



NEWSLETTER
December 2023-January 2024

Our Website: <https://www.readingu3a.org.uk>

This is an edited version of our usual newsletter, produced to give prospective members an idea of our activities

Message from the Chair: This is our last newsletter for 2023. The clocks have gone back, the evenings are getting longer and, dare I say it, Christmas is fast approaching. We are having our Christmas Get Together on 14 December and many members have volunteered to entertain us, so get your singing voices ready.

We had a successful AGM in September when we welcomed new committee members. But we are still in urgent need of a Vice Chair who will be able to assist me and prepare to be Chair in the future. This is a necessary post, so if you have recently joined or are a long-standing member, please do think about volunteering for this post. Being Vice Chair gives you the chance to shape the future of our u3a.

In October, members of our STAR group manned our table at The Older People's Day event at Broad Street Mall. It was a hectic day for us but we attracted a lot of interest and some new members.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone
all the best for the forthcoming holiday season and for the New Year.

<p>Members' Meetings 13.30 (free tea/coffee) for 14.00 Thurs 14 December - OUR CHRISTMAS EVENT Thurs 11 January: Avebury Stone Circle - old stones, new ideas. PLEASE NOTE - These meetings are now in-person only, not hybrid.</p>
<p>Christmas Entertainment at Abbey Baptist Church on Thursday 14 December 2023 13.30 for 14.00</p> <p>We have a variety of entertainment starting with music performed by our Singing for Pleasure and Madrigals Groups, followed by a selection of offerings from our members. We will finish by all singing a selection of our favourite carols.</p>

Could you be our new Minutes Secretary?

If you would like to volunteer for this post, which involves preparing and circulating agendas and other documentation for committee meetings, and writing and circulating the Committee Minutes, please contact any committee member for more information.



SAVE THE DATE!!! The next Ruth Ascher Piano Masterclass will be at 14.00 on Sunday 24 March at St Joseph's College in Upper Redlands Road. More information to come in our next newsletter – but meanwhile, make a note in your diaries.

u3a Facebook Groups

There are a number of private Facebook Groups for u3a members. The largest of these (nearly 7,000 members) is called u3a: Keeping in Touch, and its posts are wide-ranging – u3a queries, topical discussions, trivia and jokes. It can be found at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2833125070105668>

More serious discussions, about the future of the u3a movement, can be found in the Facebook Group called u3a Fit for the Future (735 members)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/685157026449507>

There are other Facebook Groups covering individual topics such as Food and Art and Gardening – just do a search and you will find them.

To apply to join any of these groups, just click on the *Join* button and answer the membership questions.

The u3a Website

If you have online access, do make use of all the useful and interesting information which is available on the u3a website at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

In particular there are many **free** Zoom sessions that you can register for, see

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes>,

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/workshops> (particularly interesting if you are thinking of volunteering to join our Committee or to run a group),

and <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events> (do click on the Subscribe button to register for monthly updates for all these events).

A new learning opportunity

A new national u3a website for interest groups has been set up to host regular talks by u3a members using Zoom on the subjects: Books & Literature, History, Art History, Science & Technology, Climate, Computing, Current Affairs, Rocket Science. Check it out at: u3acommunities.org

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Alternative Theatre Group

Fri 12 January: *Rapunzel*. Shinfield Players

Thurs 1 February: *Albion*. Progress Theatre

Thurs 7 March: *The Nightwatch*. Shinfield Players

Mon 29 April: *The Pitmen Painters*. Wokingham Theatre

Woodley Players is closing

Unfortunately Woodley Players is closing at the end of this year. The decision was prompted not so much by a lack of actors but by the age of the backstage team, and attempts to get younger people to volunteer have been unsuccessful.

We have enjoyed their productions in the last few years and will miss them.

Ambling Group

Mon 4 December 09.30: Planning Meeting

Thurs 7 December 11.00

A circular walk around Hosehill Lake, Theale followed by Christmas Lunch. Easy walking but could be muddy after rain, so bring suitable boots/sticks if you use them.

Mon 8 January 11.00

A good winter walk around Peacock Farm near Bracknell. All paths are paved and there are no stiles or hills. Approximately 2.5 miles mostly through urban areas.

Wed 24 January 11.00

A linear amble of approximately 2.5 miles around Whiteknights University campus.

