



WELCOME to Flaming June! Included this time is news from Garden Visits, Table Tennis, Chat and Screen, Book Clubs 1 and 2 and Cookery. Thank you to everyone who's contributed. We've had some interesting talks at our monthly meetings and the June 17th meeting is definitely one not to miss. The talk is all about Falls Prevention from a team at the NHS, one for all of us to attend, if possible. It's all too easy to have a fall and we don't bounce these days! On the left you might recognise the iconic West Bay Cliffs in Dorset with memories of the TV series Broadchurch.

From the Chair - Gary Murden

Dear Members

Our AGM on the 17th June is more than just a formal meeting; it is a celebration of what we have achieved together over the past year and a chance to look forward. During the AGM, we will review our financial health, hear a brief report on the years activities, and most importantly, elect the committee members who will guide us through the next twelve months. Please get your nomination forms in and send to Jane, our secretary. Following the AGM we will be having a talk on "Falls Prevention" presented by Nicky Copper of Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust.

We encourage every member to attend. Your participation ensures that our organisation remains responsive to the interests and needs of all its members.

Behind every successful event, group, is a dedicated team. Teamwork is what makes the u3a work, when we collaborate, we share the workload and multiply the diversity of our groups and events.

A good team draws on the various strengths and experiences of its members, allowing each person to contribute in a way that suits them best.

Whether it's the group leaders and their supporters or the committee guiding the branch, the spirit of our motto, "learn, laugh, live" is always at the centre of what we do. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who rolls up their sleeves and works behind the scenes.

Finally, if you have any ideas for a talk you would like to hear or suggestions for improving the working of the Churchdown u3a, do not hesitate to contact me or any other member of the committee.

Best wishes, Gary Murden

Membership – Kate Methven

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me over the last year, especially all the ladies (where are the men?) who help me with registration each month. Due to the introduction of bank charges, we will be making small adjustments to how the Treasurer and I process the renewals this year, so please read the Renewal Email carefully when it comes out towards the end of July. Finally, I would like to give a warm welcome to our new members: Kevin Dean, Lynn Pollard, Gill Rich and Pete Workman.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Garden Visits – Jane Moore

We meet up on the third Tuesday of the month at a garden usually chosen by me, but suggestions from members are always welcome. We try to make sure that we start with coffee and cake and include lunch – at the venue if possible or a local pub.

One memorable visit in 2025 was to a local NGS garden near Gretton, 'The Oaks'. This amazing garden, created by the owners gradually over twenty years, had individual 'rooms', each with different planting and atmospheres. Going in July of 2025 meant that many plants had gone over because of the weather conditions, but we will return in the spring to appreciate its full glory.

Another popular trip was to the Leaf Creative Garden Centre near Huntley. It is a lovely garden centre in its own right, but this trip was made extra special because the staff member who booked us in for lunch asked if we would like a talk from one of the designers – 'of course we would!'. John was very interesting about the role the Leaf Creative designers played in designing and growing for the Chelsea Flower Show. He was also passionate about finding local artisans and suppliers for the shop.

We have approximately 25 members, 10-12 regulars, and all u3a members are welcome to come on a visit.



Chat and Screen – Michael Potter

My small group meets on the last Saturday of each month at 1100 in the skittle alley at the community centre.

We are called Chat and Screen and follow no set agenda although sometimes I throw in a suggested subject upon which members voice their views and occasionally bring a laptop to illustrate these views.

In the past we have each given a brief talk on our personal backgrounds, place of birth, school attended, work and hobbies etc, Conversations then follow highlighting on many occasions coincidences and shared experiences.

Contributions then follow to the enjoyment of all.

We meet for a maximum of 90 minutes but the occasion has always been enjoyed by all.

Book Club – Joyce Winwood

Book Club continues to flourish; in fact, we've grown (see Book Club 2) and while we have continued to read one book per month to discuss (for a list of these please see our webpage) this year a few members have



shared their history and steered us through their relationship with reading and books. All have been wonderful and Jenny has agreed to share her story as an example. See

below. We hope it inspires you to pick up a book and read for pleasure.

Book Club 2 – Joyce Winwood

It always seems a shame to say “Sorry we are full”. In fact, we weren’t very good at saying those words to the point that we had to agree Book Club was too full!

So, we took a leap of faith and launched Book Club 2 in April.

I am happy to report that while it started with only three members it is already growing and the first book discussion was a huge success in May. It is early days but we are very confident Book Club 2 will flourish and grow into a fully independent Book Club.

Good Luck to them.



My Story and Journey of Reading - Jenny Watts

I was fascinated by the different personal stories of our “Journeys of Reading”. Influenced by our journeys, it struck me how different, special and unique they’ve been.

