are therefore meeting on 15 June and 29 June at the Somerstown hub At 2 PM. We may then decide on a final meeting in early July. Following that we hope that this will become a viable group from September.

You do not have to be a published author (either traditionally or self-published) as the main criteria is an enthusiasm for getting ideas on paper and entertaining the reader. Some members are writing poetry and several people are writing memoirs. Two members are writing fiction.

Meetings include a few exercises to stimulate the writing process and some topics chosen by members which interest them. For example, some people writing novels may want to learn how to write a cover letter and a synopsis and learn how to submit to agents.

However, you may be wanting to produce something simplify or your family and need advice from members who have done this. Hopefully before the next newsletter, I will be able to give more details of what writing is being produced. Ideally, we would like to produce a booklet of our work about once a year.

Those new to writing will be made very welcome. Have a good summer

**Contact Di Castle on (07787) 435549**

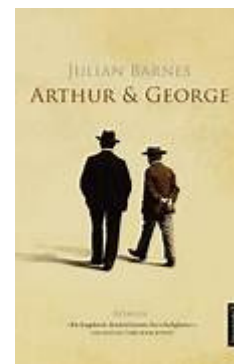
## Pelham Book Group

What a range of books we have covered over the recent months – from a prose-poem to a great classic in our Zoom sessions!

“By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept”, Elizabeth Smart, is a prose poem inspired by her passionate 18 year relationship with the



English poet George Barker by whom she had four children. It focuses on her experiences and feelings as she awaits his arrival. This was an unusual read for us but we were captivated by the rich, poetic way she describes her emotions and life events.



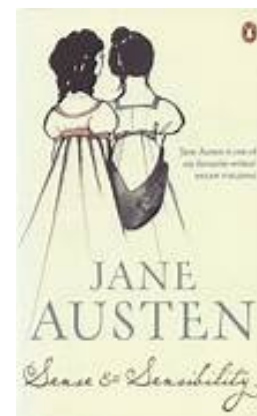
In April, “Arthur and George”, Julian Barnes’s 10th, 2005, is a “must” read for us in Portsmouth with its Conan Doyle connections. The Arthur is Arthur Conan Doyle who began his writing career here in Southsea as he established his doctor’s surgery in Elm Grove. The George, George Edalji, is an obscure, mixed race young man training as a solicitor in Birmingham who was imprisoned for barbaric crimes he could not possibly have committed. The novel is based on true events describing the two worlds these people inhabit and how Conan Doyle came to champion Edalji’s cause despite society’s prejudices. It was a thoroughly satisfying read.

May’s tome “The Poisonwood Bible”, Barbara Kingsolver, 1998, was a revelation to us as it took us into the Belgian Congo along with a fundamental Baptist preacher, blinded by his faith, his wife and four daughters totally unprepared for the African village life they would lead. They move from the US state of Georgia in 1959 with no preparation into the political turmoil of the 1960’s in the Congo. The plot is revealed by the female characters in turn as they suffer, adapt, learn and mature. The novel is rich in descriptions of characters and setting with many themes explored eg. family relationships, religion, cultures, prejudice and fate. We would all recommend this as a powerful, moving novel. Any of Kingsolver’s novels are worth a read.

What a contrast to our current classic, Jane Austen’s “Sense and Sensibility”, 1811, to be discussed this month! Although we have all read or even studied Austen, many of us confessed we had not tackled this one. Once adjusted to the style and wit it is an entertaining read with a thoroughly satisfactory ending. The young Dashwood sisters struggle with their emotions and social conventions as they find their beaus.

I hope you have shared our literary experiences and find some of these suggestions guiding your own reading as the group is full. The intricacies of the Hants Library Book Group system are masterfully dealt with by Maggie Macbeth with much appreciation by the group. Thank you.

