



Chair's Chatter

It is an end of an era as a few days ago we said a final farewell to Prince Philip. Whether you are a firm believer in Royalty or not, he has certainly made his presence felt over the past seventy years. The Queen came to the throne when I was some nine months old. I will reach my 70th Birthday in May and she is still on the throne. Some achievement.

I can't say I can remember much of the reign of King George VI, as I was no doubt too busy disturbing my parents' sleep! Princess Elizabeth and Philip were married just a fortnight after my own parents in November 1947 and there the similarity ends. Elizabeth and Philip were married in the grandeur of Westminster Abbey and my parents in a now demolished Roman Catholic Church in St Helens, Lancashire. The Royal couple must have seen a fair few changes in all that time.

Talking about changes. There will be a few in the committee too, as mentioned in the last newsletter. These changes are of course subject to approval at the AGM on the 27th May. I am due to stand down at the AGM but if there are no willing volunteers for my position, I would be prepared to stand for one further year. It is not good for the Chairperson to remain in that position for too long, as I don't consider it to be healthy for the group. Bruce Collins, our treasurer will be standing down and, subject to the AGM, we have a willing volunteer in Graham Clark to take over that position. Bruce will take up the role of Vice Chair, where there has been a vacancy this past year. Similarly, Carol Clark will be standing down as Membership Secretary and again we have a willing volunteer, Carol Hill, to take over. We shall have a new Minutes Secretary, as one of our newer members, Shelagh Richards has offered to take on that responsibility. For the first time in over six years, it looks as if we shall have a full committee. However, don't forget that any member can apply for any post. Nomination forms, which will require a proposer and a seconder, are included with this newsletter, together with information on how to apply. If anyone would like further information about any of the committee positions, then please feel free to contact me.

We are also looking at changes in how we recruit new members. In the good old days, it would probably be via local newspapers and exhibitions, and from the retirement courses that many companies used to organise. Sadly, most of those courses do not exist any longer as companies look to save money. Retiring staff are not their top priority. Local newspapers are not the sole purveyors of news as they once were, and we must therefore look to different means of recruiting new members. The best and indeed most effective method is by word of mouth from existing members. I would therefore encourage you to explain the benefits of BFu3a to your retired or retiring friends and family.

Many people retiring today, have been making great use of social media and the committee feels that this will be one of the best ways of moving forwards. I know from the phone calls to members that I have made during the past year, that many of you have "hidden talents". Perhaps our resident magician member, John Woods, can use his magic powers to get new members signed up. Seriously though, we would like to know if there are any of you who have experience in helping us set up and operate new Social Media Platforms. See, that is a piece of jargon I have picked up. If you are able to help us with these new ideas, again, I would love to hear from you. We may be retired but that does not necessarily mean that we cannot use modern technology.

Life is slowly opening up, and today I had my first pint of beer in a pub garden for the best part of four months. A very simple joy, but very much appreciated by me. We have had a dreadful 13 months but that is behind us now and we must look to an exciting future.

Between now and June, life will be returning to more like normal and I believe that several interest groups are now beginning to open up. To make matters even more positive, we are looking at shortly starting up four new groups. These are Wine Tasting, Walk & Dine, Puzzle Group and Robotics. Yes, I had to google that latter one: it is the combination of computer science and engineering. See, I told you we had members with hidden talents.

I guess that wine tasting is self-explanatory. With the Walk & Dine, the idea is that we go out for a walk, culminating in a visit to a hostelry for a spot of lunch, and no, we shall not be visiting McDonalds! Douglas Buchanan is looking at a Puzzle group, possibly along similar lines to the Quiz afternoon he has recently organised. Another group that will be re-starting as soon as possible is Ten Pin Bowling. This proved to be the fastest growing group in u3a history when we had around 70 members join in about a week. Unfortunately, we only had one session before lockdown hit us.

We are also looking at restarting our coffee mornings on the lawn of South Hill Park. It will be brilliant for us to meet up in person at last. Zoom has been excellent in keeping BFu3a open but there is no comparison with meeting face to face with old and new friends. After all, most of us are sociable animals and we are not meant to be locked away in isolation.

I have been in contact with the Open Learning Centre regarding Open Meetings. I suspect it will probably be August at the earliest before we can start holding our Open Meetings there. Much will depend on whether masks will still be required indoors after June 21st and if some form of social distancing will be required. We may decide to hold hybrid meetings, so that members who are unable to visit the OLC will be able to use Zoom to watch the proceedings.

As I say, I believe we have much to look forward to and it is up to every member to take the bull by the horns and get back into the swing of u3a life.

