



December 2024 Newsletter



A CHRISTMAS INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIRMAN

Ed: Welcome Tim, to the Christmas Interview for the Newsletter.

Tim: Hi Alan, I'm sorry to see you're under the weather. I hope you soon recover your joie de vivre.

(Tim, referring to the physical distance we observed due to a virus infection! Please don't send any cake,)

Ed: I hope that you don't see this comment as in any way condescending but – you really have grown into this Chairman's job, and you look as though you are genuinely enjoying it now. Am I right or are you a good actor?

Tim: Well, I guess I have grown into it, having been initially reluctant to be in the limelight. I'm now halfway through my three-year tenure, and, yes, I am enjoying it. As you know, I had some big shoes to fill, those of my predecessor, Anne Powell, who left me a very healthy u3a before she moved away last year. What really helps me enjoy the job is the knowledge that our u3a and u3as in general provide a very valuable social function within the community and I feel proud to be a small cog in their machinery. I am also lucky to have the backing of a fully functioning and competent committee who are all so supportive. I am a lousy actor, by the way.

Ed: The Ems Valley u3a Christmas lunch is in a few days' time, are you looking forward to this celebration?

Tim: Indeed, Alan, it is a good bash. Dbee ran it very successfully last year and I am managing it this time. The college restaurant supplied a database in the form of a spreadsheet for me to fill in, and which I extended to help me keep tabs on things. We also created a 'group' on Beacon to which I could add participants as members, meaning that it would be easy to send out emails while respecting GDPR by not harvesting email addresses. However, the proof of the pudding – and the turkey – is in the eating, so fingers crossed it runs according to plan.

Ed: I took the opportunity of having an up to date look at the website before we met, I congratulate you on its layout and 'No Nonsense' approach. You have done a great job and thanks for archiving all my newsletters... It is quicker for me to find an old copy on your site than try and navigate my own filing!

Tim: I'm glad somebody looks at the website. I confess it is not as complete and as up to date as I would like while I'm in the chair. Once I step down in May 2026, I shall return to the website with more time and energy, that is, if the good members will allow me. What I would really appreciate is a deputy webmaster and IT person to help me out, as I don't like to feel I am a single point of failure. I did have someone volunteer recently, but then ill health meant she could no longer continue, unfortunately.

Ed: You and the committee must be very proud of our list of interest groups. It has to be the most comprehensive in the area.

Tim: We are proud of our groups; they are the lifeblood of any u3a. We even have one that focuses on bricks and brickwork, would you believe, and it's astounding how many people have joined that group. I would like to applaud our group leaders, if I may, who provide the necessary leadership and cohesion to give their groups drive and direction. It's not hard to be a group leader, but there always seems to be a general reluctance to take it on, unfortunately. For example, the Ancient Roman History leader is looking for a replacement and, if no-one picks up the baton, the group is in danger of disbanding, which would be sad.

This year we adopted the tagline run by members, for members. It is something I put at the bottom of my mailouts and the rolling programme slideshow that runs before every monthly meeting. I really want to encourage members to step forward, volunteer, start a new group to help pursue their own interests. It's not arduous, it's good fun. I don't like to see groups hanging out the Full sign, though. As I said at the very beginning of my chairmanship, I want to continue Anne's policy of encouraging people to start a second or third group if the one they want to join is full.

Ed: And the success of this magnificent list of groups must be due, in some part, to the enthusiastic and thorough way our Groups Coordinator, Ann goes about her job!

Tim: Ann's energy and dedication to the job are such an asset to us in the committee and to members in general. We are so lucky to have had her support Ems Valley for all these years, long before Mary Anne and I ever moved down to Emsworth. I am sad to be losing her at next year's AGM as she takes a well-earned break from u3a management.

Of course, we now have to recruit a replacement Groups Coordinator. I will use your newsletter to gaze out at your readership and misquote the finger-pointing Lord Kitchener: Your u3a needs You!

Ed: Any secrets you would like to leak to the members for our 2025 delectation.

Tim: Erm, no. I can't think of any right now. Anyway, we don't have secrets, we even publish our committee meeting minutes on the website for all to see.

Ed: The fact that Emsworth can ably support two u3as, and successfully so, is quite amazing, and more and more, the social benefit aspect of being a member of a u3a is evident, so Well Done to you and "Ems Valley" and Well Done to "Emsworth and District".

