



Tetbury & District u3a Newsletter

March 2024

Message from the Chair

Here we are at the end of March already. Spring is in the air, the birds are singing, the clocks go forward soon - which means even more opportunity to take part in u3a activities as they ramp up.

That being said, a **few groups are now full**, and we will add this information to the groups page on our website in future, so that you can see which groups have vacancies. We always try to accommodate additional members, although it's not always possible as this depends on setting up extra groups with new group leaders and finding suitable venues.

Our committee continues to meet monthly, and I'd like to offer a warm welcome to **Alison Hesketh** who has kindly volunteered to join the committee. We are always open to ad-hoc involvement, so if you'd like to get involved please let me know via the link on our website [homepage](#)

A lot goes on behind the scenes, and we have recently had our application for **charitable status** approved. This recognises our growth - we now have over 350 members which has increased our income - and we needed to register.

I'd also like to thank Judith Randall for arranging the **refreshments rota** at the monthly talks. To reduce costs of providing recyclable paper mugs could I ask you to bring your own beakers or mugs for refreshments at these talks. We also need more people to sign up for the refreshments rota later in the year. Please let Judith (or any committee member) know if you can help next time you attend one of these.

And last but not least, you may be interested to sign up for the annual **Cotswold Link Special Interest Day on Tuesday 4th June** at The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham. The subject topic is **OUR BRAVE NEW WORLD**. Three expert speakers will talk about Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, and our interface with computers using Human Factors.

Click [here](#) for the Special Interest Day 2024 Invitation flyer and registration form.

I wish you and your families and friends a very Happy Easter

Best wishes Bernadette
chair@tetburyu3a.org.uk

News Flash

End of the Line Show

Our u3a is helping the Goods Shed celebrate the 60th anniversary of the closure of the Tetbury Branch line. We are providing the play readers, amongst other volunteers, to put on an evening of music and drama featuring local composer, and railway enthusiast, Richard George's "train stories". These have been adapted by our very own David Walker and Stephanie Dale into four short playlets with musical interludes.

The performance starts at 7.30 pm (doors open 7.00 pm) on Saturday 30th March. Advance tickets: £10 (under 25 £8), on the door £13 (under 25 £11). Box office 0333 6664466 [Goods Shed](#)

We do hope you will come and support us!

Monthly Speakers

Chris O'Grady provided a fascinating talk on Monday 18th March, which was titled "Keep the Sea to Your Left, Remember to Turn Right at Lands End". Over two decades, at every opportunity, Chris spent his spare time walking stretches of the coast of England and Wales, driving to his previous walk's end point and hitch-hiking back to his car each time at the end of his walk.

Stories of the people he met, and sights seen, filled the hour he was with us, as well as a beautiful rendition of the John Ireland setting of "Sea Fever"- you know the one, "I must go down to the sea again to the lonely sea and the sky..." (Chris sings with the Birmingham City Orchestra). The talk was very well received, bringing back memories of seaside holidays and inspiring us to get out there ourselves.

Our next Talk is on 10:30am, Tuesday 16th April at the Goods Shed. Kirsty Murray, Fundraising Officer for Longfield Hospice, will be talking about the work of this local charity that supports people with life-limiting illnesses.

Kirsty has not asked for a fee but will take a voluntary collection for the hospice after the talk so you may like to have some cash with you.

By Anne Cox

speakers@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Potential New Groups

Inviting applicants for a new (third) Creative Writing Group

The two u3a Creative Writing Groups are proving very successful. Both are full and interest has been expressed in starting another. We need a minimum of four people to start a third group, which would then take in new people as they apply.

Would you be interested in exploring this?

The group could be self-managed or could elect a leader/ co-ordinator from amongst its members. The facilitator for Creative Writing Group One would be happy to join the group for a first meeting or two to help generate ideas about how to operate, if people wished.

For information, the two current writing groups run slightly differently: In Group One, members choose a topic each month, or people have their own ideas or projects to pursue e.g. life history writing. One person is revising a draft book, chapter by chapter. People bring their writing to the meeting and read it out, and there is discussion and some feedback. Information is circulated by email, and occasionally a writing contribution is too, but communication is predominantly in person.

In Group Two a topic or brief is suggested by the leader. Members write about 1,000 words which are circulated by email before the meeting, to facilitate feedback and keep the focus on writing rather than performance. Topics are varied and we get a wide variety of contributions including prose, poetry and even short plays. We aim to improve our writing skills together and have fun. We currently read out our writing before opening out to group discussion.

