

Chair's Chatter



Welcome to our Newsletter for April. We in BFu3a are very successful with over 700 members and over 60 interest groups to choose from, covering a very wide range of interests. We thank you for your participation.

We have several new interest groups running for Yoga, Meditation, Family History and Spanish, plus all our existing groups. They are all detailed in the accompanying diaries. If you would like to start a new group, please let us know. The large number of varied groups enables you to get the most from your membership.

In addition to all these interests, did you know that u3a has its own Podcasts for you to listen to. There are some fascinating talks which are well worth listening to, at any time. Just search for u3a Podcasts and you will be directed to them.

I meet many people in my role, and it is clear that the u3a ethos is not fully realised in the community. So, if you know of anyone who is lonely, bored, or looking for friends – please put them in touch. As you know, our membership fees are low and the benefit is large. We are working with our local Social Prescribers who pass on our information to the community too.

Our Coffee Mornings at The Golden Farmer are very popular, as it's an opportunity to meet and chat. Several members stay on for a Seniors Lunch which is great value for money. The Coffee Morning is open to all BFu3a members, no booking required, just come along. It's hosted by John Edge who will be delighted to greet you and ensure you are not left alone. I love to pop along and say 'Hi', plus answer any questions you may have, or just have a chat.

Our next Open Meeting is at the Open Learning Centre on 11th April at 14:00, and will feature a talk on the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. I expect this will be very interesting. The meeting concludes with a catch up, with tea, coffee, and biscuits, of course.

Please visit our Facebook pages, we have a Public and a Private (members only) group. This will keep you up to date with what's going on in Group activities and pictures of our visits. We would appreciate a few likes on these pages as it improves our ratings.

There is also a Facebook page, *u3a: Keeping In Touch*, which carries lots of topical and interesting articles about the u3a nationwide.

Please also check out the BFu3a Website pages www.bracknellu3a.org.uk for valuable information, links, etc about things going on with our u3a, and local information.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from you at any time.

Bob Goddard, Chair BFu3a

chair@bracknellu3a.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE!

To all Bracknell u3a members

Please note that our Annual General Meeting

Will be on Thursday, 11th July at 14:00

At the Open Learning Centre.

Please make a note of the date and more information will be available in the next newsletter.

Speakers Corner

On our "Leap Day" Open Meeting (29th February) we were treated to a frank and illuminating account from our MP for Bracknell, James Sunderland - "My experiences as an MP". He described his abrupt career change from a senior military post at Sandhurst to being nominated, selected, and elected as MP for Bracknell.

James explained his respect for Bracknell as a place to live and work, his motivation to make life better for his Bracknell constituents and his enthusiasm for working closely with Bracknell Forest Borough Council and cutting across parliamentary boundaries. As expected, his talk was well attended and prompted numerous questions from the floor.

Our next Open Meeting will be on Thursday 11th April, when we will have a talk by the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. In 1999, the critical care service first took to the skies to treat patients in medical emergencies. Now, a quarter of a century and nearly 35,000 call-outs later, they are dedicating their 25th anniversary to their patients and families – each of whom are at the heart of their story as a charity.

Future talks:

30th May - *Lady Drone Pilots' Flying Experiences, Aerial Photography* - Janine Kilroe.

11th July - *The Golden Age of Children's Television* - Jeff Evans.

22nd August - *Mysteries and Conundrums* - Andy Smith.

26th September - *Gilbert and Sullivan* - Bernard Lockett.

31st October - *The Story of Bracknell: Before the New Town* - Andrew Radgwick, of The Bracknell Forest Society.

These meetings will be "Hybrid" starting at 14:00 (join earlier for a chat) either in person at the OLC or by Zoom from home using this link:

[BFu3a Zoom Meeting](#)

Alternatively use these codes when starting Zoom:

Meeting ID: 520 165 3065 Passcode: Open (case sensitive).

Coffee Mornings

Our BFu3a Coffee Mornings are held on the last Wednesday of the month at The Golden Farmer, 40 Reed's Hill, Bracknell RG12 7LS. The next one is on Wednesday 24th April, 10:00 till 12:00.

Hosting the meeting is John Edge, who will be pleased to welcome you and ensure you are not left alone.

The Golden Farmer do a Lunch Menu for those who wish to stay on. There is a Seniors Menu for £6.49 for 2 courses and £8.99 for 3 courses. They take cash as well as card, which is a benefit for some. Getting there by public transport is easy, as the 194 bus stops at Haversham Drive, which is very close.

