

Learn, Laugh, Live

Next meeting at MVH 18th October 2023

Meeting starts at 10.15 am, doors open 9.30 am

Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road, Mountnessing CM15 0UG

Chair:	Gill Bitschiné	229313	gillu3a@btinternet.com
Vice Chair:	Sue Conley	224950	sjconley21@yahoo.com
Newsletter:	Sue Conley	"	"
Treasurer:	Anne Rudkins	659476	anagram@uwclub.net
Secretary:	Diana Phillipson	811389	diron5942@gmail.com
Social sec:	Sue Stevens	231072	sueat63hhl@yahoo.co.uk
Membership:	Jean Williams	228653	Shenfieldu3amembership@outlook.com
Speakers' secretary:	Jen Shipley	655407	shipojen@gmail.com
Groups coordinator:	Michael Bitschiné	229313	michael.bitschine@btinternet.com

From the chair



TRADERS & COMPANY RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing list is currently being updated by Joy Chambers and anybody who would like to recommend a trader or company should contact her with the trader's details, including a name and phone number. You can do this either by email, putting **U3A TRADERS** in the subject line or call her and, when prompted by the security system, mention you are from U3A so she can recognise your name. Her contact details are email: joychambers@talktalk.net or tel 01277 216727. Only recommend someone if you are happy for your name and telephone number to appear on the list so that members can call to discuss your experience.

LOST PROPERTY

Did you leave a Lady's black jacket at last month's meeting? It has a pink and black lining. See me or a committee member if it is yours.

PENCIL IN THE DATE

We will be having our annual u3a lunch at Bentley Golf Club on Wednesday, 21st February 2024. Further details on menu and how to sign up will be put in next month's newsletter.

WARLEY u3a TALK

Stand and deliver!

Were pistols only used in the Wild West or by Dick Turpin? In our talk we will be learning that it was not the case with personal pistols being accepted as part of life for many people - men and women - up to recent times. With the fake news and the myths of the past being overturned, we will be learning about some of the different gun types and who really used them.

Of course, nowadays guns are tightly controlled - what led to that change in the law and how society's views of guns changed with time.

Karl Afteni is an engaging speaker and his illustrated talk promises to be insightful for all of us.

The talk will be in the upstairs room at Eagle Hall (near the old Ford HQ) CM13 3BH starting at 2pm on Monday 11th December.

There will be a small charge of £3 to cover the hire of the room and refreshments, please let me know if you intend to come along so I can buy enough biscuits!

Contact John on u3awarleyjohn@gmail.com

NEWSLETTERS

are available in Shenfield, Brentwood & Ingatestone libraries, from the weekend after the general meeting, but you may have to ask for them

The Craft Group are having a table at our November meeting with plenty of Christmas items for sale – cash only please.

TODAY'S SPEAKER

October - Andy Thomas – Lewes, the Bonfire capital of the World

FUTURE TALKS

November- Jeff Page - Bazalgotte -Sewers of London

December - Rumatica Ukelele Band

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANCIENT HISTORY

Jean Honour ☎ 229601

We are continuing our research into the earliest forms of writing. As we have already discovered true writing developed widely across the Middle East. The relationships between the various kingdoms of the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age in the region needed a form of writing in order to trade widely and spread their laws and ideas . Trade was also widespread and needed recognisable forms of accounting for goods.

