Crewkerne U3A Newsletter December 2024

Editorial

We've got here – at last or already, depending on your point of view. I am aware that this is the last time of year to be giving people yet another job to do, another item to be put on the "to do" list, and, with luck, crossed off. They do say that if you want something do, ask a busy man. This seems to have worked because my busy readers, and I am sure most of them are busy people, have contributed items to this Newsletter which have resulted in 20 pages of seasonal interest.

I know that most of you are too old for Christmas annuals nowadays but I am equally sure that you can well remember those days when the latest from the Eagle or School Friend was an eagerly hoped-for gift. But you can put all of that behind you and turn instead to this Newsletter, edited by me, assembled by a motley crew of sub-editors and all typed up by the glamorous members of our typing pool, but **contributed**, ladies and gentlemen, **chiefly by yourselves**. Pour yourselves a glass of something warming, add a mince pie? Why not? Merry Christmas one and all.

Stephen Shipley, Editor

Forthcoming Events round up

Monday 2nd December: Christmas Quiz at Henhayes at 13:30 for 14:00

Monday 9th December: Christmas Lunch at Henhayes at 13:30 for 14:00

Friday 13th December: The Holdovers (15): FilmCrew screening at Wadham School at 7:00pm for 7:30pm (see below for more details)

Saturday 14th December: Christmas Tree Festival at St. Bartholomew's

Monday 6th January: Folk Dancing, The Speedwell Hall

January 6th Carolo Patel see next page for details.

Monday 13th January: Folk Dancing, The Speedwell Hall

February 3rd Rosemary Griggs see next page for details.

March 3rd Maggie Barbour see next page for details.

Saturday 15th March: Swan Lake - Birmingham Royal Ballet.

April 7th Registration (no talk)

Monday 14th April 2005 (Wed/Thu 16/17 – 2/3 nights)**:** LONDON SOUTHBANK:

Thursday 1st May: Marriage of Figaro (opera): Mayflower Theatre Southampton for 7.00pm.

Monday 5th May 2025: U3A holiday St Ives and Scenic Cornwall:

May 12th Neil Smart see next page for details.

June 2nd to be arranged.

July 7th Elizabeth Salmon see next page for details.

August 4th Ian Banks see next page for details.

Monday 18th August: Edinburgh Festival.

September 1st Alan Jenkins see next page for details.

October 6th Bob Richards see next page for details.

November 3rd Janet Diamond see next page for details.

Saturday 8th November: Mamma Mia: Mayflower Theatre Southampton.

December 1st To be arranged

Events

Monthly Talks

Here is the programme for 2025. This is a good list of dates for those new diaries when they come along. All talks are held at Henhayes and members are asked to arrive by 1:30 for 2:00. Tea and coffee will be available but the talks do start promptly at 2:00.

January 6th	**Carol Patel**. A retired Nurse will talk about *The History of Medicine* during the Tudor years; the dreaded Black Death and medicine during Nelson's Day.
February 3rd	**Rosemary Griggs** is an Author and Speaker. Rosemary has talked about Devon's 16th century history for many years. Being a lady of many talents she makes her own costumes with passion which compliments her love of bringing the past to life. Rosemary will bring two of her novels, *Women of Noble Wit* and *The Darlington Bride*. There will be Tudor style clothes to see too.
March 3rd	**Maggie Barbour** Director of Grange Hill (and much more). Details to follow.
April 7th	**Registration** (no talk)
May 12th	**Neil Smart** volunteers for the Medical Detection Dogs Charity. Neil will bring one of his Ambassador dogs with him, with the kind permission of Henhayes management. We will learn how the dogs assist within the charity.
June 2nd	**To be announced**
July 7th	**Elizabeth Salmon** will fascinate us with her stories about working on Quiz shows on television. Several well-known shows will be named and a sprinkling of humour included.
August 4th	**Ian Banks** A Paramedic, who says "Caffeine, Chaos and everything in between. Your life in our hands." Para-Medicine, a vocation in the disguise of a job. Sit down, buckle up and prepare to step inside the minds of those that shine on your darkest day.
September 1st	**Alan Jenkins** visited us in August 2022. His work in the Special Branch in Dorset was well received. Now, with his new talk about "A Humorous Royal Command Visit" Events took many turns and nearly everything that could go wrong did!
October 6th	**Bob Richards** Bob is a local man who oozes enthusiasm and knowledge about making small steam trains. Spending many hours a week in his garage, perfecting his art. He will bring one of his engines for all to admire. Not just engines, no, much more will be explained.
November 3rd	**Janet Diamond** We welcome back after her visit in 2017 will talk about "The Great Floods of Florence: The Ruin, Rescue and Restoration of Renaissance Florence". When, overnight, the river Arno burst its banks.
December 1st	**To be arranged**

Christmas Tree festival

The Christmas Tree festival will be held in St. Bartholomew's as usual. Trees will be on display from the 14th to 21st December. Sue Moore is looking for a group of craft-oriented members to trim a tree on the theme of "Your Christmas".

Klezmer at The Dance House.

On Saturday January 18th at 7.30, the Dance House in Crewkerne will again be hosting a Klezmer and Balkan concert featuring the wonderful 4-piece band Zeffe, playing the poignant and exciting music of Eastern Europe. Tickets will be available to U3A members at the discounted price of £12.

