u3a Tetbury and District Newsletter



August 2026

Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

In this issue you will find information about our next monthly talk on 15th September. In addition to articles by our regular contributors (including Bookclub Monday Evening, Garden Visits, Historical Buildings, History and Playreading) it's good to see contributions from the Pub Lunch and Short Walks Groups this month. There's also information about the Cribbage group, which would welcome new members.

Well done to all those who have shared their group activities and photos with us. We always welcome new contributors, as our members like to see the variety of

group activities on offer, and of course it makes for a more interesting Newsletter. If you'd like to write an article, please discuss with the relevant Group Leader first. The deadline for the next issue is Monday 21st September.

Well that's it from me for now.

Martin Doidge (Chair)

Monthly Speakers

Our next talk will take place on Tuesday 15th September 2026 on the topic of Fraud Awareness and Advice, 10:30 am at the Tetbury Goods Shed, GL8 8EY.



In answer to requests from our u3a members, we have asked Rhiannon Parker, Fraud Protect Officer with the Economic Crime Team, Gloucestershire Constabulary to talk to us about fraud and how to avoid it.

This talk will provide us with information on the latest fraud types to be aware of and ways that we can protect ourselves from them. Talking about fraud can feel scary but this talk should strip the worry away and give us a better understanding of fraud and how to keep ourselves safe from it.

Refreshments will be available before and afterwards, so that you can mingle – we hope to see you there.

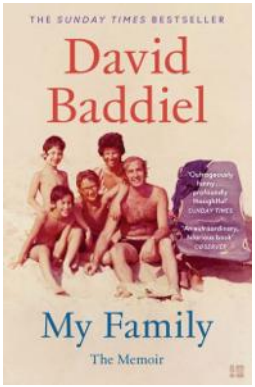
Here's a link to our full 2026 programme tetbury.u3asite.uk/events

By Julia Walter (Speakers Secretary)

Group News

Book Club Monday Evening

Ten members met to discuss two books this month: "My family: The memoir" by David Baddiel and "A spy among friends: Philby and the great betrayal" by Ben Macintyre.



The predominant sentiment among the group after reading "My Family" was disappointment. Having read other books by the same author, and seen his engaging documentary about his father, we expected more. The bad language that he used throughout, served no purpose, and the long footnotes at the end of many pages were annoying.

Image credit: Published by 4th Estate, 2025

Although the cover promised something outrageously funny, we certainly got the outrageous, but not necessarily the funny.

This extraordinary memoir of his family could easily have been called "My Mum and Dad", or even "My Mum", because in this book we don't get to discover much about his brothers, or even himself. The section on cats at the end of the book was very odd, but strangely the death of Monkey (euthanised at the vets) was the most emotional part of the whole book. It was an odd coincidence that one of our group actually had a copy the of the book mentioned in "My Family" and written by David Baddiel's mother, "Miller's Golf memorabilia" by Sarah Fabian-Baddiel. We awarded it 1.3 stars out of 5, our lowest score ever.

Our second book received a collective score of 3.8 stars out of 5. For a book with so much research, it was very easy to read, totally engrossing, and well put together. Even the photographs were well sequenced and matched the passages in the text as they were read. In fact, if you had believed that it was fiction, it was a story that you would perhaps have found a bit far-fetched.

Kim Philby, born in 1912, was educated at Westminster school and Cambridge University, before joining the British intelligence establishment based on the "Old Boys' network" and his family connections. But what his close friends failed to recognise was, that all along he held deep communist beliefs, and used his upper-class British background to subvert the establishment from the inside.

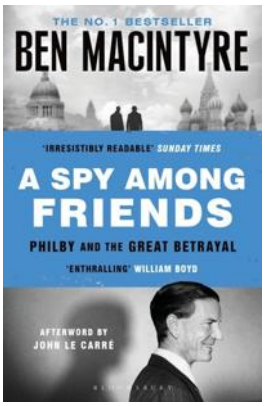


Image credit: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015

For over thirty years Philby led a double life spying for Soviet intelligence. This much has been previously documented, but Ben Macintyre emphasises, that more than committing treason for purely political motives, Philby also totally betrayed the friendship and trust of his friends, colleagues and wives (he married four times).

