



Tetbury & District u3a Newsletter

February 2023

A Message from the Chair

Isn't it lovely to see the signs that winter is drawing to a close? Longer days, beautiful snowdrops and even daffodils! Our u3a continues to offer us a wide range of opportunities, perhaps new ones to try or old pastimes to revisit.

In particular the ukelele group is making good progress. Six members are showing an interest. New members are most welcome. The beginners' Italian group and the scrabble group have restarted. Also, the Wednesday afternoon book group has a couple of spaces. If you are interested in any of these, please contact the group leader via www.tetburyu3a.org.uk, where you can also find full details of all our other groups.

If what interests you isn't there, let us know. We are always looking for new ideas.

chair@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Monthly Speakers

Monday, 13 March at 10:30am in the Tetbury Goods Shed

Tracy Spiers will give a talk entitled "Pink Frogs and Frisky Ferrets"
- Life as a reporter in Gloucestershire.



This is not, as the title may suggest, an extension of David Attenborough about unusual wild life, but about a career covering many unusual aspects of life, particularly viewed from the humorous point of view. Tracy has worked as a reporter with both the BBC and "Cotswold Life" with a leaning towards the quirky stories.

She is also a published writer and illustrator, mother of a large family and is studying for a PhD - maybe by now concluded - but has found the time, I am not sure how, to fit in a trip to Tetbury to tell us something of her interesting life.

Group News

Thank you to all the Group Leaders who have contributed to this month's Newsletter. Your Newsletter Editor would like to remind all groups who are holding meetings at this time to think about writing a few words about what's going on in their groups, so that any new members have an opportunity to see for themselves whether they might be interested in joining. A few lines are all that's required, plus photographs if you have any. (Please make sure everyone photographed is happy for their picture to be in the Newsletter.) Please send your offerings either to groups@tetburyu3a.org.uk or newsletter@tetburyu3a.org.uk You will find the latest date for submission at the end of this Newsletter.

The History Group

In February the history group had a very interesting presentation from George Keeling about the creation and early years of the Church of England covering the period from King Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534 to the death of Queen Mary in 1558. Henry died still believing himself to be a Catholic and he was not at heart a Protestant. It was only his lust for Ann Boleyn that made him break with Rome and it was this break with the subsequent setting up of the Church of England that opened the doors to an established, Protestant church in England.

At our next meeting, at 2pm on 13 March at the Goods Shed, we will be examining the Great Famine in Ireland 1845-1849. Were the deaths an inevitable consequence of the potato blight or was the British government complicit in the disaster? After a short introduction to the basic facts, we shall expect a lively debate about who was responsible, if anybody. Many people in Britain are descended from the Irish who emigrated to Britain during and after the famine. Perhaps you are one? Come and have your say, all will be welcome.

history@tetburyu3a.org.uk

The Wednesday Book Club

We met on a cold damp January afternoon to discuss Hamnett by the brilliant Maggie O'Farrell, a beautifully written book, which we all enjoyed, on the fictional life of the Shakespeare family. It seemed very relevant after our covid years to be discussing a book set in the time of The Plague, it led to lots of comments about the state of the NHS and homeopathy.

We shall meet again on Wednesday February 22nd, 2.30 at The Priory when we will have read Still Life by Sarah Winman. New members are welcome, please get in touch or come and meet us then.

bookclubwednesday@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Wine Group

The two Wine Groups are now full so if you wish to start a third group please let the Groups Coordinator know.

winetasting@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Gardening Group

The Gardening Group had a very successful visit in February to Downton House in Painswick to see their beautiful snowdrops. The garden is open as part of the National Garden Scheme and showcases small groups of many different snowdrop varieties. The weather was kind, and it was uplifting to see this garden in brilliant winter sunshine.



Our next visit will be farther afield, to Hidcote Gardens near Chipping Campden on Monday 6 March.

Play Reading Group

Our reading of Aladdin had to be postponed due to urgent plumbing works at our accommodation, so January saw a dozen of us turn up at The Priory to 'perform' this well-known pantomime. Great fun! We all knew the story line so that wasn't a problem and the best bits were when we had to 'sing' as a chorus. Well, the words weren't a problem, but we all sang a different tune. Looking forward to reading through two plays at our February get together which have been penned by two amateur writers - one very much a U3A member and one from a former resident of Tetbury. Feedback has been requested!

