

Chair's Chatter



2026 is well under way now and we are thinking ahead to our BFu3a AGM on the 9th July. We have two committee vacancies to fill. Vice Chair – Carol M is standing down having fulfilled her full term of office and cannot continue to serve as given in the constitution. Tony B is standing down for the same reason.

If you think you would like to contribute to a very vital cause, and I assure you it is a vital cause for our 800+ members, then please get in touch. Not only do we need new ideas for our u3a to move forward and improve, but without volunteers to fill key roles on the committee our BFu3a will be obliged to close and that will be a disaster for a lot of members who love meeting up and getting out. Our u3a provides a haven for so many.

We are aware that often members think, "I've done my time with committee work, I've done it for years", "someone else will do the job" or they simply look the other way. We are a committee who will help, guide and assist anyone into the role and not just let you be thrown in at the deep end. That's why we need to get this moving; the time is now. Please consider this appeal seriously.

Our Group activities offer you so much to look forward to from walking to trips out and everything in between. Please take the opportunity to make the most of your membership. Check the diary for group activities and the relevant sections in this Newsletter for details of Open Meetings, Coffee Mornings and Events.

Our BFu3a Website pages <https://bracknell.u3asite.uk/> give valuable information and links etc. about things going on with our u3a and local information.

I look forward to hearing from you at any time using the email below.

Bob G, Chair BFu3a chair@bracknellu3a.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

NOTICE!

To all Bracknell u3a members

Please note that our Annual General Meeting

Will be on Thursday, 9th July at 14:00

at the Bracknell Rugby Club.

Please make a note of the date and more information will be available nearer the AGM.

Speakers Corner

Our talk last month was from Siobhan Clark about the dress code in Henry VIII's court. This was very informative and discussed how certain colours were more expensive due to the difficulty in obtaining the colour, for instance black. This is why portraits from the time often have the sitter dressed in black as it implied wealth. The jewels worn were also to impress and demonstrate wealth and status.

Future dates :-

23rd April Richard Anderson - Wallace Simpson, Was she badly treated by the country and our royal family, or did she get her just reward?

4th June Dan Keel - Swans, discussing some of their habits and myths of these birds.

9th July William French - Butler to the Royals.

These meetings will be "Hybrid" starting at 14:00 (join earlier for a chat) either in person at the venue (Bracknell Rugby Club) or by Zoom from home using this link:

[BFu3a Zoom Meeting](#)

Alternatively use these codes when starting Zoom:

Meeting ID: 520 165 3065 Passcode: Open26 (case sensitive).

Laurayne B, Speaker Secretary.

Coffee Mornings

A very popular event. We have two meetings a month. Mid-month which uses a selection of venues and the end of month, always the last Wednesday of the month at the *Golden Farmer*, 40 Reed's Hill, Bracknell RG12 7LS. The 194, 4 and X94 buses stop at Haversham Drive, which is close to the pub.

We operate a 'Meet & Greet' for prospective New Members. The meetings are hosted by a Committee Member or a Volunteer, who will be pleased to welcome you and ensure you are not left alone.

These meetings are a great opportunity to meet and make new friends for a chat. Coffee Mornings are open to all BFu3a members, no booking required. The meetings embody all u3a has to offer. New friendships happen all the time. Many stay on for lunch too to continue the conversations made through the morning.

Next Meetings are :-

- Mid-Month Meetings from 10:00 to 12:00 are held at various venues and dates are announced in advance by email to our members. The next one is 16th April at the *Horse and Groom*.
- Wednesday 29th April from 10:00 to 12:00 at the *Golden Farmer*.

Hosted by Committee members and our Volunteers.

Facebook

If you have a **Facebook Account** you can use our **Facebook Page** and **Facebook Group** to keep in touch.

Public: <https://www.facebook.com/BracknellForestu3a>

Private: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BFU3A/>

National u3a: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch/>

Publicity

Thanks to Lynn B and a group coordinator for the suggestion for me to develop a blank version of our poster for group leaders to print off (should they want to) and add their group information, either handwritten or using online text.

