EDITION #101

Bicester u3a Newsletter

November 2026

Chairman's news



Hello everyone.
So, Halloween has gone and Christmas is around the corner, not many days away. Can't believe it is nearly 12 more months gone, seems to have passed in a flash. But! We have crammed a lot into our 40th year.

What a hot year we have all had to endure. The recent rains have been welcome and revived our natural greenery and begun to replenish the depleted reservoirs. We could have done without the damaging gales though. Sign of the times I'm afraid. Even with all that heat, what a year it's been. So many things planned and achieved.

The Groups' Fayre in January, a great success, the 40th Anniversary at The Littlebury, receiving our new banner, the annual holiday to Chester and now a look forward to carolling in St. Edburgs Church and our traditional Christmas luncheon.

But that's only half of our story. Nearly all of our groups did something a bit special to celebrate 40 years. I went up to the Brill Windmill site to witness the partial eclipse with the Astronomy group, and sat out later in blackness to count meteors as Earth passed through the Perseids meteor shower. Well done to everyone who organised and participated in celebrating this special year.

A couple of special notes. Our in-house historian, Charlie Wrench, has produced 'Our Story' the first 40 years history of Bicester u3a which Krys has now published on the website.

The Treasurer, Anthony Lock, has shown his true colours of dogged persistence with 'The Man' from HMRC. A great result – Hurrah! We got our gift aid approved and the money will be/has been added to our accounts this year.

Also a thank you to all the Committee members and Group Leaders who have worked so diligently to make our organisation such fun for everyone. Thanks.

I look forward to seeing you on 26 November at the Clifton Meeting, Christmas luncheon on 10 December and Carolling at St Edburgh's Church on the 21 December.
Stay well.

Kind Regards Garth

Christmas Come and Sing

Please see the details on our website here:
https://bicester.u3asite.uk/come-and-sing-christmas/

If you know someone who would like to attend but does not have the internet please ask them to speak to a committee member.

Residential Holiday Derbyshire Peak District Tour - Members only



Find details of the residential holiday on the website here:
https://bicester.u3asite.uk/trips-and-outings/

Audrey Luff
Book Group Leader

2027 Subscriptions

I am pleased to tell you that we will be able to maintain our subscriptions at £15 for full members or £11 for associate members for 2027. Despite having spent some of our funds to promote the 40th Anniversary as planned, the increase in membership and the fact that there will hopefully be two sets of Gift Aid payments in this year's accounts means that we will end the year very close to where we started. This means we can easily hold subscription levels at the same amount for a few more years yet.

As requested at the AGM, the committee has been looking at whether it is possible to set up a method of renewing online without having to fill in a form with the same information year on year. We think we have been successful in doing that.

Details of how members will be able to take advantage of that system will be circulated in early December. Don't worry - if you prefer to renew in the same way as you have done previously then that will still be possible.

Anthony Lock
Treasurer

Hampton Court Trip



The trip to Hampton Court was a great day out for everyone. See details on our website here:
https://bicester.u3asite.uk/trips-and-outings/

Gill Hawkins, Programme Secretary

St Edburg's Christmas Tree Festival



Bicester u3a is once again taking part in one of the town's loveliest seasonal traditions – the St Edburg's Church Christmas Tree Festival. Open from 11-13 December, this year, there are two Bicester u3a trees. One depicting the u3a's groups and a tree sponsored by the Ukulele group (who will be performing on Saturday from 11am for 45 minutes).

We warmly invite all members (and friends) to come along and see the beautiful displays. It's a lovely opportunity to enjoy the festive atmosphere, admire the trees decorated by local groups and organisations, and enjoy the twinkling lights in this beautiful church.

Open times:
Friday 11 December: 10am - 7pm
Saturday 12 December: 10am - 7pm
Sunday 13 December: 12.30pm - 5pm
followed by Carols in the Trees at 6pm.

	Monthly Meeting Programme 4th Thursday 2.15 - 4pm Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester, OX26 2BH
26 November	Sean Callery - Christmas in the Cotswolds (cards, carols and crackers (from Advent to Yule logs)
10 December	Christmas lunch, Littlebury Hotel
28 January	Annual General Meeting

Welcomers

Our welcomers are Carolyn Jones, 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.