He did this using his personal charm, his disarming stammer, and late-night sessions of heavy drinking, which all combined to create a false sense of honesty and confidence. He was an immensely likeable character and this led to an unshakable belief that a "gentleman" from a good family simply could not be a traitor; tragically, of course, he was a traitor and his actions ultimately led to many deaths.

We discussed how Philby managed to deflect any suspicion, and how he managed to split his personal and private life in two, with absolutely no remorse.

Why did he never question his communist beliefs? Why did Nicholas Elliott and MI6 allow Philby to escape to Moscow? Was his treason driven by ideology, ego, or the thrill of a double life? Ben Macintyre called it the "erotic charge of infidelity", and John le Carre concluded that Philby was driven by "the incurable drug of deceit". His upper-class arrogance made him enjoy being entirely untouchable.

By Corinne Hinton

Cribbage Group

We are a friendly bunch who enjoy meeting weekly to play fun cribbage. We meet every Wednesday morning at 10am in the lounge, Upton Mill care home. There are twelve of us in the group, and eight regularly play. We mix two or three or four players to spice up the games with healthy doses of good humoured banter. New members are always welcome, and if you have never played cribbage we'll teach you. The staff at Upton Mill are very friendly and welcoming.

So, just come along on a Wednesday morning or contact Lawrence using the link on our Group page https://tetbury.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/cribbage/
We'll look forward to seeing you.

By Lawrence Moss

Garden Visits Group – Daglingworth House Garden



Our August visit was to Daglingworth House Garden, near Cirencester, which opened for our group by special arrangement, with proceeds going to the National Garden Scheme.

Created by David and Etta Howard, it includes a walled garden, mirror canal, grotto, a classical style temple, topiary, a meadow, woodland and unique sculptures.

We began with an impromptu guided tour of the charming neighbouring church, which has Saxon origins and later additions, including work from the 15th century.





We then made our way to the three-acre garden, where we were served with tea, coffee and delicious cakes, enjoyed in the welcome shade of the temple on a sweltering day typical of this long, hot summer.

Although the lawns were as dry as most others this summer, the garden's strong structure and thoughtful planting offered interest throughout, and it looked amazing.



David and Etta guided us round and described the features they had created, including a circular bed of Cornus (dogwood) edged with Black Mondo Grass, which looks striking in snow.

There was a lot of topiary yew, and we were amused by the animal shapes which were in the process of being created.



We also admired the calming rills, the mirror canal reflecting the Georgian house, and a sunken gravel garden with a small pond and sculptures that complemented the design and planting beautifully.

At the end of the visit, Etta offered us a return visit in April, to see the garden in spring, so I have arranged a visit for early April – details to follow in the New Year.

Our final visit for this year will take place on Tuesday 29 September at the Special Plants Garden and Nursery near Bath, at 10.30 am. There is a free talk included with garden entrance on Autumn Sowing, subject to availability. Garden Visits Group members will receive an email from me about arrangements a few weeks beforehand.

By Caroline Hose

Historic Buildings Group - Shaw House, near Newbury



The Historic Buildings Group visit in August was to Shaw House, near Newbury. Shaw House is one of the best preserved Elizabethan mansions in England, built in 1581 by Thomas Dolman. Over the centuries Shaw House has welcomed royalty, seen action during the Civil War, housed soldiers during World War II, and schooled generations of local children.

Key Historical Eras

Elizabethan Beginnings (1581): The house was completed in 1581 by Thomas Dolman, a highly successful Newbury cloth merchant. Dolman built the grand, H-plan H-shaped brick mansion to showcase his immense wealth and elevate his family's social status into the landed gentry. It hosted notable royal guests, including Queen Elizabeth I and later Queen Anne in 1703.

