



WELCOME to Spring! And another packed newsletter, thanks to everyone who's taken the trouble to write, keeping us all informed about their groups and thereby reminding us that we're part of something bigger than just our individual groups. As always there are opportunities to do something different, with a new Games Afternoon proposed and an invitation to the Cotswold Link Special Interest Day. There's news of the Coach Trips and maybe an opportunity to expand the Gardening Group. Please take particular note of the changes to the Monthly Meeting days this year.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, 17th March

Our Chair: Gary Murden

While writing this, we've had a few days of sunshine and no rain! Hopefully, the period of wet weather is mainly behind us and we can start to see the early signs of Spring which must be a relief to our beleaguered farmers.

Recent talks have reminded me of the fascinating nature of our memory: The talk on the history of swing music brought back many tunes from the forties and fifties, with memories of my parents record collections and Two-Way Family Favourites on Sunday mornings.

Last month's presentation on Social Folk Dancing had some of us taking to the floor side-stepping and galloping in our 'sets' which brought back memories of school Country Dancing lessons. Great fun and good to have a presenter who really involved her audience. Talking of memory, extensive research indicates that a lifetime of education and regular socialization significantly reduces the risk of memory loss and cognitive decline in old age. Mentally stimulating activities and social engagement help build "cognitive reserve," a mental buffer that allows the brain to maintain normal function. Which is, of course, where we come in and we are lucky to have so

many people willing to lead our activities. Not everyone can lead a group but volunteering opportunities are many and varied, from helping set up the monthly meetings to taking on a committee role, all very important to keep our u3a up and running. Look out for the AGM documents coming soon to volunteer for a committee role. I promise you'll get more out than you put in.

Membership – Kate Methven

A very warm welcome to the following new members who have joined us since the last newsletter:

Lesley Bennett, Susan Dorrington,
Janet Myers, Clive Pearson and Kath
and Phil Spiller.

Some important New Year housekeeping: May I remind you to let me and your group leader know if you change your email address or phone number so that we can continue to communicate with you. Also, if you know of any members who may have moved out of the area, as they often have more important things to do than send me a message. It would be gratefully received so that I can keep our records up to date.

[Message Kate here](#)

COTSWOLD LINK Special Interest Day Tuesday 2nd June 2026

The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham, GL51 6PN 10.30 – 15.30

Click here for application form: [Apply](#)

From Pen to Reader: The Journey of a Book

A day of four lively talks exploring how books are imagined, written, researched, published, and brought to readers. Open to all members of u3as affiliated to the Cotswold Link network.



Bums on Seats Sue Ablett

Founder and Chair of the Evesham Festival of Words, Sue shares a behind-the-scenes look at running a literary festival. She draws on her varied career and her experience as a self-published non-fiction author, offering practical tips for writers hoping to promote their books.



Researching Roman Britain Jacqui Rogers

Jacqui writes two crime/thriller series set in 3rd-century Roman Britain, including the bestselling *The Loyal Centurion*. She talks about researching the ancient world, building believable historical settings, and shaping compelling characters.



The Joys and Perils of Being an Author Colin Wade

Author of seven crime and mystery thrillers, Colin discusses his writing journey, the surprises of publishing, and how his background with Thames Valley Police helps him craft fast-paced, gripping stories.



A Publisher's Perspective Gareth Swain

Managing Director and co-owner of The History Press, Gareth offers an insider's view of modern publishing—how decisions are made, what publishers look for, and how a manuscript becomes a finished book.



Bonus Session Jocelyn Wishart

How one u3a Creative Writing Group successfully wrote and published their own books.

Editor: Sue Grierson Please send contributions to: suegrierson@gmail.com

Tel: 07783061063

Coach Trips – Paul Grierson

September 8th – Chepstow, Tintern Abbey and Symonds Yat - coach **CANCELLED** due to insufficient numbers. Refunds will be available at the March Monthly Meeting where I'll also be taking final payments for Badminton and Winchester.

The Bristol and Winchester coaches are full but spaces are still available for Sidmouth, Badminton and Waddesdon Manor. Email me on pgrierson24@gmail.com to put your name down. More details on the web page [here](#)

UPDATE Editor

Time for a Change

Please let me know if you feel able to take on this role. It would be a shame for the newsletter to fold just because I need to stop. I'm happy to work with someone to start with if that would help and then you can take over when you're ready to. If you're slightly interested, please contact me.

suegrierson@gmail.com

Good news, we now have a Group Coordinator. Mike Peak has taken on the role and is the one to contact if you have an idea for a new group and would like to discuss it and get it up and running. **Group Leaders**, please remember to tell him if either the name of your group or the leadership changes. The web-site and newsletter need to be updated to reflect this to make sure all information is accurate. See the Group List at the end of this newsletter for contact details.

DON'T BE SHY!

