



# Weston Turville u3a Newsletter

February 2026

Learn, laugh, live, learn.

**General Meetings** “The Secret Lives of Molecules” provided a fascinating start to our 2026 general meeting speakers with a talk on the quirks of science and stories of discovery and we will probably now look at urine and caffeine in a new light. However we will be looking at how the British first fell in love with caffeine at our next meeting on **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February** when Melanie King will look at how tea, coffee and chocolate arrived in this country causing much anxiety and debate.

Also on the agenda will be teas and coffees (bring your own cups), the book swap table and a few group leaders who will be letting us know what their groups are doing. It all starts at 2.30pm. The following meeting is on **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March**.

**Chairman’s Report** There are a number of things for me to report on this month:

**Talks** Last month’s talk by Kathryn Harkup was truly excellent and held us all spellbound. We will certainly invite her again.

This month we welcome Melanie King who tells us about ‘Tea, Coffee and Chocolate: How the British first fell in love with Caffeine’. She tells us: *This talk explains why Europeans were so terrified of these drinks and explores some of the ingenious ways they were consumed in the 18th century.* Sounds interesting!

**Committee Membership Secretary** You will know from last month and my email to you all that **Mike Munday** has had to step down from his role as Membership Secretary for health reasons. I would like to thank him sincerely on behalf of us all for his work in this position – and to wish him a speedy recovery. I am very pleased to say that **Lindsey Beer** has very kindly agreed to step into his shoes. Lindsey will be known to some of you as the leader of the card making group and is also looking to start a Scrapbook and Memory book group. I am sure she will make a worthy successor.

**Other news** **Annie Edwards** has been a much valued member of the committee in a variety of roles for a number of years and has now decided to step down. She also used to run the Pub Grub group. We are all grateful to her for all she has done for us.

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**Dementia Workshop** I have been in touch with Nathan Hartley of Bluebird Care who writes: “Bluebird Care is working in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society to provide free Dementia Friends Workshops across our area for local businesses, charities and organisations. There are over 900,000 people currently in the UK who are living with dementia, so these free awareness information sessions are proving to be popular.

Each session is 1 hour long, interactive and thought-provoking. It's a must for anyone who wants to find out more about dementia and, in particular, how we can work together to create a dementia-friendly community.”

If there is sufficient interest, we will organise a session, probably in the Chapel Room. We will make a small charge to cover the costs (with any surplus going to the Alzheimer's Society).

*If you would like to join a session, please email me within the next week or so - with your preferred day and time.*

**Have a Go Group meeting** Twelve people showed an interest in joining such a group and at my suggestion Karen Newman will be holding an **Inaugural meeting at 1.30pm in the Rugby Club before the General Meeting next week on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February.** If you would like to join them then, please do: I am sure they would be delighted to see you.

**Another date for your diary** Our annual **Quiz Night** is going to be on **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November.** Show that you aren't superstitious and come along then to exercise your brain! Full details to follow later.

Simon Evers [chairman@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:chairman@wtu3a.org.uk).

**Monthly meetings book exchange** We are still looking for anybody who would be willing to join the team of members who each month look after books of the very popular book exchange - and also a member who would be willing to take over the co-ordination of this. Please contact Simon Evers if you can help. Thanks.

**Barn Dance** With a similar event being held in the village in March, the Barn Dance has been postponed until later in the year. More details will follow when the new date has been decided.

**General Meeting date change.** Due to circumstances beyond our control, the June meeting will be held a week earlier than scheduled so put **Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June** in your diaries.

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## **NEWS FROM THE GROUPS**

**Card making** There is still room for new cardmakers (meetings are on the second Thursday of each month – 10am to 12.00 in the Chapel Hall – so if you are interested let Lindsey Beer know at: [cardmaking@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:cardmaking@wtu3a.org.uk) The next meeting is on **12<sup>th</sup> March**. Apologies for the wrong dates being shown in the last newsletter.

**Scrapbook and Memory Book** Lindsey Beer is looking to get the new group going. With everyone having plenty of pictures, holiday bits and pieces and would like to display them in a book, this could be the group for you. Lindsey has all the equipment to make these items into actual books. Anyone interested should contact Lindsey at [cardmaking@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:cardmaking@wtu3a.org.uk) or speak to her at the next general meeting.

