

## Editorial



Remember, remember, we're now in November, gunpowder, treason and plot. Welcome dear reader to this latest edition of the Newsletter. Well we're now well and truly on our final descent into the festive season, as the big store Christmas adverts are playing on commercial TV, the 2024 holidays emails and junk mails are coming through and – according to one close friend of mine – there's even been an early sighting of Easter eggs on the shopping shelves! Bah humbug!

Ever since she succeeded Clare in the late Spring/early Summer, our new chair (Susie) has been keen to 'reach out' to the membership and develop a dialog. To this end, we've held two Group Leader's forums, and these have – in the main – been successful. I am currently working with Susie and the committee to create a questionnaire on member satisfaction, and we hope to get that out to you in the very near future. The comparative success of the questionnaire about this Newsletter (albeit only based on a poll of around 15% of the overall membership) certainly helped me to get a feel for what content to include and where I could make cuts, and I thank you again for your responses. Watch this space!

I wish you all continued good health, both physical and mental. I'm a big believer in SAD (Seasonal Adjustment Disorder), and these cold and darker mornings and evenings when I've been out with the dog are beginning to take their toll on *my* outlook, I can tell you. So please wrap up warm, look in on that neighbour who lives alone and might be struggling to pay the heating bills and keep safe,

Best Wishes - Mike



## Situations Vacant

I just want to make a general appeal this month. A number of existing committee members are experiencing pressures and circumstances in their families which have caused them to want to step back from their duties in the Spring of 2024. So if there are any members who feel they can contribute towards the administration of the Witney U3A – even if you are only able to commit one or two days a month – please get in touch.

## Groups News



### Groups Looking for Members

**Writers Group 1** is looking for new members. They meet every first Wednesday at 2pm at the Methodist Church.

**History of Art** group are looking for a new member to join them – they meet on the second Tuesday of the month in Bampton. The **Sewing/Dressmaking** group, **Needlework** and **Canasta** groups are also all looking for new members.

Lastly, the **Snooker and Pool** group are looking for new members (that's my cue to say that chalk *is* provided!

### ***U3A Longer Walks Group Walk Walk around Ditchley Park, 24 October 2023***

We were fortunate to have a beautiful, Autumn Day for our walk around Ditchley Park and House. Unusually, we split into 2 groups, as some members were uncomfortable with the 7.75 mile distance and were taken on a 6 mile 'shortcut'.

Both walks, led by Liz and John Waterfall, started from Banbury Hill Farm car park and followed the Hundley Way and Saltway into Ditchley Park. We circumvented Ditchley House anticlockwise taking in fine views of this lovely Georgian mansion. The second Earl of Lichfield built the present house which was designed by the well-known architect James Gibbs in 1772. In 1933 the estate was bought by MP Ronald Tree and his wife Nancy who spent much time redecorating the building to a high standard. Churchill used Ditchley as his country retreat during WW2 as both Chequers and Chartwell were considered vulnerable to attack. In 1953 the estate was sold to Sir David Wills, president of Imperial Tobacco Company. He set up the Ditchley Foundation for the promotion of International Relations and also the Wills Charitable Trust. He donated the house to the Trust where it remains today. The estate comprises 300 acres of parkland within a further 3550 acres of farmland, all managed sustainably by the Trust. The longer walk continued on a loop via Asterleigh Wood and Asterleigh Farm, returning to Ditchley House via Shakespeare's Way. Here the group reconnected with the shorter walk route to complete the anticlockwise circuit around the house. We retraced our steps to Banbury Farm where some of us availed ourselves of the excellent culinary treats provided by the Old Shed Cafe. (**Editor's Note:** I don't know why but I read the word 'circumvented' and immediately winced and crossed my legs!).



## Speaker Meetings

**Thursday, November the 16<sup>th</sup>, Witney Methodist Church**

**'A History of Cartoons' with Ian Keable.**

Ian Keable got a degree from Oxford University, qualified as a Chartered Accountant and then became a professional magician. He now divides his time between performing magic, giving talks and researching and writing. His latest book, *'The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth-Century England'*, was published by Westbourne Press in 2021.



Ian's talk will guide us through the masters of the cartoon art form, such as John Tenniel, John Leech, David Low, Vicky, Ronald Searle, Heath Robinson, Giles and - bringing it right up to date - Gerald Scarfe, Steven Bell and Peter Brookes. (**Editor's Note:** I happen to know that there are some rather fine examples of the Suffolk cartoonist 'Giles' and his annuals on sale at the Yarnton Antique Centre, Unit 130...only £3 a copy...ahem!).

