

# Newsletter January 2024

## AGM and January meeting

Around 170 people attended the AGM.

Carmen said that we now have 588 members. She thanked everyone who had contributed to the meetings, trips and groups.

The new Chairman, Vice-Chair & Groups Co-ordinator were elected unanimously.

Nigel Varnam, the new Chair, moved to Thorley Park in 1986 from East London. He worked for Essex County Youth Service for many years and took early retirement in 2012. He has been a member of Thorley U3A for ten years and plays cornet in the Town Band.

Linda Ketteridge is the new Vice-Chair. Members will remember her from her 3 years as Chair. She is Chair of the local National Trust supporters group. She had a varied career ending with 19 years working for English Heritage at Audley End.

Annie Compton is the new Groups Co-ordinator. She moved to Sawbridgeworth in 1974 and lived there until her move to Bishops Stortford in 1997. With her partner she was involved in setting up the very successful Acoustic Club in 2002 which they ran for 10 years. She started BSUS (Bishops Stortford Ukulele Society) in 2013.

After the AGM our speaker on Butterflies of Britain and Europe was Roger Gibbons .



Roger lives on the south coast of France for most of the year and has done so for the past eight years.

He is on a personal quest to see all 237 mainland species and to date he has seen 236

A keen photographer, Roger shares his butterfly images and knowledge on his own [Butterflies of France](#) website. His photos are widely published and he also gives presentations on European butterflies to UK conservation groups. He was thanked for a knowledgeable and interesting talk.

## November meeting—John Tarrow, Talliston House

Around 150 people attended the November meeting.



As an East-End boy John bought a house in Great Dunmow in 1990. Over the next 25 years he transformed the interior by creating 13 rooms with unique themes and artefacts.

He visited 27 countries, bought 750 items including a 30,000 year old block of Cornish granite. Around 138 people spent around 35,000 hours creating an amazing interior.

Each room is a moment. An example is the Old Rectory set in England on 13th October 1852.

The same approach was taken with each room:-

Phase 1— remove all internal features

Phase 2—Build new structure

Phase 3—Install furniture

Phase 4—Procure and place objects

Phase 5—Concentrate on details (this could take up to 3 years)

He moved from the house in January 2020 with the intention of handing it over to a Trust. Covid cause many cashflow issues and it is only now recovering.

He has written a number of books about the house and is now taking bookings for visits. He has committed to limiting group numbers to no more than 5.

This unique house should be on everyone's 'bucket list'

## Quiz Night

The third Quiz Night in October was another success. The 80 tickets sold out quickly to Quiz enthusiasts, who came along to the Thorley Community Centre. There were 10 teams, with the regular format of Table Rounds and Quiz Rounds. Half way through the evening, there was a break for dinner from Fish'N'Chicken.



The 5 Table rounds, worth a whopping 100 points included Brands, Cartoon Characters, Dingbats, Famous Faces, and Word Meanings, all designed with a mixture of easy, and not so easy images to identify.

The 8 Quiz Rounds included an innovative new round called Music. The PA system earned its keep with extra volume for the 13 tracks played, with 25 marks up for grabs. These included the 1959 Adam Faith hit 'What do you want?', and the intro from tracks from Gerry and the Pacemakers, Abba, and Hot Chocolate. The tracks spanned four decades, the 50s to the 80s. The average score was 20 which shows our love of pop music over the years.

Other rounds included the Platinum Jubilee, the 1950s and even the 2010s. Jokers were played to double your points for a round were used. Not surprisingly, many teams played it on the Music round.

The result was close with 4 teams within 4 points of each other. The winning team was Table 9, who collected their prizes of bottles of wine from Carmen.

Many thanks to Dave & Anne Willett and Ken & Frances Blethyn. Thanks also to the people who helped to set up the tables and chairs and pack away the hall after, order and distribute the food, and organise the teams.

Winners



Also-rans





## Christmas Lunch



Our third Christmas lunch at Great Hadham Golf Club was another success. 115 members enjoyed the occasion, a steady increase in numbers over the past two years.

A table plan ensured that everyone could sit with their friends. On each table were place names and jokes, and the all important reminder of what people had ordered.

