

Dates for your Diary

- ◆ 17th March - Monthly Zoom Meeting
"Wildlife on your doorstep"
- ◆ 24th March - Zoom presentation and
Coffee Morning
- ◆ 31st March - How to Make Hot X Buns
- ◆ 21st April - EGM & Monthly Zoom
Meeting
- ◆ 2nd June - National u3a Day
- ◆ 2nd July - Group Leader's Lunch
- ◆ 24th October - "Top Hat" at The Mill,
Sonning (see page 3)
- ◆ 14th November - 2 Night stay in Thursford
for Christmas Show (see page 2)
- ◆ 3rd December - Christmas Lunch

Alert for All—u3a Zoom Licences use by Groups and Group Members

If you are a u3a member whose Group uses the u3a Zoom licences then please do not sign into the meeting outside your normal Group meeting times. Signing in to meetings (either using the link or the meeting id and password) at random times to check the link works or test some function can, in some instances, block use of that licence by a group wishing to start their meeting. Zoom meetings are scheduled so that there will be no conflict if you sign into your meeting within the 15 minutes prior to the official start time. Please also remember that all participants need to explicitly select 'Leave' (the meeting) at the end of your session, otherwise there is the risk the meeting will continue and impact on other groups' meetings.

Alan Jones, Secretary and Beacon Admin

Visits are Back!

We are revisiting Thursford in Norfolk for their Xmas Show.

Sunday 14th November 2021

Further details are given on page 2 and on our u3a web site

If you are interested then please Email Carole at visits@fleetu3a.org.uk

Places are limited therefore an early decision will be needed if you wish to go.

Chat From the Chair

It feels a bit like Groundhog Day currently, not much has changed since last I wrote except both Martyn and I have had our vaccinations and both of us have had 'Lockdown Birthdays'. The vaccination process went very well, as seems to be the case for most people, and we had no serious ill effects I am pleased to report. I hope all is going as smoothly for you as the NHS jabs away at we oldies. Our birthdays, one week apart, were enjoyable in simpler ways; doorstep card and gift deliveries, take-away suppers and Zoom celebrations. The pandemic is making us all think creatively and some of these new ideas will be here to stay.

The committee are already thinking how we might manage group and monthly meetings post lockdown. (Who knew that we would all become expert in managing Zoom calls when most of us hadn't heard of a webinar this time last year!) We also have a plan for relaunching our U3A to rekindle interest in our current members and to encourage new joiners. We are keen to set up new groups with co-learning as the focus where no one person needs to be an expert but the group learns together. We have a member keen to join a photography group if there's a volunteer out there to help set it up? We are planning a Zoom meeting where anyone interested in finding out how easy it is to set up and run a group can ask questions: please put March 24th in your diary.

At our last meeting the committee decided to go ahead with updating our constitution to give us the opportunity to hold virtual or part live and part virtual AGMs in the future, technology permitting. The Charity Commission gave U3As permission to hold virtual AGMs last year but to ensure we have the right to do it again we need to vote on the changes at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). Please put April 21st in your diary; we do need to be quorate as for an AGM. We will hold the EGM just before the monthly meeting talk. As it is a one-item agenda it should be quick! You will be receiving all the paperwork by email or post in the usual way and in good time. The speaker following the EGM is from the Blue Lamp Trust, a charity set up to help older and vulnerable people keep safe in their own homes. I have personal experience of how helpful they are and I know the talk will be of interest to us all.

Spring looks as if it might be arriving and there's optimism that lockdown will be easing shortly. Here's hoping we can meet up with friends and family soon.

Keep safe,

Paddy

Two Night stay Thursford, Norfolk

SUNDAY 14th November 2021

3* Best Western George Hotel Norwich.

Award winning restaurant, bar, bistro, coffee lounge.

Price includes: Hotel BB/dinner, portorage, show tickets, coach, drivers tip, & Cody parking, where cars can be left for the duration of our stay.

Alternative departure from Sainsbury's bus stop Fleet Road on request.



£310 pp no single supplement

This price **Does Not** include entrance fees to venues on days 2 and 3, these will be collected on the day.

Day 1 Depart Cody Sports & Social Club **SHARP** 9.30.
Evening performance Thursford Xmas show.
Late Lunch at hotel at 3.00p.m. this time to TBC

Day 2 Visit to a stately home TBC or Free time

Day 3 Surprise visit on homeward journey TBC.