Details or tickets from zeffe.music@gmail.com or 07530103228. Later on, tickets will be buyable in person from the Town Hall and the Green Dragon Bookshop or online via Eventbrite.

Concerts in The West

Concerts in The West returns for its 20th season and 10th in Crewkerne with Ensemble Hesperi bringing a harpsichord and a range of early music to The Dance House. There will be a marginal rise in ticket prices for next year but the U3A discount of £3 per ticket will remain.

Trips Update:

This is just a reminder that all trips are dependent on creating the economies of scale which pay for transport.

Swan Lake - Matthew Bourne ballet in Southampton. March 15th at 2.00pm. Five seats still available

Marriage of Figaro May 1st and Mamma Mia November 8th - little interest so far and will probably not run.

Longer trips to London and Edinburgh are attracting little response so far.

Note that for one day trips to theatre I do not ask for payment until the day of the trip.

John Bartholomew

Holiday Trips in Britain

U3A Holiday 2025 St Ives and Scenic Cornwall: 5th May 2025 - 5 Days

St Ives, St Michaels Mount, Penzance, Cathedral City of Truro, Falmouth

Twin and double rooms still available, but no singles.

Maggi Davey

Concerts IN THE West

– CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN 2025 –

All the following concerts will be presented at the Dance House, Gouldsbrook View off North Street.

Tickets are available online or from the Town Hall. U3A members benefit from a £3 discount.

To book online go to:
https://www.concertsinthewest.org/concerts/category/crewkerne/

THE DANCE HOUSE
ALL THE ARTS • ONE ROOF

15th February	ENSEMBLE HESPERI Magdalena Loth-Hill, baroque violin; Mary-Jannet Leith, recorders; Florence Petit, baroque cello; Thomas Allery, harpsichord;	12th July	COLIN SCOBIE, violin; JÂMS COLEMAN, piano;
15th March	ALASDAIR BEATSON, piano	27th September	MITSU TRIO Laura Custodio Sabas, violín; Akito Goto, cello; Tyler Hay, piano
12th April	MIKELEIZ-ZUCCHI DUO David Zucchi, saxophone; Iñigo Mikeleiz-Berrade, accordion	25th October	VOICE Victoria Couper Emily Burn Clemmie Franks
10th May	TRIO ANIMA Rosalind Ventris, viola; Anneke Hodnett, harp; Matthew Featherstone, flute	29th November	CONSONE QUARTET Agata Daraškaite, violin; Magdalena Loth-Hill, violin; Elitsa Bogdanova, viola; George Ross, cello
28th June	MATHIS ROCHAT, viola; ERDEM MISIRIOĞLU, piano		

Committee

Vice Chair

We have unfortunately lost the services of our Vice-Chair, Viv Wiles. Viv just has too much on her plate and can no longer help us in this way.

If you would like to take her place (full guidance and support will be given) please contact Angie, or any member of the committee. You could be co-opted as soon as it suits you and you could be confirmed in your place at the AGM.

Membership Secretary

Although I was away and unable to attend this year's Open Day at Henhayes on 26 October, I am pleased to report that it was a great success with 20 new members joining. There have also been a further 5 who have joined since, making a total of 25 new members. We now have a total membership of 240.

We are always looking for new people to join us, so if you have family or friends who would like to join, they can contact me through our website. We have many groups they can join and of course they can attend a group a couple of times before they would need to join as a member.

Lynn Browning, Membership Secretary

Christmas Tree Festival

We will be taking part in the Christmas Tree Festival, held at St Bartholomew's Church, again this year It runs from Saturday 14th to 21st December the theme is YOUR CHRISTMAS. That is something to reflect the U3A organisation or group. Just when you thought it was safe to come out from behind the sofa, we are asking each group to give us a short description/photograph, something creative or anything that will represent your Group. We will need your contributions by Friday 6th December. The trees will be erected on the 11th and 12th December and have to be taken down from 4pm on the 21st December.

Sue Moore

Group Coordinator's News

Creative Writing Group: Mike Luff is starting a Creative Writing Group, the date, time and venue are to be decided when Mike knows how much interest there is.

International Lunch Club: In February Sue Melville is starting a new group, the International Lunch Club which will meet quarterly. The first meal will be at the Thai restaurant, Khun Goi, in Yeovil on February 19th 2025.

Local History: The Local History Group still needs a leader to book speakers and a volunteer to collect the money at the door. Eileen has booked speakers to March 2025 and will help anyone who takes on the role. There are volunteers to put out the chairs and make the tea and coffee. Unfortunately, if nobody comes forward to lead the group it will have to close.

Photography Group: The Photography Group sadly lost its leader but is trying to carry on. Having said that we are sure the group would welcome someone to take over.

If you are interested in any of the above, or in forming a new group, please contact us via the u3a Crewkerne web site.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Susan and Norman Irving, Group Coordinators

Groups

Ancient History **New Group?**

Are you interested in **Ancient History**? The current group is full but there are members who would like to start a new group. Please let us know if you are interested in attending a meeting which will be held in January to discuss the date, venue and running of this new group.

Susan and Norman Irving, Group Coordinators

Bridge

James Bond cheated at Bridge when playing against Drax in Moonraker. You can learn how to play without cheating, or perhaps you can already play. Beginners and experienced players are welcome at a new Bridge Group starting in January. Instructions will be given for beginners.

