



Bicester U3A Newsletter

November 2024

Chairman's news

Approaching the end of my third and final year as chairman, it has been a successful year with a full hardworking committee. Next year will be another of change with five members leaving. Please speak to a committee member if you are interested in getting involved. Don't forget we are all



volunteers, I have said many times before, u3a is not a passive organisation, we are all expected to make some contribution; from running a group, joining the committee, to making the tea or putting out chairs. There was a New Members' Coffee morning on the 25 November. The Committee feel that is important to get to know new 'recruits' who may not know anyone else and also to hear their first impressions of our u3a and perhaps listen to their ideas for improvement. Who knows, they may wish to start new groups, or, even become a Chairman in a few years time!

We've had a fantastic response to the Christmas lunch with more than 90 members planning to attend. Val Day has done a great job organising it. We had a great u3a holiday in Northumberland, thanks to Audrey. Members had a most enjoyable trip to Batsford, my favourite arboretum, organised by Carolyn. The next trip is to the Christmas market in Stratford. Incredibly popular with members - we needed a second coach! Well done Audrey for organising it.

We have some excellent entries to the photo competition, (not the least mine!), a surprising number from the Northumberland trip. As this is my last Chairman's report, I would like to thank the committee members, past and present, for all their help and support during the last three years.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Dave Jones

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Renewal Subscription for 2025

I'm pleased to advise that the membership subscription will remain at £15 for 2025. The accounts are still looking healthy, and the committee has agreed that there is no need for an increase. Our long term strategy is to try to keep subscriptions at a steady level for as long as possible. Renewal details will be circulated early in the New Year, so no action is needed yet.

Anthony Lock, Treasurer

Raffle prizes needed

Are you able to donate a prize for the Christmas raffle? If you've got a bottle of white wine, a box of chocolates or a tin of biscuits going spare then please bring them to the November meeting so they can be put into the December raffle. Please be sure you give them to Janet on the raffle table.

Christmas Draw

A Grand Christmas Draw will be held at the November monthly meeting. Prizes of hampers worth £100, £50 and £25 will be won. All members will be entered into the draw, regardless of whether they attend the meeting and three winners will be picked, on the day, by the guest speaker. The hampers will be delivered to the winners before Christmas. This is in addition to the usual raffle.

Garth Perkins

Stratford upon Avon Victorian Christmas Market Visit

I am sorry to advise that this trip is now fully subscribed, and I cannot accept any more passengers. I have several names on the waiting list should anyone have to drop out at a later date. I now have two coaches, a 57-seat and a 19-seat booked, for Saturday, 7 December. A large variety of stalls, gifts and crafts, as well as street food and mulled wine of course, are situated in Bridge Street, Henley Street and along Waterside. The event in Stratford has had very good reviews and it isn't too far to travel. The journey time from Bicester will be about an hour. The price paid includes a tip for the driver.



Audrey Luff

40th Anniversary Banner

Hopefully you've all seen the banner displayed at monthly meetings? It was produced for the 30th anniversary of Bicester u3a by volunteers. 2026 is our 40th anniversary and volunteers are already working on ideas for a new banner.

How can you help?

- Group leaders are going to be asked to come up with a design or idea for their part of the banner
- If you can do cross stitch, embroidery or appliqué your help would be appreciated.

Contact Joy Saville if you'd like to help out, or want more information. Her details are on the information card.

Meet Garth Perkins, Vice Chairman



Sportsman, environmentalist, pilot, folk music lover and all round Action Man!

Born in Leicestershire, Garth attended Hinkley Grammar and became an air cadet from the age of 13. His dream was to become a pilot. In his school days he played for the Leicester City boys team and continued as an air cadet, eventually applying to the RAF to become a pilot. After completing trials at the interview he was told they couldn't take him on as a pilot because he is colour blind. Hopes dashed, he developed a career in construction chemicals, advising on building and construction materials. Not to forego his dream completely, he got his private pilot's licence, which he is able to use provided he always carries a radio. During his time working on the construction of the M40, he played for the Wycombe Wanderers second team.



For 10 years he worked in Jeddah and Dubai. While in Dubai he played cricket against the then England team, including players like Graham Atherton and Mike Gatting and took an England wicket! During his time abroad he became aware of what we're doing to the planet and decided to study for an honours degree in Environmental Studies with the Open University.

After getting his degree, Garth set up his own business in the UK. Advising on the environmental impact of chemicals entering the water environment and running training courses in chemical liquid spillage clear-up.



A self-described football fanatic he follows Brackley Town FC, and is a fan of Liverpool FC. A coarse fisherman, he fishes for roach on canals and rivers and is a part owner of a narrow boat moored at Dunchurch in Warwickshire.



He plays a bit of guitar and sings occasionally. His favourite folk music groups are Show of Hands and The Watsons. His favourite films are The Shawshank Redemption and Forest Gump and he reads sci-fi books about space by the likes of Jack Campbell.