Arrive back at Fleet approx. **7.30pm.**

Booking Cash or cheque payable to "Fleet U3A"
non-refundable deposit of £75p.p. (deposit x 2 = £150)

You will be asked to provide an **Undated** cheque for the balance of £235p.p.
(£235 X 2 = £470) plus your Tel. No. and ICE details.

You will be notified when **ALL** payments will be taken.

You must be responsible for your own ability to come on this trip.

TRAVEL INSURANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, details can be provided on request.

Please CONTACT Carole visits@fleetu3a.org.uk If you have any questions.

Visits—Top Hat at The Mill, Sonning

We were all so disappointed to have to cancel the booking to see Top Hat at the Mill in January. However following publication of the “Road Map” to the easing of lockdown, we have heard from the Mill that they are reopening as soon as permitted.

So we have managed to secure 50 seats in the centre block for the matinee performance on Sunday 24 October 2021. Not all seats in that area are still available as some have already been reserved by others. This means that not all those available to us are contiguous so it might not be possible for everyone in a group to sit together, although we will of course do our best to sit partners next to each other. The same applies to all performances.

Prices have gone up all round, and we expect the cost to be of the order of £80 pp for the coach, meal and show. Departure from Cody as usual or from Fleet Road (Sainsbury’s) if pre-booked. Other details and confirmation of price are to come.

Anyone interested should please let Chris Porter know by emailing crisp@ntlworld.com or calling 01252 683355 (leave a message if no reply) giving name, number of tickets needed, phone number and email address. It will be first come, first served as usual, and a waiting list will be kept in case of cancellations. Please do not send money yet. Arrangements to meet to take payment will be made just as soon as possible, and those who have made contact will be notified.

Details will also be on the Visits page of the website.

Chris Porter

News from our Events Secretary

To increase the range of activities we offer until things start getting back to normal we are piloting a monthly Zoom coffee morning for members. Each will begin with a short ten minute demonstration or talk introducing a subject/craft. If you feel you can share an interest on one of these coffee mornings we would love to hear from you, whether it be a love of music, history, science, languages or a craft.

You will not need to run the Zoom session yourself unless you want to, one of the Committee will do that for you. The first of these Zoom meetings on the **31st of March** will be “**How to make Hot Cross Buns**” demonstration and guidance by Jackie Cresswell and Carole Brown. The recipe will be sent by email in advance to participants. **See page 4 for Hot X Bun joining information.**

Please contact me, Carol Howlett, at events@fleetu3a.org.uk if you are interested in joining these Zoom sessions. **Carol Howlett**

Can you Help—Fleet Communicare

Fleet Communicare are planning to resume operating from 12th April 2021, providing local residents with transport to essential medical appointments to hospitals, doctors, dentists opticians etc. They are therefore looking for volunteer drivers who can spare a few hours a month to help them provide this service. If any of you are interested in helping, please contact Kate Harvey on 01252 626368 to discuss what is involved.

Message from Your Group Secretary - Why not Become a Group Leader (GL)

Are you interested in becoming a new Group Leader? If you can organise a party then perhaps you might like to become a G. L. No expertise required.

Want to find out more a Zoom meeting is planned for 11am on Wednesday 24 March to discuss the above and answer some of the questions that generally arise before becoming a Group Leader. Some of these are :

- **Why set up a new group?**
- **Why you don’t need to be a subject matter expert to be a Group Leader.**
- **How much time and effort is needed?**

Existing Group Leaders will be available to give you an overview of what’s involved and answer any questions you may have.

See what great fun and joy you can have being with people who have the same interest as you

Please contact Stephen Grosvenor, Group Leader’s Secretary at groups@fleetu3a.org.uk to find out more.

Stephen Grosvenor

Cycling 1 and 2—On Your Bike

As I write this piece the ability to get out for exercise is quite restricted but I hope to convince you that cycling is by far the easiest form of exercise available to u3a members.

No sport or exercise requires as little skill as cycling. Do you like sitting down? That's a start. Can you move your legs in a circle? Yes? You are two-thirds of the way there. All you now need is a bike and a helmet and you are a cyclist. You don't need to be clever at hitting a ball at a target or to be able to coordinate the desperate flapping of arms and legs needed for swimming. What could be easier than moving your legs in a gentle circle? It's as easy as falling off a log or a bike.

Unlike running and other sports, cycling is kind to your joints. It is the ultimate non-impact sport, unless you crash or fall off, so better not to do either of those. For pointless impact sport I have often wondered why marathon runners have to 'hit the wall' during a race. About forty years ago I hurt my knee coming down a hill in the Lake District and visited my GP in West Yorkshire. She gave me no medication but two pieces of advice. One was not to let a doctor do anything to my knee if it could be avoided, as I would know about it for the rest of my life. The other was to get a bike and tighten up the flabby muscles on either side of my knees. Margaret bought me a bike for my next birthday.

