

Hi everyone!

From the Chair

Welcome to the Chiswell Green u3a New Year of 2026/27. I do hope that you share the view that the year ended 31st March was again a successful and enjoyable experience.

My Chairman's report for the forthcoming AGM will provide a more detailed review of the year but in this message I just wish to express my personal thanks:

- To the committee members who not only perform specifically assigned roles so well but contribute wholeheartedly on all matters needing our attention.
- To all the excellent Group Leaders, Organisers and Helpers without whom we simply could not function.
- And to you the members who contribute to the special spirit of Chiswell Green u3a.

All of this makes it a privilege to be the Chair with another year in prospect.

Tony Jackson

SPEAKER'S CORNER

In April, the speaker will be Andrew Smith on the topic

"Dogs and holidays"

The speaker at May's meeting will be Andrew Baker and the subject is

"Charles Dickens"

INTEREST GROUPS

Refreshment Rota



Apr 2nd
May 7th
Jun 4th

Jul 2nd
Aug 6th

In Our Time
Ladies' Points of View
Local Events/London Walks
Needles & Pins
Paper Crafts

WELL DONE KNITTERS

I first started to knit in Mrs de Board's infant class many, many years ago! It was the traditional cotton dishcloth for Mother's day. I suspect that a lot of it was reknitted on the quiet but my mum used it until it wore out!!

A couple of years ago a neighbour put out a plea on our street *WhatsApp* group for blankets on behalf of his school in Luton. He said that quite a lot of his children were below the poverty line and sometimes it was a case of "eat or heat" in their homes. There were also many in homeless accommodation. Oh good - I thought I can use all my stash of wool and do some good at the same time! I roped in my friends to join me and soon we were creating blankets at the rate of one a month.

At Needles and Pins one month, I was asked why I was knitting squares. After I'd explained, the lovely ladies in the group had a month where we all knitted squares and I was able to take two blankets to my neighbour the following month. At our showcase last year I told everyone about the blankets, and as a result I am delighted to tell you that the "square mountain" has grown. This year alone I have been able to deliver six blankets so far with another on the production line! My neighbour has told me that the blankets are greeted with joy every time he brings them in for his family workers to distribute.

He kept one back for a little girl with special needs who often needs some "quiet time with a comfort blanket". She was allowed to choose one of the batch before Christmas to keep in school and last month she sent me a letter to you all.

*Dear Mrs Duggan and the knitting ladies,
Thank you for my blanket! You are the best!*

I couldn't agree with her more! Thank you to all; to wool donors and those knitters whose squares are much appreciated. As I often tell you all - if it keeps you from reaching for the biscuits - it's a double bonus!!!

Sarah Duggan



LONDON WALKS - HIDDEN WESTMINSTER

On a beautiful sunny morning, the London Walks Group gathered by the familiar setting of Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Our excellent guide John Colmans explained that as the walk progressed from the well known Westminster settings we would experience the lesser known areas...and so it proved!

The first stop was to view the statue of Sir Winston Churchill and the plaque in honour of PC Palmer who died preventing an armed terrorist from entering the Houses of Parliament. Moving past the Victoria Tower and into the gardens we viewed further statues of Emily Pankhurst, the suffragette, and the 'Six Burghers of Calais' who helped end the long siege of the French town during the 100 year war.

Adjacent to the River Thames, the Victoria Garden is a piece of open land often used by TV companies for interviews with politicians; it houses the Buxton Memorial but there are currently objections to the concept of adding the Holocaust Memorial. Attention was drawn to a plaque in honour of Sir Thomas Frank who as Chief Engineer for the London County Council during the Second World War saved London from flooding during the blitz by fixing 128 breaches of the Thames wall.

On reaching the Lambeth Bridge, we were next to MI5 building and John also pointed out in the distance the MI6 building recognisable as the one 'blown up' in the Bond movie. Also facing the bridge is the former ICI Millbank headquarters, now home to a multitude of apartments, behind which high on the corner of the block is a beautiful statue of Ada Lovelace. She was a mathematician and writer, and is considered to have been the first computer programmer.

Moving away from the river we stopped at St John's Gardens, once a graveyard which at it's peak housed six times more bodies than intended; and Page Street with council houses designed by architect Sir Edward Lutyens. Regent Street with the ordinary looking Regency Café, but now famous and popular having featured in movies most recently Rocket Man.

On into Monk Street and the Devil's Acre, a former slum area where police feared to go; Tufton Street where residents included Eleanor Rathbone (pioneer of family allowance), and poet Siegfried Sassoon plus a monastery now a bowling alley. Into Smith Square South where the Transport House building has been the home to the TUC, the Labour Party and the Local Government Association. Also located there is the former Conservative Party Headquarters now housing the European Commission.