Tim: Thank you, kind sir. But I must point out, that we stand on the shoulders of giants, past chairmen and committee members who have built up Ems Valley to where it is today. I'm sure Adrian Wakefield would say the same of Emsworth and District, our sister u3a.

Ed: I have looked at the list of speakers for 2025, and there certainly seems to be some interesting meetings in store.

Tim: When I was vice-chairman, I was also speaker secretary – it's a job that gives the vice-chairman something to do. I really enjoyed selecting and engaging speakers for the year that I was in post. I'm glad to see that Vice-chairman Rod Lipscombe has taken on the role so enthusiastically and come up with a slate of interesting speakers for next year. But we are a bit light on After Tea activities, and he and I need to work on that.

Ed: Finally, I expect you would like to take this opportunity to post a Christmas message to the membership, and on behalf of the latter, we in turn wish you and Mary Anne a happy and relaxing festive holiday!

Tim: Of course! On behalf of the Ems Valley committee, I would like to wish all our members a very Happy Christmas, followed by a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Thanks for talking with me, Alan. And thank you for editing such a vibrant newsletter; it's such an asset to our u3a. It really is about time I interviewed YOU!



STEM November meeting – IMMUNOLOGY PART 2.

Our November meeting continued with the complicated but fascinating topic of Immunology. Given the format has proved so popular and successful we continued with a Workshop, led by Vicki King and William Saywell – with over 40 of us listening eagerly to learn more, and ask lots of questions.

Given the complexity of the subject, and to help some of those who missed the first meeting, Vicki gave us a recap on the Fundamentals of Immunology - how our immune system works, given it affects us all in so many ways. Vicki then moved on to the vast array of vaccines that are given to us over our lifetimes from 8 weeks old to our 80s. Heated discussions ensued – some of us had not been offered some of the jabs listed. Vicki told us the JVICI division of the Dept of Health decide who gets what, depending on age and risk – and of course cost. Then there was a fascinating chart showing the historical development of vaccination, starting in 1796 with Jenner’s cow/smallpox to the 2019 introduction of HPV, which is given to both girls and boys. 2020 brought the hugely important Malaria vaccine, which will save so many lives, and 2021 saw the release of the Ebola vaccine. William proceeded to give us several examples of Auto-Immune Diseases, of which there are over 100 – in effect this is our immune system attacking our own bodies. Of course William had to shorten the list for us, but it was interesting to learn that many well known illness are in fact auto-immune – Type 1 diabetes, Multiple Sclerosis, Psoriasis, Lupus, Rheumatoid Arthritis, many bowel illnesses e.g. Crohn’s, Colitis. And as if women didn’t have enough to contend with we heard we are far more likely to get these auto-immune illnesses than men - 78% of those with the illnesses are women! Such an interesting topic, we could keep it going for months. But we have other topics to explore...

STEM December Meeting: Because of the clash with Ems Valley U3A Christmas Lunch, we have had to reschedule. Our next meeting will now be on Wednesday afternoon, 4th December, at 2.00, usual venue. We will be treated to a talk by one of our members, James Mant - “An Insight into Astro Navigation – An Art or a Science”. It should be a fascinating talk, and I loved the quote we were given:
“There is something magical about using the heavenly bodies to find our way on earth.”

All members of Ems Valley U3A are invited to join us if interested. Just let Geoff know, via stem@emsvalleyu3a.org.

Pam Palmer

Travellers Tales – Everyone has one!



Travellers Tales is a unique group in many aspects. They only meet in the winter and always in the evening! Members listen to presentations of travel trips all over the UK (and in the UK!). The idea is to show the good and – if necessary- the not so good happenings of a recent holiday trip. When you have been to a few of these meetings it is hoped that you may decide to present your own recent trip in the form of a 45 minute talk accompanied with your photos. It is surprising how enjoyable it is to relive and share a magic trip. The informal atmosphere at these evenings encourages anyone who may initially feel a little out of depth to rise to the occasion.

The November Monday evening meeting took off to Iceland via John and Loli Keiran and then to the Italian Riviera by train courtesy of Neil Cowell. In truth, we never know what part of the globe a Monday evening may take us. Why not consider joining us?