The English Civil War (1644): During the Second Battle of Newbury, Shaw House was at the absolute epicentre of the fighting. It served as a vital Royalist stronghold. While early legends claimed King Charles 1 used it as his direct headquarters, recent research shows his troops fiercely defended the gardens from 7,000 Parliamentarian soldiers while hand-to-hand combat raged outside.

The 18th & 19th Centuries: The Dolman family held the property for six generations before selling it in the 1720s to the flamboyant James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos. It later passed to the Andrews family and a succession of other private owners, operating as a country retreat and a large Victorian family home.

World War II & The School Years (1939–1985): At the outbreak of WWII, the estate was requisitioned by the War Office to house troops. In 1943, after the Newbury Senior Council School was tragically bombed, Shaw House was hastily adapted into classrooms. It proudly served as a local school for over 400 children until 1985, when structural safety concerns forced its closure.

Restoration & The Present Day: After sitting empty and falling into near dereliction for over a decade, the mansion was saved by a major £6 million restoration project. Managed by West Berkshire Council, Shaw House now serves the community as a museum, public attraction, conference venue, and registry office.

<u>Tour of the house</u>

Our group of 43 was divided into two groups, with one of the groups starting off by venturing down into the Bakehouse. During the Tudor and Elizabethan periods, bakeries were almost exclusively built as detached, standalone buildings away from the main residence due to the severe, constant risk of fire.

Dolman defied this standard by constructing a self-contained, subterranean unit directly under the main house structure. Because it was built below ground and later sealed, its existence remained an entirely forgotten secret for centuries until workers unexpectedly unearthed it during the restoration project.





This structural feature is incredibly rare for its era. It offers a rare glimpse into late 16th-century estate operations. It features two Beehive bread ovens—traditional domed brick ovens where daily fresh bread and pastries were baked for the family—alongside cooling shelves and wall cupboards. These original built-in stone and brick storage fixtures were designed to hold baked goods; perhaps an early example of a fitted kitchen!



Our well-informed tour guides took us through the main rooms of Shaw House, explaining key historical and architectural features. Several of the rooms featured wooden panelling that had been partially removed to reveal hidden features such as old doorways or windows discovered during the renovation.

We were then free to wander around the house to view the various exhibitions set up to illustrate its history, including Civil War uniforms, and the "Dressed for Shaw" costume exhibition.

There was also the opportunity to visit the open-air sculpture exhibition set in the extensive grounds of the house.

It was a creative mixture of traditional, modern and cutting-edge contemporary work invoking some "Marmite" responses from our group members, accompanied by some sharp intakes of breath when the price list was consulted!



It was a very informative visit put together by a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable team from West Berkshire Council. This is not a National Trust style property filled with original or contemporaneous furnishings. It is a conserved Grade I listed multipurpose event venue that is much used by the local population - a splendid community asset.

Upcoming Event

Bookings have now closed for our September visit to Owlpen Manor. This is the final scheduled event for this year, but keep your eyes open on our website page for any updates.

If you would like to join our Group, please contact us using the link on our Group page: https://tetbury.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/historic-buildings/

By David & Maggie Smith

History Group

"From Territorial Private to Regular Army Major in six years"

Despite being a new public speaker, Hope Price gave over twenty of us an exciting, polished, illustrated presentation on her father's fascinating, scary but impressive career during the 2nd World War in North Africa with Montgomery, then in the D-Day landings and subsequently through France. She interwove his personal journey with well researched information on the progress of the 8th Army and the D Day landings and their aftermath.



Richard Marshall, Hope's father in uniform

We have no meeting in August, but on 15th September at 2pm in the Goods Shed, Anne Cox will talk about A Huguenot Migration - how one family survived the years of religious and political strife in Europe and the Americas.

By Bob Kelley

Playreading Group – "A Spider's Web" by Agatha Christie

Clarissa, the wife of a Foreign Office diplomat, is given to daydreaming. 'Supposing I were to come down one morning and find a dead body in the library, what should I do?' she muses.

