



**WELCOME** to the summer edition of UPDATE. The bonus of all the rain appears to be the blossom and roses blooming their hearts out – every cloud... Thank you to all contributors to this issue including Table Tennis, Cookery, Exploring Churchdown and Garden Visits. Two members of the Book Club have reviewed a book each so if you're wondering what to read next look no further.

## From the Chair: Robbie Philip

Dear Members

In my last report I mentioned the rain and this time I was going to mention the sunny weather but as I am writing this all I can see and hear is nothing but rain! Surely it must stop sometime. I think we should maybe start a Group on boat building for beginners. It's also very apt that our Talk this month should be about Seafaring!

This week I had a very pleasing report regarding the Singing Together Group. Alan Winwood, the Group Leader, organised a visit to the Methodist Church with the Group to sing for the Ladies Circle who were celebrating their birthday. Not only were the Ladies delighted by the performance but, in addition, the Group received a very handsome donation for their efforts which was then handed to the Chatty Café committee to help with their very valuable work. Well done the Singing Together Group.

A message from Michael Potter, Group Leader of the MOTO Group (Members on their own), informing me that there are still places available. They meet at the CCA on the last Saturday of the month at 11 am. So if you are on your own why not pop along to the CCA and see what they are all about.

This month as the majority of you will be aware is our AGM. I know that two of our present committee are standing down, so we do need replacements for them, and, in addition, we could really use another two members making a total of

4 new committee members that are required. Please give it some thought, join the committee and help Churchdown u3a become even more successful than it already is. As you will be aware we cannot exist as a u3a unless we have a committee!

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the present committee for their friendliness, dedication to the cause and the help they have given me over the past year and also to all the many others who help to contribute to the smooth running of Churchdown u3a.

## Membership – Kate Methven

As we come to the end of my second year as Membership Secretary, I would like to thank you all, once again, for being patient with me and making the task easier for me.

So far this subscription year we have welcomed 39 new members taking our numbers up to 272. It is so nice to meet the new members at monthly meetings and please make them welcome at group meetings.

I would like to wish a particular welcome to Audrey Burge, Lesley Dennish, Janet Hogg, Ray Humphrey, Richard Hunt, Letitia Jones, Sheryl May, Penny Meenagh, Brian and Liz Petley, Jan Sully and Bruce and Shirley Richardson who have joined since the last update.

## Wonderful delights of The Churchdown U3A Cookery Group

From summer barbecues to picnics and hearty soups in winter, each member plans and produces delicious food.

A distinguished characteristic of our group is that everyone prepares a theme-based recipe, with a mutually agreed theme each month, which ranges from dishes prepared using seasonal ingredients, culinary delights of a country, a festival or a favourite chef.

The 'Sharing Platter' theme included savoury Indian bites including Kachori, a small pastry parcel filled with spicy pea mix, crunchy Pani Puris filled with chickpeas and sweet and sour tamarind water. All amazing flavours. The sweet platter had mini Victoria sponges, tarts, shortbread and lemon possets.



The Scandinavian theme showcased cured salmon salad, cheese potato and spinach flan using Gruyère cheese.

We celebrated Diwali, the 'Festival of Lights' when dishes included savoury Indian canapés, semolina savoury cake, paneer tikka curry and kevera scones made from water of kevera flower (similar to rose water). Traditionally we all lit candles to celebrate Diwali.

Our theme this month was Greek and Turkish food and we enjoyed souvlaki, savoury rice with tzatziki, traditional moussaka and spanakopita (spinach and feta filo parcels) with labneh than finished off the meal with delicious baklava.



## Current Affairs Group

We are a group of 8 members who meet once a month to discuss anything and everything. By the end of the meeting, we have usually put the world to rights. Up until last year our Group title was the Politics Group which was a bit of a misnomer as we discuss many other topics which do not come under the banner of politics although that is usually how we start.

Subjects recently discussed have been the Local Elections, the war in Gaza, refugees, both legal and illegal and climate change. Was the exceptionally wet winter we have had due to climate change? How do you get an appointment at the doctors? Are there any NHS dentists available? Of course, the building of the cycle and pedestrian track has been very well discussed. Its cost and annoyance factor which has to be balanced against vehicle-free cycling, walking and running so lacking in the Britain of today. Another subject we discussed has been the voting for the new Police Commissioner. What purpose does he/she serve and, crucially, how to find out information regarding candidates?

Why not come along and put your tuppence worth in. There is only one rule: we start and finish as friends no matter how strongly a member may feel regarding a particular subject.

## Table Tennis

The outlook for the Table Tennis group is bright.

