

Editorial



Hello everyone! Aah August is amongst us, as we say goodbye to a damp and soggy July and the Australian cricket team. I hear that the jet stream which brought such high temperatures to the Med last month is heading north to the UK bringing (thankfully) more bearable temperatures to us by the end of next week (just call me Wincey Willis!).

I hope you enjoyed July's Newsletter. I mentioned in the accompanying email that this month's epistle would be a much shorter edition, and I'm a man of my word. However. I'm ALSO of the belief that we should be a membership-led organisation wherever possible. So those of you coming to the next Speaker Meeting on August the 17th will have the opportunity to complete a short questionnaire, telling us what you like and don't like about the monthly Newsletter. I've tried to set this up in digital form that I could send via email, but it became too complicated – plus I don't want to exclude those handful of members who don't *use* email.

Talking of email, can I please ask you all to inform your Group Leaders if you've changed your email address lately? For example, you may have hitherto been sharing your spouse's email address but now have your own. John – our Beacon Guru – does a great job keeping this data up to date where he can, but he can't read minds!

Before I sign off, a reader asked why I didn't give our new Chairperson's FULL name in the July Editorial. It's simply because I'm bound by Data Protection requirements. NEXT month we'll have a 'meet the committee' section to the Newsletter and (hopefully) a group photo.

Thank you from reading and very best wishes and good health to you all - Mike



Situations Vacant

I mentioned LAST month that are we are a number of people 'light' on the committee and that still remains the case. If committee life isn't for you, don't worry – we can also accommodate people who would merely prefer to work in isolation and report INTO the committee once a month. The areas where we seek help are as follows;

IT Support and Website Management

Gill and Roger currently have these areas covered, but both hope to take a step back later in the year. If you have a passion for Information Technology or you had or have 'hands on' experience in the workplace with Computer Technology, we would very much like to hear from you. Come and talk to us at the next Speaker Meeting or contact us via the website.

Furthermore, to both improve our channels of communication, and to continue to attract a newer generation of members, we are keen to exploit tools like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. To that end, we still seek a **Social Media Officer** to support the committee – do you know someone who would fit the bill?

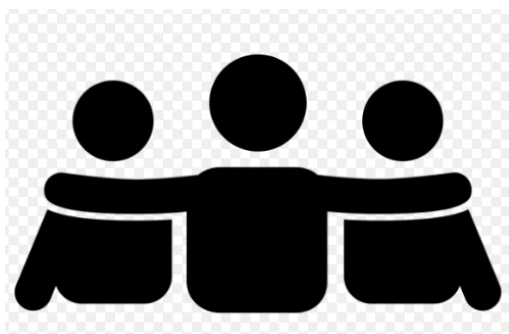
Group Co-Ordination Support

Again, this is a non-committee role. Doreen does a magnificent job reaching out and providing first line support to our 60 or so groups. In this endeavour, she leans on the likes of Jackie, Steve, Janet and others who assist at Group Meetings and New Member sessions, Doreen would dearly like more help. Is this something *you* would like to be involved in? You would be working as part of a team of very friendly people.

Programme Organiser

As I go to press, we have identified someone who may fit this role, but its at a very early stage. Corinna is stepping away from booking our many speakers for the bi-monthly Thursday sessions and has booked up as far as late 2025! Its very much a solo role answerable only to the committee, but further candidates are sought after.

Groups



The following pages are dedicated to the adventures and exploits of some of our many Groups – here's what a few of them got up to in the month of July

Longer Walking Group - Tuesday 11 July

Circular walk from Bruern Farm

Sixteen U3A walkers set off from Bruern Farm Shop & Cafe on a circular walk organised by Angela and Mark Benians. We walked past the farm accommodation carefully designed to blend into the countryside, a good example of the farm operating in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner. We observed ponds created as part of a flood management scheme before we entered Milton-under Wychwood where we saw a new flood warning system on Littlestock Brook. Rambling on through fields of wheat we stopped for coffee on the picturesque village green at Fifield and - suitably sustained - we continued on to Idbury. The 12th Century Church of St Nicholas, which still has original Norman structures including a door with pie crust decoration, houses a most elaborate and unusual grave. It is the resting place of Sir Benjamin Baker, the engineer behind the design of the Forth Road Bridge and the Aswan Dam. He was born in Frome and died in Pangbourne, but particularly liked Idbury and it was his wish to be buried here. From Idbury we returned to Bruern Farm Cafe where many of us enjoyed a good lunch having completed 6.1 miles of enjoyable exercise.



Circular walk from Eynsham - 25 July 2023

Eighteen walkers gathered outside St Leonards Church, Eynsham on a surprisingly pleasant day, given some of the cold wet weather we have endured in July. The 6-mile walk led by Sue and George took us on a circular route from Eynsham, crossing the Old Fairford Branch railway line. We observed two unusual wooden statues, a memorial to railway workers who worked here. Joining the Thames path at Eynsham Lock we followed it to Pinkhill Lock before returning to Eynsham via the site of Eynsham Abbey and Fish Ponds. Eynsham Abbey was a Benedictine monastery between 1005 and 1538. The Fishponds were constructed around 1217 and necessitated a significant expansion of the abbey grounds. This was a level and easy walk which we all enjoyed.