Clarissa's step- daughter has come to live with them in Kent after a nervous breakdown living with her drug addict mum and stepfather whom she detests. He turns up at the house threatening to take her back to her mother. Clarissa sends him away but he returns and is seen sneaking around their drawing room. Someone comes out of a secret panel in the library which opens into the drawing room and hits him over the head killing him. Clarissa then finds his body behind the sofa and has her chance actually dispose of a real dead body.

She is desperate to cover up the murder before her husband returns with an important secret guest. Clarissa calls her three dear friends at the golf club to come & help her. They become accessories and accomplices, with many complex twists and turns to dispose of his body. But the Inspector has had a call at the station to say there has been a murder at their home in Kent. His search begins for the body the murderer and the motive, while Clarissa and her friends try to persuade the police inspector that there has been no murder at all.

Agatha kept us all guessing until the very end of a quite long but very enjoyable Play Reading session. We will all be looking forward to a new play reading season starting in September.

Thanks always goes to Bernadette for arranging and running group.

By Judith Tookey

Pub Lunch Group

Grahame had arranged for our July Pub meal to be at The Vine Tree in Norton, however, he was detained in hospital and therefore unable to come.

Although we had set the satnav to find The Vine Tree, several of us still got lost, which we later discovered was quite common. Eventually, fourteen of us sat down to dine. The staff were very friendly and tried to be helpful but somewhere along the way something went wrong. We all put in our main orders and four ordered starters. Most of these came and then the staff wanted to bring the main

courses at the same time. Consequently one person never did get his main course. Luckily he had already eaten a starter. Someone else got their starter as they were eating their main.

We could not fault the quality or cost of the food. There was a nice atmosphere sitting outside under the awning and the waitresses tried their best, the problem could have been with the kitchen staff.





It is a lovely venue and the food not any more expensive than other places. Robert and Eunice decided, as it was a dry day, to come in style as you will see from the photograph.

By Pamela Selway

Short Walks Group

Thirteen walkers (a lucky number) met up to follow the Malmesbury River walk on a Thursday morning. There were a few dark clouds about and a very welcome cooling breeze.



Once Anita, with help from the walkers, had found the correct gateway from the car park to go down to the river, we enjoyed a very pretty walk, touching a few parts of the town and negotiating three stiles, some slightly suspect wooden walkways over the river and some narrow paths between the nettles and brambles. A short hill back up to the Abbey and down the steps to the long-stay car park, which is still free for two hours. It was a very pleasant walk and the dark clouds did not bring any rain. Our happy group is pictured beside the river.

By Anita Stride

And finally …… the deadline for contributions to the September newsletter is Monday 21st September.

Please send your articles to Caroline, your newsletter editor, at newslettertetburyu3a@gmail.com

Annex A

Groups

List of current groups – all are active and accepting new members except those indicated *
For further information and to register interest, visit the Groups page of our website tetbury.u3asite.uk

Art Appreciation	Golf
Aviation & Classic Cars	Historic Buildings
Backgammon (for fun)	History
Badminton	Mah-Jong
Board Games	Meditation & Mindfulness
Book Club Mondays	NEW Philately
Book Club Wednesday	Photography
Boules - Friday	Pickleball
Boules - Wednesday	Play Reading 1
Computing - Apple beginners	Play Reading 2
Computing - technical support	Pub Lunch
* Creative Writing Group 2 FULL - waiting list	Quiz
*Creative Writing Group 1 FULL - waiting list	Scrabble
Creative Writing Group 3	Short Breaks
Cribbage	Short Walks – Friday
Curry Club	Short Walks - Thursday
Family History	Spanish - Advanced Beginners to Intermediate
French	Spanish - Advanced Intermediate to Fluent
NEW French Reading	*Ukulele FULL - waiting list
Garden Visits	NEW Youth Club for Recycled Teenagers
	Wine Tasting Group

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 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

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 to 31 March of the next year. 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