Currently, we have up to 13 members playing regularly on a Wednesday and up to 9 on a Friday. So, we use 3 tables on a Wednesday and 2 on a Friday. The fourth table remains in the store cupboard and will not come out until the number attending is 14 or more. 16 is our maximum. We always look forward to having new members.

We have had a problem with one of the tables where a welded joint gave way and a few screws in some brackets popped out. Fortunately, the engineering skills of one of our members helped resolve these problems and all is now well.

The standard of play continues to improve. Regular practice helps promote this across the range of abilities that we have. This includes complete beginners through to more advanced players. We do not discriminate and each match includes a range of ability and a lot of fun and good-natured banter. A two-hour session also helps keep everyone that much fitter and healthier.

In April we celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of one of our lady players. She continues to prove that age is not a barrier and holds her own in any doubles match in which she plays.

The GL3 Community Hub (opposite Tesco's) where we play has had a lot of refurbishment work done recently. On Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May a team of electricians worked during the night to install new lights in the Sports Hall. Our Friday session (and



all future ones) was held in a far stronger light that was warmly welcomed by everyone. So, the future really is bright - in all senses of the word! **Syd Leuillette, Group Leader**

## Exploring Churchdown – Pam Bryant

Luckily for the last three months we have enjoyed good weather for our meet ups to explore our local area. In **March** we visited the fire station and were escorted around the grounds by 'Fireman Sam'. We saw a 'dummy' rescue using the lifting gear and told of their work with the other emergency services due to decreased call outs for fires. It was sad to learn that the adjacent land is to be used for a housing development, a KFC and a Costa.

In **April** we surveyed the leaflet account of the Tree Trail. This analysis found that most of the trees listed were still in situ. We will complete this trail at a later date as it lists 74 trees and we were in need of a cuppa! Unfortunately, the leaflet from the council offices doesn't state when it was compiled. If anyone knows perhaps, they could let us know, please. In **May** we were looking for wildlife adjacent to the Golf Club. 3 Butterfly species were seen, Orange tip, Peacock and Large White. Several Firebugs, ladybirds and just one damselfly were spotted plus views of a Jay and Robin. Also, a flitting sight of long tailed tits. A Song thrush was heard, unfortunately quite rare these days.



## Garden Visit Group – Jane Moore

The Garden Visit Group meet up on (usually) the third Tuesday of the month at local gardens. Sometimes we change the date if gardens aren't open on Tuesdays. For example this month we went to Nature in Art on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> as it was open for the National Open Garden Scheme. It was a beautiful day and plant sales went very well.



In April we went to Hellens Manor, a Tudor/Jacobean mansion and garden in Much Marcle. The gardens were a mix of both formal and informal settings. Some of us had a guided tour around the property which was extremely interesting, if very cold. We warmed up in a local pub for lunch, which is something we often do, rounding off the trip nicely. In June we hope to go to Trench Hill and July the lavender fields near Snowhill. If you are interested in joining the group please contact me on [janefmoore58@gmail.com](mailto:janefmoore58@gmail.com)



## Book Club - Joyce Winwood

Fifteen of us meet on the third Monday afternoon of each month to discuss the book that has been selected for that month, we have such varied tastes and rarely agree but our discussions are lively, enlightening and respectful. Each book is given a score out of ten and it is not unusual for a book to receive a 2 then range up to a 9, so you can see we have fun when we agree to disagree. After enjoying a refreshment break, we do a 'Show and Tell' session when we recommend a book we have read from a given subject, e.g. A book about Wildlife, or Music, or with a Town or City in the title, or covering environmental issues. This is popular as it's like a literary trip down memory lane.

At Christmas we enjoy a meal together and bring a wrapped book for Secret Santa and our July meeting is held at Nature in Art where we enjoy a Cream Tea.





We plan our reading programme for the year in July and each of us has the opportunity to recommend one book. In the past we have hit on winners that have been adapted for television e.g. *Dissolution* by CJ Sansom and *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris

This year our choices have ranged from Ancient Greece with 'A Thousand Ships' by Natalie Haynes, to Scotland with *Of Stone and Sky* by Merryn Glover. Some use audio books and some use Kindles and I am delighted that two of our group have agreed to write reviews of two further books we have read this year thank you Maggie and Norman...now read on and enjoy.

### *The Bookseller of Inverness* – a review by Norman Davies

- Review of the unabridged audio edition of *The Bookseller of Inverness*, by S. G. Maclean.
- Marks out of ten - 9/10
- Favourite character: Donald Moore, the larger-than-life bookbinder who plays a key role at several important stages in the book.