Dianne J, Publicity Officer.

publicity@bracknellu3a.org.uk



Thames Valley Network (TVN)

The AGM and Rep's Meeting will be on Friday 1st May at Benson.

The Thames Valley Network offer regular events/talks on Zoom and we notify our members about these by email. These events need booking in advance but are well worth tuning into.

Bob G, Chair, BFu3a.

BFu3a Events

Spring Tea Party on Saturday 16th May 14:00 – 16:00

At Garth Hill College Bull Lane, RG12 2AD

Refreshments, musical entertainment and quiz. The cost of the ticket is £6.

Please complete the booking form (emailed to all BFu3a members) if you would like to attend.

Jacky Y, BFu3a Events Social.

Summer Outing to Canterbury on Wednesday 24th June.

Details and booking forms have been emailed to BFu3a members.

Dorothy K, BFu3a Events Outings.

Group List

There is a [Group List](#) of all BFu3a groups on the website.

Groups' Support

New Group starting in May.

'Cycling for Softies' is a new cycling group aimed at those who wish to go on a gentle bike ride in the company of others.

Further information will follow shortly.

Lynn B, BFu3a Groups' Support Officer.

Art Appreciation

The Group had a very enjoyable visit to *Tate Britain* to see the works of Joseph Turner and John Constable. Turner and Constable were not close friends, but rather intense, lifelong artistic rivals with a relationship marked by grudging respect. Though from different worlds, both artists were united in their desire to transform landscape painting for the better.



Turner painted blazing sunsets and sublime scenes from his travels, while Constable often returned to depictions of a handful of beloved places, striving for freshness and authenticity in his portrayal of nature.

Greg acted as our guide and we were very grateful to him for sharing his expertise. There will be further visits to interesting exhibitions in the future.

All are welcome to join us on the second Friday of the month at 10:00 at Bracknell Methodist Church.

Leah R, Coordinator.

Book Group 1

On Fire by Naomi Klein provided a real challenge to our readers for February. It consisted of a reprint of American newspaper articles on Climate Change and how humanity can survive. The author calls for major restructuring of society and strict planning over many years to solve the problem. Published in 2019 it feels out of date now and leaves us with the question of how far we have progressed since.

Game of Lies by Clare Mackintosh was an up-to-date detective tale set in North Wales. Based on a reality TV program which tested the contestants

by threatening them with the revelation of their secret crime. The participants were kept in a compound with audio and camera surveillance assisted by local recruited support staff. Tension and social interaction lead to the murder of (surprise) the Director and away we go. The author tells the story by multiple small chapters (not entirely concurrent) covering the action of each competitor, staff and detectives. Of course, the lead female Detective Constable is awkward, uncooperative and racked with love for her Sergeant. Worth reading carefully or you will surely be lost. Popular with most of our readers.

Future reading :-

A Terrible Kindness by Jo Browning Wroe 14th April.

The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams 12th May.

Brian T, Coordinator.

City Pub Appreciation

For our February outing (Friday 27th) our cheerful group boarded the train from Bracknell over to Hammersmith and *The William Morris* pub in the centre of town for our breakfast treat. The pub and area have many nods to this famous designer, poet and artist and there is a small museum locally. After our breakfast we walked through the busy streets to The Thames and over the most bombed bridge in London, the Hammersmith Bridge and into Barnes for our pub, *The Bridge*. This interesting Victorian pub had lots of rowing memorabilia around, which was admired by all while enjoying our first real beverage of the day.