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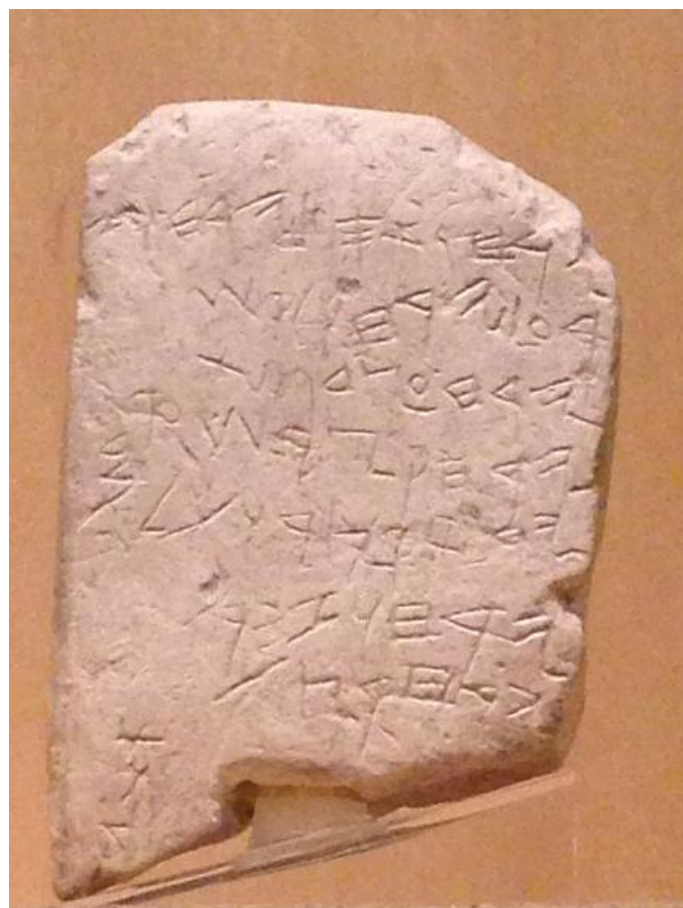
Phoenician Alphabet

It was the Phoenicians, the great traders across the Middle East and the Mediterranean from at least 2000 B.C, who spread their language and a new

alphabet. They were of Canaanite heritage. Their script proved more useful as it was linear (although read from right to left) and consisted of just 22 consonants. Each letter represented just one sound and symbol and was vastly simpler to use compared with numerous cuneiform symbols or Egyptian hieroglyphics. Deciphered by a Frenchman in 1758 it was thought to be a development from Egyptian hieroglyphics.

However, more recent studies have shown that it is more closely related to the Middle Eastern kingdoms of the period and indeed remained in use in North Africa well into the 6th Century A.D. It was extensively used from approximately 1050 B.C.

We will go on to understand how the Greek alphabet was derived from the Phoenician. Other later scripts which derived similarly include early Hebrew, Cyrillic and Armenian.



Agricultural Calendar

A very early tablet dated to the reign of King Solomon of the Bible (c. 967 - 931 B.C) appears to be an agricultural calendar and reads

Two months of harvesting
Two months of sowing
Two months late planting
A month cutting flax.

ART: ADVANCED WATERCOLOUR

Sue Conley ☎ 224950
Tuesdays 9.30 – 12.30

Some members of the group went to “An Evening with local Artists”, at the Bardswell Social Club, this month. This included a presentation on watercolour by James Merriott, a local professional painter, plus exhibits of some local artists work.

Hopefully James will be coming to one of our sessions to give us a demonstration of his techniques and the products he uses. Non artists probably don't realise what a huge range of products are available today, including the types, of paper which are dramatically different in their finish, weight [thickness] and material content.

ART : LOOKING AT ART

Maurice Norman ☎ 220289

LOOKING AT ART IS LOOKING FOR MORE MEMBERS!

What is this? We are a small group of enthusiastic art appreciation/art lovers who love to learn more about why and how artists paint what they did – and why they became famous.

We usually meet once a month and take it in turns to find out about an artist, showing examples of their work and generally talking about art. We would recommend you finding books on art from the Library who are happy to loan books for up to three months.

ASTRONOMY

Geoff Towler ☎ 262139

The next meeting will be by ZOOM ON Tuesday 14th November at 1.45 for a 2pm start.

BIRDWATCHING

Michael Bitschine ☎ 229313

Michael.bitschine@btinternet.com

As the weather is getting chillier, there will be no Birdwatching trips until April. Please keep an eye out for details of the start of next year's trips in this newsletter.

