

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

The next lunch will be on **Tuesday, 26th March** at the Coach and Horses, Chiselhampton, OX44 7UX. As there will be more than 10 of us, we will need to order in advance. If you would like to join us, please sign up on the sheet by the Notice Board and also peruse the menu and

<https://u3asites.org.uk/ridgeway>
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make your selection. 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

Writing Group

We meet at 2.30 on the first Tuesday of each month. At present, we urgently need new members. The writing is purely for fun, so anybody can have a go. If at all interested, please contact the group leader - Carol Nall 01491 612842, 07792 225461, carolmarynall@gmail.com



Ridgeway u3a

Newsletter March 2024

Issue No 172

Coffee & Chat



This month will be on Friday, 29th March, which is Good Friday, at the Spire and Spoke in Hill Road, Watlington at 11.00am, where our usual table has been reserved for us

Local History Group

In February Margaret Peach gave us a fascinating and inspiring talk, with lots of interesting illustrations, on Prince Rupert of the Rhine and his faithful dog, which was much enjoyed by everyone. This month she will be talking about "Civil War Royalist Families - who were these people?" This will be on Wednesday, 20th March 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.

Advance Notice: On 10th April (a week earlier than usual) we will be visiting Thame Church for a guided tour and talk, followed by tea in a local café.

Red Lion Book group

This month we read Tin Man
by Sarah Winman.

A tale of two lives which started with more promise than it had at the end. Ellis and Michael are twelve when they first become friends, and for a long time it is just the two of them,

cycling the streets of Oxford, teaching themselves how to swim, discovering poetry, and dodging the fists of an overbearing father. And then one day this closest of friendships grows into something more. But then we fast forward a decade or so, to find that Ellis is married to Annie, and Michael is nowhere in sight. Which leads to the question, what happened in the years between?

It deals with not only the fluid nature of their love and friendships but confronts the reader with the reality of what it meant to be gay, as the Aids epidemic tore the gay community apart.

The story is based in the Oxford area and the title Tin Man refers to Ellis who works at the car factory at Cowley. If you know the area well then it will add another dimension for you.

Sensitively written and tender in places it describes what it's like for Ellis who should have been an artist, but who works in the car factory. Michael is a writer but seems always to be destined to settle for less than the love he deserves and yearns for.

Added into the mix is sweet, caring Annie, whose story threads itself through Michael and Ellis's relationship.

Spoiler alert: not everyone has a happy ending. The story is about love and friendship and the very thin line that divides the two. It generated a lot of discussion among the Group, with strong feelings on both sides, but most had mixed feelings about it.

Monday Book Club

At their meeting on 11 March, the members of the Monday Book Club had a lively discussion about 'Mum and Dad' by Joanna Trollope. In comparison with some of the books that the group have read recently, the consensus was that the story, family characters, and dynamics between them were well drawn and portrayed. However, some of the group felt that the ending was perhaps a bit too neat and therefore lacked credibility. Other books by Joanna Trollope, particularly *The Rector's Wife* and *The Choir*, were recommended to members of the Group who had not read them.



Andy Thomas shows a photo of 'flying saucers'

The Truth is Out There

Devotees of the classic 1990s sci-fi series *The X Files* may not have been surprised to learn from Andy Thomas's recent talk on *Unexplained Mysteries and Cover-ups* that the majority of the storylines were based to some extent on allegedly actual paranormal phenomena. This was just one of the topics which Andy covered in an intriguing and fascinating talk to U3A members on 20 February. The origins of geometrically precise crop

circles, animal sightings such as Big Foot and the Loch Ness monster and the psychic phenomena of ghosts and poltergeists also featured in Andy's talk which challenged us to look at news of such events with a fresh eye and an open mind! As Shakespeare almost put it "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy".

April's talk by Gordon Rogers on **The Sky at Night** promises to be just as fascinating. An episode of **Patrick Moore's** iconic TV programme was filmed at Gordon's Long Crendon observatory back in 2001. Please join us on **Tuesday 16 April at 2.30 at St Leonard's Church** to find out more – non-members (£4 fee) and members (free) are welcome. Refreshments will be served following the talk.