On finishing our drinks we walked back across the bridge and along The Thames path to find a little gem of a pub called *The Dove*. Our group loved this quaint 17th century quirky pub which is where James Thomson composed "Rule Britannia" and Charles II dined Nell Gwynne. It also boasts the "smallest bar in the world" awarded by the Guinness Book of World Records, so obviously 16 of us had to squeeze in for a photo! On extracting ourselves from this cosy place we walked further along the gorgeous river path and up to the Fullers Brewery and *The George and Devonshire* pub. We took our next refreshments here and sank into the plush furnishings in the grand lounge of this 17th century Grade II listed building. This pub was a very comfortable place to relax despite being beside the Hogarth roundabout and flyover.



We hauled ourselves out of the comfy sofas and made our way along the various little streets across to Turnham Green and Chiswick to grab our next drink in the Grade II listed *The Tabard* pub, with the famous theatre above. The group loved this friendly William Morris decorated pub with their enormous resident Maine Coon cat, and there was plenty of room in the bars to have a chat while quaffing away. We departed for a stroll along the local area to the Goldhawk Road to find our last pub *The Duchess*. This very welcoming community pub served up some fantastic food for us which we all thoroughly enjoyed with our last drinks before making our way, in the dark, back to take our train home.

In March we had a lovely sunny day to get the trains over to Henley-On-Thames, via Reading and Twyford. We walked from the station to the town centre and our breakfast stop at *The Catherine Wheel* pub. All suitably sustained, we walked back around various streets and corners to find the *Bird In Hand*, a little known small 19th century local pub with an amazing selection of beers. We settled out in the lovely sunny garden to chat over our drinks and admire the colourful birds in the aviary. We left and walked around some very quaint streets then along the river path and across the bridge to *The Little Angel*, which is just in the Wokingham district. We settled in the garden of this contemporary designed 18th century pub to have our drinks and enjoy being outside on a warm day.

On leaving, we walked around the now familiar streets and historic houses and found *The Row Barge*, a quaint 16th century old coaching inn with a lovely atmosphere and the local of George Harrison, whose property Friar Park is only steps away. Again, the pub had a lovely garden and the group happily sat outside in the warmth quaffing our drinks. The group wandered up the road to view the gates and grounds of Friar Park before heading down a few more streets to enter *The Argyll* pub. This lovely old pub, in the market place, has a fab selection of drinks and our group again loved the ambience as we quaffed our drinks in the huge garden.



On exiting *The Argyll* we wandered around and headed to the gorgeous St Mary's Church for a look inside this beautiful building. We then had a look

at Dusty Springfield's grave and the late medieval timber-framed Chantry House building in the church grounds. Finally we crossed the road to the iconic 1728 Grade II listed *The Angel on the Bridge* pub which overlooks the river Thames. We had a very tasty meal here with our final drinks, looked after very well by the friendly and welcoming staff. Another fabulous day out done, we headed back for our homeward bound trains.

Teresa G and Colin S, Joint Coordinators.

Digital Photography

The meeting on the 10th March started as usual with a DVD lecture by Joel Sartore. This one was on Light. After some general discussion, Gill showed, via her phone, some photos that should have gone to the “B” theme photos at the previous meeting. Finally, astro photos were shown, of Jupiter, The Moon and nebulae.

The next meeting was on the 24th March and was dominated by photos on subjects beginning with “C”. There were lots of contributions. Churches, clocks, and clouds were some of the relatively common subjects. Cowslips, Concorde, ‘coffee and croissants’ and camouflage were some of the rarer contributions. After this, the meeting was opened to general viewing of members’ photos. There were some more “C” themed subjects, and photos of a Disraeli museum at Hughenden. Gill showed us yet more “C” subjects; clouds and “cars from films”, the latter taken at a recent event at the Lexicon.



ADC Cowslips
Photo by Robert H.
(C for Cowslips).



Photo by Peter E.
(C for Camouflage)
The photo was taken in
Svaalbard.



Photo by Colin F.
(C for Car).

Charles E, Group Member.

The clock has a 6-hour cycle, which was traditional in parts of Italy. There are very few of them left now.



Clock at Montecatina Alto
Photo by Phil C. (C for Clock)

Family History

In March, the Group had a very interesting talk from Cheri Greenwood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Church has been instrumental in creating the FamilySearch website, which offers genealogical records, education, and software to the public.