He moved to Bicester after he retired. It's central location and public transport make it a good option if you can't drive for any reason and the town has plenty of leisure facilities. Since moving Garth has been busy doing up his house. A keen diy-er, he's a bit of a perfectionist, so the work is ongoing.



A member of beginners' Mah Jong and the Astronomy group, he also joined the table tennis group with his wife Val, but spent most of the time picking up balls! Since becoming Vice Chairman he's picked up some of the outstanding issues, such as developing the Emergency Plan for the Clifton Centre and organising CPR training, particularly for those group leaders involved in exercise. Garth is married to Val and has five daughters (two from his first marriage and three step daughters) and nine grandchildren.

He hopes that in his role he can bring fun and laughter to Bicester u3a - because we all need more of that.

Monthly Meeting Programme 4th Thursday 2.15 - 4pm Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester, OX26 2BH	
28 November	Liz Woolley, Brewing in Oxford
12 December	Christmas lunch, Littlebury Hotel
23 January	AGM - Clifton Centre
27 February	Jeff Evans - The Golden Age of Children's Television
27 March	Carl Whitmore - Bad History: How we got the past so wrong (from Joan of Arc to the Suffragettes).

Welcomers

Carolyn Jones is our Welcome Liaison. Her helpers are: Richard Herbert, Mary Herbert, Wyn May, Juliet Ralph, Alex Sharpe, Marguerite Scott, Pauline Smith and Joy Saville.

Please come and chat to us at a monthly meeting, if you are new to the u3a we will be happy to introduce you to a member of our Bicester group.

Say hello to our new members

The following new members joined Bicester u3a during the last few months. Please give them a big welcome when you meet them.

Elizabeth Hodgson

Angela Rodman

Sarah Gray

Marion Moore

Alison Crutchfield

Nigel Hanwell

Audrey Brooks

Gwynneth Drabble

Angela Spencer

If you change your address, telephone number or emergency contact please let Val Day know by emailing her at: membership.secretary@bicesteru3a.online

Caption competition

Thank you to those of you who entered the caption competition. We had some excellent entries. The winner was chosen by the Chairman, Dave Jones, Audrey Luff and Gill Hawkins (our two excellent proof readers). Congratulations to Ian Gedling for his caption: 'For those who missed out on the Northumberland Trip, our Chairman shows how the 'Angel of the North' appeared.'

Our thanks to Tesco, Bicester for providing the prize, which will be presented at the November meeting.



Holiday 2025

Plans for this holiday are well underway. We have reservations at the Duke of Cornwall Hotel in Plymouth, a good base for our outings and with plenty of attractions to occupy us on our coach driver's day off.



The Eden Project, The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Pencarrow House and Agatha Christie's Greenway are all part of the itinerary. Several members expressed an interest a few months ago and I will be in touch with them as a matter of courtesy. Further details will be circulated to everyone when I know what space is available.

Audrey Luff

CPR and defibrillator training

The committee decided mid year to obtain and provide CPR and Defibrillator use training for a limited number of group leaders, plus some of the committee. This decision followed a view that we should be a little more prepared for the occurrence of an incident where use of this training would help preserve life. Group leaders involved in physical activity were selected. In total 13 members received their attendance certificates and we were all pleased to have taken part. The training was carried out in October using free space kindly provided by The Littlebury Hotel.

Garth Perkins

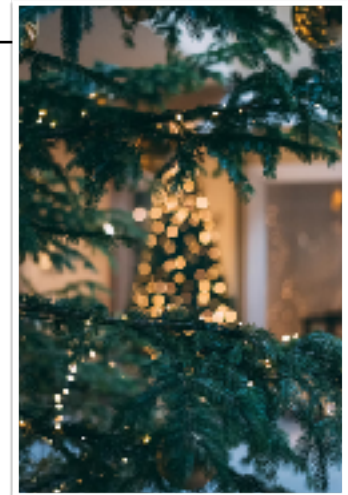
St Edburg's Church Christmas Tree Festival

St Edburg's Church annual Christmas Tree Festival is to be held from 6 - 8 December. Bicester u3a has sponsored one of the 70 plus trees that will be on display. Our tree will be decorated by the Arts and Crafts group, led by Debbie Cooper, with handmade decorations made by members of the group. Why not pop along to enjoy this festive treat?

Opening times:

Friday and Saturday 10am - 7pm

Sunday 12.30pm - 5pm.



Gill's Quiz Corner

LINKWORDS

Find a word that can be placed before or after each word to make three new words or phrases.

1. Flap, Frost, Knife
2. Corner, Start, Boxing
3. War, Play, Race
4. Free, Power, Smith
5. Count, Knock, Stairs

Answers on page 20.

