

# Haddenham

## U3A News

### Town and Gown united

**For our September** General Meeting, Oxford historian Liz Woolley gave us a comprehensive account of *Oxfordshire and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39*, covering the background to the war and the participation of Oxford people across both town and gown. More than 30 went to Spain either to fight or to help in front-line hospitals, and many more were involved in fundraising and covert logistics support. Locally, in 1937 many Basque child refugees were hosted at Thame Workhouse, which is now part of the residences at Michaelis Road. During questions afterwards, U3A member and local historian Diana Gulland elaborated on those cared for at Tythrop House near Kingsey, and mentioned the occasional disruptive behaviour of the teenage element, some of whom were actually older than they had claimed! Nothing changes...



Basque refugee children



Brandenburg Gate, Berlin

### Berlin: city of the world

**In October**, historian and tour guide Simon Gregor walked us through the city's streets in his *History of Berlin*. Suggesting that this also reflects the history of Germany, he took us back to the year 98, when Roman scholar Tacitus first referred to the area of the tribes north east of the Roman empire as *Germania*. Even then there was an east-west boundary. Our virtual tour confirmed the writings of the Bavarian romantic Jean Paul in 1800, that "Berlin is rather a part of the world than a city". David Bowie said it was the greatest cultural extravaganza one could imagine. Simon discussed key events,

including the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm in 1918, Hitler's attempt in 1923 to overthrow the government and launch his Nazi party, 1938's horrific Kristallnacht action against the Jews and the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. Curiously, all these four significant events occurred on 9<sup>th</sup> November. Mixed memories...

### Magnificent Mitfords?

**In our November** talk Gillian Cane gave us an insight into the sometimes controversial lives of the Mitford sisters. Their parents expected the girls to marry wealthy husbands, and mostly they did! Deborah became Duchess of Devonshire and lived in Chatsworth House, masterminding the payment of the death duties due on the death of her father-in-law. She wrote books but never read any. Pamela married a millionaire physicist after refusing a proposal from John Betjeman, and Nancy wrote many successful novels as well as biographies of historical figures. Unity and Diana became well known in the 1930s for their friendship with Adolf Hitler. When war broke out Unity tried to commit suicide using a gun given to her by Hitler. She didn't succeed but never recovered and died in 1948. Diana first married brewing heir Bryan Guinness but left him to marry Oswald Mosley and became a confirmed fascist. In contrast, Jessica eloped with rebel socialist Esmond Romilly and turned her back on privilege. They went to fight in the Spanish Civil War and then moved to the USA, where Jessica became a communist. She was estranged from the family and never spoke to her father again.



**Members will be emailed in advance of future General Meetings with an invitation to join via Zoom.**

## Thoughts from the Chair

**I hope you** are all keeping well and coping with lockdown the second time around. Let's hope this is the last one and that it will be effective so that we can regain our freedom once more.

**As an avid fan** of *Money for Nothing*, I've been painting a few old household items, and I have an ambition to renovate six dining chairs and an oak dresser. If any members have expertise in this area I would be very grateful for any tips and perhaps, when we are able, we could start a U3A Upcycling Group!

**Remembrance Sunday** was marked with a service by the war memorial on the village green, where I laid a wreath on behalf of our U3A. Although a reduced number were able to attend, it was a heartfelt reminder of how much we owe to those who gave their lives to preserve our way of life – made even more poignant in this year of pandemic.

**Zoom continues** to support our General Meetings and those of many Interest Groups. In the absence of our traditional Extravaganza, we will endeavour to bring some Christmas spirit to our 2<sup>nd</sup> December meeting on Zoom (see back page). Please sign up and wear your Christmas jumpers and hats, and be sure to have some festive refreshments on hand. We aim to finish the meeting with everyone joining in a rousing rendition of *We wish you a Merry Christmas* – as do I and all your Committee.

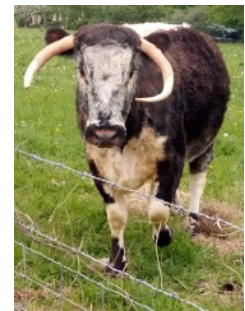
Here's to a much better year in 2021.

