

u3a
Chess Valley

Registered Charity 1126990

NEWSLETTER

March - May 2026

website: www.cvu3a.uk



Front Cover: The Chapel at Ashridge has featured before on our Newsletter, but not looking like this. Photographer David Hurd captured this view in January at Ashridge House Christmas Light Trail.



Right: Striders recently visited the new gate near Pressmore Farm that they sponsored in memory of Stuart Mann, a former Strider. (note: Although the horse on the left is a strider, he is not a member of the Group, ed.)



Above: Karen van Oostrum was our guest speaker for January's Monthly Meeting. Through her wonderful pictures she gave us a fascinating insight into our local flora.



Centre Right: If you travel into London on the Chiltern Line, keep an eye out for this: Graham from the Railways Group snapped their brand new loco, the 'Chiltern Explorer'.

Right: Chimney Cottage was just one stop-off on the Walks into History Group visit to Old Amersham in January.



Speakers for monthly talks

All talks start at 2pm

Broadway Baptist Church
78 The Broadway, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1EG



Fran Sandham

Thursday 12th March

A Solo Walk Across Africa

Acclaimed author and public speaker Fran Sandham took on the challenge of a lifetime, by walking across Africa from Namibia's Skeleton Coast on the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean near Zanzibar. He was completely alone with no back-up, no support team, no one to carry his gear, no sponsors, no film crew, no journalists, no fuss, no cheering crowds and no strings attached. Fran was an editor at Rough Guides for several years, and worked in bookselling and the voluntary sector before that.

Martin Orkin

Thursday 9th April

The Beatles Story

Following his entertaining talk to us last year on Simon and Garfunkel, Martin Orkin will discuss this wonderful group who made so many fantastic recordings during the era of Beatlemania: *Love Me Do*, *She Loves You*, *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, and so many more. We will hear snippets of each of these great records as Martin tells their story. Martin has always loved 1960s music and has a large record collection from that era. Retiring in 2010 from a career in banking, he reconnected with his fondness of this music and came up with the concept for his book *On The Beatles*. He has spent the last four years writing it – all 800 pages!

Judy Karbritz

Thursday 14th May

The Curse of the Kennedys

Uncover the haunting saga of America's most famous political dynasty. From plane crashes, assassinations and scandals to political triumphs shadowed by tragedy, explore why the Kennedy legacy remains as mysterious as it is compelling. Judy Karbritz has broadcast on LBC and local BBC radio and performed in amateur dramatics. She has been giving talks for twenty years, performs locally and regularly speaks on cruise ships.

Jason Harper

Thursday 11th June

Living, Loving and Leaving Iran

After growing up in a Christian family and leading a relatively sheltered life, a good university degree helped launch Jason into corporate employment which provided him the opportunity to broaden his horizons and learn more about the world. In this talk, Jason uses story-telling and humour to take the audience through 'a day in the life of an Englishman', living as a student in Tehran, while describing Iranian culture and surroundings, finishing up with what has been termed an 'escape' from the country, followed by some recent history. The talk is non-political and is really about giving the audience an eye-opening insight into Iran.



**The Broadway Baptist Church is accessible to wheelchairs
and is equipped with a hearing loop.**



Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026.

I am pleased to announce that, following my recent appeal, Marion Lloyd has stepped forward to fill the position of Vice-Chair of Chess Valley u3a. She has valuable experience as the vice-chair of a charity and from chairing school boards of governors and she will be a welcome addition to our team. In the first instance, Marion will be co-opted onto the Committee and she will then offer herself for election by members at our AGM in June.

In addition, Ian Reddie has volunteered to assist Webmaster Valerie Garrod in the new role of Communications Manager. Again, I am very grateful to Ian for this and he will greatly ease the load on Valerie and provide additional resilience to our Committee.

This leaves us still with a vacancy for a Publicity Coordinator, so if anyone is interested in filling that role, please contact me.

Finally, preliminary details of our 2026 AGM are contained in the middle of this newsletter.

With best wishes



James Cadle

chair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

New Members

We offer a warm welcome to our newest members:

Jacqui Cann	<i>Chesham</i>	Stephanie Knowles	<i>Bovingdon</i>
Caroline Clark	<i>Princes Risborough</i>	Barbara Leyland	<i>Amersham</i>
Richard Collett	<i>Princes Risborough</i>	Patricia Miller	<i>Chesham</i>
Claire Fallowfield	<i>Little Kingshill</i>	Helen Nolan	<i>Chesham</i>
Anne Fellingham	<i>Aylesbury</i>	Velda Sutton	<i>Aylesbury</i>
Christine Harding	<i>Chesham</i>	Daniel Wolfe	<i>Ballinger</i>
Amanda Hendry	<i>Abbots Langley</i>		

If you know anyone you think might be interested in joining, please ask them to get in touch with the Membership Secretary; contact details on the next page.

Upcoming visits from the Events Team

Eltham Palace, Thursday 19th March	This visit is now fully booked.
Upton House and Hidcote, 7th May	This was described in the February e-bulletin. The organiser is Alan Gray: alan.gray177@ntlworld.com.
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Wednesday 8th July	This visit includes a guided tour of the special exhibition of sculptures by Henry Moore. Organiser Jackie Cobb will circulate more details in due course.

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd May 2026

From the Groups Coordinator

MOTO 3

After announcing the closure of the original MOTO Group (Members On Their Own), MOTO 2 had an influx of members and are now so successful we are looking to start a MOTO 3 Group. We have a member interested in convening the new Group so don't let that hold you back from joining.

Don't leave it too late as, after advertising the Keep Fit Group 60+ a few times without much interest, it is now full with a healthy waiting list.

Please email me at groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk if interested in MOTO 3 and we will run a trial session as that seemed to work to help get the Keep Fit Group started.

Italian for your holidays

Unfortunately this Group has closed due to lack of support, which is a great shame as a member has gone to the trouble of starting up a new Group.

German conversation

Another suggested group is German Conversation. If you have any experience of German or would like to belong to such a Group please contact me at groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk.

Email forwarding

As you might already have discovered, we have been having problems with our email forwarding system. This was not restricted only to us as other u3as who use the same hosting platform have all been experiencing problems. Hopefully they are almost resolved and Valerie, our Webmaster, has received a very welcome offer from one of our members to help her.

Along with our Chair, James Cadle, I am arranging a session on 'Simple Membership for Convenors', as soon as our diaries allow. Please watch out for updates soon...

Sue Broad
Groups Coordinator
groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Chess Valley u3a Committee

Chair	James Cadle*	chair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	07889 732291
Vice-Chair	Marion Lloyd*	vicechair@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	07789 507635
Treasurer	Geoff Naylor*	treasurer@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	01494 434918
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Membership Secretary	Jim Wilkie*	membership@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	01494 782081
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	James Cadle*		07889 732291
Speaker Organiser	Peter Windsor*	speakers@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	07595 776473
Events Coordinator	Jackie Cobb*	eventscoord@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	01494 773718
Publicity Coordinator	Position vacant		
Communications Manager	Ian Reddie	comms@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	07789 372694
Committee Member	Jim Campbell	jim.campbell@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk	07702 982209
*Also Trustee of Chess Valley u3a			

Chess Valley u3a Convenors

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
Art	Janice Gray	art@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Art Discussion 1	Angela Bishop	artdiscuss@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Sarah Organ	
Art Discussion 2	Caroline Jenks	artdiscuss2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 1	Caroline Jenks	bookgroup1@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 2	Alison Pullinger	bookgroup2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Georgina Mead	
Book Group 3	Helen Barnard	bookgroup3@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Book Group 4	Jackie Cobb	bookgroup4@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Bowls (Short Mat), (Chiltern)	Sue Spalton	shortbowls@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Peter Williams	
Bridge	John Curtis	bridge@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Canasta	Linda Hepworth	canasta@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Sue Hawksley	
Chess	Caroline Jenks	chess@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
City of London Churches	Jackie Cobb	londonchurches@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Current Affairs	Eileen Overton	currentaffs@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Dinghy Sailing	Wendy Barnes	sailing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Judith Young	
French Conversation	Morag Robertson	frenchcons@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
French Intermediate	Hilary Alleston	french@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Fun Quizzes	James Cadle	quizzes@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Gardening	Jenny Beirne	garden@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
German	Jenny Lee	german@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
History	Claire Paterson	history@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Ian Hutt	
Keep Fit for 60+	Kay Johnson	keepfit60@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Jackie Cobb	
Knitting & Other Crafts	Jo Biggs	knit@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Line Dancing (Chiltern)	Linda English	linedance@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Mah Jong	Ed Perrott	mahjong@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