Gill Hawkins



Chairman	Dave Jones
Vice Chairman	Garth Perkins
Treasurer	Anthony Lock
Business Secretary	Sylvia Frydland
Membership Secretary	Val Day
Webmaster & GDPR	Tomy DUBY
Newsletter Editor	Helena Tuckwell
Group Coordinator	Jan Laker
Programme Secretary	Gill Hawkins
Beacon Administration	George Edmundson
Welcome Liaison	Carolyn Jones

Group Coordinator's Update

The Badminton group led by Paul Cousins got off to a good start. Paul is doing a great job with a mixed ability group. The German group has undergone a slight rearrangement, it now has two new leaders and focuses on Conversational German.

A second Stitchcraft group has started thanks to Janice Williams who is organising it. The local affairs group had it's last meeting in September. Thanks are due to Pam Wakeling who started the group at the beginning of this year.

General

If you're interested in joining a group that has a waiting list, I encourage you to ask for your name to be added to the list, if it has one. Second groups are always possible.

A video has been made by Bicester u3a database administrator George Edmundson and sent to group leaders to show how they can easily keep waiting lists online.

Thanks as usual to all group leaders who continue to do a great job.

Jan Laker

Groups List

	Group	Frequency, Day and Time	Venue	Waiting list
1	Any Type of Good Music	Richard Herbert 4th Monday 2-4pm	Members' homes	
2	Art Appreciation	Val Day & Steve Procopiou 2nd Thursday 2.30-4.30pm	Bucknell Village Hall	
3a	Arts & Crafts	Debbie Cooper 1st & 3rd Monday 2-4pm	Tesco community room	yes
3b	Astronomy and Space Exploration	Jan Laker. Usually 2 nd Thursday 7-8pm	Zoom	
4	Blues Appreciation	Andrew Thomas 2 nd Friday 2-4pm	Members' homes	
5	Book Group	Audrey Luff 2nd Friday 10.30 -12noon	Bicester Library	yes
6	Bridge	Denise & David Thornton 1 st & 3 rd Tuesday 2-4pm	Launton Grange	
7	Bridge Improvers	Audrey Luff, 2 nd and 4 th Tuesdays 2-4pm	Launton Grange	
8	Bus Pass Adventures	Rennie Buxton. 4th Wednesday after 9am	Outings	yes
9	Camera Group	George Edmundson. 1st & 3rd Thursday 10-12noon	Emmanuel Church Hall and/or Outings	
10	Canasta	Doreen Shirley. Weekly, Wednesday 2-4pm	Members' homes	
11	Creative writing	Mike Wyatt 4th Friday 1.30-3.30pm	Members' homes	
12	Current Affairs	Gill Hawkins 2 nd Monday 10.30-12noon	Littlebury Hotel	
13	Cycling	Martin Williams Day varies. Every two weeks. Weather permitting.	Outings	
14	Drawing and Painting	Janet L. Hartley Mostly 2 nd & 4 th Monday 2-4pm. Spring months one meeting.	Tesco community room	
15	Exploring Classical Music	Tomy Duby 1st & 3rd Thursday 10-12noon	Zoom	
16	Family History	Charlie Wrench One to one, family history research. Day & time to suit individuals	Littlebury Hotel	
17	French beginners A French beginners B	Chris Neville Tuesday A) 2-4pm every 2wks. B) 10-12noon every 2wks.	Members' homes	
18a	French Conversation A	Julie Evans 1st & 3rd Wednesday 10.30-12noon	Members' homes	
18b	French Conversation B	Krys Kazmierczak 4 th Wednesday 10.30-12noon	Members' homes	

Groups List continued

19	Garden Visits	Dave Jones 2nd Wednesday 1pm or all day	Outings	
20	Gentle Exercise	Joy Saville Every Monday 10.30 -11.30am	St Edburg's church hall	yes
21	German	Brenda Strohm & Tomy Duby 2nd & 4th Monday 10.30-12noon	Zoom	yes
22	Jazz Appreciation	Andrew Thomas 3rd Wednesday 2-4pm	Members' homes	
23	Mah Jong	Doreen Shirley weekly Monday 2-4pm	Members' homes	
24	Mah Jong Beginners Three groups A to C	George Edmundson A) weekly Tuesdays 10-12 noon B) 2nd and 4th Wed 10-12 noon C) weekly Thursday 10-12 noon	Littlebury Hotel	
25	Murder Mystery Book Group	Mary Herbert 4th Wednesday 2-3.30pm	Members' homes	
26	Qi Gong	Denise Thornton & Audrey Luff Weekly Tuesday 10-11am	Chesterton Community Centre	
27	Return to Badminton	Paul Cousins Weekly Monday 2-3pm	Kingsmere Community Centre	
28	Rock Group	Doug Irvine 1st & 3rd Tuesday 2-4pm	Bucknell Village Hall	
29	Rummikub	Sheila McKechnie 1st and 3rd Wednesday 2-4pm	Lamb Inn Bicester	yes
30	Scrabble	Sue Barden 1st & 3rd Thursday 2-4pm	Littlebury Hotel	yes
31a	Short Walks	Mary Gough 2nd Tuesday 10:00 start	Outings	
32	Sunday Lunch	Sandie Stevenson 1st Sunday 12:30 for 1pm start	Outings	
33a	Sunday Sandwich Lunch	Pam Wakeling 3rd Sunday 12-2pm	Members' homes	
33b	Stitchcraft	Pauline Smith 1st Friday 2-4pm	Members' homes	yes
33c	Stitchcraft 2	Janice Williams 1st and 3rd Wednesdays 10-12 noon	Members' homes	yes
34	Table Tennis	Christine Cox. Weekly Thursday 10-12noon	Chesterton Community Centre	
35	Ukulele	Bill Jeffries 2nd & 4th Wednesdays 2-4pm	Blackthorn Village Hall	yes
36	Wider Horizons	Joy Saville 2nd & 4th Friday 10.30-12noon	Lamb Inn	
37	Wine Appreciation	Richard Herbert 3rd Thursday 7.30-9.30	Members' homes	
38	World religions Interfaith study	Pam Wakeling 3rd Friday 10-11.30am	Members' homes	