Please make a note in your diaries to attend the Zoom AGM on Thursday 27th May. You will be able to log on from 13:45, ready for a timely 14:00 start. I look forward to seeing you for that very important meeting. This has been one of the most pleasing Chatters I have written for a long time, as there are so many positive pieces of news.

Another piece of good news is that I would like to thank Doreen Coupe for volunteering and joining our happy band of editors responsible for publishing this newsletter. Thank you for that Doreen and good luck. You will be in good hands with Bruce Collins and Peter Arthur, and you have given Lucy Simnett the opportunity to stand down after eight years as editor. This is Lucy's final Newsletter and I thank her for all her hard work over so many years.

Wishing all our members the very best for the 12 months ahead. The good times are returning.

Dave Lenton, Chair BFu3a
chair@bracknellu3a.org.uk

Speakers Corner

Coffee Mornings – Every Wednesday between 11:00 and 12:00.

6 May 2021 Sue Lambert *Scam Awareness Education*

27 May 2021 **AGM** followed by Dan Allen *The VC - Facts and Fancies*

Unless otherwise stated these meetings are by Zoom starting at 14:00 (join a little earlier for a chat) using this link:

[Bracknell Forest u3a Open Meeting](#)

Alternatively use these codes when starting Zoom:

ID 867 5751 0659 Password 332121

Update from the talk on a Nepalese orphanage

At the last Zoom Open Meeting, one of our members, Marcia Watson gave a talk about an orphanage in Nepal. I received the following lovely email from her:

Hi All,

Just to let you know that the total amount raised from the sale of Rainbow Handicrafts is £139! Please would you convey my thanks to all your lovely members who made purchases.

Thank you too David for emailing my catalogue to u3a members, this certainly helped. This means that with the £70 donation for my talk I now have £209 to send to Goma! She will be so thrilled!

Again, many thanks.

Marcia

Calling all Group Coordinators

The Committee would like to thank you for all the work that you are doing to keep BFu3a operating in these unusual times. In the last Newsletter a note was addressed to you about a meeting to offer help in running groups under the Covid lockdown restrictions. The meeting will be on Monday 26th April starting at 10:00. It will be run using Zoom. The idea is to share experiences, discuss ideas, and to offer help where necessary. If you would prefer to nominate someone other than yourself to represent your Group then that will be fine, as long as I am notified in advance. If you have any specific points to make, or questions that you would like to raise, please let me know.

Please book the date and let me know no later than Saturday 24th April that you or your nominee will be joining us for this special event. Details of the log-in will be circulated a few days before the meeting.

Richard Loveys, Groups Support Officer, BFU3A.

Newsletter Editor Vacancy

The Newsletter Editors are delighted to welcome Doreen Coupe to the team.

We would still like one more Editor, so if you are interested, please let us know via this email address [u3a News Editors](#).

You are not expected to write articles, just to assemble the items submitted by members (using Copy & Paste).

BFu3a Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held virtually over Zoom again this year, on Thursday, **27th May**, starting at **14:00** (Zoom will open at 13:45). Documents for the meeting will be sent to all members (with email) during the week beginning 26th April.

This email will be separate from but at around the same time as the email with our next newsletter and diary number 157.

Members who receive paper copies of the newsletter and diary will receive the papers for the AGM in the same envelope.

The documents for the AGM include:

- The formal notice of the AGM together with a nomination form for committee members. Nominations for the committee need to be returned to the Administration secretary by the 7th May
- The agenda for the meeting
- Minutes of last year's AGM
- The Chair's Review of our activities since the last AGM
- The Group Coordinator's report
- A financial report
- Notice of changes to our constitution to allow for Annual General Meetings to be held virtually, and also a change to our constitution to amend the deadline by which membership fees must be paid.

The Annual General meeting will be followed by an illustrated talk on the Victoria Cross.

Janet Russell, Administration Secretary

Book Group 1

To keep us warm at this time we have just read *The Ashes of London* by Andrew Taylor. It's a mystery tale set in the aftermath of the Great Fire in 1666. It provides a harsh impression of the survivors, dirt and ash, lack of buildings and great differences between the rich lords and poor peasants. Some of our readers found it slow in places but very challenging, trying to adjust our modern street plans to the much smaller area between the Tower, St Paul's, the Strand and Whitehall.

Future Books

On Chapel Sands by Laura Cumming 11 May

My thanks to all who sent my family their kind sympathies on the death of my wife Pauline.

Brian Tonkinson, Coordinator

Book Group 2

We have seven members and usually meet once a month - in non-lockdown times! Our group has been unable to meet for a long while and so we have recently taken advantage of Zoom, organised by our u3a Committee.

