



Tetbury & District u3a Newsletter

November 2023

Message from the Chair

Hello - I'm Bernadette Bell, your new Chair. For those who don't know me, I joined the u3a a few years ago on my return to Tetbury. I've thoroughly enjoyed all my time as a member. I've listened to some very interesting speakers, joined a variety of different groups, become a group leader and finally a committee member.

And now I'm really looking forward to my new role as Chair, extending a warm welcome to new committee members who bring fresh ideas, and keeping u3a members at the heart of everything. I will miss the old committee though - they were a wonderful group of dedicated people, full of laughter and serious discussion, not to mention cakes.....

I would like to encourage new u3a members to extend their social life, meet like-minded people, and most of all enjoy what the u3a has to offer.

It was great to see so many of you at our monthly talk and AGM on 14th November. Carmel presented the annual report as outgoing Chair, and remarked that our u3a branch is thriving, with membership increasing to a current total of 328. There are currently 40 interest groups, with new groups for Art Appreciation, Cribbage, Backgammon, Ukulele and a second Play Reading group established during the year. The monthly meetings have been well attended, demonstrating that the u3a charitable aims of 'Learning, Laughing and Living' were in action in Tetbury.

At the AGM we elected our committee for the year ahead, with several new members. However, it's not too late if you'd like to get involved, as there are opportunities to be co-opted on to the committee or to help in other ways. Please contact me if you would be interested.

I wish you and your families an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. Thank you for your enthusiasm, ideas and support.

Best wishes Bernadette
chair@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Monthly Speakers

There will be no monthly talk in December. The next one - 'Dead Dogs and Chiggers' - will take place at 10.30am on Monday 15th January at the Goods Shed, when Anthony G Rudall will entertain us with his 'Diary of an Amateur Adventurer'.

Group News

Art Appreciation Group

We had one presentation this November with plenty of thought provoking discussion. We looked at Raphael's 'Marriage of the Virgin' (1504) also known as 'Lo Sposalizio' depicting the marriage ceremony between Mary and Joseph and completed for the church of San Francesco in Citta di Castello. We compared it to the similar - although less refined - painting of the same name by Pietro Perugino (1503) who was Raphael's teacher. The assumption is that both were painted for a commission. The background landscape of both paintings are intricately portrayed in contrast to earlier religious paintings where the background was usually plain gold to represent heaven.

Both paintings were completed as altarpieces but have been moved from their original positions, Raphael's is now in the Brera Gallery although the painting's perspective indicates that it was to be displayed at a higher level than it currently is. Both paintings reflect aspects of Renaissance Italian architecture, customs and costume.

Despite their similarities, Raphael's version more closely reflects the influence of perspective and design which emerged via the influence of Piero della Francesca who was a mathematician. The lines of perspective converge at the temple door making this building the centre of the composition. The people in the foreground are arranged in a semi-circle and these factors give an overall cohesion and a sense of balance and harmony to the painting.

By Judy Greeman

artappreciation@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Badminton Group

The Badminton group has enjoyed the Autumn term so far, continuing to play for fun, although of course, we do like to win as well! We always hope to play doubles, but numbers often mean we play singles or even a 2 versus 1 which can challenge our athletic abilities and stamina. An hour on court passes swiftly and although the darker evenings are not very tempting for going out, we always feel refreshed for having had an hour's exercise while socialising in our friendly group.



We meet at The Sports Hall at Sir William Romney's School, Lowfield Road, Mondays 5-6pm and occasionally manage a drink at the Priory afterwards. All abilities are welcome from complete beginners to more experienced players.

By Val Pearce

badminton@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Wednesday Book Club

Seven of us met at The Royal Oak to discuss 'Achilles' by Madeline Miller. We all agreed it was a very sensitive, beautifully written love story between Achilles and Patroclus, based on the Iliad and set in the Trojan War. It charted their relationship from their first meeting to their death. We also commented on the futility of war and how it seemed particularly relevant now. The Trojan War lasted 10 years and the causes were very similar to today's wars: the stubbornness of both Achilles, a demi-god, and King Agamemnon; pride; revenge; wealth and reputation.

Our next meeting in November will be our Christmas Lunch and then, when we meet in January we will discuss 'A Fine Balance' by Rohinton Mistry. New members will be most welcome.

By Pauline Whittaker

bookclubwednesday@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Boules Group

A recent article in a British newspaper reported that referees in France are getting very upset by a surge in threats and violence. Apparently a group of Petanque judges from the Bordeaux area are threatening to boycott the qualification round of the next French championship, following the news that a referee was strangled by a player in a drunken rage.

