



**WELCOME** to another December issue of our newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading it and find it a good way to keep in touch with what's happening across our u3a. We have a story set in Gloucester Cathedral, a report on the Industrial Heritage group's visit to the A417 Missing Link project as well as another opportunity to play or learn Bridge plus information about the Cotswold Link which gives us more scope to join a group that Churchdown u3a doesn't currently have. I'm always keen to hear from individual members so please remember to send me anything you think may be of interest to others, particularly stories from your pre-u3a life.

*Christmas tree made by a member of the Craft Group*

## From the Chair - Gary Murden

Dear Members

As the days grow shorter and the festive spirit begins to warm our hearts, our U3A is buzzing with activities and looking ahead to the season of holly and ivy and, maybe, even mistletoe.

Our sense of social connection in u3a carries us right into the most wonderful time of the year and before we know it, Christmas will be here! It's the perfect time to get involved in some festive activities. At our meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December Kate Peake will be giving us an insight into past Christmas's in Gloucestershire, followed by some festive refreshments.

We know that u3a membership is all about learning new things, having fun, and making new friends. Recently, we've heard from members who are eager to join a popular group, only to find it's currently full. This is a wonderful problem to have! It shows there is a real demand for more great topics.

If a group you want to join is full perhaps think about getting a second one going. Or if you have a passion that isn't currently covered then why not start one up. We have people who can help! If you have an

enthusiasm for a subject, our dedicated u3a Committee is on hand to provide all the necessary guidance, resources, and support to get your new group up and running smoothly.

Get in touch today to discuss your idea and help us enrich Churchdown u3a community even further!

My very best wishes for Christmas and 2026!

## Membership – Kate Methven

We have welcomed our new subscription year with a bang as we have had over 25 new members since we had our meeting in July. I would like to send a warm welcome to all of you who have joined since the last UPDATE and I hope you are made to feel welcome to whichever meetings or groups you choose to join.

*Welcome to: Patricia Carr, Patricia Francis, Philip George, Carol Hilton, William Holloway, Sue Inwood, Jo Joy, Mike Joy, Kath MacTaggart, Kelvin Marshall, Vivien Marshall, Graham Powell, Dave Starr, Jane Stevens, Carol Taylor, Kelvin Tustin, Louise Tustin, Janis Whiteoak, Robert Whiteoak, Trish Martin.*

## COTSWOLD LINK

### What is Cotswold Link?

It is a network of 27 u3as covering Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

### Do you know about Cotswold Link Cotswold Link reciprocal arrangement?

In the interests of sharing and perpetuating the aims of the u3a movement, the Link has set up a reciprocal arrangement between its member u3as. Any member of a Link u3a may attend one Group activity in another Link u3a, without having to become a member of that other u3a. General meetings of the u3a do not count as a group activity. Session fees for the group activity will still apply. This is an entirely voluntary agreement between Link u3as but most participate.

### So what can Cotswold Link do for me?

Cotswold Link organises an annual Special Interest Day, which is open to members of all u3as affiliated to the network. The subject earlier this year was Our Brave New World. Three expert speakers spoke about Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security and our interface with computers using Human Factors. The event was held at The Pavilion, Cheltenham on 4th June 2024. For a report on the meeting by an attendee see the Cotswold Link website.

If you want to tell other u3as about things your u3a is organising, our webmaster will be happy to add them to the website.

### And what can Cotswold Link do for your u3a Committee?

The whole ethos of the Network is to share knowledge and best practice between members. Cotswold Link has Zoom peer support groups for Treasurers, Business Secretaries, Group Co-ordinators and Membership Secretaries at which they can share their knowledge with other in the positions in other u3as. Cotswold Link puts on two very informative meetings a year, which two delegates from each Cotswold Link u3a can attend.

Your u3a is already a member of Cotswold Link so ask your committee about how they communicate any news to members or go to the website and find out more about us.