Photography Group

At the end of last year, a mixture of bad weather and bad health meant that the September and October meetings were cancelled, but we got back on track with a great session in November when the group decided on our agenda for next year and tried studio photography using Steve's professional flash lighting kit. Warren Hately and Lawrence Moss stood in as models and there were some really good results; everyone enjoyed the session.

We did not meet in December but in January we had a Q&A on camera settings and how to use the photography sharing site Flickr (the groups public page is here:

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/tetburyu3aphotoshowcase/>),

followed by a video by Jo Cornish, one of the best Landscape photographers in the UK, after which we had an excellent 'Christmas' meal at Casa in Tetbury organised by Neil.

In February we will be meeting at the Upton Mill Care Home for a session on editing (Jeremy North) and composition (group discussion) - all good preparation for shooting in 2023.

For the rest of the year, we have a mixture of events planned (with some gaps to be filled later) and agreed that we will be more flexible with meeting dates and times so that we can visit different, more remote, places. Planned events include Swindon's Steam Museum, Lacock Abbey (the birthplace of photography) and Purton Boat Graveyard with a session on image critique by an external assessor and a session on special photography techniques. You can see more about what we get up to at our group notes page here: <http://www.sleepyhorsephotography.co.uk/u3a.html>.

Should be a good year!

Want to know more? Contact Steve through the Tetbury u3a website - new members always welcome whatever camera (or phone) you shoot with!

photography@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Bridge Group

The "round robin" in members' homes is coming to an end in March. We are considering playing social bridge in a venue twice a month, but we need more members to participate so that we can invest in equipment. We are likely to suggest duplicate and Chicago scoring but on a friendly basis. Four tables of four would be the minimum. Please signal your interest by joining the group when further detail will be sent in due course in March. Those already in the group need do nothing for the moment.

The group leader is still offering "introduction to bridge" sessions on a one-to-one basis and a refresher for any lapsed player whose bidding may not be up to date. The basis of these sessions is standard British Acol.

bridge@tetburyu3a.org.uk

French Conversation



We continue to meet on the first Monday afternoon of the month for conversation around a theme and on the third Thursday morning of the month for songs and games. If you'd stumbled on us at our most recent meeting, you'd have found us grappling with the challenge of sums in thousands of francs in our French version of Monopoly, set in Paris, and singing Champs Elysees. On the first Monday in March we'll be sharing stories about *New Beginnings* in honour of the coming Spring. We always have fun, a friendly welcoming group, tolerant of all levels of French, so do get in touch if you'd like to discuss joining us.

frenchconversation@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Short Walks Group

We have had three excellent walks recently with 16 members joining me to walk from Egypt Mill in Nailsworth along the old rail track towards Woodchester. It was a good winter walk with a solid surface and good weather. At the beginning of February, 13 of us followed part of the route used for Beating the Bounds around Tetbury. We started off at the Goods Shed, walked through the wood between the Wiltshire Bridge and Bath Bridge, up Blackhorse Hill, down Cottons Lane over the bridge to the Beverston Road then back through the recreation ground. It is good to see the progress being made with the new build for the Dolphins Hall.

Our most recent walk drew good numbers as well. We had a delightful walk across Minchinhampton Common with a route devised to minimise the effect of the breeze, which was quite strong at times, and the likelihood of getting hit by a golf ball - thank you, George, for your planning. This well attended walk encouraged much conversation particularly with those who are not able to join us on a regular basis. It was much enjoyed by all.

shortwalks@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Monday Book Club

At our meeting on 30 January a new member was welcomed by the Group, unfortunately I was unable to attend having had an accident that day but by all the emails from the Group they all had a great evening.

The January book choice was *Shrine of Gaiety* by Kate Atkinson which was based in London in 1926 during the Jazz Age. It evokes a Bohemian atmosphere with Nellie Coker as the Queen of London's night life; it's full of larger-than-life characters. Nellie is ruthless and ambitious to advance her 6 children when she is released from

prison. Success breeds enemies and her Empire is threatened by the dark underbelly of Soho's gaiety. A jolly good read given an average of 3.8 out of 5 by the Group.

This month we have been reading *Mythos* by Stephen Fry, a totally different book written in Stephen's wonderful style adding humour to the darker parts of the mythology of Greece.

The choice for March is *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan, only 114 pages long but it is a Book of The Year. It was shortlisted for the 2022 Rathbones Folio Prize awarded for the finest work of literature, regardless of form, to be published in the English language and won the Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year Award and the Orwell Prize for Fiction. Her books are translated into 30 languages so I am looking forward to dipping my toes in this read.