FamilySearch maintains a collection of records, resources, and services designed to help people learn more about their family history. The Church offers free access to its resources. The Family Tree section allows user-generated content to be contributed to the genealogical database. As of March 2023, there are over 1.5 billion individuals in the tree and the historical records database contains over 5.7 billion digital images.

We will be arranging more guest speakers in the future for our meetings on the first Monday of the month at Birch Hill Community Centre at 14:00.

Leah R, Coordinator.

Garden Group 2

On the 11th March some of the group visited *Hughenden*, the country home of former Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. He was PM twice and Chancellor of the Exchequer, despite being in debt when he stood for Parliament!



He was a favourite of Queen Victoria and was a social reformer and novelist.



The house, as you would expect, is set in a large estate. The parterre at the rear of the house has several beds filled with the spring favourites, daffodils, narcissus, primroses and pulmonarias. These are changed with the seasons.

There is also a walled garden with old fruit trees surrounded by Daffodils as well as areas for vegetables.

Hughenden is a National Trust property that is well worth a visit.

Sue N, Joint Coordinator.

Local History

After planning our programme for 2026 at our January meeting, we invited two local Police Community Support Officers to give us a talk on local policing for our February meeting. Ann-Marie Kennedy gave a lively and interesting talk on the work of our local PCSOs, and we were impressed by all the work that goes on behind the scenes that most of us don't realise.

In March, Sue Ellis came to talk to us about the Magna Carta and its impact on British democracy ever since. Henry I succeeded to the throne in 1100 and issued a Coronation Charter, or Charter of Liberties, which he claimed represented the ancient rights of the nobles as laid down by Edward the Confessor. Henry's Charter bears strong similarities with the Magna Carta.

When King John came to the throne in 1199 he was an efficient and able administrator, but was also unpredictable and aggressive. He disregarded justice when dealing with his noble opponents, regularly taking hostages and imposing ruthless punishments. Eventually John's actions became so unacceptable that they led to the first Barons War in 1214-1215 as many of his nobles rebelled against him and John was forced to negotiate with them. The Articles of the Barons were presented to King John on 10th June 1215 at Runnymede, and formed a preliminary to the final 1215 version of the Charter, known at the time as The Charter of Runnymede, granted under King John's Great Seal on 15th June 1215.

John sealed, rather than signed, the Charter at Runnymede, but almost immediately he set in train processes to overthrow its provisions. John sought the support of the church, and Magna Carta was annulled by Pope Innocent III in August 1215, at John's request. Of course, this led to a renewal of the baron's revolt, but John died in October 1216 without resolution of the revolt and William Marshall was appointed as Protector in place of Henry III, who was only nine years old.

William Marshall was responsible for issuing revised versions of Magna Carta in 1216 and 1217, which secured support for the young king. As Henry grew older, the Magna Carta became increasingly embedded into English political life. Henry III re-issued his father's Charter in 1225 when he gained his majority. This Charter of 1225 was known as the Great Charter to distinguish it from the Charter of the Forest issued at the same time, so it is actually the Charter of 1225 which is the Magna Carta.

Henry III died in 1272, leaving as his successor his eldest son, Edward I, who is credited with making Parliament a permanent institution. A century after Runnymede, a precedent was set for Parliaments to seek reconfirmation of the Charter and clarification of its meaning.

Increasingly, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, until the reign of Henry VI, it became customary to reaffirm the Great Charter and its historic liberties by causing it to be read at the start of Parliament, and by requiring the King to re-affirm his support for it. Magna Carta gains prominence again when it appears in the seventeenth century, as common lawyers and parliamentarians turned to the 'ancient constitution' as a defence against the Stuart kings' assertion of the royal prerogative.

And it is not just in this country that Magna Carta had influence. Thomas Jefferson is said to have taken the phraseology 'by the law of the land' from Magna Carta for the Declaration of Independence, and to have enshrined in the Declaration the rights to a trial by jury.

