

NEWSLETTER – Winter 2022



Season's greetings

The start to our new 2022/23 year has been encouraging. Since our Meet and Greet Day in September, we have welcomed no fewer than 72 new members, and several new groups have started (see page 2).

The number of volunteers has also increased, by 12% , since March. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our u3a and this increase is a sign of a healthy u3a. Many thanks to each and every one of our volunteers for their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication. But more are always welcome!

One change we will be introducing in 2023 is to have three new member meetings, spread throughout the year. This is to reflect the fact that we are now getting a modest but fairly steady flow of new members from month to month.

We also plan to introduce *Chatter and natter* meetings, which is really just another name for coffee mornings! Quite a few members have said they would welcome the opportunity to meet every so often for a chat, so look out for further details in the new year.

The whole committee wishes everyone all the best for Christmas and the new year.

Rod Marshall

Meetings

- Our final monthly meeting of the year will take place on 14 December, at Queen Mary's College Central Studio in Cliddesden Road.

The first part will be a talk with the intriguing title *The Sewing Room – a ghost story!* The speaker is a lady named Heather Wylde, and she has told us that her talk is a tale of mystery and intrigue.

For the second part, Tony Summers is providing a small choir. They will sing five short carols and Tony will then lead the audience in two further carols, *Away in a Manger* and *O Come All Ye Faithful*.

The meeting will start at 2pm, but members are welcome to arrive from 1.30. Seasonal refreshments will be available before and after the meeting, to welcome in the festive period together.

- **There will be no monthly meeting in January. The first one of 2023 will be on 8 February.**
- A coffee morning for new members will be held at the Lychpit Community Hall from 09.30 to 11.30 on Friday 27th January. More details will be sent out nearer the time.



New groups update

We have started eight new groups in the last few weeks and they are all thriving.

The **Book Club** had a fantastic response from members – please see Elaine’s report on the next page.

The **Local History** group had a walking tour around Basingstoke and saw sites linked to Jane Austen, Oliver Cromwell, Catherine of Aragon and Thomas Burberry. A member said ‘There is such a wealth of history on our doorstep, who knew?’

It was decided that the Current Affairs group would be renamed the **Discussion Group**. A chair is appointed at each meeting and the first meeting included discussions about population growth, climate change, immigration and the apparent shift to the right of politics in many countries.

The **Transport Group** met for the first time in November. Members present indicated their interest in buses, trains, cars, the underground, helicopters, ships, farm vehicles, aircraft, and transport in the future.

The **Mindfulness / Meditation** and **Backgammon** groups are settling down well.

At least 20 members have taken advantage of the **Very Relaxed Duplicate Bridge** online group.

I’m pleased to say that the **Literature** group has not had to close. Thank you to Marie and Liz for providing a venue and leadership.

Thank you to Joan for organising three craft sessions while her Gardening group isn't meeting during the winter. She has had a very positive response from members.

I would like to thank Elaine, Mary, Richard, Edward, Paul, Jane, Martin and Heather for helping to set up these groups for fellow members.

Creating a new group is an exciting and rewarding experience. Why not try it? If you would like to chat about any ideas you have, please contact me on the email address below.

If you want further information about these groups please look at the website or email

groupsbasingstokeu3a@gmail.com

Janet Field
Group facilitator

Storage space required – can you help?

We need to find a new home for our u3a’s audio equipment. This includes two chunky speakers.

Queen Mary’s College has no storage available, and no committee member has been able to help. Our Assets Manager Sue Seamour has explored various other options such as storing the equipment at Christ Church, but this would cost money and is hardly an ideal location when the equipment is going to be needed at QMC.

If you would be able and willing to provide storage space for the equipment, preferably not too far from QMC, please let Sue know; it would be greatly appreciated.

Possible reduction in council tax for individuals with a ‘severe mental impairment’

One of our local councillors has drawn attention to the following. He in turn thanked Martin Lewis for highlighting the matter.

A reduction from a household’s council tax bill may be available if an individual in the household is diagnosed as having a “severe mental impairment” (SMI). Examples given of eligibility are individuals with Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, dementia or strokes. The discount is worth a minimum of 25%, all the way up to, in some cases, the entire bill being wiped and backdated. This can be worth thousands of pounds.

Where someone is diagnosed as having an SMI and receives or is eligible for a qualifying benefit, it means they are then ‘disregarded for council tax purposes’.

The Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council application for SMI discount can be found at

<https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/page/34264/Application%20for%20a%20severe%20mental%20impairment%20discount%20or%20exemption.pdf>

Don’t be put off by the length of this link – the application form is just a single page.

Book club update

On 24/25 October we had our first two sessions of the new book club with around 65 attendees. We were reviewing *The Bees* by Laline Paull.

There was an interesting reaction from both groups with many scoring the book 8 or 9 out of 10 as well as 1 or 2. The final average scores for Monday were 5.8 and Tuesday 6.5.

The premise of the book about the bee society proved interesting for many of our readers but there was difficulty remembering which perspective this author was coming from in her maiden novel. Sometimes it was written as if our heroine was a bee, but often she took on many human traits that did grate on some people. People also felt the book could have been shorter and there was a lack of likeable characters.

The story was one of triumph over the norm as our bee – Flora 717 battled her way from sanitation worker, to worker bee, to ultimately the mother of a new hive. Along the way we meet the nasty wasps and the conniving spiders. Most came away with a new found respect for bees and concern for the impact of both farming of honey and the impacts our changes to the environment have on their food source.

The book was likened to the bee version of *Watership Down* without the lovable characters and even *Handmaid's Tale* given the way the society was so controlled not by the queen but her sages, that reminded people of the way that cults function.

If you are thinking of buying the book, before you do, flick through to the end and check if you have chapters after the epilogue about bee appreciation and bee facts. Some of our members had them and some did not. This extra factual information of bees gave credibility to many of the problems that readers grappled with, for example 1 in 10,000 infertile worker bees spontaneously start laying eggs and are often ejected from the hive.

There are spaces for new members in the Tuesday group, so do please sign up if you're interested.

Elaine Budd

Your committee

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|-----------------|---|--|
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