

Report from the Chair

Lots to report and reflect on over a busy, warm summer. The monthly General Meetings continue to be well-attended. The talks seem to be the draw for visitors to decide to join u3a and there have been 37 new members this year many of whom came to the new members' coffee morning in July.

The talks this quarter were excellent as usual: well-illustrated Plants and Places of Western USA; the Story of Odysseus; and in May an apt topic, Churchill: the man, politician and leader, as we celebrated VE Day with pictures, bunting, cakes (WWII recipes) and of course, prosecco. The speaker after the AGM in June was Dr Martin Holmes (he has become a regular post AGM speaker!) who gave us an excellent and thought-provoking analysis of the career of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister. The topic for July was 'From Primordial Soups to Primates in Suits, the Evolution of all Life on Earth', a huge topic condensed into understandable chunks, with excellent slides and lots of humour!

Interest Groups carry on successfully for the most part with just the Friday Lunch Group closing, except for a Christmas lunch in December. Thanks must go to Linda Axford for organising this activity for several years.

However, two new groups have started up: Pickleball, a paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong, easy to learn, play and accessible to all. Secondly, Book Group 4 will take place on the third Thursday of each month. Details can be found on the Haddenham u3a website.



Did you spot our Scarecrow?

Sir Winston Churchill, representing Strength and Hope, was sitting under the tree in the Ackroyd's garden at Church End, a spot which has become the regular place for the u3a scarecrow, thanks to David and Margaret.

Thanks also to our secretary, Sally Lajalati, for putting him together.

Wise Up to Scammers

Concern about mobile phone and online scams has been raised by a u3a member.

The summer issue of u3a Matters magazine's article addresses this issue, and is well worth a read. But meanwhile, here are some helpful tips:

Ask yourself:

Does this unsolicited email/message sound right?

Does it sound like my friend?

Do I really have an item waiting to be delivered?

Am I expecting something from...?

Why have I been chosen for a prize?

Get your bank's advice about how they would contact you legitimately, and if in any doubt, don't respond, just delete it.

A New Activity Group is Starting Up

Come and play Pickleball on Thursday and Friday mornings, 9.30-11.00

Group Leader:

Dennis Atkinson drat23@gmail.com
07704 501958

Venue: Haddenham Tennis Courts

Cost: £3.50 per session

Tuesday Walking Group



Photo: Michael Ayers

The above photo is of some of us on our June 10th adventure – a four mile wander at a reasonable pace through the very pleasant countryside and woodland around the village of Cholesbury in the parish of Cholesbury-cum-St. Leonards in Bucks, on the border with Hertfordshire. We started at 10.15 am in the car park of the Full Moon pub, returning for a very pleasant lunch at around 12.30.

Our aims are exercise in the fresh air, social interaction in friendly company and a well-earned lunch. It's a great way to keep fit and discover new eating places to go back to in your own time.

Our group numbers around 12-15 usually and our walks are always circular, about four miles, beginning and ending at a decent pub. Each walk is reconnoitered in advance by two group members who check the route, ground conditions, any stiles, inclines, or other challenges and make a booking at the pub. It's a format that works and we welcome new members.

Our group leaders are Malcolm and Mary White. Why not join us?

HF Holidays

For many years members have enjoyed going on holidays, staying in country houses owned by the Holiday Fellowship, and going on walks or trips. Recently Sue Oswell has organised successful holidays to the Lake District, Dovedale in the Derbyshire Peak District, West Sussex and Shropshire. She is now moving away from Haddenham, so we are looking for someone to continue in her place. If you could help please let a Committee Member know.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sue for her contribution and wish her well for the future.

Ancestry Group

We meet on the second Thursday of the month, usually in the committee room at the village hall but twice a year we go into the library and have a session on Ancestry (which is free on the library computers). This is to help members who need assistance with their research. Other meetings consist of discussions about family stories, usually with a theme such as WWII or dating photos, (where we enjoyed family weddings with big hats!). We have encountered some very interesting people such as a housekeeper at Castle Howard! We have also enjoyed presentations from Joan Reid who is a professional researcher. She has told us how to access Scottish and Irish records as well as newspaper articles and military records. Our next meeting in August will be a discussion about how to overcome "brick walls", how to go further when there are no apparent records.

The u3a digital magazine, plus information about monthly podcasts, events and workshops, is all on the u3a website:

www.u3a.org.uk

Farewell from Kevin

Leader of the Technical Interest Group

I have led the group for seven or eight years and am now stepping down from the role. If the group is to continue, we will need a new leader (or two or three people who will lead it together). We have had some excellent trips over the years and it would be a great shame for the group to fold. I am very willing to help a new leader to get started and have a spreadsheet of the visits we have made over the years and new visits to consider. During the time that I have been leader, we have had many new members join Haddenham u3a, so some of the visits we made before could now be repeated. If you feel that you could take on this role, please let me know and we can have a chat about what is involved.

My thanks to all of you for joining the visits over the years, and I wish the group every success in the future.