Nutrition is vitally important and for cyclists that means cakes. On my first cycle ride to Liverpool I had a wimp's morning in Shropshire when cycling up and down the hills of the Wyre Forest. I arrived at Iron-bridge, saw the Wreckin (a hill) looming ahead of me and almost decided to rest for the afternoon. In a coffee bar I had a Bakewell tart the size of a saucer with a thick layer of icing on top. I did another twenty five miles that afternoon to keep on schedule. A bucket-full of muesli would not have helped as much as that Bakewell tart.

During lockdown group cycling is not permitted, so Fleet u3a Cycling is suspended. Even when lockdown is eased, there are likely to be restrictions on groups for some time, so I will only be able to take out small groups. However, if you are sitting while reading this, why not just stand up for ten minutes to find your helmet and a bike, sit down again on the saddle and turn your legs in a circle to get your essential exercise.

Nick Keeley



PROPOSAL FOR A ZOOM SESSION on 31st March see page 3

How to make Hot Cross Buns

The recipe, and zoom link, will be sent by email in advance to registered participants. If you wish to cook along with us on the day then please email Carole Brown on ca.kb@virgin.net by 27th March.

Duration of event - throughout a day. No more than a 30 minute Zoom session will be needed on each occasion.

Day to proceed in this way

- Watch a demonstration of the first step and talk through what to do
- Participants carry out that step
- Next zoom sessions at a set time for following steps

We will be available to be contacted by phone whilst you are doing your own cookery part.

Jackie Cresswell & Carole Brown

Should anyone require any further information then please ring Jackie on 01252 616289

Strollers

Attention to all who fancy an **Easter Monday walk**. Let's do it....

Monday April 5th 2021

Morrisons car park in the usual place at 12 noon, a later start

We will walk around Elvetham Heath as usual followed by a possible "picnic." depending upon what Covid rules apply.

Bring a flask, snack etc. and we will regroup TBA!

We will keep distanced, maximum six strollers in a group.

More groups if necessary, with a staggered start say five minutes between each group.

Please contact me on outreach@fleetu3a.org.uk by Thursday April 1st to confirm your attendance.

I will email you on Sunday April 4th based on the weather forecast.

I hope to see you there.

Stay safe,

Jenny Teagle

Creative Writing—Group 1

Both groups continue to meet up fortnightly via Zoom to share the stories they've written. This one from a Creative Writing group 1 member proved a real hit!

Margaret Garrod

Why did I throw that away? by Derek Gutteridge

Jonathon sat up suddenly. The room was dark, and his clock glowed 2.00 am. He listened intently, wondering what noise had woken him for he lived alone in this two-bedroom bungalow, situated in a quiet street. He had inherited the property with all its furniture from his father who had written to Jonathon asking him to come home from Australia. Jonathon's mother had divorced dad years before and his older sister left home in disgust then refused to speak to her curmudgeonly father.

But Jonathon's father had mellowed with his illness, so they rubbed along fine until his death. The only changes had been Jonathon introducing his electronics, computer and mobile telephone, together with nick-knacks and photos from his Australian adventure displayed on the dresser in the living room. His sister refused to come to the funeral leaving Jonathon alone, apart from the usual curious people who seem to turn up at such events.

The noise came again, focusing his attention. He slipped out of bed, gave up trying to find one damn slipper in the dark, ignored his dressing gown and went into the hall naked. There was a faint light under the door of the living room interrupted by a shadow moving. Jonathon stepped forward catching his little toe on the hall table. His involuntary curse caused the shadow to stop then vanish.

He limped into the room that was bathed in light from the moon shining through the open French window. The room yawned empty at him. Jonathon looked around and could see gaps where his computer and mobile 'phone had been. He picked up a bent stick from the dresser then ran on to the patio. A dark shape was halfway across the garden.

"Hey, you, stop or else."

The figure stopped and turned. Jonathon moved quickly across the grass, holding the stick in his favourite left hand, ready to strike the burglar. He realised with trepidation that where Jonathon was 5 ft. 6 inches tall, slightly built, and naked, the intruder was a head taller, burly, and fully dressed, holding a bag. He stopped.

"You must be joking," said the burglar as he grabbed the stick and wrenched it out of Jonathon's hand. He flung it off to one side and clenched his fist at Jonathon.

"Bugger off," he said, "or else!"

