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NEWSLETTER for OUNDLE & DISTRICT

Edition Number 195
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If you would like to find out more about Oundle & District u3a,
take a look at <https://oundleanddistrict.u3asite.uk>
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A very Happy New Year to you!

I hope your Christmas activities went as planned and that you avoided coughs and colds and enjoyed a relatively peaceful time.

My thanks to everyone involved, in whatever capacity, in our Christmas Extravaganza last month. We have had some very positive feedback, so we may well be asking for volunteers for December!

A new year inevitably means a new start.

At the Third Age Trust, there is to be a new Board and a new Council, although I understand that very few people are putting themselves forward for any of the roles.

At local level, we are following guidance from TAT about emergency contact details and Risk Assessments for our Groups. It makes sense for Group Leaders to have contact details for their Groups, just in case, so please do help them in this.

Risk Assessments are straightforward if you meet in a regular place, but for those Groups which take it in turns to host or visit other places, I know that it is more complicated. Remember, all we really need to note are any access issues (steps/uneven surfaces/slopes) to the venue and ease of access to toilets. This information can then be given to members of the group and they can decide if that venue is suitable for them to attend.

While you are silently fuming about us asking you to do this (!), please remember it is not just u3as who are asked to complete these. You may have read that, at Cambridge University, students are being given new Health and Safety advice about how to walk down stairs. I can hear many of you saying 'what is the world coming to?' It is all to do with students being so busy on their phones when using the stairs that they could fall down!

Our country has a very strict approach to Health & Safety, compared to some countries. Everywhere you go – a stately home, a country park, or even a shop – you will be warned about steps, slippery floors or minding your head (I ignored one of these notices at Lyveden a couple of months ago and got the bruise to prove it!), although if they put a notice next to every pothole on every pavement on our streets, we would have nowhere to walk!

I am beginning to sound like a grumpy old woman, so I had better stop!

I look forward to seeing you 'out and about' in 2025.

Gill

MONDAY 13TH JANUARY

PC Joanne Barlow

and her talk will be on

**Scams, frauds and
cyber awareness**

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY

Alex Leger

and his talk will be on

'Life on the Licence Fee'

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONTHLY MEETINGS



Monday December 9th saw the return of the Oundle and District u3a Christmas Extravaganza and it did not disappoint, or so we have been told. Certainly, the Queen Victoria Hall was full of Christmas cheer and joy that afternoon. Songs were sung, plays were performed, instruments

were played, poems were recited, and there were monologues, all of which made up a delightfully varied programme which showcased how much talent our members have. Special mention should be made of two new Interest Groups performing for the first time: Golden Gospel and Recorders Revisited. The afternoon went with a swing, feedback was positive and we ended our u3a year with fun and on a high. It was a great team effort, so thank you to all who participated in whatever capacity, and also to the appreciative spectators, who were so spontaneous in their audience participation. (More pictures at the end of the Newsletter.)



On Monday 13th January 2025 our speakers will be PC Joanne Barlow and her Cyber counterpart David Reed from Northamptonshire Police and their talk is on Cyber Awareness: Scams and Fraud. The talk will be informative, supportive and encouraging, with the aim of empowering our members to become confident around types of scams and methods used, and to prevent them from becoming victims. The lack of high street banking across Northamptonshire and the UK in general, means that

fraud scams enabled via landline telephones are prevalent. The talk will make us aware of what to look out for, prevention measures that can be put in place as well as advice if someone does receive a scam call. (In the last two Newsletters we have published two information leaflets on the subject of this talk, including courier fraud)

Our speaker on Monday 10th February 2025 will be Alex Leger who has had a lot of fun and anxiety – in equal proportions – spending the BBC licence fee making television programmes. His talk 'Life on the Licence Fee' shows how the life of a television programme maker is full of surprises, recalling the toe-curling mistakes he made and the lessons he learned. Between 1975 and 2011, he filmed the horrors of the 1985 Ethiopian famine, a volcanic eruption, climbed Kilimanjaro, outwitted the Mafia in Brazil and bluffed cocaine paste smugglers high in the Andes in Peru. On a lighter note, he has flown with the Red Arrows and, in the course of duty, parachuted from a balloon and a RAF Hercules transport aircraft. Alex worked for a programme, amongst others, which was a household name – Blue Peter – and over 36 years witnessed first-hand how the BBC changed as technology forced it along different paths. Alex started public speaking in 2012 and his speaking engagements include national conferences, literary festivals, cruise ships and local groups. We are very pleased to welcome him for his first visit to Oundle.