Any Type of Good Music

In September we had a selection of music on a theme of 'they were once in a band or group'. The selection of solo artists was wide ranging going from Roy Orbison, to Brian Wilson, Graham Nash to Mick Jagger, and many more. The October theme was 'It ain't me babe'. It looked at the early career of Bob Dylan by playing one track from each of his first 20 studio albums, but not by Bob Dylan. All bar one of the music tracks was a cover version with some very unlikely artists.

Richard Herbert



Art Appreciation

August's show and tell produced a great mix of pictures which depicted summer in different ways.

In September we warmly welcomed 10 prospective new members to the group and their first introduction was a wonderful talk about equine artist Lucy Kemp-Welch, 1869-1958. She was a British artist and teacher who specialised in painting horses, particularly wild and working horses and in WW1. She was one of the best-known female artists in Britain in the 1920s but went out of fashion when other styles of painting emerged. She's having a revival now with the publication of the latest book about her life and work.

At October's meeting we watched BBC's Simon Schama's Power of Art DVD on Rothko.

In November Steve will be giving a talk entitled "But is it Art?" If you want to know the answer to that, you'll have to be there on the 14 November!

On 2 November a group of 10 of us will be visiting the Ashmolean Museum for a bespoke talk and visit to the Exhibition "Money Talks". A look at the influence art has had on money and vice versa.

Our December meeting has been brought forward by one week due to the u3a Christmas Lunch and will be a show and tell on any piece of art members have, so it should throw up some interesting objects. This will be followed by some festive treats.

We have a large hall and can accommodate more members if you would like to join us. You don't have to stand up and speak if you don't want to and we can always help put a presentation together for you if you need it.

Steve Procopiou and Val Day

Arts and Crafts

We're getting ready for Christmas early, hoping to put a some of the lovely things we make on the u3a Christmas tree at the St Edburg's Church Christmas Tree Festival. We all had a lot of fun making macrame angels. Also we decoupage glass vases again as we really loved them the last time we did it. We've had three new members join us and I hope they are enjoying our friendly group. It's a shame but our next group meeting won't be until 2025!

Debbie Cooper





Astronomy and Space Exploration Zoom group

August-we looked at the development, launch, and new insights into the history of our universe that continue to come via the very powerful James Web Space Telescope. September-we were privileged to listen to the experiences of Steve Kuester a local man who was involved in developing the space exploration vehicle named Hygens that landed on Titan in 2005. Titan is 746 million miles away from earth! It's one of the moons of Saturn. How To Land On Titan/Ingenia gives more details for anyone interested. We were all intrigued to hear the story first hand from Steve, of the trials, tribulations and ultimate success of the project. Furthermore, we heard how the firm Steve worked for eventually became Vorticity Ltd, a company based in Charlgrove, Oxfordshire, that continues to be a main player, working with NASA as well as the European Space Agency, developing landing and descent systems for space vehicles. October-the focus was slightly nearer to Earth, we looked at the good and not so good implications of Elon Musks 'Star Link' satellite system that surrounds the Earth. We also learned what Quasars and Pulsars are.

Jan Laker

Badminton

A big thank you to those who joined the return to Badminton group. We have one court for four people, plus two areas at each end of the court. Thanks to Jan bringing a 3m net to use on one of these additional areas, players can practise their skills. We play in 20 minute blocks and then swop players around. Our aim is to have eight people but with holidays, illness, and family commitments, we're often a few short and that is where our reserves come in - they are vital to keeping the numbers up, even though they are not the same as players on a waiting list. If you are interested let me know through the group co-ordinator.

Paul Cousins



Blues Appreciation

The last two sessions have focussed on modern Blues (eg Chantel McGregor and Kyla Brox) and 'original' Blues in the form of Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon.