Dad’s family came from Alnwick, Northumberland and Mum’s maternal family originally from Stirling. Dad was a Methodist Minister, at a small Church in Lourenco Marques, Portuguese East Africa in the 40’s and 50’s. Every six months he would be accompanied by six or eight native bearers and walked into the hinterland to preach the gospel to rural people. Several had never seen a white man before. This regular journey took 6 weeks and many wild animals were encountered. Dad learned much from the locals who always walked silently in single file and froze when elephants, lions, hyenas or the occasional python slithered by. We grew up with a passion for magnificent wildlife. The country was under Salazar’s Portuguese military dictatorship. When my arrival was imminent, three years of possible Portuguese military conscription in the Portuguese army prompted their train travel to Johannesburg where I was born. I returned to Lourenco Marques at three weeks of age.

We had easy access to books as Dad always had books from floor to ceiling in his office. When young, I loved Nursery Rhymes, tales from Beatrix Potter and Brer Rabbit and I drove my mother mad with questions, and more questions. The local doctor advised her to send me to school early as Mum was clearly exhausted. My first report home was ‘Jennifer is a pleasure to teach’ and Mum nearly fell over.

I read Enid Blyton’s Famous Five, The Secret Seven, The Faraway Tree, Enchanted Wood, Magic Tree, and of course much loved Noddy,

The Wind in the Willows I remember well, but really didn’t like arrogant, conceited Mr Toad and his passion for cars and obsession with the yellow caravan.

Because of limited educational choices, I went to Epworth, a private Methodist Church Boarding School in South Africa in 1959. During sabbatical my parents visited family in England and Scotland. I was in my element. I had permanent library access right on my doorstep! Keene’s Nancy Drew mysteries were read next, then there was a bit of romance thrown in with the Georgette Heyer’s series. A friend and I competed to see who could read

the most books each term! We raced skimpily through homework to read more! I very fortunately had excellent teachers, several out from England at the time and at fourteen, fell in love with Shakespeare, Austen, Hardy, Dickens and poetry! At sixteen I wrote my school finals for university entrance – and failed!

No-one was more shocked than me. I had read copiously but had never learned to study! At home no-one said a word for a week or two, or so it seemed. It was endless agony. Dad at last asked what I wanted to do and I said that I'd do it again. It was a lesson in humility and at last, I learned to really study. Books became different now!

I studied English Literature and qualified as a secondary school teacher in English. My life was consumed by books.

Some books our then book club read, were memorable - 'The Thorn Birds' an Australian family saga by Colleen McCullough, John Irving's 'The world According to Garp' , 'Watership Down' by Richard Adams and 'All the President's Men' by Bernstein & Woodward. 'Showgun' written by James Clavel was an historical novel of Japan – and the 'Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood was made into a television series. There was also 'The Bridges of Madison Country' Robert Waller – 'The Joy Luck Club', Amy Tan – 'The Kite Runner', Khalid Hosseini – 'The Secret Life of Bees', Sue Monk Kidd – Jilly Cooper books and the Brother Cadfael series – a very varied diet and I enjoyed them all.

With more than a passing interest, I then graduated in remedial teaching and worked in that capacity thereafter. The years teaching at an Irish city school was my most challenging and also most rewarding! It was now reading, and reading of a different order! I was now working at enabling children to understand the tools they needed in order to read. Seeing a dyslexic child accomplish reading was SO emotionally rewarding! Everyone is successful

at doing something – and I had to accept it was not always going to be in reading! Newly at the Irish school I was given a tiny office with no outside window and a glass window in the only door.

The first fellow who came to my door was a big strapping lad of 13. He stood menacingly in the doorway with his hand on his hip, 'Me Dad's in the IRA', he threatened. It didn't take more than a second to glance around the very small room to find that there was no escape! However, I soon realized why he was so menacing – he couldn't read! He came with about an inch thick file from England on all the work that had been done to enable this lad to read! I tried and tried with every single test and remediation that I knew. Going by my theory that everyone is good at something – I discovered one day that he could count and oh my, could he count! Rows of numbers in many columns. He was going to be ok – and so he was! Ten years later he was passing by my larger office, and bellowed, "Miss Watt I've come to collect me nephew. If he gives you trouble tell me and I'll sort him out!" We were great 'friends' and of course I never did call him about his nephew or anyone else!

Age had crept up on me and although it was now my turn to be exhausted by children, I wept buckets when I retired. Reading in some form or other has been my life's journey. I'm delighted to be back reading books in book club again!

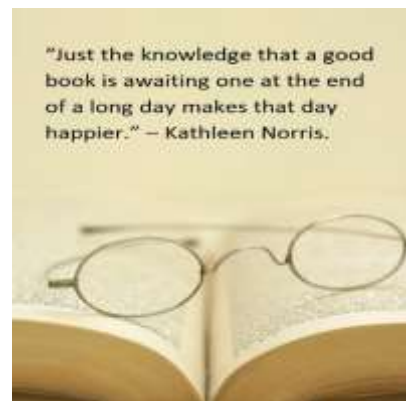


Table Tennis - Syd Leuillette

We meet twice a week for two hours on Wednesdays 13:30 – 15:30 and Fridays 11:30 – 13:30 in the Sports Hall at the GL3 Community Hub on Cheltenham Road East (opposite Tesco). There are currently 22 members of whom 7 play regularly on both days and the remainder once a week.

