

A word from the chair

Hello members

As my time as Chairman comes to an end I would like to say that it has been a privilege and a pleasure to have been your Chairman over the last few years, and to work with our wonderful committee who has always been so supportive and committed to ensuring our u3a runs smoothly.



Thank you very much for the flowers and gift presented to me at the AGM on behalf of all our members. I look forward to many more years of learning, living and laughing with you all .

My very best wishes

Sally

Notes from your new chair, Janet Mills

Firstly, on behalf of the membership of Haddenham u3a I would like to thank Sally for leading the committee so successfully through the pandemic and ensuring that the membership continued to support the monthly General Meetings and all the group activities. Her creative vision in producing special cakes and especially the u3a contribution to the Scarecrow Festival will still be available I hope, as she has agreed to stay on the committee.

I would like to thank Annette Marsden for organising all the Friday and Sunday lunches over the years. She is stepping down from this role and has agreed to join the committee. These Lunch groups are now looking for a new leader to carry forward this popular activity.

The talks on Cartoons and Indonesia in March and April were well attended and enjoyed by all and thanks to the committee and the designers of cakes for the competition, the Coronation Party was celebrated in style. The winner of the cake competition was Christine Wheeler-Cherry.

Thank you for all the contributions to the newsletter.

Janet

Inside this issue:

Coronation Tea



with Bruce Alexander

Group Activities



From Italianate house to a Steam Museum

We welcome a new Chair



Janet Mills

Also a new Committee Member



Annette Marsden

General Meetings

Cartoonology

A large attendance at the March meeting was entertained by Buckinghamshire Cartoonist Robert Duncan who illustrated how his quirky humour and talent had earned him a living and reputation as a cartoonist over many years. He described his trendy display designs of the sixties, the founding of his advertising agency in the seventies, and the creative agency Punchline in the eighties. He had illustrations of his greetings cards, t-shirts logos, badges and odd inventions that provided royalties, as well as his own illustrated book, a children's Bible Once Upon A World recently re-published by Lion Publishing. As well as plays (including Cluedo) and a musical, he has been involved for forty five years in Tim Rice's yearly Cricketers' Almanack. He talked of the pleasure he got from doing workshops for children, encouraging them to express their own humour through cartoons. He liked to observe people at conferences and portray the proceedings in quick fire cartoons, much to the delight of the participants. When asked if he was ever out of work he said there was always another project to work on. He ended his talk with a four minute animation he had produced of Edward Lear's The Jumblies. At the start of his talk he referred to a cartoon drawing put out on the chairs which needed a caption and invited any suggestions from the audience at the end of the talk, of which there were many!



Sailing from Bali to Komodo

Originally to be given by Sara Frost, the talk was presented by a colleague from Naturetrek, the travel company which organises the cruise from Bali to Komodo. Indonesia is a remote archipelago comprising 17,000 islands (famously explored by the great naturalist Alfred Wallace) of which Bali and Komodo are the most well known and home to an astonishing array of wildlife. We saw photos of beautiful birds such as the Red-tailed Tropic bird and the endangered Yellow Crested Cockatoo, brought back from near extinction by a captive breeding programme, pictures of pristine coral reefs teeming with colourful fish accessed by snorkelling and swimming with turtles and manta rays. On the island of Komodo, which is a national park and world heritage site, treks were organised to explore the wildlife such as deer and water buffalo and to encounter at a safe distance in a dinghy the legendary Komodo Dragon, the world's largest species of lizard, which could be seen basking in the evening sun on the shoreline. Cruising further out into deeper waters there were thrilling views of different species of dolphins, a sperm whale and a blue whale on its migration route. Each day's activities were finished off with the most spectacular sunsets. A truly inspiring and tempting presentation of an adventure holiday in Indonesia!



Coronation Tea

Congratulations to the committee for putting on a splendid coronation celebration afternoon tea. It was well attended, and the comments and emails afterward showed how much the members enjoyed it. The village hall was royally decorated with bunting and balloons and the tables suitably bedecked in red, white and blue.

