

An adventure into Anatolia

Timothy Walker, previously Director of the Oxford University Botanic Garden, made a welcome return to Haddenham U3A in January, albeit via Zoom. His travelogue *Plant Hunting in Eastern Anatolia* involved a 2000-mile journey with the Alpine Society in the 1980s.

Starting with an 'exciting' internal flight to Trabzon with Air Turkey, flown by gung-ho failed fighter pilots, Timothy travelled to many places of outstanding beauty. Starting on the humid Black Sea shore, perfect for growing tea and hazelnuts, to the plain of Erzurum, with its water meadows featuring primulas, grape hyacinth and orchids, the expedition took in the foothills of Mount Ararat, home to gladioli and unique species of orchid.



Tahir Pass at 8,200ft above sea level on the Old Silk Road and military route

The group found that begging children appeared from nowhere as soon as they began photographing plants! They also experienced real kindness from hotel staff, who rushed after them to return a forgotten camera. A memorable souvenir from Istanbul was ½ kg of saffron bought for 50p, which he is still using in his kitchen.

Turkey has a vast and diverse flora. Anatolia, in the northeast of the country, experiences hot, dry summers but up to 6 metres of snow in winter. Its deep valleys and high peaks are home to familiar snowdrops, tulips and fritillaries, as well as isolated pockets of unique sub-species.



An iris by any other name?

At Sarikamish, where there are still graceful curved Ottoman stone bridges, scree slopes are home to the rare *Allium akaka* and *Rosa canina*, a tiny dog-rose. At Dogubayazit, the rare and beautiful *Iris iberica elegantissima* grows, and in the poor land around Tahir, where local girls collected *Eremurus* (foxtail lilies) for food, *Puschkinia scilloides*, a relative of the hyacinth, can be found.

Many of our familiar garden plants originated in Turkey and were 'collected' by less enlightened plant hunters, but in the '80s local nurseries were established (by a man from Abingdon!) for the legal export of snowdrops. Asked by member Jenny Bullimore why we don't see more collections of truly native plants, Timothy replied that when he suggested it to the Botanic Garden many years ago, there was a less than enthusiastic response!



Ellesborough Silver Band struck a festive note at our December General Meeting. Around 80 members gathered after the concert to enjoy a glass of seasonal cheer.



Inside this issue...

Rudolph Hess



What is the real story behind his 'peace mission' in 1941?

If you go down to the woods today...



...you're sure to run into a charming u3a member!

Events are back on for this summer – at last!



Book your visit or holiday now to avoid disappointment.

Sing, choirs of angels?

Angelic or not, eighty u3a members started Christmas early, singing carols at the end of the concert given in



the Village Hall by the Ellesborough Silver Band. Eighteen members of the award-winning band played seasonal music, led by their Director of Music,

Graham Wells. Between pieces, Graham gave us some behind the scenes information. Founded in 1896, the band has a colourful history, playing to audiences (including royalty!) both at home and abroad. Over the years performances have included such prestigious venues as the Albert Hall.

During Neville Chamberlain's term as Prime Minister, the band was invited to Chequers to



play Christmas carols. And in 1992, they performed in front of Prince Charles and Princess Margaret at Aylesbury's Guttman Centre.

Fantasy, Fiction or Fact?

The Rudolf Hess mystery

Extra seats were needed in the Village Hall for our February meeting, when the ever popular Tony Eaton presented another of his fascinating "Air Mysteries".

As Hitler's deputy, Rudolph Hess undertook a solo flight to Scotland in May 1941, but was forced to bale out because thick mist shrouded his intended landing ground, possibly the estate of the Duke of Hamilton, Scotland's premier peer.

Parachuting in 12 miles short, he was arrested by the local Home Guard. He claimed he had an important message for the Duke, whom he'd previously tried to contact in order to open peace negotiations. At the time, peace on the Western Front would certainly have freed the German military for a planned invasion of the Soviet Union.



Tony discussed the strength of the British Peace Movement at that time, which included prominent industrialists, bankers and landowners. Many of the Great and Good were members of The Anglo-German Fellowship, and the intelligence agencies on both sides had recently met on neutral soil. Chamberlain's meetings with Hitler had the support of the Cabinet, and both the Duke of Kent and the Duke of Windsor had visited Hess and were thought to be seeking an accommodation with Germany.