Your Editor



Monthly Meeting at The Baptist Church – 28th November 2024

The guest speaker was Fran Sandham who talked was titled “The Sea Route to India”. Fran had visited us a year ago when he spoke about his foot traverse across of Africa. This time he spoke about the famous Portuguese explorers, Henry the Navigator (extreme left), Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama (left), and their various sea explorations to find the Indies and the magical spice islands. Fran played the “Prester John” card very heavily as the reason why the sea farers were on this quest. (Prester John was a legendary Christian patriarch, presbyter, and king, who was said to rule over a Christian nation lost amid the pagans and Muslims in the Orient. If challenged by the locals they were out looking for him!) It was very interesting to discover how difficult it was to sail down the west coast of Africa, until the Portuguese realised they had to sail right out into the Atlantic first to find the right winds and current. He held the audience with his light hearted style but I would have liked a little more history and perhaps less Glen Hoddle look-a-likes (well, after the first four or five mentions.....). The Portuguese goal was finding a sea route to Asia and they finally achieved that in a ground-breaking voyage commanded by Vasco da Gama, who reached Calicut in western India in 1498, becoming the first European to reach India. But Fran showed that they enslaved many Africans and did not respect the natives. They only cared about their gold and their spices.

After Tea - Karen Rodger the leader of our Family History group gave a fine presentation – “Who do we think we are?” She outlined how the group operated and reminded us that the group had been in being since 2007!

Jill Stanley then told us about her research into her Great-grandfather, a man whom she knew absolutely nothing about, not even his name! She gradually uncovered his story, using online records, local newspapers, and other publications, and found that he was called William Fletcher, and was born illegitimately in the Cambridgeshire village of Isleham. In time he moved to the East End of London where he became a Stay Cutter and learnt the corset trade. After his marriage and the birth of his first child, the family moved to Portsmouth, where he eventually owned his own corset factory. Jill showed us a beautiful advertising poster for the factory, a copy of which now hangs in her lounge. The factory was one of over a dozen in the City, becoming the third largest by 1903. William was also very involved with Havant Congregational church, and served on the local council. This was truly a ‘rags to riches’ story.’

Then Alan Harding gave an entirely different approach to Genealogy when he went down the DNA route. This threw up a match who contacted him wanting to know who her real Father was. The answer, after a lot of detective work, was tragic, and involved a murder, but it was able to give the lady in question the answer that she was looking for.

QUOTATION CORNER.

THIS MONTHS SUBJECT – ANGER!

Ice formed on the butler’s upper slopes

P.G. Wodehouse

When angry, count to four; when very angry, swear.

Mark Twain

I left the room with silent dignity, but caught my foot in the mat.

George Grossmith

It’s my rule never to lose me temper till it would be detrimental to keep it.

Sean O’Casey

It is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine.

P. G. Wodehouse





The above exhibition at the National Gallery in London was the reason a film was made titled "Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers". The showing at the Spring centre in Havant was well attended, as Ann Sims has mentioned below, by our u3s members especially as Steve Gorban and Simon Winslow promoted it with their Daytrippers night out, involving, for some, a meal at the recently opened ROPEMAKERS!

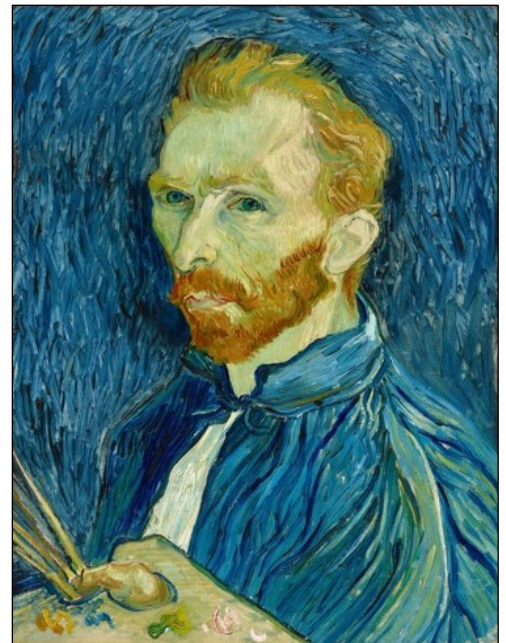


The exhibition brings together the most loved of Van Gogh's paintings from across the globe, some of which are rarely seen in public. They were paired together with his extraordinary drawings. Over just two years in the south of France, Van Gogh revolutionised his style in a symphony of poetic colour and texture. He was inspired by poets, writers and artists. The film that we saw, looked at his time in Arles and Saint-Rémy as a decisive period in his career. His desire to tell stories produced a landscape of poetic imagination and romantic love on an ambitious scale.