A well written, thoroughly researched novel, with a credible plot will always trump a less readily digested, historico-factual account of an event or series of events. Discuss.

Well, any recorded event, regardless of its significance, is processed and interpreted by an observer or a succession of observers. In other words, there is no such thing as an absolute historical truth only degrees of historical untruth.

*The Bookseller of Inverness* is the best sort of historical thriller. It is written imaginatively and the plot is skillfully woven into the complexities of 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish highland political intrigue at the time of the Jacobite rebellion. It is also a gripping whodunnit set in Inverness in the wake of the 1746 battle of Culloden.

In the immediate aftermath of Culloden, Iain MacGillivray is left for dead on Drumossie Moor. Wounded, his face brutally disfigured, he survives by pretending to be dead under the watchful eyes of the Redcoats sorting through the debris of the battlefield for the spoils of war. His cousin and lifelong buddy is less fortunate and dies unbeknown to Iain even though they lie inches apart. Six years later, with the clan chiefs routed and the Highlands overpowered by the Hanoverian Redcoats, Iain lives a quiet life, working as a bookseller in Inverness. One day, he notices a stranger lurking in the upper gallery of his shop, poring over a particular collection. The man refuses to say what he's searching for and only leaves when Iain closes for the night.

The next morning Iain opens his shop to find the stranger dead, his throat cut, and the murder weapon laid out in front of him - a blade with a white cockade on its hilt, a prominent Jacobite calling card.

With no sign of the killer, or of any motive, Iain wonders whether the stranger discovered what he was looking for - and whether he paid for it with his life. He soon finds himself embroiled in a web of deceit and a series of old scores to be settled in the ashes of war. He also re-establishes contact with his estranged father, a complex if charismatic figure who is the contact with the significantly absent Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Disappointingly perhaps Iain finds a matrimonial solution to what his mental health difficulties beyond the end of the novel must surely become.

## *The Maid* by Nita Prose: A review by Maggie Thomas

This is one of those books that surprisingly stays with you, and makes you then think about the themes and ideas in it. Here are the last words of the novel which look like clichés at first but, in fact, it's the personal narrative of the young woman who has almost finished telling us her story. She's quoting from her grandmother who was her only significant person and parent figure, as she grew up.

'Gran was correct after all. About all of it. About everything:

*The longer you live the more you learn.*

*People are a mystery that can never be solved.*

*Life has a way of sorting itself out.*

*Everything will be ok in the end. If it's not okay it's not the end'.*

The maid herself, Molly, is neuro divergent, shown in the way she takes literally, and to extremes, the 'rules' of her job. She fits everything in her life into learnt rules and patterns. Her gran has shown her how to clean a room and leave it 'in a state of perfection'. Her home furnishings have remained untouched since the death of her beloved Grandmother. Early on she tells us:

*'When I'm done with my work, I leave your room pristine... the dust and grime you left behind has been vacuumed into oblivion. It's as though you were never here, as if all your filth, lies and deceits have been erased'.*

This gives us a clue about the sort of things we'll discover in the story. So, without giving away the end, or too much plot in detail, I recommend this 'mystery thriller' story, with a twist at the end. It offers us clear insight into the mind of a young person who takes people at face value, and who is easily taken in by others immediately. The book makes us want to tap Molly on the shoulder and warn her about all the 'nice' people she meets, and how to react. We want her to survive, and we can see how other people (e.g. the police) take her inappropriate behaviour the 'wrong way', while others take advantage of her naivety and innocence (criminals). We feel 'on her side' and want her to be understood. We see her develop gradually and learn.

Some of the themes that make this book a richer story than just a thriller, are the acknowledgement and relevance of: older people, the grandmother, and her older man-friend, the plight of illegal immigrants in the USA and their desperation when trapped in the system, Juan Manuel, a good friend of Molly's. Also, the difficulties of single parenthood, as with her mother and grandmother; social inequality and the position of tenants with exploiting, greedy landlords like Mr Rosso. Coping with grief, loss, and loving memories are threads running through the book.

With vivid descriptions, the book takes us straight into the glamorous world of a large, luxurious ultra-expensive hotel, taking us backstage to see what life 'below stairs' is like. We're reminded just how precarious and shallow that world of riches and luxury is.

I'm looking forward to reading the sequel 'The Guest'.

## Walking Group News

We had our first Coach Trip of the summer on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Some members explored Clevedon and were then taken by the coach to Portishead where the walkers joined them having walked from Clevedon. This was a walk of about 8 miles along the coast path, broken up with a stop for a sandwich and a welcome rest after 6 miles. Once again, the weather was kind and stayed dry with good visibility and some of us felt very pleased that we'd managed 8 miles while secretly thinking 6 miles is our limit!