The stick swung round the garden in an arc and landed behind the big man's left ear. He grunted, realised what had happened, and said, "Why did I throw that away?" before falling face down on the grass.

Jonathon pulled his mobile telephone out of the burglar's bag to ring "999". He picked up the stick that he had thrown many times without it coming back. Perhaps, it was really a right-handed Boomerang?

Monthly Meetings—Gilbert and David pull in the crowds

A very impressive audience of three hundred and twenty one gathered on Wednesday 17th February to join David Standing for an excellent and enthralling account of Gilbert White and the garden he established at The Wakes in Selborne.

White has an international reputation as a pioneer in the fields of horticulture and natural history. Living only 14 miles away, the natural history of Selborne is for many of us something we have experienced personally, rather than through the pages of the world famous book, never out of print since 1789.

David brought the world of the Curate of Selborne vividly to life, and it was soon clear to his attentive audience how his enthusiasm for Gilbert White, the gardener had kept him working in the garden for thirty-eight years.

With an impressive range of photographs and prints, David's humour, dedication and immense knowledge made him a very popular speaker. He has even offered to be our guide when COVID rules allow us to run an excursion to Selborne.

Next month's talk promises to be equally fascinating: professional photographer Tom Way's 'Wildlife on your doorstep'. NB for reasons of copyright, it will not be possible to offer a recorded version for those who cannot join us at 11:00 on Wednesday 17th March.

John Gawthorpe

Not in Front of the Children

Having two gorgeous grandsons aged three and just one on January 7th, takes me back to my early parenting days. There was sixteen months between our two. Diane, the first born was an easy baby, but Dave was a tad more challenging.

He was crawling at four months. I had laid him on a blanket on the sitting room floor, surrounded by toys, i.e. pan lids and wooden spoons. Doing some baking in the tiny kitchen, from the corner of my eye I saw a movement. There was Dave, going at a rate of knots across the floor. Pride in his achievement was tinged by the certain knowledge that I would never have a moment's peace again. True enough, he soon developed the knack of standing up in his cot and jumping it around the room. Great fun, but it wrecked havoc with the Lino, which rucked up, and the cot blocked our entry to the door. It took quite a bit of inventive thinking and communication skills to get him to jump it the other way, so we could gain access to fulfil our parental responsibilities.

One evening, he jumped the cot over to the window, and our neighbour from the road behind knocked on the door to say he was on the window sill, banging at the window. We had to mount an SAS style operation to stealthily burst into the bedroom, so as not to startle him, and gently lift him down.

He, in common with many a second child, wanted to run before he could walk, in order to keep up with his sibling. I was constantly grabbing a pair of wellies sticking in the air, as he fell down the steps outside the kitchen door and landed head first in the drain.

We lived in a row of terrace houses, with a passage separating us from the neighbours on one side. At the end of our street was a very busy road, so Mike erected a little gate, which had successfully kept Diane out of the passage and safe in the back garden.

Not so with Dave. He quickly learned to scale it, so I was constantly listening out for running footsteps, and dashing out to haul him back. The few toys for outside play were housed in a shed at the bottom of the small garden. Also housed in there were some very lethal gardening tools inherited from Mike's step father, dating from the late 1800s. So every morning was the ritual of getting the toys out to play with. I would get them, and the children were not allowed in there.

An unfortunate incident happened when Mike's mum was staying with us. She was in her 70s, a very nice lady, but very old fashioned and proper. She insisted on following them everywhere, so she would accompany us on the routine toy unveiling ceremony. I was a bit distracted by her chatting away, when suddenly two year old Diane came out with, "The little bugger's gone in the shed!!"

In the stunned silence that followed, I dragged Dave away from the pickaxe and scythe that even Poldark would have been proud of. Where on earth did she get it from?? Despite many years at sea and then as a submariner, Mike was not unfamiliar with profanities, and his stepfather's vocabulary was riddled with oaths. To his credit, I had never known him to swear. My parents didn't swear, so where had she got it from? Cricky, I suddenly realised it must be me! I never swore, but must admit to thinking, each time I heard the footfall in the passage, "the little bugger's got out again." Maybe, just maybe, I had uttered it without realising?

The only time I heard Mike swear was when the kids were in their teens. He was getting something out of the freezer in the garage, when the lid fell on his head. I have never heard anything like it - a ten minute tirade at the top of his voice, with such a wide range of vocabulary, a lot of which was unknown to me.

I reckoned he could not be too injured, as he was making too much noise. We extricated him, with me giving the children that "don't you dare laugh" look and the incident was never mentioned again.