For more information go to the Cotswold Link web-site here: [Cotswold Link](#)

### UPDATE Editor

It feels like the time to plan ahead for a new newsletter editor. It would be a shame for the newsletter to fold just because I need to stop. I would very much like someone to work with me to start with and then take over when you're ready to. If you're slightly interested, please contact me [suegrierson@gmail.com](mailto:suegrierson@gmail.com)

### COACH TRIPS

Paul will be at the Monthly Meeting on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December with the sheets for you to sign up for the coach trips to the SS Great Britain and Badminton. Other trips will be available from January onwards. For all information go to the web-site: [Coach Trips Information](#)

## From the Groups

### Creative Writing – John Hawkswell

We start every meeting of the Creative Writing Group by choosing a title and then each member creates a story or poem. The time allocated to decide on and write the story or poem is about 15 minutes and this challenge really concentrates the mind. The purpose is to get the creative juices flowing and the variety of creativity that emerges is part of the joy of writing. Here is one of the stories that came from this process. It may be a work of fiction but it is based on a true event.

#### THE SHOW MUST GO ON



*The audience that filled the nave in Gloucester Cathedral was eagerly waiting for Handel's famous oratorio, "The Messiah" to begin. The musicians, singers and chorus were all primed ready to start this seasonal favourite. Their instruments were being tuned. Some of those present in the Cathedral had experienced difficulties in travelling that evening. To the rash of roadworks around Gloucester, which are so enduring they appear endemic, was added poor weather conditions. The BBC local station had warned that journeys could be difficult. Gritter lorries had been out in force now the weather had turned colder.*

*David, the music director of this year's Messiah production, was a worried man. The main tenor, Hugh had not yet arrived. He was over 30 minutes late and the performance was due to start in 2 minutes. None of the tenors in the choir were good enough to take the lead, especially at the drop of a hat.*

*David's nails had been bitten down to the quick as he wrestled with the problem. At that moment his mobile rang and, once the caller spoke, the music director had his worst fears confirmed. It was Hugh's wife. Hugh had had an accident on his way into Gloucester and he was now in A&E. at the Royal.*

*I was sitting in the audience with my good friend Ian, a tenor in his own right and one with a growing reputation. We had come to enjoy the Messiah, like many devotees of Handel this masterpiece was a seasonal favourite for us. In addition, we very much wanted to hear Hugh's voice especially if he was on good form.*

*At this point David, the music director, appeared on the platform and the audience quickly hushed to hear his words. With palpable emotion he told us that one of the soloists, Hugh, was unable to be with us due to a car accident. Murmurs of disappointment rippled through the audience. More in hope than expectation David went on to ask if there was anybody present willing to sing the tenor solos and thereby save this year's performance from being abandoned. This news was greeted with stunned silence and then members of the audience started looking around to see if there was anybody willing to meet this challenge. Slowly Ian beside me got to his feet.....*

## Crafts – Wendy Martin

A smallish group of 14 ladies continue to meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month to share their knowledge and interest in a variety of crafts. This year has included Quilling, Decoupage, Lavender Wands, making beads from polymer clay, as well as a number of different Christmassy items. New members very welcome. Our next meeting will be on January 28<sup>th</sup> – follow the link for more information [Craft Group](#)



## Chat and Screen - Michael Potter

We are a small Group and would welcome others to join us. We meet in the skittle alley at the CCA at 11am on the last Saturday of each month. Our meetings are very informal and have no set agenda, although we try to set a theme for our chats.

Previous meetings were themed on a member giving a kind of self-history, with photos, (paper or computer) illustrating their talk. Comments and coincidences abound.

Everyone is encouraged to participate but if anyone just wants to listen and view that is also fine. As most groups meet during the week this may suit you if you're looking for an activity on a Saturday. It's an enjoyable 60 to 90 minutes in the company of fellow U3A members.

## New Bridge Group – Louise Keeling



Bridge is a great social game that can be played at many levels. If you have been on a cruise, you may have seen fellow travellers playing and thought you might be interested in learning to play. It may be that you played many years ago and would like to play again at a gentle level or in a bridge club.

A new group has started on Tuesday afternoon, with the emphasis on gentle bridge whilst having a chance to play and natter. If you are interested in learning, then lessons are available through local bridge clubs. If there is sufficient interest, then I am happy to teach a simple introduction course to bridge for u3a members.