The current groups meet on the first Tuesday of the month for two hours, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, in the meeting room at the Royal Oak. The new group would need to decide on a convenient time, day and place to meet.

If you would be interested in joining a new Creative Writing Group, please get in touch with Judi (Group One's facilitator) to discuss - via creativewriting@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Seeking fellow musicians and singers

One of our new u3a members plays the guitar and has set up a fledgling band. He is seeking additional musicians who can join him and play various instruments or sing.

"The idea would be that anyone who plays an instrument or sings can get together with other musicians (beginner to advanced) and play together. Can cover a variety of styles, any instruments. My personal interest is 'classic rock' era and blues, but willing to jam with anybody in any style."

Please contact our Groups Co-ordinator if you would be interested groups@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Green Technology group

It has been suggested that we might create a Green Technology group, subject to demand. We could cover topics such as solar panels, heat pumps, LED lighting, electric cars, and home automation. We might do this by visiting members who have installed the technology we're looking at to show us how (and how well) they work. There may also be local suppliers/installers who would be willing to come and talk about their products.

Please contact our Groups Co-ordinator if you would be interested groups@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Group News

Art Appreciation Group

Our first discussion at the March meeting centred on Burmese lacquerware. Originally a skill from China, lacquerware has been made in the Bagan region of Myanmar for 300 years. It is a way of producing sustainable, functional, hardwearing and affordable household items - bowls, plates, mugs etc.

It is a time-consuming process of layering fine bamboo strips with a lacquer made of resin - from the Thitsi tree - and ash. Each layer has to be left to dry and then added to, and takes months to complete. Items when finished are black, and decorations and colours are added by etching or painting by hand, often using the traditional terracotta colour.

Gold leaf can be used on the more elaborate items which can also be more complex and often of religious significance, giving an insight into the culture of the everyday life of Burma.

We followed this by looking at the groundbreaking Swiss Neo Classical painter Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807). One of only two female founding members of the Royal Academy, she is now having her first solo exhibition at the RA (which runs to 30 June 2024).

The exhibition includes the famous painting by Johann Zoffany depicting "all" the Academicians in 1771/2 shown together in a life class studio - from which females were excluded "for the sake of propriety". Kauffman and her fellow female RA member Mary Moser are depicted only as portraits on the wall.

Despite the obvious barriers she faced, she managed to flourish and was held in high regard by her contemporaries, becoming one of Europe's most sought after painters of the day.

Women subjects were more readily available to her and she became successful by painting portraits of wealthy tourists and also of influential figures of the day - the aristocracy, actors and socialites - who were sometimes portrayed as figures from mythical and classical history.

By Judy Greeman

artappreciation@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Monday Book Club

We met at the Royal Oak on Monday 26th February and discussed the book "Blandings" by P G Wodehouse. The response was varied, as some members really enjoyed the book while others did not. The stories are very much like the old Brian Rix farces.

At our March meeting on 25th we will be discussing "Queen and Country" by Alan Judd, which starts with a murder in the quiet village of Sherston. It is a thrilling spy story with the various victims all being Russian defectors. Charles Thoroughgood, former head of MI6, agrees to take part in a mission that will lead him into the heart of

enemy territory and threaten to undermine the very values that he holds most dear.

It is tense, engrossing and terrifyingly believable, and reminds us that Alan Judd is a master of the spy thriller and a writer of the very highest quality.

During April we will be reading "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow". The story of Sam and Sadie who meet again by chance on a crowded railway station, the spark between them is instantly reignited, and sets off a collaboration that will make them superstars. It is the 90s and anything is possible. The book tells of a decades-long tale of friendship and rivalry, fame and art, betrayal and tragedy, perfect worlds and imperfect ones - but above all our need to connect and to be loved and to love.

Our May choice is going to be a biography of someone famous - that person is yet to be agreed.

In June we will be reading "Birnam Wood" by Eleanor Cotton and "July Politics on the Edge" by Rory Stewart.

By Saxon Greenway

bookclubmonday@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Boules



We managed to fit one or two sessions into February and March, in spite of the record high rain fall, at both the Royal Oak, Tetbury and the Red Bull, Malmesbury.

This led to some hard fought battles for the hardy souls who turned out.

"A winning shot!"

We are waiting for both Spring and our new Boules group polo shirts to celebrate the success of this group that continues to grow. In the meantime why not contact us for an introduction session?

By Jeremy North

boules@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Curry Club

The Curry Club had an excellent lunch on 13th March at JUCSAW THAI (spelling correct) in Cricklade.



We all had the lunch menu which was reasonably priced at £14.99 and offered a good choice. The food was delicious and the service was very good.