These meetings embody all the u3a has to offer. New friendships happen all the time. Come along and enjoy a coffee and a chat – We look forward to meeting you.

Groups' Support Officer report

It's been a busy month, with the four new groups: Conversational Spanish Conversation, Yoga, Family History and Relax with Meditation, all holding their first meetings.

All of the new groups have been extremely popular. Please do get in touch if you would like to join one of them as there are still some spaces available (however, please don't attend the meeting without first contacting me or the group coordinator). Lorraine tells me the Relax with Meditation has spaces in Groups A, B and C which meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at Bullbrook Community Centre.

Thank you to our new group coordinators Wendy Andrews, Helen Best, Peter Freeman and Lorraine Walker, their contact details are in the diary or you can email me and I will pass your email on.

Our established Mahjong group would welcome new players. No experience is necessary as they will be running an 'Introduction to Mahjong' session on the 17th April. The group meets at the same time as the Canasta and Rummikub group, at Birch Hill Community Centre on the first and third Wednesday of the month between 14:00 and 16:00.

If you have an idea for a new group then please get in touch

If you would like further information about any of the groups, please contact me at groupsupport@bracknellu3a.org.uk and I will pass your details onto the group coordinator

Carol Clarke, Groups' Support Officer

IT Help

Following the article on IT help in the last newsletter, Bracknell Library is now offering free Drop-In Tech Support in collaboration with Ability Net. Help is available with the use of mobile phones, laptops, tablets, smart watches, fitness trackers and more. Sessions are held on the second Friday of each month from 12th April, 10:00 to 11:30. There is no need to book.

National Newsletters

The national office of the u3a Trust send out regular newsletters containing information on what is happening nationwide. The latest newsletter includes a wide range of new offers and services to members of the u3a Friends Newsletter community. If you would like to receive these newsletters, please go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter>

Group List

There is a [Group List](#) of all BFu3a groups on the website.

Architecture For Fun

The group have been out and about again, this time spending a day in the historic city of Winchester.

We started our visit next to the statue of Alfred The Great, which stands on the High Street. The High Street began as a route about 2,500 years ago and was the main thoroughfare for Roman, Saxon and Medieval Winchester. Passing the 19th century Guildhall we made our way through the town, past the 15th century Buttercross and under the Westgate, which marked the line of the western city defences. From here we visited the Great Hall, part of the castle that was founded by William of Normandy in 1067, and where an Arthurian Round Table hangs. Behind the Great Hall is a charming medieval-style garden, called Queen Eleanor's Garden.

In Jewry Street we admired the yellow-brick building that is now the library but which started life as the Corn Exchange in 1838, built at a cost of £4,000. It was used at various times as a dining hall, a roller-skating rink, a dance hall, a theatre and a cinema.

Further on we stopped at the Winchester City Mill, a restored water mill situated on the River Itchen in the city centre. The mill was recorded, milling corn, in the Domesday Book of 1086. However, there are earlier references going back to 932 in the cathedral records. The mill was last rebuilt in 1744 and a sketch made by the artist J.M.W Turner in 1795 shows that the building and millraces today are relatively unchanged.

Following a path alongside the river, we came to the impressive ruins of Wolvesey Castle. In the Middle Ages this was the main residence of the Bishops of Winchester, rich and powerful men who advised the king. The current bishops' residence was built as a replacement in 1684. Passing by Winchester College, founded in 1382 and believed to be the oldest continuously running school in England, we eventually made our way to the Cathedral Close with its many beautiful and significant buildings surrounding the cathedral itself.

One day is not enough to see everything that Winchester has to offer, but we very much enjoyed our trip and would recommend it as a great place to visit.

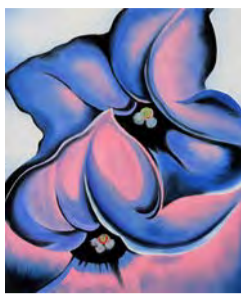
Wendy Andrews, Coordinator

Art Appreciation

Liz kicked off our March meeting with her presentation on Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986). Viewed as one of the most significant artists of the 20th century, she is renowned for her contribution to modern art. On leaving school she learned the techniques of traditional painting, but soon experimented with abstraction and developed a personal language to better express her feelings and ideas.