**Contact: Judith Wise tel. 02392357463 or 07530854969.**  
**judewise1@googlemail.com**



## Art for All



**Dancing Ladies**  
Jean McQuoid



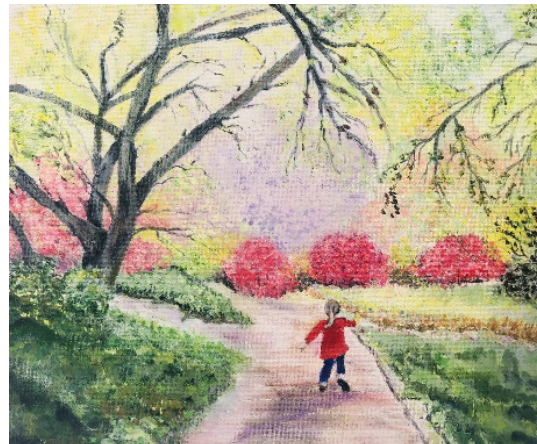
**Maggie McBeth**  
Great Kisadee



**Beach Huts** Lynn Timms



**Vicky Ellul**  
Deer



**Winkworth Arboretum**  
Brenda Colman

For more information contact Brenda Colman 07342 976255

## Science and Technology

In our last report I posed a number of topics, which we hoped to cover in the meetings up to summer. The Horizon Program is currently locked over amount of funding needed for UK to rejoin having left during Brexit. It covers billions towards research into e-cars, batteries, heat pumps, AI and everything else in the world of science. Just to illustrate the research costs involved, The USA and EU have set aside £50B each to incentivise chip production within their shores while UK have pledged £1B over the next ten years. Intel is investing £25B in a computer chip factory in Israel. Poland is investing £4.6B and Germany £22B. Time is running out for UK to either invest much more alone or to rejoin Horizon.



We spent some effort on the highly misunderstood scallop. It surprised us to find that on average each shellfish has up to 200 "eyes". These are all arranged along the edge of the shell. We don't know why these evolved but we do know that they are sensitive to light from a standard LED so that if you have a crab pot with a LED inside then scallops will attempt to swim into the trap.



We continued to scan the media to look for "Spy Balloons". The latest, manufactured by Durham University with the help of NASA, was launched in New Zealand at a cost of £4.1M. Notice was given to all countries on its 100 day overflight schedule not to shoot it down, it was looking up not down, in an effort to find evidence for dark matter.

On a brighter note than usual it was noticed that Russia flew 2.7 tons of supplies to vital the International Space Station. I wonder does Putin know about this? **Brian Greener**  
02392863381

## Religion, Spirituality and Life



This has been a very successful third term for our Religion, Spirituality and Life group. About ten of us have bonded well into a lively group, always eager to welcome new-comers. We make use of a range of disciplines to explore how religion and spirituality can bring out the very worst in us as human beings, and also the very best. One week we took a historical approach to the Crusader wars between the

eleventh and fifteenth century when the European nations encouraged by the papacy attempted to take back the Holy Land from its Muslim captors. It cost one million lives in total for no obvious gain whatsoever. Another week we looked at the contribution that psychology has made to understanding religion and spirituality, comparing the work of Karl Jung who broke with Sigmund Freud over the latter's hostility to religion. Meditation, in both religious and non-religious traditions with a spiritual dimension, has generated lively discussion and will continue next term when we examine meditation as a therapeutic resource in pain management.



Sometimes we share our fears about the direction modern society takes. Fears about the rise of artificial intelligence or AI, have figured in these conversations. Later this term we shall examine the philosophy of body, mind and soul. Come and see if you can help us shed some light on the topic. **John Strain 07834 637744**

## Interest Groups Online

Formally known as Trust u3a, these groups are usually presented on Zoom and are nationwide activities. Initiated in April 2020 when local groups were unable to meet, they have continued to meet weekly/fortnightly/ monthly as required or how offered by the group leader. They offer a huge variety of subjects and can be attended alongside the local group meetings.

I lead a group 'C19 British Social History' which, since October 2022 will meet on the last Monday of the month 2-3pm For information about these groups use: <https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/welcome>



**Elaine Lawson**



The Board Games & Rummikub Group is coming towards the first year of its existence,, there is a small but enthusiastic following, ever ready to try new games out. The main focus is upon board games and proprietary card games devised in the present century by professional designers, the games usually give the players options of action on their 'turn' and there is no

one single path leading to victory.

During our June meeting two games of the three games played were won by someone trying us out for the first time, who admitted they were still getting to grips with the newer type of games. The key criteria being that the players are having an enjoyable time and no previous knowledge is required. During that same meeting one game surprisingly polarized the group in their attitude towards the game, however the players spontaneously fell into fits of laughter at that point, the game (of course!!) was about differing types of donuts, or should that be doughnuts?