The escapologist in my youngest developed new directions. When he was just two years and three months, we moved to Bletchley, to a semi with sloping dormer roofs from the back bedrooms. We did the removal on the cheap, using a couple of chaps with a removal van, moonlighting at the weekend. Not the best of ideas, as they got lost on the way.

So there we were, with two young children, no furniture and no clothes. I hadn't seen it before, as Mike had bought it whilst he was working down there and living in lodgings. We did not have a car, my dad had died at Christmas and mum had just come out of hospital after treatment for lung cancer. I was excitedly exploring, when I found the window in the back bedroom open, and Dave starting to scale down the roof. After gingerly rescuing him, Mike was dispatched to buy hammer and nails and fasten all the window catches down.

My next instalment will show you how I converted my Houdini wonder into a career that could lead to becoming a cat burglar, or thankfully as it turned out, into a mountaineer.

Sylvia Brown

Where have they all gone?

With the news that our high streets are losing so many shops, it got me thinking about all the stores I remember that are now history.

At one time I worked in Dorothy Perkins and can remember in my lunch hour going into an electrical retailer who had Adam Faith blaring out 'What do you want if you don't want money' to entice you buy the latest record or listen to them in booths before you bought them. Redifusion, Radio Rentals and recently Maplins. All gone.

Later on when I was first married (in another job) I would go back to this high street in my lunch hour and buy provisions sold in loose in boxes or sacks from Liptons, broken biscuits if they looked reasonably whole and had a good selection, were a treat. Sainsbury still patted the butter in our local store and issued loyalty metal tokens. These were to be taken over by stores as loyalty cards and Tesco green shield stamps were the forerunners of this system. Fine Fare were taken over by Gateway, which I believe then went into International stores, who I believe was finally Somerfield. Kwik Save, Safeway, Bejams, Macfisheries, Presto, have all passed into history. Dewhurst, were one of a few country wide butchers, closed because of pre-packed supermarket meat.

Our first house was paved with lovely beige tiles from the forecourt of shoe shop Lilley & Skinners, they sold more expensive shoes than Freeman Hardy & Willis, Bata, True Form, K Shoe shops. Do you remember Dolcis, Saxon Shoes, Barrett, Timpson (now known for key cutting and shoe repairs) Curtiss, Ravel? Clarks are still on the high street, but the products formally produced in Somerset are not the same quality, as foreign production has taken over. Our recent visit to Torquay with a stop at Clarkes Village shoe section, proved disappointing. Supermarkets and cheaper clothing shops have now added shoes to their product range I think today's children will suffer from foot problems due to the lack of good quality shoes and expert fitting. There are fewer independent shoe shops offering this service.

Etam, C&A, Top Shop, Adams children clothes, Mothercare, recently, House of Frazer, and Debenhams join the list. Men's stores: Hepworth, John Collier, Fosters and recently Burtons. Perhaps the 'gone for a burton' is very apt at the present time. DIY stores: Texas, Do-It-All, Focus, Fads, recently some Home base stores. MFI, Courts, Carpet Right, Land of leather, British Home stores, Woolworth. Littlewoods. More recently Blockbusters HMV, Virgin mega stores. What about Timothy Whites? Some independent chemists were taken over by Uni Chem where are they now? John Menzies newsagents, were they taken over by Martins?

Brentford Nylons were a great success. Bed Linen didn't needing any ironing, brushed finish and cosy in the winter. The down side was hot slippery sheets, that when you turned over in bed you had to cling on for dear life as we found out on a holiday in Yorkshire.

Fortunately, our independent jewellers are doing a 'sterling job' in keeping us supplied with good quality products, after Gerald Ratner's gaff describing his company's jewellery. This was their down fall from the High Street. Thinking of booking a holiday now? No Lunn Poly or recently Thomas Cook or Shearings. I am sure there are many shops I have missed. Amuse yourself trying to remember stores and stories attached to them.

Carole Matthews

The *NILE Virus, type C* - thanks, and ugh, to Chris Harris

Virologists have identified a new Nile virus - type C. It appears to target those who were born between 1940 & 1970.

Symptoms:

1. Causes you to send the same message twice.
2. Causes you to send a blank message.
3. Causes you to send a message to the wrong person.
4. Causes you to send it back to the person who sent it to you.
5. Causes you to forget to attach the attachment.
6. Causes you to hit SEND before you've finished.
7. Causes you to hit DELETE instead of SEND.
8. Causes you to SEND when you should DELETE.

It is called the *C-NILE* virus.

And if you can't admit to doing the above, you've obviously caught the mutated strain —The *D-NILE* virus.