Many appreciative thanks to Kevin for his first-rate leadership of the Technical Interest Group.

Any tech savvy person willing to take it on?

Longer Distance Walking Group

Most walks require some level of pre-check and I am ever grateful for the support of Michael Ayers and Brian Bowman in sharing the planning and leadership of this group. Currently, the number walking is seldom more than a dozen, so we are very happy to welcome newcomers. Sometimes we need to hire a minibus to get to and from a walk, so our ideal number would be no more than sixteen. The walks take place on the last Thursday of each month, and are usually eight to ten miles long, preferably with a lunchtime pub stop! Over the years we've walked The Ridgeway, The Chiltern Way and most recently Shakespeare's Way. We have even followed canals from London to Birmingham and Oxford. Then, just as we thought we had run out of named paths, up popped another one, almost on our doorstep!

Brian Bowman recently found us The Oxford Green Belt Way, just a concessionary bus ride away. Inaugurated and publicised in 2007, it meanders through 50 miles of delightful countryside outside the urban sprawl. Our three walks so far have taken us to Abingdon with lunch on the river and through the fine grounds of Radley College to complete the first 25 miles.



A high spot near Old Boars Hill allowed us to enjoy the famous view of Oxford's *Dreaming Spires*, a phrase coined by Matthew Arnold in his poem *Thyrsis*, written in 1865. Three or four more monthly stages will complete this 50 mile project, ending back at Thornhill Park and Ride.

Whilst in the past we have linked successive walks as a "project", we don't neglect local opportunities. Here we are at Eythrope on a recent occasion when we took advantage of dry weather to follow The Thame Valley Way from Hartwell to Notley Abbey.



Third Age Trust

and Thames Valley Network updates

Members of u3a have access to a wide range of free online talks, workshops and courses. Most sessions are led by fellow members sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations.

Coming up in August on www.u3a.org.uk/events:

August 11th 2:00 pm *Exploring Alternatives to Mainstream Social Media*

August 15th 2:00 pm *The expeditions of George Mallory 1886-1924*

August 18th 2:00 pm *Mindfulness and Compassion meets Poetry*



Out with Friends

Our afternoon tea at Orchard View Farm, where we enjoyed delicious food, together with wonderful and efficient service.

To be recommended!

Discussion Group 1

We are looking for a couple of new members. We are a small group who meet on the 3rd Monday of the month (except July) at 10-12 am in the very pleasant conference room outside the Catholic Church.

All views welcome.

No restrictions!

Sign up at the monthly General Meeting or ring Peter Woodrow on 01844 292012 or 07887 822261 for more details.

Local History Group



The Local History Group enjoyed an interesting visit to St Katherine's Church at Chislehampton this month. Our guide was Charles Peers, a member of the original Peers family, on whose estate the church was built in 1762. This unspoilt and unaltered Georgian church was beloved by John Betjeman who honoured it in verse in 1952 and made an appeal for funds to support it.

*"Across the wet November night
The church is bright with candle light
And waiting Evensong."*

*"These high box pews of Georgian days
Which screen us from the public gaze".
(John Betjeman)*

There is a framed copy of the poem by Betjeman in the church.



The church is interesting historically because of the original wooden alter piece, the gallery, the tower but particularly the box pews as so few churches now have these in place because during the 19th century they were replaced by the more familiar pews.

However, the fortunes of the Peers family declined in the mid twentieth century, the estate was sold and the church was put in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Three or four services are held

during the year including the Christmas one when the real candles in the chandeliers are lit. An interesting hour at the church was followed by lunch at the Coach and Horses.

Over the last months we have had talks on Notley Abbey, Bronze Age Thame, Medieval Winslow, The problems of reading historical wills, Behind the walls of Haddenham Hall, The Archaeological Investigations at The Grove and, coming up this summer, a guided walk of Amersham and an archaeological walk from Stone to Cuddington.

Square Dancing Group

Be Cool (or Square) and Try Something New

Have you ever thought about having a go at square dancing, but don't know where to start? The chance to do so comes up in September when Haddenham's u3a Square Dance Group is inviting newcomers, single folk or couples, to join them.

You don't need to be fit, simply able to walk in time to music. Caller Alan Covacic puts it another way – if you can walk, you can square dance. And you don't need a partner, the group will supply one, or more! You could start by just coming and watching and you don't have to come every week, but you may well find that you want to. The reason for many u3a interest groups is to provide gentle exercise, for physical or mental health. Square dancing does both. It is therapeutic, fun and an easy way to make new friends, which is why it has lasted so long.

Seldom publicised these days, it is still very popular all over the world. Other forms of dance have their plus points, but none of them seem to create as much fun and laughter.

Haddenham's dancers will be meeting up again every Thursday from 4th September, 12-1.30 pm in the Village (main) Hall. Old hands, newcomers and absolute beginners who have never tried anything like it before, will be welcome. We turn up in casual clothes, ordinary shoes or trainers. No frilly dresses, or Stetsons - but you can if you want to!