Ambling Diaries

Prior to our first October walk, the temperature had been unseasonably warm but plummeted overnight, so 13 of us set off on a cool crisp morning for a 3.5-mile walk from the Roebuck Hotel, Tilehurst to Caversham Bridge.

Our final walk in October was around Wittenham Clumps near Wallingford on a lovely crisp morning. Later on we stood on the bridge over the Thames which hosted the World Poohsticks Championships from 1984 to 2015.

Our first November walk was to Peppard Common, the edge of Sonning Common and two woods belonging to The Woodland Trust, with ground covered with fallen leaves and a lot of mud.

Blanket Group

Our next meeting is at 15.00 on Monday 4 December in *The Place to Eat cafe* on the first floor in John Lewis. Any donations of double knitting wool will be put to good use.

Books Group/HYBRID

We meet on the 1st Thursday afternoon of each month at Abbey Baptist Church at 13.30. Refreshments are usually available. A zoom link is provided for those not able to attend in person (please let us know beforehand).

New members very welcome, in fact we would like to see newcomers.

Thurs 7 December Bring along a poem or reading with international flavour if possible.

Thurs 4 January 2024 *My Dear I wanted to Tell You* by Louisa Young

Thurs 1 February *Tulip Fever* by Deborah Moggach

Thurs 7 March *Blind Spot* by Paula Hawkins

Current Affairs Group

There's so much going on in the news at the moment, but what's really behind the headlines? There are often different ways to interpret what has been happening and what the implications are. Our group provides an opportunity to review issues of international and national importance, by analysing and discussing recent news reports and commentaries. In each meeting we discuss in detail two topics (one national, one international) from what's been in the news since the last meeting, and also have a quick look at other significant news items.

Debating Group

We have **no meeting in December**. Therefore, our next debate is scheduled for **Tuesday 16 January** when we will discuss the pensions triple-lock and whether our generation is prospering at the expense of the young. New members are always welcome. Despite our name we don't have formal motions or make formal speeches, so no preparation is required. We just have a friendly discussion, in a group small enough for all to have their say.

Emmer Green Lunch Club

The Autumn edition of *Third Age Matters* magazine quite rightly highlighted the shortage of men at u3a events. However, I am pleased to report that, at our September meal, male diners exceeded females for the first time ever (by a majority of 1). This prompted a debate on women's' rights and sex equality in general. As ever, the discussion was lively but good humoured and we parted with good wishes all round. We are always pleased to see new faces at the White Horse.

French Conversation Group

2nd & 4th Wednesdays each month 10.30–noon

Wed 13 December only. NO MEETING on Wed 27 December

Wed 10 and Wed 24 January 2024

French Conversation – Improvers' Group

1st Wednesday of every month 10–11.00

Wed 6 December and Wed 3 January 2024.

Fourth Friday Film Fun/Zoom only

Fri 22 December – NO MEETING

Fri 26 January 10.30

Jerry protects a southbound duckling from hunter Tom's gun, Buster Keaton lives in a tiny house, and Betty Boop does her best to avoid the attentions of the Old Man of the Mountain. Then six of seven brothers are involved in a dancing contest, John Cleese plays the village idiot, Father Ted's roof is leaking and Lou has a go on water-skis. Next, John Bird interviews psychiatrist John Fortune

while Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse spoof Question Time. Finally, a spectacular piece by Tchaikovsky and a very early Merrie Melodies cartoon.

It's cold outside, so why not enjoy Film Fun in the comfort of your own home?

Gardening Group

No further face-to-face meetings until March 2024 but email discussions will continue between group members until then.

Heritage Group

There will be no visits in December or January but there are plans for 2024. Details will appear in the New Year.

History Group via Zoom

Fri 8 December – NO MEETING

Fri 12 January 10.30 via Zoom

Reading Royals – the Kings (of Wessex and later England) who have significantly affected the history of Reading.

We are reverting to Zoom meetings during the winter months when the weather is usually at its worst.

Italian Films

We hope to organise occasional showings of Italian-language films (with subtitles), at Abbey Baptist Church.

Italian – new course for beginners

This course will be suitable for complete beginners. It is structured around the BBC *Talk Italian* course, injecting some fun into it, and with an emphasis on managing simple conversation in situations that visitors to Italy are likely to encounter.