Believing that contacting the Duke of Hamilton would be a route to negotiations with the King, it seems Hess had a poor understanding of who governed the country. He had hoped to seal a deal and return in 48 hours, but had left a message that "If it ends in failure, say I was crazy". The official account states that he made the dangerous flight entirely of his own volition and that his offer of peace was simply the product of a deluded mind. But recently declassified documents reveal quite the opposite, indicating that Britain came very close to signing a pact with Nazi Germany, which would have fundamentally changed the history of the War and the face of post-War Europe.

Hess became a prisoner of war, was found guilty of war crimes at the Nuremberg trials and incarcerated in Spandau Prison until his apparent suicide by hanging in 1987 at the age of 94.



Spandau Prison

Further mystery surrounds his death, as the expected noose marks on his neck were absent, rather more resembling strangulation. Later, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl believed Hess had been murdered, and although Scotland Yard investigated the claim, no findings were published.

The death of the Duke of Kent in a plane crash in Scotland in 1942 while serving in the RAF introduced a further mystery. He was often in the company of the Duke of Hamilton, so could he have been the real target of Rudolf Hess on his flight to Scotland? Investigation reports remain "classified" under the unique 100-year rule which protects sensitive state secrets. It's possible that the truth about Hess has been the subject of an official cover-up to protect the reputations of those actively involved in secret negotiations, which included senior politicians and leading figures from the highest reaches of the British Establishment.

Diary Dates

General Meetings

All at 2.15 for 2.30pm in the Village Hall

Tuesday 8th March

The Questionable History of the TV Quiz Show

Jeff Evans is a champion quizzer and writer of questions for *Fifteen to One* and *Impossible*, and an author of books about popular TV. He is currently on the *Mastermind* writing team. In this fully illustrated talk, he looks at where it all began and which shows have been the most successful. Who have been the winners, losers and – perhaps most intriguingly – the cheaters? Jeff celebrates the good, the bad and the ugly, and unearths some very dodgy dealing along the way. You can expect lots of warm memories, plenty of surprises and lots of ‘I didn’t know that’ moments in this one hour talk.



Tuesday 12th April

Our Brains: How we remember, and why we forget!

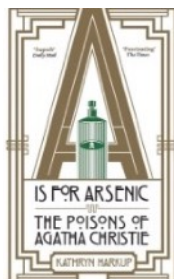
Jim Ellis’s postponed talk will help us to understand our brains, and how people accumulate, understand and apply information. What do our brains do to help us remember and make sense of new things, and do we all do it the same way? Why are different people skilful at maths, sport or languages, but rarely all three?

Jim will address all these questions and dispel some common myths about the brain, using numerous examples to illustrate his points. Audience participation will be encouraged – but only if you are comfortable doing so.

Tuesday 10th May

A is for Arsenic

Dr Kathryn Harkup will once again enthral and appal us with what perilous chemicals can do, exploring the poisons used by the Queen of Crime, Dame Agatha Christie, in her bestselling detective stories. This talk looks at how the writer used her extensive knowledge of drugs and medicines mixed with real life cases to create her brilliantly plotted crime novels. Kathryn will look at howdunnit – but whodunnit is for you to find out.



A word from the chair

With snowdrops and daffodils beginning to appear, spring seems almost here, and I can update you on tree planting plans at Snakemoor Nature Reserve. This will commemorate both our u3a’s 20th Anniversary and the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. I have located three pot-grown Black Poplar trees, which will be delivered and planted in early March (see page 5).

We have also donated five trees as part of the national u3a 40th Anniversary woodland in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The goal of 5,000 trees by the end of last year was achieved after just three months – perhaps not quite so difficult when you consider there are more than 1,000 u3a groups in the UK.

The push for more Interest Group leaders has met with some success, and we are grateful to Fiona Chester for taking over Discussion Group 2, and to Norma Moore for agreeing to set up and lead a third Book Group! We might also now have a leader for Card & Board Games. However, we still need leaders for the Theatre Group and Earth Matters. It will be a shame if these groups cannot carry on, so if anyone is interested, please contact Groups Coordinator, Linda Page. There was some interest in the possibility of a Strollers Group, for those who prefer easy walks of 2–3 miles, but we need someone to take the lead for this to happen.