BOOK GROUP 1

Diana Phillipson ☎ 811389

'The Flat Share' by Beth O'Leary was one of our recent reads. There are two main characters, Leon and Tiffy. Leon has a flat and needs a flatmate. Tiffy needs a flat, but can't afford much rent. They agree to share Leon's flat, but it only has one bedroom. The solution is that Leon is a nurse permanently on night duty and therefore won't need the bed in the flat, and Tiffy can sleep in the bed and leave the flat in the morning to go to work. At the weekend Leon stays with his girlfriend, leaving the flat free for Tiffy to use. Any communication is by post it notes. It would seem that they should never meet each other but inevitably they do meet by accident and the real story unfolds. There is a coercive boyfriend, a fragile relationship between Leon and his girlfriend, a brother in prison, and a host of good friends. Our group thought the book was probably written for a younger age group than ourselves, though the cost of renting property was something we found very relevant. We also liked the use made of recycled clothing, and the part of the story where an unexpected source of knitwear gave one character an income equally totally unexpected.

We next meet on Tuesday, 17 October , and then on Tuesday, 21 November, both at 11.00am., usual venue.

BOOK GROUP 2

Mary Clemow ☎ 211403

CANASTA

Michael Bitschine ☎ 229313

Canasta players meet at St John's Hall, Mountnessing on the first Friday of the month at 2.15 pm (note slightly later start time). All are

welcome for two hours of canasta and light refreshments. Tuition given if necessary.

COUNTRY HIKES

CRAFT GROUP

Brenda Major ☎ 220441

Host: Maria Buckley

Some of the craft group tackled macrame at our session and a jolly good job they made of it too. Others filed and painted their dishes and ornaments made on the previous month and they too are looking good. One of the members repaired some ornaments she brought from home and then proceeded to make some air dry clay birds. A very interesting afternoon especially as a chocolate cake was brought for us to enjoy!

Please peruse our stall at the November meeting and please remember your cash for the Christmas goodies all in aid of our charity 'Alzheimer's Society'

CROQUET GROUP

Peter Ely ☎ 211738

DISCUSSION GROUP

Elma Rieckenberg ☎ 211469

FRENCH: BRUSH UP YOUR FRENCH

Andrew Lyner ☎ 07941887655 lyner@mac.com

FRENCH INTERMEDIATE

Jean Honour ☎ 229601

GARDEN GROUP & VISITS

HANDBELLS

David Brice ☎ 01277 221422

davidpbrice@aol.com

If you are interested, please call or email me, details above.

HISTORY

David Salvatore ☎ 224952

Mob: 07767 243334

David.Salvatore@btconnect.com

The title of Diana's talk this month was '**Regency Britain - The reality behind the glamour**'. Diana confessed that, prior to her research, her impression of late Georgian society had come

largely from the novels of Jane Austen but, as she was then about to reveal to us, the Regency period, which ran from 1811 to 1820, was far more grim than indicated by the idealised portrayals in those novels.

The first five years were taken up with the Napoleonic wars that almost bankrupted the country. The aristocracy and landed gentry had been taxed to the hilt to fund the war but in 1816 the tax on property was abolished and replaced with a purchase tax on goods. This had a catastrophic effect on the lives of the working population as the goods most affected were basic foodstuffs, beer and coal.

To recoup the losses they had incurred during the war the landowners kept the price of basic foods artificially high. The '*Corn Laws*' of 1815 banned the importing of cheaper wheat until the local price had reached a certain level and so they kept it just below that. They were also enclosing land that had previously been used by everyone to graze their animals or mow for fodder, making it even more difficult for people in rural areas to be self-sufficient.

Diana gave us an insight into the Parliamentary system at that time which only represented the interests of the landowning section of the population as a person had to own property or pay certain taxes in order to vote. The constituencies were very different from ours today. MPs were elected just to represent certain areas, many of which had existed since medieval times. There was no attempt to reflect the size of the population and some of these now had very few, if any, resident voters, the most famous being Old Sarum. This was the original site of the city of Salisbury which had been abandoned in the 12th century but still had the right to have 2 MPs whereas the rapidly growing cities like Manchester and Leeds had no MPs at all. The 'lower orders' of society therefore had no representation in Parliament.