There was a magnificent array of decorated cakes which the members voted for, the winner being the beautiful crown made by Chris Wheeler Cherry seen here being congratulated by Bruce Alexander. The afternoon's entertainment was given by Bruce who read from a variety of sources including some of King Charles favourites : Sir Bernard Levin's Quoting Shakespeare, Fern Hill by Dylan Thomas, and a passage from the King's own book, The Old Man Of Lochnagar. There was the Investiture poem by Cecil Day Lewis recalling the coronation of an earlier monarch and A Subaltern's Love Song by John Betjeman recounting wistful memories of young love. A tribute from Bill Bryson's Notes from a Small Island expressed amazement at the heritage of Britain and paid homage to the 'self-effacing fortitude of the British People under trying times' as well as the various peculiarities of Britain and British English. The refreshments were followed by an amusing monologue given by Derek Holland , a toast was given to The King and a rousing rendition of God Save The King and Rule Britannia was led by Sally accompanied by Heather Wood. Finally the raffle was drawn for a lovely hamper, a bottle of prosecco and the 12 table plant decorations. A lovely time was had by all.



Harold Macmillan: Reputation revised



Our AGM was followed by a fascinating talk from Dr. Martin Holmes on “Harold MacMillan: A Reputation Revised” during which we heard about the contrasting aspects of Macmillan’s character. He described MacMillan as a man who was always true to himself, a ‘no gimmicks’ politician and brilliant election campaigner.

He served bravely as a soldier, sustaining an injury during the Somme which left him crawling alone in search of medical assistance. He was also stoical, seen in the way he coped with the death of his son due to alcoholism and his wife’s 30 year affair (which only ended with her death), with Bob Boothby. He was ruthless, Machiavellian in his pursuit of vendettas, with a cavalier attitude to the truth – his memoirs and diaries containing many lies and distortions of the truth. He was also snobbish, lacking in empathy and incapable of kindness. Misogynistic, his view was that women had no role to play in politics. He was considered untrustworthy and two faced. Indeed following the ‘night of the long knives’ in 1963, when he sacked 7 of his cabinet (seemingly for no reason other than to exercise his power) Jeremy Thorpe said of him ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friends for his life.’ As a politician he was a Conservative moderniser, employing brilliant tactics to ensure no Labour victories – full employment, managed public services, increased pensions, child benefit for the first child, building of hospitals and houses and a bigger council house project than Labour. On the international scene, he was a foreign policy innovator. With his ‘winds of change’ speech in 1960, he distanced himself and the country from apartheid speeding up the process of decolonisation started by Labour. Every date for withdrawal was adhered to with as much ceremony as possible, televised for the world to see. Almost 50 territories became independent. Macmillan acknowledged that Britain’s future lay with Europe, seeing membership of the new European Economic Community as a substitute empire and an economic panacea. The influential bank Warburgs backed it but his plans for entry were set back when the French President General Charles de Gaulle said no to Britain’s application in January 1963.

Dr Holmes summed up MacMillan as a brilliant, ruthless politician and Prime Minister but as a man he was flawed, perhaps fatally. Comments from the audience after showed how much they enjoyed this powerful presentation by Dr Holmes

Future General Meetings

All at 2:15 for 2:30 in the Village Hall

Tuesday 8th August 2023

A most extraordinary Spy - The White Mouse, Nancy Wake, a talk by Paul Barwick

Nancy Wake has it all. Intelligent, beautiful and married to a wealthy French industrialist, living in



grand style in the South of France. In June 1940 when the Nazi war machine rolled into

France. Nancy became part of the escape route for Allied personnel evading capture from German forces in Southern France, driving an ambulance converted to hold hidden escapees. Nicknamed The White Mouse by the Gestapo, she fled to London in 1943. She joined the Special Operation Executive (SOE) where she learnt new skills such as spy-craft, sabotage, radio communications and how to kill using her bare hands. In April 1944 she parachuted back into France to assist the French resistance.

Tuesday 12th September 2023

Jenner and Vaccinations a talk by Steve and Eve Bacon

The story of the development of vaccination is more complicated than you may think, and



Steve explains how Jenner developed the technique and how he got it accepted by society.

Edward Jenner pioneered the concept of vaccines, and created the smallpox vaccine, the world's first vaccine. In the West, Jenner is often called "the father of immunology", and his work is said to have saved "more lives than any other man. In 1821, he was appointed physician to King George IV

Our speaker Steve Bacon has long had an interest in the history of medicine and has researched a series of presentations from Medieval through to Victorian.

Tuesday 10th October 2023

A talk by **Richard List QPM**

On **Policing, Intelligence and Organised Crime**



We may be aware of crimes such as burglary, car crime and anti-social behaviour and the advice that our local police provide to prevent such offences. But what is Organised

Crime? What is its history, what does it look like and what threat does it pose? Richard will be explaining the nature of organised crime and how the police go about tackling it through intelligence and covert policing methods.

