



DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

I would like to thank all members for being Ems Valley u3a, not just a part of it.
I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
Tim, your Chairman



NO – This is not a ROUGES GALLERY – These are the members who are running EMS VALLEY u3a – Your committee!

URGENT APPEAL TO THE OTHER 500 MEMBERS!

I have been asked to message you all to consider giving a little of your time to help our Committee. Some of the above retire in May 2026, some in May 2027. Would you go along to a monthly committee meeting NOW, and see how it works. See what they discuss. See if you might join in the future in order to help our Ems Valley u3a continue to function well. Without volunteers we cannot operate. The u3a movement is all about taking and giving. Please give this request your serious consideration and contact one of the committee via the web site or at a monthly meeting in order to discuss further. **Your Editor**

CRAFT GROUP ADDRESS CHRISTMAS!

Angela Blunden writes: We had a wonderful time last Wednesday at our November meeting. We welcomed a new member Jenny Moyles who very kindly offered to show us how to make a Christmas Table Decoration, and kindly donated ribbons, things to help anchor the oasis to the base, and showed us how to make ribbons look best.

Jenny was wonderfully helpful, she also had greenery which added to the greenery we had brought along ourselves. It was a huge success and great fun, although we had a lot of clearing up to do afterwards, but so worth it. Kim made some beautiful decorations from walnut shells and tiny beads (see photo) very intricate & delicate, Hope you enjoy the photos of all our efforts!



Traveller's Tales go west to Yellowstone and south east to Bavaria!

Richard Fowkes and Babs Fielder gave us an insight to a trans-Canadian Rail Journey – four days of scenic luxury – and then to Vancouver, Seattle and Yellowstone National Park at the November meeting Of Traveller's Tales. Babs gave us an intimate taste of this mighty rail trip and Richard told us about the massive size of the Yellowstone National Park, home to 60% of the world's geysers and 50% of the world's geothermal features. The lava rocks under your feet are so hot that you are warned not to stray from the straight and narrow, or chance being "cooked" as one careless tourist recently was! The bubbling mud pits, the famous Old Faithful and the Yellowstone Caldera—the largest supervolcano on the continent – he took us there and then onto their safari search for moose, elk, bison, grizzlies, wolves!

The other talk was about Munich as a city break from Gatwick or Heathrow, easy access in just an hour and a half. Alan Borrow recommended this city for its compact nature, all main sites in easy walking distance, and he even adopted Freddie Mercury's regular choice of Hotel, not for the Men's Sauna but because the Deutsch Eiche was so comfortable and central! Munich is Bavaria's capital and home to centuries-old buildings and numerous museums. The city is known for its annual Oktoberfest celebration and its beer halls, but if you want to attend this festival, you need to book early!

An Interview with member John Harris - or could be an article titled "Flying with the Red Arrows"!

Ed - Hello John, when did you come to Emsworth?

John - We came to Emsworth in May 2005 from Berkhamsted. We had family here and Mo had been fighting a losing battle with the M25 for more than a year to visit grandchildren. We were both retired so decided to concede defeat and move down. It was the best thing we could have done! We moved to Prinsted from Emsworth six years ago.

Ed - What did you do before retirement?

John - My working career was entirely in aviation, first in the RAF as a pilot. Our physics master took us to Farnborough when I was fourteen and I spotted an aircraft between two hangars and peeled off to look at it. A



“voice” from behind asked me if I wanted to get in, and he helped me into the cockpit of a Hawker Hunter - jet, fast, guns - job done for a career. The RAF was wonderful. My first tour was as a flying instructor, then I went into anti-submarine warfare; Shackletons in N. Ireland, P3 (Orions) with the US Navy in San Francisco and Nimrods in Scotland. It was great flying, demanding and absorbing. I flew the Nimrod in air displays which was a bit different. I left the RAF after 16 years and flew B737s with Britannia Airways (now TUI). I ended in management with Britannia.

Ed - You’ve flashed through that a bit John, What was the most exciting thing that happened in all that time?