Our next meeting will be in early May at The Bridge Indian Restaurant in Sherston.

By Jenny Lomas

curryclub@tetburyu3a.org.uk

French Conversation Group

It's been a busy month. Our first session in March was, as usual, French Conversation. We talked about Spring, what it means to us, the various French translations of the word spring (which has lots of meanings in English) and were treated to a poem by Victor Hugo, which I share here with its translation:

Le Printemps

Voici donc les longs jours, lumière, amour, délire!
Voici le printemps! mars, avril au doux sourire,
Mai fleuri, juin brûlant, tous les beaux mois amis!
Les peupliers, au bord des fleuves endormis,
Se courbent mollement comme de grandes palmes;
L'oiseau palpite au fond des bois tièdes et calmes;
Il semble que tout rit, et que les arbres verts
Sont joyeux d'être ensemble et se disent des vers.
Le jour naît couronné d'une aube fraîche et tendre;
Le soir est plein d'amour ; la nuit, on croit entendre,
A travers l'ombre immense et sous le ciel béni,
Quelque chose d'heureux chanter dans l'infini.

Spring

Here the long days, light, love, madness!
Here is spring! March, April with a sweet smile,
Flowery May, scorching June, all the beautiful month's friends!
The poplars, on the banks of the sleeping rivers,
Bend softly like large palm fronds;
The bird flutters in the depths of the warm and calm woods;
It seems that everything is laughing, and that the green trees
Are happy to be together and say verses to each other.
The day dawns crowned with a fresh and tender dawn;
The evening is full of love; at night, we think we hear,
Through the immense shadow and under the blessed sky,
Something happy singing in infinity.

Our team, "Les Folles" made a very creditable showing at the Lions Great Tythe Barn Quiz, coming 3rd and we had our first French Film Matinee, a showing of "Etre et Avoir". This is a charmingly gentle and affecting documentary of a year in a French primary school, honestly portraying the struggles of the children and the challenges and humanity of a gentle schoolmaster.

Our April film will be the wonderful "Jean de Florette" with Gerard Depardieu, Yves Montand and Daniel Auteuil.

As I write, I'm creating materials for our monthly Songs and Games session to practice talking about the past. Our aim is to increase our confidence in spoken French, with a sprinkling of grammar, and lots of practice spiced with laughter and friendly competition.

If you like the sound of what we do and would like to join us, please get in touch.

By Anne Cox

frenchconversation@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Historic Buildings Group

Our first visit of the year on 10th April - a walking tour of Cirencester - is now fully subscribed. We'll be sending out invitations to our Group members for the 9th May visit to Stanway House in early April, so keep your eyes on your inbox and book quickly to avoid disappointment.

Click on the link [here](#) to download a copy of this year's programme.

Please get in touch with us if you wish to join our Group.

historicbuildings@tetburyu3a.org.uk

David & Maggie Smith, Anita Stride

Photography Group

Last month we featured the top three images taken by our photography group members, from our competition of best images in 2023, which were judged by an independent judge.

We invited you to choose which one of these was your favourite - and the results were split equally between the three. The highly commended and commended images are shown below.

If this has sparked your interest and you would like to join the group, please contact photography@tetburyu3a.org.uk