The picture on the right is Clevedon Pier, described by Sir John Betjeman as 'The most beautiful pier in England', it's difficult to disagree even now.

By the time you read this we will have had our trip to Minehead and Dunster with the walkers going along the top of North Hill to the viewing point overlooking Porlock Bay for our picnic, fingers crossed for another fine day.



Here are the dates for our walks up to September:

Date	Location	Leader/s
Tuesday, June 18 <sup>th</sup>	Slad Valley	Phil & Trina
Tuesday, July 9 <sup>th</sup>	Coach trip to Pen y Fan & Brecon	Paul Grierson
Tuesday, July 30 <sup>th</sup>	Eckington	Mary White
Friday, August 9 <sup>th</sup>	Coach trip to Shrewsbury	Fully booked
Tuesday, August 13 <sup>th</sup>	To be confirmed	
Tuesday, August 20 <sup>th</sup>	To be confirmed	
Tuesday, September 10 <sup>th</sup>	To be confirmed	
Tuesday, September 17 <sup>th</sup>	To be confirmed	



# CHURCHDOWN u3a SPEAKER PROGRAMME

Meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 2pm  
No meeting in August

At Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road, GL3 2JH

Date	Subject	Speaker
June 19 <sup>th</sup>	Seafaring in the Sixties	Paul Drinkwater (Glos Civic Trust)
July 17 <sup>th</sup>	A Presentation by the R.N.L.I.	Anthony Gerrard
September 18 <sup>th</sup>	The Butterfly Garden	Chris Evans, Dundry Nurseries
October 16 <sup>th</sup>	Gloucestershire Inventions	Phil Collins
November 20 <sup>th</sup>	A Grandmother's Legacy	Jenny Mallin, Author/writer

*I found this apt poem to fill this space – if you have an apt or favourite poem, please let me know!*

## **Portrait of the rain – by Jan Wagner** (translated by David Keplinger)

It appears as a hand-kiss, gentle nudge,  
spray of memory: remember  
where you came from, frog.

Or galloping, as a thundering horde,  
to tender unto Caesar what is Caesar's,  
until everything flees into the entryways  
under the cover of newspapers  
and briefcases: whoever listens at the open  
window  
senses that he may be dry, but the weather  
has long since been inside him.  
Or how the gutters become musical,  
when laundry lifts off the lines  
and rivers flow out of their beds,  
and the secret scent of earth and asphalt  
unveils itself; when mushrooms, mosses,  
vineyard snails run rampant;  
it makes the outlines visible: where rain ends,  
we begin.  
It treks across the landscape like a circus,

the spectacle and curtain at the same time:  
scenery loft of the great weather-  
and wandering theatres; bestows upon blonds  
darker hair, and on the bald the radiance  
of billiard balls; to the hens it is a cage  
that doesn't imprison them. So often divined,  
yet no church is founded on it.  
Good ears can still hear,  
if you bend low enough,  
the songs of humpback whales, glacier calving—  
one geyser over North America  
inspires umbrellas to blossom  
from Shanghai to Rome.  
Each drop contains the whole book, *water*,  
particles, pollen, all the dirt of the world.  
resurrection—the easiest exercise.  
Meanwhile it slumbers in car tires  
and from puddles and cisterns  
stares back toward its own origin,  
while the trees for hours and hours  
are immersed in their soliloquies.

The soothing swoosh between the radio  
transmitters, the wind in the forests yet to come

## 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>

**Note:** If you do not have the means to contact a convenor via the web page, please phone the Group Coordinator who will contact them for you

Group Coordinator: **Gary Murden**

Contact: [murdeng71@gmail.com](mailto:murdeng71@gmail.com) 07340 965083

Group	Convenor	Contact Details
Art History/Appreciation	Martin Bowden	01452 854007
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
Current Affairs (previously Politics)	Robbie Philip	01452 715033
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 (currently suspended)	Sue Grierson	07783 061063
MOTO (Members on their own)	Michael Potter	07392595970
Petanque	Ann Stollery	Contact via web-page
Photography	Ann Knight	Contact via web-page
Singing Together	Alan Winwood	01452 715099
Spanish (Language & Culture)	Maggie Thomas	01452 676751
Table Tennis	Syd Leuillette	01452 857039
Walking	Mary White	07817 007706
Wine Appreciation	Louise Keeling	01452 712753
Yoga (currently suspended)	Sue Grierson	07783 061063

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