



How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world. *William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice*

Welcome to another Christmas edition of UPDATE. Where did that year go? I'm very grateful to everyone who's contributed this time to make another varied and interesting newsletter. There is news from seven of our groups, including a new item from Exploring Churchdown via Pam Bryant who also rounds off her Wildlife in the Garden feature. Special thanks to Jill Bunting who has written of her experiences while living in Shetland. It would be great if you could keep these stories of your previous lives coming, please give it some consideration for the March issue, I know we all find them interesting.

From the Chair -Paul Grierson

Churchdown U3A continues to thrive and we are delighted to regularly welcome new members. I have continued to visit the groups and have been warmly welcomed each time. It is obvious that the members are enthusiastic to encourage others to share their interest. If you have not yet joined a group or are thinking about it, I would urge you to take that step, like me you may be surprised to find you rather enjoy sharing their interests.

Many of you are aware that our website has been down over the past weeks but is now accessible once again. Our Webmaster is monitoring and updating the site as quickly as the provider allows. Our thanks to Gavin for his efforts on our behalf. Please let him know of any omissions within your pages.

By the time this issue appears we will have had our final outing for this year and I would thank all of you that supported the trips during the year and made it possible to enjoy days out with friends and good company.

Both Liz and Di are working on new trips for the coming year and details will be given at our meetings and on the Website, coach costs have increased but I hope they will receive the same strong support you offered me during my time as organiser.

Our meeting this month looks as though it will be entertaining and we will be providing mince pies and a glass of fizz along with our regular tea/coffee so I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 21st.

Membership Matters – Kate Methven

When I took over as membership secretary in June, we had a very healthy membership of 237. While waiting for some members to renew, numbers tend to dip at this time of year, but although some members have left for various reasons, I am delighted to say that now, at the end of November, our membership totals 234.

Please give a warm welcome to the new members who have joined us since the September UPDATE.

Janet Birden	Royston Harvey
Jane Bremner	Brenda Humpage
Fiona Clayton	Yvonne King
Carol Davidson	Michael Peak
Alison Ferkin	Jill Pidgeon
Colin Ferkin	Lesley Sweetman
Ruth Frampton	Peter Twiggs
Patricia Harvey	Linda White



GROUP NEWS

Creative Writing – John Hawkswell

The individuals that make up our small Group each have very different writing styles and such diversity is really good and to be encouraged. Whatever theme is set you can be sure of variety in the literary creations both in format and content. To give you an example, recently the theme was “beauty” and group member Stella Cannock produced this delightful haiku:

Cherry blossoms bloom
Like pale necklaces of time
Precious and fleeting.

Delicate perfumes -
Roses; love’s messenger,
Kiss with soft blushes.

Raindrops are like pearls
Grown in clouds ‘til ready
To bring rainbow skies.

Hoarfrosts draw pictures
Of glistening spiders’ webs
Hanging in hedgerows.

Moonlit trees stand tall
By frozen lakes of silver
Guarding night
movements.



Other members of the group are more comfortable with prose and a little sketch was produced which gives some idea of the range of endeavour. The scene is set during the weekend following the resignation of Liz Truss before a new leader is chosen. The country is faced with uncertainty and confusion but the mice who live under the floorboards at 10 Downing Street are meeting to try and find a way forward... this will be found in full on the Creative Writing web-page once the site is up and running again.

Photography – Ann Knight and John Pinder

Our photography group was formed in September 2016 and at the moment we have 15 enthusiastic members, seven of whom are from our original membership. We meet once a month to view all our photographic efforts in illustrating the theme which has been chosen for that month. Our technical leader gives advice on how these could be improved.

The discussion is always lively especially when it comes to advice on cropping. i.e. cutting down the margins of the photograph seen on the screen! As with any artistic endeavours there are always many opinions. We have seen our numbers grow recently, but there is always room for further members. We look for good technical quality but do not seek technical perfection, and are equally happy to look at photos taken with upmarket digital cameras, compact cameras, or with smartphones.

Occasionally we have outside visits to take photos. In the past these have included Gloucester Docks, Churchdown Hill, Tewkesbury and Churchdown pocket park. Our meetings are friendly, there is always a break for a chat and a cup of tea and a biscuit. This is when we plan future meetings and discuss anything else in regard to the meeting.

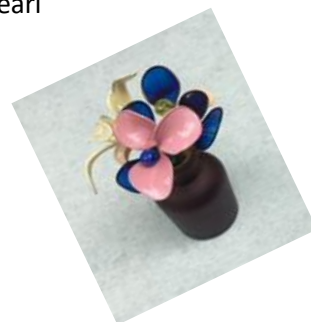
Anyone interested in joining us is welcome to just turn up at The Methodist Church Hall at 2.15pm on the fourth Friday in the month (except December)



Craft – Wendy Martin

The craft group is now back up and fully operational. We have had a very varied programme throughout the year. We are sometimes led by individual members who have shown us how to make Christmas cards and tree decorations. We have sampled silk painting used to create a necklace, ribbon embroidery, resin flowers and made a sugar paste wreath. We have also enjoyed the expertise of visiting instructors in needle felting, using pastels and pearl knotting.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, 25th January 2023.