In Smith Square North (St John's Smith Square) is the first church which Queen Anne had built now used purely for concerts. Running off this square is the very fashionable Lord North Street, popular with MPs previously including Harold Wilson and the disgraced Jonathan Aitken. Some of the houses still bear signs pointing down to air raid shelters which were located beneath them.

We now reached the true gems of Hidden Westminster – Cowley Street and Barton Street. Beautiful terraced houses in these peaceful streets still served by gas street lamps unsurprisingly featured often in movies and TV productions and having been home to famous people such as Sir John Gielgud, Lord Reith and T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia).

After calling into Dean's Yard which houses the Westminster School, Westminster Choir School and Church House (admin centre of the Church of England) we returned to the main Westminster thoroughfare via Great College Street to College Green, past the Henry Moore sculpture ending the tour by the Jewel House, once the home of the Crown Jewels.

For three of the weary walkers the final hidden gem was the Marquis of Granby pub, following in the footsteps of Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond.

Tony Jackson



GARDEN VISITS

Finding new gardens to visit isn't so easy but if there is one place worth a revisit it is Ascott House just outside Leighton Buzzard, so it proved when 16 members made the trip on what turned out to be the warmest day of the year so far. The masses of daffodils were a sight to behold, magnolia trees were dotted everywhere and the formal garden was a delight with colourful daffs, tulips and primulas. After a snack lunch sitting in the sunshine we headed for home after an enjoyable trip out.



Val Orchard

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

September 16th 2026	Coach trip to Portsmouth/Southsea	details to follow
December 5th 2026	Christmas Cracker at Cadogan Hall	details to follow
February 10th 2027	Golden Oldies (<i>Tereza Joanne</i>)	details to follow

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING TRIPS

Please remember to have with you or wear your CGu3a Membership card and, more importantly, an up to date emergency contact card, preferably kept together on a lanyard. Details of each event can be found in the Newsletter or on our website. Please note the month when tickets are available for trips. Purchase of tickets can be made at our monthly meetings via Joy Dabson, Event Organiser, with payment by Bank Transfer (preferred option) or cheque.

Tickets: Chiswell Green u3a members ONLY for the first month when tickets for trips are on sale. Tickets for guests will be allowed in the second month when they are on sale. This is to avoid waiting lists for members when guests have taken up places. Tickets must be paid for by Bank Transfer (preferred option) within **seven days**, or on the day they are booked with cheques made payable to **CGu3a Social Account**. Please ensure when writing cheques for Trips that you have filled it in EXACTLY correctly, and written your membership number on the reverse. If paying for more than one outing, please send separate Bank Transfers (preferred option) or separate cheques for each event. Cheques can go in the same envelope. If you wish to make a booking for an outing, you can still do so by contacting the Event Organiser (Joy Dabson) by phone (01923 268018) or via our website or email (trips@chiswellgreenu3a.org.uk). All payments should be made within **seven days**.

Pickup point: The coach will be in Tippendell Lane, at the entrance to Greenwood Park. Please be **prompt** – the coach will not wait. A driver's tip is included in the price of the outing. **If you are unable to go on an outing, or running late**, please contact the Event Organiser by phone, up to 10pm the night before the trip landline (01923 268018) or on the day landline FIRST and if no reply then events mobile (07824 671857). Please make a note of this number. If someone is able to take your place, you may be able to have a refund but this cannot be guaranteed. Ideas and suggestions for trips are always welcomed, and can be placed in the Suggestion Box on the signing table.

****Disclaimer**** If you are participating in any Chiswell Green u3a trip or event, please read the Disclaimer below.

It is the personal responsibility of each member to decide on their own capability to participate in any trips or events organised by the Chiswell Green u3a. Chiswell Green u3a cannot accept any responsibility for your fitness to undertake a trip or participate in a group, event or journey. By committing to any activity you will be declaring that you are fit and able to participate in the said activity.

Tuesday 28th April 2026—BEAULIEU

Waiting list

AN INCLUSIVE TICKET TO GIVE ACCESS TO:-

The National Motor Museum: From the earliest motor carriages to classic family saloons, the world-famous National Motor Museum has one of the finest collections of cars, motorcycles and motoring memorabilia in the world. Latest attraction is "We Had One Of Those" showcasing some of the most popular cars from the 1960s through to the noughties and beyond.

Palace House & Gardens: Palace House, once the gatehouse of the medieval Beaulieu Abbey, has been the Montagu family home since 1538. In an idyllic New Forest setting, overlooking the picturesque Beaulieu River millpond, Palace House was remodelled and extended during the 1800s and is now a fine example of a Victorian country house. Inside, its ecclesiastical heritage sets the grand gothic tone for a home bristling with character and adorned with family treasures, portraits, and memorabilia.

