

## Editorial



If it's not too late to do so, may I wish all our members a Happy New Year from both myself and on behalf of the Witney u3a committee. If your 2023 was tinged with sadness, I hope that 2024 sees a turnaround in your fortunes. For me personally, it was largely a good year, qualifying for the State Pension in March and getting my first bus pass! And when the football team you've been supporting since the early 1970s (through thin and thinner) wins its first serious trophy in 43 years, it *has* to be a memorable year!

We've got some mouth-watering u3a events to look forward to in the early months of the new year. Marian H has recently emailed out about the next cinema outing in February (having been on the *first* one in October, I'm greatly looking forward to that), and Martin Holmes – who's visited us in Witney many times before – kicked off this year's programme of Speaker Meetings on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> with a very passionate, informative and entertaining talk on the relatively short-lived premiership of the Right Honourable Jim Callaghan. I note that the next talk on the 18h (by Kevin Little) is entitled "Donkeys, Dolphins, Foxes and Fish" - which I'm sure was the lunch menu of a little Taverna I visited in Valletta last June? But I digress....

On the subject of guest speakers, may I welcome and thank Marion C who has graciously agreed to take over the role of Programme Secretary from Corinna. Those are mighty big shoes to step into, as Corinna has performed so admirably over the past years keeping our list of guest speakers so well stocked and populated with advanced bookings. It makes one realise how lucky we are to have TWO speaker meetings a month in our u3a, and that's in no small measure down to our Programme Secretary. I'm sure Marion will make the transition appear seamless. Good luck Marion.

Take care, everyone - Mike

## Greetings From Our Chair



A very Happy New Year to all our members. I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas, managed to see out the old year in style and are now looking forward to a new year full of opportunities and adventures. Witney u3a Committee has certainly got some great ideas for the coming year and we'll look forward to sharing them with you over the coming weeks.

One of the big things on our agenda right now is planning for the AGM in June, when we will be wanting to elect some new committee members. Sadly, some of our long-standing committee members have come to the end of their terms and we urgently need to replace them. I'll be sending out an email shortly about one particular role but there are several other vacancies as well. If you would like to know more or would like to attend one or two committee meetings to get a feel for what we do, please, please contact me, either by email or in person at a speaker meeting. If you'd like to have a say in how your u3a is run, here's your chance!

In the meantime, it's my pleasure to introduce you to our new Volunteer Coordinator, Kay Green, who has taken over from Janet Martin. Her contact details are now on the Contacts page of our website our website.

Kay has asked me to tell you that she would be delighted to hear from anyone who can spare an occasional Thursday afternoon to help at Speaker Meetings. She would particularly like to hear from people willing to help in the café so that training can be arranged on how to use the equipment. Some of you have said that you put your names forward but haven't heard anything. If that is the case, please will you email Kay again? It's so easy for names and information to get lost during a hand-over from one co-ordinator to another.

With all good wishes for the New Year,

*Susie.*

## Group News

We start as usual with news of Groups with 'vacancies' they'd like to fill;



**Book Group 4** – run by Celia, this group meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month (you might want to note that down...or bookmark it!)



**Canasta** – run by Shirley and meeting every first Tuesday of the month at the Methodist Church. Shirl...sorry...surely you'd like to join?



**Needlework** – Jane runs two groups, both meeting in a member's home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month. Why not go along? But don't run – don't want you getting a stitch!



**Non-Fiction Reading** – It's a fact; Gill gathers the group at the Methodist Church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month. It's a very well-run group – you might say textbook!



**Sewing/Dressmaking** – on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, Sandra's group meets at the Methodist Church. And she always looks smart for the occasion!



**Snooker/Pool group** – Keith cues off this gathering every Monday evening, upstairs at the Methodist Church.

The **Spanish** group (meeting every other Monday with Noreen) and **Table Tennis 2** (meeting the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday with Steve) are also looking for new joiners. So whether its Paella or Ping-Pong you're after, Noreen and Steve have got it covered!

## Cotswold Discovery Group

### *Outing to Bourton on the Water, Monday 18 December 2023*

With a week to go before the big day, everyone was 'de-mob happy' and in party mood. This only worsened/improved (delete as applicable) when Sue suggested a detour to the Cotswold Distillery shop, where quite a few of us made purchases (it should be noted: Sue only drinks for medicinal purposes...because she can't live without it!).

