

EDITORS UPDATE



Welcome to the August edition

I am sure many of you are watching our Olympians and their amazing achievements in what has been a most difficult time. Our new Chair Jane Barker updates us on what being a member of the u3a has meant for her and her hopes for the continuing success of Chalfonts u3a. We have our own hero in Chalfonts u3a member namely Zena Hersey who has been volunteering at the Red Cross Charity shop in Chalfont St Peter for the past 20 years. More about Zena in this newsletter. And finally some excellent Musings from members, thanks as always.

August monthly meeting – a talk about the RNLI

I also include information about our next monthly meeting speaker at 2pm on Wednesday 11 August via Zoom. David Richmond-Coggan is Chairman of the Christchurch and Bournemouth RNLI Branch. A volunteer presenter, fundraiser, and education volunteer for the RNLI. David will give an up to date talk about the RNLI, the charity that saves lives at sea, and the wide variety of the work it does without government funding. The flyer for this is attached and the zoom login details will be emailed out twenty-four hours before.

Introduction to Jane Barker - our elected new Chair

Jane has been a member of Chalfonts u3a since its inauguration in 2015. She is an active member of book group 1, the short and longer walking groups, wine appreciation group 1, table tennis, family history, London walks, new experiences and the excursion group. She convenes the garden visits group along with Jacqui Greenham, and between 2019 and 2021 served on the Committee as our Secretary. As she has been learning bridge during the lockdown, Jane has just joined the bridge group to practice and learn more.

Jane says:

“I really love Chalfonts u3a. It offers so many opportunities to try out different interests and to take part in a variety of activities. I have to stop myself from joining too many groups or I wouldn't have time for anything else! It has also been a great way to meet new people and make local friends after years of travelling out of the area to work. My u3a network has been a great source of friendship and support through the difficult lockdown months.

As Chair I feel a big responsibility for ensuring the continued success of our u3a. One of my top priorities is to ensure that we continue to re-open all our wonderful groups so they can meet up in person once again. To do this safely we will follow the relevant government and professional

body guidance and advice. I am aware that some members may be hesitant in returning to in person meetings and with the current uncertainty we will keep all options under review. We may find we have a mixture of in person, online and “hybrid” meetings for a while to come.

Another priority is to grow the number of active volunteers and participants we have. Our u3a would have nothing to offer its members without its fantastic volunteers who contribute their time and skills to their groups and in many other ways. Any contribution, however small, can be really valuable, so please consider playing an active role in your group, or at our monthly meetings, or in other ways. I know it can take time to build up a successful new interest group and the Committee members are there to offer support, advice, and encouragement through this process.

I hope Chalfonts u3a will always welcome new members and new ideas which will help keep our u3a vibrant and successful as it continues to develop and recover from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. If you have any ideas or views you would like to share to improve our u3a please drop me an email at chair@chalfontsu3a.org.uk”

We wish Jane every success as Chair.

Meeting up again – Important information for all our members

As our groups start to meet up again in person following the lifting of the majority of Covid restrictions I thought it might be helpful to offer some simple guidelines for members which will help us all to keep safe as far as possible, whilst enjoying our activities. Whilst the vaccine offers significant protection against severe illness for most people, it is not 100% effective and appears to be only around 60% effective at reducing transmission of the Covid delta variant.

All our convenors have been advised of the risk assessments they need undertake and the arrangements they need to have in place to open in a Covid secure manner. Please help them by following their instructions. This is what you can do as an individual:

- 1) Please do not attend an event/interest group meeting/activity if you are feeling unwell.
- 2) Continue to wash/sanitise your hands regularly, especially if you are sharing equipment, food, crockery etc with other members.
- 3) If you become unwell following contact with other Chalfonts u3a members at a u3a meeting/event, and test positive for Covid, please let your group convenor, or Lesley Bedford the group co-ordinator, know immediately.
- 4) For each activity and meeting you attend please consider the amount of personal risk you are prepared to take. We are unable to guarantee that you will not come into contact with someone who has Covid. Please let your group convenor know if you have any concerns.

We will monitor carefully how the re-opening of our groups is proceeding and adjust our plans as appropriate. We are hoping that a return to in person meetings indoors can be achieved for our groups over the course of the Autumn.

Jane Barker - Chair

Group Coordinator update from Lesley Bedford

I am delighted to say that many of our interest groups are now back meeting in person and from the feedback I have had this has been enormously successful. If anyone has any ideas for new groups please let me know.

All walking groups are now active. Cycling, badminton, lawn bowls, table tennis, yoga and Pilates are all now meeting, please let me know if anyone is interested in joining either Pilates or table tennis as there are spaces. Garden visits and bird watching have had several trips arranged which have been very popular and enjoyable.