The population of Britain doubled between 1751 and 1821 and the growth of the urban areas disrupted the traditional way of doing things. Before, most people lived in small villages where

the rich felt some sense of responsibility for their workers and poorer neighbours. There were laws guaranteeing hours of work and rates of pay but these were swept away in the Regency years. Because the growing numbers of disenfranchised workers had no say in how their lives were governed, demand for change was growing in the large urban areas. So, underneath the glamour of the polite society depicted by Jane Austen, a storm was brewing.

There were two prevailing attitudes to poverty, one was that it was a natural condition ordained by God (hadn't Christ said that "*the poor will always be with you*"?) and the other, put forward by the economist, Thomas Malthus, was that the population increase would lead to mass starvation as agricultural production wouldn't be able to keep up. The poor would therefore die in large numbers and the population would decline thus bringing things back into balance! There was also a general feeling that it was wrong to give money to the poor as they would only waste it.

Child labour had been a regular feature of life in the countryside for centuries. However, as more families moved to the cities, dangerous tasks such as clearing debris from under weaving machines and sending children as young as 6 up the narrow chimneys of the rich to clean them became ways for a family to earn desperately needed money. Girls of 10 or 11 were sent off into service which meant the family had one less mouth to feed and in the North and Midlands young children were working down the mines. Families might try to supplement their meagre diet by poaching despite the fact that this could lead to imprisonment or even transportation, a penalty that could also apply to even minor cases of theft.

The weavers of Lancashire and Yorkshire were particularly hard hit. By 1812 it was estimated that there were around 200,000 handloom weavers in Britain. Families were living on oatmeal porridge and stale bread (bakers had been advised to sell only stale bread because the effort of chewing it would make people feel they had eaten more than they really had) and proteins like meat, butter, milk

or cheese were unaffordable luxuries. The increased use of machinery in the mills had made it possible for employers to use unskilled workers at lower rates of pay. The only way that workers could protest was to withdraw their labour but Trade Unions were forbidden and any demonstration in favour of economic or political change was against the law.

There were many incidents where weaving looms and other machinery was smashed and by 1817 the Government realised this was taking on a more organised look. The destroying of machinery became a capital offence, punishable by death rather than transportation, but protests for reform continued. The most famous of these, at St Peter's Fields in Manchester in August, 1819, was to become known as the '*Peterloo Massacre*'. A gathering of around 60,000 mostly peaceful men, women and children were forcibly dispersed by the local militia resulting in 15 killed and 600 injured.

What could have potentially become the most serious event was the '*Cato Street Conspiracy*' where a group called the Spencean Philanthropists plotted to assassinate the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in the hope of starting a revolution. However, there was a Government spy amongst the conspirators and they were intercepted by the police and the five leaders were executed at Newgate Prison on May Day, 1820.

The most lasting impact of the Cato Street incident was that the Government and the upper classes began to realise how serious the situation had become for the poor people of the country and attitudes began to change, although the '*Corn Laws*' weren't repealed until 1846.

Diana said she could have elaborated a lot more on the less appealing aspects of life in Regency Britain but felt that would have made our afternoon far too depressing!

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday, November 1st** at the usual place and time - St John's Hall at 3:00 p.m.

HISTORY 2

Tony Holmes: Convenor ☎ 01277 414200

Teresa Ravenscroft: Co-ordinator ☎ 07774 830346
teresaravenscroft128@gmail.com

ITALIAN

Marie Wright ☎ 220931

Jeanette Fossey jeanettefossey@yahoo.co.uk

LONDON WALKS

Melvyn Cardy ☎ 229137 or 07818 463855

LUNCH CLUB

Kae Freeman ☎ 230749

LUNCHEON GROUP

Michael Bitschiné ☎ 229313

Carol Holder ☎ 220340

Rita Harries ☎ 07733 098951

We plan to visit The Harvard Inn Stock on Wednesday 1st November at 12pm for our next meal. The full address is High Street Stock CM4 9BJ. At our next meeting please reserve a place and make choices from the menu that will be available. The Harvard needs us to pre- order and to give them the details one week prior to our visit. For any queries please ring Rita Harries.

