

## Editorial



Welcome to the March newsletter and isn't it wonderful to see all the blossom on the trees and the early shoots and blooms in our gardens (and the accompanying bees that all that blossom brings). But with it comes this incessant rain – there always seems to be an April shower getting ahead of itself lurking *somewhere* around the corner.

I've chosen a mini portrait of the March Hare from Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking Glass* for this front cover. He was a character I can identify with – quite mad (though this is *not* the origin of the phrase 'mad as a March Hare', which first featured in literary works some 300 years *before* Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel). And he was rather partial to a cuppa, the highlight of every speaker's meeting (no matter how good the presenter has been – and we've been blessed with some great presentations this year).

You'll read in this edition about a forthcoming Special General Meeting, and I hope as many of you as possible will attend. That's if we haven't lost too many of you down in the mines of the Rhondda on the latest u3a outing to the Cardiff Royal Mint and the Coal Mining Historical Centre? It was a wonderful day out (as proud Welshman, Max Boyce, used to say, "I know, for I was there!"). A big word of thanks for Marian and Jackie for organising a fantastic event. It reads 'learn, laugh, live. At the top of this page, and we certainly did a lot of each of those on the Cardiff trip. The next outing, ironically, is to the Ideal Home Exhibition in Olympia on April the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Having experienced the cramped miners' cage down into the dark underbelly of the earth with its stray scents of methane that pervaded the pits, there was nothing 'ideal' in *that* working home, let me tell you! And I say that as a Collier!

Enjoy the read - Mike

## Group News

As at the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, Groups looking for new members are/were;



**Art** – run by Keith every Thursday at the Methodist Church (if the man hasn't got a snooker cue in his hand it's a paintbrush!)



**Canasta** – run by Shirley and meeting every first Tuesday of the month at the Methodist Church



**Croquet** – run by Valerie P in Eynsham every Thursday. So if you want to know more about 'roquet' and 'bisque', ask Valerie (I'm quite hungry now!)



**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?



**Poetry** – Donald runs this group every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at the Methodist Church. So don't delay, see Donald J.



**Sewing/Dressmaking** – on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, Sandra's group meets at the Methodist Church.



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

Also looking for new members is el **Spanish group**, which Noreen hosts every other Monday at her home, and the **Table Tennis 2** group run by Steve B on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month, and then every Monday for the remainder. In fact, why not join *both*? You'll be talking and hitting backhands like Rafa Nadal in no time!

## Speaker Meetings

Thursday, March the 21st, Witney Methodist Church

**'Destination Utah (the USAAF in a typical English Village)'** with Brian Fernley



Brian spent most of his working life in telecommunications, starting as an apprentice and then moving into design. From there he joined the training department, eventually becoming the UK Technical Training Manager for Siemens Communications. Brian enjoyed the presentation aspect of his training life and wanted to continue this into his retirement.

He has always been interested in aviation history and – through this – he continued to grow his knowledge and his skillset. Consequently, he developed an interactive guide for Newark Air Museum and became involved with aviation archaeology. Moving from Nottinghamshire to Devon, he became actively aware of the South West Airfields Heritage Trust, an educational charity, and this highly entertaining and informative talk is born from Brian's work with the trust.

## 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).

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 late February or early March. Contributions always welcomed if you have anything to say or promote.

## Special General Meeting on our Constitution



At its regular, monthly meeting on Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, the committee unanimously agreed that the Witney u3a constitution should be updated. The Third Age Trust (or 'the Trust') has developed what is known as a *Model Constitution*.

As our national body, the Trust has invested considerable time and legal fees in developing the 'Model', which is an up-to-date constitution that they are confident meets the increasingly demanding requirements of the Charity Commission. As a registered charity whose membership is growing, we feel it is appropriate that we *also* do our best to meet those requirements by adopting the model constitution.