John - Flying is exciting, but the most exciting thing wasn’t anything I did personally. While in the States, I was at an air display in Washington (hosting at cocktail parties in the British Embassy!) when the Red Arrow pilots came in. I knew two of them from training days and asked if I could fly with them the next day. So I did the Washington display with the Arrows in the back of Red 2. It was wondrous!

Left: John reliving his service career, sitting at the controls of a Shackleton at the Gatwick museum, and below, the plane patrolling low over the sea.



They are an immaculate formation team, smooth and poetic - like Torville and Dean doing Bolero at 350 knots - and wing tips 6 feet apart.

Ed - Okay, getting back to earth, what groups have you been a member of and why those particular groups?

John - I have been in your Wine Group 1 from very early on. I’ve always been interested in wine and made my own from grape and hedgerow for years. One memorable accolade was in the States when I did a brew and offered some to my

American boss. He suggested I “pour it back in the horse”.

I am also in Science and Technology and Local History. I have been in more groups but find I have to ration myself as I get older.

Ed – Looking from afar, how do you view our u3a movement?

John - I know that u3a is a valuable social aid for people in retirement. Mo's "retirement from work seminar" included a talk from a u3a rep! Mo was a reluctant retiree, and I felt guilty about mine. The u3a gave us immediately a new dimension and perspective in retirement. But that's not all. When we moved to Emsworth, although we had family here, they worked and had their own circle of friends. We knew no-one and had no work involvement. It was joining the u3a, first in Chichester (Emsworth and District u3a was full, and Ems Valley didn't exist) which brought us into contact with a lot of like-minded people in our age group. We joined Ems Valley when it formed and never looked back. Also, I have recommended the u3a to people who have been bereaved as a safe and welcoming environment.

Ed – Do you see any gaps in our fifty five interest groups?

John - I don't think we know as much about early British history as we should. There are 600 years between the Romans leaving and 1066. England was divided into five kingdoms, invaded repeatedly by the Vikings, embraced Christianity and then united as one kingdom. We live in Wessex, in the heart of Saxon England where a lot of the action took place. I think it would be interesting to find out what happened in that period.

Ed – interesting concept John, who is going to start "Saxon History"?? Tell us what you do outside of u3a?

John - Until recently I enjoyed sailing, and motor homing to Spain and Portugal in the winter. I still swim regularly, and we seem to be "Friends" of every organisation that needs one. We are active members at St John's at Southbourne

Ed – We always end the interview with you being cast away to a desert island with the Bible, the complete works of Shakespeare and a great big compendium of the workings of Ems Valley u3a. You are allowed to request one other thing, what will that be?

John - After much thought I will just take my bus pass. It would be a tragedy if a 700 came along and I couldn't get on it.



Photo: John asks our guide a question at the science museum in Trento, Italy on the 2015 wine trip . The building is quite striking from the outside, thanks to the innovative design by architect Renzo Piano! See below:



Autumn Lingers: A milder November and what It might mean....

As we reach mid-November, many of us have noticed something rather unusual: autumn still seems to be in full swing. The trees continue to dazzle with golden and russet hues, and the chill of winter has yet to truly bite. While this extended mild spell is a welcome reprieve for our heating bills, it also raises questions about the changing nature of our seasons.

I read that this year's Bonfire Night was the warmest on record, with temperatures in parts of London staying above 14°C overnight.

The 'Independent' reports that across the UK, over 30 weather stations reported unusually high minimum temperatures for November, with many areas experiencing nights warmer than typical day time averages for this time of year. The Met Office attributes this to mild air drawn from the south, combined with cloud cover trapping warmth—a pattern that's becoming more frequent as the climate warms



While it's tempting to simply enjoy the pleasant weather, these shifts may signal deeper changes. Climate change doesn't just mean warmer summers—it can also disrupt the timing and character of our seasons. Longer autumns, delayed frosts, and erratic rainfall patterns could affect everything from wildlife migration to gardening routines.