Wine Appreciation – Louise Keeling

It's just over a year since the group first met at Churchdown Club on the first Tuesday of the month. It is very much a group that fulfils the ethos of the u3a in that we laugh and learn together. No one has any background in wine and wine tasting but we are learning together. Over the year we have tasted Italian reds, compared wines from Aldi with more expensive ones and much more.

In September we visited the Wythall Vineyard, near Ross-on-Wye. It was well worth visiting, During the tour we found out its history and the various grapes that are used to make their award-winning wines.



Our November meeting was an introduction to the history of Chilean wine making and we tasted three different bottle, two red and one white. In the past we have compared cheaper and dearer bottles of the same wine or focused on Sauvignon Blanc.

Please come and join us if you are interested in December when the focus is on Austrian wine. We don't meet in January but in February it is wines from Luxembourg.



Please contact me if you are interested in finding out more, no previous knowledge expected.





This group continues to be well supported and we have welcomed new members in the last year. Average attendance for the walks is 15-20 although we have had 25. There are two walks each month. Dogs on leads are allowed where indicated on the programme. Although most walks are led by Paul or myself, we occasionally do have walks led by members and we are keen to encourage others to lead if they would like to.

The following members' views of the group summarise what the group is about:

"The walking group was my introduction to u3a. I went along with a friend who was a member and I enjoyed both the walk and the company so much that I joined immediately afterwards! The walks are generally 5 or 6 miles, not too challenging and take us out into the wonderful countryside that's all around us. I've been living, and walking, in this area for 50 years but there are still new places to see. We've been on some lovely varied walks this autumn: Birdwood, Northwood Green and Upper Ley; Ashleworth and Hasfield; Naunton and Upper Slaughter and Selsey, as well as Whaddon and Robinswood Hill. It's a really friendly group. You can walk along silently admiring the beautiful views and colours and listening to the birdsong, but often get so engrossed in conversation that you've little idea of where you've been! Either way, you feel much better for having done it and there's also the reward of lunch at a nice pub or café at the end!"



"I started walking with the u3a walking group last year and since then have discovered so many amazing walks in the Cotswolds and around Gloucestershire. Mary and Paul do a great job of searching for new walks. We have had great views from the Malvern Hills and Bredon Hill and walked through woods and fields. The group is a friendly bunch and we enjoy socialising along the way as well as at the end when we stop for lunch. We have a mixture walks suitable for most walkers."

The Industrial Heritage group had a very interesting, guided tour of the Gloucestershire Waste from Energy facility situated just off the M5 junction. Some of you will remember the old



Morton Valence airfield but I hadn't realised the M5 is straight at that point because it was built on the old runway where Meteor jets were tested.

Following a very informative presentation about the amount of waste that is used, where it comes from and how it is separated, we had a tour of the building. The power generated can provide electricity for up to 25,000 homes. Great care is taken to ensure that no smells or gases are emitted from the steam which is often only visible in the winter.

There were a lot of facts and figures to be absorbed, too many for now, but hopefully we will be able to organise further tours, although no further bookings can be made until January next year. The building itself is like Marmite, opinions about it are divided but I came away with a much better understanding of its purpose. **Louise Keeling**



Exploring Churchdown – Pam Bryant

We have had two meetings now, one looking at trees and the other a talk/tour of The Methodist Chapel in Chapel Hay Lane. Within this group we are going to try and promote local events under the title **Promoting Local**, helping us find out about local events which we may not have seen advertised. These will be published on our web page. Here are some you may be interested in and if you know of any events coming up, please let us know. Best wishes, Pam and Frank Bryant

The Methodist Chapel

Knit & Natter

10-12pm fortnightly from
Wednesday, 7th December

Nature in Art Museum

World Bird Photographer of the Year
Exhibition

29th November to 15th January 2023

From January 2023 the **Cheltenham & District Orchid Society** will be holding their monthly meetings at Down Hatherley Village Hall. The Society is looking forward to this move and we hope that anyone in the Down Hatherley/Churchdown area that is interested or just wants to meet us will come along to our first meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 24th January 2023 (always the fourth Tuesday of the month, except December) – details at www.cheltenhamorchids.org

Wildlife in the Garden

Just to round up our year of Wildlife News from the Garden. Now the weather has turned a bit chillier the birds are visiting more and more! Usually 12-17 different species per day.

We have been very privileged to have had a lovely Grey Wagtail (pictured) at the stream for about three weeks now. Two weeks ago, a Grey Heron stopped briefly and today a Great Spotted Woodpecker.

It's only a small garden but planted for wildlife and the water gives the extra attraction to the birds. Best wishes to you all, Pam and Frank.