(continues on next page)

Chess Valley u3a Convenors (continued)

Group	Convenor/s	u3a email address
MOTO 2	Joan Barton	moto2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Ted Harrington	
Music Appreciation	Geoff Hayes	music@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Patchwork & Quilting	Angela Bratton	patchquilt@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Dee Watson	
Photography with Digital Imaging	David Hurd	photography@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Pippa Greensmith	
Pilates (1, 2 and 3)	Christine Ross	pilates@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Liz Howlett	
Play Reading	Joan Barton	playread@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Linda Hepworth	
Poetry	Christine Ogborne	poetry@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Railways	Graham Yellowley	railways@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	James Cadle	
Singing for Pleasure	Angela Bratton	singing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Stephanie Rothwell	
Spanish Conv (Inter)	Hilary Alleston	spanishconv@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Stamps & Other Collectables	Steve Epps	stamps@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Tai Chi	Sue Broad	taichi@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Meg Brinton	
Theatre	Geoff Naylor	theatre@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Helen Barnard	
Ukulele	Jeff Naman	ukulele@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Heather Sprake	
Amblers	Susan Osborne	amblers@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 1	Stuart Stanley	walkers1@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 2	Michael Ferraro	walkers2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walkers 3	Catherine Haridi	walkers3@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Jill Thomas	
Striders	Ian Barrett	striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Keith Pittman	
Walks into History: Country	Peter Schweiger	walkshist@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Walks into History: London	Angela Shipley	walkslondon@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Wildlife	Harry Howlett	wildlife@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
	Keith Sonley	
Wine Appreciation 1	Pauline & Tom Hohenberg	wine@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Wine Appreciation 2	Graham Hitchener	wine2@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk
Writers	John & Helene Bunyan	writers@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

News From The Groups

GROUP MEETINGS

Most of our Groups meet in person and are open to enquiries from new members. If full, they will hold a waiting list. Groups that are inactive generally do not have an entry in the newsletter.

In public buildings it is important that the Convenor knows who is at the meeting in case of fire. Please, always sign in to the building. Also, make sure you know where the fire exits are.

Art

Janice Gray



We ended the year with our usual art session followed by Christmas nibbles and saying au revoir to a member of our Group. Our first meeting in January was a free choice with discussions on what members would like to perfect in their art and projects going forward.

A thought which we will work on is putting together a calendar depicting changes in the seasons throughout the year. Watch this space! The last couple of sessions has seen us trying our hand at collage work, which some of us were new to. Concentration was in the atmosphere as was silence in the room, apart from the sounds of scissors, with tissue and newsprint being ripped from magazines and newspapers. Birds were popular, along with water, sunrises and sunsets. At the time of writing not all of us have finished our work but we will continue at home. We currently have limited vacancies for new members.

Art Discussion 1

Angela Bishop & Sarah Organ



In December our subject was 'Reflections'. Immediately our thoughts turned to the most reflective surface, that of a mirror. Our presenter reminded us of both reality and illusion in reflected images. Perhaps the best-known depiction of reflections is that of the enigmatic lady in Edouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Berger* (1882), a work full of detail and activity. We looked at Amish Kapoor's *Sky Mirror* (2001), a six-metre-wide concave dish, made of polished stainless steel which invites the viewer to become part of the artwork. More conventional images were that of George Leslie Hunter's *Reflections Balloch* (1929), a cheerful, colourful image of dwellings and boats reflected in a lake. Another is J M W Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839) with the ship and the sky exquisitely reflected in a calm sea. Finally, we laughed at Ohara Shosan's woodcut (1910) entitled *Monkey reaching for the Moon*. One member chose William Richard Sickert's work *Ennui* (1914), where we speculated on the reflections of the couple on their failed relationship.

We looked at the medium of pastels in art at our January meeting. Our Group started by considering what exactly defined a pastel: in brief, it is an art medium made of pure renaissance-powdered pigment mixed with a binder, formed into sticks for drawing or painting, known for its vibrant, pure colour and velvety finish. Pastels originated in the 15th Century and were used by Leonardo da Vinci and some other artists. We considered the work of Rosalba Carriera, an 18th Century artist who revolutionised the use of pastels and was at the time more famous than her contemporary, Canaletto, making pastel portraits of many well-known figures. Her style and technical expertise had a huge influence on her male contemporaries, including Jean Étienne-Liotard, a Swiss artist of great character, who was particularly known for his portraits and the realism of his work. Pastel art became unpopular during the French Revolution but regained popularity under the Impressionists, and we looked at some of the works of Monet, Renoir and Degas. We were particularly impressed with Degas' use of bright colours in some of his pastel works. We also considered some of Mary Cassatt's tender portraits and learnt that Mary was influential in bringing the medium of pastels to the United States. Post-impressionists such as Millet, Picasso and Odilon Redon, also worked in pastels. Our Group looked at several works by other modern artists and current practitioners of the medium, including Wolf Kahn, Mike Beeman, several artists of the Pastel Society of the West Coast of America, and a number of contemporary British pastelists, including Mark Leach and Nell Nile.

(cont.)

In February our members chose Frank Lloyd Wright, the renowned American architect. We learnt that his Prairie-style design, described as “long and low”, with large internal spaces and borrowed light, has influenced future architectural design across the world. We looked at his domestic commissions, fascinating houses of differing design, ranging from the traditional Thomas and Laura Gale dwelling in Oak Park, Chicago (1892) to the futuristic circular home for his son and daughter in law in Arizona (1952). We looked at the commercial Johnson Wax building in Wisconsin which featured the first open-plan office design complete with furniture also by Wright. Several of the members were able to give their own opinions on his design of the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in New York, with its revolutionary spiral ramp, central atrium and inverted ziggurat shape commissioned in 1943 and opened in 1959, shortly after Wright’s death. Everyone knew about his most famous commission, Falling Water, a house built for the Kaufmann family of Pittsburgh as a weekend retreat. Constructed in woodland over a waterfall in rural Pennsylvania, it provides year-round interest as its natural surroundings change with the seasons. We marvelled at the finished house with its cantilevered concrete balconies and contrasting stone verticals. We saw his influence in the work of one of his acolytes, Barry Byrne, in his design of three modernist concrete churches, one in Cork, Ireland and two in the United States, (1931-1951).

Our next subject is ‘Turner and Constable’ to coincide with the recent exhibition at Tate Britain.

Art Discussion 2

Caroline Jenks



Most of our meetings follow a theme and all members suggest paintings which are combined into a PowerPoint by the Convenor. Once or twice a year one of the members chooses to give an entire talk. We hold an August meeting outside with a picnic each year when we talk about art without the need for a screen. Our December meeting always involves planning the following year’s programme, some kind of quiz and festive food. Tea and cake are an integral part of every meeting! At present the Group is full but do let the Convenor know if you are interested in joining.

Our 2026 programme will include the Dutch Golden Age, the Art of Scandinavia, and Artistic Links (such as paintings inspired by other earlier artists’ works).

For our first meeting of the new year, the Group were treated to a presentation by the Convenor, meaning that the rest of us had not needed to prepare anything over the holiday period! Caroline had been to an exhibition at The National Gallery entitled *Wright of Derby: From the Shadows*. We were fascinated to hear about the progression of his painting style, and we learnt about his use of tenebrism which exaggerates the contrast between darkness and light. Many of the paintings are influenced by the Midlands Enlightenment Movement led by scientists, engineers and designers involved in the Industrial Revolution. The subject matter included experiments and demonstrations of newly discovered scientific principles showing the facial expressions and sense of awe of many of the observers. The paintings act as a window on the social, scientific and engineering changes that were developing at the time, as well as showcasing Wright’s remarkable skill in representing the play of light on surfaces. It was good to spend time analysing in detail the contents of a small number of masterpieces. (Thank you to Sue for that meeting report.)