For now, we can appreciate the beauty of lingering autumn colours and the comfort of lower energy bills. But as we sip our tea and admire the view, it's worth pondering how our seasons may continue to evolve—and what that means for the world we share. Just in case a cold spell hits us in the second half of November, I wish



to point out that this was written on 13th Nov. and the photos I include were taken on 12th Nov.! Ed

Your CHRISTMAS Celebration Events



How is you interest group going to celebrate Christmas? If past years are anything to go by, lunches and special dos will be the order of the day. Or, perhaps your group do a special excursion? The newsletter and the readership would love to hear about your particular group and how you celebrated. Please take photographs and send in a little article after the event so that we can all share your joy in the January edition! (contact details for the editor are at the end of this newsletter)

Editor

William Saywell on Safari!



Last month I published lovely photos of local birds that William had taken. Now that he has been on Safari and we have his African delights! Top left clockwise: Red billed Oxpeckers, Southern Yellow billed Hornbill, Trumpeter Hornbill, Striped Kingfisher, Crested Barbet, Lilac breasted Roller, Saddle-billed Storks.

Great photos William - Thanks for sharing them with us!

Rags to Riches - a Havant Businessman.

Recently I gave a talk to the Local History group about my Great-grandfather, and the Editor persuaded me to write the story for the newsletter. And we all know how persuasive the Editor can be!

I have long had an interest in family history, and I had in mind to research my father's family. All I knew was that my grandfather's name was William Fletcher, he was a corset manufacturer in Portsmouth, and that he died long before I was born. I knew nothing about his father, not even a name.

Using the common tools available to family historians - censuses; birth, marriage, and death records; newspaper articles, and so on I was gradually able to uncover the story of my great-grandfather. I discovered that his name was also William Fletcher! And he was born illegitimately in the village of Isleham in the Cambridgeshire fens, in 1856. In the early years of his life he was brought up by his grandparents, William and Phoebe Fletcher (yes, I know - there are five generations of William Fletcher in my family) who were pig-dealers, and he had very little schooling.



His mother, meanwhile, had married one John Human and moved to the East End of London. William joined them in due course and became employed as a Stay Fitter in a Walthamstow factory, where he learnt about corset manufacturing. While in London he met and married Mary Blower, and subsequently their first child, a girl, was born. In about 1877 the little family moved to Portsmouth where my grandfather was born the following year.

William continued in the corset industry, since Portsmouth was a major centre of corset manufacturing at that time. By dint of sheer hard work he was eventually able to set up his own factory, and it was registered as a Limited Company in 1898. He was known as a very kind, 'hands on' employer, caring for his staff and outworkers.

By 1903 Fletcher's was the third largest corset factory in Portsmouth. However, in 1905, he made an unwise decision to sell direct

to the retail trade, bypassing the wholesale, and it cost him. The factory was declared bankrupt! Nothing daunted, he started up again, this time in his son's name, William Fletcher Jnr. and the factory was finally sold off in the 1960s having latterly been in the ownership of his grandson, my uncle, Kenneth Fletcher.

In the years around the turn of the century William also held various public offices - becoming Chairman of the Havant UDC, being on the School Board, and as an 'Overseer of the Poor'. He was also very involved with the Congregational church (now URC) in North Street, Havant, being one of the church leaders and also running a popular Bible class for adults.

In 1929 his son died suddenly at the age of 51. His son-in-law wrote that 'the light went out' for William snr, and he died just two years later at the age of 75. He was a very highly thought of person, a deeply loving family man, an excellent businessman, and a man with a strong Christian faith. I'm proud to number him among my ancestors.