My Shetland Adventure – Jill Bunting

I arrived on Unst, Shetland, in a hail storm with two young children, a cat (suitably sleepy) in a pet carrier and a pile of luggage. My husband had already started work up there and I had stayed behind to prepare the married quarter for "march out". The wind was howling when we arrived at our home for the next 20 months, a green wooden bungalow with a tin



roof. It was called a Canberra bungalow, and the only thing distinguishing it from the ones apparently used in the outback were the metal ropes securing the roof to the ground. The Shetland Isles are not called the Windswept Isles for nothing! I felt like a pioneer.

We had left York train station the previous morning, stayed overnight in Edinburgh, arrived by aircraft on Mainland Shetland then transferred to a 12-seater aircraft for the trip to Unst. We had to make a stop on the island of Foula and the pilot had to buzz the runway to scatter the sheep before he could land.

Our daughters went to the Primary School in Haroldswick. There were 25 children and 2 teachers. I went back last year with a friend and we visited Unst. The school building is now the Heritage Centre. I was chatting to the lady working there and explained who I was and she disappeared and came back with the school archives and showed me the girls' names in the hand-written records.

I saw my first wild otter all those years ago on Shetland and seals would pop up if they heard us because they are really curious. Sometimes

we would take a boat out in the bay, switch off the engine and wait. Within minutes, up they



would pop. Sea bird populations abound. We took regular walks to Hermaness, a conservation area with magnificent cliffs, where if we sat quietly the puffins would come very close. Out to sea the amazing dives of

the gannets took our breath away. We had to watch out for the great skuas (locally known as bonxies) which would dive-bomb if they felt their nests on the ground were threatened. We were always very careful where we put our feet but carried a stick to hold above our heads as they attack the highest point. The conservationists are now building miles of wooden walkways to protect the fragile peatland habitat.

We visited the island of Fetlar to see the colony of red-necked phalaropes, and the island of Noss, an uninhabited wildlife sanctuary to see arctic terns, guillemots, razorbills, more puffins (you can never have too many puffins) and fulmars (locally known as marlies) which are best not disturbed, because if they get stressed or feel threatened they shoot out an oily goo which smells really bad and the smell stays and the clothes have to be thrown away.

The weather there is changeable to say the least and we learned very quickly that we couldn't put activities off because of the weather unless it was unsafe to continue. I remember well the BBQ we had in a horizontal hail storm! This was also the only time I've been able to see the Northern Lights which were quite magical.



CHURCHDOWN u3a SPEAKER PROGRAMME

December 2022 – September 2023

Meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 2pm

At Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road, GL3 2JH

Date	Subject	Speaker
2022 December 21st	A Dickensian Christmas	Mike Bottomley and Phil Collins
2023 January 18th	A Walk to Rome	Chris O'Grady
February 15h	Butch & Sundance – Heroes or Villains?	Peter Gill
March 15th	Ambling Images	Mark Wardle
April 19th	Producing the BBC Antiques Roadshow	Robert Arley
May 17th	The Criminal Justice System	Andrew Walters
June 21st	History of Aviation in Gloucestershire	Simon Barry
July 19th	The Everyman Theatre	Caro Day
September 20th	The Story of Tin Pan Alley	Roger Browne



Although individual u3a's have been having some problems with their web-sites which will hopefully have been fixed by the time you're reading this, the National Site is still fully accessible. Have you seen the Subject Advice page where over 70 individual subject advisors have posted a wealth of information to help with individual groups. Follow this link to have a look, you may find something useful for your group.

[Subject Advice](#)

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE

Current Group List

Please contact the Group Convenor if you wish to join a group, or for more information go to our web-site: <https://u3asites.org.uk/churchdown> (currently suspended)

Note: While the web-site has problems, please contact the Chair for those convenors without a telephone number below.

Group Coordinator: **VACANCY**

Contact: Paul Grierson (Chair) 01452 857831 in the interim

Group	Convenor	Contact Details
Art History/Appreciation	Martin Bowden	01452 854007
Badminton	Eamonn Doherty	07946 341270
Book Club/Literature	Joyce Winwood	01452 715099
Bridge for All	Dave Bebbington	07587 151191
Cookery	Eve Anstis	01242 235833
Crafts	Wendy Martin	01452 714049
Creative Writing	John Hawkswell	01452 730528
Cribbage	Diana Sinden	01452 698713
Exploring Churchdown	Pam Bryant	01452 532124
Family History	Di Medland	Contact via web page
Film and Cinema	Norman Davies	07957 994390
Gardening	Ann Knight	Contact via web-page
Garden Visits	Jane Moore	Contact via web-page
Industrial Heritage	Louise Keeling	01452 712753
Italian Appreciation	John Hawkswell	01452 730528
Lunch Club	Tom Arnot	01452 498934
Meditation	Sue Grierson	01452 857831
Petanque	Ann Stollery	Contact via web-page
Photography	Ann Knight	Contact via web-page
Politics	Roger Streatfield	01452 713498
Singing Together	Alan Winwood	01452 715099
Spanish (Language & Culture)	Maggie Thomas	01452 676751
Table Tennis	Syd Leuillet	01452 857039
Walking	Mary White	07817 007706
Wine Appreciation	Louise Keeling	01452 712753
Yoga	Sue Grierson	01452 857831

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