

Winchester  
May 2026

u3a learn,  
laugh,  
live



# WELCOME to the **Winchester u3a** newsletter

The saying “Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted” has been variously attributed to Field



Marshal Rommel, the Duke of Wellington and ancient Chinese strategist, Sun Tzu. My father paraphrased this, telling me that “time spent in preparation is never wasted”. He was however referring to home decorating, not fighting. I've just been painting my garage door. Now that I've applied the final coat, I can see all the minor surface blemishes that weren't smoothed out when I did the initial sanding of the old paint. Short of going back and redoing the whole door, I will have to live with the consequences. OK, you can't see the defects from the pavement; you would have to be a house-guest with an eye for detail to spot the mistakes.

Similarly, spending time preparing the u3a newsletter is always a good idea. Monitoring the inbox, asking contributors for their latest news, blanking out the master layout from the previous edition so there's space to fill, making sure the printers know the next edition will be with them in a few days, they're all good tactics to avoid a last minute panic. I hope you don't spot too many mistakes hidden beneath the glossy pages!  
Enjoy your newsletter! *Vernon Tottle*

## Winchester u3a Committee 2026/7

Chairman Ann Edwards

[chairman@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:chairman@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Vice-Chairman Jean Crispin  
[vicechair@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:vicechair@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Secretary Marion Schiesser  
[secretary@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:secretary@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Treasurer David Wright  
[treasurer@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Members Secretary Marion Schiesser  
[membersec@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:membersec@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Groups Secretary John Craig  
[groupsec@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:groupsec@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Webmaster Mike Holt  
[webmaster@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Speakers Team Nicola Giles  
[speakersec@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:speakersec@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Newsletter Editor Vernon Tottle  
[u3aletter@gmail.com](mailto:u3aletter@gmail.com)

Members without portfolio:  
Wendy Broadbent,  
Mark Brown, Chris Giles

Newsletter proofreaders:  
Marion Schiesser and  
Wendy Broadbent

**Cover photo** - Martin Webb

## Chairman's letter

Thank-you to the 146 members who came to our AGM and talk in March. We easily made a quorum as well as nearly running out of chairs! I must also thank the three Committee members who resigned this year: Julia Allison, for her work as Secretary and her valuable contribution to discussions; Sian Rolls, for providing lifts and trying to contact members for whom we do not have email addresses; and Vernon Tottle, for 8 years of dedicated service and remarkable commitment, both as Treasurer and a Trustee.



As I mentioned in my AGM report, I do not think that any previous generation has seen such rapid technological progress as we have seen. People are generally able to live longer and the original vision of a university of the third age is a particularly inspiring one, I believe. Whilst the first age is from childhood to adulthood and the second age is that of our working lives, when many of us have also been busy as parents, during the third age of life we usually have far more freedom of choice concerning what we do and how we spend our time.

Every u3a offers its members the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities so that they can pursue their interests and share their knowledge as well as their life experiences as equals and with mutual respect – whatever their academic qualifications or working-life status has been. Is there a particular subject or topic you would like to explore with others - or an activity or skill you are keen to develop – or a short course you can offer? If so, why not start a new u3a group? First tell John, the group secretary, and then send Vernon and Mike an article that can be published in the newsletter and on the website, with your contact details.

A few weeks ago, I was contacted by Winchester Rotary. They are keen to recruit new members or volunteers who can help with their many worthwhile local projects: from enabling year 8 school students to improve their reading skills to planting elm trees, helping with dementia-friendly Cathedral tours or being a marshal at the Clarendon Marathon, the annual Pancake race or the Christmas Lights event etc. If you are interested and want to find out more, do see their website. We hope to have a new page on our own website soon where local charities as well as upcoming events can be advertised.

Finally, I want to share with you a thought-provoking statement that I came across recently. 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn'. Benjamin Franklin

With best wishes to you all, Ann



## August 2026 edition of the newsletter

Any contributions please to [u3aletter@gmail.com](mailto:u3aletter@gmail.com) by Friday 17 July. Photos to accompany the text are always welcome.



## New members

We welcome the following new members from

Winchester: Gail Bailey, Keith Bosley, Kathleen and Kenneth Day,

Kate Dicker, Rosie Duffy, Chris Edwards, Colin Grant-Wilson,

Andrew Kinnear, Diane Leverton, Jacqueline Marsh, Ashling Moore,

Carilla Taylor, Dorothy Toms, Clive Tong, Carole Trantham, Mark Trundle

Kings Worthy: Jillian Brighton, John King, Barbara Kearns

Easton: Stephen Percy. Alresford: Christine Allison.