Gill's Quiz



The first letter of each of the answers spells what word?

1. How many spaces are on a standard monopoly board
2. First name of the artist who sang 'Sittin' on the dock of the bay'
3. King who died at the Battle of Bosworth
4. After Alaska what is the 2nd largest state in USA
5. Another name for the Abominable Snowman

Answers on page 16.

New Newsletter Editor

I'll be handing over to Trish Hallam who will be newsletter editor from the next edition. I'd like to thank all those who have contributed to the newsletter over the last three years. Massive thanks go to **Audrey Luff**, who has very kindly proofread the newsletter for many years. I am especially grateful to Audrey as I didn't know very much about Bicester u3a when I first started and she was able to ensure I got things right. A big thank you also to **Gill Hawkins**, who has provided the quiz every edition. They are always challenging and fun and must take a while to put together. Thank you to Trish for agreeing to take over.

Helena Tuckwell

Group Coordinator's Update

There are currently 58 Bicester u3a groups (including multiple groups for some activities).

Group News

The Mah Jong Improvers Group and the Chess Group are still open to new members. There have been three new Groups which have just been set up, namely, Exploring Meditation Together, Tai Chi Chih and Wine Appreciation Group 2. The Tai Chi Chih Group was oversubscribed and currently has a waiting list. The first meeting took place on 22 October and went well. The Exploring Meditation Together Group is also fully subscribed. The Wine Appreciation Group 2 has space for one additional member. Please let the Group Leader, Sylvia Frydland, know if you would like to join the group. My thanks to Marion Harris, Karen Fill and Sylvia for taking on the respective Group Leader roles for these new groups.

Moving on and the future

As mentioned previously, there is considerable demand for other activities that are currently over-subscribed and have waiting lists including the Arts and Crafts and Bridge Groups. There is therefore a need to set up second groups for those activities with waiting lists. If anyone is interested in acting as Group Leader for those topics or are currently on a waiting list for another group, then please contact me by email: group.coordinator@bicesteru3a.online or speak to a committee member and I can explain what would be involved and the availability of mentoring to get you started.

Wendy Smith

Any Type of Good Music

At one of our recent sessions we listened to all of the number 1s on October 26 from 1953 (when the pop charts started) up to 1986. The 26 of October was the date of the meeting. Surprisingly none of the artists with multiple No.1s featured in the selection. Perhaps this was due to the "big-hitters" waiting for the Xmas releases, so no Elvis, No Beatles, no Cliff, no Madonna, no Elton. The only entry in the "most No.1s" listing was Take That, and that didn't happen until 1994.

We started in 1953 with Frankie Laine, 1954 with Don Cornell through Jimmy Young, Paul Anka, Connie Francis and Bobby Darin. Then things became a bit more up to date with Roy Orbison, Helen Shapiro and the Tornados. More up to date were the Bee Gees, Rod Stewart, Art Garfunkel, The Buggles and Culture Club.
How some of the records got to No,1 is a mystery – think "Mouldy old dough" by Lieutenant Pigeon, or "Eye level" by Simon Park Orchestra, or "That's what I like" by Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers. What records were kept off the top of the charts by these songs?

If anyone else is interested in listening to a varied selection of music with associated chat please contact me or the Group Coordinator.

Richard Herbert

Art Appreciation

Our group is growing and we regularly get 20 members each month, the hall can accommodate more so we are always happy to welcome new appreciators.

In August our meeting took the form of a show and tell on a favourite painting. Steve produced a slide show of the pictures nominated by members (thank you Steve). So many interesting and diverse paintings, what a treat.

September was thankfully a lot cooler, and we were lucky enough to have an outside speaker from another u3a, Simon Evers from Weston Turville, who gave us a wonderful insight into "Problem Victorian paintings" explaining why all was not always as we seem to think revealing some of the symbolism used in the pictures.