Andrew Thomas



Book Group

In August we met to review "Songbirds" by Christy Lefteri. Nisha has crossed oceans to give her child a future. By day she cares for Petra's daughter, at night she mothers her own child by the light of a phone. Then she vanishes and no-one seems to care. Cyprus employs huge numbers of domestic staff from various parts of the world. Many take the work to send money home to their own families. The book highlights the fact that these workers are faceless to their employers, and when Nisha disappears, even the police are not interested. We had a good discussion about this book. At times it was gruesome, harrowing and deeply disturbing. It is a sad story of two widows with young daughters, with a variety of characters. A reminder to open our eyes to what is happening in the modern world. Worth reading.

Our book choice for September was "The Fraud" by Zadie Smith. This is the author's first historical novel, based on the "Tichborne Trial" of 1873. Roger Tichborne, heir to the family title was presumed to have died in a shipwreck at the age of 25. Following extensive enquiries, a man came forward claiming to be the missing heir. A long-protracted trial followed his attempt to prove the claim. Despite the wonderful reviews, our group did not enjoy the book, finding it dull, tedious and disjointed. We agreed that we really didn't care if the claimant really was Roger Tichborne. Not a book we would recommend.

In October we met to talk about "This is going to Hurt" by Adam Kay. Scribbled diary entries after endless days, sleepless nights and cancelled weekends, this book provides a dramatic insight into the life of a junior doctor. 97-hour weeks, life and death issues and the hospital parking meter earns more than he does. Parts of the book are very funny, the sort of gallows humour that professional people revert to, just to cope in very difficult situations. Other parts had you reaching for the tissues. The group had mixed feelings. It opened our eyes to the weight of responsibly resting on the shoulders of such junior staff. Quite frightening to think about. A very thought provoking read, we would hesitate to recommend it.

Audrey Luff

Bridge

We reconvened our sessions at the beginning of September and have been playing regularly since. Unfortunately we lost one long time member but gained two new ones. The numbers playing at each session have increased and we had three and a half tables playing at the last session. This caused a lot of fun as we had only three tables in the room. It did mean that the pair sitting out each round were sent off to the library to chat. As Bicester u3a now has a new website the full results will be posted on our group page after each session should you care to check. As usual if anyone wants to join the group please contact me, either directly, or via the group co-ordinator.

Denise Thornton

Bridge Improvers

We resumed our sessions after the August break and have since welcomed three new members, all keen to practise and improve their game. Denise finds hands for us to play which revise what most of us learned in our early bridge playing, combined with some conventions and guidelines for playing competitively.

Recently we have been working on improving our defensive play. All good for those “little grey cells” and keeping our minds active. Playing regularly helps and the sessions are light-hearted and beneficial. If you have some bridge knowledge and would like to improve your play, do get in touch.

Audrey Luff



Bus Pass Adventures

Our July adventure was to Shillingford and Benson. We stopped off at the Shillingford Bridge Hotel for coffee before making our way across the Grade II Listed bridge built in 1827, to join the tow path towards Benson. It was a lovely sunny day and people on boats waved to us. When we reached Benson we had a wonderful lunch at the cafe watching the boats on the river.

Our August adventure was entitled ‘We’re going on a ‘Cow Hunt’. Throughout Oxford were 138 unique and moo-gnificent ox sculptures. We had coffee in a lovely, hidden, coffee shop alongside the old Castle wall and then walked around the City to look at the herd.

Our September adventure didn’t quite go as planned as the Bicester Bee bus to Fringford came in at the opposite end of the bus station we were waiting at, so Fringford Historic Village Trail will wait for a future month.

Plan B was decided, so we boarded the bus to Oxford and after coffee at the Weston Library and a visit to the Kafka exhibition, marking the 100th anniversary of his death, we spent a while in the Science Museum before lunching at the Ashmolean.

Rennie Buxton



Camera Club

As summer draws to an end we've continued to fit in outdoor shoots. In August we visited Oxford with the brief of photographing five iconic images of Oxford. This proved to be more difficult than I expected as Oxford is very popular at this time of year and tourists were everywhere. One of my images was of the iconic Eagle and Child pub which claims strong association with Oxford's literary greats.

The following month I arranged a private opening of the Charlbury Museum. This was very fortuitous as on the day it was pouring with rain. Two Charlbury residents kindly opened the museum and provided lots of interesting background to the exhibits. In October we visited Stowe Gardens which was hosting a display of 1,475 silhouettes of servicemen and woman who were killed on D-day. It was very moving and exceptionally well displayed. However finding them proved difficult as there were no signposts and it turned out to be a very long walk to the Grecian Valley. Though this did provide an excellent location for the display. I asked the group to produce a photo with an architectural item in the foreground and interesting background. This turned out to be very challenging especially after the long walk and emotional impact of the display.