Susan and Norman Irving, Group Coordinators

Folk Dancing

On 25th November we welcomed new U3A member Atha. Our final dance of the year is on Monday 9th December from 2pm - 4pm in the Speedwell Hall. Last year a couple of elves turned up to add to the fun. Perhaps they will join us this year. We will be back dancing in January on Mondays 6th and 13th. *Leslye Stansfield*

Contributions from Members start on the next page with a Christmas Quiz in five Sections from Sue Frackiewicz. Answers will be in the January Newsletter so you've plenty of time to grapple with this one.

Jazz Appreciation Group.

This group meets from 2:15 – 4:15 on the 4th Wednesday of each month at various venues. Here are details of the programme right through to next Spring.

December 6th	Christmas Meal
January 23rd	Saxophone players
February 26th	My favourite track
March 26th	Trad Jazz
April 23rd	Modern Jazz

Val Warren

Table Tennis

Looking for a fun and engaging way to stay active and social? Look no further! Our table tennis group is the perfect place for you, whether you're a serious player or just looking to learn something new.

🏓 **Stay Active**: Keep fit and healthy with regular physical activity.
🏓 **Stay Sharp**: Table tennis is great for improving hand-eye coordination and mental agility.
🏓 **Stay Social**: Meet new friends and enjoy a friendly, welcoming community.

We meet every Monday and Friday afternoon at Misterton Village Hall.

Contact details can be found on the Crewkerne u3a website.

Mike Luff

Fun Christmas Quiz (no prizes)

Section 1 – Multiple Choice

For approx. how many years has the Western World celebrated Christmas day on 25th December?

A) 250 B) 850 C) 1650 D) 2050

How high is the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square?

A) 21.5m (70ft) B) 24m (80ft) C) 27.5m (90ft) D) 30.5m (100ft)

Which country was Good King Wenceslas from?

A) Bulgaria B) Belgium C) Czechoslovakia D) Slovenia

During the reign of which monarch was the Christmas tree made popular in the UK?

A) George III B) Victoria C) Edward VII D) George IV

Section 2 – Plagiarist's Christmas Carol

I have written my very own Christmas carol, but have borrowed a few lines from existing songs. There is a point for each one you can identify.

Verse 1:

Silent Night, Holy Night	
The little Lord Jesus lays down his sweet head	
And i-o, i-o, i-o	
On Christmas day in the morning	

Chorus:

Bethlehem, Bethlehem	
Snow on snow on snow	

Verse 2:

Yea Lord, we greet thee	
Let nothing you dismay	
And man will live for evermore	
Following yonder star	

Section 3 – General Knowledge

Which celebrity Christmas Carol counts down the days to their birthday on Christmas Eve?

Which celebrity with the same birthday might ask for black cats and voodoo dolls for presents?

Rudloph's companions were Donner and Blitzen. What do their names translate to in English?

(*two points available*)

By the twelfth day of Christmas, how many **living creatures** had my true love received?

Before a stint on Radio 2 and Strictly Come Dancing, Aled Jones was famous for singing 'Walking in the Air', the sound track for the animation 'The Snowman'.

What year was this first aired?

In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol", what was Tiny Tim's surname?

What is the total value of the Scrabble tiles that spell CHRISTMAS?

Which country has sovereignty over Christmas Island?

Section 4 – European Christmas Greetings

Below are a series of greetings used in European countries. Fill in the name of country alongside the appropriate greeting.

Buon Natale	
Feliz Navidad	
Fröhliche Weihnachten	
God Jul	
Hauskaa Joulua	
Joyeux Noël	
Nadolig Llawen	
Nollaig Shona Duit	
Vrolijk Kerstfeest	
Wesołych Swiąt Bozego Narodzenia	

Section 5 – Christmas Number Ones

Fill in the blanks for the artist or song that have occupied the much-coveted Number One place each Christmas throughout the years.

1960	Cliff Richard & The Shadows	I Love You
1961	Danny Williams	Moon River
1962	**Elvis Presley**	
1963	The Beatles	I Want to Hold Your Hand
1964	The Beatles	I Feel Fine
1965	The Beatles	Day Tripper / We Can Work It Out
1966	**Tom Jones**	
1967		**Hello Goodbye**
1968	Scaffold	Lily The Pink
1969	**Rolf Harris**	
1970	Dave Edmunds	I Hear You Knockin'
1971	Benny Hill	Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in The West)
1972	**Little Jimmy Osmond**	
1973		**Merry Xmas Everybody**
1974	Mud	Lonely This Christmas
1975	**Queen**	
1976	Johnny Mathis	When A Child Is Born (Soleado)
1977	Wings	Mull Of Kintyre / Girls' School
1978	Boney M	Mary's Boy Child-Oh My Lord
1979	**Pink Floyd**	
1980	St Winifred's School Choir	There's No One Quite Like Grandma
1981	The Human League	Don't You Want Me
1982	**Renee & Renato**	
1983	The Flying Pickets	Only You
1984	Band Aid	Do They Know It's Christmas?
1985	Shakin' Stevens	Merry Christmas Everyone
1986	Jackie Wilson	Reet Petite
1987		**Always On My Mind**
1988	**Cliff Richard**	
1989	**Band Aid II**	
1990	Cliff Richard	Saviours' Day
1991	**Queen**	
1992	**Whitney Houston**	
1993	**Mr Blobby**	
1994	East 17	Stay Another Day
1995	Michael Jackson	Earth Song
1996	Spice Girls	2 Become 1
1997		**Too Much**
1998	Spice Girls	Goodbye
1999	Westlife	I Have a Dream / Seasons in The Sun
2000	**Bob the Builder**	
2001	**Robbie Williams & Nicole Kidman**	
2002		**Sound Of the Underground**
2003	**Michael Andrews ft. Gary Jules**	

