

Next Speaker Meeting: on 19th March **Jeff Evans** will be talking about 'The Questionable History of the TV Quiz'

Thames Valley Network: The last meeting of representatives from the forty-seven member u3as earlier this month heard a presentation about future plans for the u3a movement across the country. If passed at the AGM in the autumn, this will not directly affect the running of individual u3as but will allow them a much louder voice in the governance structure of the whole u3a. More details are on page 3 and on the u3a website. Meanwhile TVN continues to run interesting and varied lectures on Zoom many of which are free to join and others cost just a pound or two. Do have a look on the website to see what is on offer in the next few weeks. www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk



Lunch Group: We had a very enjoyable lunch at the Red Lion in Chalgrove on 23rd January with fifteen members gathered together in their back room. We had the full choice from the menu and were, as always, looked after very well.

The next lunch will be on **Tuesday, 26th March** at the Coach and Horses, Chiselhampton, OX44 7UX. Please sign up on the sheet by the Notice Board if you would like to join us and include your email address so that we can send out a reminder. The organiser is Judith Pernette judith.pernette@btinternet.com 01844 281270 / 07711 566987

Morning Art Group: This season so far has been fun, with interesting results, especially when trying to draw each other! We still have one vacancy if you want to join the fun. We meet in Pyrton Village Hall every Thursday in term-time. Please contact Annette on 01491 614756 if you are interested.

Bridge Group: This group meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 10.30 to 12.30. If you are interested in joining, please contact the group convenor: Berly Brown at bkb@tinyworld.co.uk or 01491 613251



<https://u3asites.org.uk/ridgeway>

Registered Charity number 120292

Change of Editor: Guess what? Me again! The good news is that Peter is making an excellent recovery but is not yet quite ready to take on new projects, so I'm back for another month.

New members: Richard Sibly and Rosemary Taylor have joined recently, please make them feel welcome when you meet. It is not always easy to find one's way in a crowd of strangers.

Coffee & Chat: this month will be on Friday, 23rd at the Spire and Spoke in Hill Road, Watlington at 11.00am. Our usual, table has been reserved for us downstairs and we can now see the attractive staircase leading up to the large, newly opened upstairs seating area.



Local History Group: The next meeting will be a talk on the adventurous life of **Rupert of the Rhine** by Margaret Peach, including his links to the Civil War locally. This will be on Wednesday, 21st February in the West Room, Old School Place, Watlington. The talk will start at 2.30pm, followed by tea, for a cost of £3 payable at the door. If you would like to join us, please let our group convenor know (to ensure there is enough cake!):

Sue Carlyle, sue.bill.carlyle@gmail.com or 01491 614857.

Red Lion Book Group: This month we discussed "The Uncommon Reader", Alan Bennett's classic story about Queen Elizabeth II. In the story the Queen drifts accidentally into reading when her corgis stray into a mobile library parked at Buckingham Palace. She reads widely and intelligently, which naturally changes her world view. She comes to question the prescribed order of the world and loses patience with much that she has to do. In short, her reading is subversive. The consequence is, of course, surprising, mildly shocking and very funny.

Writing Group: This group meets in members' houses, usually in Watlington. The next meeting is on Tuesday, March 5th at 2.30pm. The topic for this month is 'Parking Cars' which should open a wide variety of choice for potential writers and scribblers. Why not have a go? Group convenor, Carol Nall – carolmarynall@gmail.com 01491 612842

January speaker: We were privileged in January to have Joanna Bogle give us her talk on Sue Ryder. She gave a magnificent presentation, without slides but freely from memory, talking at length on Sue Ryder's amazing life.



Sue Ryder became a household name in the UK in the 1950s thanks to the Homes she founded and the help she gave to survivors of the concentration camps, the disabled and anyone in need of long-term care whom she brought to Britain. This work expanded to people living in Britain and was funded by various methods and in no small part by the well

Sue Ryder CMG OBE known high street charity shops, which still operate today under her name. However, her full story involves so much more – service with SOE during World War 2, prison visiting in Germany in the immediate post-war years, long-haul relief work in countries all around the world and a life driven by a commitment to care for those in need. Her life is a story of courage, dedication and adventure which Joanna related to us with enthusiasm. Sue Ryder travelled to many countries, establishing homes, hospitals and initiatives to support the sick and disabled. In 1959 Sue Ryder married Leonard Cheshire, a pilot, who had established the Cheshire Homes using his RAF pension. They married in India where Leonard started a Leper Colony, where they even spent their honeymoon. They made their home in the Suffolk village of Cavendish where Sue was brought up. They lived austere, even frugally and working extremely hard. Both spent much of the year away visiting humanitarian projects around the world. Leonard was made a life peer in 1991 as Baron Cheshire. Sue was made a Member of the House of Lords and took 'Warsaw' as her special place, becoming Lady Ryder of Warsaw, and then Baroness Cheshire. Leonard Cheshire died in July 1992 aged 74 and is buried in the graveyard at St Mary's Church in Cavendish. Sue Ryder was interred in the same grave after her death in 2000 aged 76.

Joanna Bogle is an author and the first to write the full account of Sue Ryder's life in one publication 'A Life Lived for Others'. It was initiated by the Lady Ryder of Warsaw Memorial Trust to mark the centenary in 2024 of Sue Ryder's birth. This is a fabulous read on an amazing person. Our thanks went to Joanna for bringing Sue Ryder's life to our attention, so vividly and with such enthusiasm. This is a brief synopsis of her talk, in the hope that you will want to learn more.

Annette's full report is on the website and will be in the Link & Watlington Times.

The future of the u3a movement: Many u3as, including our own, are finding it increasingly difficult to find members willing to volunteer to help with organisation. This goes right across the board from making the tea at Speaker Meetings to serving as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Third Age Trust. Like so much in the modern world, we are increasingly subject to rules and regulations varying from financial constraints to health and safety. There are about 1040 u3as across the UK from Shetland to Jersey and they are all different and have different concerns. However, the shortage of volunteers seems to be universal. It also means that those members who are prepared to take on the role of a Regional Trustee, have what amounts to a full-time job. Yes, we do have paid staff in the u3a office in London but they equate to about twenty full-time employees looking after a membership of around 450,000. Is it any wonder that members don't always get their questions answered by return? However, we do have a plan and it is currently in a consultation phase where every member has the chance to make comments or ask questions. The project is called **Fit for the Future** and is an attempt to bring our forty year old organisation up to date and ready to continue to prosper in a changing world. Don't worry, if these plans are approved and adopted at the next AGM in the autumn, they will not affect the running of individual u3as in any way. But they will change the way in which the national movement is governed, splitting responsibility between a Board and a Council, thereby lightening the load on Trustees. The split will also give u3as a much greater chance to make their voices heard when it comes to changing policy documents or guidelines or solving problems. If you are interested and would like to hear more details, there is a SE Region meeting on Zoom at 2.30pm on Monday 4th March to which everyone is welcome. Liz Thackray, the chair of the Trust will be there to answer questions and there will be a short presentation on the whole project. Just click on this link or type it in. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83306616332> There is also a video of the presentation on www.u3a.org.uk Plus a designated email address for any questions and / or comments you may have is available on governance@u3a.org.uk or just phone me (Susie) on 07966 132738.

A very long time ago a committee considering calendars had eventually decided that a year should be divided into 365 segments but couldn't agree on the name - finally they had to call it a day.