

SPRING IS IN
THE AIR



Message from the Chair



Following our AGM, our Committee has a new look. We have lost Marlen who did a great job in modernising our newsletter and making it so good. Phil Nichols has joined the Committee and taken on the Newsletter - please support him by sending him articles about your group or anything you have done that others would find interesting. Marlen was also Group Co-ordinator, and Lynda Lees has taken on that role. She needs all the Group Leaders to keep her advised of your group membership, and talk to her about any queries you have about groups. Lynda also continues to support Lyn on the website and Facebook page and has taken over as Speaker Secretary from Richard who managed to get us a string of good speakers on interesting topics over the past 8 years. Richard stays on the Committee, liaising with the Rufus Centre and as always being very helpful. We have two other newcomers, Ann O'Brien and Barry Walden. Ann is Vice Chair and we will see Ann getting more involved over the coming months, while Barry will be shadowing Maureen's role as Treasurer, in anticipation of taking over from her next year when her maximum term of 6 years is reached. Barry is currently getting involved with the Raffle, we are looking to get a rota of people to look after the raffle as Maggie Hathway has now left the Committee but will continue helping with the raffle until we get a rota in place.

Carol Smithers continues on the Committee and her Awaydays team have arranged great outings for a number of years and continue to do so, the latest having been 'Hidden London'; I know how popular those outings are, and they have more great Awaydays arranged for future months. Lyn Fairweather continues as Secretary, and Website and Facebook manager, - the new Website she worked so hard on is amazing particularly compared with the previous one. I, as a result of the Constitution change at the AGM, continue as Chairman. I am also Membership Secretary, and am very pleased so many of you have renewed your membership again this year. But as I said before, it really does help if you fill in your name at the top of the form, and I need both payment and form, just paying by BACS is not enough.

The weather has noticeably improved over the last few weeks - much less cloud and rain and somewhat warmer – like me, I am sure you are all looking forward to a great summer of U3A activities this year.

Nick Rose

Your Committee Members

Chairman	Nicholas Rose	01462 713897
Vice Chair	Ann O'Brien	
Secretary	Lyn Fairweather	07927364286
Treasurer	Maureen Gates	015257 715793
Membership Secretary	Nicholas Rose	01462 713897
Groups coordinator	Lynda Lees	07986539390
Away Days	Carol Smithers	07721030203
Speaker Secretary	Lynda Lees	07986539390
Newsletter	Philip Nichols	07552206495
Committee Member	Richard Bowsher	01525 630335
Committee Member	Bary Walden	

Contents

Chairman's Report	P 02
Your Committee Members/ Editor's note	P 03
Announcements	P 04 / 05
Group Articles /Miscellanies	P 06 / 15
Groups and Contacts	P 16/ 19

Hello

I'm Phil Nichols and I am the new editor of the Newsletter. This is my first attempt and I hope that it will continue to maintain the high standard of my predecessor Marlen Jackson.

The Newsletter is very much about you, the members of the Branch. So please let me know what you would like in it in future and please send me anything that you would like to be included in future issues.



Come and say hello to me at meetings and let me know what you think!

2025 General Monthly Meetings and Speakers.

May 8th John Hutchinson presenting “Tales of a Concord Pilot”.

June 12th Richard Luscombe presenting “World War 1, the hospital @ Wrest Park”.

July 10th Rob Brewer presenting “Life as a TV/Film extra”.

August 14th Jim Stebbings presenting “Luisitania—a tale of loss, deception, and conspiracy”.

September 11th Howard Slater presenting “Fred Astaire—his story with singing and dancing”.

October 9th Roy Smart presenting “Percy Pilcher—Aviation Pioneer and the Art of Flight”.

November 13th Margaret Butt presenting “My Ancestral Convict to Australia”.

December 11th To Be Arranged

Richard Bowsher

U3A Notices

If you have moved or changed your address, please let us know, so we can keep in touch with you. Equally, if you know any other member whose details have changed do prompt them to get in touch with us

Nick Rose (membership secretary)

Contact Details: phone: 01462 713897
or email: memsecu3afd@outlook.com
or write to;

2 Wilson Close,
Shillington
SG5 3PN

To join any of our groups you need to be a full member of Flitwick and District U3A.

- Please send all your editorials to **our new email address:**
- Phil Nichols
fdnewsletter@outlook.com
- Our U3A Website address:
<http://u3asites.org/flitwick>
- Facebook.com
- Let us know of future local events and activities
- If you have any comments on the newsletter or other matters do let us know.