Committee members do a wonderful job of running our u3a, which could not function without extra help from many other volunteers with chairs, technical support, registration and teas at general meetings, the publication and distribution via email database and letterbox of this newsletter, plus management of the database and website. Many have served for a number of years and, if we are to continue to thrive, it is vital that others step up. If you are interested and would like to find out more, please contact any Committee member who will be happy to chat to you about what it involves. Nominations are needed at our May AGM.

As I keep saying, and writing, the u3a is an organisation run by its members for its members, and Haddenham is no different. Our u3a can only continue with your individual participation and involvement.

My very best wishes to you all.

Sally

Interest Group News

History Group

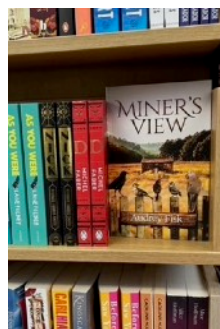
Elaine Parkes writes: At our November meeting Elizabeth Oliver gave a very interesting presentation about her volunteer work at the Buckinghamshire Archives, as well as her research project for the History Group. At the Archives Elizabeth lists the contents of boxes which have not yet been catalogued by the professional staff. One of the boxes related to the progressive, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, founder of London's famous Liberty department store. His career began in Chesham and he eventually became Lord of the Manor at The Lee. Elizabeth also examined documents about the radical John Wilkes, the scandalous MP for Aylesbury, who acquired the Prebendal property in the town. Interestingly, the house was later bought by Arthur Lasenby Liberty. Unfortunately, Elizabeth's work was suspended during lockdown but has now restarted.



Her project for the History Group was to transcribe a register of the Haddenham Baptist Burial Ground. She drew particular attention to the Commonwealth War Grave there of J E Falconer, a young New Zealand pilot, who died in a training accident near Waterperry and was therefore, sadly, interred very far from home.

Writers Group

Kevin Cheeseman reports that member Audrey Fisk had her novel *Miner's View* published at the end of 2021. Set in the 1970s, it follows a small cast of characters struggling to lead fulfilling lives during the period of industrial strife and mass unemployment. Available from good bookshops now!



Kevin himself was pleased to win first prize in the flash fiction competition held by Writers' Forum magazine this month. His pantomime sketch, *The Cinders of 2021*, features traditional, topical jokes – recent events providing a rich seam to be mined. The Writers Group still has room for one or two more members, so whether you're a wannabe wordsmith or an accomplished author, you'll be sure of a welcome. Contact kevin.cheeseman@me.com



Film Club

Fourth Tuesdays at 2.00pm. Walter Rose Room. Open to all u3a members. A donation of £4 is requested.

Tuesday 22nd March

Military Wives celebrates a band of misfit women who form a choir on a military base. Starring Kristin Scott Thomas and Sharon Horgan.



Tuesday 26th April

Ammonite tells the story of acclaimed but overlooked fossil hunter, Mary Anning, who worked alone on the South Coast in the 1840s. With her famed discoveries behind her, she now sells common fossils to tourists to support herself and her ailing mother. When a wealthy visitor entrusts Mary with the care of his wife, she cannot afford to turn his offer down. Starring Kate Winslet, Saoirse Ronan and Gemma Jones.



Tuesday 24th May

A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood is based on a true friendship between American TV personality, Fred Rogers, and a jaded journalist: Tom Junod learns about empathy, kindness and decency from America's most beloved neighbour, "Mr Rogers". Starring Tom Hanks and Matthew Rhys.



Book Group 3 – new!

Norma Moore writes: We had our first meeting at the end of January. We are currently a group of six, but only four could attend because of health issues at the time. It was a very lively meeting, made more enjoyable by the fact that most attendees had not been to a book group before. We planned our year's reading and then discussed *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, about choices, regrets and embracing life. We meet on the fourth Friday at 10.30am at members' houses and would welcome anyone wanting to join us. Email n.moore2@sky.com or call 07920 887699.

Book Group 2 – a good read

Elaine Parkes writes: We have been reading Richard Osman's *The Thursday Murder Club*, set in an affluent retirement village where 'Waitrose delivery vans clink with wine ... every time they pass over the cattle grid'. Elizabeth leads a cast of strong, likeable characters who overturn stereotypical assumptions about septuagenarians. This is a good 'holiday read', with a deftly written, if somewhat implausible, plot and a denouement that is perhaps rather convoluted.