By the mid-1920s, O’Keeffe was recognized as one of America’s most important and successful artists, known for her paintings of skyscrapers, desert-inspired landscapes, and equally radical depictions of flowers, often in extreme close-up. She was the first female artist to exhibit at MOMA.

She became a regular visitor to New Mexico, where the stark landscape and Native American and Hispanic cultures of the region inspired a new direction in O’Keeffe’s art. Eventually, she suffered from macular degeneration and failing vision, but continued painting with the aid of assistants.



Next, Sue gave a talk on Marc Rothko (1903-1970), a Latvian-born American abstract painter. He is best known for his colour field paintings that depicted irregular and rectangular regions of colour.

In his later career, Rothko executed canvases for mural projects. The Seagram murals were to have decorated the Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building, but Rothko eventually grew disgusted with the idea that his paintings would be decorative objects for wealthy diners and refunded the lucrative commission, donating the paintings to museums including the Tate Modern. He died by suicide in 1970.



Finally, a group of members visited “Two Temple Place” - a dazzling neo-Gothic gem on Victoria Embankment, commissioned by, and built for, William Waldorf Astor in the 1890s.

Come and join us on the second Friday of each month at 10:00 in the Methodist Church on Shepherds Lane – we have plenty of space for new members.

Bruce Collins & Jen Vincent, Group members

Ballroom

We meet at Bullbrook Community Centre on Fridays, 13:15 to 15:00 and have spaces for couples and singles so you are very welcome to join us. The programme always includes all the ballroom dances as well as fun, light-hearted sequence dances that are called and easy to pick up.



Lynda Lunn, Coordinator

Barn Dancing

We meet once a month on a Saturday at 19:00 at the Birch Hill Scout Hall to enjoy barn dancing with gusto and hilarity. All the dances are called. Beginners, singles and couples are welcome.

Lynda Lunn, Coordinator

Book Group 1

There is no Planet B by Mike Berners-Lee, provided an unexpected Spring stimulus! The author sets out the cause and effect of global warming and then suggests what the world needs to do to return to normal. It’s written and constructed to allow easy understanding without being too simplistic but with a convincing level of common sense. The major changes which must be made over the whole earth and within the UK are laid out and we are urged to follow them. After reading the book one can only ask why the subject is currently given such a low level of significance and lack of urgency.

Future Book:

The Embroidered Book by Kate Heartfield April 9th

Brian Tonkinson, Coordinator

Book Group 2

Our book for March was Claire Keegan’s *Small Things Like These*, short-listed for the Booker Prize in 2022. Set in a small town in Ireland in 1983, it tells the story of one man’s courage and compassion when he discovers the atrocities being committed behind the walls of the local convent laundry. While the rest of the community remain silent and indifferent, he rescues one of the girls and takes her home with him for Christmas. It is a short, beautifully written book in which, according to the Booker judges, “every word is the right word in the right place”. Compelling and critical but never didactic, it was highly recommended by all of us.

Kathy Clarke, Book Group 2 member

Current Affairs 1

This lively group meets once a month to discuss the news, focusing mainly on UK and worldwide events, but we sometimes talk about local ones. We have recently discussed the problems facing the main political parties as they all try to increase their share of vote in the run up to the General

Election. The events in Ukraine and Gaza are a regular topic and we've also been talking about American gun laws and the cost of living and poverty. Members are encouraged to suggest topics. Unfortunately, the group is currently full, but there is now a second Current Affairs group that may have spaces for anyone interested.

Chris Nabavi, Coordinator

Current Affairs 2

Since we started the Group in September last year we've had seven meetings, all of them quite wide-ranging discussions on topics of the day. We've talked about Ukraine, Gaza, Trump/Biden, Sunak/Starmer, the Budget, Local Government finances, Education and others. Attendance has varied considerably but seems to be settling to around eight to ten. This is enough to ensure varied opinions, but not so many that some members don't get the chance to state their opinions. Although I suggest an agenda beforehand, it's by no means obligatory, and quite often not followed, but that doesn't seem to matter.

Derek Thornton, Coordinator

Digital Photography

We have now had the two scheduled March meetings and we seem well settled in at the Birch Hill Community Centre.

At the early meeting, we reviewed some of the portraits that had been taken at the portraiture and flash workshop held in February. There were some very good pictures on show.

