



HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR!

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE  
IN NOW**

£15.00 or £11.50 if you bring proof of  
Membership of another u3a branch.  
Group Leaders & Committee Members £7.50

Cheques payable to Blackmore Vale U3A  
(Please contact Gill Westall for postal  
address)

We are now able to take membership  
payments by debit or credit card – in  
person only. This can be done at the  
general meeting.

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January  
Henstridge Village Hall



**Grand Winter  
Quiz**

Arranged by  
Pamela Slater

# WANTED

## NEW INTEREST GROUPS

*If you have an idea for a group, please let anybody on the committee know. Just because you think of something, it doesn't mean to say you have to be the group leader (but it would help!).*

*Qualifications not required.*

*The committee will help to get it set up and advertise to all members about your group. To comply with the u3a mantra - Learn, Laugh, Live – there needs to be an aspect of learning something...*

**You're a star bursting with knowledge**

**This is your year to sparkle**



## Group Coordinator's Report

### Groups Report 31st December 2023

Please see list of group leaders at the back of this newsletter for contact details.

**Backgammon:** a new backgammon group has been proposed. We have a member who is happy to teach people how to play. This could be of particular interest to members during the winter months when some of the outdoor activities are not active. Please contact Hilary Smith if you are interested.

**Boules:** this group started in 2023, but has ceased for the winter. It will resume in April or May when the days are lighter and the weather is warmer. Please contact Hilary Smith, if you are interested in joining this group or if you would be able to be a group leader or assist.

**Bridge:** meets on 2nd and 4th Monday in the Lounge of Henstridge Village Hall at 14:15 ready to start playing at 14:30 (there is a small charge to cover the cost of the hall hire). The group leader is Howard Warden.

**Croquet:** now suspended for the winter, but will resume in the spring / early summer. Group leader is Jean Lindley.

**Garden Visits:** led by Jan Nast, assisted by Brita Wood. Meets on the first Monday of each month in at 11:00 at Thyme after Time, near Stalbridge when the group decides which gardens to visit that month.

**Lunch / Pudding Club:** led by Jean Lindley. The group offers visits to a local pub / restaurant for lunch on a bi-monthly basis, alternating with the starters / pudding club which meets at Jean's house. Members take either a starter or dessert to share.

**Photography:** led by David Foster. It meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 19:30 at a group member's house when arrangements will be made to have trips out to take photographs and share knowledge with other members. Anyone who is interested in improving their photography skills is welcome to join. So far, the group has visited Wells, Ninesprings in Yeovil, Sturminster Mill and Shaftesbury. The theme for the winter is indoor photography. The next meeting will be in March or April.

**Reading:** led by Jean Lindley. There are two groups: One group meets in the Tippling Philosopher, Milborne Port at 10:30 on the 2nd Friday of each month and the other meets at the Virginia Ash, Henstridge at 15:00 on the 4th Friday of the month. Each group reads a book which is discussed when the group meets.

**Walking Groups:** both groups are led by Richard Kidd, assisted by Hilary Smith. There is a different walk each month and the meeting place and time are determined by where the walk starts and how long it will take. Afterwards, refreshment is normally taken at a local hostelry. Both the Tuesday and the Wednesday walking groups will do the same walk with a single recce with at least 2 people from each group.

**Tuesday:** They walk on the last Tuesday of the month.

**Wednesday:** They walk on the third Wednesday of the month.



## GARDEN VISITS GROUP

Myself and Brita (Asst. Group Leader) took over the u3a Garden Group from Lyn Comrie in January '23, after Lyn had been running this successfully for around four years. We both feel that the varied programme of monthly coffee mornings, garden visits, and events have gone really well this year. We still have the maximum number of 30 with two members still on the 'waitlist', which is good news and the various events and visits have been well supported throughout the year.

We have tried to organise a variety of visits both locally and slightly further afield, which included NGS, RHS and NT gardens and always included either coffee, lunch or afternoon tea! We only had to cancel two garden visits during 2023, which was due to inclement weather, so, again, pretty good!

This month (Jan '24), we have organised our Annual Garden Group Lunch on Friday 12th January at 12.30, which is at The Virginia Ash, Henstridge and 25



members have paid a deposit in advance and also chosen their menus, so we are looking forward to it.

Both myself and Brita hope to organise some good trips again this coming year and hope most of the members can join us, along with our usual monthly coffee morning at the nice 'Thyme After Time' café on the first Monday of the month – the next one being on 5th March at 11.00.