The current age range of members is from 60 to 80+ although younger players (who must be members of u3a) are very welcome to join in this enjoyable and social activity whilst exercising at the same time! We play for fun and competitively as well. The games are usually, but not always, played as doubles and the best players usually play alongside the weaker ones. Individual coaching can also be given to those wishing to further improve their game.

In January this year all our members contributed to the purchase of a Pong-Bot Nova machine + nearly 150 orange balls. Once loaded with the balls the machine can be programmed to fire the balls individually down the table tennis table to a player who can then practise a range of different strokes: forehand / backhand topspin, backspin etc., etc. We are still learning how to make the best use of it.

In between matches (the best of three games) we have a short break to re-mix the players so that they get to know each other better. This encourages the social aspect of the group and the overall standard of play is steadily improving.



If you are interested in trying us out and have some questions before you do, then please ring or text me (Syd Leuillette) on 07862 744630. Or, better still, why not come along to one of our sessions and try it out for yourself? You'll need to wear a pair of trainers in the Sports Hall. We can lend you a bat if you don't have your own and there is no charge for this trial session. We look

forward to seeing you and hearing – as we all did when we joined the group – that the last time you played table tennis was 20, 30 or 40 years ago!

Finally, how can table tennis improve your health? A renowned physician, psychiatrist and brain imaging expert, Dr Daniel Amen is quoted as saying that "Table Tennis is The World's Best Brain Sport!" It has the following advantages in that it:

- ❖ Increases concentration and alertness
- ❖ Stimulates brain function
- ❖ Develops tactical thinking skills
- ❖ Develops hand / eye coordination
- ❖ Provides aerobic exercise
- ❖ Provides social and recreational interaction



Cookery – Ally Ferkin

Hello everyone – since we last updated you all we have been celebrating Easter recipes from around the world, and ‘pukka’ Jaime Oliver recipes in May. Unsurprisingly the Easter recipes involved eggs! We had devilled eggs, purple eggs (beetroot) and chocolate eggs in nests.

Throughout history, people have given each other eggs at spring festivals to celebrate the new season. Eggs represent new life and rebirth, and it’s thought that this ancient custom became a part of Easter celebrations.

In the medieval period, eating eggs was forbidden during Lent (the 40 days before Easter) so on Easter Sunday, tucking into an egg was a real treat. We certainly had our own Easter feast!

On the right is Polish Easter Bread/Cake (Babka) which can be found on the ‘Good Food’ website



Our foray into Jaime Oliver recipes was great fun – such a range of recipes to choose from! We started with chicken fajita’s, followed by chicken cacciatore, spinach & ricotta pie and many delicious salads and side dishes. This was followed by 3 delicious desserts!!! We all enjoyed trying Jaime’s recipes again, they are so straightforward. Each time we cook a new recipe we learn something new and gather tips and techniques. Here’s one from Jaime Oliver – *when using greaseproof paper squares to line a cupcake tin, wet the paper squares first then you can easily scrunch into the mould!*

Finally, we all agreed that good food and social interaction are essential ingredients for good health and longevity!

Current Affairs – Robbie Philip

We are a small group of 10 people who meet in a member’s house once a month on the last Friday to discuss anything and everything, but the main theme is always politics. We politically wear a rainbow of colours so it is very interesting to hear the views of other people in the Group and things that you may not have thought of or even crossed your mind.

As always there are many topics to discuss, some old ones from previous meetings but always new ones as well. Mr Trump seems to crop up regularly, but it is never the same as he seems to change tack from day to day.

This month we discussed the first Minister of Scotland having stated that the embezzlement of £440,000 by the husband of Nicola Sturgeon has run its course and is no longer being debated. But what about the rank-and-file members whose money it was? What about the forthcoming by-election at Makerfield. Will there be lots of tactical voting to stop Andy Burnham getting into parliament and possibly becoming PM!? Do we need proportional representation now that there is a wider plurality of political parties? Is the State pension affordable? The Green Party advocate that the highest paid executive or CEO should not earn more than 10 times that of the lowest paid worker!

The above are only a few of the subjects we cover. What do you think? How would you solve these particular problems and what are your thoughts?

The great thing about our Group is that although we have widely differing views we always leave as friends at the end of our meetings.

CHURCHDOWN u3a SPEAKER PROGRAMME

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

At Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road, GL3 2JH

Date of Meeting	Subject	Speaker
17 th June <i>Includes the AGM</i>	Falls Prevention	Nicky Copper Glos NHS Foundation Trust, Falls Assessment and Education Service
15 th July	Rembrandt: The Artist's Life Discovered Through His Self Portraits	Chris O'Grady
August	No Meeting	
16th September	History of the Magic Lantern	Patrick Furley

And Finally:

- *I am still hoping someone would like to take over editing the newsletter eventually, so please contact me if you're interested....*
- *If you're able to set up the chairs and tables for the monthly meetings, please let me know. At the moment you are likely to be asked on a quarterly basis but, of course, if more people come forward this would reduce to once or twice a year.*
- *We are always on the lookout for helpers to serve refreshments and man the registration table. Both these jobs are much less physically demanding so are great opportunities for everyone to help.*



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

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