The late March meeting was another workshop. It was unstructured which meant that we covered a wide range of topics, which included using WiFi, using a camera's self cleaning ability, and protecting the camera lens with a filter (amongst others).

The meeting scheduled for 9th April will be an outdoor session, with the group meeting on the terrace at South Hill Park.

John & Mavis Cook, Coordinators

Electronics and Robotics

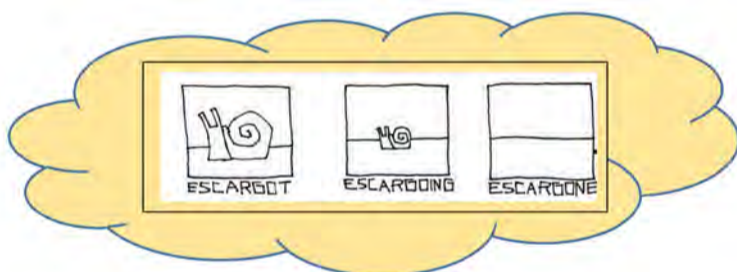
This is a small group of members who like tinkering with electronics and robotics. We meet once a month to discuss progress on individual projects and to learn from each other. This works well because the members all have very different backgrounds and skill levels. A problem shared is a problem solved! We have room for more members and you don't need to be an expert to join us; all you need is an interest in making things and basic DIY skills.

Chris Nabavi, Coordinator

French Conversation

Sharing anecdotes about boozy nights out with friends, outdoor rambles knee deep in mud, awkward bosses, and £4,000 ironing boards - sound friendly and fun? Such is the normal content of u3a French conversation meetings, twice monthly on a Tuesday 14:00 – 15:00, at the Open Learning Centre. As a newcomer I was made to feel welcome and not overly rusty, as group coordinator Lucy expertly juggles a mixed bag of attendees from expert French speakers to eager Duolingo learners and Google translators. I highly recommend it.

Liz Skelton, Group member



Garden Group 1

We now hold regular meetings at Bracknell Rugby Club to discuss our visits to various gardens during the year. We shall be visiting various NGS gardens etc. as well as the Physic Garden in Chelsea. Normally we use our own transport for local visits. For ones further afield we use public transport.

Angela Hill, Coordinator

Garden Group 2

We started the year off with a visit to Swyncombe Church to see the snowdrops. This is a pretty little church in a beautiful setting. Delicious cakes and tea were served, and inside the church were sales of snowdrops, chutneys, books, etc.

Earlier this month, some of us joined with another group organised by Dorothy to travel by train to Putney and then to Fulham Palace. Here we had a tour of the garden and part of the palace, with a sandwich lunch to sustain us in between. Some of us are planning to go back later in the year where there will be more to see in the garden.

This week we are visiting Ramster Garden in Chiddingfold.

In the next few months, we are planning to go to Borde Hill Garden, the Gardener's World Spring Fair being held at Beaulieu, and Chichester Flower Festival.



Shirley Thompson, Coordinator

Geocaching

Our meeting at the *Old Manor* on Tuesday 12th March was attended by nine people, thank you for coming along, I hope you found it useful.

For our next get together, we will be going outside and looking for Geocaches. This will be at 10:00 on Tuesday 9th April, meeting at the *Pyes Acre Car Park*, Sandhurst GU47 9AH, we will finish by midday. If you haven't already done so, please let me know if you are coming along.

As already advertised, future dates to meet up are:

14th May, 4th June, 9th July, 6th August, 10th September, and 15th October.

I'll circulate details of where we will meet near the time. I will hold one of them at the *Old Manor* so we can go through things in comfort – and in the dry.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, and you can look at the main Geocaching website <https://geocaching.com/play>

Steve Richards, Coordinator

geocaching@bracknellu3a.org.uk

History

Since November last, we have discussed some more explorers, including Raold Amundsen and John Cabot. Although we didn't look in depth at Robert Falcon Scott's activities, he formed part of our discussion in February, when we compared him with Amundsen and Shackleton. This was not just a discussion on their respective achievements, but we also talked about what kind of people they were and their leadership styles. I'm not sure we came to solid conclusions concerning these three, but while researching Scott, I came across the following:

In his 1956 address to the British Science Association, one of Shackleton's contemporaries, Sir Raymond Priestley, said "Scott for scientific method, Amundsen for speed and efficiency but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton".