INFORMATION

U3a the national picture

– what else can your membership of Flitwick and District u3a offer you? **The Third Age Trust!**

Are you a member who would like to try something completely new and it's not available in our u3a?

There is a plethora of help and ideas for you on the Third Age Trust website (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities>). These vary from writing and photographic competitions to a quiz library to puzzles and games and opportunities to share your own memories. I must admit that the weekly maths challenge is beyond me. There are specialist subject advisers available who have a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to share with group leaders (or anyone else who asks) to liven up your meetings if you would like some extra input. You just need to set up a username and password for the website to find all of this for free. I counted 52 different subject advisers!

If you're a person who likes to listen there is a monthly podcast (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/u3a-radio-podcast>). The podcast can be listened to online where you can also pick up subtitles. It's available via the website or on YouTube and you can subscribe to it for free.

If that is not enough, there are also Online Learning Events (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>) – talks lasting an hour or so on specific topics. September topics include amongst many others: Mods v Rockers – a 1960s 'Moral Panic', a 'Mindfulness and Meditation' 6-week course and 'Visualizing Statistical Concepts'. These are all presented via Zoom at different times. If the timing suits you, book a place on whatever interests you. *By Lynda Lees*

Awaydays 2025 Team

We now have a list of Awaydays up on our branch website. Please have a look.

There will also be information given out in our monthly meetings

CAMERA GROUP—by John Parkins

It seems the camera group have been remiss in sending in items for the newsletter, so we are now setting about addressing the lack of items.

As I am unsure when we last submitted an item, I will start from around mid-year 2024. As and when the weather allowed, we had time away from our usual meetings at the Rufus Centre. One of our trips away we spent an interesting time at the Panacea Museum, enjoyed by some and found rather quirky and eerie by others especially me.



Our next visit was to Leighton Buzzard where time was spent photographing the town centre and surrounding area. Whilst in the area we decided our next trip should be The Three Locks. This proved somewhat to stretch our abilities as it was a somewhat restrictive subject. However, given the challenge, it was surprising just what some people came up with. Which just goes to show that you have to keep your eyes open for any opportunity.

Our next outing was to the Shuttleworth Collection and The Swiss Garden. This was an interesting trip as it was surprising how many people can photograph the same aircraft and all from a different angle. The Swiss Garden gave us great scope for a lot of different photographs.



During the year we have had a number of themes, some of which were challenging, some of which were easier and some of which proved really interesting. During this time we have had a variety of themes such as "Odd Angles", "Shapes", "Cold", "Arches", and "Utensils".



Each month we set a theme for members to photograph, and when we are next at the Rufus Centre, show each member's submitted photos to the whole group and talk about them in a non-critical way.

We are probably at maximum capacity at the moment, but if you are interested in joining us please contact us to be put on a waiting list.

Where do you go to keep warm in February?

Well, we chose Sri Lanka this year. I've been before, but so many years ago it doesn't count. Then it was a country in turmoil with soldiers on street corners in Colombo, the capital. No longer. This is a country blessed with loving people and a rich heritage. It has beaches and it has mountains, it has temples and it has wildlife. We chose to focus our holiday on wildlife with just a little of the culture and some time built in to relax at the seaside.

Our first few days were spent recovering from the journey in Negombo, only a few miles from the airport. Negombo has a beautiful beach where we were able to watch the fishermen landing their catch but shelter from the heat of the sun under the palm trees. Who knew treacle comes from coconut palms? We didn't until we took a lesson in treacle and sweets making at the hotel where they refine the sap they take from their own trees and boil it up for many hours on charcoal fires. We were also treated to a wedding taking place at the hotel, where the bride and groom were led to the ceremony by Kandy dancers.

Kandy is the second largest city on the island, and we took the opportunity to visit as it is famous for two things. The dancers, who put on an amazing nightly show, and the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. Both were well worth seeing. The Temple is a very holy place and tourists like us were amongst the minority of visitors to the site.



Our main focus for the trip was wildlife and in particular we wanted to see elephants. A number of wildlife parks are being protected on the island, but that doesn't stop the elephants from roaming. This means that you are likely to see elephants both inside and outside the parks. The lifestyle of local farmers is driven by the need to protect their crops from the elephants. Fences erected by the government make some difference, but farmers keep constant night watch in huts on their farms whilst their families sleep safely in the houses they own near the main roads. We took a number of jeep safaris to see wildlife. We were bumped around very busy parks where the noise of the many jeeps must have scared most creatures away. However, one pleasant surprise was the number of peacocks we saw. Peacocks are the national bird of Sri Lanka and now I know why. Even the motorways have warning signs to ensure you look out for them



It was wonderful to visit a turtle sanctuary where they increase the chances of survival for the baby turtles manyfold.