We would like to make it clear that our boules group is friendly and welcoming as evidenced by our recent lunch together at the Priory Inn! You are of course covered by u3a insurance when attending an u3a event!



The group meets on alternate weeks at the Royal Oak, Tetbury or the Red Lion, Malmesbury.

The last session of the year at the Royal Oak will be on Wednesday 29th November or Friday 1st December weather permitting. There after the default is no play at the Royal Oak until the spring unless we see a spot with really nice sparkly winter weather when we will call a one-off at short notice, so check your in box and junk files on a Monday. We will keep going at the Red Lion every other Friday over the winter, weather permitting.

We currently have 48 members but we welcome more and can offer introductory sessions for those wanting to try it out.

To join our group contact: boules@tetburyu3a.org.uk

By Jeremy North

The Historic Buildings Group

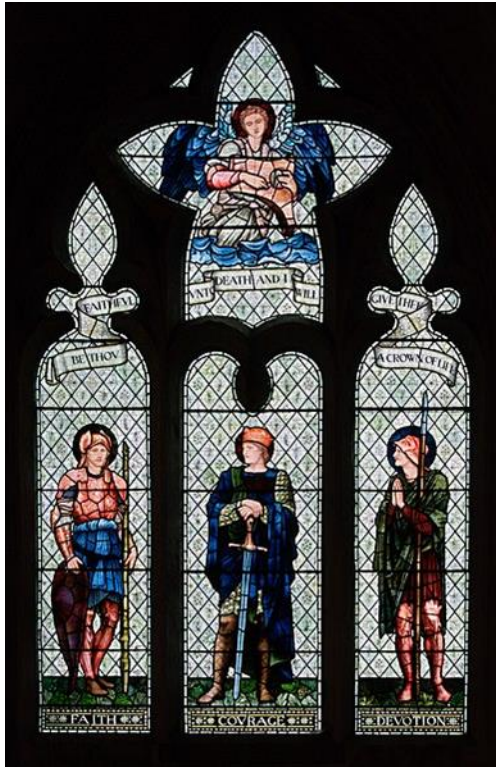
A group of 25 members enjoyed a visit to Malmesbury Abbey on 18th October - our last organised visit for this year. We were treated to a very informative introductory talk by Catherine Price, Assistant Minister at the Abbey. Her knowledge and memory is most impressive!

The Abbey was founded around 700 AD by St Aldhelm. The current building was consecrated in 1180. One of the most notable features surviving from that period is the south porch with its magnificent Norman arch containing carvings depicting Bible stories. The Abbey was a place of pilgrimage; the carvings were highly coloured to help instruct the pilgrims, most of whom couldn't read.

During the next 2 centuries the building was expanded, including the addition of a spire which was even taller than that on Salisbury Cathedral - it must have been seen for miles around! Unfortunately, it fell down, probably during a storm, sometime around the turn of the 16th century, leaving a gaping hole behind what is now the rear of the nave. About half of the Abbey was subsequently demolished, leaving the remaining abbey with a curious layout - there is no East window.

After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1539 the Abbey was sold to a local clothier for the sum of £1517 and then given to the people of Malmesbury to be used as their parish church. One of the outstanding features of the Abbey is the Tomb of King Athelstan. Athelstan, who was buried somewhere on the site in 941 AD (exact location not known), is considered to be the first King of All England.

There is a magnificent stained-glass window made in 1901 by the William Morris workshops from a Burne-Jones design.



Another curiosity is the 'Watching Loft', high up in the nave and easily missed. Monks would sit to keep guard over the important relics during times of pilgrimage. It was not unknown for items to be 'borrowed' - medieval equivalent of CCTV - plus ça change!



The Abbey was the location of probably man's first flight by a 'live wire' monk called Elmer. He attached something akin to a hang glider to himself and then leapt from the Abbey roof. Supposedly he flew a good distance before crashing and breaking both legs! His name lives on today in the form of the nearby 'Flying Monk' brewery and Elmer's Pale Ale!

The gravestone of Hannah Twynnoy can be found in the Abbey grounds. She is reputed to be the first person killed by a tiger in Britain! A memorial plaque (now missing) tells the story:

'To the memory of Hannah Twynnoy. She was a servant of the White Lion Inn where there was an exhibition of wild beasts, and amongst the rest a very fierce tiger which she imprudently took pleasure in teasing, notwithstanding the repeated remonstrance of its keeper. One day whilst amusing herself with this dangerous diversion the enraged animal by an extraordinary effort drew out the staple, sprang

towards the unhappy girl, caught hold of her gown and tore her to pieces.'

We made a donation to the Abbey towards their repair funds. The roof and porch are in need of repair and conservation - this will cost several million pounds. If you haven't been to the Abbey, why not go along and pay a visit? There is an excellent café as an incentive!