Whilst the main focus has been on modern games this is not to the exclusion of all others, all members are welcome to join us and if you are wish to bring along older types of games I am certain you can be accommodated, but to date the Rummikub and Scrabble sets remain unplayed, hopefully not for too long. For more information contact: **Tony Valvona 023 92 822641**



**Mah Jong** still takes place Friday mornings. Come along and give it a go.

**John Hall on 02392 732980**



## Film Club

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September  
1.45pm  
Effie Grey (2014)**

Effie Gray is a British biographical Romance/ Drama film written by Emma Thompson with a starry cast. It is based on the true story of the marriage of John Ruskin (famous Victorian art critic and essayist) to Euphemia Gray.



**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October  
1.45pm  
Kolya (1996)**

Kolya is a Czech drama film about a musician whose life is reshaped in an unexpected way. Set in Prague in 1988 as the Soviet Bloc is beginning to crumble. Winner of the Oscar in 1996 for Best Foreign Language Film. Shown with English subtitles.



**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November  
1.45pm  
Hit the Road (2021)**

This Iranian road comedy-drama film depicts an Iranian family driving to the Turkish border to smuggle their young adult son out of the country.



**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December  
1.45pm  
Mr Turner (2014)**

A biographical drama film based on the last 25 years of the life of the artist J.M.W.Turner. Written and directed by Mike Leigh, the film stars Timothy Spall in the title role.

## Needles and Pins

Knitted clothes for the premature baby unit



By Brenda Colman



**Footballing octopus**



**Fabric elephant by Lois Saunders**

For more information contact  
**Penny Scipio 02392 832500**

## The Walking Group

Firstly, I would like to once again thank all the drivers who make the out of the way walks possible. We couldn't do it without them. We have a couple of new members, John and Fi who we welcome most warmly.

To get started we did a walk around Bosham, it was quite windy and cold so it was not long before we retreated to a cafe for lunch.

The next outing headed by Rosemary was to the wonderful Bluebell Woods near Stoke. We managed to get the landlord of The Fox and Hounds at Funtington to open up for ten of us for coffee before the walk, and very nice it was too. The bluebells were spectacular and went on forever carpeting the woods as we walked. A sheer delight. We drove on to West Dean for lunch and a few purchases were made in the garden centre shop! Our most recent walk was back to West Dean as it was free of charge for Mental Health Week. Four of us did the circuit walk to see the massive Rhododendrons in bloom and the others enjoyed walking the gardens. There were fields of delicately scented Cow Parsley, and the Wisteria was blooming on the pergola.

The Gardeners Cottage is now a tea-room and opens at weekends. We enjoyed coffees in the garden and a late lunch in the main cafe. A few more purchases were made in the Garden Shop!!

This coming week we are hoping to redo the Chidham walk too I hope we can do the lovely Winchester walk again this summer.



The bluebell woods April



West Dean May

An unexpected find on our walk to Chidham in June was the display of Teasel People in St Mary's Church Jackie Forsyth 02392 666680



## Speakers' Corner

### Tuesday 21st March 2023 Malcolm Nelson: Forty Years Catching Smugglers.

Malcolm gave a talk about his life in the Detection Branch of Customs and Excise. For this session he concentrated on his experiences at Heathrow, an airport through which a huge percentage of the drug trade passes. There is an Alpha 1 List: a complex organisational tool which centralises knowledge of drugs movement from all over the world



At Heathrow there is a huge search team who examine passenger lists, note unusual routes and search baggage before passengers reclaim it, using specially trained sniffer dogs. Other officers study behaviour in the Green Lane, noting different weights of luggage and checking the use of cash rather than credit, which is untraceable. Malcolm told us

of some amusing trends in smuggling style, of which officers need to be aware. He ended with an amusing tale of a complex misjudgement that once occurred. It was a very entertaining but also thought-provoking afternoon.