Littleton: Carole Bean. Bishopstoke: Stephen Bigley.

Bishop's Waltham: Ann and Adrian Keen

Swanmore: Robin Moate

Southampton: Thomas Prisk, Richard Walker

*Marion Schiesser*



**Our website** can be found at "[www.winchesteru3a.co.uk](http://www.winchesteru3a.co.uk)

Almost all the information there is freely available, but in order to access the phone numbers of Group Leaders, the password is

Have you visited the website recently? If not, you are missing out on a wealth of up-to-date information about our events and activities.

As well as details of the monthly meetings for the next few months, you can also find out what is happening in the national u3a through the recently introduced Latest Notices section on the home page. A new page has also been added under the Newsletters menu to give you the latest info on local community news. There is also a great deal of information to be found in the Interest Group pages, which can be viewed in a number of ways: by category, by venue or by meeting day.

If you want to contact any of the groups, you can easily do this without even leaving the website as there is a contact form in-built so that you send a message to the group leader. You don't even have to bother about email addresses as these are known to, and protected from misuse by, the website. You just fill in the contact form and the website will send your message to the group leader. To access the contact form, you just need to click on the group leader's name (shown in blue) at the foot of each group page.

One planned feature is a calendar of u3a events. Would you find this useful?

Some local u3as allow members to update their own pages. Should we do this in Winchester? Please let me have your feedback on these topics and anything else about the website. You can do this via the contact form by clicking on my name on the Committee page, which is located under the About Us menu.

This is the method to use if you ever want to contact any other member of the committee.

Volunteers to help me with the website are always welcome. If you have basic word processing skills you will find this easy, and help is readily available.

Please let me know if this would interest you.

*Mike Holt*



## Forthcoming talks

Monthly talks at Littleton Memorial Hall, second Tuesday of each month.

Doors open at 1.40pm for 2.00pm start. Tea/coffee and biscuits after the talk.

I hope you have enjoyed the monthly talks to date. I try to get as much variety as possible. The turnout for the AGM and accompanying talk was very impressive.

I have got speakers booked up to the end of this year and am now concentrating on next year. Below is a taster of the talks for the next few months, which I hope you will find interesting.

**Tuesday 12th May 2026:** Music in Winchester through the ages by Jeremy Neville (MA Music Education)

Jeremy says "It is obvious that nowadays a very wide range of musical activity is taking place in Winchester at any given time. Naturally, in a Cathedral City, religious music has always been of great significance, but you might be surprised to learn that a thousand years ago, Winchester was one of the most important centres for its dissemination in Europe.

We shall be exploring major musical events that have taken place in the City since medieval times up to the present day and meeting a raft of interesting characters involved in the local music scene. The talk will be illustrated with many musical examples."

**Tuesday 9th June 2026:**

Movement for Longevity by Nicky Watt of Invigor Health.

Nicky's mother is a member of the u3a in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

They were chatting about her mother doing some strength training and why, even at 78, Nicky wanted her to do something to protect her bones and stay mobile. Her mother suggested this would be a great topic at u3a.



And so here she is. Nicky is a qualified Personal Trainer (with a special qualification for those who are 50+) and has been training clients for over 9 years in Winchester and in the fitness industry for nearly 30 years.

This is your chance to learn the secrets and work towards a healthy future.

### **Tuesday 14th July 2026:**

William Cobbett's Rural Rides by Christine and James Rowley, presenters for Basingstoke Hospital Radio.

William Cobbett was a native of Farnham who led a colourful life where he was always surviving, resisting or defying something. Two of his pet hates were bank notes and speculators on the stock market. He visited America where he served in the Army for eight years before he was discharged. Back in England he was a gentleman farmer, politician and writer. Whilst living away, he fostered a highly idealised picture of Rural England, becoming a radical whose sympathies lay with those experiencing hard times who farmed and worked on the land.

Between 1821 and 1832 he went on a series of journeys around Hampshire, Wiltshire and the Home Counties that featured in his publication 'Rural Rides'. James & Christine describe some of the anecdotes from his travels with illustrations, including the local places he visited, the characters he met and the picture of their ordinary lives he painted.

**Tuesday 11th August 2026: Please note there is NO MEETING** - Hall closed for maintenance/refurbishment

Best wishes to you all.