In October we had another external speaker, Pat Snelson, who has spent several years leading projects on Bicester's architectural history for the Bicester Local History Society and regularly leads walks around the town's buildings. She gave a very informative and interesting talk about Bicester's Victorian Gothic Revival Buildings.

In November, Julie will be giving us a talk called Cutting through the Noise: Women who Changed Art with Collage and December will be a show and tell by members on any piece of art/china/glass etc they have in their home which they love and the reasons why - followed by some festive treats.

Steve Procopiou and Val Day

Astronomy and Space Exploration

The universe was on our side to celebrate the group 40th anniversary celebration on 12 August. A few minutes after 7pm that evening was the peak of a significant solar eclipse. It happened exactly at the time and date we usually meet (7pm, 2nd Wednesday)!



Ten of us, including friends and family of the u3a Astronomy group, met on Brill Hill, facing west near the Windmill to view the eclipse. Brill Hill was packed, at a wild guess there were 250 or 300 people on and around the hill!



At the peak of the eclipse our group popped the Prosecco and drank to our astronomical adventures together, to the occasion and to new beginnings. We enjoyed a delicious fruit platter and eclipse stories, ideal for the occasion. We all had eclipse glasses. The special glasses are fun and quite remarkable to enable viewing of an enormous event that otherwise passes by barely noticed without them. (I have about 15 pairs if anyone wants a pair for the 2027 eclipse season.)

I couldn't believe our luck when I found that the peak of the Perseids meteor shower was the same night! After celebrations at Brill Hill, four of us including our intrepid chairman Garth, and three adventurous women went to Kirtlington, where we put up our loungers and lay, or sat, with low light pollution in the middle of a field. Foxes were calling, and bats flying overhead; we stayed, looking skyward counting meteors until 12.30am. Apparently, the average amount of meteors viewable per hour in a non designated dark sky area is 25. I'm delighted to say that, together, we counted 21 meteors, a decent number.

A thoroughly enjoyable evening, maybe especially for me because, believe it or not, I had never seen a meteor (shooting star) before!

Jan Laker

Blues Appreciation

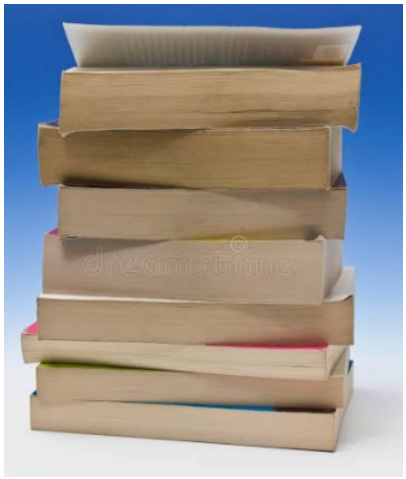
Summertime was the August Blues theme. And what a Summer we've had, matched only by Denise's great selection of music. Side 1 began with Eddie Cochran's version of Summertime Blues. Following were great songs including: Ice Cream Man by Van Halen; I feel so good by J B Lenoir; Walking in the sand by Imelda May; The sun is shining by Elmore James; and many others. Side 2 reprised Summertime Blues, this time by the very wonderful duo of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. We were then treated to being Alone on the Delta by Tom Davies and the Bluebirds; Catch Me by Johanna Red; Can ya handle the heat by Samantha Fish; Bright Lights by Gary Clark Jr; and Bruce Springsteen enchanting the audience with Waiting on a Summer Day.

September brought us Adrian's personal musical journey (Part 1 1957 – 1970) and began with Hound Dog sung by Elvis Presley. The journey continued with some wonderful tracks including: Peggy Sue (Buddy Holly); Surfin' USA (Beach Boys); We gotta get out of this place (Animals); Penny Lane (Beatles); Little Red Rooster (Rolling Stones); Like a Rolling Stone (Bob Dylan); Baba O'Reilly (The Who); Baby What You Want Me To Do (John Mayall). After tea and cake we continued on Adrian's musical journey with: The Weight (The Band); Hey Joe (Jimi Hendrix); White Room (Cream); Keep on Runnin' (Spencer Davis group); Knockin' on Heaven's Door (Sandy Denny); Smoke on the Water (Deep Purple); and Blowin' Free (Wishbone Ash). We finished by all contemplating our own musical journeys!

