

Chair's notes



To welcome you to the merry (and slightly warmer) month of May you are invited to join two special events in the coming weeks: the Coronation Tea on May 18 after the Speaker Meeting to mark the coronation of King Charles the Third. There will be a Toastmaster and some fizz (non-alcoholic).

We also have the AGM on June 1 before the Speaker's talk about a renowned WW2 female espionage agent. AGM papers will be sent out shortly for you to read in advance so you can come prepared with any comments and questions to the Committee. Any further volunteers for the Committee or the Support Team would be very welcome - just announce yourself at the meeting or to the Chair beforehand. The AGM will be short but will be a great opportunity for you to participate in the development of our u3a. The Committee hope as many members as possible will be there on the day.

This month's Newsletter has been produced by our new editor, Mike Collier who, from June, will be taking over in full. We are grateful to Mike for his interest and enthusiasm. Please would you send (lots of) contributions to him via Newsletter on the Contacts page of the website or talk to him at any Speaker Meeting (he's one of the chaps at the back of the hall keeping the projectors and sound system running!). As editor for the past two years, I shall miss writing the Newsletter - it's been fun and a great way to stay in touch with as many members as possible. Thank you to everyone who has offered support and sent contributions.

Best wishes to all members - and Newsletter readers,

Clare

Groups



Some of our **Local History** group visited Minster Lovell ruins during April and enjoyed an interesting talk and guide round the ruins by local Minster Lovell historian, Graham Kew.

The manor house was built around 1440 by William Lovell, Baron of Lovell and Holland, on the foundations of an older 12th century house. It remained in the Lovell family for centuries, but was sadly abandoned in the 1730s. Later, many of the buildings were dismantled for building stone.

The pictures (below) show how the buildings used to look, and how they are now.



The site is in the care of English Heritage, but is free to visit, and is in a beautiful and tranquil setting next to the River Windrush. It's a pleasant walk through the old part of the village of Minster Lovell, with its Cotswold stone cottages and thatched roofs, up to the church of St Kenelm and to the ruins.

Twenty members of the **Longer Walking** group set out from the Chequers Inn at Cassington on a beautiful sunny Tuesday in late April to revisit a circular walk that they have done on previous occasions. John Waterfall reports 'The walk took us north east to Rectory Farm and then on to Little Blenheim. Leaving Little Blenheim, we followed the unusually named Frogwelldown Lane to Begbroke Wood. The bluebells were just beginning to open, encouraged by the dappled shade of the wood, and provided a lovely photo opportunity for members during our coffee break. We circumvented the wood returning to Cassington via Worten where some of us enjoyed a hearty lunch at the Chequers. The length of the walk was approximately 6.3 miles.



U3A Groups looking for new members:

Nature Study – 1st Friday at 10.00am

History of Arts II – 3rd Monday at 2.00pm

WWI Poetry – TBC

Groups Disbanded: History of Poland

Contact Doreen via the Contact page on the website or at any Speaker meeting.

Speaker Meetings

Thursday May the 4th

On 'Star Wars' Day (if you know, you know!) we had;

“Life and Times of a Ship’s Pilot” with Captain William Wells

As a schoolboy Captain William Wells won a scholarship in his native New Zealand to travel to England where he underwent nautical training for a career at sea. He served at sea a few months short of 49 years during which he rose through the ranks to become Captain and then a Harbour Pilot, ending his career as the Chief Pilot on London’s River Thames.

Captain Wells speaks regularly to a variety of different organisations, cruise ships, the BBC radio and TV and was invited by the Cunard Line to be the principal speaker aboard the world-famous liner QE2 on her final voyage. He has also written his autobiography which was published by Writersworld.