*Nicola Giles, Speakers Secretary.*



## **Monthly talk reports**

### **St Giles Hill Park – Past, Present and Future**

Presented by Harry Mycock on Tuesday 13th January 2026

Away from the hustle and bustle of Winchester city centre there is a large green space that provides spectacular panoramic views of this ancient city. Our speaker, a u3a member, is one of only 100 Chartered Horticulturalists in the British Isles. He is currently Chair of the Friends of St Giles Hill Park. The Group's aim is to improve the area as an asset to Winchester and beyond. Harry gave a most interesting and valuable talk on this most iconic site, particularly the history thereof.

The hill gained initial fame with the execution of Earl Waltheof, for treason in 1082. Having fallen out of favour with William the Conqueror for insurrection, he was duly despatched by beheading, to serve as an example to the rest of the country.



Until the late 19th Century, the land on which today's park sits was owned by the Bishop of Winchester. In 1096, with the church reeling from the cost of building Winchester Cathedral, the king granted the Bishop a licence to hold a three-day fair near the Church of St Giles. Over time, it became a regular event, its duration extended from three days to eight and later to fourteen. Merchants came from across England and Europe to exhibit and sell their wares. All other shops within a ten-mile radius were forced to close their doors for the duration of the fair.

Its popularity peaked in about 1200 but began to decline in size and importance in the 14th and 15th Centuries, hastened by the impact of the Black Death, a decline in trade with the Continent and the rise of London as the country's political and commercial centre.

By the mid-19th Century, the Fair had degenerated and become the Magdalen Hill Fair, mainly limited to trade in cheese, cloth and horses. The Hilltop itself had largely reverted to bare downland and was used for grazing livestock. A new park "for the purpose of public exercise and recreation" was suggested. In 1894 the local authority commissioned the landscape gardener H.E. Milner to advise on the layout of a new park, and over the years that followed, the grass downland was transformed into a tree-clad Victorian pleasure garden with magnificent views over the city and St Catherine's Hill.

Today, the park still plays an important part in the life of the City, fulfilling its original purpose of promoting public health and well-being. It is a much-loved place for exercise, recreation, dog-walking and picnicking, and has also become a tourist attraction with many visitors making the climb to its famous viewpoint and frequently posting photos on social media.

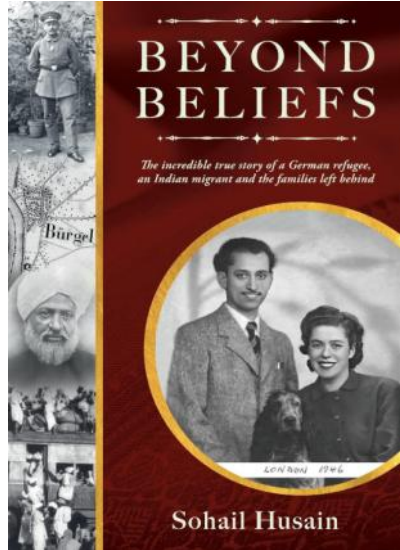
The Friends of St Giles Hill Park's aims include re-establishing regular working parties and fund-raising for proposed improvements.

*Chris Giles*



## Sohail Husain: Beyond Belief - One Family's Incredible Story

Sohail Husain has used his retirement to trace his parents' family trees. It took him, with other volunteers, six years to complete the history of his grandparents and beyond! But it revealed an extraordinary story. One of his most important discoveries was that historical world events can be the reason for future couples to even meet. Sohail himself had a German-Jewish mum, and a Hindu-Indian dad. Mum had been bundled out of Nazi Germany as a girl in 1939, two weeks before the start of World War II. Dad fled from the vicious religious violence that followed Indian Independence in 1947. They met in London while he was working at an outdoor market.



Unexpected, unusual stories could be expected once a family's past is dug into. Dad married Mum, and they moved to India, where Dad persuaded his waiting Indian bride to become his second wife! Dad's father had fled to South America, and instructed the family to burn the few letters that he sent back to India.

Meanwhile, paperwork was recovered from Germany after Mum passed away. But this allowed an 80 year-old lady from the same kindergarten to spot her long lost friend in one of the photographs!

We were asked whether we wished to trace our own families. Sohail's important advice was to "get started now before those folk with the stories pass away."