We could still do with a few more people to go onto the rota to help with setting up the hall for the Monthly Meetings. The more people we have the fewer times you will be called upon. Other jobs are helping with Refreshments and Registration

Contact me on suegrierson@gmail.com

GROUP NEWS

Bridge for All – Dave Bebbington

A Thursday afternoon games club?

Would you like to come along and play one of your favourite board/card games (or perhaps learn a new one) on Thursday afternoons? Our Bridge for All Group would welcome you.

We meet every Thursday from 2-4pm in the Methodist Church Hall, Chapel Lane to play Bridge, but we see no reason why we shouldn't open the meetings up to other card and board games. We're thinking serious games such as Chess, Backgammon, Mahjong, or other card games, mini-bridge or whist for example. Anything you like really, your ideas would be welcome (though we will draw the line at snap or online bingo!).

Just to be clear, we will continue to play Bridge. But, if that's not your thing, there is plenty of room in the Church Hall for different game tables. Let's see if, and how, this idea develops. Maybe we will change the nature of our Thursday meetings into something of a 'games afternoon'. The charge would be £3.00 per session, which is the same as our occasional Bridge players pay.

If you are interested contact me, Dave Bebbington, via the group web-page, or email davebebbington@outlook.com.

Gardening – Ann Knight

We are a small group of 13 that meets in members' homes once a month. I started the group in 2016 with my late husband, so this year is our 10th birthday. Tony is often spoken about as we walk around the garden, seeing how things are growing.

We discuss all things to do with gardening (and some that are not), including 'no dig' gardening, compost making and the importance of using it. In recent months we've included the right plants to cope with climate change, those that survived the heat of last summer and the wet of this winter.



Our February meeting was at the home of one member whose daughter was visiting from Canada and she showed us how to use dried flowers to dye silk. Pieces of dried flowers were tightly rolled into the silk squares, bound with string and then treated like a tea bag and dumped into a steaming solution. After 20 minutes it was lifted out, cooled, unrolled and shaken to dislodge all the bits and then kept open and shaken until completely dry.

February is the time to buy seed potatoes and get them chitting ready for planting later. It is also time to be thinking about what (if any) seeds we should be sowing, whether in a greenhouse, on a warm windowsill or in a conservatory. Tomatoes will be among the early seeds planted. If you don't have a greenhouse, start tomato seeds indoors, 6 to 8 weeks before your area's average last frost date, to get a head start, but don't start too early to avoid leggy plants, ensuring they have enough warmth (65-75°F) and 16 hours of bright light daily before transplanting after all danger of frost has passed. Unfortunately, we can't take any more members into this group, but, if you are keen, why not start your own gardening group?

One thing we don't cover is growing on and taking care of an allotment.



Petanque – Ann Stollery

Unfortunately, rain has stopped play a fair amount of the winter but the group has continued to meet for coffee on rainy days. We meet at the CCA on the 1st and 3rd Monday mornings from 10 – 12 and, with better weather around the corner, now is a good time to join us if you would like to bring back memories of happy holidays. [Contact Ann to join](#)

Italian Appreciation – John Hawkswell

I am pleased to report that the Italian Appreciation group is alive and well. The latest news is that we have just launched a WhatsApp group. We are calling ourselves “Caffe & Chiacchierata”, or “Coffee and Chat”. As the name suggests meetings are conducted in a fairly relaxed atmosphere. Even the photo (see below) that has been adopted for the group’s profile is a bit decadent.

The Caffe & Vino in Tewkesbury, where the group meets, does a wonderful homemade chocolate cake and this example survived just long enough for the photo to be taken.



Every year just before Christmas, the group’s playwright writes a play for the members to read at an extended meeting in Caffe & Vino. While it is extremely doubtful that any of these performances will make the Westend stage it provides participants with some innocent fun. The plots seem to get weirder each year. Take the latest example:

A publican dies without leaving a will and his family must go to fantastic lengths to discover where the money has been hidden. These measures include a séance and a trip to the underworld. When the day of the performance arrived, the actors came equipped with horns, trident and masks, trappings from Halloween on temporary loan from their grandchildren. As the play gets underway players really entered into the spirit (no pun intended) of the drama. We had a devil who spoke Italian with a strong Scouse accent. A passing waitress took an impromptu supporting role brandishing a plastic trident in a mock attack. Charon the ferryman was accompanied by a parrot (hand puppet) with a serious attitude problem. I dread to think what the other patrons of Caffe e Vino made of this spectacle but we did get a few funny looks. The play gave us an appetite so everyone stayed on for lunch. This brings us neatly onto food so I now end with this Italian recipe which is really easy to make.