We started out at St. Lawrence Church, with its architecture that is a fusion of medieval and modern which somehow seems to work. With last-minute shopping being the order of the day, our short tour also took us to the Cotswold Perfumery, before taking lunch at a pub alongside the stream – and yes, the aquatic Christmas tree was as resplendent as it is every year!



## Speaker Meetings

Thursday, January the 18th, Witney Methodist Church

### **'The Queen Mother at the Castle of May' with Jeremy Mainwaring-Burton**

The Queen Mother would spend every August at her wonderful Scottish homestead, formerly known as Barrogill Castle. Jeremy had the honour of serving Her Majesty as her equerry, based at Mey Castle during this time. He is a geologist, a gemmologist, a former Army Officer and a fascinating and entertaining speaker.



## New Member Meetings



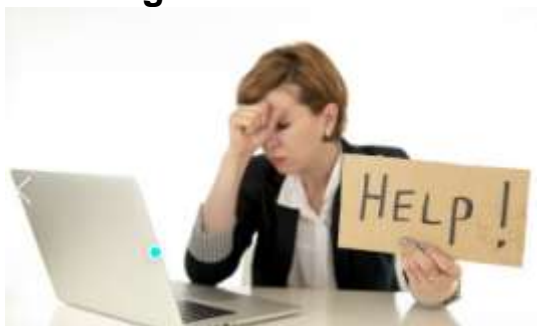
New members have a chance to meet on the 1st Monday of the month at 2pm in the Methodist Church Coffee Bar (except for Bank Holidays). This month – unusually, but for obvious reasons – they met on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The get together normally lasts about 1 to 1.5 hours - there is no charge and coffee/tea is available. The New Member's meeting is organised to provide new members with some background information about the u3a organisation and more specific information about Witney u3a.

There is a chance to discuss the interest groups available and to register any group interest.

**Editor's Note:** welcome to your first Newsletter those that have joined in both December and the New Year. Contributions always welcomed if you have anything to say or promote.

## IT Training



Develop your skills on your phone, tablet, or laptop. Mike and (when available) Nick can help you. Free to Witney u3a members. Wednesday mornings in the Library at 10am and 11am, Welch Way. If this is unsuitable, please contact us and we will try to be flexible. 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/](http://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.' Link via [www.facebook.com/witneyu3a/](http://www.facebook.com/witneyu3a/)

## National U3A On-line Learning



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

The National U3A website ([www.u3a.org.uk](http://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:

### **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> of January – 'Chinese Wand Exercises for Mobility, Fitness & Fun'**

Sit or stand to do these ancient Chinese exercises which improve mobility, strength, balance using a lightweight cane and incremental movements.

Free – online via Zoom at 10 am. With second session at the same time on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> of January– 'Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk One'**

This series starts with a simple description of the structure of the brain by Dr. Rob Pullen of the Prudhoe u3a.

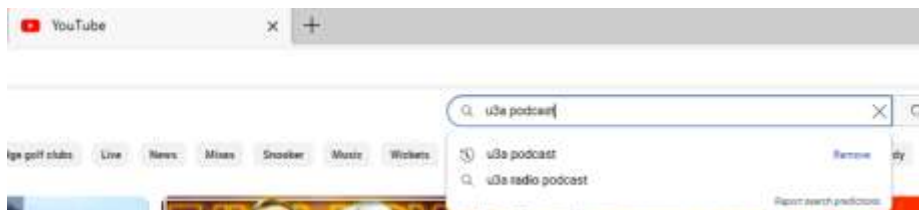
Free – online via Zoom at 2 pm.