February concluded with a brief introduction to Richard Evelyn Byrd Jnr. (no prizes for guessing his nationality!), a US Navy officer who led the first expedition to fly over the South Pole in November 1929. They were the first humans to go to 90 degrees South since Scott's team nearly eighteen years earlier.

The Group is now looking at international canals. We are starting in March with Panama, presented to us by Liz Bush, who's actually sailed along it! Ideas for a canal go back to 1534, but the first serious attempts (by the French) did not begin until 1881. So difficult was it to build, that it was not opened until the Americans, who took the project over in 1903, completed it in 1914.

Derek Thornton, Coordinator

Line Dancing

We meet at 10:30 on Wednesday mornings at the Open Learning Centre for beginners' Line Dancing sessions. New dancers are very welcome to join this friendly, sociable group where all the moves are called.

Lynda Lunn, Coordinator

Local History

Our meeting at the beginning of March was actually our February meeting delayed for a week due to the Open Meeting being scheduled for our usual date. At this meeting, David Hunt gave us a talk on Shalford Mill on the River Tillingbourne near Guildford, which has had a chequered history. The first reference to mills on the river at Shalford occurs in the Domesday book, with Pratts Mill being built in 1653. In 1715 it was valued at £200. Each waterwheel powers two sets of millstones, and one pair of millstones would be hired out to local farmers for milling corn and oats.

In 1794 the mill was sold to Robert Godwin-Austen, and it stayed in the family, until by 1914, it was no longer operating and became derelict. It was offered for sale, but there was no interest until it was sold in 1928 to a group of nine people known as 'Ferguson's Gang', who kept their identities secret but raised money to preserve special buildings and landscapes. The group wanted Shalford Mill to be preserved as a working mill, and gave it to the National Trust in 1932 with an endowment fund to preserve the building and machinery.

It is now a Grade II* listed watermill with well preserved machinery. The architect who worked on the repair of the mill, and conversion of part of the building as living accommodation, still lives there as a tenant.

Janet Russell, Coordinator

Lunch Club

We are back to our base of *The Weathervane* for Monday 25th March and Monday 22nd April, both at 12:15. For Monday 20th May (a week earlier due to the Bank Holiday), we will be trying *The Running Horse*. We will return to *The Weathervane* for 24th June and 22nd July. So please put all these dates in your diaries.

I look forward to seeing you all, for good food and company.

We usually meet on the 4th Monday of the month unless it is a Bank Holiday, then it is a week earlier.

All members are welcome to join us.

Joyce Brown, Coordinator

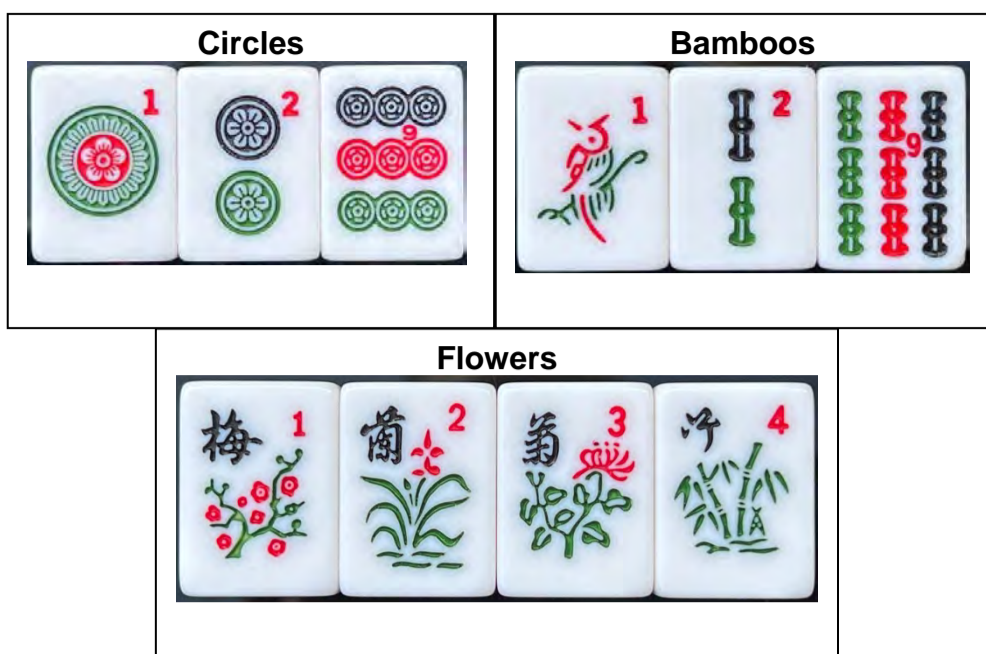
Mahjong

The group started in May 2023 and has gradually attracted new members. They share the hall with the Canasta/Rummikub group at Birch Hill Community Centre, meeting on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, between 14:00 – 16:00.