*Sally*

## Lockdown musings

### The changing seasons

Being able to walk the footpaths around Haddenham was a great source of enjoyment and a real lift for many of us – with the chance of a socially distanced chat with a friend not seen for several weeks. It was fascinating to see how the same route changed with the seasons in a way that I had not noticed before. Spring was still quite wet at the start, but soon gave way to warmth. Crops and newborns began to appear. Some sightings included longhorn cattle near Chearsley, a deer near Dinton, lambs at Cuddington and twin white calves near Thame. The summer saw the growing crops shooting up until the drought affected them and harvests suffered. A poppy field at Scotsgrove was a surprise. Autumn has brought a mixed harvest and even more mixed weather. But always something worth seeing.

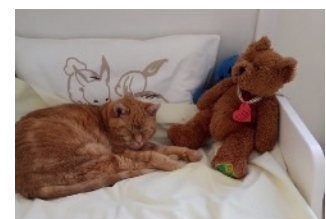


### Zooming around

Back in February I had never heard of Zoom, or any other video platforms. A landline conference call was as sophisticated as it got, although I had used Skype and Facetime. So, when Elaine Parkes suggested that our book group could meet via Zoom, I was a little apprehensive about it. Having downloaded the right version, I joined our first meeting. Inevitably, there were some teething troubles, and parts of the early meetings had video and sound problems, but with a lot of encouragement from Elaine and Geoff people got there. And we got past the early novelty of playing with the background scenes! Very soon more U3A and other groups began to use it for various meetings, or just to chat. Lockdown has triggered a big leap in the use of technology – one friend even does Morris Dancing via Zoom!

### The empty bed

Just before the first lockdown we got a junior bed for our grandson to sleep in on his next visit, with some new covers featuring rabbits, as he loves animals. As there was no chance of him using the nice new but empty bed, our cat moved in, with a teddy, which we duly photographed for him. When in June the family could at last come for a BBQ, of course he had to see it to make sure it was really there. And it was! One very happy little boy. But it still hasn't been slept in, except by the cat, who is taking good care of it.



*Rosanne Ward*

## Interest Group News

### Local History Group meetings resume

**Courtesy of Zoom**, Roderick Floud, gave the Local History Group a fascinating talk in August on *Making and Maintaining the Great Gardens*, as covered in his recently published book *An Economic History of the English Garden*. We learnt about the amazing amounts of money spent on gardens such as Wrest Park in Bedfordshire and the huge workforces required to create them.

**In September** Steve Sharp talked about the development of local democracy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of our very own Parish Council. Occupations of the first councillors ranged from ‘a gentleman’, two farmers and a miller, to a bootmaker, a butcher, a carpenter and two general labourers – a real cross section of society. A farmer called Frederick Merrick was elected chairman at the first meeting. William Redhead, a labourer, was made vice-chairman, becoming chairman in 1896. Interestingly, Redhead’s widow, Ruth, later joined the Council and in 1934 was elected as the first female chairman.



Wrest Park, Bedfordshire



Cowley's cinema then...

**In October** Liz Woolley spoke to us engagingly about *Leisure and Entertainment in Victorian and Edwardian Oxford*. She explained how workers began to have more leisure time because of the new 5-day week, Bank Holidays and early-closing days. However it was believed that the working classes should take part in ‘Rational Recreation’ to improve the mind and body. The first gym opened in 1858, there were designated bathing areas on the rivers and Oxford City was the first football club to be founded. Circulating libraries opened in the 1830s, Mechanics Institutes produced literature to improve the mind and gradually public lectures were opened to the working classes. All this was aimed at keeping the working classes away from BEER! Despite all these alternative pastimes, drinking became more and more popular. In 1883 there were 319 pubs and beer houses. Intellectual activities continued to expand as cinemas appeared, the New Theatre opening in 1886 and a Big Game Museum on Woodstock Road. However, for many the entertainment they looked forward to most was the annual St Giles Fair, with its fairground rides, menagerie and copious amounts of alcohol!



...and the fine Jeune Street facade now

### Writers Group

Thanks to Roger Rickards’ technical support, the Writers Group also continues to meet via Zoom, and our congratulations to member David Gregory, who won third place for his entry *I’m not Julie* at October’s DigiTAL event organised by Thame Arts & Literary Festival. You can read it at [talfestival.org](http://talfestival.org)

### Languages Groups

French Conversation is once again being led (on Zoom) by Carol Mason, who originally started the group. Thanks are due to Paul Dickinson for running it for more than 7 years, and for continuing to lead German Conversation. They are also using Zoom to get this multi-U3A Anglo-German walking group together. A number of members are native German speakers, and they currently ensure that walkers stick to German before their picnic lunch, after which they are allowed to speak English during the rest of the walk.