In 'normal' times, we meet on the second Wednesday of each month from 14:00 – 16:00. Venues have included Lavender Park Golf Club, South Hill Park cafe or gardens and 'Crema', a cafe in Binfield, whose staff kindly set aside a small area for us.

Books are chosen at the start of each year, from a list organised by Maidenhead Library. The choice is vast and very varied (extra marks for me for alliteration!). We chat about the current book (and have coffee), then we chat some more (not necessarily about the book).

If anyone would like to join us, or come and have a taster of our book group, you would be very welcome. Soon, when the weather is warmer, we hope to meet outside at South Hill Park (with fold-up chairs). Please contact me via the number in the Diary.

Jen Vincent, Coordinator

Blues, Rock and Jazz Jamming Group

The B/R/J Jamming Group has also continued via Zoom throughout all the lockdowns and, as with the Guitar Tuition group, we now use the u3a Zoom log-in so that we don't have to pay for the subscription from our own group funds. We were a little unsure whether this would work for us as it we thought it would restrict our jamming flexibility as to actual timings on the day but I'm pleased to say that it's working very well indeed and I would encourage any group not already using it to give it a whirl. However, we are not able to play together via Zoom because of the communication delay between the various participants, so in each session we individually play and everyone else mutes themselves but then plays along with whoever is playing. Not everyone is comfortable playing individually in this way but we usually get six to eight people who are, and everyone playing individually for us, chooses their own material.

We now have something approaching 150 songs (excluding Xmas carols) in our repertoire and we're all desperate to get back together 'on stage'. There's nothing to beat making music together even though we are mixed ability. We are also looking forward to playing one or two live gigs again for various other organisations in addition to our own esteemed BFu3a (e.g. Wokingham u3a Rock and Roll Group, Bracknell Women's Institute etc). We're hoping to start playing live together after 17th May at the Bracknell Methodist Church. Fingers crossed.

In conclusion, I'd like to add my personal thanks and pay tribute to Graham Dives who provides very much appreciated assistance to help me run the Group, and to Dave Borkin who runs an extremely well organised and highly sophisticated Music Quiz for us every couple of weeks (I think I've only won one in over 25 quizzes... "Could do a lot better, Turner" as my school reports used to constantly remark!!).

Alan Turner, Coordinator.

Digital Photography Group

The DPG had a very successful Zoom meeting this morning Monday 12th April. This was attended by 13 members.

For a change we commenced the meeting by watching *The Fundamentals of Digital Photography* DVD "House Party", as opposed to making it the final section of the meeting. This worked well because it meant that we could discuss the video and what had worked or not worked for us and made it a more meaningful session. This was followed by a discussion about photo books and other topics of interest. The next meeting (again via Zoom) will be on Monday 10th May.

Mavis and John Cook, Coordinators

French Conversation

When the first lockdown happened last year, we stopped our meetings for a while until I got to grips with Zoom. The group remained faithful despite the fact that I sometimes found myself in the wrong Zoom meeting and couldn't get out to let anyone else into the right one.

Fortunately, the technical problems are now a thing of the past and we enjoy our fortnightly chats on Tuesday afternoons. We have two 40-minute Zoom meetings with a 15-minute break in between and usually manage to fill the time very well.

We hope that when the weather gets better, we'll be able to meet in person again. As we usually have around seven members at the meeting, we won't be able to meet indoors for the time being, so we'll keep going with the Zoom meetings, changing to an outdoor venue whenever weather permits.

The aim of the group is to chat in French and (almost) anything goes. Sometimes we look for an interesting article to discuss, other times we chat about what has happened in our lives or a good film we have seen. We are a friendly group and would welcome anyone whose French is reasonably fluent. We don't worry about grammar as we feel that communicating is what it's all about, so don't worry if your French is not perfect. Give it a go.

Lucy Simnett, Coordinator

German Conversation

Between four and six people usually attend our fortnightly Zoom meetings on Thursday afternoons at 14:00. We hope to be able to meet in person again soon. Thanks to the u3a's Zoom subscription, we can now talk for a whole hour which is much appreciated. The topics vary from whatever is going on in the world to German *Lieder* and poems, or proverbs. We are lucky to have a native German speaker in the group who can help us out with words we don't know. We all feel that our chats benefit our fluency in German.

We would be very happy to welcome more people who speak German and want to improve their fluency. Just have a go and see whether it is for you. You might be surprised at what you remember of your school German.