The game of Mahjong can trace its origins back to 202BC, however the game as we know it is believed to have developed in China in the 1870s. If you've ever played Mahjong on your phone or computer - forget what you've done - this is completely different!

The "proper" game, which is a combination of skill and good fortune, is played in a group of four people with special 'tiles' in sets of characters, bamboos, circles, winds, dragons, seasons and flowers. In its present form it's most closely linked to rummy.

Don't worry if it sounds a bit complex because we will be running an "Introduction to Mahjong" session on 17th April, for anyone who would like to find out more or try their hand at playing. Please email me at groupsupport@bracknellu3a.org.uk, if you would like to come along.



Carol Clark, Canasta, Rummikub and Mahjong Coordinator

Mixed Media

We meet each Wednesday at The Methodist Church Priestwood, between 10:30 and 13:30. New members are always made to feel welcome. There are places available, so whether you are an experienced artist, or a starter and would like to improve in a helpful and friendly environment, just come along for a taster session. This month we feature the work of Jon Morse who provides excellent examples of water colour paintings.



Ray Grant, Coordinator

MOTO1

A busy month for MOTO1:

- Several members enjoyed a quiz and curry night at Bracknell Rugby Club. It was a good evening, despite our lack of our rugby knowledge.
- We then joined MOTO3 (thank you for the invitation, Lynette) to visit Kelvedon Hatch, quite an eventful day for the coach driver, but an interesting visit.
- Later in the month, a group of 15 of us went to Winchester Cathedral to see the Crown and Coronation light show, that was originally shown on the walls of the Tower of London in November. It was a spectacular display, starting with the reign of William the Conqueror through to King Charles III, set to music that echoed around the cathedral. A very moving experience.



- 26 members went for a visit to Fulham Palace, which is set in the grounds of Bishops Park. This has been the home of 120 Bishops of London over 1300 years. The Palace has been altered over the years

to suit individual bishop's taste. There are 13 acres of botanical gardens around the palace, including a walled garden.



- We finished the month with 25 members enjoying a Sunday lunch at *The White Horse*.



Dorothy Kirkham, Coordinator

MOTO2

Things have been rather quiet for Moto2 just recently, although our frequent teas and lunches have continued. Our recent visits to the cinema were very enjoyable and we are hoping to repeat this sort of event when suitable programs occur. We also had an enjoyable shopping day in Windsor. We are now looking at visiting some of the gardens in the National Garden Scheme and perhaps some theatre trips to *The Theatre Royal, Windsor* and the *Wilde Theatre* at South Hill Park.

Brenda Murphy, Coordinator

MOTO3

We recently visited the Kelvedon Hatch Secret Bunker in Essex. Some other u3a members joined us for the trip. It was a very enlightening tour of an amazing site.



We also held a lunch, cinema and theatre trips, and a coffee morning. We are looking forward to our quiz night with a fish and chip supper in April and our seaside trip to Weymouth in May.

Lynette Robertson and Lorraine Walker, Coordinators

Music Appreciation Classical 2

This month a member asked if we could discuss Avro Pärt's – *Speigle im Speigle* (or *Mirror in Mirror*) as it's played a lot on Classic FM. We then watched a YouTube video of the piece.

We found this piece pleasant but repetitive. Our opinion was the title *Mirror in Mirror* suggests the repetitive theme. Arvo Pärt is an Estonian composer of contemporary classical music. Since the late 1970s, Pärt has worked in a minimalist style that employs tintinnabula, a compositional technique he invented. Pärt's music is in part inspired by Gregorian chant.

I was fortunate to attend a concert at the Anvil in Basingstoke recently to hear the Philharmonia Orchestra with Frank Dupree (piano) and Santtu-Matias Rouvali (conductor).

