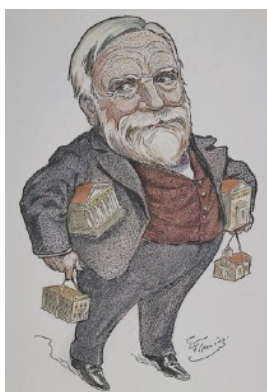


Festive films

In our countdown to Christmas Pete Allen, the speaker at our December General Meeting, told us that a US movie channel began its Christmas Season in September – but then, their business was to sell Christmas Cards on the side!

Frozen and *Elf* are current children's favourites, but other perennials such as *Love Actually*, *Home Alone* or *Die Hard* are surprise seasonal hits just because of their Christmas setting. One of the earliest stories to be filmed, in 1902, was Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. It must surely claim to have the most remakes, with 20 films, 8 animations and dozens of TV productions. Stars include Alastair Sim, Albert Finney, Colin Baker and The Muppets.

Possibly the most viewed film every Christmas is little known in the UK. Filmed in black and white in 1963 and lasting only 18 minutes, *Dinner for One* is a slapstick two-hander starring Freddie Frinton. It has become a must-watch TV video every Christmas in Germany, with half their population and much of Scandinavia viewing it at least once a year. Seek it out online and see what you think!



Robber Baron or Robin Hood?

In January our largest ever Zoom audience, of over 90, attended Jeremy Holmes' fascinating insight into the classic rags-to-riches story of Scotsman Andrew Carnegie.

Son of a handloom weaver, and with little formal education, he started work at the age of 13 as a telegraph messenger after his family moved to the USA. He impressed those he met and was quick to learn. Joining Pennsylvania Railroad he borrowed money to make small investments which paid off, becoming the first millionaire at the age of 35. He later wrote that the rich

have a moral obligation to distribute money in ways to promote the welfare and happiness of the common man: "The man who dies rich dies thus disgraced".

During the Civil War he bought an oil well and set up a steel mill and was soon supplying steel for bridges and railway track, creating the largest steel empire in American history. However, this was not without marring his reputation through poor industrial relations, leading to a bloody battle against striking workers.

In 1901, Carnegie Steel was sold for \$480m. The buyer, J.P.Morgan, congratulated Carnegie on becoming the world's richest man. True to his beliefs, and supported by his wife, Carnegie proceeded to divest himself of more than 95 per cent of his fortune by the time of his death in 1919. He believed that education could transform society, and \$350m (\$80bn today) funded scholarships, teachers' pensions and 3000 libraries worldwide. Most of the 800 established in the UK are still open and, in discussion afterwards, we learnt that at least two of our members have benefited from using one of Carnegie's Libraries.

Inside this issue...



Sugar and spice?

Or frogs and snails?
Find out just what it is you're made of.

Doomed by climate change?



A look at our threatened moths and butterflies.

Period return to Haddenham?



What was our local stage coach service really like, and how did it influence modern transport?

Barrow to Baghdad...

...via The Ritz

In February, ex-chef Philip Caine entertained us from his well equipped kitchen – but no cakes were baked. After ten years in the hotel trade, including time at The Ritz and in Paris, he managed catering for dozens of hungry oil workers on North Sea rigs, quickly learning that the French like steaks much less well cooked than the Scots! He and stay-at-home wife Sandra enjoyed the shift pattern (2 or 3 weeks away, 2 or 3 back home in Barrow-in-Furness) and she always encouraged him to progress by taking on more. Moving into management, and with Sandra's continuing advice and support, Philip set up and managed facilities in Algeria and Nigeria (on alternate long shifts), followed by Kazakhstan, where he provided accommodation and 6000 meals a day for 2500 ex-pats. And when bandits were robbing his supply chain, he found himself being offered logistical support from a KGB colonel!

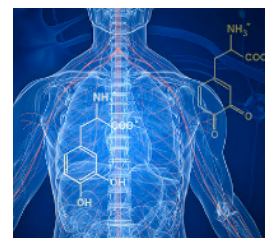
At the end of the Iraq War in 2003, Philip directed the operations and project management of accommodation bases for the American Coalition in Baghdad, providing full support for over 30,000 troops on nine sites across Iraq. Having signed up for a six-month contract, he ended up working there for seven years. He spent the end of his career with Sandra (still encouraging) in the Emirates, running two oil service businesses. In "retirement", domesticity in Barrow was no challenge for Philip, so he is now successfully writing adventure thriller novels and fulfilling hundreds of speaking engagements. Afterwards, the first question for Philip, from member Anne Routh, was "Please can we meet Sandra?"