A three course lunch was served. A choice of starters and a choice of mains including roast turkey, salmon-en-croute and vegan/vegetarian options. Dessert included berry roulade. And if that wasn't enough, there was coffee and mince pies as well.

The service and the food were very good as usual. Everybody had an enjoyable time, especially the raffle winners who took home prizes including a carvery dinner at the golf club, a M&S Voucher, chocs, fizz and wine.

*Dave Willett*

Thanks to Carmen for the photos (more on next page)









## Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!

The Wednesday French Conversation Class held its now-traditional lunch at the home of tutor Catherine Blunderfield.

Everyone contributed to the menu of French wine, quiche, salade, fromage, and baguette, followed by a stunning selection of desserts – home-made chocolate bûche de Noël, mince pies, fruit platter and a tiramisu created by our Italian classmate Tina.



## Line dancing line-up

Around 30 members have signed up to the new Line Dancing class, run by tutor Helen Nicholls.

Helen, who is an experienced teacher, is offering a beginner's class with a varied style of line dance – some traditional and some more up to date styles which have a Latin theme.

Her classes are on Fridays at the Bishop's Park Community Centre, at 11.45am. Cost is £5 per session. More details on our website or contact [helennichollsww@hotmail.com](mailto:helennichollsww@hotmail.com), 07957 634461.



## Singing to help the Food Bank

Members of the U3A Singers got together to sing in Jackson Square in mid-December, raising £172.20 from the Christmas shoppers to donate to the Bishop's Stortford Food Bank.

Standing outside the Poundland store was chilly, so the singers sported Christmas jumpers and warm coats as well as Santa hats, reindeer antlers and other seasonal headgear.

It was especially heart-warming that towards the end of the session the singers – all past retirement age, of course! – were joined by nine young teenagers. It started with just one boy, then several other boys and girls joined in with a rousing rendition of 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas'.





## Concert success for the choir

Around 80 people attended the U3A Singers' Christmas concert at the Hub in Apton Road at the beginning of December. It was a really enjoyable start to the festivities with lots of songs from the choir, plus several opportunities for the audience to join in – which they did with gusto!

Everyone enjoyed a glass of wine and snacks in the interval and, as always, the raffle was very popular.

The choir was led by its director Sue Hickman and accompanied by pianist Susie Savage in a programme that included popular music by the likes of Elvis and Madness, as well as some classics (Offenbach & Purcell), gospel and even a sea shanty... plus, of course, lots of Christmas songs

It was also the first occasion when the choir members wore their new uniforms. They looked both elegant and seasonal in their black outfits with new red scarves decorated with musical motifs.

For the first time the choir now includes a male singer, Steve Howe, who looked smart in his black outfit with red tie, handkerchief and cufflinks.

More male and female singers would be very welcome and next year's programme will include both songs from musicals and some 1960s/70s hits.

If you would like to join in the fun, email Carmen Konopka at

[carmen.konopka@btopenworld.com](mailto:carmen.konopka@btopenworld.com) or come along to one of the choir sessions. They take place every week at 1.45pm for 2.00pm at the Havers Lane Community Centre and will begin again on January 11th





## Trip to Moulin Rouge

Sylvia Poole organised a trip to Moulin Rouge on November 1st.

Everyone enjoyed the wonderful scenery around the Piccadilly Theatre.

They are all now trying to get into the various dancing postures.

Liz Happer took the photos.



## Garden Group 2

Garden Group 2 went to Langthorn's Plantery, Great Dunmow in October for a private visit round the Gardens of owner Ed Cannon's parents.

Ed Guided us round this rambling garden started in 1977 from grassland. He explained in detail about the plants and shrubs on show ( Ed is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about all aspects of gardening)

The Group were able to buy plants from the Nursery at the end of the tour





## Thorley U3A Committee



Nigel  
Varnam  
Chair



Linda Ketteridge  
Vice-Chair



Ken Blethyn  
Treasurer



Annie Compton  
Groups  
Co-ordinator



John Bailey  
Asst Treasurer



Tom McNeeney  
EDI Officer



Anne Willett  
Events organiser  
& Membership  
Co-ordinator



Pam Archer  
Business  
Secretary



David Willett  
Communications  
Co-ordinator



Linda Maxwell  
Speaker  
Co-ordinator