Thursday May the 18th

“Playing with Knives: Paper Cutting” with Christine Green

Christine writes: "A graphic designer by trade, I have had a life-long fascination with letters in all their infinite forms, especially hand drawn. I am also interested in cut out art forms, playing with negative and positive shapes so paper cutting seemed a perfect fit for me. I began paper cutting about 14 years ago and it has improved and become refined over the years. I am self-taught and have built up a small business selling my typographic designs as printed cards and bags. The talk covers international aspects of paper cutting, a bit of history, techniques, popularity and my own take on it and where it has taken me. A couple of years ago, I was featured on BBC4's 'Make! Craft Britain' demonstrating and teaching paper cutting to a group of novices."

Coronation Tea



The Speaker Meeting on the 18th will also be our first opportunity as a membership to mark and celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. We will therefore be holding a Coronation Tea in the Church Hall, whereby our toastmaster, Peter, will invite us all (in his own inimitable way) to raise a glass of non-alcoholic fizz to their Majesties. There will be buffet-styled food laid out on the tables when you arrive, and we invite you all to join tuck in. See ‘Chair’s Notes’ for further details.

Drop in café.



2 pm on the first Monday of every month in the Wesley Room at the Methodist Church. The café 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? N.B. No café during May because of the bank holidays. The Drop in café will resume on June 5. Contact Ann through New Members Contact on the contacts page of the website.

Important Notice – Please Note...

The Church have informed us that they can no longer staff the café for U3A members. We therefore have urgent need for volunteers to serve in the café from June onwards. Now you could be forgiven for thinking “If I volunteer, am I setting myself up for a full-time job?”. So, ideally, we are looking for an ‘army’ of volunteers, who would be willing to pool their resources and – therefore – not be called on individually too often. The café area is always well populated and offers an important social opportunity to sit and chat – it’s important we keep it going.

IT Support



Develop your skills on your phone, tablet, or laptop. From ‘how do I switch it on?’ beginners, ‘you’ll never get me back up in one of those!’ restarters all the way up to advanced user levels, 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/**

Meet a Member

Nicky Valentine is Co-Organiser of our volunteers, and she shares the leadership of one of the Play Reading groups.



‘I can’t remember how long I’ve been a member of the u3a. I *do* remember it was recommended by a friend in Cheltenham before I moved to Witney. I needed to meet people – and I’ve met lots of lovely people through the u3a. I love doing play reading because I’ve always been mixed up in drama.

I’ve been a Background Actor since the 90s, and this has included parts in *The Madness of King George* and *An Ideal Husband* (I love period drama), *Father Brown*, *Casualty* (I did 15 years as a Resuss Nurse) and spent days on *Downton Abbey* (I was caught yawning on camera). The peak was being on stage with Lauren Bacall in *These Foolish Things* as a maid, directed by Angelica Houston and then being chosen by Clint Eastwood to appear next to Matt Damon at a book fair in Alexandra Palace! Being directed by Woody Allen was brilliant. He was a rule breaker allowing us to eat the food, which normally one must mime, and wrapping at 3pm. Then there was Charles Dance! What a charmer. He was directing *Ladies in Lavender* and picked me out of the crowd to be featured! In contrast, I have been homeless under a bridge in *Doctors*, zapped by Daleks in *Dr. Who*, pursued by Cyber men, and line danced in *Gavin and Stacey*. One year I attended *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, another wedding on *Love Actually* and camped for 3 nights on Greenham Common. I’ve attended a garden party in *Bridget Jones Diary* and spent days in Oxford prison (when it really was one) on *Bad Girls*. Inspector Morse collapsed at my feet (*The Remorseful Day*, the final ever episode) and James Bond drove through we journalists in *The World is not Enough*. I was a nosey old villager on *Land Girls* and - as I aged - I enjoyed life in an advert for *Calceous* and another for an Equity Release company. I’ve time travelled in *Stardust*, experienced the other worldliness of *The Golden Compass* and watched a dragon attack at a Quiddich match in *Harry Potter*. I was there when King Arthur extracted the sword from the stone in a magic Welsh wood and I’ve sipped Cider with Rosie in Gloucestershire. Blink and you miss me, but my CV is long and I have some great memories.