Left above: Vincent van Gogh, 'A Wheatfield, with Cypresses', 1889



Left below:
Vincent van Gogh, 'Sunflowers', 1888



Right above: Self Portrait 1889



A RED LETTER DAY!

Wednesday 6th November proved an exceptional day, not merely internationally, but also for Ems Valley u3a. In the morning, we held an exploratory meeting to see if an Absolute Beginners Bridge Group could be formed. Mountford 3 filled with enthusiastic people – both those who were keen to learn and those who were willing to pass on their knowledge. Basic questions were asked and patiently answered and a demonstration of a game took place with four of the experienced players talking us through all their thoughts and moves. This was followed by a group of complete novices trying a game which was guided and talked through by our “teachers”.

Thanks to all those involved we now have a WEEKLY Beginners Bridge Group starting immediately!

In the evening, The Spring in Havant was showing an “Exhibition On Screen” about Vincent Van Gogh. Although I am a frequent attendee at The Spring I have never seen so many EV u3a members there at one time! We must have made up at least half of the audience! Was it a Theatre Group outing perhaps? I’m sure everyone enjoyed the virtual tour of the exhibition and learned a lot about Van Gogh and his painting style and technique.

A really memorable day – at least for me!

Ann Sims

A late but worthy entrant for the item we ran in November’s newsletter: “What are your wartime memories”

War time

My first memory of the war was being in a cot in a cupboard which I later learned was the hall coats cupboard. My sister was in a small cot alongside.

I wasn't evacuated so I spent the war years in the suburbs of London.

Very few children were around so there was only one class for those still in the area. Because of the paper shortage we had to use slates for any writing.

My most vivid memory was the occasion when my mother wanted us to understand the 'Doodle Bug' so we stood at the french windows and watched the machine iddle across the sky. It landed a short distance further along and crashed onto some cottages. It was just amazing that nearly all the windows in the house were blasted but none where we were standing. After we went to the front of the house to make sure all the neighbours were there. My mother and sister and I raised a smile as we were black with soot which had come down the chimney. Diana Driver

NOSTALGIA

Today it is the site
of ONESTOP

and you wait here
for the traffic lights
to turn green.



Havant.

The Emsworth Rd.

Day Trippers visit Salisbury

On Tuesday, 26th November, 10 members of the Day Trippers Group travelled to Salisbury to visit the Christmas market but mainly to tour Arundells - the former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath's out-of-town residence.

Three of the party travelled by car with the remaining seven deciding to let the train take the strain. Whilst the trains were all on time with plenty of seating available, the train travellers were lucky because the line to Southampton was blocked by a fallen tree the day before and similarly the day after when the line between Romney and Salisbury was also blocked. We definitely chose the right day!

On arrival at Salisbury the train group had a quick pit stop at a very good coffee shop before deciding to split up and go their own ways to the market and make their own lunch arrangements before meeting up at Arundells.

The Christmas market was slightly disappointing although to be fair several stalls were still being set up and so only a few were up and trading.

The Group



including the car travellers all managed to meet up at Arundells on time for the guided tour. Special thanks need to be given to Steve Gorban who through his contacts at Historic Houses managed to secure a guide to open up the house which is normally closed to the public at this time of year.

The Group was treated to an exceptionally interesting tour and commentary by our excellent guide. He explained that Arundells was originally a medieval canonry within the Cathedral precinct before it was acquired by Ted Heath and became his home until his death in 2005. The house remains unchanged and contains his collection of art and artefacts including paintings by Churchill, Lowry, Sickert and Willie along with political cartoons and yachting memorabilia. There is a two acre garden leading down to the river.

All in all this was a most successful outing and much enjoyed by all"

Simon Winslow

INTERESTING STUFF?

In the 1400s a law was set forth in England that a man was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb - Hence we have, the rule of thumb.

(I frantically looked for the law that gave the same right for a lady to deal similarly with her husband but ran out of time – answers on a postcard please.....)

Many years ago in Scotland , a new game was invented. It was ruled “Gentlemen Only...Ladies Forbidden” ...and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language.