There were a few provisions of Magna Carta still on the statute books at the start of the twentieth century. In 1965 the Law Commission began the reform of modern law, with the removal from the statute books of outdated and superseded statute. Of Magna Carta, only four provisions remain on the statute books today.

Janet R, Coordinator.

Mixed Media

The Group meets each Wednesday at The Methodist Church, Priestwood between 10:30 and 13:30. New members are always made to feel welcome. There are places available, so whether you are an experienced artist or a starter and would like a helpful and friendly environment to improve just come along for a taster session. This month we once again feature the work of Jon M and Caroline E who provide some excellent examples in water colour and one from Ray G using Pyrography.

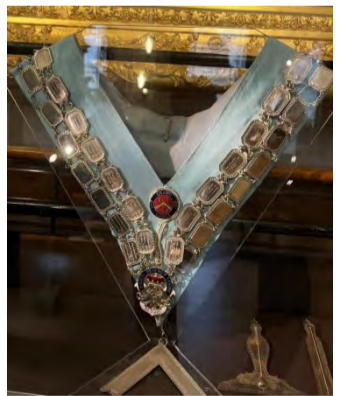




Ray G, Joint Coordinator.

MOTO 1

March saw us take the train to visit the Freemasons Grand Lodge in London. The lodge sits in the heart of London, an amazing Art Deco masterpiece. The present lodge was built between 1927 – 1933 as a memorial to those who died in World War I. There have been two previous lodges built on the same site. Our guide gave us a brilliant tour of the Museum and the very ornate and splendid Freemasons Hall with its lovely mosaics and stained glass windows. We learnt about the history of the Masons and also the amazing work they do by raising millions of pounds every year for various charities. A big thank you goes to David F who arranged the tour for us.



Thank you to Colin S for the photographs.

We have also recently enjoyed two Sunday lunches, one at the *The White Horse* and the other at Bird Hills Golf Club.

We have a busy few months coming up now that hopefully the weather will be better.

A guided tour of the Royal Albert Hall – A guided tour of the Old Bailey – Visit to RHS Malvern – Denbies Wine tour and wine tasting – Compton Acres – Cotswolds Lavender Fields and Broadway – Hatfield House and more.

Dorothy K, Coordinator.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.

MOTO 3

We held a coffee morning at Oaktree Garden Centre at the beginning of March where over 40 members enjoyed a great morning chatting and laughing.

We also had a fabulous lunch at *The Newtown Pippin* pub. No photos were taken as we were too busy enjoying a delicious three course lunch!

Our next day trip is to the Tulip Fest, a trip we have planned jointly with Garden Group 1. We also have a Skittles evening to look forward to at the start of May, along with a couple of coffee mornings.

Lynette R, Coordinator.

Music Appreciation Classical 2

This month, our Theme was – ‘Passion of Performers and Conductors’.

We watched performances which had passion and feeling. Well... in most cases. A discussion was held after each piece.

- Little Drummer Boy | Live at Hope Church
- Gustavo Dudamel : The Best Of
- HAUSER - Nocturne in C Sharp Minor
- Tchaikovsky / Pletnev - The Nutcracker: Pas de Deux | Alexander Malofeev, Verbier Festival 2022
- Beethoven: Overture to Egmont | Kurt Masur and the Gewandhaus Orchestra
- The Magic Flute – Queen of the Night aria (Mozart; Diana Damrau, The Royal Opera)
- Orff: Carmina Burana (O Fortuna) | KSO & GC | CM Berlin
- Carl Orff - Carmina Burana "1. O Fortuna", Conductor: Adel Shalaby
يبلش لداع
- Beethoven: Symphony No.3 Eroica - Klaus Mäkelä, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Bob G, Coordinator.

Out and About

Our March event was to the Combermere Barracks, Windsor. Fortunately, as this trip was so popular, we were able to book two March dates for our group to visit.