For more information, contact one of the co-ordinators: Garry May - garrypetermay@gmail.com, 01844 290533 or Julie Standing - dancing@haddenhamu3a.co.uk, 07534 119468.

Dates for the Diary

General Meetings 2nd Tuesday of the month, 2:30 pm at the Village Hall

August 14th

The Man Who Saved MI6

The elusive British spy, Thomas Joseph Kendrick, who fooled Hitler and the Nazis. Dubbed 'the elusive Englishman' by Hitler's Secret Service, his real identity baffled the Abwehr until he was finally denounced by a double agent.

Speaker Dr Helen Fry has authored and edited over 25 books covering the social history of the Second World War, including British Intelligence and the secret war.

September 9th

Hydrogen: beneath the public relations what is the reality?

A look at the basics and claims made for what hydrogen can and may do as part of the Energy Transition to zero carbon emissions.

Speaker Phil Minette is a retired chemical engineer with many years working in industry.

October 14th

Canal History, Heritage and Architecture

A colourful introduction to the history and heritage of our 2000 mile canal network with remarkable engineering, locks, bridges, cottages and warehouses, boatyards and towpaths.

Speaker Roger Butler is an experienced lecturer, established writer and photographer.

November 11th

Amazing Frauds and Swindles

The man who sold the Eiffel Tower.

Speaker Hugh Grainger will tell us about this and many other swindles.

December 9th

Christmas Celebrations through History

Discover Christmases of the past from celebrations of the Neolithic Midwinter, the Roman festival and Tudor games to its reinvention by the Victorians.

Speaker Dr Jill Eyers studied Earth Sciences at the OU and has worked at archaeological sites around the world.

Grateful thanks to all our contributors and to:

Jonathan Hawkins, webmaster, responsible for uploading to the website.

Geoff and Elaine Parkes, for sending the newsletter out.

Mike and Sally Phillips, for delivering hard copies.

Editorial Team

Janet Mills (Chairman of Haddenham u3a)

Annette Marsden (Publicity and Newsletter Officer)

Jenny Watkins (Design)

And finally...

STEP RIGHT UP

Every home should have one

By the time I had reached three score years and ten, I had heard it dozens of times – the prescription for health and happiness is diet, exercise and sleep. Get the first two right and the third in this recipe for ripe old age will come more naturally, so it was said.

Dietary advice has long been everywhere – TV programmes devoted to cooking and wellbeing, newspaper and magazine articles, including many in *u3a Matters*. Into my eighties and exercise advice was also easy to find. However, the list of desirable and acceptable options for finding fitness shrink alarmingly with the passing years. I had decelerated over time from football and cricket to leisurely golf and then unspoiled walks. Now I'm at that stage in life when I'd rather not plunge into wild-river swimming thank you, nor jog my knees to bits in pursuit of a place in the Great North Run.

I love long beach walks on Pembrokeshire's flat, golden sands near where my daughter lives, but now I've discovered the best ever exercise for ancient bodies and brains, right here in Haddenham *u3a's* full-of-fun **Square Dancing Group**. Unfortunately, it's only on once a week.

So, for most of the winter, I gazed out at raw winds blowing chilly rain through bare branched trees. I shuddered at the thought of having to dress up like an Inuit to side-step my way round tree-root rumpled pavements. At the same time and looking inwardly, the mere idea of riding my old exercise bike seemed to bring on saddle-soreness, a discomfort which lingers long in octogenarians.

There had to be something else, some other way to take daily exercise more or less painlessly. And there it was! I saw it amongst advertisements for holidays on a large cruise ship, a treadmill! You can set it between one and ten kph to proceed at your preferred walking pace.

Unlike even the smallest of dogs, a treadmill costs almost nothing to run. It does not yelp, tug on a lead, or spoil for a fight. No need to set out for a walk with a pocketful of poo bags. My model has a control pad that displays time, distance and calorie-count, also my pulse rate if I choose to hold on to the handle bars. It has a tray to hold a laptop, tablet or ubiquitous mobile phone. Walk, work and talk without a pause, if you wish, or I can simply gaze down from the bedroom window to watch the cabaret of small birds flitting around the seed-filled feeders.

Best of all, I phone my cousin Dorothy who also has a treadmill. We can chat while walking together, daily or whenever we like. At her home in Chang Mai, Thailand, she strides out in her trainers at three kph while I stay at her side in bedroom slippers, moving at half her pace. .

Of course, a mechanical device is not the real thing. Nothing beats stepping out on a bright morning to hear the chatter of chaffinches, the whistle of the wind, to feel the sun on your face, to smell new mown grass, to greet passing neighbours or even strangers. But such near perfect days are rare and a treadmill is, I think, the next best thing.

So there we have it. The best answer to enjoyable activity at home at an older age. My exercise bike is still just an exercise bike. But my newly-acquired, slinky black treadmill is my friend.

And it might improve my sleep!

Garry May