Future General Meetings*

Wednesday 3rd March – 2.30pm

Chemistry of the Human Body

There are 92 naturally occurring elements in the Periodic Table but how many of them would you need to make a human? The chemical formula for a human has some surprising inclusions and the recipe to make a fully functioning person is carefully balanced. Chemist Dr Kathryn Harkup looks at some interesting facts about the elements that make us what we are.



Wednesday 7th April – 2.30pm

Bad boys and gutsy girls

Balkans expert Robert Wilton looks at two centuries of travels of British adventurers, soldiers, poets, painters and humanitarians to Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. From Lord Byron to Rebecca West, Edward Lear to Trotsky Davies, some were pursuing dreams, and some running away. This talk is an entertaining story of these remarkable individuals, what they discovered, and what it means to us today.

Wednesday 5th May – 2.30pm

Speak up and mind the furniture

As an amateur actor for 50 years and a professional film extra for 5 years, Jeff Rozelaar presents a series of anecdotes and character monologues encompassing mishaps on stage and off, and those that take place behind the camera. He describes his favourite plays and roles and what he considers to be great moments in drama.



* via Zoom

A word from the chair

The first signs of spring are here at last, with crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils blooming, and I hope by now most of you will have had your first jab, with no adverse reactions. It's been heartwarming to benefit from such a well-organised and good-natured vaccination campaign, as well as hearing about all the acts of kindness from people during this difficult time.

The Committee were happy to give members the good news about the 2021/2022 subscription being suspended. We are grateful for your messages of thanks and support. Just to remind you that you do

not need to do anything unless you pay by Standing Order. Please see page 3 for more details.

We are also delighted to benefit from the national rebranding of the **u3a**, the results of which you can see in the new look for this Newsletter, and on our refreshed website.

The enthusiastic adoption of Zoom by members, whether as participating audience or as Interest Group leaders, has helped us all to keep in touch, and we look forward to when we can hold our first General Meeting at Bradmoor Farm, perhaps later this year.

In the meantime, take care and stay safe.

Sally

More Diary Dates

Thames Valley Network study days

All via Zoom, bookable at u3atvnetwork.org.uk

17th & 18th March 10.30-12.30 (2-day event)

Sweet Thames

Talks by Steve Capel-Davies, John Tough, Cliff Colbourne and Graham Scholey – four speakers with great knowledge of the Thames and its history. Cost £3. Closing date: 10th March



Wednesday 24th March – 10.15am

Women in Art and Photography

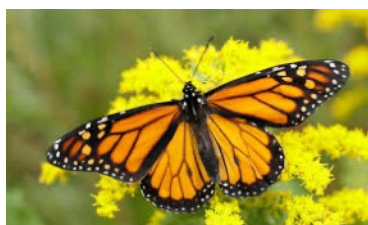
Two free lectures by Keith Appleby, who taught Photography to degree level, following his last presentation in December on Art vs Photography.



Closing date: 15th March

Wednesday 31st March – 10.30am

Butterflies within a Changing Environment



How is a butterfly different from a moth? Is the changing climate affecting native species, how are they coping and what can

we do to save them? Entomologist Dr Ian Bedford will answer all these questions, and more, in a fascinating talk on his favourite subject, the butterfly. Cost £3. Closing date: 24th March

Other u3a services

There are too many study days available at u3a.org.uk to list here, but it's definitely worth a look at the Events section on this easy-to-use revamped website. Online readers may well like to receive the short monthly u3a newsletter issued nationally. Join 30,000 others and find out about the bigger u3a in these difficult times. Registration is simple at u3a.org.uk/newsletter. Just enter your name, email address and region (South East).

You can also keep in touch and share ideas with other members nationwide at u3a.org.uk/keeping-in-touch

Our new look

If you're a marketing agency, the new u3a visual identity is "brave in its simplicity and geometric shapes, with a bold and progressive look and feel to help elevate the brand and attract the next generation of members". If you're a u3a member, perhaps the first thing you'll have noticed is the revised logo. The use of lower case lettering might not be to some tastes, but it undoubtedly looks more modern, although we should continue to write or type U3A where clarity is important, such as on cheques!