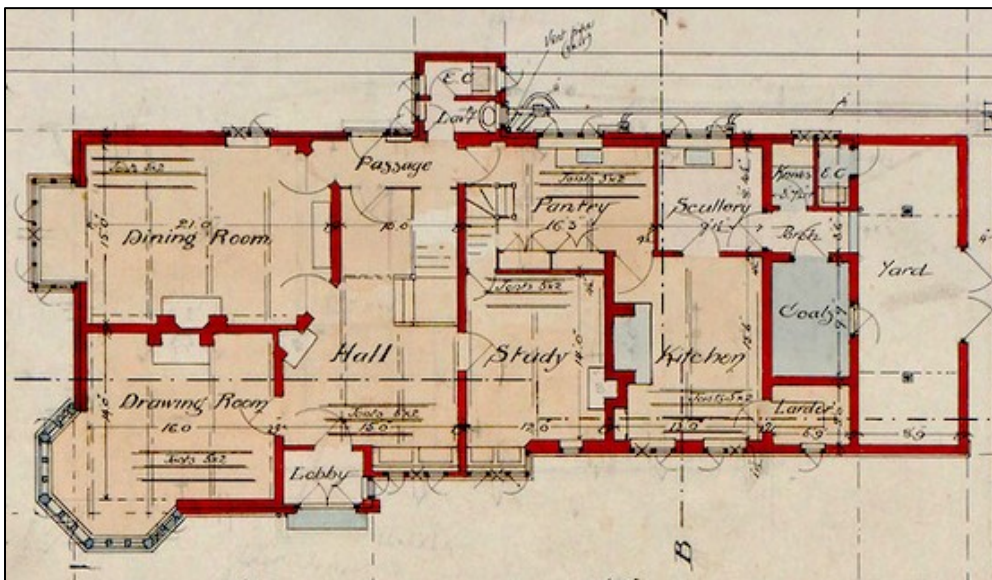
Jill Stanley

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL PICTURE DEPICTING EMSWORTH LIFE OR EMSWORTH SCENERY?

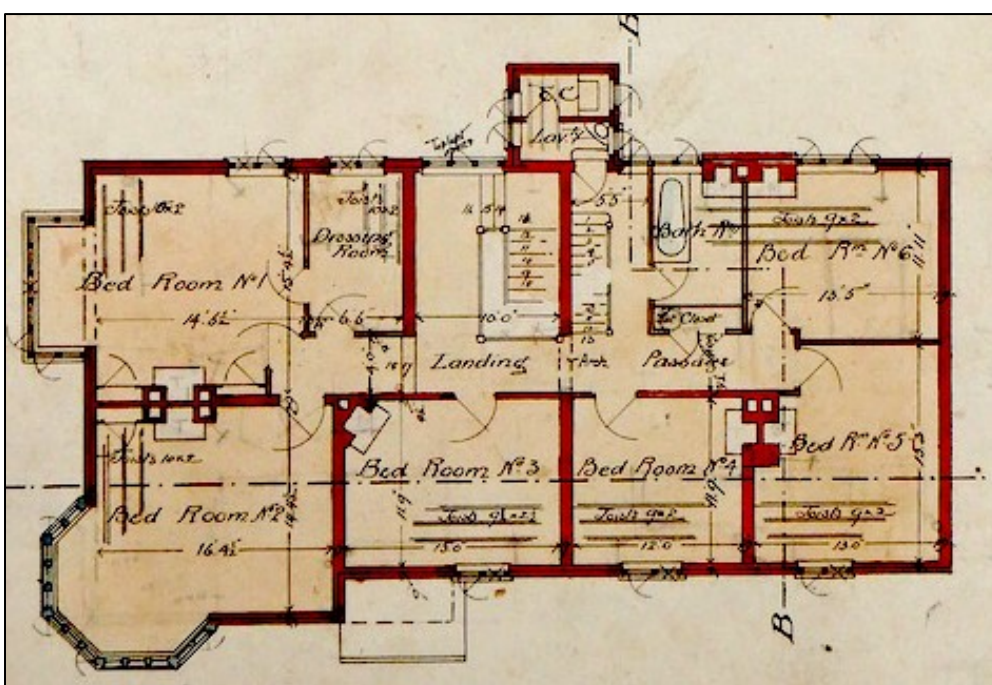
Your Web master, Tim Mathews would be keen to see it, and use it so that our Web Site is as eye catching as possible! Send it to him now, and help keep our site interesting and fresh!



‘Bricks’ went to Haslemere in November and discovered an interesting Social History house plan....