Mark Brown



## A Solo Walk Across Africa

Presented by Fran Sandham on Tuesday 10th March 2026

Walking from the west coast of Africa to the east coast on his own in 1997, Fran's story held us all captivated; captured in depth by 'Traversa', a record of his experiences along the way. An amazing story of determination, resilience, courage and fortitude; all

starting with a hospitalised six-year-old becoming captivated by Tarzan Comics. The thrills, spills and adventures to be had; piqued by curiosity, Africa had beckoned.

At long last, in his late 20s, Fran embarked on his mission of a lifetime, aided only by an old Michelin map of the continent (very small scale) and a 100lb rucksack filled with essentials.

Starting in Namibia, he headed out from the Skeleton Coast and a year later reached his destination of Zanzibar. During this time he averaged 26 miles a day and shed 4 stone of his starting weight of 12½ stone. Skinny yet wiry.

Walking from the Skeleton Coast of Namibia to Zanzibar Island is a massive journey spanning roughly 3,500 kilometres (over 2,100 miles) across southern and eastern Africa. This cross-continental route necessitates navigating severe terrain, including deserts and diverse wildlife areas.

Dangers likely to be encountered en route were creepy crawlies, snakes, lions, bandits, malaria, weekend drunken drivers, sun stroke and dehydration. What he did encounter throughout was kindness, together with fun and humour from the villagers that he met on his long journey.

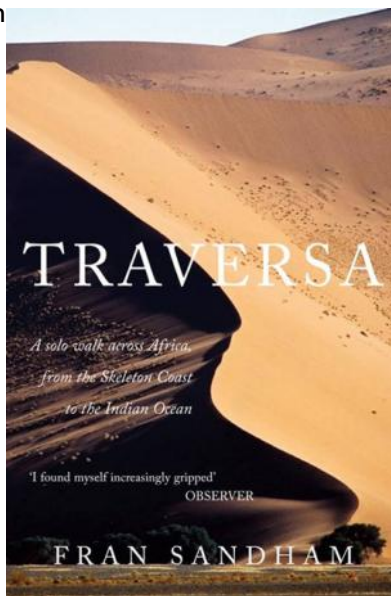
At one stage he bought a donkey called 'Tsondad', a most recalcitrant creature that kept running away; needless to say, he returned it to the previous owner very quickly. It was then explained that the donkey's name meant 'where you get stuck'!

His next endeavour, to ease his burden, was a mule and a donkey cart, which again ended in disaster. And so, it was back to the rucksack and "Shanks's pony".

The encounters along the way included a character who, when stopped at checkpoints, would be saluted and given free passage immediately; on his papers he'd written that his trade was 'General Factotum', which was taken at face value.

There were so many other interesting tales, too many to mention here; the purchase of Fran's book will reveal all, no doubt.

*Chris Giles*



## News from groups

### Exploring French Literature

Are you a literary buff? Enjoy speaking French? Then why not join our small, friendly group of enthusiastic francophiles? We are seeking two new members. The sessions are light, the choice of books varied, with each member having the opportunity to select his/her own choices. We meet on Teams, usually the first Wednesday afternoon of the month, though this can change according to everyday pressures.

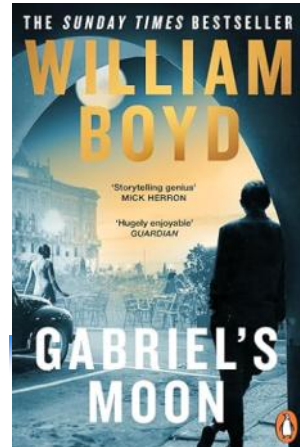
Interested? Then do get in touch - Diane

### Modern Novels I

We do need more members. We are a friendly small group who meet the first Monday of every month at 2pm taking turns to host and provide necessary sustenance - cake and tea!

We select books about six months in advance and have just discussed *Precipice* by Robert Harris. Our next book is *Gabriel's Moon* by William Boyd.

*Timandra Nichols*



### Debating group

Two years ago, following a proposal in the *u3a* magazine, a small group met together to discuss whether to set up a Debating Group and, if so, what style and format it should take i.e. how formal, length of each presentation, how to manage a balance of views, the need for a voting procedure, frequency of meetings and so on.

We agreed that, above all else, it should be an enjoyable (not unnerving) experience! So it has proved – even with a changing/expanding membership. We have debated a vast range of topics from the serious and contentious, e.g. Assisted Dying, A.I., the merits of a Universal Basic Income, social media - to the lighter, e.g. whether film or books are a better medium of expression, is retirement boring? (!), with many other areas of life's quandaries between. The group meets monthly and subjects are chosen by the group for the following meeting.