Please remember to bring your membership card to the meeting as it makes signing in a lot quicker.

Special General Meeting

This was held at the start of our December meeting. The motion to amend a clause in our Constitution, which was explained in last month's Newsletter, was carried. The Constitution has therefore been amended and is now on our website. TAT has been informed.

However, we still need a Treasurer to take over from Barbara in May. She is adamant that she will not continue for another year. We have to have four officers, one of whom is the Treasurer, so please put yourself forward if you think you can help us. Without a Treasurer our u3a cannot function. Barbara would be very happy to explain the role and assist with the handover.

The Hallé Christmas Concert – Thursday 12th December 2024 – Val Brind

It was a grey drizzly afternoon when our Robinson's coach set off to Nottingham. Little did we know what an inspiring evening of Christmas music lay ahead of us!

After dining and socialising, we found our Tier 1 seats, giving us an excellent view down over the full orchestra. There was an air of expectation in the audience and a warm welcome from all, as the conductor Stephen Bell stepped onto the stage. Stephen has been described in the International Record Review as "one of the most gifted younger British conductors". He is certainly very energetic in his work. He launched the evening with bouncing jumps up and down on his podium, as if on a trampoline! This bouncing was repeated throughout the concert, whenever he wanted a little extra commitment from the players! The Halle Orchestra played to his expectations and so we were treated to a fine programme of music, a superb way to launch the festive season!

We listened to many familiar pieces and some less well-known ones. The opening piece was a rousing '*Polonaise from Christmas Eve*' by Rimsky-Korsakov. It gave all orchestral sections the opportunity to show us their impressive talents. United under their commanding conductor, they made a fantastic first impression on the audience. Throughout the evening, Stephen was keen to share information about each piece played. He informed us that, although this had first been played in St Petersburg in 1895, its UK premiere was much more recent, actually not until 1988!

Stephen then invited Lizzie Ryder on stage. Although young, Lizzie has a rich melodic soprano voice. She sang '*Song to the Moon*' by Dvorak, in a plaintive mood. Her sustained high notes rose easily above the orchestral sound, filled the auditorium and thrilled the audience. It was a beautiful performance.

Then Stephen invited Emily Hodgkinson on stage. Also young, she sings mezzo-soprano. She sang an aria by Handel, '*Qual leon, che fera irato*' (Like an angry lion), first performed in 1734. Emily adopted various battle stances as she sang to bring this song to life. She has a beautiful evocative voice and delivered this song confidently, clearly inspired by the wonderful orchestral accompaniment. The beautiful flowing music from the strings section was most impressive. By now we all realised we were lucky enough to be attending a most memorable Christmas concert.

Next, in a lighter mood, we were treated to a lively medley of traditional seasonal tunes, in '*A Christmas Carnival*' by Richard Bissill. Sometimes lively, sometimes solemnly reflective, with quick changes, Stephen kept all sections of the orchestra on their toes! There were some audible appreciative sighs from the audience in the gentler '*Silent Night*' section. There were also outbursts of delightful laughter from the audience, as the orchestra set up the melody from '*We Wish You a Merry Christmas*'. We could see the percussionists were also in good humour, though concentrating hard to correctly time the required sleigh bells, the essential midnight chimes and the intermittent jingling, in this joyous piece. For me, the next piece was a special highlight of the concert. It was the '*Flower Duet*' from *Lakme*, by Delibes. Lizzie's and Emily's voices complemented each other beautifully in this duet. They combined to produce an exquisite sound. It was truly beautiful. They were rewarded with loud sustained applause. I noticed that, as we clapped, they warmly smiled at each other, quietly delighted with their joint performance.

We then heard a French operatic aria from 1899 by Massenet, from *Cendrillon* (Cinderella), sung by Emily, again with her dramatic actions. Then we were treated to the exuberant and delightfully light '*Champagne Polka*' by Johann Strauss II. The audience sat in anticipation and happily giggled, as we watched the percussionist time to perfection the popping of his champagne corks!

The last music played before the interval was the '*Final Waltz*' from Tchaikovsky's '*Nutcracker Suite*'. Stephen's commanding and energetic conducting from his podium enabled a fine and fully satisfying performance by the wonderful Halle Orchestra!