Penne with ham and peas

15 oz penne pasta
2/3 cup prosciutto - ham (cubed)
2/3 cup piselli - green peas (fresh or frozen)
3/4 cup crème fraiche
3 TBS butter
1/4 tsp nutmeg
Salt (to taste)

Preparation

- Cube ham into small 1/4-inch pieces
- Add penne pasta to boiling water for time stated on the packet
- Saute the prosciutto
- Add peas and cream to the prosciutto
- Drain pasta,
- Stir pasta into ham, sauce, and peas;
- Add water reserved from pasta to get the consistency of the sauce to that desired.
- Sprinkle with a dash of nutmeg
- Serve warm with grated parmesan cheese

Family History – Di Medland

The u3a Family History group meets monthly at Churchdown Library. Over the past year, the library has decreased its computers from five to three, which has limited our research opportunities. As a result, membership is now restricted to eight people, ensuring everyone gets a chance to research and share their findings.

When we meet, our access to computers allows us to utilize various subscription-based genealogy resources such as Ancestry, Find My Past, and The British Newspaper Archive. Additionally, we share information about websites that can be accessed from home, many of which are available at no cost.

We talk about our findings and any 'brickwalls' that we are having difficulty knocking down. We can also help each other with the research and share tips on how to record our findings.

We do get some interesting stories but some days we find nothing!

We shall continue to meet each month and enjoy hearing about each other discoveries, hoping to fill in the gaps in our Family History and learn about the Social History at the time of our Ancestors. Meanwhile we are looking forward to the next series of Who Do You Think You Are!

CRIBBAGE – Diana Sinden

The cribbage group was formed in January 2020 but we had only three afternoons together before Covid struck and put an end to our fortnightly sessions. We restarted in September 2020 with very few members as some people were still reluctant to meet up after all the restrictions, but gradually the numbers expanded and now we have a regular group of ten keen players.

Cribbage is an adaptable game and can be played by two, three or four people together. A number of our members played many years ago, often having been taught the game by their parents or grand-parents, but may not have played for some time before starting again with the u3a group.

We meet from 2 - 4pm on the first and fourth Tuesday afternoons throughout the year at the Methodist Church in Chapel Hay Lane.

We feel it is important to enjoy the socialising as well as the card-playing; several of our members live on their own and look forward to having a chat over tea/coffee and biscuits halfway through the afternoon.

We currently have space for two more players if anyone is interested in re-igniting their card-playing skills! For further information, please contact Diana Sinden through the Churchdown u3a website [here](#)

Spanish – Maggie Thomas

One of our members gave this talk in Spanish to the group: *Dave and I went to Lanzarote for a holiday. The weather was cloudy and windy but much better than back home. Lanzarote is one of 8 Canary Islands. The others are: Tenerife, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, La Palma, La Gomera, El Hierro and La Graciosa. Lanzarote is an amazing island with volcanic scenery and delightful small white villages. Cesar Manrique was an artist, painter and sculptor who had a tremendous influence on the development of the island. He campaigned to restrict the construction of high-rise developments, which kept the spaces open to view the beautiful coast and sea. To this day the tallest building is the Grand Hotel in Arrecife and its stands out like a sore thumb. Cesar Manrique created various houses using the landscape within each building. It is incredible to see them.*

Sadly, he was killed near one of the roundabouts and a "wind toy" that he built was installed on the roundabout in his memory.



Monthly Meetings are held at Churchdown Community Centre,
Parton Road on the 3rd Wednesday of each month starting at 2pm

+ Refreshments are served + All welcome

Please note the change of dates in March and April (2026 only) *

SPEAKER PROGRAMME

*Tuesday, 17th March	Cathryn Wilcock	The Winchcombe Meteorite
*Tuesday, 21st April	Pam and Frank Bryant	Searching for Big cats and Bears
Wednesday, 20th May	Timothy Brain	The Gloucestershire floods of 2007
Wednesday, 17th June	Nicky Copper Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust Falls Assessment & Education Service	Falls Prevention
Other changes for your diaries: November's meeting – Tuesday, 17th December's meeting – Wednesday, 9th		



Current Group List

Please contact the Group Convenor if you wish to join a group, or for more information
follow this link to the web-site: [Churchdown u3a Website](#)

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: Mike Peak: 01452 492159 mikepeak39@gmail.com

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
Chat & Screen	Michael Potter	07392595970
Cookery	Eve Anstis	01242 235833
Crafts	Wendy Martin	01452 714049
Creative Writing	John Hawkswell	01452 730528
Cribbage	Diana Sinden	01452 698713
Current Affairs	Robbie Philip	01452 715033
Family History	Di Medland	Contact via web page
Gardening	Ann Knight	Contact via web-page
Garden Visits	Jane Moore	Contact via web-page
Industrial Heritage	Paul Methven	07377 706992
Italian Appreciation	John Hawkswell	01452 730528
Ladybirds	Sue Grierson	07783 061063
Lunch Club	Tom Arnot	01452 498934
Meditation	Sue Grierson	07783 061063
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	Jacqui Ellis	07969 765893
Wine Appreciation	Louise Keeling	01452 712753
Yoga	Sue Grierson	07783 061063

PLEASE RETAIN FOR FUTURE REFERENCE