We all clearly put work into researching the topic and also bring to bear our life experience of any areas of enquiry. So the meeting has become increasingly interactive and sociable.

We still meet at our Group leader's home by kind invitation. We seem to

welcome and absorb the comings and goings of old and new members easily and look forward to any new perspective shared. It is certainly one of my favourite activities and a great example of the u3a ethos of reciprocal teaching and learning!

*Beth Butler*



### **Walkers Group 3**

The sun finally came out for us on 18 March, and sixteen walkers emerged into the warm air for a good four mile morning walk!

Chawton village is south of Alton, and is well known for containing Jane Austen's house, and the Chawton House where her brother lived. But there is plenty of marvellous countryside surrounding the famous buildings, and this is what our walk leader Charlotte Farmer led us through.

There are plenty of beautiful houses alongside the quiet lane to the south of the village – we noted that even the primary school had several flint walls! Then we turned east, and we were walking through flat wide fields covered by wet grass; this was not really surprising for a spring emerges amongst this open ground, and a small stream was flowing beneath our route!

Then along the narrow lane with more old brick houses beneath thatched roofs, and countryside fields that lead us to Upper Farringdon. And that is where we passed the local parish church, and its two yew trees - one is 3,000 years old, the other is “only” 2,000 years old. The elder of the two is one of the oldest ten trees in the United Kingdom (still growing) – a 2022 campaign raised £13,000 to preserve its stability.

Then on to paths through woods and even more open fields. There were fewer houses as we progressed back to Chawton. But still interesting – a totem pole in a back garden was a surprise! Our monthly walks are usually 4-5 miles long, and some members stop for lunch afterwards. A relaxing way to get to know others after all of the walking. Do feel free to contact  
if you wish to view our timetable.

*Mark Brown*



### **Apple Mac Users Group**

Do you own an iPhone, iPad or Apple computer? Do come & join our group. We already have over 30 friendly members, and meet (in the big room) of the Littleton Hall for ten months of the year. With all that space we can easily take more members, so if you're interested, let me know. The first meeting is free, then there is a small annual fee that also buys access to telephone support from our expert. We cater for the categories of “Managing well but

keen to help or learn more”, the “Erm, I know I should know this....” and also the “I’m clueless, please help”.

Our small committee has run the group for the last couple of years. There’s always more to learn (or be reminded about).

My email is  
Gill Goodwin

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### **Modern Novels 9**

The group is going well but we would welcome one or two new members.

Jenny Brennan

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### **Birdwatching Group**

We have made a start, and we have been on several trips. Due to the weather, we have mainly been going to bird reserves with hides. From these we have seen many beautiful wintering ducks and geese, and a fabulous view of a kingfisher. We hope to go to a wider range of places in the next few months. The best birdwatching sites involve a considerable drive from Winchester, but we have been able to share lifts.

We would be delighted to recruit more members: please contact Charlotte Farmer at

*The cover photo is a Siskin seen in March at Blashford Lakes. The photo below is a Water Rail that conveniently came out from hiding in the reeds just so the group could take photos. Ed.*



## Science and Technology Discussion Group

Our meetings are now being held on the second Monday of each month in the afternoon at Shawford Springs Care Home, Otterbourne Road, SO21 2RT. As the average attendance is about eight members, we would welcome possibly three new members to join the group. We take turns in presenting a topic of interest that may have appeared in the news, the press/magazines, or about a research topic. Occasionally we have a meeting involving short talks on miscellaneous topics which are easy to develop, usually generate lots of discussion, and provide members confidence in presenting talks.

Talks later this year include:

- Monday 11 May "Detecting illegal migrants inside HGVs"
- Monday 8 June "Coastal Management/Engineering"
- Monday 13 July "Bridge Disasters"
- Recent talks include:

Quantum Computing is the way forward for next generation computing as classic computing has reached its upper limit (Moore's Law limit). Unlike classical computers that process binary bits, quantum computers control quantum bits (or "Qubits") that can exist in multiple states at any time. This phenomenon is known as "superposition" which allows quantum computers to process far larger amounts of information simultaneously, outstripping the capabilities of classical supercomputers. Conventional computing encodes data/information as binary digits or 'bits', represented as either '0' or '1'. In quantum computing the equivalent unit is a quantum bit or 'qubit', which can exist either in a state uniquely as '0' or '1' or as a simultaneous combination of both '0' and '1'.