Meetings will be once a month, 1.30 – 3.30 on first Thursdays, at RISC, starting in February 2024.

Nature Walks Group

Thurs 28 December – NO MEETING

Thurs 25 January 10–noon

We are off to Dinton Pastures – joining instructions will be sent nearer the time. We are conscious of finding a venue that has a good chance of being dry or has all-weather paths.

ADVANCE NOTICE – in February 2024, we will meet on the 29th (the 5th Thursday and also Leap Year Day). We are visiting The Harris Garden.

Photography Group

Wed 27 December: NO MEETING

Wed 24 January: A photograph session

New members are always welcome.

Poetry Group

Tues 5 December: *Celebrations*

Tues 2 January: *Female Poets*

I look forward to seeing you then.

The Linked Quiz

We are entertained, puzzled and sometimes infuriated by these ingenious email quizzes. Even if we don't get them right, it is great fun trying to work out the answers, and wondering what on earth could possibly link them together! Questions are sent out by email at the beginning of the month.

Science & Technology Group

Tues 28 November: *Project milk, Part 2*

Members who have been investigating various aspects of milk give their informal, short reports. What impact does cattle rearing have on the environment, how can we influence this, what are the allergies and problems?

Tues 26 December: NO MEETING

Tues 23 January: *The Lost Rivers of London* will be explained to us by Alan Fitzgerald of Marlow u3a. We welcome newcomers and visitors. Please join us.

Seated Exercise Group

Thurs 14 & 28 December

Thurs 11 & 25 January

New members are very welcome and I am happy for people to come along for up to two taster sessions, including prospective members. Please wear suitable loose fitting clothing. You must contact the group leader before attending.

Slice of Arts and Culture/ a possible new group

Arts and Culture are integral parts of life in a huge range of forms. Do you enjoy going to live performances, visiting the cinema, reading fiction or just watching the wide variety of programmes television and streaming have to offer?

Does this ever take you down the track of wanting to know more about the writers, musicians, performers or other interpretations of authors/composers works.

If so, would you be interested in a group that looked at some of these different interpretations, which would be investigated and then reviewed at a meeting either in person or on Zoom?

Tai chi Groups

Our Tai chi groups have proved very popular in recent months with many new people joining, and **our classes are now full**. However, if you wish to join us, please contact the group leader who will place you on a waiting list.

Our last classes before Christmas **will all be on Friday 8 December**.

We meet again on **Friday 5 January 2024**.

Thames Valley Network

As we approach the end of the year and look towards 2024 there are a couple of very interesting Zoom talks planned, plus a Winter Quiz.

Thurs 30 November 14.30 *My Falklands War* A talk by Dr Chris Parry

Fri 8 December 14.30 *Winter Quiz*

Mon 15 January 14.30 *Genetics of Ancient Populations in Britain*
A talk by Dr Tom Booth

Theatre Group

Tues 28 November 14.30: *Christmas Concert at The Musical Museum, London*

Thurs 8 February 14.30: *The Circle* at The Oxford Playhouse

Town Study Group

Wed 13 December – NO MEETING

Wed 10 January 14–1500 followed by tea/coffee

Our researchers report back on our first towns to be studied in 2024 – Haddenham and Thame. Expect to hear about Wychert and also Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital!

Walks Group

At present we have not finalised any walks for December or January 2024. Details will be emailed to members on the walks mailing list at a later date.

Woodley & Earley Lunch Group

In September ten of us ate at Romanji, an Indian restaurant (and a new venue) tucked away in Maiden Place, where the food was plentiful and service excellent.

In October we had a last minute change of venue as Good Companions was temporarily closed for refurbishment. We went instead to the Bull & Chequers where we made use of sharers' prices, ie two mains for price of one, and also pensioners' price for two courses.

Mon 18 December: Xmas lunch at The Carvery, Lower Earley:

Mon 15 January: A Woodley venue TBC, possibly Good Companions, Waterside Inn, The George: awaiting further suggestions.

Writing for Pleasure Group via Zoom

The theme for November was *A chance encounter*, which was received and replayed with diverse responses once again. Thank you Writers for providing such varied pieces.

On **Wed 6 December** our theme is *Obscured by clouds*.

More details of our activities, including a timetable and contact details for the group leaders, are made available to new members on joining our u3a.