We were lucky enough to catch the end of an international cricket match against Australia from the walls of the fort in Galle (where the locals watch for free!). Sri Lanka lost. We were invited to take part in a ceremony to mark Sri Lanka national day where I released a white pigeon into the air. We felt very welcome.

I would say Sri Lanka is working hard to preserve the best of what their country has. We saw well-tended farms, preservation of wildlife – elephants, leopards, birds and turtles - history and traditions. No nasty creatures. We ate well, slept well and had a thoroughly good holiday.

Lynda Lees

HIDDEN LONDON

Away day Visit 11th March 2025

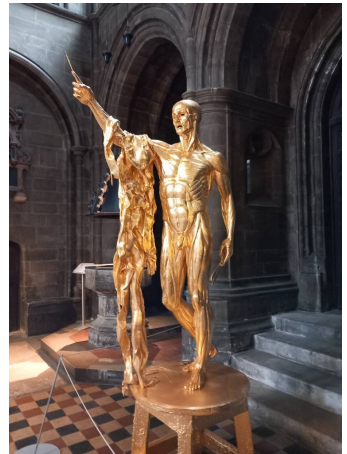
A coach set off from Flitwick Village Hall arriving in London where we met our guide Owen.

He arranged a coffee stop (with loos) at the Paternoster pub. The quality was excellent and tea came in individual pots and drinks were accompanied by homemade biscuits.

Once on our way we made our way to the ruins of Christchurch Greyfriars destroyed twice by fire, where Owen gave us a brief history amongst the spring flowers.

From there we made our way to the old Post office building and into Postman's Park which features the Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice.

Worth a google -wattsgallery.org.uk. We also saw some splendid camellias and banana trees! From there to the Church of St Bartholomew the Great founded by former court jester Rahere in the twelfth century. His splendid tomb was one of the highlights of the church (for me) as was the Damien Hirst statue and some of the remaining cloisters. Much of the area is connected to the hospital St Bart's also founded by Rahere in 1123



We passed the Worshipful Company of Butchers on the way to Smithfield Market

the historic weekday meat market which is set to close although it is still in operation. The smell of blood as I walked through was quite obvious but trading had finished for the day at 7am! There has been a livestock market on the site for over 800 years. We split up for a quick lunch before meeting the coach again for the trip to Little Venice. Some used the pub with the splendid name "The Butchers Hook and Cleaver"

I found a French patisserie! I wandered around after lunch and spotted something happening at Haberdashers' Hall.

I witnessed the arrival of the Chief Rabbi. (I was hoping for a minor Royal at least)

The coach ride through to Little Venice was made more interesting by Owen our guide pointing out various building and statues on the way including one of Sherlock Holmes

I was just pleased to recognise various places which I remembered from earlier trips to London. We were able to plot our way by watching the sat nav system on the overhead TV!

Little Venice is situated in Maida Vale. I think we were on a narrow boat and we had a steep climb down to our seats which were somewhat cosy. Most of us had to go down backwards!

We passed Regents Park and London Zoo on the way, but didn't spot any animals. Owen pointed out places of interest, named celebrities who had houseboats and informed us that many of the properties on the canal side were not as old as they looked. Lots of water fowl but I didn't recognise the many coots!" I come from haunts of coot and hern " sprang to mind when once I knew what they were. Plenty of moorhens and ducks. I can't be more specific.

At the end of our trip we had time for a quick cup of tea before rejoining the coach for our homeward journey a few minutes later than planned. Some amazing sights to be seen at Camden Lock. I liked the Punk hoping to collect cash to "get drunk" Impressed by the guy juggling with flaming clubs- sorry I didn't get a photo We were back at the Village Hall in time for sunset. Thanks to Carol Smithers for organising the day out.

Ann Slack



Where on Earth...?

(Or at least in Flitwick and District)

How well do you know the local area?

Can you identify the following pictures?