Well, we didn't actually travel to Haslemere, we brought Haslemere to Mountford Three room at the Emsworth Community Centre! Thirty attended the meeting and Alan paid tribute to the help he had received from the Chairman of the Haslemere Society, help which had definitely pointed him in the right direction! Yes, Sir Herbert Hutchinson (1868 – 1957) was an Architect and an Artist! His drawings avoided academic styles and revived the vernacular use of traditional materials such as timber framing in oak, clay hanging tiles, projecting gables with hand carved bargeboards, tall massive brick chimney stacks all combining to form what we now refer to as the Surrey Style. But the meeting discovered the layout of one of his typical houses, most enlightening in terms of social history.



We assumed that it was designed at the turn of the century and this six bedroom luxurious house had just

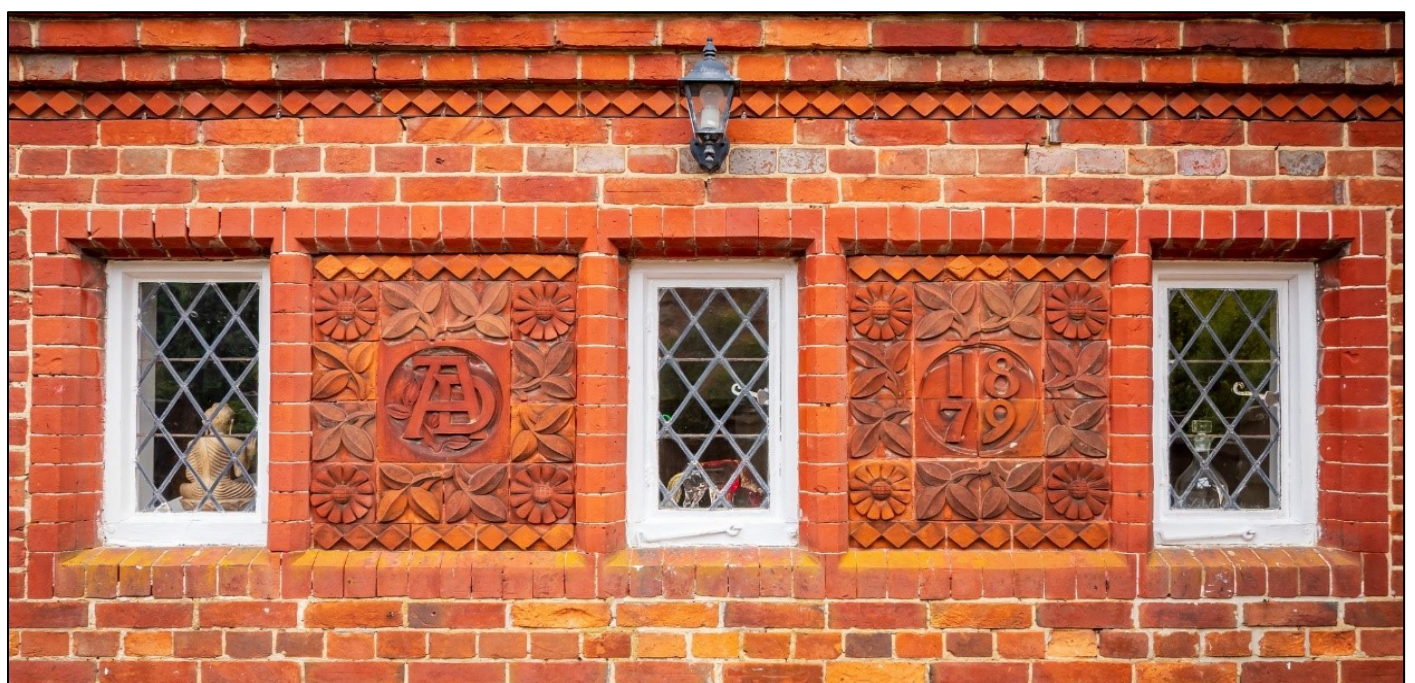
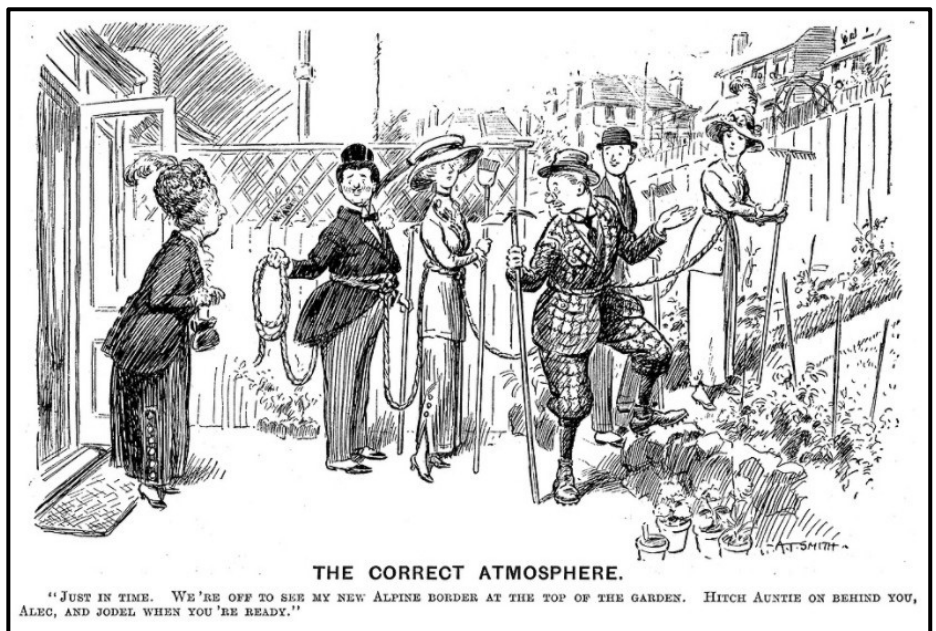
one bathroom! And that room only contained the bath! A separate room for the closet basin and another for the lavatory! Nearly half of the ground floor is devoted to Kitchen, Pantry, Scullery and Larder, all separate rooms! The Coal room is quite voluminous.... How things have changed.....(No central heating but a comforting fireplace in every single room!)