The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time TV were Fred and Wilma Flintstone. (The mattress was made of stone of course)

Every day more money is printed for Monopoly than for the U. S. Treasury.

Men can read smaller print than women can; women can hear better.

It is impossible to lick your elbow.

The USA State with the highest percentage of people who walk to work: Alaska

The percentage of Africa that is wilderness: 28% (now get this...)

The percentage of North America that is wilderness: 38%

Intelligent people have more zinc and copper in their hair.

(I shall speak to my hairdresser)

The I-35 Bridge that recently collapsed in Minneapolis had 144,000 cars cross over it every day.

Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history:

Spades - King David

Hearts - Charlemagne

Clubs -Alexander, the Great

Diamonds - Julius Caesar

If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle. If the horse has one front leg in the air the person died as a result of wounds received in battle. If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.

Q. Half of all Americans live within 50 miles of what? A. Their birthplace

Q. What do bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers all have in common?

A. All were invented by women.

Q. What is the only food that doesn't spoil? A. Honey

In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase. 'goodnight, sleep tight.'

It was the accepted practice in Babylon 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey wine and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month, which we know today as the honeymoon.

In pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts... So in olden times, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them 'Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down' (mind your Ps and Qs)

Many years ago, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim, or handle, of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service. 'Wet your whistle' is the phrase inspired by this practice.

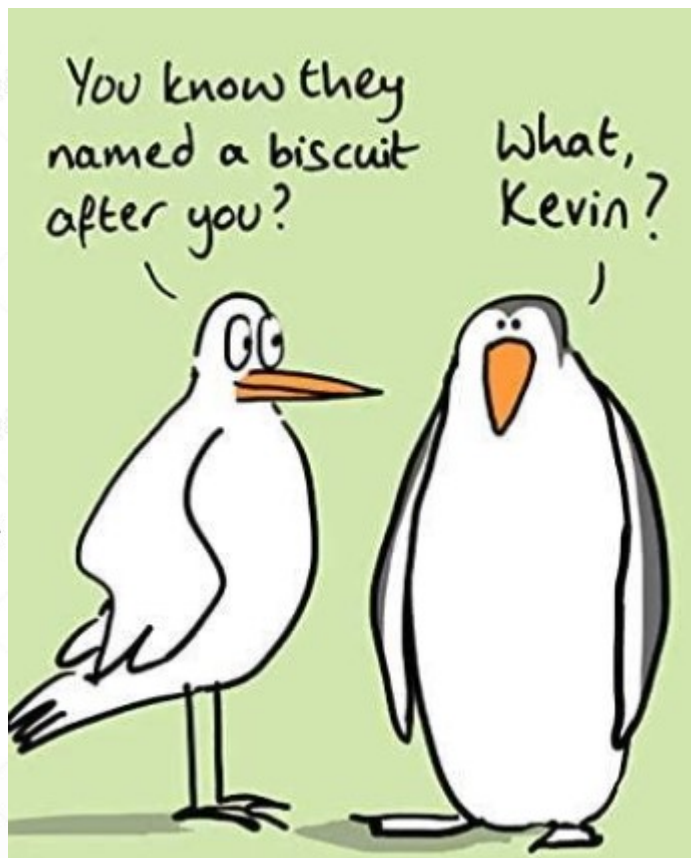
At least 75% of people reading this 'stuff' will, by now, have tried to lick their elbow!

YOU KNOW YOU ARE LIVING IN TODAY'S WORLD WHEN:

1. You accidentally enter your PIN on the microwave.
2. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of three.
3. You e-mail the person who you are going to see in a few minutes.
4. Your reason for not staying in touch with friends and family is you don't have their email address
6. Leaving the house without your mobile phone, which you didn't even have the first 30, or 40 (or 60) years of your life, is now a cause for panic and you turn around to go and get it.
7. You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee.
8. You start tilting your head sideways to smile.
9. You are now nodding and laughing.
10. You are too busy to notice there was no number 5 on this list.
11. And you scrolled up to check.
12. Do you think it's time you had a new editor?



"I'll only give you the paper if you promise not to let the news upset you."



Message from the Editor:

As usual, I am looking forward to your news – please keep in touch with your newsletter in the New Year and please send lots of photos of your Group Christmas meetings - alanborrow1@gmail.com