The new model constitution has the additional benefit to Witney u3a of reducing the number of members required for a quorum at a General Meeting (from 20% to 10%) and extending the maximum length of time that anyone can serve on the Committee (from 6 years to 9 - three years in any one role). These changes will make it easier to meet quorum numbers and will ensure that the knowledge and experience of committee members is retained for longer.

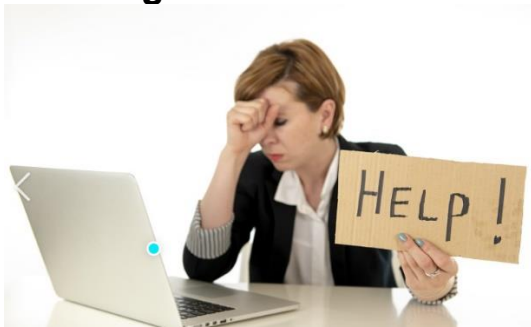
Our committee will never take such fundamental decisions without first consulting YOU and so - before we can adopt this updated Constitution - it is necessary for us to hold a Special General Meeting at which two thirds of those present vote to support the change. Accordingly, it is planned to hold the Special General Meeting on **Thursday 4 April at 1.45** in the **Methodist Church**, before the planned Speaker Meeting that day.

The Resolution put before the meeting will be:

***'That Witney u3a agrees to adopt the model constitution, provided by the Third Age Trust (revised February 2021).'***

On Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, Chair Susie emailed the membership announcing this SGM and attached detailed documentation that should help you arrive at a better-informed decision. We look forward to seeing you on 4 April – please ask if you have further questions of Susie or send comments to me (Mike).

## IT Training



I'm delighted to inform that Jackie W has agreed to help Mike out with IT Support and Training (the chap has just turned 67 and he's not as sharp as he used to be, bless!). If you have recently been dragged into the digital age, kicking and screaming, or your family has recently given you their old, unwanted mobile technology, we may be able to help you come to grips with it. Booking essential via Wendy on: **07732 597087** or email **infoawitney@gmail**

## Facebook – Important Announcement



Following a thorough review of the 'traffic' on both our private and public Facebook pages, the committee agreed at its meeting earlier this month that **both will be taken down**. Very few people use the pages and there is little or no interaction between members. Anyone trying to access the public page will instead be directed to our Witney u3a website. For our members, all the information that was posted on Facebook is available on our website, in our newsletter and at speaker meetings, so hopefully essential information will continue to reach everyone. **Editor's Note:** Although I am a passionate advocate and regular user of social media, I wholeheartedly agree with this action. Whilst we should explore all avenues of communication with our membership, we shouldn't expect you to participate via channels you never (or rarely) use. As they say at Cheltenham, its very much a case of horses for courses!

## Current Members' Coffee Meetings

The next Current Members' Coffee Meeting will be held at the Methodist Church on Tuesday the 30<sup>th</sup> of April at 2pm. Hope to see you there!

## National u3a On-Line Learning Events



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:

### **Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of March – ‘Reduce Your Risk of Dementia’ with Sir Muir Gray**

Take a deeper dive into what you can do to reduce your risk of developing this awful condition.

Free online via Zoom – starts 2pm

### **Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of March – ‘John Snow and the hunt for the source of cholera in Victorian London’**

In the 1850s, John Snow provided evidence that cholera is a water borne disease. This talk explores John Snow’s legacy and asks why he died without recognition.

Free online via Zoom – starts 10am

And on a lighter note...

### **Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of March – ‘Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords’**

Try your hand at solving cryptic crossword clues with Henry Howarth, u3a Subject Advisor for Cryptic Crosswords.

Free online via Zoom – starts 10am

**Editor’s Note:** one of *my* all-time favourite cryptic crossword clues (from The Times) was simply ‘G.E.S.G (9,4)’. The answer: Scrambled eggs.