In February our theme was ‘Birds’ and this resulted in a delightful afternoon with many beautiful pictures. The brightly coloured and scientifically accurate paintings by Marianne North, displayed in her gallery at Kew, were much admired: what a woman she was, travelling the world to out-of-the-way places in Victorian times. In contrast we were moved by the softer colours and focus on the essence of things in various Japanese and Chinese prints. We were intrigued to learn that Edward Lear, who we mainly knew as a humorous writer, created outstanding illustrations of the parrot family. Contributions from the Low Countries came from Gerrit Dou, Frans Snyders, Jan Asselijn and Carel Fabritius’s famous *Goldfinch*. From Monet’s stupendous *The Magpie* and Van Gogh, we moved on to more recent artists such as Peter Scott (of Slimbridge fame), Tracey Emin, Robert Fuller, ending on the only troubling pictures chosen: Jamie Wyeth’s use of seagulls to illustrate the Seven Deadly Sins.

"Q: How many surrealist painters does it take to change a lightbulb? A: A fish!"

(boredpanda.com)

Book 1**Caroline Jenks**

This is the Book Group with a difference: it is for those who are already keen readers, or who wish to expand their knowledge of books. We all read and tell the Group about any books we wish; so, you hear what others do, or don't, recommend. We have a wide variety of tastes, both in subject matter and style, so there are always interesting, but friendly, discussions.

We've covered books set in a wide variety of countries recently: Greece in *The Book of Fire* by Christy Lefteri; Alaska in *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis (a short read, but most thought-provoking); Japan in *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop* by Satoshi Yagisawa; the USSR in *A Life's Music* by Andrei Makine; Lebanon in *The Hills of Adonis* by Colin Thubron; Norway in *The Place of Tides* by James Rebanks; Iraq in *Take What You Can Carry* by Gian Sardar; and the USA in *The Little Friend* by Donna Tartt. We can recommend them all. By getting titles muddled, the Convenor accidentally read and can recommend both *Queen's Gambit* by Elizabeth Fremantle about Queen Catherine Parr, and *The Queen's Gambit* by Walter Tevis, a novel about a female chess genius!

Most of us, having already read *Hamnett* by Maggie O'Farrell, and some of us having seen the new film, were able to compare the two. Maybe we're biased, being a Book Group, but there was so much lacking in the film, that we had enjoyed in the book.

We could now consider taking one more member, so please contact the Convenor if you are interested.

Book 2**Alison Pullinger & Georgina Mead**

We continue to meet in Amersham library at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month and receive a set of books each month from the library.

This quarter we read an historical fiction novel, a spy novel and a classic novel:

We began with *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Duerr. This is not a quick and easy read but well worth it if you enjoy books written with the Second World War as a backdrop. It is an unconventional war novel which follows a blind French girl and a young German boy whose lives become intertwined in St Malo during the war, and shows how each is affected by the events taking place around them.

Our second read was *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* by John Le Carre. It was his third novel in which the reader benefits from his knowledge of MI6. It exposes the seedy and hypocritical secret world of the British Secret Services in the Cold War. A James Bond or Jason Bourne novel it is definitely not, but well worth reading, especially for a flavour of the times.

Finally, our third book was *My Cousin Rachel* by Daphne du Maurier. Without exception we had all read the book before or seen a film version. We were all agreed that it is cleverly written, full of suspense and atmospheric; its ambiguous ending provoked much discussion. Daphne du Maurier herself revealed in an interview that she was unsure as to whether the main characters were guilty. This novel is well worth a first or second visit. It does not disappoint.

Book 3**Helen Barnard**

We continue to read books from the library, but they are now occasionally interspersed with others. Our next book is Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and soon we move on to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* to tie in with the new film. Apart from the books, the tea and biscuits are a popular part of our meetings. The Group has no vacancies at present.

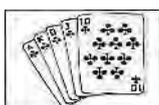
Book 4**Jackie Cobb**

We meet in members' homes and the books we read are chosen by each member in turn. We purchase our own copies. As the book choices are varied it makes for a good discussion each month. Our next meeting is on Thursday 19th March to discuss *The Go Between* by L P Hartley. We have recently read *Joseph Knight* by James Robertson and *The Foundling* by Stacey Halls. We may have space for another member. If you are interested, please contact

the Convenor.

Bowls (Short Mat)**Sue Spalton & Peter Williams (Chiltern u3a)**

Chiltern u3a extends an invitation to our members to join them in playing Short Mat Bowls. In the winter we meet each Friday from 13.15 to 15.30 pm at Chesham White Hill Centre for indoor sessions. Summer sessions are held outdoors at Holmer Green Sports Association each Monday from 13.50 to 16.00. Please check with the Convenors for the start date of the summer season. The cost is £4.00 in the winter, including a cup of tea per session. So, if you would like to "try your hand" then get in touch: experience not needed; tuition given; bowls available. Please contact the Convenors before attending, for more information and season start dates: shortbowls@cvu3a.uk.

Bridge**John Curtis**

The Bridge Group continues to meet on Wednesday afternoons at Chartridge Park Golf Club and plays ACOL bridge to a reasonable standard in a friendly atmosphere. Attendances have increased over the last few months, and the Group is currently at full capacity with a small waiting list. Should you wish for your name to be added to the waiting list, please contact the Convenor.

Canasta**Linda Hepworth & Sue Hawksley**

We continue to meet at one another's houses on the afternoon of the third Monday of the month. We still have room for a couple of new members so if you're familiar with the game do come along. Please contact us at: canasta@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Chess**Caroline Jenks**

We're an odd number! Chess Chess(!) Group needs you to even us up for playing games. Do come for a taster session, no commitment. Meetings are held in the Convenor's house and are now on the fourth Friday morning of the month, 10.30 to noon; morning drinks and biscuits provided. As well as playing games, we mull over chess puzzles together and have a bit of a chat.

The Group will welcome anyone: those who want to learn and those who can help teach us.

Current Affairs**Eileen Overton**

Meetings are held in members' homes at 2pm on the first Thursday of each month. We are a small informal Group, which means that everyone has a chance to speak, which is not always possible in a large Group. We enjoy listening to our members as they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Group. If you are interested, please get in touch with the Convenor for details of the next meeting.

Dinghy Sailing**Wendy Barnes & Judith Young**

We are looking forward to the start of the upcoming 2026 sailing season, having had a break over the winter. The schedule of dates will appear on our page on the Chess Valley u3a website. We normally sail from 1pm to 5pm on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month, although there may be variations in order to keep a two-week gap between our sessions. Troy Lake, the home of Rickmansworth Sailing Club, between Maple Cross and Denham, is where we sail, and we have the use of their club boats, kayaks and paddle boards. All are welcome, from any u3a Group, and no previous experience is required, although we do ask that you can swim 10 metres. At the beginning of the season, the water may still be very cold, so we recommend that you wear suitable warm clothing, and bring a change in case you get wet. For more information, contact either of the Convenors.

*"A boat carrying red paint crashed into a boat carrying blue paint: The crew were marooned."
(yachtingmonthly.com)*

French Conversation

Morag Robertson



The French Group meets twice a month and chats informally about many topics, keeping abreast of events avoiding politics or controversial subjects! We try to keep up to date with any films or television programmes in French. The Channel 'More 4' is proving a useful resource for foreign language programmes.

French Intermediate

Hilary Alleston

We enjoy our monthly meetings, trying to use plenty of French while we learn about the culture and traditions of the different departments of France. New members are welcome. We are a very sociable Group.

Fun Quizzes

James Cadle



The Fun Quizzes Group has two more meetings via Zoom (in March and April) before we stop for the summer. We will then start again in November. We call them Fun Quizzes because participants aren't competing against each other, just trying to beat the question-setter.

Quizzes usually take place on the second Tuesday of the month, starting at 7:30pm, with people being admitted to the Zoom meeting from 7:15 onwards. The Zoom invitations are sent out by the Convenor a few days before each quiz. Each quiz lasts for about an hour and has five rounds of ten questions each. If you would like to join in, please contact: quizzes@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Gardening

Stephanie Rothwell & Jenny Beirne



Did you know that spring has come forward a full month since the 18th century? Or that gardens make up 4.6 of the total land area of the UK? Facts pointed out to us by Katrina Roche during our first talk of the year, entitled *Resilient Gardening*.