I currently restore oriental rugs, having kept the oriental rug shop that some members may remember in Bridge Street. Volunteering is in my blood. I sometimes want to shake up people who *don’t* volunteer – even though we’re retired, we can’t just take, we should contribute. I find joy in meeting people who are happy to volunteer.

What makes me grumpy? Abuse of the English language, specifically grammar’

The U3A Tree



The cherry tree planted last September in tribute to the many health workers and care workers of Witney and the surrounding areas is now in full bloom. Many thanks go out to Gill Davies and her team for their dedication and devotion.

Thames Valley Network

On Friday the 2nd of June at 2:30pm, there will be a Summer Quiz for TVN Members. The session will be held 'on-line' using Zoom, with the questions set by Avis Furness. For other TVN events, follow the U3A website, or go directly to <http://u3atvnetwork.org.uk/> (copy this link into your browser).

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. These include the 'Hadrian's Wall' programme, which covers such diverse subjects as flower arranging and creative writing workshops. If you prefer a more cerebral learning experience, there are talks on Philosophy and Sport and Exploring World Faiths to be enjoyed. On May the 17th there is a session of exploring family history entitled 'Births Deaths and Marriages'. It's well worth a look.

Podcast

The April episode of the U3A podcast (episode 29) is now available on-line. As you can imagine, it is strongly themed with the big Royal event of May 6th (have you ever marvelled at those wonderful knitted creations that adorned the tops of post boxes?) and there's something for all of us, dog and cat lovers too. Plus, the very serious topic of 'face blindness' – an inability to recognise people that strikes many of us of a certain age – is discussed.

The National u3a podcast celebrates and showcases the wide range of activities taking place across the movement. It comes out every month on podcasting platforms,

including Apple and Spotify and as a captioned video on YouTube. Go to your internet browser, search www.youtube.com and – within YouTube – search for u3a.

Local Events and Information

Running until 30th July, Royal Connections Crowns and Coronets. A major new exhibition at Blenheim Palace. Discover behind the scenes stories, spanning 300 years, into the relationship between the Marlboroughs and the British Royal Family. Tickets from blenheimpalace.com

5th May: Witney Jazz presents the Jonny Kerry Quartet. Word class jazz piano-accordionist, playing gypsy swing, classical and tango. Doors open 7.30pm, show starts 8.00pm. Tickets: £16 row seat, £18 table seat, available from Truck store or via website www.witneyjazz.co.uk

7th May: Witney Town Council will be hosting a Big Coronation Picnic Lunch on the Leys Recreation Ground between 12.00 noon and 5.00pm. Bring a picnic. Hot food available on site.

9th May: Woodstock Literary Society present The Importance of Being Poirot, A guided tour by Professor Jeremy Black through the mind and world of Agatha Christie during and between two world wars. 8.00pm at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock. Tickets £8 at the door.

12th May: West End Magic, London's longest running magic show, comes to the Corn Exchange, Witney featuring magic and variety acts. Doors open 7.30pm, show 8.00pm. at 8.00pm. Tickets £15 - £17.

[13th to 21st May: Artweeks comes to Woodstock. An opportunity to view the work of artists local to Woodstock. Venues include St Mary Magdalene Church, Darl-e and the Bear, No 14 pop-up shop and Gleide Home Décor. Art will also be on display in shop windows throughout Woodstock.](#)

14th May: Four favourite television personalities from the world of antiques (Philip Serrell, Charles Hanson, Charlie Ross and Christina Trevanion) will be telling tales from the saleroom, television and beyond, at the Theatre, Chipping Norton at 7.30pm. Tickets £24. Box office 01608 642350 or www.chippingnortontheatre.com

15th May: At the Corn Exchange, Witney, Nearly Nicks – a celebration of supergroup Fleetwood Mac and singer songwriter Stevie Nicks. Professional musicians and vocalists are fronted by Stevie Nicks impersonator Julie C. Myers. Show starts 8.00pm. Tickets available from www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk

17th to 20th May: The Bartholomew Players present A Bunch of Amateurs by Ian Hislop at Eynsham Village Hall. 7.30pm. Tickets £10 available on the door or in advance from www.trybooking.co.uk/CCIR

18th to 30th May: Giffords Circus is at Blenheim Palace. Located at Lower Park, near Eagle Lodge. For tickets and further information see www.blenheimpalace.com

19th May: Older Persons Day. Meet the local businesses and organisations here to support you as you age. 10.00am to 1.00pm Corn Exchange, Witney.