More Contributions from Members

Planning Christmas Presents

Oh! How much easier it was when the grandchildren were between the years of 3 and 8. Letters were written to Father Christmas with a list of wishes and (ssh) Nana and Grandad could choose from the list. Now that we have grandchildren aged between 22 and nearly 30, can we get them to let us know what they would like? It's a nightmare!

In days gone by we told our grandchildren that if Santa had not heard by the end of November, Santa wouldn't have enough time or room left to enable him to get their wishes ordered and into his sleigh (on line of course) to them.

Oh, for the good old days when one took delight in going into shops to Christmas shop for presents.

This sounds like Scrooge but I can't wait to see all the family, including grandchildren, who are currently spread across the UK in Scotland, Norfolk and with at least one living in Somerset. Hopefully, weather permitting, we will all be together.

I hope your Christmas is as joyful as ours is going, fingers crossed, to be.

Best wishes to all U3A members,

Maureen Allen

Disposing of Christmas Trees

This is what I do with my old Christmas tree. I chop it up and put it on top of the soil where the blueberries are planted. Blueberries like an acid soil so this helps, it also acts as a mulch.

Chris Loukes

Sex in the 1960's….

There! I knew that would get your attention..

This is really only of concern for those of us of a "certain age" (old codgers). I'm not entirely sure whether Cornwall was particularly behind the rest of the U.K. in such matters. Certainly the invasion of the "beatniks" to St. Ives and the concept of "free-love" was certainly frowned upon by many of the inhabitants of the town - but perhaps they were just envious?

Anyway, did your parents ever "spill the beans" about such matters, or were you left to work it out for yourself?

In my case it was never actually explained by either of my parents. Such things were not discussed openly, or what clues came my way were often by way of a bit of *scandal* being discussed by my mother and one of her close associates. Such a conversation would run along these lines..

"You d'naw she at No. ...? Well, I was just cleaning the window when I noticed his motorbike parked outside her house. Now, you d'naw I'm not one to spread any gossip - don't you?" "Oh yes, I d'naw that m'dear, me neither… ", answered her friend.

Such a conversation would immediately spark my young interest, particularly if it was said 'sotto voce'.

"And it was still there an hour later - I just happened to notice when I went past to the shops", continued my mother. "And her husband working up country as well…", she added with a meaningful glance at her friend. Followed by lots of *tut-tutting*, and that meaningful phrase "She's no better than she should be….". 😀

It is quite likely that whoever the lady in question was, she was perfectly innocent. In some ways I suppose it is a bit like the "morality police" that we so often hear of in some Arabic countries.

Although you would not get dragged from your home and publicly flogged for whatever your transgression.

I also recall that when I was about to leave Cornwall to go to college and follow my chosen career, I was taken aside by my mother and giving this sage advice...

"Now my boy, I want you take care while you are away. Don't you be getting involved in taking any drugs or going to any of they orgies". At the time I wasn't entirely sure what an orgy was, and it was made all the more confusing by my mother pronouncing "orgy" with a hard "g". She must have read the word somewhere and never heard it pronounced - as the only regular publications that she read were the *War Cry* and *The People's Friend*. I now regard both with new found respect… LOL

PS I'm pleased to say that at least I was able to follow the first part of her advice…

Malcolm Osman

Drinking and Driving – a cautionary tale.

So, it's that time of year again – not just about getting the tinsel out and singing Jingle Bells for the umpteenth time. It's the time that we get invited to lovely events – lunches out, visiting friends for a mince pie and a mulled wine, or indeed enjoy a warming whisky at home. And I am sure that if anyone asked you if you drink and drive you would all say Never!

But how many people in fact mean "I would never have more than my *legal allowance* and drive?" or "I would never drive when I feel incapacitated" or "even when I felt a tiny bit affected by the drink". "I can have a glass or two of wine and still drive just as well – better even".

If you are still reading, thank you! I promise I am not writing this to preach but rather as a cautionary tale. For many years I worked in Drink Drive rehabilitation with people who had been convicted of related offences and I want to share a few examples of how they found themselves on the wrong side of the law, what happened on that fateful occasion and what the consequences could be.

Consider first of all how much can you legally drink and drive? You may be thinking about units, pint and a half, one small whisky but consider this – when we blow into that bag the police are not measuring units, but rather 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath and that is something you can't measure when someone is topping up your wine glass and telling you "You can have another half a glass, surely". If you gave 3 people a double vodka and breath tested them an hour later all the results would be different as we all process alcohol differently

So, a few real-life examples (NONE of them local).

