

Dates for you DiaryMondays, – **German Language Group**Wednesday, 3rd January - **New Horizons**Monday, 8th January - **Second Monday Book Group**Tuesday 9th January – **Writing Group**Wednesday, 10th January - **Heritage & Local Studies Group****Tuesday, 16th January - Speaker Meeting Angela Buckley****The Real Sherlock Holmes?** Real-life crime cases from the fascinating career of Det. Jerome Caminada, a true Victorian super sleuth.Wednesday, 17th January – **Walking Group** (Chinnor U3A)Tuesday, 23rd January – **Reading Group**Wednesday, 31st January – **Luncheon Group**Friday, 9th February – **Theatre Group****The 2018 Programme & Membership Card** is now available.

It includes contact details for committee members and group leaders as well as details of the Speaker Meetings for the coming year. Please remember to collect yours from the welcome desk.

New Groups: We always welcome ideas for new groups. You do not need to be an expert on a subject to start a group. There is a huge amount of material available from U3A Resources and other places. You just need a couple of other members who are interested.

Eddy was spending Christmas with his grand parents. On Christmas morning the family went to church. On the way in Eddy checked out some pictures on the walls. When he saw one of a group of men in uniform, he asked his grandpa, 'Who are all those men in the pictures?' Grandpa replied, 'Those are some of our boys who died in service'. Horrified, Eddy asked, 'Was that the Carol Service or the Christmas Day service?'



Ridgeway U3A Website <https://u3asites.org.uk/ridgeway>
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NEWSLETTER
December 2017

*We wish you a
 Very Merry Christmas
 and a
 Happy and Peaceful 2018*



November Speaker Meeting. Dr Michael Keith-Lucas, gave an outstanding talk on the History of Trees – despite having forgotten his slides, projector and notes. The earliest known trees were in the Carboniferous period (some 300 million years ago) which were woody Club Mosses and woody Horsetails similar to Horsetails of today except these were very big trees with bark. One can see woody Club Mosses today in Victoria Park in Glasgow! We were then taken on a journey through millions of years, including the five main Extinction Events, finally resulting in the Dinosaurs becoming extinct some 65 million years ago. Michael told us how the trees of today arrived and in what order and then related the main problems affecting them now. This includes animals such as squirrel, dormouse, and deer which all ring bark trees causing severe damage. Diseases, such as Dutch elm disease, are now rife. The English Elm was propagated from cuttings so all are the same and prone to this disease. Only the Wych and the Cornish elm survive. Other diseases and problems include:- Acute Oak decline; Ash die back (from Denmark where 95% of all Ash has died) Rhododendrons (introduced in the 1700s) form dense thickets and shade out our native plants and trees, as well as producing a root poison. Massama disease of Plane trees; Sweet chestnut blight; Horse chestnut leaf miner; Ramorum Larch disease and fungal Larch canker. Dr Keith-Lucas showed us how trees have developed and how many threats there are to our native species, leaving us wanting to know more. *Annette Thompson*

Writing Group: The second meeting of the group was kindly hosted by Carol and we read the stories of which we had each written one paragraph during the preceding month. It was interesting to see how different they were, although starting with the same idea.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, 9th January at 2 pm in the West Room. We shall each read stories we have written, allegedly about ourselves, and the others will have to decide whether or not they are true.

The Reading Group: There is no December meeting. The next one will be on Tuesday, 23rd January at Caelia's. The current book is *The Tenderness of Wolves* by Stef Penney. The title of the January book is not yet known.

Heritage & Local Studies Group met at Anne's house where we enjoyed delicious Christmas hospitality, reviewed what we had done in 2017 and planned our group calendar for the next nine months.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 10th January when we shall visit the Bodleian Treasures: "21 pairs and a tropical forest" The exhibition presents some of the best of the 12 million items in the Bodleian Library's collections including Handel's *Messiah* and Shakespeare's First Folio. Meet outside Bodleian at 1.30 pm (Bus from Red Lion, Chalgrove at 12.27. Return bus at 15.25 or 16.40).

Luncheon Group: The next meeting is on Wednesday, 31st January. Because of the likelihood of wintery weather conditions, we are going to The Fat Fox Inn, 13, Shirburn Street, Watlington, OX49 5BU. There is a free car park and the pub is cozy and welcoming. Food is seasonal, imaginative and freshly cooked. If you wish to join please sign the list by the Notice Board, make your choice from the menu and put your payment in the black purse provided. The cost for two courses is £19 including coffee and gratuities (£23 for three courses.) Drinks extra. Organiser: Nina Stonham 01844 281385 nina.stonham@gmail.com

Walking Group: We hope to re-establish this Group in the New Year but meanwhile, through our membership of CHaTTR, Chinnor U3A have said they would be happy for us to join their Short Walks Group. (They meet on the third Wednesday of the month.) If you would like to join them, please contact Graham Stone on gdstone@tiscali.co.uk 01844 352178 with your name, phone number and email and he will add you to his mailing list. You can then turn up when you want to, without further notice.

The Second Monday Book Group: The last meeting was cancelled due to snow so 'The Book of Dave' by Will Self is held over until the next meeting on Monday, 8th January.

New Horizons: "We were a large and happy bunch that gathered to enjoy refreshments mulled wine, mince pies and lots of festive cheer at our December meeting."

Santa season is here and on 25th December many young children will be tearing open their gifts, they believe were dropped off by Santa. The entertaining and informative Colin Oakes delighted us with a potted history of Father Christmas' origins. Amazingly, researchers from Oxford University, had just dated bone fragments, from the Basilica di San Nicola in Italy, to precisely the time, in which St Nicholas - a bishop from 4th century Turkey - is thought to have died. Colin impressed on us the importance of Father Christmas always staying in character, doing his research, being able to field difficult questions and never disappointing the children. This Santa is obviously a very conscientious and caring Father Christmas - which explains why he has been asked to return to his grotto for the last eighteen years!

Next meeting: Wednesday, 3rd January at 2.30pm in Watlington Sports Pavilion. A talk by Jane Stubbs on *The Lives Of Victorian Women*. An illustrated and amusing talk "Crinolines, corsets and mangles" on how slowly women's lives evolved, during the reign of Queen Victoria. History coming vividly alive. What a fascinating way to start the new year. Register your interest on the list available, so that we can gauge refreshments needed. (£5 including refreshments).

Theatre Group: All Theatre goers please add your name to the Theatre list outings next to our notice board if you are interested in any of the productions.

- Friday, 9th February at 7.30-8pm Comedian Ginny Davis Talks on **Crime & Punishment** in Tetsworth Village Hall.
- Thursday, 22nd March 2.30pm **Strangers on a Train** at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre.
- Wednesday, 9th May 2.30pm **Beautiful** - The Carole King Musical, at New Theatre Oxford.

Dabbling in Art Group: is enjoying its winter break. Those wishing to join the new group starting in March, should contact Jane Pawlyn.