

Haddenham u3a learn, live, laugh

Newsletter February 2025

From the Chair Janet Mills

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. The months have flown by since the last newsletter so there are quite a few things to report on. Looking back, the General Meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month have continued to be very well attended and the talks all interesting and well presented, ranging from insights in to Gilbert and Sullivan and their contemporary society, an historical perspective on the English Channel through stories of legendary characters and places and a journey through non-university Oxford via 'Alice in Waterland' and the Pre-Raphaelites. Then in December Jenny Mallin gave a talk on Christmas Traditions with a difference, centred around a family heirloom, a book started in 1844 in Madras which described the festive season enjoyed by those who were living in a country which was part of the British Raj. Samosas were served to members along with the traditional mince pies and prosecco. This was a particularly enjoyable ending to the u3a year.

January saw us being introduced to an important, but mostly overlooked, Victorian woman, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, who was influential in so many ways - the founder of Girton College, Cambridge, and a pioneer of feminism, equal opportunities, diversity, inclusion and mental health awareness. She knew many influential Victorian thinkers and doers and was loved by all. In February Dr

Peter Altman asked the question 'Does Alien Life Exist?' It was an enthralling talk of space exploration and statistics coming to the conclusion that as space is so vast and it takes millions of years to travel beyond our solar system we will never know whether life exists elsewhere!

Coming up: In March 'Giants and Volcanoes: plants and places in Western USA'. In April 'Homeward Bound - the Story of Odysseus'. In May, Celebrating VE Day, with bunting and music, a talk on Churchill and refreshments which may have a wartime flavour, accompanied by prosecco. The June meeting is the **AGM** followed by another talk by Martin Holmes, 'Boris Johnson'.

As usual a Christmas tree was displayed at the Christmas Tree Festival in St Mary's Church, beautifully decorated with newly made items from the interest groups; thanks to the leaders of the groups who came up with ingenious designs. A photo of this is on the website, along with photos of members enjoying the meal at the Christ Church Christmas Carol Service in Oxford. Theatre trips, walks of varying lengths (a bit hampered by the wintry weather, at times), lunches out, talks and indoor activities are just a few of the things going on under the u3a banner.

u3a Week was also promoted with a display in September in the library.

The Cycling Group: Berlin to the Baltic Sea

In September 2024, 15 cyclists assembled in Germany to begin travelling from Berlin to the Baltic Sea by boat and bike. The first day started hot, cycling through forests and fields and alongside waterways on well-maintained cycle paths but then the weather changed dramatically. Some cyclists continued and viewed the spectacle of the oldest working boat lift in Germany in torrential rain and wind. Most of the group remained on board and had the excitement of entering the nearby boat lift on the Oder-Havel Canal, opened in 2022, a remarkable feat of engineering.

The cycling route continued to Szczecin in Poland, a port halfway between Berlin and the Baltic coast. There was an optional walking tour to the castle and the city centre. The group then cycled on the island of Usedom to Peenemunde with its fascinating WW2 museum where the V1 and V2 rockets were developed.



The museum at Peenemunde. A Doodlebug!

We also cycled the islands of Lauterbach and Rugen, the largest island in the Baltic Sea. Stralsund was the final destination, a fine

Hanseatic Port and town with beautiful medieval buildings. Our next cycling holiday is to the Netherlands in September visiting Dordrecht, Utrecht and Delft.

We are unable to take any more bookings for this trip but we are looking for new members to join us on our monthly local rides.

Report by Marie Woodrow

Technical Group visit to the Shuttleworth Collection

Eight intrepid ladies and gentlemen of the Technical Group drove to rural Bedfordshire on a chilly November day to visit the amazing private collection of historic planes and wheeled vehicles at Old Warden. The Shuttleworth Collection and airfield were established by Richard Ormonde Shuttleworth in 1929, and the airstrip was only taken over by the RAF for a period during the Second World War. Most of the flying exhibits are still airworthy, although one or two are incredible reconstructions.

The group was fascinated by the mechanics of 9-cylinder air-cooled radial engines, and how machine guns were synchronised to fire through the propeller of early fighter planes. When these guns were first used, apparently pilots just shot through the propeller until there were too many holes in the prop, which was then replaced!

The collection is housed in six very large and cold hangars, so after 90 minutes some repaired to the café to warm up, while others took a brief tour of the gardens associated with Shuttleworth House and Park. A bonus after lunch was a brief visit to the engineering

workshop to see a team of volunteers busy on restoration projects such as repairing and replacing the fabric skins of several aircraft, including a Spitfire. This involves applying at least six coats of "dope" to stretch and protect the covering — painstaking and rather smelly work.