## 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.

## BT and the Digital Age



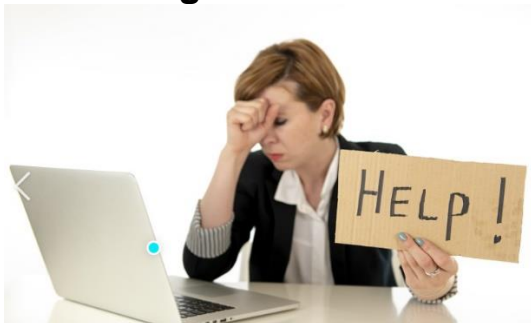
I know that many of you have 'smart phones' and like to keep up to date with new mobile technologies – you are quite comfortable in the age of 'the app'. However, in my duties as the group's IT Trainer, I also meet many members who either have no mobile at all or are still using a phone handed down to you by a son or daughter from way back. I just want to bring to everyone's attention that BT are intending to go fully digital with their phone network and have already begun a roll-out program which they aim to complete by December 2025.

What does this mean for you and I? Well, Age UK recently published a very good article on the subject which you can find [via www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/comsumer-issues/changes-to-landline-telephones/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/comsumer-issues/changes-to-landline-telephones/)

But as Corporal Jones would say, "don't panic!". In the vast majority of cases, your phone number won't need to change. And it's likely that your handset won't need to be changed either. Where customers WILL be required to change, your providers will get in touch with you, and are especially mindful of the impact the switchover may have on the over 75 age group,

And you know who *e*lse can help you? None other than...

### ...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.' The link to the public Facebook page is:

[www.facebook.com/witneyu3a/](http://www.facebook.com/witneyu3a/)

## National U3A On-line Learning

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 the 10<sup>th</sup> of November – 'The Curious History of Labyrinths and Mazes'**

Dr Julie E Bounford, historian and author, leads us through the story of these enigma.

Free – online via Zoom at 10 am.

### **Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> of November – 'Mathematical Games – Winning Strategies'**

This session will test your problem-solving skills and strategic know-how, hosted by James Grime

Free – online via Zoom at 10 am.

### **Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> of November – 'Staying Safe Online: A U3A presentation with Q&A'**

Keeping you safe in an electronic age, presented by Barry Linton.

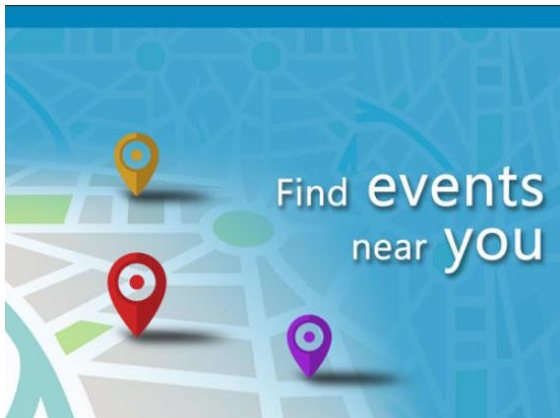
Free – online via Zoom at 10am.

## Free To A Good Home



One of our members was bought an 'Ancestry UK' 12 month membership for her birthday last month, and wants to know if anyone would like it – she has no interest in establishing her family tree. As it happens, I bought one of those packs and completed the DNA trace test. They wrote back to me and said that my grandmother was 80% Irish. I asked them how this could be, as she was from Aylesbury and was the only child of an exclusively Buckinghamshire family of many generations past, They replied “but her name was Iris – and that’s four-fifths of the word *Irish*”.

## Local Events



**November the 9<sup>th</sup>:** The Arts Society West Oxfordshire have a lecture by Alice Foster on '**Post-impressionists Cezanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh**'. 2.30pm at The Corn Exchange, Witney. Visitors welcome. £7.00 at the door.

**November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>:** **Millets Farm Christmas Craft and Gift Market.** 10am to 4.pm.

**November the 10<sup>th</sup>:** Pub quiz at The Rector's Arms. Join a team or take a team for a pub quiz at St Mary's Church, Witney. Bar opens 7.00pm, quiz starts 7.30pm. Tickets £5 per person. Proceeds in aid of St Mary's Church.

**November the 10th:** Witney Music Society presents Alessandro Fisher, Tenor and Ashok Gupta, Piano, performing **music by Schumann, Schubert and Faure**. See their website for the full programme. Concert starts at 7.30pm at the High Street Methodist Church. Tickets £15.00, available at the door or in advance from [witneymusicsociety.org.uk](http://witneymusicsociety.org.uk)

**November the 10th: Shadowing Hank, a tribute to the Shadows guitar legend Hank Marvin**, at the Corn Exchange, Witney. Show starts 7.30pm. Tickets £14.00 available from the Corn Exchange or online at [cornexchangetickets-shadowinghank.eventbrite.com](http://cornexchangetickets-shadowinghank.eventbrite.com)

**November the 11th:** Cineworld Witney is screening **Callas – Paris 1958** at 7.30pm. Repeated on the 12<sup>th</sup> @ 3:30pm

**November the 11<sup>th</sup> to December the 23<sup>rd</sup>:** West Ox Arts Christmas Show. A members-only exhibition. West Ox Arts Gallery, Market Square, Bampton. Tuesday to Saturday 11.30am 4.30pm, Sunday 2pm to 4pm, Closed Mondays

**November the 11<sup>th</sup>: Eynsham Repair Café.** A community pop-up event where people who like to fix things meet people with things to repair. Eynsham Village Hall, 2.00pm to 4.00pm. For further details see [eynsham.org.uk](http://eynsham.org.uk).