Lucy Simnett, Coordinator

Guitar Tuition Group

The Guitar Tuition Group has continued through the current lockdown, as we did in previous lockdowns i.e. by Zoom and it is moderately successful although trying to show finger positions on the fretboard of my guitar by holding it up close to the screen is a little difficult. We now use the u3a Zoom log-in so that we don't have to pay for the Zoom subscription from our own group funds.

The current group of four learners are progressing really well and most are now confident enough to join in with the jamming sessions which take place, again on Zoom, immediately after the Tuition. Therefore, after we are finally released from the current lock-down, I will start the Tuition course again for absolute beginners. To do this I do need to sit with any new learners 'face to face' (albeit socially distanced) rather than trying to do it on Zoom. Anyone wanting to learn guitar from scratch or just to pick up the guitar again after a period of abstinence, please email me via the u3a website.

Alan Turner, Coordinator.

Italian Conversation

This small but very loyal group meets every fortnight on a Thursday afternoon at 15:15 for an hour's chat on Zoom. As soon as we are able, we will have our meetings in person again, probably somewhere outdoors to begin with.

Most of us are either learning Italian or trying to remember what we learned a long time ago but we find that our knowledge and fluency of the language has improved (slowly) with time.

The topics of our conversation vary from articles we have read or television programmes we have seen to our own experiences. We all strive for correct grammar but feel that understanding someone and being understood is the most important thing.

If anyone speaks some Italian and would like to join us, please get in touch. You would be very welcome.

Lucy Simnett, Coordinator

Local History Group

As with everyone else, we have not been able to run our normal programme of activities for the past year but we have managed some meetings by Zoom.

A significant activity for some of our members was taking part in the National u3a High Street project in September. The purpose of this project was to survey our local shopping areas in September last year to record the shops that were in business at that time. We will then repeat the survey, probably during September this year, to identify what changes have taken place during this difficult time for the retail industry.

This project has taken place in 234 u3as around the country and the national High Street project team will produce an interactive website to show the results of all the surveys. Our Local History group surveyed Crowthorne High Street, Bracknell High Street and The Avenue in the Lexicon. My thanks go to Jenny McKeever, Sue Hester, David Fisher, Carol and Graham Clark, Alan Buckingham and Joyce Brown for their help with the surveys and data input.

In August we held a socially distanced meeting at Birch Hill Community Centre to discuss the memoirs and life of Cissie Simmons, a lady who was born in 1907 and lived all her life in Warfield. Later this year we hope to visit the area and lanes that she talks about in her memoirs.

Also, during the year, we held two Zoom meetings in which members read extracts from the book by David Neal Ford called *East Berkshire Town and Village Histories*, and in another Zoom meeting we had a fascinating talk by John Painter from the Friends of Reading Abbey on 900 years of Reading Abbey, which emphasised how important Reading was in the middle ages.

We hope to get out and about more this year, and have plenty of ideas from our plans that we were unable to achieve last year.

Janet Russell, Co-ordinator

Lunch Club

The Lunch Club meets usually on the 4th Monday of the month at 12:15 and we enjoy the company of approximately 20 regular members. Our base is The Weathervane where they always look after us and the food is excellent and reasonably priced.

There will be no Lunch Club in May but after a long wait for safety, we will be getting together again on **Monday 28th June** at the Weathervane, at 12:15. **Please let me know you are coming as I need to make sure we have the right number of small tables.** I have initially booked for 25 to 30 people but if there are more, I have to arrange for this.

It will be good to see you all, and The Weathervane are pleased to welcome us all back.

All Members are welcome to the Lunch Club. Just arrive at the venue, at the time stated above, for the usual monthly meeting, for good social company, laughs and food. I look forward to seeing you all.

Joyce Brown, Coordinator

Mixed Media Art

Our group has not done anything together during these Covid days as our base in South Hill Park has been shut. Now that an end is in sight in June, we are starting to reorganise.

After many years of running the group, our coordinators Sheila, Jaci and Doreen have stepped down so they can concentrate on their art rather than administration. Jon Morse and Ray Grant have agreed to take over.

Jon Morse, Coordinator

MOTO 1

We are still keeping up with our weekly Zoom meetings as a way of keeping in touch. Hopefully it will not be much longer before we can start meeting up in person, maybe at South Hill Park, weather permitting.

I have been busy organizing our first outing for the end of June so I'm hoping that the road map for the end of lockdown stays at the 21st June. We are having a barbeque at Easthampstead Park Hotel. It will be interesting to see what refurbishments the new owners have done to improve the venue.

Then we should be back to some normality with our monthly meetings and lots of outings and lunches.