The photo below was taken at our meal at The Priory in November, a superb evening with good food and good company.



This is a list of just a few of the books that we are interested in reading in future months: *An American Bride in Kabul*, *A Long Petal of the Sea*, *The Tartan Pimpernel*, *Young Mungo*, *Miss Benson's Beetle*, *Love Nina*, *House Arrest*, *Snow Country*, *Little Wing*, *The Golden Bowl*,

Biography - Henry James, Exiled, The Partisan, The Diamond Eye, All the Broken Places, Reputation, The 16 Trees of the Somme, Act of Oblivion, Cloudstream, The Hare with the Amber Eyes

Our next meeting is on Monday 27 February 7.00pm at The Priory Inn.

bookclubwednesday@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Pub Lunch Group

January saw 12 of us enjoying a Burns Night lunch at the Greyhound Inn, Siddington (see photo). Some adventurous members had the traditional Burns Night offerings of Cullen Skink (made especially for us) and Haggis, neeps and tatties. All the food tasted great, and we had good service throughout. This was the second lunch we have had at this great little pub and no doubt we will revisit it in the future.

publunchgroup@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Our February lunch will be at the Tippits Inn, Stroud, on Thursday 23 February 12-12.30pm. This will be our first visit here so look out for the next newsletter to find out how many turned out and how the food was.



Scrabble Group

The Scrabble Group is now under new leadership. It had been led from the start by Marcus for which we will be forever grateful. Unfortunately, as far as I know, health and other commitments have made it difficult for Marcus to carry on. The attendees for this group have dwindled over time and I suspect many may have even questioned if the group is still running. The answer is, YES, it is. We currently meet at Tetbury library on the first Wednesday of the month but if there is enough support this may be extended to twice per month. I am hoping that previous group members will give it another go, and hopefully new members will also want to join us. For several months there has only been the two of us, Janet and I. Although you can still have a good game with just two players it gets much more interesting and challenging when there are three or four, and you don't need to be a professor of English to play although some knowledge of English is an advantage. There are several boards available so we can accommodate a few players. If interested just contact

scrabble@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Historic Buildings Group

The Historic Buildings group continues to grow and there are a number of visits in the pipeline. Their next visit, on Friday, 28 April, is a guided tour of Gloucester Cathedral. Invitations will be going out early in March.



The group have a number of visits planned for the coming months: in May they will visit Acton Court near Yate; in June there will be an all day visit to Bowood House and Gardens; a private guided tour to Kelmescott Manor has been arranged for July; in August there will be a private opening and tour of Arundells, the former home of Edward Heath in the Cathedral Close in Salisbury. All the visits involve car sharing.

If any of these destinations appeals then please contact the group leader for more information.

historicbuildings@tetburyu3a.org.uk

And finally.....

Your u3a committee has decided to hold a coffee morning for all new members who joined in 2022 and 2023. Our founder members who joined at the beginning of Tetbury & District u3a are aware of what we do and what we stand for, but we felt that newer members would appreciate some first-hand information about setting up a group,

joining a group, meeting group leaders, use of the website, etc. If this is successful we may repeat this every year so that new members feel welcome, especially if they are new to Tetbury and are looking for ways to make friends in the community.

One of our newer members has noticed the lack of participation (nationally) on some of the online u3a courses and suggests that we should publicise them more. So, the current course offers are here: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events> and there is a link on that page where people can subscribe to updates so they are always alerted to new online courses. These courses are all free to u3a members and cover a wide range of interests. Have a look and see if there is something that appeals to you.

As mentioned in the Chair's message, we are delighted to announce that there has been good interest in a **ukulele** group. If you're interested in joining, do contact the group coordinator via the Tetbury u3a website who will put you in touch with the rest of the group. No previous experience is necessary; a couple of members are hoping to start entirely from scratch!

Wanting to learn or brush up on basic **Italian**? Then contact the group leader as the Italian group is being reformed.

Are you a **Scrabble** enthusiast? Look no further....the scrabble group meets regularly at the library. You know what to do. Contact the group leader!

The **Wednesday Book Group** has a couple of spaces. Both the book groups are very popular, so now is your opportunity to join one!

Do you have a burning desire to join or suggest a group which currently doesn't exist? Please contact the groups coordinator via the website to express your interest.

Don't forget we have a Puzzle Swap at the Monthly Meetings now. If you have an unwanted jigsaw puzzle and you would like to swap it for a different one bring it along to the meeting.

The final date for contributions to the March Newsletter is Monday 20 March. Keep those reports coming.....