SUNDAY LUNCH CLUB

Maria Buckley ☎ 07758 252260

EVENING DINING

Sandra Nolle sandra@nolle.co.uk

This group meets on the second Thursday of the month and aim to have a group of 10 to 12 people who very much enjoy eating out socially in good company. If you think this might interest you, then please get your name on our waiting list!

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Barrie Cook ☎ 218511

PLAY READING

Joan Williams ☎ 203490

Host: Sue Conley ☎ 224950

This month we read a double bill by Agatha Christie featuring Hercule Poirot. In 'The Wasp's Nest' Poirot comes between a bitter triangle of lovers to prevent a sinister murder before it takes place. In 'The Yellow Iris' a distressed phone call from a

mystery woman brings Hercule Poirot to the hotel Jardin des Cygnes, where a man commemorates the four-year anniversary of his wife's sudden death - a death under very suspicious circumstances that Poirot himself witnessed. Gathered is everyone present on that fateful night and now Poirot must find a killer in the midst, before they strike again. Our next meeting is on Monday, 6th November at 2.00pm. Please note we will meet at Mary's.

POETRY GROUP

Joy Harding ☎ 260316

Host: Sue Conley ☎ 224950

The themes for 2023 are:

October - Flight/Birds

November – World

December – Relationship

RUSSIAN

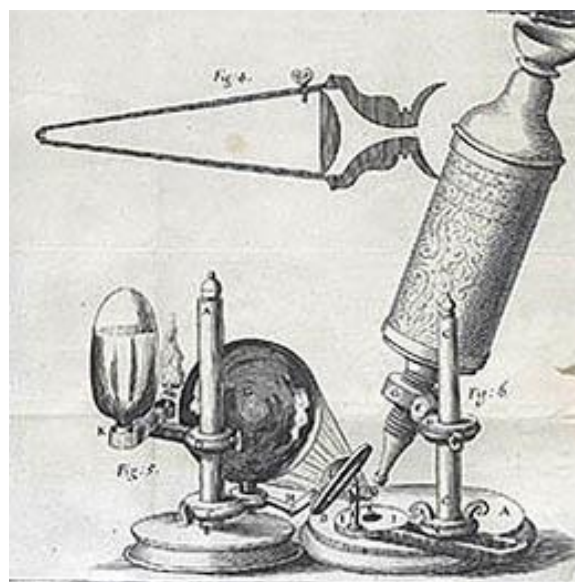
Strachan Heppel ☎ 353418

Resource: Tony Holmes & John Metcalfe

SCIENCE 1 & 2

Ron Phillipson ☎ 811389

In October we traced the history of the development of ways of studying very small objects. In the seventeenth century Robert Hooke used an early microscope [shown below] to study the features of tiny organisms such as fleas. He published his results in "Micrographia", which proved to be a very successful book. Reduction in size increases the surface area to volume ratio, which has significant effects.



Megaphragma, a minute wasp five to ten times smaller than a flea, has paddle-like wings and appears to swim through the air. Titanium ground into small particles burns readily in a flame whereas a solid piece of the metal doesn't. Animal cells are all about the same size (1/10th to 1/100th mm) whether the creature is very large or very small. This is because cells need a supply of nutrients through their walls and their size is the optimal compromise between maximum surface area and minimum size to contain all the necessary components for life.



Hooke's illustration of a flea from 'Micrographia'.

Even the most modern microscope of the type Robert Hooke used is unsuitable for objects smaller than about 1/1,000th mm because this is the region of the wavelength of light.



Image of a flea using an electron microscope.

The development of the electron microscope, which uses an electron beam instead of light, enabled objects hundreds to thousands of times smaller to be studied.