## Out and about

### *On the trail of the firecrest*

In October, Sue Oswell led 16 members of the Tuesday Walking Group on a beautiful socially-distanced walk through the autumnal beeches of Wendover Woods. Part of the route included the Firecrest Trail, where members actually heard the strident call of a firecrest, one of Britain's tiniest birds. However, as is typical, it remained out of sight. After taking in the magnificent, if misty, views across Aylesbury Vale and beyond, a fine dry outdoor picnic was enjoyed at the Café in the Woods.



Britain's tiniest bird?



### *Wandering the Wychert Way*

The Long Distance Walking Group emerged from Lockdown 1 for a delightful local loop from Church End around The Wychert Way, led by Brian Bowman. After a socially-separated lunch in the garden of Dinton's Seven Stars, several of the group completed most of the 12-mile walk to return to Haddenham, while others returned via Green lane. A further walk, featuring a steep ascent of Chinnor Hill with a pause for breath (left) was centred on Princes Risborough, reached by train rather than minibus. Sadly, adverse weather and Lockdown 2 have put an end to further plans for now.

### *Cycling the 'Tour de Vale'*

Members of the Cycling Group were delighted to be able to resume monthly rides in September and October. They divided into groups of six or less and managed two local rides of about 20 miles each. Leader Marie Woodrow reports that it was just great to be out cycling together again. She adds, "Twelve of us also met together informally in two groups to do a 15-mile ride for the Tour de Vale to support their fundraising for disabled sports. We had an excellent ride, stopping for an outside coffee break at Orchard View Farm and waving to each other across the field." Although the new lockdown rules have ruled out immediate plans, Marie remains optimistic for further rides in the New Year, and the 3-day trip exploring the Canterbury area in April is at present still on. Watch this space!



Look out behind you!  
Taking a selfie Wendover Woods



### *Re-cycling? You scratch my back...*

A popular local pilgrimage for members throughout the summer was to stroll past Ponnie and through the thicket to pay their respects to the New Zealand Kunekune pigs, Rosie and Scarlett, in the grounds of Tythrop Hall. They enjoy human contact, and Brian Bowman suggests taking them food and a back-scratcher stick!

## A time for reflection...

Joining others at the war memorial on the village green, this year's Haddenham U3A wreath was laid by Sally Lajalati at the Remembrance Day service on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November. The Baptist Church minister Revd Jonathan Fillis, who is new to the village, led the service. He read a thought-provoking poem by Geoffrey Studdart Kennedy MC (1883 – 1929), an English Anglican priest and poet. He was nicknamed Woodbine Willie during the First World War for dispensing Woodbine cigarettes along with spiritual aid to injured and dying soldiers.



## ...for sharing and for laughter

The Editorial Team is grateful to members who have kindly contributed to this Newsletter in these news-starved times – including the topical cartoons below, which might make you chuckle. Hopefully we will be back to normal by the spring, but if you have anything you'd like to share with fellow U3A members – thoughts, observations, news, humour or photographs – please email them to [neil.dury@btinternet.com](mailto:neil.dury@btinternet.com)



*In Germany they are preparing for the crisis by stocking up with sausage and cheese. That's the Wurst Käse scenario.*

We hope readers had some pleasure trying to identify Beatles song titles from the cartoon we printed in the August issue. The Editor is reliably informed by websites (and his Beatles-loving brother) that 38 songs are indicated. Most are album tracks, many from the later recordings. Please send an email to [neil.dury@btinternet.com](mailto:neil.dury@btinternet.com) if you would like to be receive the full list.



## What's my line?

Research by members of the Genealogy Group has revealed many bygone occupations, with several of the less recognisable skills being from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the heyday of manufacturing in the North and the Midlands. Discoveries range from a so-called wire hooker in one of Sheffield's steel mills (controlling the wire originating from a steel billet as it descended from sets of rolls into a pit) to a master cordwainer or shoemaker (not a cobbler – they *repaired* shoes). Going back even further has uncovered long-forgotten jobs such as tripe dressing, preparing that peculiar delicacy to accompany chips, as it was cheaper than fish!