Discussion Group 2

New leader Fiona Chester writes: We operate on an 'Open Forum' basis, enabling members to engage in discussions with their peers about any subjects of their choosing. Each attendee brings a topic for discussion, so we are able to cover a number of subjects in a two-hour session. The meetings are very informal, with everyone able to speak if they wish to, and give their opinion on each subject. The group meets on the first Monday of the month at St Mary's Centre, from 2.00 to 4.00pm. There is a charge of £5 per head to cover the costs of hiring the hall and refreshments. If you would like to join, please email fiona@fionachester.co.uk or call 01844 299482.

Yoga Group – back in action

Jan Baker writes: It's been a real pleasure to welcome back members and new faces to in-person classes on Wednesday afternoons. The Zoom yoga group is continuing for those who prefer to practise from the comfort of their own homes, or are not ready to come back to in-person classes just yet. New people are always welcome to the Thursday morning Zoom class at 9.45am. Contact janbakeryoga@gmail.com

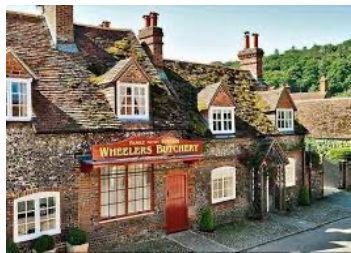
Technical Interest Group

Kevin Nash is keen to get things going again after a long break, and many meetings and visits are open to all u3a members, so please share any suggestions you might have with him at kevinpnash@yahoo.co.uk

Out and about

Walking Group 1

A few days before Christmas a dozen members enjoyed a five mile walk from the 'film set' village of Hambleden on the edge of the Chilterns, led by Mike Darnell and Tony Barker. In cool but dry weather, the climb out of the valley through Great Wood led to Roundhouse Farm, and on to the Highfield Plantation.



Hambleden — a favourite film and TV location

Heading back over Reservoir Hill, there were distant views of the River Thames winding its way past Hambleden Lock, before returning past Ridge Wood to Hambleden. Despite the uncertainty about Omicron, many of the group stayed afterwards for an excellent seasonal lunch at the Stag & Huntsman.



Photo: Bill Piers

Ingrid Holmes adorns a very interesting tree stump

Braving a sharp frost and looming fog in mid-January, Ingrid Holmes led an intrepid group of 17 members on another five-miler from the small village of Bradenham, uphill past St Botolph's Church into a brief period of sunshine in the beech woods. The descent through Great Cookshall Woods passed under the railway and across the road to emerge in West Wycombe village. From here another steep ascent to National Trust woodland passed close to the golden ball atop St Lawrence Church and nearby Hellfire Caves, before a scramble back down to the Risborough road and a welcome all-day breakfast at the Red Lion Café.

There was a good turnout of 18 in the cold and wet for the February walk at Christmas Common, led on this occasion by Malcolm and Mary White. Although conditions were very muddy, members enjoyed the route through Queen Wood, appreciating some wonderful patches of snowdrops, then skirting Northend and returning through Blackmoor and Shortridge Wood to complete a four mile walk. A couple of past members joined the group for an excellent lunch at the Fox & Hounds pub – a welcome compensation for the mud and rain!

Long Distance Walking Group

Fearing filthy conditions, based on past January experience, the longer distance group seem here to have cheated the mud. The ten mile walk from Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Haddenham via the Waddesdon Greenway, the Manor Grounds, Eythrope Park and The Seven Stars at Dinton was mostly on tarmac. The Greenway closely follows the course of the Akeman Street Roman road. An easy stroll for many (try it), the path features descriptive signage relating to the Roman occupation. Leader Brian Bowman was also able to provide the group with further archaeological insights along the way.



Photo: Neil Dury

Look — January, and no mud!

Three u3a trees for Snakemoor Nature Reserve

Volunteer Manager, Julian Watson, writes: We are very grateful for the generous donation of three trees by Haddenham u3a. Black Poplars are particularly well



Black Poplar

adapted to wetter environments, so they will make an excellent addition to our preferred location adjacent to the stream, where they should prosper.

The species has become increasingly rare in the UK and, tending to be solitary, struggles to reproduce. We hope that a group of three will have a good chance of

setting seed for future dispersal. Black Poplars are reported to support a wide range of insect and other wildlife species, which will benefit the Reserve. We all look forward to their planting in the early spring.