**Mahjong Group** Joy Williamson is still looking for one or two (or more) people to join the Mahjong group. Mahjong is a 19th-century Chinese, four-player game of skill, strategy, and luck, often compared to the card game Rummy. Using a set of 144 tiles - comprising suits (Bams, Dots, Craks) and honors (Winds, Dragons) - players draw and discard tiles to form specific sets (melds) and a pair to create a winning hand.

The group meets in the Chapel Room on the second Thursday of the month from 2pm to 4pm. It is a lot of fun and not difficult to learn.

Please contact Joy at [mahjong@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:mahjong@wtu3a.org.uk) if you are interested.

**Trips** Thankfully we have got two members who have volunteered to run the group. Sarah Gunn and Sharon Pennery will be looking after things and they will be at the next general meeting to gauge interest in their planned trips.

The two visits are: **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June** – a coach trip and visit to Windsor Castle with a likely cost of £45 and **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December** a coach trip to Bath Christmas Market which will be about £21. Contact them at [trips@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:trips@wtu3a.org.uk) if you are not at the meeting.

**Quiz Group** **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February** is the date of the next afternoon quiz. It is at 2.30pm in the Chapel Room. You can come on your own or as a group for this enjoyable afternoon's entertainment. More details from Joy Mantell on [quizzing@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:quizzing@wtu3a.org.uk)

**Joint Coffee morning with ACu3a** **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February** is the date for the first coffee morning of the year at the Five Bells starting at 10.30am. You can either just turn up, or Marie Jones on [coffee@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:coffee@wtu3a.org.uk) will let you have further details. The following one will be on **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March**.

**Walking Group** The first walk of the year took place in the Tring area and some 14 members braved the walk – no doubt encouraged by the thought of mulled wine and mince pies afterwards! After the February walk, the next one is scheduled for **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March**. Contact Sylv Elliott on [walking@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:walking@wtu3a.org.uk) if you want more information.

**Theatre visits** Based on the Christy Lefteri's best-selling novel a performance of "The Beekeeper of Aleppo" has tickets available on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March**. Tickets are £36 and it starts at 7.30pm.

"Barnum" is on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March** – 2.30pm with tickets being £42. This show features Lee Mead as Barnum and includes the famous tightrope walk across the stage. Onto **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May** and we have an evening of "That'll be the Day" which celebrates timeless hits from the 1950s until the 1980s. This has a 7.30pm start and costs £33.50. Finally, for now, there is on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September** a performance of "Choir of Man". This is an evening of foot-stomping entertainment featuring bar songs, folk classics, Broadway hits as well as classic rock and pop anthems.

If you are interested in any of these let Melanie Evans know as soon as possible at [theatre@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:theatre@wtu3a.org.uk)

**Crafts** The group meets on the second Wednesday of each month, from 10am to midday in the Chapel Hall, so the next ones are on **11<sup>th</sup> February** and **11<sup>th</sup> March**. Tea and biscuits are available. Our current members continue to support and share their skills — and together we enjoy a creative, friendly morning full of ideas and laughter. If you'd like to try something new or learn new craft skills, come along and see what we do! If you are interested have a chat with Sandra Crannage or email her at [crafts@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:crafts@wtu3a.org.uk)

**Writing Group** The new Writing group got off to a good start with a lot of ideas. We are beginning with writing about part of our life so far and in particular - The Teenage Years. Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March** at 2pm at Joy Mantell's house so contact her at: [groups@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@wtu3a.org.uk) for further details. Group members will be welcome to choose their topics – either serious or trivial.

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**Science and Technology** Mark Mainwaring recently gave us an interesting talk about his planned world record attempt in an aircraft he made in his garden shed. Looking ahead on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March** there is a visit to the National Space Centre in Leicester. There are still some seats left for the visit to this interesting place which is also home to the UK's largest planetarium offering stunning 360° full dome experiences. This is a full day trip by coach and the cost of £50 includes travel, entry fees to the museum and Planetarium.