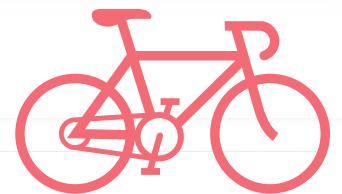
George Edmundson



Current Affairs

We have settled nicely into the Littlebury for our meetings. Plenty of lively discussions have been held there, including Reparation, Euthanasia, and Devolution. Most sessions we touched on our favourite topic, Donald Trump!

Gill Hawkins



Cycling

After a wet spring we've enjoyed some beautiful summer days with bike rides into the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire countryside. As we turn from autumn to winter we intend to carry on riding, providing it is safe to do so. Generally, we'll be riding most Thursdays, weather permitting. This will follow a routine of short rides for less experienced riders and longer more challenging rides. We would like to see a few more of our club members on our rides and of course welcome new members. I'd like to thank Wendy and Ian for their support as ride leaders over the summer.

Martin Williams

Drawing and Painting

We're coming to the end of our meetings for this year, but will recommence in January, as Tesco need the room for Xmas stock. We have two new members and will not be able to take any more due to lack of space.

Janet Hartley

Exploring Classical Music

Since my last report, we've had five meetings. Why only five when in my last report I wrote about seven? In August we decided to take a summer break and there is one meeting outstanding for October. Two meetings presented by our Bicester members are worth mentioning. John R. exposed us to songs: 20th-century English songs, American songs, songs of faith and German Lieder (yes, you have guessed, that is the German word for songs). Though songs are not my favourite classical music genre, we enjoyed very much John's selection: he showed us that there is much to explore and why it was a very personal choice. Krys K. dedicated his choice to music inspired by birds, some rather exotic, like the South American Bare-throated Bellbirds (*Procnias Nudicollis*). We also learned a good deal about his hobby of birdwatching and the bird's anatomy for singing. So, again, a personal selection of (mostly) classical music. So, as you can see, there is never a dull moment in Exploring Classical Music!

Tomy Duby



Family History Beginners

u3a-Bicester Family History Group is open to all members who have an interest in their family history. It is a tuition and help activity for those members who would like to know how to get started with their research. There are also opportunities for those members who have started their own research to discuss what they have found so far. One-to-one sessions are available with the Group Leader, or with other FH Group members who have considerable family history experience. Sessions normally take place at the Littlebury Hotel in Bicester.

Charlie Wrench

French Conversation A

Group members take it in turn to host a session and provide tea or coffee and if we are lucky, biscuits or cake. There is no set agenda for our meetings and we discuss such things as recent holidays which may have been taken in England or somewhere more exotic. Other topics might include every day inconveniences, likes and dislikes. The conversations can be very varied, sometimes serious and sometimes not so serious.

Julie Evans

French Conversation B

We have a very pleasant little group meeting twice a month at members' homes. The group is currently full.

Krys Kazmierczak

Garden Visits

What a sad quarter. I was unwell for the August visit, I was recovering from a hernia op in October and I have lost my D1 licence, so can no longer drive the minibus. But my minibus swan song in September was to Basildon Park, a superb house and garden. Formal garden designed in the mid-18th century by David Brandon, featuring Lady Iliffe's rose garden and the restored terrace balustrade. We've had some great visits this year: February we went to Kew to the Orchid festival. Great as usual. June we went to Hidcote, several members had never been before and were suitably impressed. July we went to Swiss Garden & the Shuttleworth Collection, something for everyone - absolutely brilliant! Next year we will unfortunately be returning to the format before I took over - sharing cars. We will probably only need two or three cars per visit. Several members have said they're not happy driving and would consider it unfair to go each month and never contribute, so we will make a charge in line with the usual charging policy.

Dave Jones



Gentle Exercise

Still going strong with the exercises and putting in a few dance moves to aid co-ordination and suppleness. We really enjoy our Monday morning sessions, they get us going for the week ahead. Please join us if you feel you would like some exercise with friends.

Joy Saville

German Conversation

We have just begun this new face-to-face group meeting twice a month at the Littlebury. We are open to having another member or two, but anyone wishing to join needs to be able to hold at least a basic conversation in German.

Krys Kazmierczak



Jazz Appreciation

We've had a couple of excellent sessions with a mix of Trad Jazz, Big Band Jazz and well-known singers including Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and Cleo Laine.

Andrew Thomas

Local Affairs

Just to say that sadly Local Affairs is in 'temporary abeyance'. I'm hopeful we may restart next year. I felt it needed more preparation re input and topics. So watch this space ...