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No 1 in B flat minor Op 23 – Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 2 in B minor - Alexander Borodin

Capriccio espagnole Op 34 - Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

I had not heard of Frank Dupree but have since researched him to find he is a very acclaimed pianist, and he also plays jazz with his own trio. After the Tchaikovsky, he gave us an encore of a jazz piece in which he played

piano and the bongos! It also featured several members of the orchestra and the conductor. The Tchaikovsky was a brilliant performance. The concert was very good indeed.

I found a YouTube video of Frank Dupree playing Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, so we watched this, but another member suggested we also watch the same piece played by Martha Argerich. We all concluded that the latter performance was better. Maybe because it was a better recording but also Martha's experience came to the fore.

We commented that watching different performances of the same work was a very good learning experience.

The afternoon was appreciated by all, and I think, maybe, the tea and biscuits helped.

Bob Goddard, Coordinator

Needlecraft

The group meets on the 4th Monday of the month at 14:40 (ISH). Sadly, we are full, as there is not enough room for any more members, however another group has started, so do look in the diary.

We continue to meet for needlecraft (various types) and enjoy a social natter with tea and biscuits.

We have all dug out needlework that has been left in the 'pending' file, so it is good to finally finish projects. We also help one another if we have problems.

Our next meeting is on Monday 22nd April, at the usual time above.

Joyce Brown, Coordinator

Out & About

Sixteen of our group went to see the 'DIVA' collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum on 7th March. We went by bus to the Royal Albert Hall and then it was a short walk from there. The collection was lovely and you had individual headphones that played you music of the era and told you about the collection. A good day was had by all. Just a few photos from the collection.



Carol and Denise, Coordinators

Poetry group

The group has had the best of times and the worst of times.

Some of our members have been poorly and we send them our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The meetings of our reduced numbers have continued to be lovely, friendly occasions which we all look forward to.

Any new members will be very welcome at our next meeting on Tuesday, 2nd April, 10:30, please contact me for the venue details.

Bring along some poetry or just come for a chat and to listen.

John Giles, Coordinator

Science and Technology

In the past two months:

- We have looked at the importance of thunderstorms and how hundreds of weather balloons are sent up daily worldwide to predict their likelihood.
- We have heard about the origin of life on earth and about the experiments being made to duplicate the process. When we sense something, our brain suppresses opposing senses, be it colour, touch or whatever.
- We know that electricity can be generated from water which has been pumped uphill when there is spare power; we heard how bricks can be used in the same way by storing heat.
- We looked at some of the crazy developments on display at the US Consumer Electronics Show and that there are many AI applications using common data, possibly making the same mistakes.
- On astronomy we heard about a huge quasar which is being investigated.

Future meetings will continue to explore a variety of scientific topics. New members are welcome to join the group in the Methodist Church on Shepherds Lane at 10:00 on the second Thursday morning of each month.

Don Webster, Coordinator

Why shouldn't you pat a robot dog?
It might byte!

Scrabble

The Group continues to meet on a fortnightly basis and has vacancies. The next session is booked for April 17th (I am away on April 3rd). If you would like to give the group a try, have a chat and a cup of tea and a biscuit, and play a couple of games of scrabble you would be more than welcome.

Don't worry about your ability level, just contact me and I'll explain in more detail how the group works.

Hear from you soon. (wychwoodstephens@gmail.com)

Martin Stephens, Coordinator

Spanish Conversation

On 14th March the group met for the first time. Thirteen members attended the meeting at the Open Learning Centre where they chatted in Spanish, first of all introducing themselves to the rest of the group, then getting to know more about each other in smaller groups and talking about holidays and places they have visited. The time went by quickly. The group will meet every two weeks on Thursday afternoons – a basic level of Spanish is needed, but there is no need to be anywhere near fluent, so come and join us!

Wendy Andrews, Coordinator

Tenpin bowling

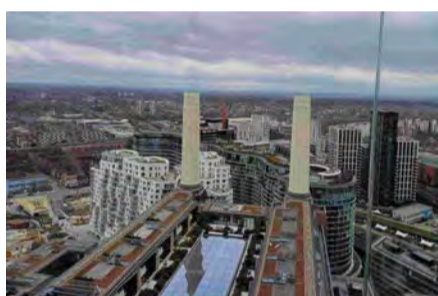
We bowl twice a month and continue to welcome new members; 18 people bowled at our last meeting. Sometimes the pinspotters misbehave and sometimes the staff misunderstand the groupings but we have fun regardless. Owing to the school holiday there is a bit of a break before we next play.