Katrina had been featured in the RHS magazine for the way in which she transformed her small garden in London, with an eye to the effects of climate change on our landscape. It was slightly bizarre looking out at yet another wet, grey January day and seeing Katrina's slides of wonderful water-storage devices to grace your patio on those long, dry days of possible summer drought ... but of course, Katrina's talk also featured ways in which to deal with excessive moisture, and there has been plenty of that in recent weeks. She gave useful advice about plants which are tolerant of both dry and wet conditions, and we came away with plenty of ideas about wise choices when planting in the future.

Our February meeting featured Cyclamen, that lovely flower which cheers the garden with shades of pink in autumn, winter and spring. Our speaker, Paul Whitlock, of the Cyclamen Society, is a prize-winning grower of Cyclamen at the Royal Horticultural Society. His knowledge and enthusiasm for Cyclamen gave us the desire to get out and plant, and perhaps even join the Cyclamen Society, in order to acquire their well-curated seeds! Our full programme for 2026 can be found on Garden Group web page of the CVu3a website. Although our membership is increasing, we are still able to accommodate new members. Please contact the Convenors if you wish to join the Group.

Jenny Beirne and Stephanie Rothwell

German

Jenny Lee



It's amazing what we learn about in our German Group. For example, interesting things about parts of the world our members are travelling in. At the moment one of our Group is in India, another in Zanzibar and one is cruising the high seas. We have also learnt about planting trees, playing chess, drinking wine and walking. All this is in German, which is great fun!

"Germany has around 1,200 different types of sausage:

The history of the German sausage dates from the Middle Ages when meat had to be preserved to keep it safe for consumption. This process would include combining meat, salt and spices, placing them in an encasing and then smoking it."

(bbc.co.uk/bitesize)



Alison Bailey, researcher and trustee of Amersham Museum, visited us in December with her fascinating talk, *The History of Amersham in Placenames*.

Alison opened her presentation with the name of the town itself, Amersham, which is thought to be derived from the name of an early Anglo-Saxon ruler. Earlier spellings are Agmodesham and Elmodesham after Ealmond or Ealhmund. Ham is the early Anglo-Saxon word for a settlement or village in a water meadow, hence the origin of the town's name is Ealmond's village by the water.

Alison continued with references to Saints as in local parish churches, frequently used in street names and schools as in St Mary's Primary School. Landowners were also remembered. Lords of the Manor, the Drake and Tyrwhitt-Drake family, are represented in Drake Road and the Drake Alms houses founded by Sir William Drake in 1657. The Amersham School, formerly Brudenell, was named after the Brudenell family. The Cheyne family were Lords of the Manor for over 300 years, and Cheyne Close in Chesham Bois honours their memory. Alison continued with references to Weller the brewers, George Ward, local photographer, Gilbert Scott and Kennard (both architects), all acknowledged in street names. Though many women left their mark in the area, very few have been named in places. There is Archer Court after Jean Archer, Amersham's first female mayor and Abrahams Court after Margery Abrahams who, among other notable achievements, was involved in the organisation of Kindertransport.

Our first presentation of 2026 focussed on the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. We looked firstly at the Great Pyramid of Giza which, despite being the oldest, is the only one of the seven that still exists today. Its age, when Cleopatra was alive, is significantly greater than the period between Cleopatra and the present day. The exact location of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon is unknown. Traditionally the gardens are attributed to Nebuchadnezzar although Stephanie Bailey from Oxford University has proposed these are in fact the well documented gardens constructed by King Sennacherib.

Next, we focussed on the Temple at Artemis in modern Turkey. It was commissioned by King Croesus, famous for his extreme wealth. The temple was said to be four times larger than the Parthenon. The fourth wonder was the Statue of Zeus. Even seated, he was 41 feet tall, depicted on a cedar wood throne ornamented with ebony, ivory, gold and precious stones.

The Colossus of Rhodes was erected to celebrate the successful defence of a year-long siege. It only stood for 56 years before being destroyed by an earthquake. The ruins were sufficiently spectacular to attract visitors for a further 800 years. Our sixth wonder was the mausoleum at Halicarnassus, each side of which was designed and adorned with reliefs by four leading Greek sculptors. It was the last wonder to be destroyed which was as late as the 15th century.

Our final wonder was the Lighthouse, or Pharos, at Alexandria. This was the first lighthouse to be built anywhere in the world. There are plans to open a museum on the site to display artefacts recently recovered. The architect carved his name at the base but covered it with plaster with inscribed praise to Ptolemy. In due course the plaster fell away revealing Sostratus' name.

February's meeting was a presentation by Chris Simmons from Chiltern u3a. He enthralled us with the exploits of Sir Francis Younghusband, a Victorian explorer, soldier and sometime spy. His early life resembled a Boy's Own adventure story.

He was born in 1863 in Murree, British India, to a family with a strong military history which was a great influence on him. His upbringing and schooling were of a typical British 'stiff upper lip' style, paramount in Victorian England, which he totally embraced in all his placements. He made an expedition across Asia, ostensibly to survey the geography, but really to ascertain the strength of the Russian threats to the Raj. He carried out numerous scientific observations and at 24 was elected the youngest member of the Royal Geographical Society.

Younghusband served as a political officer on secondment from the British Army and travelled through India, China and Tibet on various missions. He was the first person to cross the Gobi Desert and the first European to cross the Muztagh Pass with no equipment. He had tremendous endurance and pushed himself to the absolute limit.

(cont.)

He married Helen Magniac in 1897, but she did not accompany him on his travels. In 1904 he experienced a profound spiritual revelation, and this prompted him to form a new religion. His exploits made him a global celebrity and, as such, he travelled through the UK and USA. Honoured by many geographical societies, he finally met the love of his life, Lady Madeline Lees, with whom he shared the rest of his life.

Chris is an excellently informed speaker who manages to keep his subject alive.

Italian; Get By on your Holiday

Peter Windsor

Unfortunately, this Group has had to close. It will be restarted if there is sufficient interest.

Keep Fit for 60+

Kay Johnson & Jackie Cobb



The Keep Fit Group is now up and running and after a rocky start the turnout has been fantastic. The classes are held at the White Hill Centre every Wednesday from 2.00 to 3.00pm

Our instructor, Caroline, has worked out a plan especially for our Group. She always points out that we must only do the exercises at our own pace. If we have to sit down to do some, hold onto a chair or even sit down for a rest, that is fine. At the moment the exercises are gentle, but who knows; by Easter we could be completing a marathon. So, a very big Thank You, Caroline.

We have had to close the Group as it is fully subscribed. We do however have a waiting list, so watch this space.

Knitting & Other Crafts

Jo Biggs



We meet at members' houses on the first and third Mondays of each month. The meetings provide an opportunity to get together, share our progress on projects, swap ideas and see finished results. In February Jo finished a crochet blanket, and we made the month seem a little less dull and rainy by going to the 'White Lion' for our (late) Christmas lunch. Fabulous company and great food!

We currently have a waiting list of one. Please contact Jo Biggs if you are interested in the Group.

Line Dancing

Linda English



The Line Dancing Group is run by Chiltern u3a but they also welcome members from Chess Valley u3a. We normally meet in the Methodist Church Hall, Bellingdon Road, Chesham HP5 2HA on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. From January 2026 the sessions will run from 9:30am to 11am, the first half hour dedicated to new beginners, with the more experienced dancers joining at 10am. We pay our teacher each time we attend a session. No previous experience is necessary. The emphasis is on exercising the body and mind and having fun. Limited parking is available at the venue. We currently have a waiting list, so please contact the Convenor if you wish to be put on it. Email: u3alinedance@chiltern-u3a.org.uk

Mah Jong

Edward Perrott



Mah Jong is a game played with tiles, which originated in China. It's a very sociable and fun game played by two, three or four people. There is no competition involved as each person plays their own game and any mistakes are easily hidden!

Don't worry if you haven't played before: If you have ever played the simplest of card games, you will quickly pick up the basics of Mah Jong. This is a friendly group of people who enjoy each other's company for an afternoon playing and chatting with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit. Anyone is welcome from beginners to more experienced players. We meet on the second and fourth Mondays (except Bank Holidays) at 2pm in the Free Church, Amersham. The Group is currently full.

