

CHAIR'S BULLETIN No. 32 – Thursday 23 July 2026

A very hard act to follow! Immediately after our AGM last Thursday (attended by a very pleasing 104 of our members), your Committee elected me as their Chair. It is a great privilege (and a rather daunting one!) to be following on from Susie who, as you know, had to stand down last Thursday at the end of her term of office. As I (Rhys Williams, formerly Vice-chair) remarked at the AGM, her leadership has been so vitally important for the running of the organisation which provides us with such a huge variety of activities – Groups, Outings, Speaker Meetings and so on. I will do my best to follow your lead, Susie, but you will be a very hard act to follow!

Also at that Committee meeting, Jill Calvert was confirmed as our next Business Secretary. Jill takes over from Lynda Gardner. In asking members to join me in thanking Lynda I mentioned how important the role of Business Secretary is to an organisation such as ours. This is to ensure, for example, that our activities are in keeping with the various codes of conduct and other important policy documents. As with Susie, we owe Lynda a sincere vote of thanks for keeping us 'on the straight and narrow' over the last few years. I'm sure Jill will be a worthy successor.

The roles of other Committee members will be reviewed at our first regular committee meeting (on August 4th) and I will be letting you know what they are in the next issue of this Bulletin.

Do I have a 'message' in my first Bulletin as Chair? I suppose, if I have, it's to paraphrase a remark made by an American President – no, not the current one, that would never do! It's **'Ask not what Witney u3a can do for you – ask what you can do for the Witney u3a'**! That may sound slightly corny but it's true that every single thing that happens in the Witney u3a happens because someone volunteers to do it – either as a Committee member, or outside the Committee as a Group Leader, greeting you when you sign in for Speaker Meetings, providing refreshments, staffing the book stall and a whole host of other things which make our organisation work. **Volunteering enhances well-being – FACT!** (Sorry, I promised not to do that!)

I shall endeavour to keep to Susie's schedule of producing a Bulletin twice a month. Don't forget, your contributions are always welcome. Please send them, for the present, to my personal email – d.r.r.williams@swansea.ac.uk. Soon the Chair's email – chair.witneyu3a@gmail.com will be transferred to me. Next issue is **due on Thursday 13 August 2026**. Items for possible inclusion should reach me by the Tuesday before publication.

Important Notices

- **Final, final reminder!** There's still just time to enter this year's u3a Essay competition which closes for entries on 31 July. More guidance on this and how to apply is available on the u3a website under 'Learning Activities'.

Group News

The Welsh Language, History and Culture Group has gone into abeyance following my change in roles. Its future will be decided soon.

Members' Notices

None received.

Next Outing

Our August trip will be to Brighton (on Wednesday 19th). The Coach will leave Woodford Way car park at 08:30 am and leave Brighton at 4:00 pm. The cost of this trip will be £18.00 per person and the coach will drop you and pick you up at the seafront. The rest of the day will be yours. Details of how to book this are in Marian's email sent on the 20th July.

Witney u3a Next Speaker Meeting

Normal service will be resumed in August when we will have two Speaker Meetings once again. Both will begin, as always, at 2:00 pm in the Methodist Centre.

The presentation on Thursday 6th August will be by Gareth Morgan and will be entitled: **"The Secrets of Station X - How the Bletchley Park Codebreakers helped win the war."**

As I'm sure you know, Winston Churchill said that the Codebreakers at Bletchley Park were the 'geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled'. Indeed, it wasn't until the 1970s and in some cases the 1990s that the role of Bletchley Park started to become revealed.

The general populous could be forgiven for thinking that Bletchley Park was all about Alan Turing et al and the Enigma Machine, but it was so much more. It was part of a long history of British spy masters and code breakers going back the first Elizabethan age. This talk will give an insight into the work of the thousands of the non-combatants who, indeed, did help to win the Second World War.

The talk on 20th August will be given by Mary McIntyre who has visited us before. This time her presentation will be entitled: **'Shadows in Space and the Stories they tell'**. There will be more information on this in the next edition of the Bulletin.