After the interval, the variety and excellence continued to impress us. We heard music from composers Alan Silvestri; Eric Masch and Manning Sherwin; Andrew Lloyd Webber; a traditional Catalan carol '*Fum, Fum, Fum*' and Engelbert Humperdinck. Then we were treated to another seasonal favourite, '*Jingle Bells*', written in 1857 by James Lord Pierpont, arranged by Ron Goodwin, a prolific composer of film music. It was a pacey, light-hearted version and again the percussion section made us all laugh as they played their jingling bells to perfection! We heard the *Barcarolle* by Offenbach and as I listened to this familiar warm flowing melody whilst intently watching the orchestral performance, I thought to myself, "How much more fulfilling it is to watch a live performance, rather than simply listen to a familiar piece of music on the radio!"

At this point, as the concert was reaching its close, there was a delightful personalised moment! Lizzie and Emily spoke to the audience, which included many of their family and friends, to thank everyone and to say, "This has been a very special moment for us to be singing in our home town, with the very wonderful Hallé Orchestra!" The concert finished with an enchanting warm delivery of the '*Christmas Song*' by Mel Tormé and Bob Wells; and then there was the opportunity for audience participation, a sing-along version of Irving Berlin's '*White Christmas*'. It had been a marvellous evening. One lady I spoke to afterwards commented how beneficial it was for her, to be taken away from the challenges of everyday living by such beautiful music, to another world for a few hours. She said she felt uplifted and I agreed with her!

Thank you once again to the intrepid Robinson's driver who had to deal with the busy city traffic on roads very recently altered! He got us home safely and I suspect that we were all glad that WE were not driving into Nottingham city centre on that busy damp winter evening!

Very special thanks for organising the trip are also due to Gill and Nadine and any others who supported them. For all of us who were fortunate enough to be there, it was a very special experience!

Theatre and Outings 2025



We are finding it more difficult to fill places for evening outings during the winter. In fact, we did not manage to sell all of the places for the Hallé Concert in December, which means that we made a loss on this outing – our first ever loss.

No more Members signed up last month to go to see *Blood Brothers* in March, so unless there is a sudden surge in bookings from Members this week (Wednesday 26th March at the New Theatre, Peterborough- £51 pp – contact Sandra on 01832 273891) we will reluctantly cancel this outing.

We would like some feedback from you, please: Should we stop running outings in the winter altogether or just go to matinees? I know that some of you do not drive in the dark, even locally, or are not keen on being out in the dark.

Is another factor the cost? We know that theatre prices have shot up since the pandemic, as have coach costs, plus the cost of eating out. Should we just concentrate on day outings? This is your chance to tell us what you think so that we can plan for this year. We are hoping to have a day in Lincoln in May and another to see Agatha Christie's '*The Mirror Crack'd*' at Toletorpe in June. Would these be popular? Please contact me with your thoughts: oundleu3achairman@gmail.com

Information from the Committee meeting on 2nd December

We finalised details for the SGM and the Christmas Extravaganza.

We discussed Group Risk Assessments and Emergency contact details.

A sub-group will meet in January to produce new Recruitment leaflets.

The two new Committee members have completed their induction.

Members will be contacted about renewing their membership for 2025.

Jane Fenton has taken over Publicity from Gill Potts.

QVH has been booked for our monthly meetings in 2025.

Our next Committee meeting is on 3rd February.

FOCUS ON BOOK GROUP 1

Jane Morris



So what did the Groups get up to at their December meetings?

Book Group 1 has spent an enjoyable year reading and discussing the books selected each month by each of our members. However, for our Christmas meeting, we decided to do something a bit different and read 10 different books, all biographies or autobiographies, and shared our thoughts with the others.

Some had chosen books about well-known celebrities, people we recognised from films or TV, and it was interesting to hear about their childhood before fame hit them. Would we have known that both Victoria Wood and Billy Connolly grew up in chaotic households? And we were all amazed to learn that Nelson Mandela's prison arranged secret meetings with his family during his captivity and came to have great respect for each other with an enduring friendship until Mandela's death. Others were less well known and a few were completely unknown to the group as they were family or friends of the authors.