All of my research pointed to a very hilly Haslemere! The AI description suggested that this country town was referred to as England's Switzerland. During the course of my day in and around Haslemere I spoke in some depth with four different residents. Not one of them had heard of this "SWISS" description! It was lucky that I had copied and I have included the Punch type cartoon depicted below. In case you cannot decipher the wording, it reads "Just in time. We're off to see my new alpine border at the top of

the garden. Hitch Auntie on behind you Alec and Jodel, when you're ready...."

We studied over ninety houses and many displayed most attractive clay tile hanging in varying shades, both plain pattern and extremely ornamental! The house depicted at the bottom of the page showed fancy brickwork and patterned square terracotta which looked suspiciously like the products that we had been speaking about at our October meeting. These were a feature of the production from Rowlands Castle brickworks, extensively used around the turn of the century but out of fashion by the beginning of the First World War.



The Emsworth Baptist Church

At our November meeting, after the tea break, we had a talk from the Baptist Church Pastor, Joel Ferreria. It was a shame that so few members stayed for this second half talk because it was so interesting and was followed by many questions. Joel gave us a potted history of the Baptist Church in Emsworth, culminating in the magnificent new building that we are lucky enough to now hold our monthly meetings. EBC (Emsworth Baptist Church) was founded in 1845 with 23 people.

It was In 2000 that the decision was made to build the new facility. It opened in July 2015, and now has had over 10 years in use.

He told us that EBC is a Christian church focused on not just being a traditional church but with an accent on supporting the community. He



reminded us that as a COVID-19 hit, it became a vaccination centre: 53,000 jabs administered over 8 months! He then went on to tell us about International involvement and the work of Simon Howling in Bolivia. He works with disadvantaged youth, he runs a football academy promoting values like leadership and discipline. He provides English lessons twice a week, and volunteers with an eye care charity and recently, 91 surgeries were held in two weeks where 500+ people were helped.