With no trips in April due to the proximity of Easter, the following outing is on **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May** when we go to Frogmore Paper Mills near Hemel Hempstead. This is a unique heritage site, where paper has been made since 1774 and the first paper machine was placed in 1803. During the visit you will also get the chance to make paper and possibly even get a short trip along the adjacent canal. There will be morning and afternoon visits and the cost is £15. The visit to Matthews Brickworks has not been confirmed but late April is a possibility.

As there has been a lot of interest in the tour of the Elizabeth Line on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June**, a second trip is planned for **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July**. The coach will leave Weston Turville at 8.45am (cost is £18) for the journey to Taplow to meet the guide. The rest of the trip, including train rides and lunch, is free.

Let John Beer at: [science@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:science@wtu3a.org.uk) know if you are interested in any of these visits.

**Discussion Group** The next meeting of the group is on **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March** starting at 10.30am at the Five Bells. At their last meeting, the group discussed – How important is routine in your life? What is the most frightening thing that has happened to you? Can the prime minister remain in office? Should old people be forced to go into homes against their will? For more interesting discussions just come along on the first Friday of any month. The group leader is Terry Jones on [discussion@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:discussion@wtu3a.org.uk)

**Handbell ringing** A reminder that you don't need any musical knowledge or expertise as the handbell ringing is all done by numbers. The group meets every Friday morning at John Beer's house so contact him at [handbells@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:handbells@wtu3a.org.uk) If you fancy trying it.

**Chess** The group meets on the second and fourth Fridays of each month for more chess, chatter and chips at the Chandos Arms in the village. So the next get togethers will be on **27<sup>th</sup> February** and **13<sup>th</sup> March**. We welcome new members at any time and if you would like to find out more about the chess group, please contact Geoffrey Howell on [chess@wtu3a.org.uk](mailto:chess@wtu3a.org.uk).

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**Gardening** At the beginning of February members of the Gardening Group enjoyed a visit to see snowdrops (Galanthus) at The Cedars in Wendover accompanied by the owner Mrs Sarah Nicholson. The gardens are included in the Buckinghamshire Open Gardens for Charity Scheme. During a period of continuous torrential rain we were delighted to have a pleasant dry day in which to walk around this plantsman's garden in the Chiltern Hills with sloping lawns. We understand that there are 148 different types of snowdrop and some collectors will pay up to £500 for a rare specialist bulb. We were able to purchase a selection of potted snowdrops at a much lower price! Snowdrops should be planted "in the green" that is with leaves still in place and flower if possible. Expired bulbs can be used but not usually as effective. Following our walk around the garden with its trees and shrubs and looking at the many areas of snowdrops and aconites, we warmed up with a hot drink and delicious home-made cakes in the very large kitchen-diner of our hostess. There is no meeting at the end of February the next being on **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** when we welcome the return of our local Horticulturist Edwin Rye to talk about spring planting. For further details of the Gardening group visit the WTU3a website. Please note this group is not a substitute for the former Garden Visits group which is currently in abeyance awaiting a Group Leader. Please contact the Groups Co-ordinator Joy Mantell if you are able to help.

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**Network News** The Thames Valley u3a Network have a couple of Zoom presentations coming up shortly. They are: **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March** at 10.30am there is a talk on Sutton Hoo - the awe-inspiring Anglo Saxon burial site in Suffolk and on **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April** a talk on Pandemics! The usual booking arrangements apply and details are on their website: [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk) or you can link from our site.

**u3a Conference** Tickets are now on sale for the national u3a conference which is being held between **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July** at the University of York. The festival will feature a wide range of activities, talks, workshops, exhibitions, sports tournaments and concerts that celebrate the vibrancy of u3a. Tickets are £18 per day or £50 for the three day experience and accommodation at the university campus ranges from £75 for one night to £258.33 for four nights. This includes breakfast and VAT. Details from: [festival@u3a.org.uk](mailto:festival@u3a.org.uk)

"If January is the month of change, February is the month of lasting change. January is for dreamers... February is for doers."

– Marc Parent

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