### May 16<sup>th</sup> Visually Impaired Group



For May's general meeting we had a visit from Julie Duffy and her dog Spencer. Julie is the Visual Impairment Officer for the Portsmouth Library Service. She started as a volunteer 22 years ago. Since then, her role has increased in scope and she has been responsible for providing ever increasing services to help the blind and visually impaired: braille lesson and translations, large print books for adults and children and, advice on audio technology and other equipment to help the blind. She also provides emotional support: she compared losing one's sight with a bereavement and pointed out that no two

eye conditions are the same. All these services, available at the Central and Southsea libraries, are free. They are for the blind, visually, impaired, dyslexic, and for refugees and the homeless. Julie also talked about the huge range of technology which is now available to help the blind: from liquid level indicators to bus stop readers.

It was so good to know that all this help is available for all and for free locally. The meeting showed its appreciation of all Julie has done to help others. **Di Wren**

### June 13<sup>th</sup>

The speaker at June's General meeting was Lucy Butcher, a volunteer fundraiser from the Isle of Wight and Hampshire Air Ambulance service. Like the RNLI, this service is run entirely on voluntary contributions. They have a team of pilots, doctors and paramedics. The paramedics are employed full-time, but the pilots and doctors are seconded on a regular basis from their full-time occupations. They also have a team who help members of the public deal with post-traumatic stress after their involvement in the accidents which required the Air Ambulance's services. Altogether this was a very enlightening talk which encouraged all to give generously to their funds. **Di Wren**





## Speakers for next term

DATE	SPEAKER	Title	SUBJECT	NOTES
Tuesday Sept 19th 2023 2pm	St John's Ambulance – Community Engagement	Adult and Child First Aid	An awareness session for ourselves and caring for our families and grandchildren. Patient care: Bites and stings: Shock: Severe bleeding: Recovery position: Choking: CPR: use of Defibrillator: use of right medical service.	Room 3
Tuesday Oct.17th 2023 2pm	<b>Mandy Richards</b>  U3A Member	Readeasy	Our speaker will tell us about this charity that helps adults to read on 1 to 1 basis. Maybe some members would have the time and enjoy taking part in pairing in the programme or spreading the word about this worthwhile charity.	Room 3
Tuesday Nov.21st 2023 2pm	<b>Vicky Brown</b> - Law Learning Support and Advice Clinic Tutor,  Portsmouth University	An interactive, speed advice clinic for U3A members and training experience for the Law students	U3A members will be able to submit topics of interest or concern beforehand to the tutor. The students will come prepared to give us advice and answer questions. We will be able to circulate around the topics. Eg:- Legal rights of grandparents, consumers, landlords or leaseholders	Room 3
Tuesday Jan 16th, 2024, 2pm	<b>Penny Mason</b>  Fraud safeguarding Protect officer.	Fraud Prevention		Room 3
Tues Feb 20th, 2024 2pm	<b>Malcolm Nelson</b> –  Retired Customs officer and popular Cruise Ship Speaker	Forty years catching smugglers.  Lies and Excuses	Malcolm gives us an insight into how Customs Officers detect items such as cigarettes, fur coats, jewellery. This includes hints about who some of the more famous people Malcolm came across during his 40 years as a Customs Officer	Room 3
<b>Tues March</b> 19th, 2024 2pm	<b>Jim &amp; Lois</b>  Members of the Portsmouth Choral Union.	Highlights of music over 144 years		Room 3

Just for fun



**Tuesday 1st August**

1pm Picnic on the common opposite the Jolly Sailor -bring a chair and food to share

## Summer Programme July and August 2023



**Tuesday July 18th** Cream tea in the café 2:00 £6:50

Pay in cash in the café.



**Tuesday July 25th**

Summer lunch at the Royal Maritime Club: 12:30 for 1:00

Two courses £24 or three courses £26  
Folder in reception



**Tuesday 8th**

August film Belle 2pm



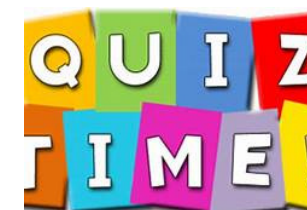
**Tuesday 15th**

August Games afternoon 2pm



**Tuesday 22nd**

Quiz 2pm







## **Principles of the u3a Movement**

- The u3a Movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:

### **The Third Age Principle**

- Membership of a u3a is open to all in their third age, which is defined not by a particular age but by a period in life in which full-time employment has ceased.
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.
- Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a u3a can do so.
- The Self-help Learning Principle
- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all u3a members.

### **The Mutual Aid Principle**

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a movement