Wine tasting, scrabble, bridge, Italian beginners, and Italian beginners plus, book clubs 1 and 2, mahjong, iPad group and computing have all started meeting up or are about to during August. September will see many more groups meeting up in person, including ballroom dancing, family history, textiles, Spanish conversation to name a few.

Some groups are continuing to use zoom for the time being and this includes flower arranging and some of the other language groups. A big thank you to all our group conveners for the work they do groupcoordinator@chalfontsu3a.org.uk

Our own hero ...



Congratulations to Zena Hersey, the longest serving volunteer at the British Red Cross shop in Market Place, Chalfont St Peter. Zena was presented with a well-deserved 20-year badge, and a hanging basket full of flowers to compliment her beautiful garden. Shop manager Maureen Gillard thanked Zena, calling her “a much-loved member of the team, whose patience and positive attitude is inspirational.”

News from our existing Interest groups

Lawn Bowls



This group is going well with only one session cancelled due to bad weather, and we have 2 new members. For further information contact Mike Alderton lawnbowls@chalfontsu3a.org.uk

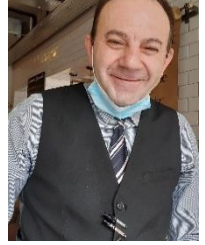
Intermediate French

An update from convenor Ray Luker. Our group of 8 members have continued meeting on Zoom during lockdown, finding it quite entertaining! We are now taking a summer break and will re-start again in late August when we hope to start meeting again in members' houses – with luck in the sunshine!

Italian Beginners



Our news from the beginners Italian group is that we are having the summer holidays off and our last meeting took place in Luna Rossa restaurant Gerrards Cross, where Emilio spoke Italian with us and looked after us splendidly. We will reconvene in September- Jacky Tennant *Saluti!*



Italian- Beginners Plus.



We very much enjoyed getting back to face to face meetings last month at Lesley Bedford's home and the photo shows it!!

Buongiorno!

Photography Group - The next meeting is on Thursday 19 August.

The group will be spending an hour or so visiting a local spot - Greenacres, at Jordans, HP9 2XB. Greenacres is a delightful place to walk and take photographs. Very tranquil and quiet with plenty of things to capture with your camera. An email has been sent out to the group members. We intend to meet up at the CSP Community Centre at 1.40pm as we try to travel in as few cars as possible. We welcome new members too, so please get in touch with Tony Darbyshire, the Group Convenor, if you'd like to be added to our list of members. The email to write to is: photography@chalfonts.u3a.org.uk



Taichi Group -The joint Chiltern and Chalfont u3a Taichi group held a most enjoyable event in Milton's Cottage garden recently, however it has been decided not to attempt face to face meetings at the present time and a review will take place towards the end of September. Weekly Zoom meetings will continue on Tuesday at 12 noon for the joint Chiltern/Chalfont u3a group.

Members' Musings



MINDING MY LANGUAGE – Denise Beddows

My latest musing began when I was chatting with my optician. We were discussing how language changes from one generation to the next, though heaven knows how we got onto that subject, and he told me he had asked his young male assistant to post a letter for him on his way to lunch. 'When you're passing the pillar box,' he had said, 'just pop this in, will you?' 'What's a pillar box?' his assistant had asked.

The young man was not generally ignorant, of course, just ignorant of some of the terminology used by the older generations. This caused me to ponder on phrases and concepts which must appear alien to those who are under fifty. I recall, for example, being stopped by some young hikers, who asked me if I knew what the 'rly' next to a black line on their map signified. Was it a road? Was it the road leading to the scout camp, which they were seeking? No, I explained, it simply showed the position of the railway line which led to Gerrards Cross railway station. 'Do you mean train station?' they asked.

I cannot be sure exactly when the UK decided to drop the phrase 'railway station' in favour of the American 'train station' but I do remember, back in the 1990s, being shocked to see a new sign being erected outside East Croydon station announcing that it was now 'East Croydon Train Station'. In my youth, anyone who said 'train station' was either under five years of age or was a tourist fresh in from New York. Of course, my youth was a very long time ago.

I also remember back in the 1960s watching the US comedy series 'Rowan and Martin's Laugh-in' featuring, amongst others, a comedienne whose ineptitude with past participles caused some hilarity. 'Where did you spring from?' someone would ask. 'Oh, I just snuck in,' her regular reply would be. It has taken half a century, but nowadays 'snuck' has universally replaced 'sneaked' as the past participle of the verb 'to sneak', and, oddly, 'dove' has replaced 'dived'. Similarly, owing to the preponderance of US court dramas on UK TV, the past participle of 'plead' here in our sovereign land is no longer 'pleaded' but 'pled'.

