

Haddenham u3a learn, live, laugh

Spring Newsletter March 2024

From the Chair Janet Mills

Welcome to the Spring newsletter. I would like to thank Fiona Chester for her production of the last three newsletters. She has decided to step down from the committee. The committee has put out an appeal for an editor. In the meantime I am putting out a simplified version of the newsletter in order to keep all the membership in touch with what is going on in the club. Thank you to the interest groups leaders for their contributions to this edition.

Looking back, the general monthly meetings have continued to be well attended, the numbers increasing each month and leading to an increase in membership. The return of the popular Ellesborough Silver Band definitely brought the Christmas spirit, helped by prosecco and cake, to the Village Hall. The dull days of January were brightened by the entertaining presentation given by Ann Ford and her husband John about how their hobby of restoring Morris Minors became a successful business, hiring them and other classic cars to film, TV and publishing companies and latterly weddings. Ann had lots of anecdotes of famous people, films and adverts they had been part of with a broad display of photos and memorabilia which prompted questions from the audience and lots of chat afterwards.

February's presentation had an apt Valentine's theme, 'From Guns and Roses to Hearts and Flowers'. The speaker was Catherine Jones who has several alternative identities as a successful author of romance literature. Bucking the trend to go to university she enrolled in the army as a cadet officer, 'to tick the boxes': earning, being looked after, travelling and meeting a man! She had a successful career in the army and met her man but on becoming pregnant she had to retire from the army and she became the typical army wife. After writing for the local army newsletter she discovered she had a flair for writing romantic fiction based on her experiences as an army wife, writing a series as Annie Jones. A more racy series followed under a pseudonym Kate Lace and another series as Fiona Fielding. Catherine joined the Romantic Novelists Association, led their team in Celebrities Universities Challenge and has been their chairman. Currently she is active in local life in Thame and has a number of books in the Little Woodford series, including 'Homes and

Hearth' but does not plan to write any more. It was an entertaining and humorous talk and had many in the audience chuckling!

Looking ahead:

The **March** (12th) speaker is another Kathryn, Scientist Dr Kathryn Harkup. Titled: Superspy Science: Science, Death and Tech in the World of James Bond. From the plots to the gadgets to the ludicrous ways that his life is threatened this talk takes an in-depth look at the scientific world of James Bond.

April (9th) The Stylish Art and Design of the Paris Metro. Speaker Mike Grundy celebrates the exotic Art Nouveau styling of the original Paris Metro and the different permanent artworks celebrating historic events from the Bastille to the Arc de Triomphe along the original Metro Line 1.

May (14th) (AGM)The excellent speaker Martin Holmes who enthralled with his talk on Harold MacMillan last year, this month talks about 'Harold Wilson: Interesting Times'. Wilson, four times election winner for Labour between 1964 and 1979, was associated with social liberalisation policies but how far he actually supported such policies is open to doubt. Martin will enlighten us.

June (11th) The Story of the Royal Bucks Hospital by John Frewin, featuring a unique film that tells the story of the hospital from its birth in the 1860s in line with plans drawn up by Florence Nightingale. The film, not seen since the 1930s, was commissioned by the Royal Bucks and South Beds to persuade families to join the hospital's Contributory Scheme that ensured free health care at the hospital.

July (9th) 'Exciting Wildlife from Around the World' presented by photographer Tom Way. No stranger to Haddenham u3a nor to wildlife hotspots Tom describes his adventures photographing penguins in the Falklands, orangutans in Borneo and his biggest passion of all - the 'big five' in Africa.

August (13th) speaker David Wright, a wine retailer, importer and distributor, will give us a talk on 'The Story of Wine' using historical evidence in the form of paintings, decorated drinking vessels, buildings and literature.

Reports from Interest Groups

Discussion Groups 1 and 2 are looking for new members to join informal discussions on any topics. **Group 1** meets 3rd Monday at 10am at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Group Leader is Peter Woodrow woodrow333@btinternet.com 07887 822261. **Group 2** meets 1st Monday in members' homes. Leader David Gregory 01296 747528 davidygregory@aol.com

Intermediate Level French Conversation: a chance to develop your French conversational skills with a qualified French teacher. Starts on 15th April from 1.00 pm -2.45pm in the Snug at 7 Stars Pub Dinton. Leader Lorraine Gooch. Contact for more details

larrainegooch@hotmail.co.uk 07771 624580

Watch out for British Excellence.