MOTO (Members On Their Own)

This Group is now closed. The good news is that there are a several members wishing to join a new MOTO Group which Sue Broad is in the process of setting up. This is provisionally named MOTO 3. If you are interested in joining this Group, please contact Sue at: groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

MOTO 2 met at 'The Gate' in Chorleywood in November. I couldn't attend this, but it seems to have been successful and is, I believe, on the list for another visit. In December we had a Christmas lunch at the 'Boot and Slipper' which was enjoyed by all except that Brian announced he did not feel able to carry on as Convenor. He's done a great job up to now and we were all sorry to hear he's standing down.

After some discussion Ted and Joan volunteered to take over but because of discussions about this, we missed our lunch in January. February took us to the 'Blue Ball' in Asheridge which always has a good choice, and we look forward to sampling more and varied pub grub throughout the year.

MOTO 2 is full. Further enquiries should be directed to the Groups Coordinator, Sue Broad, as another MOTO Group may soon be formed (see MOTO above, ed.)

Music Appreciation**Geoff Hayes**

If you are fed up with the rain, and I guess most of us are, and the cold and damp are keeping you inside, then the Music Group is just the thing for you. We had a fabulous meeting on, what was, a very damp and miserable Thursday 5th February.

Our chosen theme for the meeting was 'Winter'. Members of the Group brought along their suggestions for pieces of music to share, based on this theme. We look up each selection on Youtube with its associated video and play it on a large screen. We heard pieces from Genesis, Debussy, Elvis Presley, Chopin, Queen and much more besides, including something from Flanders and Swann; I wonder if you can guess what it was with so much MUD around at present.

Several of the members expressed their relief and joy in attending the meeting because it got them out to a lovely relaxed social event instead of being trapped at home by the weather. Sharing music and lifting spirits is what we are all about.

Our theme for the meeting on 5th March is 'Marches and Military Music'. I am looking forward to the inventive and sometimes quirky suggestions that Group members bring along. No doubt there will be plenty of stirring stuff.

We are a very friendly Group and would love to welcome new members. We meet at the Town Hall in Chesham for two hours on the first Thursday of the month. It's easy to participate and the well-being payback for the effort to come along is huge. Do come along and join in.

Patchwork & Quilting**Angela Bratton & Dee Watson**

Here's hoping everyone is finding the first few weeks of this new year to be a time for new beginnings. Whether it is some new resolutions for things to experience or maybe some challenges to overcome, whatever our thoughts, there is so much on offer with our u3a, and the Patchwork and Quilting Group is no different. We have had two meetings so far in 2026 and our members are either finishing off their ongoing projects or have started new ones.

However, we have the capacity to take new members, and it doesn't matter whether it is at beginner or expert level. There's no competition, there are no deadlines for our work, no homework to be handed in, no fees and our progress is self-managed. What we do is for our own pleasure and all at our own pace. We are a friendly group of like-minded people who enjoy what we learn from each other's progress and achieve.

Patchwork and quilting can be done by hand and/or machine. We continue to meet one Wednesday each month at the Village Hall in Hyde Heath throughout the year and, as always, we welcome a visit from anyone when we are there, whether it is just to see what we do, or think about joining us.

There's no pressure, but if you do want to come along please ring Dee on 07889 263207 first so we know when you are coming and at the same time you can ask any questions you might have about the group or patchwork itself; and there's tea and cake! The ability to sew and/or use a machine is a good starting point, but we would love to have more members to enjoy our lovely pastime. Angela Bratton and Dee Watson



For the last meeting of the year in December, as usual, members had their five minutes of fame showing their photographs taken during the year. Subjects ranged from wildlife, water scenes and buildings to holiday destinations. This was followed by mince pies with tea. Alec showed a very neat technique for combining images and agreed to run through this in detail at another session. We briefly discussed the programme for 2026. There

was enthusiasm for running a session for members to follow a detailed photoshop exercise on their laptops at a meeting. For the January meeting, members were asked to show some winter photographs, using any of the non-auto modes if possible, and for their digital imaging exercise, to create a Dickensian Christmas scene from one of their photographs.

In January we looked at a range of photographs, mostly taken over the Christmas period, to reflect the winter season. These included photographs of the starling murmuration in Brighton, the light show at Ashridge and photographs taken at Tate Britain. Pippa also showed some excellent photographs of the installation of the bridge over the railway line at Little Chalfont on Christmas Day.

Alex gave a very informative presentation on how he created a composite image from four photographs using Photoshop. Although members generally use Photoshop Elements, there were a lot of techniques which could be directly applied. Well-done Alec!

After tea, we discussed the forthcoming programme:

There was no meeting in February as the hall had been booked for a presentation by the developers of Chalfont Park.

March: Members are asked to take photographs using the manual mode in their cameras. Any subject is acceptable. The meeting will also look at monochrome photography.

April: A presentation by Jeanette Leadon on phone camera use, including in-phone editing.

May 6th: Field visit to Amersham, which we hope will include a visit to the Amersham Museum.

We discussed the possibility of a visit to London, with details still to be worked out. Alex has volunteered to present some photographs by well-known photographers for discussion. Again, the details are still to be finalised. We discussed having a session showing members printed photographs, and how they may be collated for professional printing. Our portrait session was very popular, so we discussed repeating it later in the year.

Pilates

Liz Howlett & Christine Ross



Our long-running Pilates classes continue to thrive and help give a Monday morning lift to participants' health and well-being. Over the years we've seen consistent improvement in strength, balance and flexibility and overall confidence among our members. Attendance remains steady and it's been great to welcome a few new faces alongside our dedicated

long-term participants The supportive social atmosphere continues to be a highlight.

Play Reading

Joan Barton & Linda Hepworth



As several of us were busy with preparations or social events for Christmas, we decided not to have a play reading in December, but Claire hosted a very pleasant coffee morning ... a good old chat with coffee and mince pies.

In January we went to Jan's and read *I'll Leave it to You* by Noel Coward. I believe this was the first play he wrote. For February, Mavis hosted a reading of *A Tomb with a View*; a comedy thriller by Norman Robbins in which most of the Tomb family, as well as their guests, had been murdered well before the end.

It's always interesting to try out different voices and accents and in the last few months we've gone from 'posh' to 'common' via various regional accents ... not always successfully, but we give it a go!



Agenda for the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Chess Valley u3a

Held at 2pm on Thursday 11th June 2026

Broadway Baptist church, Chesham, HP5 1EG

- 1 Apologises for absence**
- 2 Minutes of the 17th AGM, held 12th June 2025**
- 3 Reports from: (a) The Chairman**
(b) The Treasurer
- 4 Reports for the year ending 31st March 2026**
- 5 Appointment of an examiner for the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2027**
- 6 Election of Officers and committee Members (all Trustees) see note below**
- 7 Any other business**

Notes

The Committee comprises up to 10 members. The present incumbents are:

Officers

James Cadle	Chair
Geoff Naylor	Treasurer
West Marshall	Business Secretary

The roles of Vice Chair and Publicity Coordinator are currently unfilled

Committee Members (Trustees)

Sue Broad	Groups Coordinator
Valerie Garrod	Web Editor
John Bunyan	Newsletter Editor
Jim Wilkie	Membership Secretary
Jackie Cobb	Events Coordinator
Peter Windsor	Speaker Coordinator

In addition the following non-Trustee has been co-opted onto the Committee:

Jim Campbell

Notes

(1) James Cadle, Sue Broad, Valerie Garrod, Jackie Cobb, Peter Windsor and Jim Campbell, having been appointed for two year terms at the seventeenth AGM in 2025, are willing to continue to serve in their current positions.

(2) Geoff Naylor, Jim Wilkie and John Bunyan, having been appointed for two year terms at the sixteenth AGM in 2024, have offered themselves for re-election in their current positions.

(3) Jim Campbell, having been co-opted onto the Committee in 2025/2026, offers himself for election by the membership.

(4) Nominations for new committee members to fill the vacant positions, or to contest any of the roles available for re-election at this meeting will be welcome.

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Committee Elections June 2026

Nomination Form for Officers and Committee Members

Five Committee roles are subject for election or re-election.

Position applied for (tick one or more boxes)

Treasurer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletter Editor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vice-Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publicity Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communications Manager	<input type="checkbox"/>

Proposer and Seconder

Proposer's name (in capitals)

Signature

Seconder's name (in capitals)

Signature

Nominee's full name (in capitals)

Nominee's CVu3a membership number (if known)

Nominee declaration

If elected, I am willing to accept the position for a two year term on the Chess Valley u3a Committee.