Joel finished by telling us that EBC aims to be a source of hope, care, and compassion for the local and the global community.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ - AROUND THE WORLD

- 1) In Lithuania, what is celebrated on December 24th?
- 2) Poinsettias are the national emblem of what nation?
- 3) In 1974, KFC ran an ad campaign in what country with the slogan "Kentucky for Christmas"? (And it worked!)
- 4) In Iceland, what is the name for the 13 troll-like characters that come out to play before Christmas?
- 5) In what country do they ride roller skates to church on Christmas Eve?
- 6) In Columbia, the Immaculate Conception is celebrated with what?
- 7) Pope Julius I declared December 25 to be Christmas Day in what year?
- 8) What are the names of the Three Wise men?
- 9) Fruitcake originated in what ancient country?
- 10) Who made Christmas illegal in England from 1647 to 1660?

Answers to Quiz at the bottom of this newsletter

Quotation Corner – CHRISTMAS

“You smell like beef and cheese. You don’t smell like Santa.” —**unknown little girl**

“I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was 6. Mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph.” —**Shirley Temple**

“So I’ve started wearing sweatpants to bed because I really don’t need Santa seeing me in my underwear.” — **Jeff Kinney**

“I’ve always had a thing for Santa Claus. In case you didn’t notice, It’s like some deep-seated childhood thing.” —**Sue, Bad Santa**

Confessing that she takes pretend baths to get away from it all – “Sometimes I get in with no water and just lie there. I’ve been known to have five “baths” on Christmas Day!” - **Dawn French**

A lovely thing about Christmas is that it’s compulsory, like a thunderstorm, we all go through it together - **Garrisin Keillor**

It will be a very traditional Christmas, with presents, crackers, doors slamming and people bursting into tears, but without the big dead thing in the middle. (Of a vegetarian Christmas) - **Victoria Wood**



The most common activities found in UK u3as, not necessarily in Ems Valley.



Crafts



Photography



Writing



Gardening



Badminton



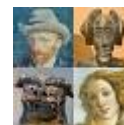
Architecture



Book Group



Bowls



Art appreciation



Folk dance



Current affairs



Cinema



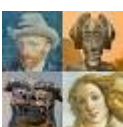
History



Film appreciation



PLUS Dining out, Bridge, Board games, French, Coffee house discussion French conversation, Classical music, Curry Club



Art



Literature

“Dear England” - A Cracker of a show by Jackie Oiler

Of the few of us that went to the Chichester Festival Theatre to see Dear England, we were definitely not



disappointed. Yes, it had football at its heart, but it was much more than that. It was a dramatic examination of the team’s history of losses, the Manager’s (Gareth Southgate) efforts to change the team’s culture and address its penalty woes, and its impact on the Nation.

It explored the country’s history of footballing disappointment, particularly the penalty shootouts, and Southgate’s mission to create a new culture. He explores the pressures of elite sport and the role of the national men’s football in the national psyche, because a huge portion of the population do adore football, like it or

not, and some almost feel it is their god given right to be the number one team in the world!

Southgate was helped along the way by sports psychologist Pippa Grange who explained the role that fear plays in taking a penalty and how to overcome that fear. Her approach in helping Southgate create a different culture could be applied to any medium or situation. It was a very thought provoking play, poignant in parts, also funny.

The standing ovation which they got was so well deserved Thankyou to Maureen for getting the tickets. It really was a ‘Cracker of a show’.

Editor: I looked at the national reviews that DEAR ENGLAND achieved – quite amazing!

5 Stars

As thrilling and nail-biting as a penalty shoot-out

WhatsOnStage

5 Stars

A winning drama about the beautiful game

The I

The decade's biggest theatrical triumph

The Telegraph

4 Stars

A resounding hit

Broadway World



Three brothers age 92, 94 and 96 live in a house together.

One night the 96 year old draws a bath, puts his foot in and pauses. He yells down the stairs, "Was I getting in or out of the bath?"

The 94 year old yells back, "I don't know, I'll come up and see." He starts up the stairs and pauses, then he yells, "Was I going up the stairs or coming down?"

The 92 year old was sitting at the kitchen table having coffee listening to his brothers. He shakes his head and says, "I sure hope I never get that forgetful." He knocks on wood for good luck. He then yells, "I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door."

To All Ems Valley u3a Members – a letter from Santa

“Are you a little bit surprised to be hearing from me, I have a feeling you might be!