Pam Wakeling

Mah Jong Beginners

A year on, just over, and the majority of the then 'beginners' continue to meet and enjoy the game, the banter and the sociability that meeting together on a regular basis brings. When we all assembled last year at the Littlebury to understand the basics, some of us remembered a little from playing back in the mists of time, some complete newbie's and some who had more recent playing experiences. We were sort of



thrown together in a group of about 25, not at all sure about what we had let ourselves in for but, all with one common denominator. An enthusiasm to learn this peculiar Chinese game of twittering and Kong's and characters and the initially confusing set of rituals and rules and lots of other stuff! For the first weeks we wrestled with the do's, don'ts, winds and dragons, wriggly snakes, knitting and honours, and then, suddenly it seemed, we had sufficient knowledge (and hope) to be off on our own and were divided up into the three beginner groups. They're still going strong. One or two individuals have dropped out, but the rest of us have stayed and I think that several of us have now really developed a strong grasp of the game and continue to learn. So what is the 'glue' that brings us out every week? I asked several players this question. Members said "the game is a mixture of luck, strategy and I love playing", "I learn something new about the game every week", "I enjoy the challenge of having to manipulate my hand to go MAHJONG", "it's fun and everyone is now a new friend", "we have good banter whilst trying to beat everyone else..I like to win and learn a lot when I lose", "being part of a happy group enjoying something to meet up for."

Seems to me Mah Jong and the principles of the u3a are rightly aligned LEARN, LIVE, LAUGH

Garth Perkins

Murder Mystery Book Group

September 2024 - Those People by Louise Candlish.

Until Darren and Jodie move into Lowlands Way, it is a suburban paradise. Beautiful homes, friendly neighbours, kids playing out in the street. Darren and Jodie, do not follow the rules and soon disputes over loud music and parking rights escalate to threats of violence. Then early one Sunday, a horrific crime shocks the street. As Police go house to house, the residents close ranks and everyone's story is the same, "Darren and Jodie did it," but there is a problem, the Police don't agree, so everyone is worried that their door will be the next one chosen by the Police.

October 2024 - Murder on an Oxford Canal by Faith Martin.

Meet Detective Inspector Hillary Green in the Oxfordshire Constabulary fighting to save her career. Not only has she lost her husband, but his actions have put her under Internal Investigation for corruption. Then a bashed and broken body is found floating in the Oxford Canal. It looks like an accidental death but Hillary is not so sure. Her investigation exposes a dark truth and she is not about to let anyone stop her going after the killer. Can Hillary clear her name and get to the bottom of a fiendish conspiracy on the water?

Mary Herbert

Qi Gong

Since the report in the August newsletter, we've resumed our weekly sessions at the Chesterton Community Centre. The timing was just right given the recent spell of wet weather. Our attendance numbers have been gradually increasing during October as the holiday season nears its end and it has been nice to catch up with old friends we have not seen during the summer months. We lost some old members and gained some new ones and are now at full capacity with three people on the waiting list. We're all enjoying the exercises and hear from Tania that we are to expect some new ones in the coming weeks.

Denise and Audrey

Rock Group

The Rock Band have had an exciting summer. We played at the Marsh Gibbon beer festival as the first gig with our current line up. There are some new songs in our set list and rehearsals are going well.

We'll be playing at the Torino Lounge in Bicester on Sunday 17 November and then have the support slot for a private function at the end of November.

Doug Irvine



Scrabble

We are all thoroughly enjoying our games at the Littlebury hotel. Our numbers have increased which is great. It was agreed at our last session that we will go back to starting at 2pm and finishing at 4pm. Most of our members drive to the hotel, and now the darker evenings are approaching, it will be better for them to drive home earlier.

Sue Barden

Short Walks

In August the short walks group took a stroll around Bicester's green spaces. We started at Bure Park shops and walked to the Kingsmere Estate and back. Some of us had lunch at the Bure Farm pub afterwards. Our September walk started from Caulcott. We walked across the fields to Aves Ditch where we passed an enormous field full of pigs before returning to the village. It was fascinating to watch them. October's walk started from Great Tew. We walked past the church out of the village, passing the Beckham's Farm and Soho Farm to Little Tew and back. We had lunch in the Falkland Arms afterwards.

Mary Gough



Stitchcraft

The new Stitchcraft group started on 2 August with a lively gathering of very talented ladies. We have knitters, crocheters, quilters, ribbon crafters and beadwork. Their work is beautiful and so professional. It's an opportunity to learn a new craft by watching other ladies. Tea and coffee is provided and the afternoon passes very quickly with lots of chat. It's a relaxing afternoon doing the craftwork that we love doing.

Pauline Smith

Sunday Lunch

We are off to Denis's the Turkish restaurant in Bicester. It's always a very popular venue. Perhaps because we are always made to feel very welcome by Metin, the owner, and never feel rushed. It's a complete change from some of the other restaurants we frequent. The price is reasonable and we can pay separately.

Sandie Stevenson

Sunday Sandwich Lunch

This continues on the third Sunday of each month, we vary in number, but that's ok and expected and we still have fun. Very informal, very chatty and very friendly. One can bring along knitting, crossword, or games or any variation or none! I have space for a few more, so don't hesitate to contact me. My number is on the Information Card. Parking is no problem as Alchester Medical Centre is next door and they've been kind enough to agree to parking for this venture

Pam Wakeling



Table Tennis

This is an ideal time to join us if you have been thinking of taking up Table Tennis again!