October's Blues DJ was Sylvia who provided a heady mix of Blues-Rock. While it included some classic songs by The Rolling Stones (Gimme Shelter), Fleetwood Mac (The Chain), Thin Lizzie (Still In Love With You), The Beatles (She's Leaving Home), Dire Straits (Private Investigations) and Gary Moore & Phil Lynott (Parisian Walkway), we were introduced to some new artists including Connor Selby (The truth comes out eventually) and Greta Van fleet (Saw you stand). Paul Simon's 'Sound of Silence' was given a very distinctive and powerful treatment by a new band to me – Disturbed. The session ended with three poignant songs, beginning with 'Archangel' by the band Catfish. Sadly, Catfish's frontman – Matt Long – passed away on the 6 October 2024. He was described as *'one of its brightest lights…known for his electrifying guitar work, soulful vocals, and a stage presence that could fill any room'.* His legacy lives on through his father Paul Long (ex keyboards player in Catfish) who is the lead vocalist and keyboard player in Burning Rope whose song 'Before the Landslide' was the penultimate song in the session. The finale was a wonderful version of 'With a little help from my friends' performed by many of his friends and bandmates. The Benefit concert was recorded and released on CD with all profits going to the Royal Surrey County Hospital, which cared for Matt.

Andrew Thomas

Book Group



Our Book choice for August was **"Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe" by Fannie Flagg.**

The café opened in 1929 and became the heart of the community of Whistle Stop, a small town close to the railroad. Racial tension existed in the deep south in the 20's and the book deals with that and other problems which still exist to the present day. The story is at times, funny, sad and inspiring. There is a strong theme of family and friendship, recognising the intrinsic goodness of people. An interesting story but not to everyone's taste.

At our September meeting we talked about **"The Wrong Sister" by Claire Douglas.**

Sisters, Alice and Tasha, couldn't be more different. Tasha is married to Aaron and has two young children Alice is a scientist who travels the world with her successful husband, Kyle. Alice offers to look after the children while Tasha and Aaron go away to celebrate their anniversary. A call comes from home, Alice is in intensive care and Kyle is dead. Then the note arrives, addressed to Tasha… "it was supposed to be you". There are several threads to this story, and the group had mixed feelings about it. Most thought it was a good yarn, plenty of red herrings and an unexpected ending. It was an easy read and promoted a good discussion.

In October we gathered to review "**Man at the Helm" by Nina Stibbe.**

Lizzie's newly divorced Mother is thirty-one years old and trapped in a hostile village in the English countryside. In the 1970s, not having a husband is bad, the village women think Lizzie's Mother is after their husbands – and no one will let the children into the Brownies. This is a comedy, with childlike solutions to family problems. At times it's a very sad story and gives a great deal of insight into life at the time and children dealing with domestic details, all the time hoping they would not be taken into care.
Most of us enjoyed the book and we had a lively discussion about the points raised in it. An easy, unusual read.

Audrey Luff

Bus Pass Adventures



Our adventure for August was a walk along the Thames. We caught the bus from Bicester to Oxford and then the Reading bus to Shillingford. From the main road we walked to the Shillingford Bridge Hotel for coffee. The bridge is Grade II listed and is half way between Oxford and Reading. It's a balustraded stone bridge built in 1827. We then walked along the Thames Path to Benson, where we had a lovely lunch at the Benson marina. It was a hot day, but the walk was mainly shaded by trees. We then caught the bus home.



Our adventure in September was to Buckingham. We caught the bus from Sainsbury's to Buckingham Market Square and went for a coffee at a quaint tea shop, before setting off for a lovely walk along the River Great Ouse. When we arrived at the point where you have to go along the road to meet the river again there was a sign saying that we couldn't get over the river at the University, so we followed the Town Trail Historic walk through Buckingham. By the time we had nearly reached the town again we found a lovely place to eat called the Laura Ashley Tea Rooms, where we replenished ourselves before catching the bus home.