The session took us round the world from Scotland to South Africa in the cases of Billy Connolly and Nelson Mandela, and also included a local personality, the Reverend Richard Coles. Michael Palin's story of his Great Uncle Harry introduced us to the empire of the early 1900s in India and New Zealand. It concluded on the battle fields of Gallipoli and France where unfortunately Great Uncle Harry had lost his life. Michael Palin's father had been given a box of family records, amongst which was a photo of his great uncle as a young man in a military uniform, and five barely legible diaries. It was these diaries that piqued his interest in telling the story of Harry's life. I wonder how many of us have similar boxes of family history with stories to tell.

SPOTLIGHT ON PHILOSOPHY GROUP

Anne Brown

The new Philosophy Group, under the care of Fredi and Frances, has finished the first 'term' of six sessions – and we have enjoyed it immensely. Topics hop about and inevitably lead into psychology. We have all gained a greater understanding of the human condition.



Along the way, we have met some great Roman senators and their concept of stoicism, using reason and logic to guide one's perception. I especially admire Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose insight into life and clarity of expression included:

"When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love."

"You have power over your mind – not outside events."

"Be tolerant with others and strict with yourself."

"If anyone can show me I'm making a mistake or looking at things from the wrong perspective—I'll gladly change. It's the truth I'm after, and the truth never harmed anyone."

Such wisdom!

The 'drama triangle' which can rule our inter-action with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, explains how our behaviour alters according to our perception of our place within the relationship, which I had never considered before.

We've bumped into the 18th century German philosopher Kant's metaphysical morality and ideas of rationality.

We've tiptoed through transactional analysis to uncover the theory of psychology and psychotherapy (although for me, this would take a lifetime's study to understand!).

Our afternoon with Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' proved especially enlightening, delving into our own motivations and those of others.

Our most energetic debate covered the comparative value of one life over another – who's to judge? G B Shaw's "Doctor's Dilemma" indeed, once personal emotions or relationships could sway your decision!

We have even toyed with Existentialism, the theory that preoccupied Sartre and de Beauvoir in the immediate post-War years. They believed that a person is free to decide the course of their own life and actions and that everyone is responsible for creating purpose or meaning in their own lives: "Our individual purpose and meaning is not given to us by Gods, governments, teachers or other authorities," Sartre contends.

Carl Jung's ideas of a 'shadow self' and a collective unconsciousness allowed us to discuss the way we can repress thoughts or experiences into our unconsciousness because they are socially unacceptable, unethical, or traumatic. This of course led on to Freud's methods of psycho-analysis and finally Karl Popper's belief in the paradox of tolerance. Trump's name came up rather too often at this point!

Perhaps we all need to bear in mind the maxim against complacency: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Warmest thanks to Fredi and Frances.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



Shakespeare 4 currently has space for two or three new members. Do come and join us if you would like to improve your knowledge and appreciation of the Bard. We meet from 2.00pm – 4.00pm on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at each other's houses and we have great fun. Contact us by clicking on the group email link on the website.



Playreading 2 has space for a couple of new members. We meet on the first Thursday of the month from 2.30pm – 4.30pm and read a variety of plays. If you are interested, please contact us by clicking on the group email link on the website.



Chinwaggers starts again on the fourth Thursday of the month – January 23rd from 10.00am 'til noon in the Snug of the Talbot Hotel Oundle. All welcome.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP 3 rounded off the year when each of our 11 members had the opportunity



to introduce us to someone new – someone they thought none of us would have ever heard of. Mince pies, Stollen and cakes were on offer, plus some bubbly as, not only was it almost Christmas, but a number of the group also have December birthdays.

We began with a Mexican/German artist called Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, born 1988, who had exhibited in Oxford's Modern Art Gallery in the summer. Her paintings were difficult to interpret but her works were impressive as she fused European painting with the indigenous embroidery techniques of Mexico. The stitching certainly added a

further dimension to her paintings and brought flowers and bodies to life. Another member introduced us to Wendy Red Star, born in 1981 on the Crow reservation in Montana. We had a look at her Four Seasons series in which she portrays Native Americans in landscapes with blow-up deer, cut-out coyotes and wallpaper mountains in a humorous and surreal way.