**November the 15<sup>th</sup>:** Cine Seniors, screenings for the over 60s. Cineworld Witney is screening **Oppenheimer**. Tickets £4.50. For time and details and booking visit [Cineworld.com/cineseniors](http://Cineworld.com/cineseniors)

**November the 17<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> January:** Christmas events at Blenheim Palace.

**Christmas Market** in the Great Court. A seasonal village of wooden chalets offering Christmas gift ideas and tasty treats, plus street food stalls.

Blenheim Palace is transformed to retell the story of **Sleeping Beauty** with a contemporary twist. Each room tells a chapter of the story, with plenty of festive decorations.

**Christmas light trail.** An after dark trail with a multitude of twinkling lights and seasonal sounds.

For details of all events see [www.blenheimpalace.com](http://www.blenheimpalace.com)

**November the 18<sup>th</sup>:** Coffee morning plus cake and stalls at Holy Trinity Church, Wood Green, Witney. 10am to 12.00 noon

**November the 18<sup>th</sup>:** The Corn Exchange, Witney presents **A Murder at Goodbottom Manor**. A murder mystery plus a four-course meal from Granda Bangla. 7.00pm start. £38 per person. Smart dress code. Visit [cornexchangewitney.org.uk](http://cornexchangewitney.org.uk) to book.

**November the 18<sup>th</sup>:** Cineworld, Witney are screening **2023 MET Opera Live: The Life and Times of Malcolm X** at 5.55pm.

**November the 24<sup>th</sup>: Witney Christmas lights switch on in the Market Place at 6.00pm.**

**November the 25<sup>th</sup>:** Woodstock Festive Fayre. Held in St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock, from 10am to 7pm. A wide range of stalls selling unique gifts, crafts and treats.

**November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>:** Cogges Christmas Market in the Barns. 10.00am to 4.00pm at Cogges Manor Farm. Local traders offering unique gifts, homewares, accessories and treats. Plus BBQ, music, mulled wine and mince pies. Entry fee £3.00.



**November the 26<sup>th</sup>:** Burford Singers perform **Handel's Messiah** at the Church of St John the Baptist, Burford, starting at 7.15pm. Tickets £10 - £15. For information see [www.burfordsingers.org.uk](http://www.burfordsingers.org.uk)

**November the 30<sup>th</sup>:** Lunchtime recital at High Street Methodist Church. 12.30 to 1.30pm. **St Brigitte and the Christmas Card**. Admission free.

## The Wychwood Players



If you enjoy live theatre, then why not go and see The Wychwood Players' next production which is **'Flare Path'** by Terence Rattigan.

1942. The Falcon Hotel on the Lincolnshire coast. RAF bomber pilot Teddy is celebrating a reunion with his actress wife Patricia. When Peter, Patricia's ex-lover and Hollywood heartthrob, arrives and an urgent bombing mission over Germany is ordered, Patricia finds herself at the centre of an emotional conflict as unpredictable as the war in the skies.

Performances will be from Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November to Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm. The venue is the New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood OX7 6BQ. Book your tickets via <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wychwoodplayers/>



## Outings



I've been asked to clarify the procedure for booking on outings and explain a little of what goes on behind the scenes. The U3A nationally uses the Beacon IT system for logging many of its activities, and we at Witney are no exception to that. Our Outings secretary – the wonderful Marian – compiles and maintains a list of members who have confirmed **and paid** to go on that trip. We settle the bill with the coach company around a week before the actual event, and Marian has no 'credit facility' should there be insufficient members' money up front to pay that invoice. In short – if you don't pay, your name doesn't go on the list. And once the list is filled, your only recourse will be to go on a waiting list. If you cancel on or before the day of the trip, you will only get a refund once someone from the waiting list has taken up your place.

There's nothing new about this procedure – it's always been this way. I just wanted to make sure that you knew. And if this sounds a little like a lecture, let me assure you that I'm one of the worst offenders when it comes to paying Marian on time!

## Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks as ever go to John W, Gill, Wendy, Doreen, Ralph and everybody who contributed in any way to the production of this newsletter.

## And Finally, a Witney u3a date for your diary..

I opened in the editorial talking about 'reaching out' to our members. We have a **Members Meeting** scheduled on Thursday the **30<sup>th</sup> of November**, starting at 2pm at the Methodist Church. Come along and meet members of the committee for a chat and a cuppa, and find out what we do...and how you might help us. To paraphrase the words of John F Kennedy, "ask not what your u3a can do for you, but what **YOU** can do for your u3a!". We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.