Alzheimer's is an autoimmune disease of the brain and is the most common form of dementia. Nearly a million people in the UK have dementia of which approximately 600,000 have Alzheimer's and this is expected to rise to one million by 2040. A common early symptom is difficulty in remembering recent events. As the disease advances, symptoms can include problems with language, disorientation, mood swings, loss of motivation, self-neglect, and behavioural issues such as withdrawal from family and society. Currently, no known treatments can stop or reverse its progression, though some may temporarily improve symptoms. The brain waste clearance system, which declines with age, is an important feature in decreasing its acceleration. This includes a healthy lifestyle such as a mediterranean diet and a good night's sleep. On the treatment side, there is potential in using gene therapy, and understanding Parkinson's as this has a similar pathway to the brain. For further information please contact me, email address

*Janusz Adamson*



### **Classic Novels Group**

In the November newsletter, one of our members, Gail Alexander, wrote an interesting piece on the Classic Novels Group. The current group is full but we are looking for members of a new group “Classic Novels 2”. We enjoy our reading of Classic literature so much that we are happy to help in setting up such a group. We already have one or two people who are interested but we need a few more. If you would like to know more please contact me at

*Karen Beecher*



### **Poetry 3**

Many poems scrutinized,  
no poem weaponized,  
many enjoyed:  
at Poetry 3

we’ve got what it takes  
and the coffee is free  
and so are the cakes.

Come and give us a try. We meet at Winchester Heights at 10.30 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Contact me at

*Janet Loverseed*



### **Art Appreciation Group**

We began 2026 with “Revolution”. This theme led to a variety of interpretations. A roundabout in “Penzance Fair” by Laura Knight was one. Eugene Delacroix’s “Liberty Leading the People” was another. The American revolution, whose 250th anniversary occurs this year, with “Washington Crossing the Delaware” by Emanuel Leutze was also discussed. The effect of the industrial revolution as shown by one of L S Lowry’s depictions of workers heading towards a factory was considered. Scientific revolution was represented by William Blake’s “Newton”.

Communication(s) was chosen for February. Two artists who made impactful contributions to the world of magazines and advertising were looked at. Barbara Kruger, b. 1945, was influential in magazine design. She also created installations in which messages in carefully chosen, and often large, fonts were placed on walls, ceilings and floors of galleries and other spaces. Cassandre (Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron, 1901-1968) was a Russian-born poster artist

and type face designer whose work in many ways exemplifies the Art Deco period. We considered his poster advertising the liner “Normandy”, which is a dramatic depiction of power with a low angle view resulting in an abstract geometrical composition. Rodin’s “Lovers”, or “Kiss”, exemplified a far more direct form of communication. The well known “Annunciation” by Leonardo then gave a complete contrast. Barriers was the topic for March. A physical and aspirational barrier was shown in “The Girl at the Gate” by George Clausen (1889). A rural scene showing a young woman standing at a farm gate, and possibly dreaming of



escaping to a different life. Monet painted several versions of “Cliffs at Etretat”. This natural barrier is a well-known feature of the Normandy coast, and there was discussion of how erosion has changed it over the past 140 years. An anonymous landscape with a gate provided a breath of rural peace. Joseph Edward Nuttgens (1892-1982), who was one of the foremost exponents of stained glass both in churches and elsewhere, showed how the barrier of a window can be an instrument of enlightenment. In 1968/9 Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrapped a one and a half mile stretch of Little Bay, Sydney in fabric to form a sculpture of part of the landscape. One of us recently spent two days at The Henry Moore Institute in Leeds exploring the exhibition “Beyond the Visual”, which examines the multi-sensory aspects of sculpture: visual, tactile, audible and olfactory.

*Keith Hatter*



## **Ukulele Group**

The group continues fortnightly. We have a big room, so plenty of space for new players. We meet on Monday mornings and we have 15 on the roll. The emphasis is on fun.

To see the Songbook and meeting dates, please contact me on email at:

*Taff Powell*



## **Photography Group**

In recent meetings we have explored composition (symmetry and cropping) as well as architecture. Our monthly image themes give us an opportunity to focus our photography on specific tasks and enjoy a review at our monthly meetings.

Whilst in the past we may have talked about f-stop and ISO settings, the majority of the photographs we share are taken on smartphones, using automatic modes. Whilst the smartphone technology has limitations, which means that some of our members are still keen to use their interchangeable lens cameras, we acknowledge that the convenience of a smartphone often outweighs the complexity and bulk of a 'proper' camera. Smartphone cameras are adept at handling difficult lighting conditions and, given attention to the composition of the scene or subject, astonishingly good results can be obtained.