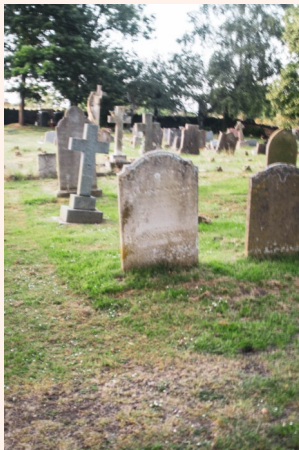
Hint—there is a common theme to them all.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

Answers

1. St. Andrew's Church, Ampt Hill
2. St. Mary's Church, Woburn
3. St. Mary the Virgin, Maulden
4. Ampt Hill Methodist Church
5. St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Flitwick
6. St. James', Silsoe
7. St. James, Pullox Hill
8. St. John the Baptist, Flitton

Craft Group Charity Work

Before Christmas, the Craft Group were very busy knitting covers for chocolate oranges, some of which we sold at our monthly meetings. This



Flitwick & District Ltd

13 January 2025

Dear Gwendolyn

Re: Merry Christmas

I am writing to thank you for the wonderful support you have given us with our Christmas fundraising project selling Merry Christmas Oranges with Toffee Covers. With your help we managed to knit over 800 covers and the amount raised, which included sales at our November and December meetings, came to £1800.

I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to the members of your craft group who knitted for us and to those who helped with the sales.

We do really appreciate your help in raising this money which will be used to support people with Dementia and their families locally.

Yours sincerely

Sue Halsey

Volunteer Fundraiser
TIBBS DEMENTIA FOUNDATION



Tibbs Dementia Foundation, 5 Lansdowne Road, Bedford, MK42 2BT
Email: consg@tibbsdementia.co.uk | Website: www.tibbsdementia.co.uk
Registered Charity No. 1190596

was a great success and the TIBBS Dementia Foundation sent us a beautiful 'Thank you' letter stating that over 800 covers were knitted and the total amount raised from the whole of Bedfordshire was £1800. This is a tremendous amount for such a small local charity. Our next knitting project is to help local neonatal wards. We are knitting bonding squares. One square is placed with a premature baby and another is worn against the mum's skin, then the squares are swapped round every 12 hours or every time mum visits. Many Neonatal Units are now using them. They help

with the bonding of a premature baby in an incubator and the baby's mum. The baby can smell mum's scent even when she isn't there or wasn't able to get him out of his incubator, and then when she goes home she can still smell the baby's scent on the square, which is a big comfort. Not only this, but many mums find that it really helps with expressing breast milk. Keeping the scent of the baby close by triggers the hormones needed to produce and express milk, which is very important as breastfeeding can be difficult for mothers with premature babies. Gwen has patterns if anyone would like to knit some too. Her email is gwen.halsey@me.com. These squares are a great way to use up your wool stash.



Gwen Halsey and Lyn Fairweather Craft Group

FEAR OF FALLING?

A Request for help with a survey

Ever feel a little shaky on your feet? Worried about taking a tumble? You are not alone! Falls are a common concern as we get older, and sometimes, even the fear of falling can hold us back.

Researchers at Coventry University and Imperial College London are on a mission to understand this fear and how it affects us. They have put together a short survey that explores the thoughts and feelings that might contribute to these worries. By taking part, you will be helping them unlock the secrets to overcoming the fear of falling. Your answers could be key to developing new and helpful programs that help people feel more confident and steady on their feet

If you are between 60 and 90 years young and want to make a real difference, we would love for you to share your experiences. It is quick, easy and you will be contributing to something really important. Just click here: <https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/coventry/survey-fearoffalling>

If you have any questions or queries, please contact Ellie Johnson at johnsone4@coventry.ac.uk.

Cards made by members of the Papercraft Group are on sale at the monthly u3a meetings. On alternative months there will also be Jewellery available for sale. A percentage of the sales are donated to the Air Ambulance.

Personalised cards can be made to order.

Jewellery orders can also be taken.

Contact Colleen at the Monthly meeting or

Email: uk.whitehouse@ntlworld.com

Phone: 01525 752040

HANDMADE CARDS AND JEWELLERY

BY COLLEEN



Some facts about Easter

The Council of Nicaea in 325 decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (March 21). Easter, therefore, can fall on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25.

The use of painted and decorated Easter eggs was first recorded in the 13th century. The church prohibited the eating of eggs during Holy Week, but chickens continued to lay eggs during that week, and the notion of specially identifying those as "Holy Week" eggs brought about their decoration.

The custom of associating a rabbit or bunny with Easter arose in Protestant areas in Europe in the 17th century but did not become common until the 19th century. The Easter rabbit, or Easter bunny, is said to lay Easter eggs as well as decorate and hide them.

The timing of Easter is linked to the events of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, which took place around the time of the Jewish Passover holiday commemorating the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt.

NEXT NEWSLETTER ISSUE—AUGUST 2025