A lady in her 70s, having had a few glasses of wine over dinner at home goes to bed. At midnight she is woken by her granddaughter on the phone saying I can't wake Mummy up. She jumps in the car and drives there . . . and is stopped and breathalysed on the way. Over the limit.

After a great night out a man wakes up in the morning and needs some milk. It's a 10-minute walk and it's raining so he takes the car – and someone pulls out of a side road without looking and hits him. They have a few words and the other driver calls the police saying he thinks he can smell booze. Over the limit.

Another man takes a friend out for lunch to show off his new Range Rover, even though the restaurant is within walking distance. He has one large glass of wine with lunch, bumps a kerb on the way back and a police officer that happens to be there stops him for a chat. You guessed it – over the limit.

A woman buys a takeaway from the local Chinese restaurant and stumbles down the step outside on the way to her car. The takeaway calls the police (restaurants, including McDonalds, commonly train their staff to do this). Say no more.

Outcomes:

After the positive breath test at the side of the road you will be taken to the police station or the custody suite where you will be given another breath test – or blood/urine if you insist. If you are over the limit now you will be fingerprinted, have your DNA taken and be put in a cell. The grandmother told me "I was treated just like a criminal" – well, at this point in the eyes of the law that is exactly what you are. You will be charged. Usually it takes around 6 months for this to come to court. Your name and details of your offence may well be in the local paper. At the least you will be banned for a minimum of 12 months (more serious levels of incident can result in a prison sentence). You will have a criminal record – Drink Driving is not a motoring offence; it is a criminal offence and will be visible for 10 years. Do you have children, grandchildren in Australia or Canada? You are unlikely to be able to enter those countries for at least 5 years. You cannot use the ESTA system to visit the USA.

People lose not just their jobs but their careers. They lose the trust of their family and the respect of their peers. And the man with the brand-new Range Rover – the frustration of having to continue paying the finance whilst his wife got to drive his pride and joy for a year. I am not perfect and I am not preaching, but when I am driving, I never take the chance.

Atha Murphy

Bosava Mill, Lamorna, Nr. Mousehole, Cornwall,

It is said there has been a Mill here since the 1400's. It was known as Kemyel Mill and was owned by the Hoskyn family until the 1920's.

Lamorna . . . As pretty as its name sounds . . . Lamorna! It rolls off the tongue just lovely, doesn't it? . . . Braer 'ansome! I can remember my first visit to the valley. I was still quite small, and my uncle Arthur, my mother's brother, a fisherman, took me. We went out of Mousehole via Reginnis hill, and away over the fields, and through the three Kemyell farms (there was no coastal path then). It was a fair old walk for a small kid, but as we came to the steep valley, and started down the winding narrow pathway through the granite *tips*, Arthur said, "Look boy, follow me and I'll show you something". He branched off the pathway and into the gorse - no more than a dozen steps or so, but it brought us out onto a rocky spur, and in a flash the whole valley suddenly opened up to me!

What a view! The moment is still in my memory. My eyes took in all the colour of a sunlit shimmering blue sea, and an even bluer sky right down to the ocean skyline and the clean white seaways fringe around the rocky tideline. At the end of the quay down there below me, I remember the stones had been torn out by the sea. The logic of the cut granite blocks in neatly built pattern suddenly ending in a loose crazy jumble. All this was restored in later years.

Springtime is the best time for Lamorna, with the fresh green and the yellow blaze of the daffodil meadows. Although high summer is also something, and many times after a hot day, I would, in past seasons, in the cool of the evening, about ten o'clock or so, before turning in, get the bike out and do a circuit. Out of Mousehole, up to Paul, on to Sheffield, drop down into Trevelloe and Trewoofe, and then branch down into the Lamorna valley. Coasting along under the spread of the trees, head held high in the cool night air, breathing in deeply (like the *Bisto Kid*, the valley fragrances of a summer night (I'm reminded of Matthew Arnold's lovely line - "All the live murmur of a summer's day" - only now it's a treat for the nose instead of the ear!).

Then turn lower down the valley by the Post Office, and quietly climb away up and out over to Castallack and drop down again to home via the hill at Reginnis - and give the eyes a treat from that high vantage point, taking in the lights below of the resting village surrounding the bowl of the harbour. Or of the twinkling lights right across the bay, where with a mere turn of the head one can take in the glowing pinpricks - like myriad fireflies, that mark Marazion, Perran, Porthleven, down away to Mullion and ending with every three second sweeping wink that marks Lizard light - the thought would be in me, - What a place to live!!

The above was taken down verbatim or recorded on my mobile. The story comes from my life-long friend from Mousehole. He himself has no phone or internet and is now quite deaf. However, he does have a marvellous memory and some lovely stories and anecdotes.

The Matthew Arnold reference is to a line from his poem: *The Scholar Gypsy* which is also quoted in Ralph Vaughan William's *Oxford Elegy* - which I know is a great favourite of both myself and my friend).

I have recorded these stories because I think they are worth preserving for posterity. Also, when he passes - which won't be in too many years and having no close relatives, I fear they will be lost forever. Anyway - enjoy!

Malcolm Osman

A well-travelled life

I have found my old diaries and what I did when I was young and very active. I skied every year and also travelled to places like Germany, America, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Far East. I also visited many islands in the Caribbean including Antigua and Grenada. *Ann Needle*

Books, Books, Books!