Diane Jones, Coordinator

MOTO 2

At last, we are allowed to meet up outside in groups of six. Moto 2 took advantage of this for some of us to meet at South Hill Park. We were fortunate to choose a day that was sunny and very warm. We have really missed meeting and enjoyed this initial get together. We are now looking forward to meeting for coffee on 15th April and lunch on 20th May. We are also continuing with our twice weekly Zoom meetings as a back-up.

Brenda Murphy, Coordinator

Music Appreciation (Modern)

At the moment we are meeting on Zoom but soon we hope to be able to meet live and listen to music properly.

We could do with a few more members, so if anyone is interested in listening to various music from the 50s up to today then please email me at blues@bracknellu3a.org.uk.

Tony Bolt, Coordinator

Music Makers and Recorders

Until we can meet again, Music Makers and Recorders have combined online.

We meet every two weeks at 10:00 on a Monday on Zoom and we usually play for nearly two hours as well as having a chat.

We accompany a soundtrack online but mute ourselves on Zoom. The music scores are all online for anybody who doesn't have a copy, so can be downloaded before playing.

Anne Pusey Co-ordinator

Needlecraft Group

The Needlecraft Group meets on the 4th Monday of the month at about 14:30.

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

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

There will be no meeting in May but our next one is Monday 28th June 2021 at the usual time at my house. Hopefully we can meet outside, weather permitting, to help with safety issues.

Please can you let me know if you can come. It will be lovely to see you all.

Joyce Brown, Coordinator

Poetry Group

The Poetry Group will continue to meet in the SHP area on the first Monday of each month at 10:00. Please contact me via the phone number in the diary for up-to-date details. All are welcome, listeners, writers and sharers of poetry.

John Giles, Coordinator

Here is a lovely poem written for our last meeting:

THE GARDEN OF MY HEART By Jean Abel

*When I close my eyes and let the dreaming start,
Flowers are growing in The Garden of My Heart,
I see Orchids for joy, Pansies for smiles,
Carpets of Bluebells that go on for miles and miles,
Heather for wishes, Tulips for kisses,
And lots and lots of Forget-me-nots,
Snowdrops for hope, Daisies for play,
Jasmine for perfume at the end of the day.*

*When weeds of discontent rear their ugly heads,
I rip them right out of my lovely flower beds.
If dark stormy clouds should ever be seen,
I tend my Garden lovingly, to keep it evergreen.
When the sun's scorching heat, causes me pain,
I feel love pour down on me, like a soothing summer rain.
The garden birds all sing a beautiful refrain,
And my flowers keep blooming again and again.*

*I see Sweet Peas and Dahlias, with colours so bright,
Delicate Fuchsias such a wonderful sight,
Daffodils so yellow, Magnolia so mellow,
Honeysuckle, Stocks and tall Hollyhocks,
Lilies for peace, Sunflowers shine above,
And red, red Roses for everlasting love...
As I open my eyes to face a brand new day,
The Garden of My Heart, just fades away.*

Scrabble Group

Last time I asked you to find the 15 three-letter words permissible in Scrabble containing an O and an X as a recognition of the Chinese Year of the OX. Here are the answers:

BOX COX DOX EXO FOX GOX HOX LOX NOX OXO
POX SOX VOX WOX OXY

This time there are no obscure words as answers. There are 10 anagrams for you to unjumble:

AAIINRT AEIINRR AIIILNT AILLNOS IILLRS
EIIILORS EIIILSTT IILLNST IILNORS IINOTTU

Martin Stephens, Coordinator

Singing for fun

When you read the new diary, you will see the **28th June** listed for SFF. This is on the premise that groups of 30 or so will be able to meet indoors on that date.

It is extremely unlikely we shall be able to sing but I thought it would be helpful to hold a meeting to discuss the way forward.

Hopefully this can go ahead, but like anything else it all depends....

In the meantime, keep on singing and don't forget this month's birthdays.

Lena Webb, Coordinator

Spanish – Beginners Year 2

A few of us have continued to meet over Zoom to try and improve our Spanish. Although Zoom has its disadvantages, it has enabled us to keep meeting with one of our number who moved away from Bracknell during the lockdown! We would welcome new members as we are a very small group.

Chris Nevin, Coordinator

Walking group

Good news. The Walking Group will resume its regular walking programme starting Tuesday 4th May and details will be sent to members nearer the time. Meanwhile, informal groups of up to six friends have been walking during April and members are being informed of any vacancies to share the joy around.

Roger Jones, Coordinator

Editor's Note

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Grateful thanks to all contributors.

Deadlines for contributions to the next editions are:

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Please send contributions to all editors at:

newseditor@bracknellu3a.org.uk

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