Richard retired from Thames Valley Police in 2021 as a Detective Chief Superintendent after thirty years' service. He was awarded a Queens Police Medal (QPM) for distinguished service in Her Late Majesties 2021 Birthday Honours List. He is now a Parish Councillor for Stone, Bishopstone and Hartwell and an Honorary Senior Fellow at Buckingham University.

Tuesday 14th November 2023

The Weird and Wonderful World of the Law.

A talk by **David Allen**



David is a popular public speaker with a fascination for Victorian history and the Golden Age of Hollywood, who is the perfect combination of being both hugely

knowledgeable and a very skilled and entertaining storyteller. This talk is great fun with plenty of laughs, David draws on over 25 years' experience as a locum solicitor travelling around the country, encountering raging judges, dotty clients, and weird cases. David uses his own life experience in his professional time as a solicitor and as a professional storyteller, as well as from his historical research, trawling through the archives and records dating back to the 1800s.

Tuesday 12th December 2023

Christmas Entertainment to be the Ellesborough Silver Band.

Interest Groups

Cycle Group News

As well as our usual monthly rides in and around adjacent counties the cycling group has been on the move again, spending four days exploring the lanes of Suffolk in May. The weather was perfect, the roads lined with buttercups, cow parsley and may bushes with hardly a pothole to be seen, and we even heard the cuckoo! We visited Ickworth, an Italianate house set in a quintessentially English landscape dotted



with sheep and Hansel and Gretel type thatched cottages. For the technically minded among us we cycled to the Steam

Museum at Bressingham where there was also a good garden centre for the others to browse round. The next day we went to Lavenham with its beautiful timber framed buildings and Guildhall, and some of us also took the opportunity to look round the Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds with its magnificent ceilings. There was something for everyone, nobody got lost, and we had a lot of good conversation and laughter.

Marie Woodrow

Movers

Movers have been meeting regularly in the lovely Walter Rose room. We have been enjoying working on improving posture, flexibility and strengthening muscle groups, accompanied by music as varied as Mozart to Beatles to Frank Sinatraand that, all from the support of a chair!



Our last fifteen minutes are done standing and learning some Tai Chi sequences to music, good for improving memory and balance.

which is movement



However, if you feel like remaining in the chair to perform them seated... that is what you do!

Never say can't you can! Do come and join us on a Friday from 10 to 11am.

Technical group

I'd passed it many times on my daily rail commute to Wycombe, and always wondered what it would be like to see inside. Back then, it was slowly decaying, and I assumed that one day it would either fall down of its own accord or be demolished. I never really expected that my curiosity would one day be satisfied, and I would indeed get the chance to go inside and have a look around.



Thanks to the conservation work of a charity, the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway Association, the North Signal Box just

outside Princes Risborough station has been saved from eventual collapse and is now being restored and brought back into use. A few of us from the Technical group were lucky enough to get the chance of a guided tour around signal box.

Anyone passing by these days can see that the top floor is full of levers – just as one might expect in a signal box. In fact, the box is divided into two parts. One is the active signal box that is used by the C&PR Railway in conjunction with Railtrack to run their trains safely in and out of platform 4 at Princes Risborough station. I understand that the other part is intended one day to be a visitor attraction and training centre. Training? Yes I too wondered who would need training on signalling stuff from donkeys years ago, but it seems there are still a lot of these “old fashioned” boxes in use, and are likely remain so for some years to come. The most fascinating part for me, was to see the middle floor of the box which held the mechanical interlocking system of the signal box. This is a rather clever mechanical computer that is programmed with rivets and metal bars that slide up, down, left and right as the signalman pulls his levers. Its purpose is to ensure safety on the railway, and prevents a mistake being made. So it is just not possible, for example, for a signalman to give a “green light” to an express train if the points are not set correctly (thank goodness).

With thanks to members of the C&PR Railway for hosting this fascinating visit.

Mike Chester

More from the Technical Group

The Technical Group also had a very interesting visit to Oxford Bus Museum and Morris Motors Exhibition. The museum gives the history of buses used in Oxfordshire from horse drawn examples until the 1970s. There is also an exhibition of Morris cars together with a wonderful display of early bicycles. Certainly, a venue well worth visiting.

Kevin Nash



U3A Scarecrows in Haddenham

If you have been walking around the village you would have viewed the annual delights of the scarecrow display. If you missed our entry, here is a picture.



New Committee member

The committee has welcomed a new member. Annette Marsden. Annette has been an active member of the u3a for some time and will bring her extensive experience to the committee.



Your next Newsletter will be in November. Please continue to send in your contributions, in particular readings, tastings, discussions, or other experiences you've had that might appeal to our general readership.

Editorial team Fiona Chester | Janet Mills