I have always enjoyed reading and my husband gets through a fair few books a week. We do buy new books and I frequent the local charity shops searching for preferred authors. My husband recently discovered on line The World of Books where you can buy second hand books for around £3.50 - £4.50 each and if you buy 3 you get one free. By buying books this way you also save them from going to landfill. I can highly recommend it and they have thousands of authors. *Leslye Stansfield*

"A Tale of two cities" or "Just My Luck!"

Here are two very different experiences with a common thread.

In September I went on a Solos only trip to Uzbekistan which had long been on my bucket list.

In Samarkand we visited the Afrasiyab Museum. This is a modern museum built on the site of one of the largest archaeological sites in the world, the ancient city destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th Century. In 1965 during road building (yes really on an ancient site!) they discovered in a private house four walls covered in murals of the Sogdian Art of the Kishida Dynasty 7th century. They show Verkhuman, the King of Samarkand being visited by numerous embassies including Iran, Korea, India and China whose emissaries are carrying a string of silk worm cocoons. We watched a very good video of how they would have looked but could not see the originals as they had been lent (the first time ever) to the British Museum for their "Silk Roads Exhibition"! So I shall have to go to London to see them.

In October I went to Paris for my grandson's 20th birthday, a milestone (or kilometre) in France apparently which somewhat unfortunately falls on All Souls Day when we should visit his French grandfather's grave.

However my daughter and I decided to go to the Musée Marmottan. This building was originally a hunting lodge on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne bought by Jules Marmottan in 1882 and is full of illuminated manuscripts and Napoleonic art and furniture. Downstairs in a modern space are 300 Impressionist and Post Impressionist paintings collected by the family over the centuries which we were keen to see. However on our arrival we discovered that they have all gone to Washington for an exhibition there! We can't fit in a visit to America just now but we did enjoy an exhibition of Trompe L'oeil paintings which were a discovery for my daughter who only thought of that as something painted on buildings during renovation works in Paris. Many of the paintings reminded me of the exhibition, curated by Jonathan Miller at the National Gallery many years ago when I lived in London.

Kate Pearce

A family tradition – ballet shows

For very many years I have produced a calendar for members of my family, containing photos of all of them. It goes to six older relatives, and six parents (of 5 great-nieces and 3 great-nephews). The youngsters love looking back at the old calendars to see what they looked like when they were little. This year my 16-year-old great-niece Liv agreed to share with me designing the family's 2025 calendar. She has learnt to use Photoshop, so the calendar's style this year is different from my old tried and tested formula. My great-nieces all "do ballet", as I did when I was young. Liv asked me to send her any ballet photos of me so she could do a montage of us all dancing. Out came my photos from the 1950s and 60s, along with memories of my poor mother sewing costumes for dancing shows. I was always more sturdy than my fellow-dancers so was often chosen by my dancing teacher to dance male characters – a French gendarme, the devil (as opposed to the slim girls dancing as angels). The lighting and cameras weren't up to recording the actual staged events in those days, so my photos were taken by Dad on the back garden lawn, with me posing stationary in my costume! I sent these images to my great-niece Liv. Her "ballet" month on the calendar shows me on the lawn alongside her cousins photographed in action on stage in their tutus and stage makeup. What a contrast! All teenagers these days seem to struggle with their mental health and "what does the future hold for me?" I just hope my family's youngsters will hold on to good memories of happy and fulfilled childhood activities like dancing.

Liz Randall

Holly, Ivy and Freezing Toes

25th December, Christmas Day, Uncle and Miss Welstead came to tea and dinner. The King spoke after 'Christmas Under Fire'." 'Harvest of Messerschmitts-A Chronicle of a Village at War' by Dennis Knight.

. . . in farms, cottages and urban houses, the civilians consumed goose, duck or chicken but in Mary Smith's home the day was blighted because father was extremely ill. At 3pm the wireless was switched on and the entire nation listened with respect to the faltering speech of King George VI. It had been an extraordinary year and neither the King or his subjects quite realised that they had lived through "their finest hour." *

This description of Christmas 1940 evokes much which makes up the Christmases of living memory. There are elements we all recognise: the King's/Queen's speech, the traditional Christmas dinner, the family occasion and the poignancy of times when not everyone can be together through the divide of war. Yet the festival we know today, with its emphasis on family, children, goodwill and nostalgia is a marriage of very old and the relatively new- a glorious mixture of Pagan Mid-Winter feasts, Christianity and Victorian imagination. We hear that Christmas is overcommercialised and that somehow times past were always better. People "then" did not indulge themselves in gluttony, drunkenness and the sensual enjoyment of Winter festivities! However the old Pagan rituals were certainly about celebrating . . . often lasting 12 days with a grand finale on Twelfth Night. It was only in the 19th century that the festival was confined to 3 days and made into a "respectable" family occasion, less of a threat to public disorder!

Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe all go back to these times. They were used for their healing powers and to ward off supernatural beings closely linked to Winter. Christmas Eve was especially charged with the Spiritual. Animals were said to have the power of speech, originating from the Ox and Ass of the Nativity. One North Country superstition held that Bees assembled on Christmas Eve to hum Christian hymns! There is no doubt of the popularity of Yuletide ghost stories. Almost everyone is familiar with Charles Dicken's A Christmas Carol in which the ghosts of the Past, Present and Future appear to the unfortunate Mr Scrooge.