## **A Foot Note on Adjoining Members**

Please note that Witney u3a can no longer accept members of other u3as into our groups, who only wish to do so because the activity they want to partake in does not exist in their 'home' u3a. Our numbers have been steadily increasing in these early months of 2024, placing pressure on groups, their leaders and on the poor Group Coordinator attempting to place everyone. People from adjoining u3as who are *already* members of Witney groups may continue as before. People from other u3as will still have the option of becoming Associate members of Witney u3a for a reduced fee (£4.00 off relevant joining fee).

## Podcast



Episode 37 – the February edition – can be listened to and watched now. And yet again, the always engaging, ever entertaining Peter C (fully paid-up member of this parish) presents the show. This episode will please devotees of the ancient, musical art of lute playing, and briefly explores the connection with Galileo, himself a lutenist (yes, that's a word!). There's also an item on poetry by David Protheroe, who has none other than Poet Laureate Ted Hughes in his mobile phone contacts! There's cookery advice from Alex Connell and news of a new book being launched by a u3a member on the history of the Olympic Games. And u3a's medical expert, Mike Trevethick, gives us some public health advice and looks back at how that source of information became so vital during the recent pandemic.

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



Those all-important 'dates for your diary', coming to a cinema or theatre (or town, civic or church hall) near you SOON.

**March 16<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>: Oxford Literary Festival**

**March 21<sup>st</sup>:** Cineworld Witney are screening **National Theatre Live: The Motive and the Cue** at 7.30pm

**March 22<sup>nd</sup>:** **The Brize Singers** will be performing an **OUH Charity Musical Evening** at The Congregational Church, Witney at 7.30pm (doors open 7.00pm). Tickets £12.50, to include refreshments, available from [brizesingers50@gmail.com](mailto:brizesingers50@gmail.com), via 01993 880013, or on the door.

**March 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Woodstock Music Society Choir and Woodstock Chamber Orchestra are performing **Mozart's Great Mass in C Minor** and **Haydn's Te Deum in C Major, Symphony No. 88** at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock at 7.30pm. Tickets at the door £15, in advance, £14 from The Woodstock Bookshop.

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Cineworld Witney are screening **2024 MET Opera Live: Romeo et Juliette** at 4.55pm

**March 23<sup>rd</sup> until June 30<sup>th</sup>;** **Icons of British Fashion Exhibition at Blenheim Palace.** Celebrating fashion from the past to the present day, featuring loans from huge names in the fashion world.

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>;** **Atom Heart Floyd**, a Pink Floyd Retrospective. Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Tickets £22, including booking fee. [www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk](http://www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk)

**March 24<sup>th</sup>;** Burford Singers perform **Haydn's Creation** at the Church of St John the Baptist, Burford at 7.30pm. Tickets £10 - £25

**March 26<sup>th</sup>;** Cineworld Winey are screening **Royal Opera Live: Madama Butterfly** at 7.15pm

**March 26<sup>th</sup>;** Corn Exchange Classic Film Club are screening **The Big Lebowski** at 7.30pm. Tickets £7.21 - £8.83

And in early April we can look forward to...

**April 5<sup>th</sup>;** Witney Jazz presents **The Randolph Mathews/Nick Meier Band.** Vocal led jazz and world music vibes. Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Table seating £20, row seating £18. For tickets see [www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk](http://www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk)

**April 9<sup>th</sup>;** Cineworld Witney are screening **Royal Ballet Live: Macmillan Celebrated** at 7.15pm

**April 9<sup>th</sup>;** Corn Exchange Witney Classic Film Club are screening **Scarface**, starring Al Pacino. Say 'hello' to his little friend at 7.30pm. Tickets £7.21 - £8.83

## Acknowledgements

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

## And Finally...

I spoke earlier of the upcoming *Special* General Meeting in about three weeks. Well another important date for your diary – the **Annual General Meeting** will be held on **Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> of June** at the **Methodist Church Hall**. As is practice, minutes of the last AGM and all annual reports will be circulated prior to the meeting.

It's also the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D Day landings that day (which is merely coincidental of course!).