## Podcast

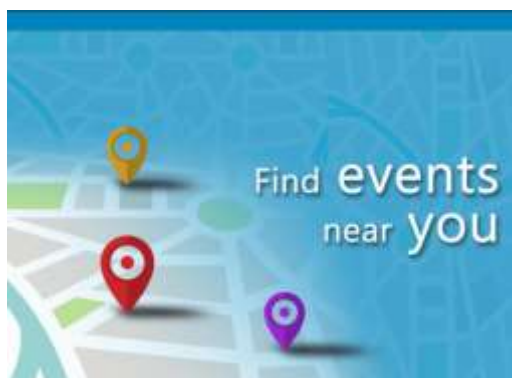


The u3a radio podcast is available again. And Episode 35 – the December edition – can be listened to and watched now. Once again, Witney u3a’s very own Peter C is in the chair (sorry Peter...I don’t mean you’re buying the drinks...can someone please help Peter up from the floor?!). This episode starts with some unusual Christmas Carols, and revisits some of the highlights of the 2023 series of shows. These include a look back at the Lyons Teahouses and Nippy waitresses, the amazing progress of an award winning u3a Creative Writing Group from Monmouthshire, a Bromsgrove u3a member’s recollections of being posted in Aden in the mid-1960s and the successes of the u3a national poetry competition. And no look back at 2023 would be complete without a recollection of the Coronation, and the tale of the post box topper knitting crew from Meopham u3a in Kent is a wonderfully entertaining story!

The podcasts are available on Spotify and other podcast platforms but are probably most easily obtained on YouTube by simply searching ‘u3a podcast’.



## Local Events



As always, we end with a list of entertainment ‘hot tickets’ in West Oxfordshire this month...and a ‘heads up’ of some of the early February events (in case the Newsletter editor is tardy in doing his job again...a-hem!)

**Open until 30th April: Into Battle! The Art of British War Comics.** Exhibition at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock. Open Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 6pm. Sunday 2pm to 5pm. Admission prices apply. [www.soho.org.uk](http://www.soho.org.uk).

**9th January to 10th February: A Place For All Seasons.** Paintings and drawings of Kelmscott Manor. An exhibition to celebrate the work of West Ox Arts members, created over the four seasons. WOA Gallery, Market Square, Bampton. Tuesday to Saturday 11.30am to 4.30pm. Sunday 2pm to 4pm. Closed Mondays. Admission free.

**12th January:** Witney Music Society presents **Frederico Paixao (flute) and Mark Rogers (piano)**. Programme includes pieces by Chaminade, Bonis, Godard and Sain-Saens. High Street Methodist, Witney. 7.30pm. Tickets £15.00.

**24th January:** Cineworld Witney are screening **Royal Opera: Rusalka** at 6.45pm.

**25th January:** Cineworld Witney are screening **National Theatre Live: Dear England** at 7.00pm.

**27th January:** Cineworld Witney are screening **MET Opera Live: Carmen** at 5.55pm.

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**2nd February:** Witney Jazz presents **Tim Whitehead In Concert** at the Corn Exchange, Witney. A jazz quartet led by an award-winning tenor saxophonist. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Row seats £16, table seats £18. [cornexchangewitney.org.uk](http://cornexchangewitney.org.uk)

**3<sup>rd</sup> February: The Mayor's Charity Quiz.** Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, quiz starts 7.30pm. Tickets £5.00. Team size, six maximum.

**7<sup>th</sup> February:** Cineworld Witney are screening **Royal Ballet Live: Manon** at 7.15pm.

**8<sup>th</sup> February:** At a meeting of The Arts Society, Clive Stewart Lockhart will be **speaking on The Art Market and How It Works**. 2.30pm at The Corn Exchange, Witney. Visitors welcome. £7.00 at the door.

**Also on the 8<sup>th</sup>:** Holy Trinity Church, **Witney, pancake and quiz night, in aid of The Besom**. 7.00pm.

**9<sup>th</sup> February:** Witney Music Society Presents **Antonina Suhanova**. Programme includes pieces by Mozart, Debussy, Britten and Schubert. High Street Methodist, Witney. 7.30pm. Tickets £15.00.

**10th February: Stayin' Alive – The Best of the Bee Gees** at the Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Tickets £18.

[www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk](http://www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk)

**14<sup>th</sup> February:** Cineworld Witney are screening **My Favourite Things**, an 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert celebrating the music of Rodgers and Hammerstein. Filmed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, the concert features original arrangements of iconic songs from Oklahoma! Carousel, South Pacific, The King and I, The Sound of Music and more. 7.30pm. Tickets are in the region of £18.50

## Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks as ever go to Wendy, Doreen, Susie, Peter and everybody who contributed to the production of this newsletter.