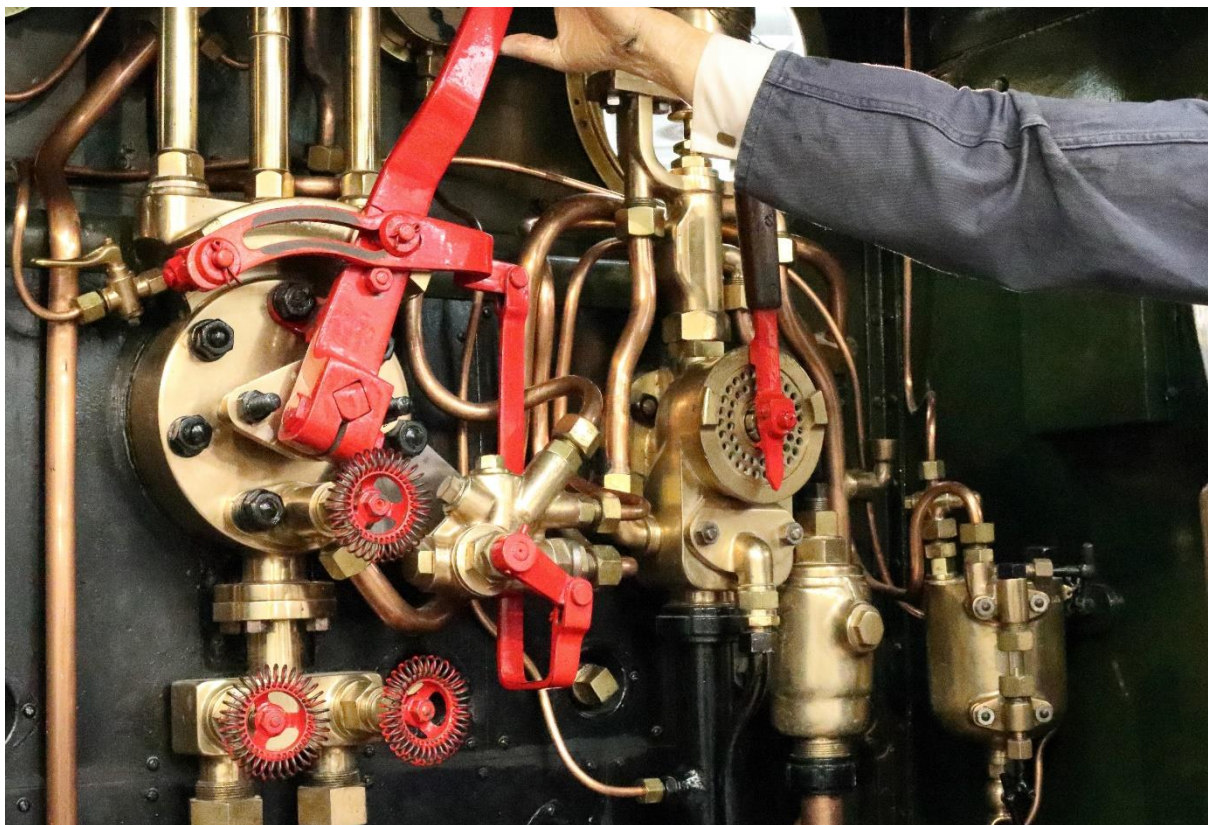
By Steve Hammond



4th = Highly Commended - Moss Eccles Tarn by Adrian Robson



4th = Highly Commended The Bristolian by Steve Hammond



6th Commended - Let's Go by Ian Clements

Playreading Groups 1 and 2

Both groups met to read the same two short plays, written by two of our members. Stephanie Dale wrote the "Fun Vendetta Club" about a group of computer savvy residents in a care home who had developed the ability to hack into networks on the internet.

They went after individuals or organisations who had upset them in one way or another, to get their revenge with increasing sophistication and ever more ambitious targets. They eventually bite off more than they can chew but there is a delicious surprise ending. Everyone agreed this was an amusing and fun piece of work.

The second short play, by Jeremy North, was a much darker piece set in 2080. "The Life Certificate" depicts a world where artificial intelligence has permeated right through the civil service and the legal system, driven by an aging population and a shortage of a qualified younger work force. A distinguished soldier, holder of the VC, fights for the right to live before a court almost entirely staffed by humanoid robots, all programmed to apply the law without fear or favour.



Corinne gave a chilling performance as the humanoid robot judge, from her opening remarks to final judgement. There is of course a twist at the end! Discussion over tea and biscuits was quite thoughtful!

Group one meets on the last Monday afternoon of the month and group two on the first Monday afternoon.

To join either group please contact playreading1@tetburyu3a.org.uk

By Jeremy North

Short Walks Group

Now that the weather is, in theory, a little less wet and brighter, the Short Walks Group can venture further afield and not be constrained to walking on hard surfaces.

Our latest walk centred on Cirencester, chosen to take advantage of walking through Cirencester Park before charges are introduced at the end of March.



We had a very pleasant walk from the Brewery Car Park in the centre of the town up to the Roman Amphitheatre through Querns Wood to Chesterton Lane and then down to the A433 and back through Cirencester Park.

Walks planned over the next couple of months include a ramble across Minchinhampton Common, a walk around Chavenage and a country walk to admire the spring bluebells.

We have welcomed a number of new members recently. If you would like to join us, we would be pleased to see you. We walk twice a month: on the first Thursday in the morning and the third Friday in the afternoon. The walks provide an excellent opportunity to explore the countryside and chat to fellow walkers.

By Judith Richardson
shortwalks@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Storytelling Group

The group meets monthly to tell each other stories round a log fire in a virtual cave, just as our ancestors used to do well before the written word. Below we present a truncated version of one the seven stories told at our last session.