Each meeting includes a short teaching session, covering anything from how to take close-up photos, to basic editing on computer or smartphone, to printing and creating photobooks. Where possible we like to include a practical element (hands-on) and tie-in with our monthly image subject.

Recently, we have included smartphone workshops and first-aid sessions to discuss, solve problems and answer queries from our members.

In May the group will visit Bishop's Waltham for a walk-around. As one of Hampshire's lovely market towns, there is a lot of hidden detail, historical references and variety of subjects to photograph. We hope to visit Tichfield Haven Nature Reserve and the adjacent coastline during August, to keep us busy during the month when we do not have a meeting.

If you are looking for a knowledgeable photography group, want to know more about how to take good photographs, we can provide that in a sociable environment. We cater for all levels of photography. Come along to a meeting at Littleton Millennium Memorial Hall, SO22 6QL - held from 2pm to 4pm on the first Monday of every month (except August).

If you would like further details, please contact me at

or just turn up at a meeting and introduce

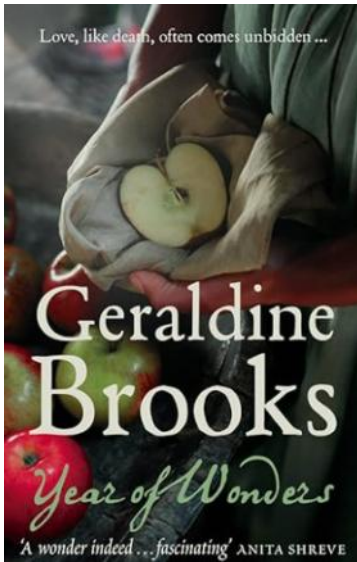
yourself.

*Paul Haines*



## **The eclectic reading choices of Modern Novels Group 2**

Our group's final meeting of 2025 was attended by eleven members - almost a full complement - plus an invited guest. Consequently, there was much shuffling of chairs to accommodate everyone before the meeting could begin. It was an interesting meeting and also very enjoyable, despite the



'unChristmassy' book we were discussing: *Year of Wonders*, a first novel by an Australian-born journalist, Geraldine Brooks. Her book painstakingly re-creates 17th century England, based on the true story of Eyam, the 'Plague Village', in Derbyshire's rugged hill country, which quarantines itself to arrest the spread of the devastating bubonic plague. Our thoughts returned to COVID restrictions.

Attendance at meetings has continued to flourish and this year's choices have already generated some very interesting and lively discussions. We kicked off this year with P D James's dystopian novel, *The Children of Men*. This book, a departure from James's usual writing, was published in 1992 and is set in

2021. Worryingly, we recognised a number of unsettling parallels in today's society.

In complete contrast, in February, we discussed *The Red Notebook*, a novella written by a French author, Antoine Laurain, a prize-winning novelist, screenwriter and antiques collector. The central character is a bookshop owner in Paris, whose life changes forever when he finds a woman's handbag abandoned on the top of a rubbish bin on a Parisian street. It's a charming book, well worth reading and you'll discover how his life changes.

In March we discussed one of Jojo Moyes' novels *Someone Else's Shoes*, a character-driven story of mix-ups, mess-ups and making the most of second chances. It asks who you are when you are forced to walk in someone else's shoes.

April's book, *Disgrace* by J M Coetzee, won the Booker prize in 1999 and in 2003 Coetzee was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. *Disgrace* is a powerful and unsettling novel that explores themes of masculinity, power dynamics, and the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa. Although most of us had read it years ago, we appreciated the opportunity for a second reading of this multi-layered, classic novel.

Two very different books have been chosen for our May and June meetings: *Queen Macbeth* by Val McDermid and *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevalier. I'm sure that both these books will generate interesting discussions.

*Celia Harris*



## Proposals for new groups

### Jazz, Blues and.....

Meeting once a month for a couple of hours in one of the group member's homes, we will listen to and discuss a range of recorded music. Some of the meetings will be at my home in Stockbridge. Although the focus is on Jazz and Blues, we will frequently stray into other genres such as Rock and Folk. We'll pick a topic for the following month at the end of each session to give members a chance to think of pieces to play.

Contact me on

*Mike Deverell*



## News from the wider u3a

### South East u3a Forum Summer School 2026

7 - 10 September 2026 Courses include:

AI – Beginners ; Art History – The Male Gaze

Craft – English Paper Piecing - Beginners

Jazz Appreciation - Introduction; Life Story – Social History

Linguistics – Onomastics: What's in a name?