A worthwhile visit, with something for everybody, including beautiful restored "charabancs" and early motorised bicycles — plus attractive gardens and, on flying days, a chance to relive the days of "those magnificent men in their flying machines". Report by Jerry Michell

The next talk is 'How did I get here from being a civil engineer to a major retailer in the UK?'. Haddenham u3a member Peter Appleby will talk about his career as a Chartered Civil Engineer. The talk will be on 3rd March at 11.00 at Haddenham Methodist Church. We look forward to seeing as many people as possible to what should be an interesting talk. Report by Kevin Nash

Other Group News

The Wine Tasting Group: This is slowly expanding with a regular attendance of 14-18 people. We meet every 2nd Wednesday of the month in the Walter Rose Room at the Village Hall. The cost is £10 per session which leads to an accumulation of funds which allows a free

session every now and then. We intend to have a couple of outside sessions this year, either in a vineyard or someone's garden. Come and join us if you would like to explore the wonderful world of wine. Report by Richard Moore

Table Tennis Group: Since moving from the Village Hall to The Airfield Pavilion last September we have gone from strength to strength as a group. Everyone has embraced the opportunity of playing every week rather than fortnightly and the camaraderie is plain to see! We have now purchased two new tables, the new setting has good facilities and is well lit, clean and safe. We have full capacity and many new friendships have been forged. We all feel real pleasure to be part of the Haddenham u3a table tennis community. Report by Sylvia and Steph.

The Walking Cricket Group: We have completed our first year in September 2024. It was successful and we averaged 12 players per session. I hope we can improve on this in 2025. Our group enjoyed playing in the sunshine and we had the cricket ground to ourselves. People often stopped to watch and joined us or asked how they could join the u3a. Like last year, our start date is unpredictable because we have no control over the weather and the cricket pitch was waterlogged until late April. This may well be the case this year but we hope not! We would like more members to join this year. They would be most welcome. Report by Patricia Cumberpatch.

Discussion Group 1: We need some more members! This group runs on an 'Open Forum' basis and is very friendly and informal. Members usually bring a subject they wish to discuss so we are able to cover a number of

topics in the 2 hour session. Everyone is able to join in and give their opinions. In addition we always enjoy coffee and biscuits! There is a charge of £2 to cover the cost of the hire of the room. We meet every 3rd Monday of the month at the Catholic Church, 45 The Croft,

Haddenham. The room is easily accessible (no steps) and there is plenty of parking. If you would like to come along and enjoy interesting topical discussion, please contact Peter Woodrow (01844 292012 07887 822261)

Subscription Renewal 2025 - 26

The current u3a membership year will end on 31st March 2025. 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 e-mail or post.

PLEASE DO NOT PAY DURING MARCH.

Our financial year ends on March 31st therefore we need payments for 2025-26 to be paid during the 2025-26 financial year.

We would be very grateful if you could renew your subscription as promptly as possible from **April 1st onwards.**

You can renew your subscription by Standing Order, BACS transfer or Cheque. I am afraid that **we can no longer accept cash.**

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)

Please let Elaine know if there are any changes to your personal details.

It would also be very useful if you could let Elaine know if you do not intend to renew your membership.

Thames Valley Network and Third Age Trust online Talks

11 March 10.30 **Keystone Species and
Rewilding** by Ruth Nobbs

3rd June **Petra** talk by Jill Eyers
events_info@u3atvnetwork.org.uk

Monday 3rd March 10am **The Life Cycle of a
Laser- from prototype to making a start on
Earth**

Tuesday 11th March **Dorothy Levitt The
Fastest Lady** www.u3a.org.uk/events

The Third Age Trust

You might have read in the magazine **u3a Matters** that the National Organisation has been reorganising since it became a charity. Now there is a Board of 11 elected trustees responsible for Governance and then a council of representative members to deal with clubs and local issues. The mission is to increase membership by communicating better at all levels about what the u3a stands for - giving

opportunities to live well and fully by offering activities for learning and socialising to all older people, run by u3a members for u3a members.

A successful club has volunteers sharing the setting up and leading of interest groups and the committee overseeing them.

In keeping with this ideal, Haddenham is looking for enthusiastic volunteers !! Consider joining the committee, start up a new interest group, and **a plea from the editor's heart, can anyone help with compiling this newsletter?** It is the way to keep all members informed about what other members enjoy doing and perhaps encourage more participation in the interest groups.

Thank you to the groups who have given reports for this edition. If you fancy being an editor get in touch.

Thanks also go to Jonathan Hawkins, the webmaster, who puts the newsletter on the website and prints off copies for those members who do not have access to a computer, to Sally and Mike Phillips who distribute these and to Elaine and Geoff Parkes who send the newsletter out by email to all the other members. Finally my thanks to Annette Marsden for her help in compiling and editing it.

Editorial Team:

Janet Mills (Chairman of
Haddenham u3a)

Annette Marsden (Publicity and Newsletter
Officer)