The overall look aims to balance being serious with making us seem more friendly and approachable. Our "corporate" colours are still yellow and blue, but lighter and brighter, feeling more modern, more fun, and visually more exciting in print and on screen. The clean, modern typeface you are reading here is also designed to be easy to read on both page and screen. (For the technical, it's called DM Sans.)

The "Learn, laugh, live" strap line is retained, confirming the long-declared intention to drop any reference to "The University of the Third Age", which can be off-putting to potential new members. As members will appreciate, we are an inclusive rather than exclusive organisation and, in these challenging times, we want to welcome as many as possible to join us.

"Until now, I never understood why you got so excited when someone walked past the house."



Annual membership fee

As many of you already know, the annual subscription for existing members is suspended until 1st April 2022. If you pay by Standing Order you need to amend the next payment date to April 1st 2022. Some members have found that online banking does not necessarily allow you to make this type of change. We suggest you either phone your bank or cancel the existing S.O. and then immediately set up a new one for 2022. If you have any queries contact David Ackroyd, at treasurer@haddenhamu3a.co.uk or Elaine Parkes at membership@haddenhamu3a.co.uk

Interest Group News

Gardening Group

More than two dozen members of the Gardening Group were treated to a talk in February about The Thame Valley. Speaker Doug Kennedy explained the character, wildlife and conservation projects between the river's headwaters, north of Aylesbury, and its junction with the Thames at Dorchester. Precious wildlife includes many types of butterfly, and the overall landscape is dominated by water meadows (as can be seen in the scene below near Starveall).



In an ongoing restoration project at Eythrope, the Waddesdon Estate is creating new wetland habitats that will increase species diversity. The sewage treatment plants along its length provide a continuing challenge to life in and around the river, but ironically much conservation funding has resulted from fines levied on spillages, the worst of which was in 2013.

In March, Paul Patton's talk "Show Time" will give a behind-the-scenes look at the build up to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and how the magnificent gardens and exhibitions are created.

Appreciation of Music (and Hugh)

There have been many tributes to member Hugh Stradling and his wife Tricia as they leave Haddenham after 45 years to be closer to their family. Among his many contributions to village life, Hugh led our Music Appreciation Group 2. At meetings in his studio, members were sometimes lucky enough to enjoy his concert performances on one of his several (!) grand pianos. Bernard Warner has kindly agreed to take over as group leader as soon as meetings are able to recommence.



Appreciation of humour?

New Interest Group proposed

During lockdown, when so many people have been sharing jokes, videos and cartoons to cheer up our lives, there has been a suggestion to start a 'Humour Group'. Initially this would be via Zoom. Topics could include funny things children say; amusing things that happened on holiday, at Christmas, with animals etc. Or the group could look at different types of humour. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Linda Page on groups@haddenhamu3a.co.uk



History Group

Members' research projects last year included:

Cynthia and Roderick Floud's recordings of the spoken memories of some older villagers, starting with Brian Burch. Unfortunately social distancing means this fascinating research has been put on hold.

Three members investigated the Board School Log Books which were donated to the Museum by the Community Infant School.

Diana Gulland studied the first of these which showed that Walter Rose was a pupil there when William Ward was the master from 1875 to 1885 and she has compared the Log Book entries with Walter's writings.

Elaine Parkes found the only reference to war in September 1914 was "Mr Wootton had undertaken military duties". Life continued very much as normal but they did celebrate the end of war with a day off.

Sue Michell researched the last book which showed many changes – more sports, annual trips for the whole school and the introduction of the 11+ and 13+ examinations.

There will be full reports of the Log Book research in future Newsletters.

Finally, Peter Gulland is researching long-distance passenger travel in and from Buckinghamshire in the stage coach era from the 1630s to the 1890s. He cautioned that the importance of the coaches has been exaggerated due to the romance surrounding them. More prosaically, their principal importance lay in the revolutionary systems which guaranteed that an intending passenger could book a seat on a coach which had not yet started its journey – and that the coach would be available to make the journey to a published timetable, complete with driver, guard, and

regular changes of horses. Those systems still apply to our public transport services today, albeit with a little help from computers.