Signature Date

Please send your nomination, no later than 8th May 2026, by email to: secretary@cvu3a.uk

or by post to: Chess Valley u3a, The Secretary, 118 White Hill, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1AR

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Chess Valley University of the Third Age

Annual General Meeting 2026

Proxy Voting Form

The following matters are to be presented at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Chess Valley u3a (CVu3a) on Thursday 11th June 2026 and I, the undersigned, authorise the Chair of the Meeting or to vote in accordance with my instructions:

	Yes	No	Abstain
Approval of the Minutes of the 17 th AGM of CVu3a held on Thursday 12 th June 2025	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approval of Accounts of CVu3a for 2025/2026	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Re-election of Geoff Naylor as Treasurer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Re-election of Jim Wilkie as Membership Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Re-election of John Bunyan as Newsletter Editor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmation of Jim Campbell as Committee Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Election of Marion Lloyd as Vice-Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reappointment of Ernest Newhouse as Examiner of CVu3a's accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I wish to ask the following question:

.....

Signature: Date:

Name (print): Membership No:

To be returned to the Business Secretary by Friday 5th June 2026:

Chess Valley u3a, Business Secretary, 118 White Hill, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 1AR

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Our Poetry Group meets at each other's houses on the fourth Thursday each month and we enjoy reading and discussing poems chosen in advance of the meeting. In December we chose a favourite Christmas poem to read and then enjoyed a Christmas tea. January saw us choosing poems by Derek Walcott whose poetry echoes his Caribbean roots. In February our subject was 'Parents and Children' and many of our choices evoked memories of our younger days!

Future Meetings:

March: Carol Ann Duffy

April: R S Thomas and Welsh Poetry

May: Gavin Ewart

Railways

Graham Yellowley & James Cadle



We are already into 2026 and have another great set of talks and visits planned.

December 19th: Adrian Palmer: South Africa: Adrian had a great set of photos of his visit to South Africa. The bulk of the talk related to a visit to the Sandstone Heritage Museum near Bloemfontein, which is also close to the Lesotho border. A very large track layout with a whole series of different locomotives were pictured with lovely views of the landscape beyond.

Adrian had a vast number of photos, and we didn't get through them all, but we certainly got a lot of images of locomotives in South Africa.

January 16th: Francis Gomme: Back to Brunel: Francis has presented to us more times than anyone else and this talk reminded us of what an excellent researcher and presenter he is. He gave us another interesting talk relating to West Wycombe station and the Railway that connected with the Great Western and Great Central joint main line from Paddington and Marylebone that would eventually sweep away much of the early broad-gauge route. Francis had some excellent pictures as well as some amazing Great Western Railway company maps of the original broad-gauge route dating from 1879, and another set recorded after the line was doubled in 1912. These showed an incredible amount of detail. Francis also pointed out various sites where remnants of the old railway can still be seen.

February 20th: Francis Gomme: Watkins' Dream: Another excellent talk by Francis, this time based on Edward Watkins who wanted to bring the Great Central Railway to London. This was originally achieved by connecting with the Metropolitan Railway through Aylesbury and Amersham, but due to conflicts over the number of trains being able to be slotted into the Metropolitan schedule, Watkins altered his plan. He then discussed with the Great Western Railway a connection via High Wycombe which then became the GCR's route to London. Both routes ended in London Marylebone station and, of course, these are the routes Chiltern Line now uses. In addition, Watkins had a dream of connecting with the continent and had started digging a Channel Tunnel from Dover. He got two miles out to sea before Parliament issued a Cease-and-Desist order due to fear of invasion from France.

Francis has an amazing set of photographs and anecdotes which he weaves into a very interesting and informative talk.

Our next meetings are:

March 20th: Waterloo Station Tour: Rachel Kolsky (FULL)

April 17th: *Confessions of an Editor*: Murray Brown

May 15th: *HS2 / Rolling Stock and Washwood Depot*: Bernie Rowell

June 19th: *Sri Lanka Railways*: John Scales

July 29th: Quainton visit: Sandy Harrison

Please contact the Convenors if you wish to join the Group. You will be very welcome. The Railways Group talks are held in Christ Church Hall, Chesham.

Singing for Pleasure

Stephanie Rothwell & Angela Bratton



Our Musical Director, Ali, is taking a sabbatical this term. She is busy touring Europe, performing with John Eliot Gardiner, the renowned Conductor, and his choir.

In the meantime, we are under the tutelage of Colin Spinks, one of Ali's musical colleagues, until she returns next term.

We are gradually adjusting to Colin's different method of teaching, and it's good for us oldies to have to adapt to new approaches!

Spanish Conversation (Intermediate)

Hilary Alleston



We are often travelling and enjoy hearing about each other's experiences, whether in a Spanish-speaking country or not. We are great readers and keen to share ideas for new books to try, as well as discussing current events. The Group is still full.

Stamps & Collectables

Steve Epps



The Stamps and Other Collectables Group meet every two months and either Group members or outside speakers talk about items from their collections, which could be anything collectable. If you are interested in coming to a meeting to show something you collect, please let me know.

Tai Chi

Sue Broad & Meg Brinton



Our Group are still coming to terms with performing the intricacies of the 24 movements to our instructor's satisfaction, but all hopes of going to the World Taijiquan Championships which take place biennially, and are the competitive culmination of a discipline known around the world for its emphasis on patience, control and balance, have now flown out of the window. But we might win for endurance, if that was part of the competition.

Due to interest, we are still looking out for another tutor to take a Beginners Group. Please let me know if you know of anyone: groups@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Theatre

Helen Barnard & Geoff Naylor



2026 got off to a great start, with 57 members heading to the Barbican Theatre in London to see *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare is not everyone's cup of tea, but the production was, on the whole, enjoyed by all, and the coach provider's brand-new vehicle proved extremely comfortable!

February will bring something a little different with *I'm Sorry, Prime Minister*, followed by *Shadowlands* starring Hugh Bonneville in March, and *The Producers* in April. These trips are currently all sold out, but it is always worth adding your name to our cancellation list, as places do occasionally become available.

Please watch out for announcements of further trips, and remember that places are taken up very quickly, so prompt responses are essential.

Ukulele

Jeff Naman & Heather Sprake



Lured by mulled wine and mince pies, five of us entertained Whelpley Hill W.I. with a medley of songs and carols which they merrily sang along to. (See picture with our resident dancer in the middle! Ed.)

This new year sees us trying out more new songs and methods to enhance our Group meetings. We always welcome new ideas. We hold our fortnightly meetings (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month) at the Methodist Church in Bellingdon Road, Chesham starting at 2.30pm.

Please contact me if you would like more information or just come along. It is fun!

Jeff Naman 07976 633798

Walking Groups

Each Walking Group accepts participants from other Groups with prior notification. Members of the Groups also walk individually to scout new routes.

Amblers (3 - 4 miles)

Sue Osborne

No surprise; our walks have been badly affected by rain this year! Our January amble was cancelled owing to torrential rain.

However, in February nine of us enjoyed a virtually dry walk from Wharf Road in Wendover along the towpath of the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. The path has recently been resurfaced so is safe (apart from runners) whatever the weather. Volunteers have cleared the canal, and swans and ducks seemed to be enjoying themselves.

We stopped at Halton tennis club where we refreshed ourselves with tea and cake. Satisfied, we made our way back to our starting point in good spirits, feeling all the better for having beaten the rain, getting out in the fresh air and having a good chat.

Walkers (5 - 7 miles)

Walkers 1

Stuart Stanley

Walkers 1 meet at various locations on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 10:00. Walks are usually between four and five and a half miles long and are led by members. We usually meet for a picnic or pub lunch (optional) after each walk. They are planned with walk leaders and published every three months, and members advise the walk leader if they wish to participate.

For the fourth quarter 2025, we held walks in Bovington, Chenies, Cliveden, and Chalfont St Giles. For the start of 2026 our walks were or will be in Chipperfield, Asheridge, Old Amersham, Cliveden, and Studham.

New members are always welcome, including members of other walking groups.

Walkers 2

Michael Ferraro

Walkers 2 normally meet at 9:45am for a 10am start on the fourth Thursday of each month for a five-to-seven-mile walk.