Beaulieu Abbey: This 800 year old Abbey was founded by King John in the 13th century before being destroyed on the orders of King Henry VIII in 1538. Owing to the efforts of the Montagu family ancestors, distant relations of these former kings, the now tranquil Abbey is a conserved ruin where visitors have enjoyed its peaceful setting and appreciated the achievements of its medieval builders.

The Secret Army Exhibition: Uncover Beaulieu's history as a top secret training establishment for special agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War Two.

Enjoy the Beaulieu grounds on the aerial "Skytrain" or via the open top veteran bus.

NOTE: the coach journey is approximately **two hours**.

Depart Greenwood Park: 9:30am

Depart for home: approx 4:30pm

Cost: £40.00

Saturday 9th May 2026—JACK & SARAH at THE MILL AT SONNING

Waiting list

Based on the 1995 film starring Richard E Grant and Dame Judi Dench. Jack, a workaholic lawyer, is suddenly left to raise his baby daughter alone. Enter Amy, a free-spirited au-pair. Against all the odds, and with a little help from an eccentric cast of family and friends, their different worlds collide in a surprising and life affirming way.

The Mill at Sonning is a professional restaurant and theatre venue. The theatre is fully air-conditioned, situated on the River Thames at Sonning Eye. The Mill on this site was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and during the 18th century milled flour for Huntley and Palmers biscuits based in Reading. The waterwheel can still be seen turning in the bar. This is a delightful venue which we have been lucky enough to enjoy many times.

Price includes two course waitress served meal, chosen on the day with a vegetarian option, and tea or coffee after; centre block seats with several "end of rows"; coach and driver's tip.

Depart Greenwood Park: 10:30am

Depart for home: approx 5:00pm

Cost: £83.00

Wednesday 1st July 2026—THAMES RIVER CRUISE

Waiting list

A three hour cruise on board the Caversham Lady through the scenic "*Wind in the Willows*" country which offers a relaxing journey along the picturesque Caversham and Mapledurham reaches of the River Thames. Guests enjoy a Cornish clotted Cream Tea while passing iconic spots like Reading's three bridges, riverside homes, parklands, and the tranquil meanders of the river. The cruise continues, turning at Mapledurham lock & weir, where Mapledurham House, thought to have inspired Toad's home in *Wind in the Willows*, is nestled. The area is renowned for its stunning scenery and serene atmosphere, making it a delightful experience for nature lovers.

The Caversham Lady is a single deck vessel, which has excellent all round visibility and has easy access with a large open foredeck. The Cream Tea includes home made plain and fruit scones, Cornish clotted cream, jam and tea/coffee, served at lunch time. Bar available – **NOTE:** card only.

Please notify Joy if you have any dietary issues when booking.

Depart Greenwood Park: 10:00am

Depart for home: approx 3:30pm

Cost: £51.00

Thursday 27th August 2026—W&H PEACOCKS AUTIONEERS

Selling: April 2026

Auction Insight Evening

The return of one of our favourites. This visit has proved very popular in the past, with much laughter - just what we need.

On arrival we will be welcomed with a glass of wine or juice, and the visit will begin with a short introduction to W&H Peacock and its history.

We will then be invited downstairs - there is a lift - to take part in a light hearted valuation competition. Another chance to see how good you are before we go back upstairs for a light supper and discussion.

Please tell Joy if you are gluten-free when booking.

Please note: This is an evening trip.

Depart Greenwood Park: 5.00pm

Depart for home: approx 9.00pm

Cost: £33.00



PARKING: Could we please remind members not to park in either of the car parks at Greenwood Park if you are going on one of our trips. If parking in local roads, please park with consideration for the local residents, and, if possible, car share to help ease the parking problem. **Thank you.**

CGu3a FACEBOOK PAGE

I hear that some of our members are having trouble accessing our correct *Facebook* page - or are puzzled by it if they do manage to find it. Let me explain.

Some years ago, a u3a member (now an ex member) set up a *Facebook Page* that we could all join and add photos or information about our u3a activities. When this member left the u3a, and moved away, she did not contact *Facebook* to change the name and details of the new Moderator who would run it on behalf of our members. This has resulted in my having to set up a brand-new *Facebook Group* - which has been running now for a few years. But you must make sure that you type in the correct name - the difference only being spacing within the title and so very easy to get wrong.

The correct title of the new *Facebook Group* is:- ChiswellGreenU3A

There is a link to this new *Facebook Group* on the home page of our Chiswell Green u3a website.

All you need to do to join is to follow the instructions which asks for your u3a membership number. I look forward to some lovely photos and some interesting stories!

Pam Whitfield

... *and finally*

"Laughter is timeless. Imagination has no age. And dreams are forever."

Walt Disney