David Brown — Courtesy Oxford Mail



No stage coaches came into Haddenham, but two coach services passed close by – the Oxford to Cambridge coach which started to run in 1815 and followed the future A418, and the Thame–High Wycombe–London service, which took the future A4129 through Kingsey. Villagers had to walk to either King’s Cross in Haddenham or Kingsey to board their coaches. Rumours of stage coaches in the village are probably based on a misunderstanding of the Thame to Aylesbury horse bus which started after the last stage coach had been withdrawn. Unfortunately the pandemic has brought a temporary halt to Peter’s research because the record offices are closed.

God and Grass

Gardeners might see some truth in this ‘conversation’

God: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now. But, all I see are these green rectangles.

St. Francis: It’s the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers “weeds” and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

God: Grass? But, it’s so boring. It’s not colourful. It doesn’t attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It’s sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

St. Francis: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilising grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

God: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

St. Francis: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it – sometimes twice a week.

God: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

St. Francis: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

God: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

St. Francis: No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

God: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilise grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

St. Francis: Yes, Sir.

God: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

St. Francis: You aren’t going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

God: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It’s a natural cycle of life.

St. Francis: You’d better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

God: No!? What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

St. Francis: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

God: And where do they get this mulch?

St. Francis: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

God: Enough! I don’t want to think about this any more.

St. Catherine, you’re in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

St. Catherine: “Dumb and Dumber”, Lord. It’s a story about...

God: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.



Members' musings

Exercise for people over 60

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, from where you have plenty of room at each side.

With a 5 lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax.

Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10 lb potato bags. Then try 50 lb potato bags and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100 lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I'm at this level).

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.



A Blessing or a Curse

by Kevin Cheeseman

These times are tough; this year has been just awful,
Sometimes you think it couldn't get much worse.
But trust me when I say the glass is half full,
And that all this is a blessing, not a curse.

At last you'll have the time to write that novel,
You'll have a chance to teach yourself mah-jong,
To catalogue your collection of old fossils,
To master mime, or even play ping-pong.

Zumba by Zoom should get your pulse a-racing,
Pilates too – would that be such a stretch?
You've time to brush up on your portrait painting,
Or paint-by-numbers; OK then, etch-a-sketch.

Yes, times are tough; the lockdown blues – we've got 'em,
And you believe things really can't get worse.
Are you convinced we've truly hit rock bottom?
Did I mention that I've started writing verse?

Out and about

Member Jenny Bullimore recommends dry walking in the grounds of Waddesdon Manor, where snowdrops planted last season are now in flower, daffodils are just coming out and the long borders beyond the aviary are filling up with miniature iris, hellebores and cyclamen. Every week it changes and later in the season pyramidal orchids will appear among the trees near the parterre.

According to Jenny, Mary Miller has been organising joint walks to which everyone can contribute by adding up the miles (or steps) taken each day as your exercise. She adds, "Before Christmas we walked from Haddenham to Bethlehem, and made it by Christmas Eve, and now we have walked The North Wales Pilgrims Way and will be starting to walk to Santiago de Compostella. It's great fun and a real challenge to see how far you can clock up each day – even if it is only 1 mile".

Closer to home...

A local seeker of exercise found out why sticking to tarmac pavements might have been a better idea for his afternoon stroll!



... but no drier here

Walkers attempting recently to cross the swollen River Thames at Waterstock were rewarded with this delightful spring view.



Puzzle page

All questions refer to the village of Haddenham:

1. Which public route has a 1:6 slope (17%)?
2. On which street will you find the largest magnolia?
3. Where would you be standing to see both of these at the same time?



4. Many have been walking the Green Lane, but do you know where this is?
5. Where are 12 black and white stripes followed by another 40?
6. What are the names of the two watercourses than run on the northern and southern parish boundaries?
7. How many (working) Royal Mail postboxes are there in the village?
8. Where can you see these?



9. If "sounds like toy on a bed" is Dollicott, where is "perpendicular shares"?
10. What is the name of the longest road wholly within the village?

Good luck! Answers will be published in our May issue.

The editors extend their thanks to those who have submitted contributions to this Newsletter during these difficult times. As ever, we are grateful and apologise that we were unable to include them all. Please keep all your suggestions coming.