Rennie Buxton

Canasta

There are a couple of spaces on the Canasta group. The group meets weekly on Wednesday afternoons. If you are interested please contact me or the group co-ordinator.

Doreen Shirley

Cycling Group



The cycling group has had two rides in October. The first one five of us managed to thread a route through the many closed roads east of Bicester to the Claydon National Trust cafe 'The Phoenix Kitchen'. Blue skies and sunshine made it a very pleasant cycle.

The second trip was a cycle to Croughton Tea rooms where four of us enjoyed the good food on offer. We had originally planned for a Friday cycle but the threat of Storm Austen heavy rain and 40 mph winds pushed us to change the day to Thursday and the promise of sunshine.

Ian Baldwin

Drawing and Painting

We are carrying on meeting at Tesco community room and we are booked in for next year. The 4th Monday in October will be our last until January. We will meet informally a couple of times before Christmas. We do have space if anyone wishes to join us.

Janet Hartley

Exploring Classical Music

We continue to meet twice a month on Zoom. This group has a combined membership of our u3a and the Interest Groups Online, (the nationwide u3a that meets exclusively online). It has more than 50 members. About half of them regularly participate in our meetings.

Most of the time, one member prepares a selection of (mostly classical) music worth exploring, that we may want to listen to a second time. Recently, Jane, a member from Denmark, shared with us her country's music. It was new and very interesting. And in the last meeting, our member, John R., gave an excellent talk with many musical examples on an English composer, Gerald Finzi. Do you know his music? Until now, I did not!

The group meeting dynamics have changed over the last year. Having more than 20 actively participating members means that often we have a lively discussion that I must moderate to give everybody a chance to have their say.

Tomy Duby

Family History

As the hours of daylight get shorter, some find that an alternative to watching television is welcome. There are plenty of options of course. Listening to music, reading for pleasure, or studying a new subject, are just a few. There is also researching family history. In the August Newsletter I spoke about summer activities. Now that Autumn is upon us, it is necessary to consider what can be done online. There are lots of ways to do this and sometimes it can be daunting to chose between the many providers. Of course there is no simple answer to making a choice; it all depends on what you want to know. Sometimes, talking through the options available can be helpful. If you would like to know more, please get in touch.

One other matter: Registration for the RootsTech-2027 conference is now open for those who would like to watch family history lectures online for free.

Good luck with hunting down those ancestors.

Charlie Wrench

Jazz Appreciation

Jazz Appreciation has been in abeyance over Summer. It returns in October.

Andrew Thomas

Garden Visits

On the 12 August we visited Hidcote and Kiftsgate. Two lovely gardens very close together. Hidcote particularly is one of my favourite gardens and while there, as well as all the flowers, we were treated to a wonderful saxophone recital in a lovely setting. Kiftsgate is a delightful garden and even has a swimming pool, but it was a long way down the hill and even further back up on one of the hottest days of the summer.

On the 9 September we visited Waterperry. An old favourite that never lets you down. lots to see, Lots of interesting plants. Last time I went I spent most of the time in the museum, well worth a visit with well informed volunteer curators.

On the 14 October we went to Batsford Arboretum. Always a favourite for autumn colours and there were plenty. I found it rather hard work pushing Lesley round in a wheelchair, there is a sizeable hill!

Having been assisted by Tricia Hallam this year, I am now stepping down as leader and she is taking over, I am sure she will do a great job.

Dave Jones



Mah Jong

There are a couple of spaces on the Mah Jong group, which meets weekly on Monday afternoons. The group is an advanced group that only plays 'special hands'. We are a friendly group and will be tolerant of anyone who thinks they may like to try a game. Please contact me or the group co-ordinator.

Doreen Shirley

Mah Jong Seasons

We have welcomed a new member to the group and are now back up to the full quota of 12 - (three tables of four players).

Alison Crutchfield

Murder Mystery Book Group

July - The Trial by Rob Rinder.
When hero policeman Grant Cliveden dies from poisoning in the Old Bailey, it threatens to shake the country to the core. The evidence points to one man, Jimmy Knight who has been convicted of multiple offences before and defending him will be no easy task. Not least because this is trainee barrister Adam Green's first case. But it quickly becomes clear that Jimmy Knight is not the only person in Cliveden's past with an axe to grind. The only thing that's certain is that this is a trial that will push Adam - and the justice system itself - to it's limits.