Our major news was the retirement at the end of 2025 of Sue Rawbone as Convenor, after 14 years. Our thanks go to her for coordinating walks and helping to keep us all active over that period. She was unable to attend the December walk, but a collection was taken and presents were delivered to her afterwards.

That walk was organised by Jill and Catherine for Walkers 2 and 3 combined and started from 'The Full Moon' in Hawridge, Cholesbury Lane, Hawridge, HP5 2UH, winding over five miles around Hawridge, with most of the Group stopping for lunch afterwards.

Our 22nd January walk, led by Brigid Farmer, was from the 'Blue Ball', Asheridge HP5 2UX, meeting at 9.45 for a 10am start. It was five miles with one stile: downhill from the pub and up to Bellingdon, then along paths to Ramscoat Wood, descending to White Hawridge Bottom. We then followed the valley up towards Cholesbury and back to the pub via Bank Farm.

February's walk was on the 26th, led by Lynne Delph, from the Little Hay Golf Complex, Box Lane, Bovington HP3 0DT. It's around five miles with gentle inclines, no stiles, through woodland, arable and grazing pastures.

New members are welcome, but please check with the Convenor first. There is no fee for membership, but we normally request a £1 optional donation on the day which funds either gates replacing stiles through the Chiltern Society, or a donation to the Air Ambulance

The longest walk around the world was completed by Jean Beliveau, a neon-sign salesman, who walked 46,600 miles around 64 countries. The trip took him 11 years.

(wellbeingpeople.com)

New walkers always welcome in Walkers 3. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month.

Our combined walk with Walkers 2 at Christmas, as mentioned above, was around Hawridge. The rain stayed away, and we finished with a challenging lunch at 'The Full Moon'; there were plenty of empty plates. Libby led our January walk around Hyde Heath, and Cat led our February walk from Whelpley Hill, a great day, with deep mud and massive puddles! We enjoyed it so much that we would like to do it again, but perhaps in the summer. A big thankyou to our walk leaders.

Striders (7 - 15 miles)

Keith Pittman & Ian Barrett



Striders have continued to walk through the worst of the winter and now the better weather is coming the number of regular walkers is increasing. Recent walks have seen us in the areas around Wigginton, Little Chalfont, Little Missenden and Chipperfield. We are all very grateful for the time our members put in to discovering new routes for us.

Some administrative changes have seen us bring together the two Striders Groups and switch to using WhatsApp for managing regular walks. This has made it simpler for Striders to book on to a walk and so reduced the burden on Walk Leaders and Convenors. Keith Pittman and Ian Barrett still jointly convene the Group, which is now known just as Striders. Contact: striders@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk

Walks into History: Country

Peter Schweiger

Amersham Old Town: 14th January 2026



Meeting in the grounds of the Quaker meeting house on a sunny but bracing morning, and well insulated, we set off down Whielden Street, past the charming seventeenth century cottages, so well maintained. We approached the Broadway through the cobbled yard of an old coaching inn, 'The Griffin', where we sampled their delicious sourdough bread in their thriving 'Ourdough' bakery. This proved too inviting to be missed (for some!)

After a welcome hot drink at 'Kokos', on through St Mary's graveyard. Peter gave us one explanation for the mummy-like semi cylindrical stones on some of the graves: there to weigh down coffins when the nearby river Misbourne flooded. Perhaps? An enthusiastic Howard Hughes guided us through the history of the church. How chilling it was, to be told that some poor souls had been condemned to death on the very same stone floor on which we stood, for the crime of reading the bible in English. The Drake chapel was perhaps the jewel in the crown. Lengthy inscriptions on several impressive sculptures commemorate past members of the powerful landowning family, both men and women, and give a fascinating record of social history.

The tear sculpted onto the face of one little cherub, grieving for a loving mother, reminded us that high or low, rich or poor, we can all feel grief.

Then on through Pondwicks meadow and past the banks of the Misbourne where eagle eyed walkers spotted a brown trout in the crystal-clear water.

Back in the High Street, what a variety of rooftops! Who would have thought there had been so many schools here, back in the day? Thank you, Squire Drake (Thomas Drake Tyrwhitt-Drake) for preventing the railway passing through Old Amersham. It leaves us this beautiful, some say unique old town, virtually unspoilt.

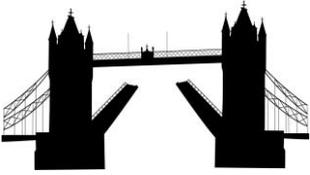
Our walk, in many ways, proved to be a 'taster', leaving some of us keen to learn more, perhaps with a visit to the local museum? And we are looking forward to Heritage Day in the Autumn. Barbara Leyland

Interesting facts about Amersham:

"Film & TV Hotspot: The Kings Arms in Old Amersham was featured as 'The Lucky Boatman' in Four Weddings and a Funeral. It has also appeared in Midsomer Murders and Cuckoo."

(A I overview)

"The Bandroom in Amersham is home to eight different brass and wind bands."



Mayfair: December 2025

After several days of unpleasant, cold and damp weather, it was nice to assemble outside Green Park Underground Station on a bright and, for the season, mild day. The guide for our Group was Richard Roques whom we have met before and so we anticipated a good tour.

Mayfair is apparently named after the May Fair that was held in the area from 1686 to 1764 in what is now Shepherd Market, but was then rural land outside of the cities of London and Westminster. The fairs were eventually suppressed because of their noise and nuisance and after the land was acquired by the Grosvenor family (now the Dukes of Westminster), development began which, over time, included Hanover Square, Berkeley Square, Grosvenor Square and the elegant and expensive houses that followed. Richard said that, with Kensington and Chelsea, Mayfair is now one of the most expensive areas of London and has many wealthy residents.

After an initial briefing, we peered through the windows of Langan's Brasserie and then viewed the exterior of some lovely Georgian terraces. In Curzon Street, we passed G F Trumper, a famous gentlemen's hairdresser, and the bookseller G Heywood Hill which has a blue plaque to Nancy Mitford who worked there during World War Two.

Next it was into Shepherd Market, named not after sheep herders, but rather the builder Edward Shepherd, who did well enough for himself that he was able to build an actual villa, now the home of the Saudi Arabian Ambassador.

Shepherd Market itself is now the site of art galleries, many restaurants and cafes. In Chesterfield Street, we viewed a number of fine Georgian houses, one now the Bahamas Embassy and some of which still have the original fittings for their oil lamps. One house had blue plaques to both Anthony Eden and Beau Brummell, the latter described as a "leader of fashion". Another nearby house had a plaque to the Duke of Clarence who lived there with his mistress and several illegitimate children in 1826 before ascending to the throne as William IV in 1830.

Hay's Mews is a surprisingly broad thoroughfare where the buildings were originally stables and coach houses where the grooms lived separately, to keep them apart from the maidservants in the big houses. In Farm Street we viewed a mock Tudor house which was built for Lady Thelma Furness, related to the Vanderbilts, and a mistress of Edward VII. Later the house was used by Gloria Swanson and visited by President John F Kennedy.

Across the road is the Church of the Immaculate Conception, better known as Farm Street Church and the London base of the Jesuits. It was designed in the gothic style by Joseph John Scoles, who commissioned Augustus Pugin to create the High Altar. The church also has some fine stained-glass windows.

Then, into Berkeley Square where the entrance to Annabel's nightclub was garishly decorated for Christmas, and thus into Mount Street where we viewed shops decorated with lovely terracotta tiles. The Connaught Hotel followed, with the next major stop being the former US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, now converted by the Qataris into the Chancery Rosewood Hotel. On the opposite corner of the Square is a house once occupied by John Adams, then US Ambassador to London and later the Second President of the United States. Richard told us it has both a huge bathroom and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Our tour ended in Duke Street, near the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family.

Altogether another fascinating and informative tour.

Angela Shipley

Wildlife

Harry Howlett & Keith Sonley



We had our usual social meeting in December but this time, as well as the usual quiz, we had a presentation with lots of great photos of puffins and kingfishers by one of our members, Brian Feakes. This was followed by a selection from more of our members; photos of which they were particularly proud, or of unusual examples of wildlife. (cont.)

We missed January as the meeting would have been January 1st and we thought it might be wise to give that date a miss! So, we began 2026 with our February meeting when we had a really interesting talk on urban wildlife, in London especially, from the enthusiastic and entertaining Jon Mason; lots of photos and some surprising facts, including how many green spaces and gardens there actually are in London. We will be looking to invite Jon back in the future.