Mahjong – Beginners; Mathematics – for Life

MPT - Memory, Perception & Thinking

Poetry – Australian: Philosophy – Introduction


Spanish – Beginners; Yoga – Seated, Mat and Standing

En-Suite Accommodation £390.00; Standard Accommodation £360.00

Non-Residential with dinner £220.00; Non-Residential no dinner £175.00

The residential prices include accommodation and all meals and refreshments offered at break times. A 'Welcome' drink on the first evening, with a 'Farewell' drink on the last evening, both prior to dinner. Also, the evening entertainment is included; it's available on campus each evening at 8.00pm.

Current information on 2026 Summer School can be found on the South East u3a Forum's website, <https://southeastu3aforum.u3asite.uk/2026-2/>



*The following article is reprinted for u3a members who were inspired to research their own family history after hearing the excellent talk by Sohail Husain in February.*

### **Family History / House History / Genealogy Group**

I am a volunteer at the Hampshire Genealogical Society (HGS) Help Desk at the Record Office here in Winchester. I should like to know whether there might be any members who would be interested in the setting up of a Family History / House History / Genealogy Group.

Those living locally to Winchester would also be welcome to visit the HGS Help Desk in the Winchester Record Office any Tuesday - Thursday, 10am - 4pm. The Record Office is situated close by Winchester Railway Station; no appointment is needed. The desk is staffed by volunteers some of whom have experience of DNA research. We're always looking for more volunteers. If you are interested please email

*April Wood Ashton*



## **Iftar**

Ann Edwards invited me to attend an Iftar dinner with her as this year's Winchester u3a representatives on Tuesday 3 March. It was held in the Cathedral Pavilion. During Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to fast during daylight hours and this includes food AND fluids, including water, although there are exemptions made, e.g. health conditions, children etc. The fast is then broken with the Iftar meal, which begins with a delicious toffee-like date. This year Ramadan and Lent overlapped, a rare occurrence that will not happen again until 2057!

We listened to a Qu'ran recitation and the call to prayer, followed by several speeches from the Bishop of Winchester, our Mayor, our District Police Commander, Councillor Martin Todd and a Portsmouth University lecturer who is a volunteer at the Dialogue Society. There was some live Turkish classical music and two interactive quizzes, with answers displayed on the screen by an app that we had been asked to download onto our mobile phones. We both enjoyed meeting and conversing with others as well as a delicious meal of curry and accompanying delicacies that were served to us from beautiful copper tureens.



The evening was organized by the Basingstoke Dialogue Society. The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities and encouraging people to engage and contribute to the development of ideas via dialogue and community building. They emphasize the importance of trust, fairness, respect, truthfulness, kindness, patience and forgiveness.

*Nicola Giles*



## **Winchester u3a at World Health Day 7 April.**

We had fun "manning" a stand at Winchester Sport and Leisure Park. Thanks

to Gill Goodwin, Anne Roe, Wendy Broadbent and Ann Edwards who came to help me.

Although Winchester u3a is large, we continue to lose more members every year than we recruit, so we really need to put the message out there. Research shows that active social engagement is important to healthy ageing. What better way to have fun and do the things you enjoy with like-minded people in such a grassroots, members-led organisation as u3a?

If you could help to circulate leaflets or posters, or have other ideas about how to spread the word, please get in touch:

[vicechair@winchesteru3a.co.uk](mailto:vicechair@winchesteru3a.co.uk)

*Jean Crispin*



## Introducing the committee

Marion Schiesser, Secretary and Membership Secretary

The mundane: Born and grew up in Bristol.

Just slightly less mundane: Sister of Vernon Tottle, the newsletter editor. The proof: →

Interesting fact: We spent 9 months in Peru when I was 13; reason: Dad's job. When we went to Macchu Picchu, long before it became a popular tourist destination, we had the place almost to ourselves!

Later: Met my Swiss husband on my first day at a new job in London.

Spent 38 years living in Switzerland; hiked, climbed mountains, and even skied, which latter I can hardly believe I actually did.

Came to Winchester 10 years ago.

Non-u3a activities: Helping with church groups for both seniors and pre-schoolers.

u3a: Very much enjoyed being Membership Secretary for 5 years; now learning to be Secretary.

Request: Please do give some thought to possibly joining the u3a committee; if I can do it, .....

*Marion Schiesser*