Stephanie tells us a tall story, but makes it credible. She tells us about a new political party called the Tolerance Party. Matthew gets elected. All new MPs are informed by the Whip in the Houses of Parliament they must vote as directed or they will not be promoted. Matthew repeatedly gets promoted and his wife Gail, deals with the constituency office and all the problems that brings.

The Tolerance Party, now in power, passes a law that, as it allows hunting, shooting and fishing, it also tolerates the killing of domestic dogs and cats by anyone. Gail finds out her husband, whom she recently learned is having an affair with another MP, voted for it.

When her own dog is gruesomely killed, she is appalled and decides to act. Then we discover Gail, who had previous military experience with explosives, that her ancestral surname is Fawkes. Does she succeed where her famous ancestor failed?

Come and join us on the last Monday of the month at 2.30pm. We have room for three more members.

By Jeremy North

storytelling@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Ukulele Group

The Tetbury u3a Ukulele group - T'UKES - goes from strength to strength. T-shirts with our own logo, requests to gig as far away as Wiltshire, and even payment being requested to listen to our 50s and 60s repertoire.

Next week we are celebrating our first anniversary and we all agree our Ukes have added a great deal of enjoyment to our lives. We hope to be able to continue to bring a smile to those willing to hear our strumming and singing (not always together and not always in tune).



We recently played at Sherston Senior club on 19 March, one of our best gigs so far, with a lovely appreciative audience - and home baked cheese scones as well.

Regrettably our group is currently full, and we have a waiting list for potential new players.

By Sally Hadley

ukulele@tetburyu3a.org.uk

And finally

The deadline for contributions to the April newsletter is Monday 22nd April. Keep those reports coming in!

Please use the contact newsletter@tetburyu3a.org.uk to send your articles to Caroline, your newsletter editor.

We would love to hear feedback from those who have taken part in any of the u3a National Online Learning Events and Interest Groups Online (see Annex).

u3a National Events

Online Learning Events

u3a members can join a wide range of online talks, workshops and courses for free with their membership. Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves, sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement. There is also a wide range of talks on offer from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution.

All of these events can be booked at the link below via Eventbrite. Online events are hosted on Zoom - further information and 'how to' guides are here <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

Want to be the first in the know? Sign up to receive regular monthly updates on upcoming events [subscribe here](#)

List of future Online Learning Events

On-line Event	Date and Time
Mindfulness and Meditation Continuation Sessions	These sessions will run on the third Thursday of every month until 16th May at 10am - 11am
Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie	Tues 26th March at 3.30pm Tues 30th April at 3.30pm
Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Three: Brain & Behaviour	Wednesday, 27th March at 2 - 3:30pm
Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords	Thursday, 28th March at 10am - 12pm
Suffering and hope in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina	28th March at 2pm 27th June at 3:30pm

Aviation Network Meeting: Milestones in Aviation	Tuesday, 2nd April at 10am - 12pm
From Pleasure Gardens to Theme Parks	Friday, 5th April at 2 - 3pm
An Introduction to AI Chatbots	Thursday, 4th April at 3:30 - 4:30pm
Electing the President in 2024 - an Update	Tuesday, 9th April at 2 - 3pm
Laughter Yoga with Judith	Wed 10th April at 10am Wed 8th May at 10am Wed 12th June at 10am
Live Cookery Demonstration - spring recipes	Thursday, 11th April at 10:30 - 11:30am
A Remarkable Woman: The Arts and Crafts Designs of May Morris	Thursday, 11th April at 2 - 3pm
Artificial Intelligence News: April	Thursday, 11th April at 3:30 - 4:45pm
Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance	Monday, 15th April at 10 - 11am
The Road to Clean Water: Beginnings of a sewage system in Victorian London	Wednesday, 17th April at 10 - 11:30am
From despair to delight: the sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins.	Thursday, 18th April at 2 - 3:30pm
The Climate Crisis - and some solutions	Friday, 19th April at 10:00 - 11:30
Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Four: The Blood - Brain Barrier	Wednesday, 24th April at 2 - 3:30pm

Interest Groups Online

Interest Groups Online is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home. Like with a u3a, the activities are run by members and are a great way to meet people from all across the u3a movement.

It costs £12 to join for the year, equating to £1 per month. Membership runs from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Membership and your groups are managed via the u3a Beacon Members Portal.

To become a member of Interest Groups Online you will need to fill out a short form and make your payment on the u3a Beacon Members Portal. As part of your subscription to Interest Groups Online, you can opt in to receive a free copy of the u3a magazine, Third Age Matters (TAM).

Take a look at the groups page for details on the wide variety of online groups, courses and talks, and how to join [interest groups online](#)