I am writing to you about a very important matter indeed. Elf Oracle, my oldest and wisest Elf, told me your Christmas magic is fading! He said your magic is losing its power, because you are not sure whether to believe in me anymore, I do hope that's not true, It is perfectly normal to have doubts about me as you get older, and I know that you are already in the Third Age, but I still remember seeing you when you were just a little baby. I can barely believe you're already old enough to be in u3a. How quickly time flies!

We all need help believing in things sometimes, I remember the first time that Elf Patch told me he thought he could make reindeer fly. I laughed so much I nearly choked on my hot chocolate! I didn't believe it was possible, but Patch was sure, so he and Mrs Claus went looking for a very special something to make the necessary magical reindeer food. They decided that magical moon sparkles were the perfect ingredient when you want to fly through the stars! When Patch fed the magical reindeer food to Rudolph, he shook his antlers and took to the skies above the enchanted forest; I nearly fell off my seat! I knew from that day onwards that I could believe in anything, even if it was first mentioned by Tim Mathews.

Do you believe in magic? It's all around us here at my Lapland Workshop; like the way I find out what all Ems Valley members want for Christmas. Shall I share my secret with you? Whenever you makes a Christmas wish, even if you are in the Cycling or Wine Appreciation group, the power of that wish transports it to my enchanted notebook, which I keep here in my Wishing Room. So, best put out that sherry on Christmas Eve, or for wine groups, a Vintage Port would not go unanswered...

There are so many things we cannot see, but you must never stop believing in them. Things like love and friendship; because family and friends are the most important things you will ever have. And by being kind, and looking after your loved ones, and those little things like sending articles to the editor of your newsletter, and volunteering for tea duty at monthly meetings, these are the things that will keep your place on my official 'Nice List'. Happy Christmas.

A SEENAGER is an older Teenager:

Also, you will feel much more intelligent after reading this, if you are a **Seenager**. Brains of older people are slow because they know so much. People do not decline mentally with age; it just takes them longer to recall facts because they have more information in their brains. Scientists believe this also makes you hard of hearing as it puts pressure on your inner ear.

Also, older people often go to another room to get something and when they get there, they stand there wondering what they came for. It is **NOT** a memory problem; it is nature's way of making older people do more exercise.

Editor: about ten years ago I heard this little story, and could not stop laughing – so, when it popped up on my computer again this week, I had to include it:

A farmer stopped by the local mechanics shop to have his truck fixed. They couldn't do it while he waited, so he said he didn't live far and would just walk home.

On the way home he stopped at the hardware Store and bought a bucket and a gallon of yellow tractor paint. He then stopped by the feed store and picked up a couple of chickens and a goose. However, struggling outside the store he now had a problem – how to carry his entire purchases home.

While he was scratching his head he was approached by a little old lady who told him she was lost. She asked, 'Can you tell me how to get to 25 Nightingale Lane'

The farmer said, 'Well, as a matter of fact, my farm is very close to that house I would walk you there but I can't carry this lot.'

The old lady suggested, 'Why don't you put the can of paint in the bucket. Carry the bucket in one hand, put a chicken under each arm and carry the goose in your other hand'

'Why thank you very much,' he said and proceeded to walk the old girl home. On the way he says 'We can take a short cut now and go down this alley. We'll be there in no time.'

The little old lady looked him over cautiously then said, 'I am a lonely widow without a husband to defend me. How do I know that when we get in the alley you won't hold me up against the wall, and have your wicked way with me?'

The farmer said, 'Give us a chance lady, I'm carrying a bucket, a gallon of paint, two chickens, and a goose. How in the world could I possibly hold you up against the wall and do that?'

The old lady replied..... 'Set the goose down, cover him with the bucket, put the paint on top of the bucket, and I'll hold the chickens.

Answers to Christmas Quiz: 1) Kucios pronounced koo-tchos 2) Madagascar 3) Japan 4) The Yule lads
5) Venezuela 6) Dia de las Velitas the day of the little candles 7) 350 AD 8) Balthasar, Melchior, Gaspar
9) Egypt 10) Oliver Cromwell

**All contributions for the next newsletter please to:
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