Much folklore and ritual come from the age of Dickens. Prince Albert first introduced the Christmas tree into Britain in the 1840s, along with many other German customs. Dickens harked back to an idealised time. However the writer was also aware of the gulf between the haves and have-nots -with A Christmas Carol being a critique of Victorian Society and its neglect of the poor.

Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, please put a penny in the old man's hat.

Many poor people had to make the best of adversity as this 1920s account of Ted Harrison's Christmas shows:

My mother used to keep fowls and she had this big cockerel. She called it 'Wild Bill Hickock' but I called it 'Billy the Sod' because it would go for you when you went to the toilet in the back yard. My sister got locked in the toilet once because she was scared of him and my mother had to hunch the bird away. Well, that signed his death warrant. My mother slung her apron over his head and wrung his neck. We had him for Christmas. + 'Christmas Past' by Gavin Wightman and Steve Humphries

Similarly during WW2, with its hardships and making do, most families made the effort to celebrate. Traditional dishes were made from non-traditional ingredients like grated potatoes instead of dried fruit. Christmas then as now, was a time for children.

It is only since the relative affluence of the 1950s that people have been able to celebrate on a bigger scale, giving children the gifts that their parents could never have afforded. Christmas 2024 seems a world away from the 1840s or 1940s, yet, as Christmas customs endure, there is always a link with the past.

Jo Lawrence

Beatlemania Nostalgia

I am a bit embarrassed to admit that I was one of those screaming fans! In my defence, puberty had just hit and hormones were obviously coursing. I queued overnight with my friend to get tickets to see the Beatles at the Birmingham Odeon (I was very surprised that our parents agreed to this as we were all of 13 or14 years old). There was a police presence so we felt quite safe although it was a very long, cold night and we were very glad to get through it and come away clutching precious tickets for the middle of the stalls.

On the night of the performance, excitement was high and the suspense was killing, waiting to get through the other supporting acts, which included Mary Wells singing her hit My Guy. We weren't very interested as we were only there for our idols. Their performance was fantastic and over too soon. I was lucky enough to see them once more at the Odeon having queued overnight again.

I also saw them at the ATV television studios, having won a competition in the local newspaper to be in the studio audience during recording of Thank Your Lucky Stars. I think the Shadows and Roy Orbison were in the same show but to be honest it was all a bit of a let-down as the songs were mimed and consequently the studio lacked the expected atmosphere. Also, by then the gloss was wearing off and O levels were looming. I continued to love the Beatles music and still do today. It's hard to believe that this was all 60 years ago now! I wonder if Paul would still love me now I'm 74!!!

Gill Sharples

I don't remember the rain

It must have rained sometimes
When I was young,
But I have no memories of being
Stuck indoors, bored,
Watching raindrops racing
Down the window pane.
But it must have rained sometimes?

I have no recollection
Of trudging to school
In pouring rain, soaked through!
Splashing through puddles in boots!
But it must have rained sometimes!

I remember long hot
Endless summers
Spent outdoors, the sun blazing.
Lying in tall bracken
Or in the long grass lazing.
But it must have rained sometimes!

Maybe my early years
Are viewed through
Rose coloured lenses,
When all was fresh and new,
And there was so much to do.
But it must have rained sometimes.

Now this year's flaming June
Was cold winds, dull days, and rain.
Oh, if I could go back
To childhood, care free days,
I remember snowy winters,
And chilblains on my toes.
Huge icicles hung from the gutters,
Making snowballs, building snowmen,
But not dismal wet days,
Rain keeping me indoors,
And bored!
But it must have rained sometimes!

In my teens I remember
Putrid smog when we moved
From country to town.
The fog thick, cloying,
And yellow all around.
It even tasted foul!
But as a young child
The days were glorious,
Sunny bright, victorious.
But it must have rained sometimes?

Maybe, should you not have
A happy childhood,
You remember the pain
Of dismal days of steady rain?
My memory not so skewed-
Only full of happy sunny days
In my view.
But it MUST have rained sometimes!

But it must have rained sometime?

Christine Dubery

Christmas Thoughts

Yes indeed, Christmas has once more thrust its way into our lives well before the real event takes place. Soon Easter eggs will replace the items currently on display.

Wrapping and making presents are not high on my list of accomplishments. Creativity does not figure largely in my life and anything I created as a gift would probably be discarded soon after receipt or found in a charity shop. Wrapped presents resemble items that have gone through the post and emerged, scathed, on the other side. I am liberal with the sellotape and, if scissors cannot be found, the sellotape is wrenched apart leaving a gnarled and twisted piece standing clear of the package.

Turkeys conjure up an image of the slaughter of these birds on my father's farm in the 60s when the bloody carcasses hung in rows on the barn wall. We were always left with the biggest specimen which lasted for many meals...in one form or another.

Our guests this year will be hailing from Sweden and I am hoping that we can dispense with the traditional Christmas dinner (so no cooking for me as my cooking is similar to present wrapping) and enjoy a Swedish Christmas Eve feast which will be prepared and cooked by my daughter and son-in-law.