September - Watching You by Helen Fields.
A face in the crowd. A killer in the shadows... On the dark streets of Edinburgh, a killer is waiting. When a body is found, it is only the beginning. Soon there will be seven more. In the city's hospital a renowned surgeon is grieving at the loss of her beloved only daughter who had fallen prey to a vicious stalker a year previously - and now he is coming for her too. After one body comes another and another. The brutal deaths are all seemingly unconnected and yet DS Lively and forensic profiler Dr Connie Woolwine know they are dealing with a serial killer - they just need to prove it. Time is running out and The Watcher is already set on making Beth Waterfall his next victim.

October - Hope to Die by Cara Hunter.
Self defence or murder? DI Fawley has to determine if someone has staged a crime scene in connection with another homicide from years past. A grisly murder scene at an isolated farm on the outskirts of Oxford. A man lies dead in the kitchen - shot at point blank range. The farm's elderly owners claim the shooting was self defence against a burglar. But something about the crime scene doesn't sit right with DI Adam Fawley, whose gut tells him there's more to the story. If the victim came to rob the house why wasn't he wearing gloves or carrying any tools? Why didn't the owner ring the police right after the shooting? Why did his wife wash his blood splattered clothes immediately? Digging deeper, the police realise this in no ordinary burglary gone wrong. There's an unmistakeable link to an infamous case from years earlier involving a child's murder and alleged miscarriage of justice. When the news leaks out, the press goes wild. Suddenly Fawley's team are under tremendous pressure to crack the case and to bring one formidable criminal to justice.

Mary Herbert

Needlefelt groups



Both needlefelt groups continue to develop their skills. Over the last couple of months we have all made polar bears and felted pictures. Some members have started their own projects outside of the group. Gill Barber is making a beautiful horse.

Helena Tuckwell

Pub Quiz

A new venture for us was the Noughts and Nibbles quiz in aid of the Mayor's charities. There was a small prize of nibbles for the table for each round. We won four of the five rounds. We'll be entering teams in the future quizzes there.

Quizzes at the Bure Farm have started up again. At the last one we would have come joint second but the team marking our paper made a mistake and marked a correct answer as incorrect. No hard feelings.

Two of us went to a quiz at St Edburg's church. We joined a team with two other ladies who turned out to be u3a members, although not in the pub quiz group. We named the team u3a and won first prize!

We continue to struggle with the quizzes at the Nightingale every week and the Littlebury every two months. But we have fun trying.

Alison Crutchfield

Scrabble



Scrabble continues to be popular, with Group A full and Group B growing. It runs on alternate Monday afternoons so if you'd like to join us do get in touch.

Members of both groups got together on an afternoon in August to celebrate 40 years of Bicester u3a with a garden party. Everybody contributed food or drink and we managed a few games of Scrabble in the sunshine. There are more photos of this fun occasion on the Scrabble Group page of the Bicester u3a website.

Karen Fill

Short Walks



In August, fourteen people walked from Kidlington Church to Thrupp and back. We stopped near Annie's Café and watched the boats. It was a very warm sunny day.

The weather was very different for our September walk. It was pouring with rain. We went for a short walk around Bure Park Nature Reserve and then went for coffee at the Emanuel Church on Bure Park. There were only six of us.

In October we walked from Market Square in Bicester to Jubilee Lake on the Langford Village estate. We started off in the rain but the sun came out after a short while.

Mary Gough

Sunday Sandwich Lunch

Between six and ten members usually attend. Noise levels of chat and laughter would indicate ten times that number! Everyone goes home having had a friendly chat and good coffee. The group is full at the moment but if anyone is interested in joining please get in touch and I will start a waiting list .

Pam Wakeling

Table Tennis



Our table tennis group kept playing throughout the summer, despite the heat! Now that the cooler weather has arrived, it's lovely to see our numbers increasing once again.