The "oldest" painter we looked at was Joachim Patinir, born some time around 1480 in Belgium. We know what he looked like as Albrecht Durer attended his wedding and painted his portrait. We looked at a couple of amazing landscapes with dramatic mountains and he was very influential on later landscape artists. Another group member showed us works by Tom Thomson, a Canadian born earlier in 1877. His landscapes are evidence of his love of the countryside, showing lakes, rivers and mountains. He first exhibited in 1913 but died in a canoe incident in 1917 so his output is limited. Another painter who had a short life was Frédéric Bazaille, born in Montpellier in 1841. He moved to Paris to study medicine but, all the time, wanted to paint. In Paris he met Renoir and Monet and helped support his less well-off friends. He even let them use his studio. He was killed in the Franco Prussian war in 1870, before he had had time to fully develop as an artist. Ukraine born Marie Bashkirtseff was another artist new to the group who found herself in Paris. She definitely held feminist ideas and had no desire to get married, with all the restrictions married life would bring her. We saw some delightful paintings of children and street life but she died in 1870 at the young age of 25, leaving behind a fascinating diary of her life.

We did wonder if some of these artists were unknown to us as they had a limited output of works during their short lives. Alternatively some others were very talented artists who have not yet become famous in the UK. Frances (Fanny) Palmer was born in Leicester in 1912 but only achieved fame in the US when she moved there and worked as a lithographer for Currier and Ives. Between 1849 and 1868 she is credited with producing around 200 lithographs showing rural farm scenes, famous American ships and landscapes.

One of our group told us about her art teacher, Jamie Poole. He teaches in a local school but in his spare time has created a stunning collage of the poet WB Yeats using strips of his poetry. It's worth taking the time to look him up on the internet to appreciate the collage fully. Another member also brought a personal touch to the meeting by introducing us to her Mum's cousin, Reg Lander, whom she remembers visiting in her childhood. He worked as a commercial artist and was commissioned by the Government and by British Rail to produce posters to promote destinations such as Polperro and Plymouth.

One of our members did think we may have heard of her choice of artist – Michael Rothenstein. He had been part of the Great Bardfield group of artists, alongside Eric Ravilious and Edward Bawden whose work we have looked at in an earlier session. No one admitted to knowing anything about him even though he became a famous printmaker who had been commissioned to illustrate the first UK edition of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* in 1937.

So that brought us to our final artist, Eduardo Paolozzi, and that name did ring bells. He was a Scottish artist, who died in 2005 and who was considered one of the pioneers of pop art. His sculptures and mosaics can be seen all round the UK and we had a look at his work at Tottenham Court Road Underground station.

So how many of those artists are new to you?

December 2024 Christmas Extravaganza



Above is Michael Aubrey on his bassoon



Above is Keith Diggle

Members of Playreading Group 1 below and right



*and to the left is
Madeleine Sewter as Gladys*



Above is the Golden Gospel Group

JANUARY 2025'S QUIZ

Our first quizzes of the year are brain teasers.

Part One: Connections. Get those brain cells working to start the New Year. Can you sort the words in the grid into four connected groups – and then work out the connection between them all.

QUAY	VICTORIA	MARKET	FIONA
WATERMAN	SOPHIE	NOVEL	MINT
HAM	LATEST	ARMSTRONG	FRESH
BOLAM	PORT	REETA	LYNDHURST

Part Two: Logic and Common Sense

Have you been watching the 1% Club? Here are a few questions from the show – not necessarily in any particular order, but our Quiz Group had fun working them out. Time allowed – 30 secs per question!

1. Which two letters complete this tongue twister?

H _LL_ _A _H_LL_ ON TH_ _A _HOR_

2. What is the missing word?

JESSICA HAS A SISTER CALLED MANDY

MANDY IS THE _____ OF JESSICA'S SISTER

3. If September = 9; November = 8, what number is October? = ?

4. What are the last two letters in this sequence

BULCTNECREPE__

5. In sport, if being FT gets you GD and being SD gets you SR, what does being TD get you?

6. What five-letter food appears in the following sentence?

After Jacob read Paul Hollywood's book, he was inspired to take up baking.

7. What three letters should come next?

SMT, WTF, SSM, TWT, FSS, ???

8. Larry's father has four sons. Their names are listed below. What is the name of his fourth son?

Rick, Nick, Mick and

9. What words replace the question marks?

W????Y

CA????

PO???TIAL

10. Nikita receives an email about sales figures and sends it to Caleb. Caleb forwards the email to Michelle. Michelle reads it out to Ellis. They discuss it with Ivan and Jane, and Michelle decides to forward it to Zara and Levi who then mention it at the management meeting with all 8 managers present. How many people so far have received the email in their inbox?

Answers to last month's Quiz will be on the website.