You are very welcome to come along on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon 2-4pm to play or to find out more about the game. We meet at Churchdown Methodist Church, Chapel Hay Lane.

## Walking – Jacqui Ellis

Wow, where did this year go...no sooner had I agreed to take over the running of the walking group then I am being asked to write a few words for a yearly round up. So here is my take on how I think my first year has gone. But first things first, many thanks to Mary White for her guidance (and patience!) as I slowly found my feet at the start of the year.



I had this grand idea that I would theme the walking programme with the flowering seasons. However, the great British weather had other ideas. So, much to the amusement of the group, my theme rapidly became...you should have been here last week. Snowdrops, bluebells on Sandhurst Hill all past their best by the time we got there; a beautiful walk around Martley apple orchards without a single apple blossom. But the wild daffodils at Dymock were wonderful. And the magnificent autumn colours through Westonbirt Arboretum restored my faith

in my ability to follow the seasons.

I must also thank those people who volunteered and led a number of the walks; Sylvia Bennett, Colin Ellis, Derek Hughes, Carol Humphreys and of course to Mary White and Paul Grierson. With their support, I have been able to put on a varied programme, with some group favourites, some not done in a long time and one or two new ones. We had two away-days; one to Exmouth for a walk along the side of the estuary and the other along the canals of Bradford-on-Avon. This picture is of the disused Sapperton Canal entrance on the Thames & Severn Canal.



For all my grumbling about the nonconforming weather, we have been blessed with some beautiful sunny walks and, at the time of writing, I haven't had to put my wet weather gear on once this year. Now, back in the bad old days, when I worked for a living, I was known to like a statistic, so here are a few that I have collected through 2025 to date:

- Number of walks in the year: 22
- Total number of miles walked: 102
- Average number of people on a walk: 20
- Number of pub lunches consumed: 222!

We have lost a few members along the way this year but have gained new ones so the group remains a vibrant one which I have enjoyed leading. As I see it, with this mix of folks, the group is a wonderfully eclectic one which welcomes all newcomers and I look forward to seeing many of them at our Christmas lunch.

I am already working on a programme for 2026 and am looking to incorporate the suggestions that several people have made to me throughout the year. So, I'll finish by saying thank you to everyone that has, and continues to, support the walking group and I look forward to seeing you next year when we can do it all again.

*Walking: The most ancient exercise and still the best modern exercise - Carrie Latet*

## Industrial Heritage – Louise Keeling

The group has had a very varied and interesting programme, thanks to its members' contributions. Visits have been organised to the Record Office and Beckford Silk Mill.

We have learnt amongst other things, about Illmor, an engineering company which was and still is involved in motor racing in different ways. Learning about the Luxembourg steel industry raised the question about the future of the British steel making industry.



In September the group went to the A417 visitors' centre.

We were given a very informative talk about the costs and progress and how the road will look in 2027. There will be new paths and bridges, cycle lanes and roundabouts. There has been a strong emphasis on ecology and archaeology and recycling materials. Much of the remains found dating back beyond the Roman times can be seen in the Corinium Museum Cirencester.

Adders have been relocated to surrounding areas as there is a strong population of the snakes in the area.



Teams of workers from Ireland have been trained as Cotswold stone wall builders. Health care has been provided for the staff and contributions made to many local charities.

Below is an artist's impression of how the road will look when finished, along with the current road which will be re-purposed into a route for cyclists and walkers, The Air Balloon Way. If you are interested in visiting, then the centre is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10am-2pm, children are welcome and it's free. Find all the information here [A417 Missing Link Project](#)



Monthly Meetings are held at Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month starting at 2pm \* Refreshments are served \* All welcome



## SPEAKER PROGRAMME



Date	Speaker	Subject
17th December	Kate Peak	Christmas in Gloucestershire (film show)
21st January	Nigel Thompson	A brief history of popular music - "The Renaissance of Swing"
18th February	Nicky Copper Glos NHS Falls Assessment & Education Service	Falls Prevention

Finally, very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year



"Apparently there's no good or bad children anymore...only misunderstood!"