A Selection of upcoming Trust u3a Online Learning Events - NB a full list can be found on www.u3a.org.uk/online learning events

(Free to all members on zoom via: www.u3a.org.uk/events)

- Monday 27 July at 2:pm: 'Secrets of the human brain'
- Thursday 30 July at 10 am: 'The climate crisis and the National Emergency Briefing'
- Friday 31 July at 10 am: 'Staying Safe Online'
- Tuesday 4 August at 10 am: 'Flight inspirations aviation group: August'
- Friday 5 August at 1 pm: 'Building the world's most advanced airline'
- Tuesday 11 August at 2 pm: 'Digital hobbies for the third age'
- Wednesday 12 August: 'Laughter yoga with Judith: August'

What's on in and around Witney

You'll remember, I'm sure, that we had a visit, last December, from the Wychwood Singers who led us in a delightful Christmas Singalong. We plan to do the same thing this year. Duncan Sedgewick, Honorary Secretary of The Singers, has just sent me notice of an event of theirs – 'Come and Sing! Songs from the Musicals' – which will take place on Saturday 22nd August in The New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood. This is open to all those interested.

Registration is at 9:30 am, Finish at 4:00 pm – £20 per person. For further information and booking, contact Duncan at: duncan_sedgwick@yahoo.co.uk.

(With grateful thanks to Wendy for gathering all the information below)

Cineworld Witney screenings are subject to change of date and time. Please check.

Running until 3rd January 2027, Wonder of Birds. An exhibition inspired by The Book of Birds by Jackie Morris and Robert Macfarlane, at The Weston Library, Oxford. For more information visit go.glam.ox.ac.uk/birds Admission free.

Running until 13th September, Lee Miller: A Woman At War. An exhibition at The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock. The famous photographer, surrealist and war correspondent's wartime images return to Oxfordshire, including photos from her first article in

Vogue – US nurses in Oxford's Churchill Hospital. Open Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 5pm and Sunday 2pm to 5pm. For more information visit sofo.org.uk

From 5th July to 30th August a cream tea will be served every Sunday afternoon 2.30pm to 5pm in the garden of the Reading Room in Combe village. Proceeds to village organisations

JULY

23rd Music Box Events presents Julia Titus' Speakeasy Band at the Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Tickets, including booking fee, £19.51 to £21.68. For more information see cornexchangewitney.org.uk

24th Witney and District Museum invite you to join a guided tour of St Mary's Church. Bringing the building's rich past to life, uncovering everything from ancient carvings and stained glass windows to curious local legends and surprising secrets tucked away in the architecture. 11am to 12.30pm. Meeting at St Mary's Church. £10. Limited spaces so booking essential. Contact sedelaney2@gmail.com

25th Reaper Promotions presents Witney Warfare. A night of boxing, kickboxing, muay thai at Langdale Hall, Witney. Doors open 3pm. Tickets £30 standard, £50 VIP. For tickets call Chris Ryder 07359 043643.

25th and 26th Open days at North Leigh Roman Villa. An opportunity to see the mosaics and speak to the expert volunteers. 11am to 5pm. For more information see english-heritage.org.uk

26th Witney and District Museum Heritage Walking Tour SOLD OUT

30th A summer lunchtime recital of piano duets, songs and poetry at Witney High Street Methodist Church. 12.30pm to 1.30pm. Free entry with a retiring collection.

31st Bingo, Pimms and Prosecco Night. Fundraising for Mayor's charities at the Corn Exchange, Witney. Opens 7pm, first game 7.30pm. £15 per person, includes drink on arrival.

AUGUST

5th Cineworld Witney is screening Turandot on Sydney Harbour (Re-release) at 7.15pm

7th Witney Jazz presents Ben Holder's Tribute to Porter and Gershwin. Ace violinist celebrates the music of two titanic jazz composers. Corn Exchange, Witney. Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm. Row seats £20, table seats £22. For more information see witneyjazz.co.uk

8th Cogges Manor Farm Summer Festival. 50 craft beers and ciders, live music all day, summer bar and guest cocktail bar, food paddock including bbq. Open for families 12.00 noon to 6.00pm, adults only 6pm to 10pm. Early bird tickets now on sale. For more information and to obtain tickets visit cogges.org.uk

8th Cineworld Witney is screening Andre Rieu's Summer Concert 2026: Viva Maastricht! At 7pm. Also screening on 9th August at 1pm.