Derek Johnson, Coordinator

Times Out

On Wednesday 13th March, 23 of our members travelled by train to London to visit Battersea Power Station. 16 of us took the 'Lift 109', which travels up the north-west chimney and pops out at the top to give the most spectacular views of London.

The ex-power station is now home to a large shopping mall, cinema, plenty of eating places, flats and more. There are also nice walks around the building and down to the river.



In the afternoon we walked to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, which is just across the river, for a guided tour. We were shown round by a Chelsea Pensioner in full official uniform.

We started the tour in their museum, by watching a video on the history of the site. We were then shown round the museum. Next, we were guided around the grounds with an explanation of the different areas. The grass area between the hospital and The Embankment is hired for events such as a classic car show, the famous RHS Flower Show, an antique jewellery fair and more. We were then taken into the hall where all the pensioners congregate at meal times. There were several paintings on the walls depicting people of importance in the hospital's history, plus inscribed details of each campaign they have been involved in.

Finally we visited the chapel which had an amazing ceiling,

The guide was informative, interesting, and friendly, altogether a great tour.



Brenda and Tony Bolt, Coordinators

Transport Group

On 23rd March, a group of us travelled to Aerospace Bristol.

For over a century, Bristol has been at the forefront of aeronautical and space technology. Of all the achievements, Concorde has to be the most well known. It is a symbol of the UK's technological achievement. The museum houses a large display of planes / space equipment etc. and tells the history from trams to today.

We arrived there around 11:00, and after a coffee and a quick look at the museum, we met our guide who took us over to the Concorde hanger. He provided us with a great tour, telling us lots of information, stories, and answering the many questions from the group.

We then returned to the main hanger for lunch and a bit more time in the museum. This was followed by another guided tour, which took us to the conservation hanger, where again, our guide fed us with all sorts of information and stories. Here, we were able to see close up, the current restoration projects underway.

A thoroughly enjoyable day.



Our next trip is to Old Sarum Airfield Museum on 21st May.

Doreen and Steve, Coordinators

Walking Group

The weather continues to conspire against walking, the ground being waterlogged and extremely muddy. Despite this, our members have not been deterred and our five miles or so walks have been well attended. For example, after much overnight rain in February, 25 members enjoyed a walk in the peaceful Crown Property of Swinley Park. In a few places paths were flooded, but we all survived.

At both of the March walks, another 25 members attended each time. From Crowthorne we walked around Broadmoor Hospital and part of the Devil's Highway, and where we expected flooding, it was dry. However, a monster puddle prevented us from reaching our planned banana break spot and so we made a diversion and avoided the worst of the mud. On our second walk, around Binfield and Warfield, the outward leg was muddy but passable with care and the return leg was dry on good walking surfaces.

In April we plan to do our first long walk of the summer season, let's hope the ground dries out a bit before then.

Roger Jones, Coordinator

Wine Tasting

We have about 24 members in the group and more members are welcome to join, but attendance at each meeting is limited to 16 for practical reasons. We don't have a regular monthly meeting, but instead the dates are announced by email to the members about 10 days or so in advance. The meetings usually take place on a Saturday evening and we typically try eight or nine different wines, often chosen with a theme in mind. Cheese and crackers are also provided. You don't need to know anything about wine to take part - the idea is simply to try a selection of different wines in a social setting. The organiser usually says a few words about each wine, but that is limited to just a couple of minutes. Participants are encouraged to share transport and contact details of participants are shared (if permission is given) to enable this to happen.

Chris Nabavi, Coordinator

Writing for Fun

Who would think that simple suggestions can bring forth such a range of writing!

At each meeting, we share our writing with the other members. (There is, of course, no onus to share. We can decide not to do so! But part of the fun is getting feedback and enjoying our writing.) So how do we know what to write? We each choose what to write, though there is a suggestion to spark some ideas – whether to follow the suggestion is our individual choice.

We've had some excellent stories and non-fiction on such things as 'A woman buys a hammer and a hatchet' (this created interesting diverse writing and a lot of laughs); 'You're trying something new' (New Year's resolutions: hugging a tree, learning to body board, learning to horse ride, riding a zip wire), 'Someone who settles disputes for a living'.

If you'd like to join this vibrant group, please contact the coordinator.

Jane Hempson-Jones, Coordinator

What type of blood does a proofreader have?
Type O

Editor's Note

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