By David Smith

historicbuildings@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Playreading Group 1

This month our play reading meeting was a little different. Instead of reading through a play from the local public library collection, we were treated to two short plays written by local u3a members Stephanie Dale and Jeremy North.

The first play 'The Box in the Cellar' was a three-act play about the perils of world-wide on-line dating, and the second, 'Til Death Us Do Part', a two-act play on the subject of assisted dying.

Both plays were interesting to read, and the 'Box in the Cellar' had an unusual twist at the end. As you can imagine, 'Til Death Us Do Part' led to plenty of discussion afterwards from all the group.

The two plays were subsequently read and discussed by Playreading Group 2 - see below for more detail.

By Bernadette Bell

playreading1@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Playreading Group 2

The 'Box in the Cellar' centred on Matthew trying to establish ties with strangers. The theme of communication and trust (in an on-line setting) generated a few disclosures.

'Til Death Us Do Part' is the story of a family spanning several generations. Sarah the granddaughter wakes up one night with a feeling of foreboding and discovers that her beloved old carriage horse, Roger, is writhing in pain on the grass. The emergency equine vet arrives and diagnoses colic. Roger needs an injection to ease his pain, but it doesn't work, and Sarah must make the hard decision to allow Roger to be euthanised. Three years later, Richard, Sarah's 93-year-old great-grandfather, calls a family conference to inform every one of his intention to control his own death.

This was a very topical subject. Both plays were written with the intent of engaging and prompting debate, which they certainly did. All in all, this was a very life affirming afternoon and not as dark as it could have been.

By Corinne Hinton

playreading2@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Ukulele Group - T'UKES

The Ukulele group now has 13 members, at least half of whom had never picked up a ukulele just nine months ago. The progress made by the group has been astonishing and the group is now regularly performing in and around Tetbury.

So far this year we have appeared at Upton Mill Care Home (twice), The Goods Shed (twice, both with Stroud Ukes) and The Friendship Café at The Dolphins Hall. Our recent 'gig' at The Friendship Café

(photo below), arranged with the Town Council, earned us an entry on the 'Experience Tetbury' Facebook page and many compliments from the organisers and attendees. We must have been good as they've asked us back to play at their Christmas Party next month!



We also hope to visit Kingsley House Care Home before Christmas and so we are heavily practicing carols... Next year we go 'on the road' and already have performances lined up in Sherston, Minchinhampton and Malmesbury.

No-one is more surprised than our group about how quickly we have gone from complete beginners to competent musicians. This is obviously due to our talent (ahem) and the tuition from Mike and Sue, but probably also says something about how easy the ukulele is to pick up and play. Perhaps more importantly group members always leave every session, whether it's a public performance or just our normal

weekly meeting, with big smiles on our faces because that's what playing the ukulele does for you - it is a fun instrument! 😊

Two new members have settled in well and it is hoped they will get as much enjoyment as us established players. As we all improve it is becoming more obvious which players have done their homework and have practiced the new chords during the week but ukelele mistakes are very forgiving! Or so we're told.

If you fancy having a go at learning the ukulele and joining our group please contact:

ukulele@tetburyu3a.org.uk or tetburytukes@gmail.com

You don't need to be able to read music, we can lend you an instrument to try and they are not expensive to buy if, like us, you become converted to 'the way of the ukulele'. And don't worry about having no experience or not being good enough - most of us were like that not many months ago!

By Martin Doidge and Sally Hadley

New Group

Story Telling

The ancient art of story telling predates the written word and was the main way that our ancestors passed on their history, skills, culture and beliefs.

To start with our group would meet once every two months to swap stories round a mythical roaring fire, imagining ourselves in a cave or a forest (my gas fire with the lights dim will set the scene). Those who want to do so will have prepared a story lasting 10-20 minutes based on their own experience, a historical event, a forecast of the

future, a ghost story from M.R. James or whatever they like. The story would ideally be created in your head but you could draft it on paper. However it must be told to the group without notes. It does not matter if you forget some detail - in ancient times the story would change every time it was told (like the game of Chinese whispers).

Some of the group will just want to listen sometimes. If you would like to get together to discuss this, contact groups@tetburyu3a.org.uk

By Jeremy North

And finallyThere will be no newsletter in December, due to the various festivities going on.

If your group meets in December or January, please let me have any news and photographs you would like publicised in the January issue by Monday 22nd January.

The committee would like to thank all those group leaders who have contributed to the Newsletter this year.

Please use the contact newsletter@tetburyu3a.org.uk to send your articles to Caroline, your newsletter editor.