However, America cannot entirely shoulder the blame for this. Australia, too, has contributed to the migration and mutation of our speech. There is perhaps a certain irony in this, given the past history of our exports to that land down under. Back in the 1980s, the addiction of British youth to such Antipodean TV dramas as 'Neighbours' and 'Home and Away' led to a change in accent of a whole generation, whose sentences all now end with a sudden and alarming increase in cadence, and whose conversation is sprinkled with the phrase 'no worries'.

'Please may I have' has been replaced, courtesy of US TV programme 'Friends', with the curt phrase 'could I get' (please refer back to my observation last year of the Polish barista's response that she, not the customer, would 'get' his latte). And on that subject, I do find it irritating that, whenever I order a *latte* using my best Italian pronunciation, I am asked 'do you mean a lartay?' Breads, too, seem to suffer from mispronunciation. The once exotic but now commonplace Baguette has become the 'b'geh', and I heard a customer in Wenzels in Gerrards Cross

demanding six 'croissance'. Perhaps she hoped half a dozen of the bakers' doughnuts would increase her 'growth'.

Of course, it is not merely foreign influence which introduces odd developments in our language. TV in general must shoulder most of the blame. The actor and comedian Rowan Atkinson recalls his sketch featuring a tamed ape named Gerald, in which sketch he suggested the collective noun for a bunch of baboons would be a 'flange'. A few short years later, he was astonished to find the word 'flange' appearing in a dictionary alongside that very definition.

Having returned to the UK in 2009 after four years living abroad, I suddenly noticed that everyone being interviewed on TV now felt obliged to preface their answers and comments with the word 'so'. When, I wondered, did that become law? One particularly irritating interview with the spokeswoman of a failing railway – sorry, train company had her begin each and every one of her answers to thirty questions with 'so, ...'. And why was English grammar erased from our schools' curriculum? Back in the 'nineties, my daughter was taught Latin grammar and French grammar at school, but not English grammar.

My husband assures me that, since language is a living thing and is constantly developing and absorbing outside influences, one should not get one's undergarments in an uncomfortable rotation at such ungrammatical and strident changes in our language. In fact, he accuses me of being a 'grammar Nazi', but it is hard not to wince upon hearing the head of English at a local private school telling the pupils she wants them 'sat in your seats', or on hearing a police chief recount how a murder victim 'was just stood there when he was attacked'. Might the motive behind the unfortunate victim's murder have been a reaction to his own slaughter of the Queen's English? If so, then the main suspect might just be me.

Last month I inadvertently missed out the last portion of John Forsaith's piece entitled "The Sound of England" so apologies to John so here goes again!

'THE SOUND OF ENGLAND'

Church bells, the sound that drifts on a warm summer breeze and comes to rest lightly on the ear – well for many anyway. Instantly recognisable and conjuring up images of those being called to worship or perhaps starting their lives together.

St Patrick is credited with inventing the hand bell in the 5th century and his disciples were given them to ring as they walked around Ireland as Heralds of God's Word.

In the 6th century the bell crossed over to England where it retained its religious connection as a source for blessings and healings invoking special powers. They were carried into battle to banished demons. In time the roaming missionaries settled and built monasteries. Here the bells were used to signal the start of prayers. Ringing every three hours the workers in the fields could tell the time of day. They now had a practical as well as spiritual use. The Celtic name for a bell was *clocca* from which we get the word *clock*.

By the 10th century bells were being made from bronze rather than iron and getting bigger requiring towers to be built. In December 1170 when Thomas a becket was murdered at Canterbury legend has it that the bells fell silent for a year. Bells were used in the 12 Century to signal when the village oven was hot enough to begin baking bread and the Normans would ring them every evening to tell the people to 'cover their fires. This was called '*courve feu*' (French) from which we get the word '*curfew*'.

Into the 13th century the idea of praying for yourself with others rather than having the monks doing it for you gained ground and the bells would summon the local population to prayer. Bells

took on a higher level of significance and would be blessed and named. The 'Sanctus' Bell rung at communion would signal the congregation and those working in the fields to fall silent. At baptism and at death the bell was also sounded. The death knell, a tolling bell, also called for silence. It was used with dramatic effect at Wootton Bassett when the town received the dead soldiers back from Afghanistan.

The oldest factory in England is a bell foundry. The Whitechapel Foundry has been making bells for 440 years and still used the old formulas of sand, clay, goat's hair, and horse manure to make its moulds. Up to the mid-17th century bell ringing was hard work and a job for the local young men to show their prowess and strength. Then the use of a rope and wheel with stops enabled the ringer to bring the bell to an 'up' position and hold it there until it was time to make it ring. Bell ringing was now a very controlled activity allowing for peels to be composed and rung. Change ringing had evolved. Six bells can ring 720 combinations taking about half an hour, eight bells allows for 40,000 permutations and needs 22 hours of ringing and twelve bells would require 30 years to work through a complete change.