Christmas trees are important to have to add cheer to the proceedings and, after Christmas, they must be disposed of correctly, not flung from the rear of the car whilst hurtling along the A356.

Pastry is also not amongst my accomplishments and parts of mince pie have been found secreted down the sides of armchairs and sofas. I have discouraged their use as missiles.

I must close now as the brussels sprouts must be prepared and cooked in time for Christmas Day just in case the Swedish contingent fail to show up.

Audrey Loukes

Pea Pod Wine

Bill Turner said "This Pea Pod wine
Is made by Wynn, this wife of mine.
It has a most alluring taste,
So sip it slowly, not in haste."

He said the truth, it tasted sweet,
A truer word you couldn't beat.
The glass, soon emptied, filled again
And put away, no hint of pain.

That is, until I came to rise,
When something happened to my eyes.
My vision, slowly came quite blurred;
My speech, it also became slurred.

I found that I was talking scribble;
The sense of it entirely dribble.
Why is it that I can't stand up?
I can't have had more than a cup.

My legs, they also ceased to function,
Like the points at Yeovil Junction.
Right went left and left went right.
I never will get home tonight.

How fortunate, my sober spouse,
Escorted me back to our house.
And sad to say, it must be said,
Up over stairs and into bed.

Gordon W. Rendell © 18th November 2021

Too much to do, too many ways to turn

It is that time of the year when everything telescopes. What seemed a long way away suddenly is yesterday. That's how I am at present. Booking granddaughter's place on Berry's coaches, trying to decide if I should go up to London to have a night at my new club, really excited at the thought of somewhere to stay near Marble Arch, but also trying to get stuck into the book on family that I planned to finish by the new year and there's so much research on bits of paper, can I find it all? It's mostly in my head, but I am really not certain on the dates and my new computer is not user friendly still, at least not to this user, so there you have it - too much of everything since I completed my special train journey I am in a whirl! Dreaming in three different languages, sleeping so well I need to set the alarm or I am having breakfast at ten o'clock. I think I need another holiday to get past the last. Happy Christmas, everyone.

Judith Morris

Get thee to a Nunnery' - A talk by Sheila Seymour

On Monday 4th November we were treated to an exceptional presentation by Sheila Seymour. And indeed U3A members attended in force - over 50 people coming to Henhayes Centre to listen to this marvellous guest speaker. Sheila gave us all a vivid picture of the plight of single, dependant women in Mediaeval England. This was set against the context of war (the Hundred Years War in Europe) plus Plague. The year 1348 was the height of the Plague and over half the population died over the period. The whole country was begging. There were fewer men and hence more women but nunneries were not necessarily filled with the needy. These establishments preferred aristocrats, wealthy women who brought money and prestige. Barking in Essex boasted three Queens and two Princesses in its convents!

Girls as young as 8 were admitted but they didn't have to take vows until the grand age of 12. In our region, Shaftesbury and Ilchester had well known nunneries. They were the second and third richest establishments in the country. Others were exceptionally poor. Women could take in their own clothes and possessions and linens until vows were made. Their destination was often dependent on where guardians had influence. In the marriage ceremony, women were *given away* like goods and chattels and single women entering a nunnery were considered no differently. However, not all was doom and gloom. A nunnery could be a very successful career ladder for some. There were many administrative roles- Abbess, Prioress, house management etc. Much was produced: wool, fruit and vegetables and handiwork that could be sold locally. Time was also filled in nursing, gardening, education, the creative crafts and devotions. Animals were also allowed e.g. rabbits, squirrels, monkeys, greyhounds and the ultimate hunting accessory - falcons. And of course, there were Pilgrimages too! Sisterhood had lots of benefits not the least being cared for into older age.

With lots of colourful examples and a lively speaker in Sheila Seymour, it was a thought provoking and very entertaining afternoon.

Jo Lawrence

A Tudor Christmas

Last month I mentioned that I would be attending A Tudor Christmas in the Speedwell Hall on Friday 15th of November with Lady Katherine Champernowne the mother of Sir Walter Raleigh. Author Rosemary Griggs along with her husband the peasant David (both in full period dress) explained how different Christmas was 400 years ago while peasant David interspersed the narrative with folk songs of the period.

It was very atmospheric as curtains had been drawn across the windows and the only lighting was by battery candles. The hall was suitably decorated with wall banners and greenery and tables were laid out in Tudor fashion as Tudor food was served half way through.

A great deal of feasting went on over the Christmas period and Rosemary explained how the tables were laid out and also where the container of salt was placed. Salt was a precious commodity. Nobility sat at high table and commoner servants at lower trestle tables. Salt was placed in the centre of the high table and only those of rank had access to it. Those less favoured on the lower tables were below or beneath the salt. Hence the expression *below the salt*.

The whole afternoon could not have been more enjoyable and the food was delicious. The lemon posset said to be the favourite pudding of Henry VIII was to die for. We were also served a goblet of warmed red wine and in true Tudor fashion we ate with our fingers though we did have a special biscuit to dip in the posset and I wasn't the only one to also use a finger! The excellent food was prepared by the Speedwell Chop, Chat, Cook and Eat group which meets on Friday mornings at The Speedwell

It was Rosemary's third visit to Crewkerne and all tickets were sold so if you missed her this time she will be back again in the New Year with another tale of life in Tudor times.

Leslye Stansfield