The use of X-rays, which have a very much shorter wavelength than light, led to the very useful technique of X-ray crystallography. In the 1930's and 1940's Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin was very interested in this subject and after 4 years of work was able to determine the structure of penicillin. This was an extremely valuable discovery which led to the development of a range of antibiotics. Similarly, the diligent X-ray crystallography work of Rosalind Franklin led to the discovery of the structure of DNA. In order to examine even smaller objects with the electron microscope, the problem of spherical aberration caused blurred images as the magnification was increased. A group of German and American scientists, after many years of work, eventually overcame this with a complex array of magnets. This enabled images of individual atoms to be seen on screens, an amazing achievement.

We then went on to discuss what is expected to be the first CRISPR gene-editing technique to be approved for human use by regulators in the US, UK and Europe. A small trial using this method has shown success in treating sickle cell disease, a serious crippling condition. The disease is caused by two copies (one from each parent) of a mutant gene. (Interestingly, a single copy of the gene seems to confer a useful level of immunity to malaria infection without causing sickle cell disease.) A double dose of the gene results in deformed red blood cells. These tend to clump giving obstructions in blood vessels which cause severe pain and damage to various organs. It had been noticed that some people with two defective genes didn't become ill and this was found to be due to the unusual continued production of fetal haemoglobin into childhood and adult life. The method of treatment for sickle cell disease therefore involved extracting red blood stem cells from the patient. CRISPR technology was used to delete the "off switch" for fetal haemoglobin

production, so it would restart. Chemotherapy was then used to kill the unmodified blood stem cells in the patient's bone marrow. Finally the gene-edited cells were put back into the patient. Of those treated who were followed up long enough to assess the results 16 out of 17 have remained free of pain for at least a year. Much work and refinement of CRISPR techniques is needed in the future but the potential for relieving suffering from diseases caused by gene mutations is huge.

Our next meeting will be :- Tuesday 7th November, at 2.00pm.

SCRABBLE

Ruth Sprittles: ☎ 225637

We are a friendly group and would love a few more people to join us, please ring me on the number above if you are interested.

SHAKESPEARE 1

Host: Judith Priddle ☎ 07901 553159

We are starting Henry IV part 1.



SHAKESPEARE 2

Jill Hawkes jillchawkes@gmail.com

We meet on the second Tuesday of each month.

SINGING

Co-ordinator: Nigel Bennett ☎ 216752 Mobile: 07752 660896 email: nigel.bennett99@gmail.com

Admin: Maureen Stuttard ☎ 353119

We really try and sing something for everyone – just come and suggest it, and we try and find it in

singable form! And we are looking for members. Although we usually meet twice a month, most of our members only come to one of the two meetings. You don't have to be able to read music, and we don't audition. All we ask is that you enjoy music and feel like having a sing.

Did you know that research has shown that singing is the most uplifting activity we can do? I haven't made that up – it really is! So come and join us!

SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Maria Buckley 07758 252260

SPANISH 1

Andy Burton ☎ 228077 abmaj6@hotmail.com

SPANISH 2

Maureen Deller ☎ 07801 071357

mofieldhouse@hotmail.com

Thursday morning. The group is from 10:15 till 11:45. We meet every week. I have spaces for 2 more.

THEATRE GROUP 2

Maria Buckley ☎ 07758 252260

mariabuckley48@gmail.com

We are booked to see **Private Lives** on 2nd November at 2.30pm at the Ambassadors Theatre (**I have 2 spare tickets @ £55 each**). In January we are booked to see **HAMNET** on 4th January at 2.30pm at The Garrick Theatre (**I have 1 spare ticket @ £73.50**) and in February we are going to see **The Motive and The Cue** on 1st February at 2.00pm at The Noel Coward Theatre (**I have 2 spare tickets for this production @ £50 each**).

We are also looking at booking tickets for **Long Day's Journey into Night - April** (date and price [£60] to be confirmed).

If anyone is interested in any of the above, please give me a ring.

NEWSLETTER

Entries emailed to Gill Bitschine by Friday 10th November at the latest.