What with illness, holidays and other constraints, numbers have been fluctuating, so if you have played in the past, however long ago, do come along and meet us. We're a very friendly group, and everyone mixes in together, regardless of standard. We play doubles at Chesterton Community Hall (at the end of Vespasian Way) on four tables from 10am - 11.45ish with a break to relax. To find out more, just ring me - my number is on the Information Card and/or come and talk to me at a general meeting as I'm usually there.

Christine Cox

Ukulele

The Ukulele group continues to grow in confidence with every performance we do. We're fully booked for performances till the year end and also have a couple of performances booked for next year.

A new member has joined the group and has settled very quickly into taking an active part in all we do... We've recently entertained residents at Bartletts Care Home in Stone, Bucks, and the members of The Bicester Methodist Wives Club.

Bill Jeffries

Wider Horizons

We are enjoying meetings at the Torino Lounge on Sheep Street. It's nice to meet up with friends and catch up with what everyone has been doing for the last two weeks. It is just a 'drop in when you can group' - you don't have to attend every time.

We've had an enjoyable visit in August to Sulgrave Manor, a Grade 1 listed building, built by the ancestors of George Washington. It was opened just for us and we had a lovely guide who told us lots of stories about the house. Do come and join us on the 2nd and 4th Fridays 10.30am in the Torino Lounge you will be most welcome.

Joy Saville

Wine Appreciation

Our August wine selection was a wine from each of the top six best selling wine brands. My favourite was a Shiraz from Hardy's, closely followed by a Sauvignon Blanc from Isla Negra. A pink Moscato from the Barefoot brand didn't fare so well with the members tasting that evening.

In September my favourite was again a Shiraz but this time a Gran Reserva from Chile. In the whites, a Sauvignon Blanc from the Marlborough region of New Zealand. October had a couple of fun innovations. We all have difficulty in defining the 'nose' or scents of a wine, so we had a selection of six scents from a perfume smelling kit to see if we could identify specific scents. We were not very good at defining some of these scents - vanilla, jasmine, lavender and cinnamon. We were better with lemon and orange.

Turning to the wines we reflected Sober October by including an alcohol free white and red wine. Sadly neither were very nice and scored poorly. In the white selection a Sauvignon Blanc from the Aconcagua Valley in Chile came out top just beating another Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand. For reds, a Merlot from the Pays d'Oc in France came out best followed by a Claret from Chez Michel in Bordeaux.

Richard Herbert



World Religions

We are a smallish group, looking at the world's different religions, from Paganism, to Catholicism, Islam etc. It's been an eye opener to realise just how many there are. Alongside each religion we have an action/feeling such as silence, meditation, ritual and how this interacts over the various religions. It's been amazing to discover how many similarities there are within the practice of different religions.

At the end of each session we 'blind choose' the next month's two topics so we have time to prepare. We have space for two or three more so if interested contact me. My number is in the Information leaflet.

Pam Wakeling

Answers Gill's Quiz Corner

1. Jack
2. Kick
3. Horse
4. Will
5. Down

Bicester U3A General Notices

- **News of Members:** If you know of someone who is ill, PLEASE let one of the Committee know so that we can arrange to send a card or perhaps have someone make a visit.
- **Honorary Members:** When existing members reach the great age of 90 years, we like to mark the occasion by sending them a card and making them Honorary members of Bicester U3A. As we have no record of dates of birth, we rely on group leaders and friends to let us know when these happy events are approaching.
- **Internet and Email:** If you have internet access and are able to receive future editions of the newsletter by email, please contact the Membership Secretary. We try hard to deliver paperwork to members with no email but sometimes it is necessary to use the post, which does increase costs.
- **Personal Details:** The Membership Secretary keeps a master list of your personal details. Please remember to advise her if you move house, change your telephone number or email address in order to keep our records up to date and keep in touch.
- **Equipment Register:** These items are available to borrow by U3A interest groups. Contact the keeper to arrange a loan
- **Committee Members:** Dave Jones (Chairman), P.A. System and digital projector, screen, “iRoar” P.A. System and blue tooth speaker. George Edmundson, Nobo 3 panel desktop display boards (with cover). Audrey Luff, laminator and free-standing flip chart stand/whiteboard. Val Day guillotine.
- **Clifton Centre:** Hinged notice board, floor standing projector screen, projector stand, U3A banner. tea urn with stand.
- **Refreshments:** Refreshments at monthly meetings are prepared by group members. Sue Wilde will approach leaders with a request for assistance and compile a rota. Please help if you can. Supplies are maintained by Sylvia Frydland.
- **Raffle:** The raffle at monthly meetings is organised by Jan and Alan Marshall.

Press dates: articles for inclusion in the February 2025 newsletter must be submitted by 31 January 2025.

Please note this is an absolute deadline. You can contact the editor by emailing newsletter.editor@bicesteru3a.online.

bicester.u3asite.uk

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