Just before Christmas the Technical Group visited "The Wing" near Henley-on-Thames, the prestigious manufacturing and technology centre of Bremont- a young, luxury brand of mechanical watches that is thoroughly British. The company was set up only 20 years ago by two brothers, Nick and Giles English, and is building an enviable reputation with enthusiasts, collectors and, in particular, our

Armed Forces. Bremont's link with the aviation world is clear from the restored aircraft parts exhibited outside and inside their building and their logo is a stylised propellor. The family's history ranges from the survival of a badly injured Nick and the sad death of his father Euan while practising for an air display, to the brothers' forced landing a few years later in a French field. The sympathetic farmer, who was a World War II veteran flyer, shielded both the stricken plane and the brothers from French bureaucracy for 3 days. His name was Antoine Bremont, a collector of clocks, and he was the inspiration for the company's future business and name.

Having grown from a handful of employees assembling watch movements and handmade cases in modest premises, Bremont moved to its current state-of-the-art facility in 2021. Here, 120 people design, manufacture, finish, assemble and service Bremont's watch collections. Competing with the likes of Rolex, Breitling and Omega, with watches in the £2,500 to £7,000 bracket, Bremont also makes exclusive editions that can command £20,000 to £30,000. These are real collectors' items and underpin not just the company's profitability but also its reputation with the military and all the brand's ambassadors.

Bremont does not have the budget for high-profile product placements, but good fortune brought model and actress Claudia Schiffer to their door after she spotted a Bremont watch which she thought would appeal to her husband Matthew Vaughn, the director of the Kingsman film franchise. This chance event ensured placement of Bremont in the first Kingsman film and on the wrists of the cast including Taron Egerton, Colin Firth and Mark Strong. A similar opportunity presented itself when Tom Hardy chose to wear Bremont for the Venom films. Other ambassadors, who not only wear but extensively test Bremont's watches in the most extreme environments on earth, include former servicemen Aldo Kane

and Jason Fox, alongside world-renowned big wave surfer Laird Hamilton and, most recently, adventurer and award-winning filmmaker Jimmy Chin.

The Tech Group spent 3 hours being guided around The Wing by expert host Tom Quintrell, looking at the boutique, the events space, the historic limited collections, servicing and assembly areas. The company currently makes around 12,000 watches a year and aims to increase output to 15,000, then 20,000 and upward, expanding its in-house capabilities while maintaining a premium position as one of the great luxury watch brand success stories.

Report by Jerry Michell

Subscriptions Renewal 2024-25

The current u3a membership year will end on 31st March. 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 renewal letter, either by email or post.

You can renew your subscription by Standing Order (our preferred method), BACS transfer or by Cheque. I am afraid that **we can no longer accept cash** as it is becoming increasingly difficult for David, our Treasurer, to bank cash. We would be very grateful if you could renew your subscription as promptly as possible and by **31st May at the latest**.

If you still pay income tax, could you please consider gift aiding your subscription. This allows us to reclaim 25p for every pound of your subscription from HMRC. This helps to keep subscriptions at a low level. The Gift Aid Declaration is a very simple form and only requires you to fill in your name and address. You do not have to give any details of your tax affairs. Forms are available on our website or from the Membership Secretary.

If you have any questions please contact Elaine Parkes, the Membership Secretary, (membership@haddenhamu3a.co.uk) and please let Elaine know if there are any changes in your personal details.

National u3a news. For the first time there is to be a u3a Festival, 18-20 July at York University. Three days of activities and social events with accommodation on the campus. For more details: festival@u3a.org.uk also check most recent magazine which comes to all members. Online learning: info@u3atvnetwork.org.uk and www.u3a.org.uk/events

For example: March 11th 10am Women in Faiths marking International Women's Day

 March 28th 10am Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords

 April 5th 2pm From Pleasure Gardens to Theme Parks