20th May: Witney Horticultural Society Plant Sale and Coffee Morning. 9.30am to 12.30pm at High Street Methodist Church.

20th May: Witney Festival of Food and Drink. St Mary's Church, Witney, 9.30am to 4.30pm. Over 50 stalls, street food, music, bar and café. Ready Steady Cook competition

20th May: Cineworld, Witney is screening Don Giovanni from MET Opera Live at 5.55pm

20th May: Witney Town Band Spring Concert. Langdale Hall, 2.30pm. Tickets £5.00 available from Truck store or via www.witneytownband.org.uk

21st May: Combe Mill, Combe, Long Hanborough, (the original sawmill and workshop of the Blenheim Palace Estate) is holding a steaming event day. There will also be a display of barn engines and horticultural machinery. Market stalls. Tea room open. Dogs welcome. 10.30am to 5.00pm. Tickets £9.00, concessions £7.50

21st May: Bridewell, the mental health charity that offers social and therapeutic horticulture to adults, have an open day at their walled garden. Plant sale and pop-up café, 11am to 4pm. Suggested donation £5 per person. The Walled Garden, Wilcote, North Leith, Chipping Norton OX7 3DT.

24th May: Cineworld, Witney is screening The Sleeping Beauty from Royal Opera House Live Ballet at 7.15pm.

24th to 27th May: Balancing Act and Buttercross Theatre Productions present The Murmuration of Starlings, a unique theatrical story of dementia from the inside out. Witney Corn Exchange, 7.30pm. Tickets £15. In aid of Alzheimer's Society.

www.buttercrosstheatreproductions.co.uk/shows

27th May: Witney Pride LGBTQ Parade and Festival Day, The Leys, Witney

27th – 29th May: Blenheim Palace Food Festival. For more information see www.blenheimpalace.com

Advance Notice

3rd June: Cineworld, Witney is screening Die Zauberflöte from MET Opera Live at 5.55pm.

8th June: The Art Society present - Cathedrals: Stone on Stone- the men who built the cathedrals. A talk by Imogen Corrigan. Corn Exchange, Witney at 7.30pm. Tickets £6.50 at the door.

9th and 10th June: Witney Music Festival, The Leys. 9th 5pm to 11pm £5.00. 10th 12 noon to 11pm £10.00. VIP weekend ticket £40.00

10th June: Lower Windrush Choral Society will be performing Brahms' German Requiem at the Methodist Church at 6.00pm. Tickets purchased in advance £12. Available from Truck or St Andrew's Bookshop. £14 on the door.

2nd / 3rd June: Buttercross Quilters Exhibition. Witney High Street Methodist Church, 10.00am to 4.00pm. Admission £3.00.

Wootton Village Hall Talks

The next speaker at 7.30 pm on **Friday May 12th is: Simon Parker**

Simon is a travel writer and filmmaker who has reported from over 100 countries - cycling from China to London for the BBC, hiking every route to Machu Picchu in Peru, and cycling the length of Scandinavia. He has also climbed the highest volcanoes in Bali, driven a rickshaw the length of India and covered the migrant crisis in Greece.

For his talk in Wootton, Simon will be talking about his acclaimed book, Riding Out - the remarkable story of how he battled grief and anxiety, one pedal stroke at a time, on a 3,500-mile adventure around Britain.

In March 2020, as Britain entered its first lockdown, Simon's life fell apart - his travel journalism career vanished overnight and, shortly afterwards, he received the tragic news that a close friend had died. With a long-suppressed anxiety disorder starting to rear its head, he turned to the only therapies he knew and trusted - travel and exercise.