Big Ben was hung in the tower at the Houses of Parliament and rang for the first time on 11th July 1859. After a few months it cracked and a small rectangle of metal was removed to stop the crack running further up the bell. This is why, for those with musical ears, the note is slightly off key. Five bells are used to ring the world-famous Westminster chime and sounds at 118 decibels – as loud as a jet plane at take-off.

In both World wars the Government banned the ringing of bells silencing their use after nearly 1000 years. Bells were only to be rung if an invasion was threatened. In fact with the Allied victory in North Africa (1942) Churchill ordered the bells to be rung. Now the bells had a new purpose as heralds of the prospect of peace for the population, so when you next hear the bells ringing as you can stop and listen to a sound that has also been heard by our ancestors - the sound of England's history. (based on Richard Taylor's BBC4 Programme – *Still Ringing After All These Years*).

SIMON THE CAT- John Forsaith



As related in the opening sequences to the 1957 film 'The Yangtse Incident' HMS Amethyst was proceeding up the Yangtse River in China and going about 'her peaceful and lawful occasions'. She was on her way, in April 1949, to Nanking to become the guard ship to the British Embassy and to take them necessary supplies.

About 104 miles upstream she was fired upon by the shore batteries of the People's Liberation Army resulting in the death of her captain and a number of the crew. Others were injured and the ship sustained serious damage. Loss of steering caused the Amethyst to run aground. So was to begin weeks of efforts to get the situation resolved. Other British warships tried to provide assistance but they were also fired upon and damaged. An RAF Sunderland Flying Boat landed and managed to get a doctor on board the stricken ship. The Admiralty sent a new captain (Lieutenant Commander John Kerans) overland to take command. Intensive negotiations with the PLA failed to secure a safe release. Conditions on board deteriorated as fuel levels dropped, food was rationed and the heat made life very uncomfortable.

Eventually the crew managed to re-float the Amethyst and secure a mid-stream anchorage. Kerans, using radio signals based 'on a code book on board and duplicated at the Admiralty, got permission to make a bid for the open seas. Using wood canvas, he altered the outline of the Amethyst, heavily greased the anchor chain, and made other preparations. On 30th July 1949 she

slipped her chain and began her full speed dash passed the searchlights and guns on the banks. In the early morning she met up with HMS Consort and sent the signal "*Have rejoined the fleet south of Woosung. No damage. No casualties. God save the King*". King George VI sent a message of congratulation and ordered the ship to '*Splice the mainbrace*'.

Amethyst made her way to Hong Kong for repairs before returning to England and a heroes welcome. Kerans was awarded an OBE. The ship's cat, Simon, recovered from his injuries and continued with his duties catching vermin and supporting the morale of the crew. He died shortly after returning home and was posthumously awarded the Dickin Medal (the animals' VC). He remains the only cat to have received the medal.

A tale of two Tilleys – Imelda Micalleff



My husband and I are proud owners of the said Tilley hats which many of you walkers and outdoor enthusiasts will be familiar with. Apart from our yearly trip to Australia to visit family our hats had led a fairly quiet life until this summer....



It was whilst on holiday in Yorkshire this June, visiting Fountains Abbey that a mishap occurred with Anthony's hat on a rather windy day. A sudden gust blew the Tilley into the mill stream several feet below us down a steep bank thus unreachable to us. We continued our visit but luckily came across a National Trust worker named Nell who informed me "I've no idea what a Tilley hat is but I'll certainly try and retrieve it!" This, she duly did with the aid of a long handled rake once the hat had drifted down stream a way to where the bank was lower. We offered the gallant Yorkshire lass a small gratuity in thanks but she declined saying it was all part of the NT service. What a great British institution!

My hat's adventure happened more recently on our first visit to London since the pandemic. It was one of those very hot and sunny days. Travelling by tube on the Bakerloo line, we managed to get off a stop too early by mistake at Regents Park. Too late to re board, we were making our way off the platform when the rush of wind from the departing train took my Tilley and deposited it on the track between the rail and platform. Again, unreachable due to health and safety. We found a helpful station manager who informed me that they would only be able to retrieve my Tilley at the end of the day and that we'd have to return there to collect it. As it was a Friday, that meant returning the following Monday, another hot day, which we did and to my delight my Tilley was returned very dirty but intact. This time it was "hats off" to Transport for London, another great British institution! And the moral of the story is.... Wear your Tilley with the chin strap in windy conditions!