Thousands more trees for the



Last September the Third Age Trust launched a project to create an anniversary woodland to mark the u3a movement's 40th Anniversary this year. It will be situated in the Brecon Beacons, an area of outstanding natural beauty, and the trees will be expertly looked after by skilled arborists. Each u3a can contribute to the woodland by purchasing individual trees or a copse of 100. Haddenham u3a has already contributed five trees, which might not sound a lot, but there are more than 1,000 u3a groups in the UK. The woodland will help benefit the environment, wildlife and climate for future generations.

A wide range of trees will be planted, including alder, downy birch, silver birch, wild cherry, crab apple, dog rose, hawthorn, hazel, oak and rowan. Part of the outlay for each tree



is reserved as future payment for maintenance. Once they are fully established, they will be looked after as part of routine woodland management.

The initial target was for 5,000 trees to be purchased and planted between November 2021 and March 2022. However, in January the Trust announced that the target had been exceeded, with 6,000 trees already on their way to be planted. A new goal of 10,000 trees has now been set. The planting season ends in March but will start again in November.

Summer events

Haddenham u3a HF holiday

May 16th-20th. Derwent Bank, Northern Lake District



Sadly, two of our regular walkers have had to drop out, so a double room has become available. We have 27 people booked on the holiday. The choice of activities is Gentle Guided Walking, with three walks ranging from 4 to 9 miles), and self-guided walking



Photo: Carol Mason

for the more adventurous members of the group. The Discovery Tour has minibus trips to places of local interest, with walks between 2 and 4 miles. Accommodation is full board, and includes guides on the walks and a guide on the Discovery Tour.

For more information please contact Carol Mason at mason.carol16@gmail.com or telephone her on 01844 292236 or 07702 015319.

Book your visit now!

Longford Castle, Monday 25th July

It is good to know that we are all beginning to return to some kind of normality! Mary Paterson, our Outings Coordinator, has arranged a trip to Longford Castle, near Salisbury, home of the Earls of Radnor (see longfordestates.co.uk/the-estate) on Monday 25th July departing from

Haddenham Village Hall car park at 8.00am. The cost (to be confirmed) will be around £50 per person and includes a guided tour of the castle and gardens.



Refreshments will be arranged at a nearby pub. Longford restricts the group number to 15, so release of tickets will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Email marypaterson208@gmail.com if you are interested, or call her on 01844 291919.



"Were you easy, difficult or fiendish?"

Points of order

A plea from your Editor

Having been duly elected to serve on the Committee for another year, Yours Truly interrupted the last General Meeting and dared to announce that he would hope to be able to resign from the Committee at the next AGM. My circumstances have changed and, like almost all of my colleagues, I have long outstayed the normal 3-year term of office. We need new people with new ideas. My area of responsibility is publicity – surely there must be people among our 435 members with better IT skills and more modern ideas than I have? And there are already two other long-standing vacant positions on your Committee.

I therefore write this to remind all members that the next AGM is in May. You are invited to offer nominations or volunteer for the Committee. If you are prepared to join, have a chat with me (Neil Dury), Sally or any other Committee member. If you just think you might be interested, you could always come along to observe the monthly meetings. They're lovely people, and they won't bite!



Our website

Now that lockdown is behind us, we have started to pay a little more attention to our website. Have a look at the new pictures displayed in the 'Photos' gallery. We will also try to keep members up to date with any special items (such as changes to meetings) in the 'News' section. It would be good if Interest Group Leaders ensured the pages relating to their own groups are also up to date – and more photos are always welcome! All contributions can be emailed to Jonathan Hawkins at webmaster@haddenhamu3a.co.uk

Subscription renewal 2022–2023

The current U3A membership year will end on 31st March 2022. You will be pleased to know that the membership fee will remain unchanged at £16 per person. During March you will receive a personalised subscription letter, either by email or post. You can renew your subscription by Standing Order (our preferred method), BACS transfer, cheque or cash. We would be very grateful if you could renew your subscription as promptly as possible, and by 31st May at the latest.

If there are any changes in your personal details, it would also be very helpful if you could let the Membership Secretary, Elaine Parkes, know at membership@haddenhamu3a.co.uk

You can expect our next Newsletter in May. As ever, all contributions will be gratefully received, particularly from Interest Groups with something to say that might appeal to our general readership. Don't hide your light under a bushel – tell us what other members can perhaps participate in or benefit from.