Reviewers point out that *Riding Out* is a story of optimism and hope, and a ground-level portrait of Britain as it transforms from a country in crisis to a nation on the mend. From Shetland to the Scillies, Dover to Durness, Simon says he learned that life's sharpest corners are best navigated at the gentle pace of a bicycle. In other areas, Simon also works with a small team of cinematographers and editors all over the world to produce videos in some of the most extreme corners of the world - from the centre of the swirling Pacific Ocean, to the searing Atacama Desert, via Arctic tundra and the summit of the Andes mountains.

Simon has produced award-winning short and long-form video and radio content for outlets such as The Telegraph, Sky Sports, BBC World Service, Radio 4, Amazon Prime Video, FOX Australia, SBS and The Evening Standard.

Entry is £10 in cash - and includes free food featuring sumptuous rocky roads. Wine and soft drinks are available for a modest donation.

To reserve seats, please contact us through our website www.woottontalks.co.uk (Children over 16 welcome).

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

Numbers Quiz



1. How many years are celebrated in a traditional 'Pearl Wedding Anniversary'?
2. How many American Presidents have been assassinated while in office?
3. How many lines are there traditionally in a sonnet?
4. How much is a gross?
5. What number is the 'answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything' in the *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*?
6. How old was the Queen Mother when she died in 2002?

7. What is the ninth prime number?
8. A lustrum was a period of how many years in Ancient Rome?
9. In rugby league, how many points is a drop goal worth?
10. What is the maximum number of clubs golf players are allowed in their bag?
11. How many jumps does a horse have to make to win the Grand National?
12. How many sides does a nonagon have?
13. In astrology, what is the 10th astrological sign of the Zodiac?
14. How many cards make up a typical tarot card deck?

Recipe For May



Coronation Quiche!

1 X 20cm Flan Tin

Pastry

125g plain flour

Pinch of salt

25g cold butter, diced

25g lard

2 tablespoons milk

Or 1 x 250g block of readymade shortcrust pastry

Filling

125ml milk

175ml double cream

2 medium eggs

1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon

Salt and pepper

100g grated cheddar cheese

180g cooked spinach, lightly chopped

60g cooked broad beans or soya beans

Method

Make the pastry. Cover and allow to rest in the fridge for 30-45 minutes.

Lightly flour the work surface and roll out the pastry to a circle a little larger than the top of the tin and approximately 5mm thick.

Line the tin with the pastry, taking care not to have any holes or the mixture could leak. Cover and rest for a further 30 minutes in the fridge.

Preheat the oven to 190°C.

Line the pastry case with greaseproof paper, add baking beans and bake blind for 15 minutes, before removing the greaseproof paper and baking beans.

Reduce the oven temperature to 160°C.

Beat together the milk, cream, eggs, herbs and seasoning.

Scatter 1/2 of the grated cheese in the blind-baked base, top with the chopped spinach and beans and herbs, then pour over the liquid mixture.

If required, gently give the mixture a delicate stir to ensure the filling is evenly dispersed but be careful not to damage the pastry case.

Sprinkle over the remaining cheese.

Place into the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes until set and lightly golden.

Thoughts for the Month

Why are goods transported by sea called a “CARgo”, whereas goods transported by road are termed a “SHIPment”?

And here’s a thing; where I used to live, there was a Tesco superstore that proudly proclaimed that it allowed ‘24 hour’ shopping...so how come there were locks on all the doors?

Acknowledgements

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

And a note from the new editor – do let me know what you like about this newsletter and what you *don’t* like (I’m very thick-skinned!). I want this to be your newsletter, not a vehicle for me to ‘show off’.

Quiz Answers

1. 30
2. 4
3. 14
4. 144
5. 42
6. 101
7. 23
8. 5 years
9. One
10. 14
11. 30
12. 9
13. Capricorn
14. 78