On March 5th the subject will be 'Amphibians & Reptiles' with speaker Dave Willis, who is the founder of the Hertfordshire Amphibians & Reptiles Group (Herts ARG), established in 2011 to promote, conserve and study Hertfordshire's native populations of reptiles and amphibians. He will cover such things as the types we might see in our area, how to identify them, what to do if we come across any, and what risks there are to any individual species (e.g. crested newts).

Our April 2nd speaker is Doug Kennedy who will show us what you could see in 'Spectacular Namibia', the landscapes and the wildlife of this amazing country.

We are in the process of organising some outdoor visits as well as other speakers, with a booking already confirmed for September when we will learn all about bees.

With a membership of over 80 we are pleased to report that we regularly get 35 to 40 attending our meetings at Amersham Common Village Hall, which are held at 2pm on the first Thursday of the month. If you want to learn more about wildlife, both local and around the world, come and join our Group.

Wine Appreciation 1

Pauline & Tom Hohenberg



The November meeting at the Hohenbergs featured Italian wines. After some *Tesco Finest Gavi* as an aperitif, we started with a *Friuli Pinot Grigio* reduced from £14 to £10 at Tesco. This was followed by a *Moncaro Verdicchio Classico 2022* from the March region, 12.5% and £10 from Waitrose. Then came a *Cantina Puiatti Ribolla Gialla* from Northeast Italy, £10.50 from the Wine Society. Moving on to the reds, we sampled a *Christian Patat Appassimento* from Puglia, 14.5% from Naked Wines, then a *Primitivo di Manduria Paolo Leo 2023* at 14% and finally another *Primitivo di Manduria Riserva 2022* at 14%, on special offer from Avery's reduced from £19.99 to £12.99.

In January, our now traditional Scottish evening at the Howletts featured wines suitable for a Burns Night. Not surprisingly, this produced an eclectic selection. With the Selkirk grace we sampled a *Chablis 1er Cru Moillard-Thomas*, available from Majestic at £32. This was followed, accompanying the smoked salmon, by The *Pebble Chenin Blanc* from Val de Loire, 11.5%, £11.99 from Tesco. The Haggis, neeps and tatties were graced firstly by a *Pinc Velfrey 2023 Rose* from the well-known wine growing region of Pembrokeshire. 11% and £20. This was closely followed by a *Catena Malbec 2023* from Mendoza, £15 from Waitrose and a *Cune Rioja Reserva 2020*, 14% and £18 from Waitrose. Finally, we had a *Louis Latour Cote de Beaune Villages 2020*, 13% and £22 at Tesco.

Wine Appreciation 2

Graham Hitchener



Our final meeting of the old year was entitled *Old World, New World?* Which featured wines that may have surprised some of our members. Unfortunately, the wines chosen by yours truly actually fell some way short of our usual standard. Fortunately, Xmas food was a great deal better than most of the wine!

We didn't have a meeting in January but instead we had a belated Christmas lunch.

February's meeting hosted by Muriel and Alan featured wines from Aldi (The new Amersham store is now open, ed.) The leaders on the night were a Chenin for the whites, and a juicy Malbec for the reds.

"Wine improves with age. I improve with wine."

"Did you know wine doesn't make you fat? It makes you lean ... against tables, chairs, floors, walls and ugly people."

(vincarta.com)



Holidays, family commitments and back pain have conspired once again to scupper one of our meetings this last quarter. Our February meeting on Friday 13th was cancelled for these reasons. Or maybe it was the date! It may have been too much to hope that things would go as planned, especially as our chosen topic was 'Superstition'.

'The Room at the End' was the topic for the last meeting of 2025 in December and this was well attended. We had the chance to welcome a guest member who presented a wonderful piece on the subject. Some out-of-the-box thinking was also behind one of the presentations. For January our topic was 'Music', a very broad subject and one we had visited before. A wide range of interpretations of this were presented. The topic 'Superstition' is now being carried through to our March meeting, which also falls on a Friday 13th. We live in hope.

Our Group welcomes new members so, if you write in any capacity, maybe you would like to join us. Our meetings have now come forward half an hour to start at 2pm, generally on the second Friday of the month in a member's home. We agree on a topic for our next meeting, but members can present from any work that they may have in hand.

At the Equinox

The tide ebbs and reveals orange and purple sea stars.
I have no theory of radiance,

but after rain evaporates
off pine needles, the needles glisten.

In the courtyard, we spot the rising shell of a moon,
and, at the equinox, bathe in its gleam.

Using all the tides of starlight,
we find
vicissitude is our charm.

On the mud flats off Homer,
I catch the tremor when waves start to slide back in;

and, from Roanoke, you carry
the leafing jade smoke of willows.

Looping out into the world, we thread
and return. The lapping waves

cover an expanse of mussels clustered on rocks;
and, giving shape to what is unspoken,

forsythia buds and blooms in our arms.

Arthur Sze 2014

Chess Valley u3a Groups Schedule

FIRST in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Art Discussion 2 (pm)	Walkers 1	Walkers 3	Wildlife	
Pilates Classes 1,2 and 3 (am/pm)	Striders	Patchwork & Quilting (am)	Current Affairs (pm)	
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)	Music Appreciation (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Ukulele (pm)	German (am)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Book 2 (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Keep Fit (pm)		
		Wine 2 (eve)		

Monday Groups' schedules are sometimes interrupted by public holidays; contact the Convenors for more information

Tai Chi meets in school term-times only

SECOND in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
History (pm)	Ambler's	Walks into History (Country) OR	Art Discussion 1 (am)	Writers (pm)
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders	Walks into London (alternate months)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	Line Dancing (am)	Monthly Talk (pm)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	French Conversation (am)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Dinghy Sailing (pm) (April-October)	Bridge (pm)		
	Fun Quizzes (eve) (November-April)	Keep Fit (pm)		

The Chess Valley u3a Committee meets on the first or second Tuesday of each month, two days before the Monthly Talk

THIRD in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Walkers 1	Patchwork & Quilting (all day)	Book 4 (am)	Railways (am)
Canasta (pm)	Striders	German (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	Book 1 (am)
Knitting & Other Crafts (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Spanish Conversation (Intermediate) (am)		
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Book 3 (pm)	Photography with Digital Imaging (pm)		
Singing for Pleasure (eve)	Ukulele (pm)	Play Reading (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Keep Fit (pm)		

Stamps and Collectables meets in members' houses every two months

FOURTH in month				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mah Jong (pm)	Striders	French Conversation (am)	Walkers 2	Chess (am)
Pilates Classes 1, 2 and 3 (pm)	Art (am)	French Intermediate (am)	Keep Fit (currently suspended)	
Bowls (Short Mat) (pm)	Tai Chi (am)	Line Dancing (am)	Poetry (pm)	
Singing for Pleasure (eve)		Dinghy Sailing (pm) (April-October)	Wine 1 (eve)	
		Gardening (pm)		
		Bridge (pm)		
		Keep Fit (pm)		

MOTO 2 meets for lunch on the second Saturday of each month

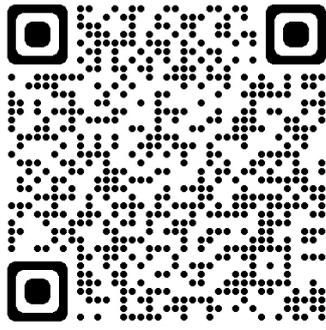


In the new year our Art Group have been very busy once again and collage has been the order of the day. The White Hill Centre, where they meet, has seen the tables covered in snips and torn fragments from magazines and newspapers.

A completed robin is shown here alongside a landscape of sun over water; a work in progress.

If you want to join them, contact the Convenor.





www.cvu3a.uk



Pimlico, London, 7 January, Alex Brown (2020).



Top Right: Several players from our Ukulele Group entertained Whelpley Hill W I with songs and carols in December. (note the dancer in the centre, ed.)

Centre Right: Knitting and Other Crafts member Jo completed this amazing crochet blanket in February.

Above: Alex Brown of the Photography and Digital Imaging Group made this monochrome study at Tate Britain's recent exhibition of the work of photographer, Lee Miller.

Lower Right: The Striders walk on 6th February coincided with a rare snowfall this year. But they were well prepared for it.