We had another special birthday to celebrate this summer, when Adrienne Lee reached the wonderful milestone of 80 years young!

We're always happy to welcome new members who have played table tennis before, even if it was many years ago, or who have experience of another racquet sport. Unfortunately, we're unable to accommodate complete beginners as we don't have a coach. We meet every Thursday in Chesterton Community Centre from 10am to 11.45am, with a short break halfway through for a rest and a chat.

If you fancy coming along and giving us a try, we'd be delighted to hear from you!

Kate Boyes

Ukulele Group

Although the group did not meet at Blackthorn throughout August we did three performances at various venues around the Bicester area.

A few members of my group also belong to the Buckingham u3a ukulele group and we decided to have a joint group meeting. We met at the Buckingham group venue where we spent a couple of hours playing from each others song book. This proved to be an exhilarating morning. In the New Year the Buckingham group will come to our venue.

In September we performed at four venues, one being a new one to the group: Richie Court at Summertown. This is an Independent Living complex and one of the residents saw us playing at Annie's Tea Room in Thrupp and enquired if we did performances.

October will be a very busy month for the group, these being:

Marsh Gibbon Pensioners Club lunch time.

The Garth Park Kitchens where will be the main event of the evening and will perform for approximately an hour. There will be a warm up act before and an open mic session after we play.

Graven Hill, Otwell Grove - this is a brand new care home and we are there for the grand opening. We will be doing three performances over the lunch period

Bicester Forget Me Not, this is a regular venue for us.

Thame Cricket Club. Another regular venue

Inspire Bucks - this is a registered local charity delivering gifts, support, and opportunities to disadvantaged children, young people, and families across Buckinghamshire. Our bass player Clive is a trustee of the charity and asked us to play there.

Going forward we have six performances booked up to Christmas including the St Edburgs Christmas Tree Festival. We have secured sponsorship for a tree and we will be performing on Saturday from 11am for 45minutes.

We have another new venue to add to our list, this being St Rumbolds Court in Brackley. This is an Independent Living Complex.

Bill Jeffries

Wine Appreciation

One of our recent sessions tasted a selection of wines from California bought from a local superstore (starting with “T”).

The favourite white wine was a Chardonnay (especially by me) which was also the cheapest of the three tasted, reinforcing the theory that higher price doesn't mean better quality. Sadly the shop had sold out of this wine the next day so we couldn't top up our personal stock before Christmas.

The reds were headed by a Californian Zinfandel from old vines which got my top vote, it was delicious. The other two reds, a Pinot Noir and a Cabernet Sauvignon were good but not as good as the Zinfandel.

Last month one of our members held an “end-of-summer” BBQ with wine provided. Some of the guests brought a number of bottles of wine that were then used as the theme for our wine tasting meeting, being a somewhat random selection.

One wine that we were all looking forward to tasting was a Pinot Noir from Burgundy that apparently had a price in the upper £20s. It turned out to be the least favourite on the night, whether it was 'corked' or not I don't know but it reinforces the earlier comment about cost and quality.

The white selection was topped by an Argentinian white Malbec closely followed by an Italian Falanghina from a Superstore starting with “W”. For the reds I've already described the Burgundy but the other two reds came up trumps with an Australian Merlot and another Californian Zinfandel both of which got a high score.

We are currently full but a Wine Appreciation 2 is starting soon. Contact the Group Coordinator for more details.

Richard Herbert

Answers to Gill's Quiz

1. Forty
2. Otis (Reading)
3. Richard 3rd
4. Texas
5. Yeti

The answers spell Forty.. because its our 40 year anniversary!

Know of someone who is ill?

If you know of a member who is ill please inform a member of the committee so that a card can be sent from Bicester u3a.

Bicester u3a General Notices are now available on the noticeboard at the monthly meetings or on our website please visit:

https://bicester.u3asite.uk/general-notices//

Press dates: articles for inclusion in the February 2027 newsletter must be submitted by **31 January 2027**. Please note this is an absolute deadline. You can contact the editor by emailing newsletter.editor@bicesteru3a.online.

More information can be found on the Bicester u3a website
bicester.u3asite.uk
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