Cotswold Discovery Group – Monday 17 July

A walk around Chipping Norton

A party of 5 intrepid Discoverers who used their bus passes were met up by 2 others (who missed the bus and had to drive!) and a further 2 who came under their own steam but – due to physical impairment – did largely their own thing. As Chippy is so hilly, we didn't venture too far off the beaten track, but we were indebted to Gail who acted as our guide/sherpa (delete as applicable). From our meeting point outside the Town Hall, our trail took in some of the back streets and hidden side lanes of Chipping Norton (you definitely need to sit a 'knowledge' exam if you're going to be a postman!). We visited the theatre (closed on Mondays, sadly), the alms houses, St Mary's church and the famous recording studios (one of many locations to sport a blue plaque on its wall – including the Crown and Cushion hotel which rock drummer and wild child Keith Moon once owned!). After lunch at the Rustic Bean café (where we were rejoined by our 2 friends who had gone 'off piste' for the morning), we visited the delightfully 'random' but nonetheless fascinating Chipping Norton museum, before setting off home. This month we're going on the S2 bus to Cheltenham if anyone wants to join us?



Speaker Meetings

Thursday August the 17th

“Marylebone – More Than A Station” with Colin Oakes

Colin Oakes is an archaeologist and a London guide who has significant knowledge of London’s history and possesses superb delivery skills. In the past he has talked about Dickens’ Childhood, The London Docklands and Downing Street.

New Member Meetings



2 pm on the first Monday of every month in the Wesley Room at the Methodist Church. This meeting is for all new members to meet each other, the Membership Secretary, Groups’ Co-Ordinator, and the New Member Contact. It’s also for any relatively new or existing member who would like a cuppa and a chat, to meet more members and to find out more about the u3a. If you know of anyone who is wondering about joining the u3a and is hesitant, why not encourage them to come along and discover more in a small, informal group?

Contact Ann through New Members Contact on the contacts page of the website.

IT Support



Develop your skills on your phone, tablet, or laptop. Mike and Nick can help you. Free to Witney u3a members. Mondays and Wednesdays in the Library, Welch Way. Booking essential via Wendy on: **07732 597087** or email: **infoawitney@gmail**

Witney u3a Facebook.



Are you a user of Facebook? Did you know we have a private Facebook page for Witney u3a members where members can stay in touch and exchange news and views? You can find it on: www.facebook.com/groups/1705574986327778/ (best to copy and paste this link into your browser). There is also a link from our website to our private members' page. Go to the Links page and scroll down to near the end of the section called Witney u3a information. Click on the wording that says 'Witney u3a Group Facebook page' and it should take you to it. How about posting to our private members page? We also have a public page which can be accessed by anyone, be they members or non-members. This carries news of forthcoming and recent events and acts as our 'shop window.' The link to the public Facebook page is:

www.facebook.com/witneyu3a/

National U3A On-line Learning

The National U3A website (www.u3a.org.uk) hosts a variety of educational and self-help learning events which you may find of great use. This month, they are running:

Wednesday August 9^h: Science Network Event

Online: Starts 10 a.m.

Monday August 21st: Exploring World Faiths – Faith and Youth

Online: Starts 10 a.m.

Thursday August 24th: The Story of Lela Black

Online: Starts 2 p.m.

Friday August 25th: Staying Safe On-Line – Presentation with Q&A

Online: Starts 10 a.m.

Thought for the Month

Remember, laughter is always the best medicine...unless you're laughing for no reason whatsoever...and incessantly...in which case you might need clinical help...and they might prescribe you with medicine!

Witney Blanket Hall

The National Chair of the u3a, Liz Thackray, visited the Blanket Hall in Witney on Friday July 21st to view the u3a blanket which was completed by u3a groups across the UK to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the u3a in 2022. The blanket is now on permanent display in the Blanket Hall.

Liz Thackray was accompanied by Susie Berry OBE, a Trustee of the South-East Region of the u3a and the TVN Events Team Coordinator, together with three of the quilters who contributed to the quilt, Jane, Ann and Christine. There were also two past Chairs of Witney u3a in attendance, Pam and Clare.

Richard Martin, Manager of the Blanket Hall, also joined them and gave a very interesting and informative talk on the history of the Blanket Hall building and how the weaving industry began and developed in Witney. The party then enjoyed afternoon tea and cakes in the Blanket Hall.



Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks as ever go to John W, Wendy, Ralph and all those who contributed to the production of this newsletter.

And Finally, Esther...

Put it in your diary – **Thursday 21st of September** is the Witney U3A Open Day!