The Household Cavalry has been on the site since early 1800s and there is still one Victorian building. It is where new three year old horses arrive for training and are very well looked after, including during their retirement. We had a tour of the forge and stables, speaking with military personnel, who were preparing for a state visit the week of 16th March. Members are still talking about feeding the horses with polos! The building where Harry and William stayed during their service, was pointed out to us.



The museum included uniforms for us to try on. A plumed military helmet, now worth £3,000, was passed around for us to appreciate just how heavy it is. Fortunately nobody dropped it! The helmet looked rather Germanic until the plume was added. The helmet was developed by Prince Albert.

Our visits were enjoyed by everyone and included three military veterans.

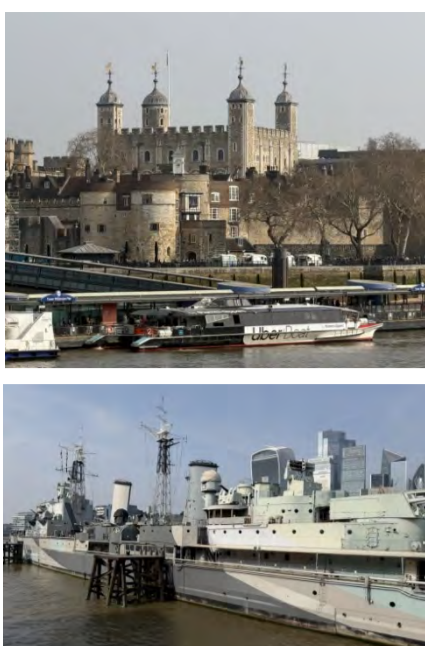
We are now looking forward to our April visit, which is to Reading College for lunch.

Lesley S, Coordinator.

Transport

In March, 24 of us caught the train up to London Bridge, and walked to the *HMS Belfast*. Here we were divided into two groups and were given a guided tour of the ship. The guides were extremely knowledgeable and full of stories about the ship's history. There were nine decks to explore, and many tight ladders to negotiate. The guns on the main deck were very impressive. On the lower decks we discovered how the crew worked, slept, ate, and relaxed. Our guide explained the differences made by the refitting between the various periods of active service: the Second World War (1939- 1945), End of Empire (1945-1949), and Cold War (1950- 1966). At the end of the one and a half hour tour, the guide directed us to the engine rooms so that we could explore them on our own. The group we were with soon realised that having been guided around the ship – we couldn't find our way back out of the engine rooms!

I'm terrified of lifts and I'm taking steps to avoid them.



Once we left the ship, people split into smaller groups to find lunch in the local pubs and restaurants.

Early afternoon we regrouped at *The Golden Hinde*. This is a full-size reconstruction of Sir Francis Drake's Elizabethan galleon – the first English ship to circumnavigate the globe. Again, the tour leader was extremely good and the talk very interesting. She explained how difficult life on board was, how they used instruments to navigate and stories of mutiny and executions. Towards the end, she demonstrated the use of the historic medical equipment on Jeremy!



Doreen and Steve, Joint Coordinators.



If you book a holiday or cruise with Riviera Travel, can we please ask you to mention Bracknell Forest u3a **at the time of booking**.

Riviera Travel runs a national scheme, available to all u3as where they will pay a commission of 10% back to the u3a nominated by the traveller. There is no cost to you and we can then use the donation for activities within our u3a.

Editor's Note

Issue 201 edited by Peter Arthur.
Publication date: 16th April 2026

Grateful thanks to all contributors.

The committee is looking at the future and format of the Newsletter so at the moment there isn't another Newsletter scheduled.

Please send contributions to all editors at newseditor@bracknellu3a.org.uk

The editing team consists of:
Peter Arthur, Doreen Coupe, Chris Nevin and Jeanette Wyatt

The Editors cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy or the views of contributors or for the statements and claims made in any items or advertisements appearing in the BFu3a Newsletter.