Of course, several members with connections in the North have family histories in coal mining, from pit managers to coalface workers, while those in the South often have ancestors in farming. However, mining can also be traced in Westcountry families, including coal and slate in Wales and tin and china clay in Cornwall, all of which were needed to feed industries in other parts of the world – as they still are.



Courtesy: Macclesfield Silk Museum

Many manual skills, such as silk weaving in Macclesfield and Spitalfields, have been overtaken by automated machinery or cheaper overseas labour, and some are the victims of changing fashion, such as one member's grandmother, who was a corsetière. Their mother, however, became the first female realtor (estate agent) in the San Francisco Bay area as late as the 1960s, enjoying success in that profession for almost 30 years. And even office machines have been superseded. No more serried ranks of typists in the pool, or comptometer operators in the accounts department – just the word processing software and spreadsheets now available to all.

If you would like to find out more about your ancestry, and compare notes with others, contact Sue Michell at [susan.michell501@gmail.com](mailto:susan.michell501@gmail.com) and do let her know if you'd like to share some long-lost occupations in future editions of this newsletter. If you are a member of Buckinghamshire Library, you can currently log into [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) at home for free, as well as online *Which?* and many gardening and lifestyle magazines.

## Thames Valley Network

The following bookable educational days will be available via Zoom. Details are at [u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://u3atvnetwork.org.uk)

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December – 10.30am**

Ukulele Day (limited availability) with George Bonner

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December**

Art versus Photography – study session with Keith Appleby

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December**

Christmas Quiz session from Avis Furness



**And in 2021:**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January**

The Charge of the Light Brigade – study session

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February**

A talk on musicals

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March**

The Thames and its Boats (postponed from March 2020)

## Macmillan 'Coffee morning'

In September, U3A members Mary and Malcolm White were still determined to go ahead with their annual 'coffee morning' for Macmillan Cancer Support during the recent restrictions. Despite having to sign in guests to their garden and no means of serving coffee safely, there was a warm welcome well into the afternoon for small groups of people, who had a wide choice of cakes, bric-a-brac and plants. A large covered gazebo ensured that the rain stayed away but unfortunately the volunteers who erected it the previous day were pressed into service early to help the hosts dismantle it when the high winds in the evening started to carry it off! After a successful but tiring day for all, £950 was raised for this worthy cause – a remarkable achievement and not far short of the Whites' record fundraising of recent years.



**If you would still like to contribute, please call Mary White on 01844 291677 or pop your donation through her letterbox at 22 Rudds Lane, Haddenham.**

## Haddenham Parochial Charities

Joseph Franklin | Alms Corn | Revd John Willis

The trustees of the Haddenham Parochial Charities now invite applications from the less fortunate residents of the Parish. You can download an application form [here](#).

The original objects of the ancient bequests above were to provide bread and coal for the poor at Christmas and seed corn on Good Friday. Nowadays the trustees make a gift of money at Christmas time to claimants in need. Applicants are required to be adult residents of Haddenham parish and their names are kept confidential to the Trustees.

If you wish to apply, please collect and complete a form, now available in the Post Office, the Medical Centre and Blooming Fruity for return by 1<sup>st</sup> December. If you know of a relative, friend or neighbour who is in need please let them know about the charities and help them to apply if necessary.

Trustees: Alan Rose 01844 291004, Steve Sharp 01844 290597, John Wheeler 01844 296134, John Wilson 01844 291200

## Future General Meetings

### Lights, Camera, Ho! Ho! Ho! (via Zoom)

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December – 2.15 for 2.30pm

Of necessity, our Christmas meeting will be more modest than our customary 'Extravaganza' and a little less social. However, our speaker Pete Allen will recall Jimmy Stewart in *It's A Wonderful Life*, Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone* and Michael Caine in *The Muppets Christmas Carol*. He says, "Christmas and movies have gone hand in hand since the early days of cinema. But do we think we know what makes a great festive film? There's always room for a little surprise in the festive movie stocking – like John Wayne on the run from the law! What could be more Christmassy than that?"



### Andrew Carnegie (via Zoom or possibly at Bradmoor Farm)

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Jeremy Holmes will talk about the philanthropist from a Dunfermline slum who went on to make his fortune in America as a ruthless steel magnate. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he gave it all away by setting up foundations all over the world. Worth more than Bill Gates, Carnegie couldn't give the *interest* on his wealth away fast enough. The talk plots his rise, motivations and unique personal story at a time of dramatic industrialisation in the USA.