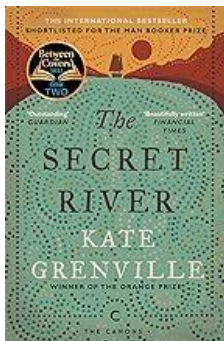
Jan



## READING GROUPS

We have two groups, each group meets monthly, one on the second Friday of the month and the other on the fourth Friday. We take it in turns to choose a book so all categories are covered. Our discussions are entertaining and can cover many topics. If you are interested in joining, please contact me, Jean, on

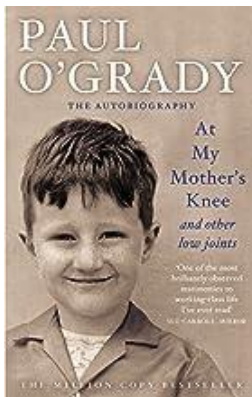
*The Secret River*  
Kate Grenville



This book came about as the author was researching her family history and in particular her great-great-great grandfather who was transported to Australia and there eventually became quite successful. However, from this a novel sprang, well researched, well written and very interesting. The Aborigines naturally featured strongly, not only their way of life but also their treatment by the British. We were all glad we had read it and would recommend it as a good read.

*At My Mother's Knee & Other Low Joints*

Paul O'Grady



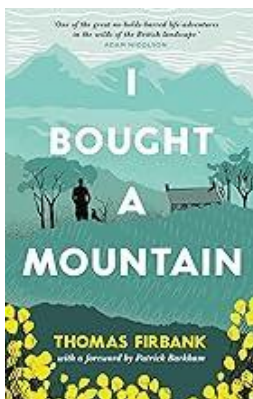
We all agreed that we liked Paul O'Grady and enjoyed reading his autobiography, this book dealt with his childhood and youth, before he was famous. Written with verve, wit and verbal repartee, such as was familiar to his audiences, he is candid about himself as a selfish and wayward Birkenhead lad, son of forgiving Irish Catholic parents, latterly swinging both ways but with a leaning to homosexuality. Much of what he learned at his mother's knee was inspiration for his stage persona Lily Savage, even the name derived from his relatives. We were all astonished by the detail included in the book and could only think its accuracy came from research involving his multitude of family members and friends. This is the first of four books covering his

life. We are considering reading his later books as we all agreed this one was an enjoyable read.

*Eileen Bate*

### *I Bought a Mountain*

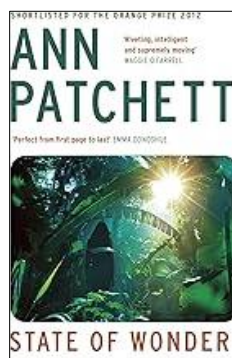
Thomas Firbank



Firbank was born in 1910 and at the age of 21 spent all his money buying Dyffryn Mymbry, a 972-hectare sheep farm in North Wales. He was a man of great energy and enjoyed challenges which this certainly was. He married Esme, a Surrey born actress, in 1934 and between them made a success of what can only be described as an almost insurmountable task. Their energy and toughness were remarkable. His writing flows easily and his descriptions are imaginative. Although some found there was too much about sheep, most of us enjoyed it.

### *The State of Wonder*

Ann Patchett



Like the Secret River reviewed above this was a venture into the wilds but this time it takes place in Brazil in the present time. An intriguing plot where a female scientist goes in search of another research scientist and a male colleague who seem to have almost vanished without trace. It is a good read but unfortunately has a weak ending, almost as though the author had to tie up the ends and finish too rapidly. However, most of us enjoyed it.



## LUNCH CLUB



Our Christmas Lunch at The Kings Arms, East Stour on Wednesday 6th December was a success, a lovely meal, good service and, of course, great company!

We are hoping to have a meal here at The Byre on either Tues 23rd, Wed 24th or Thurs 25th January. Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to come, which day would suit you best and what you are considering

bringing with you, starter, main, dessert or anything else.

Jean [ejlbyre@btinternet.com](mailto:ejlbyre@btinternet.com)



## WALKING GROUPS

Denis Ollington and Ian Westall retired at the end of December 2023 from their long-term roles as leaders of the Tuesday Walking Group. This has necessitated some changes to the administration of both the Tuesday and Wednesday groups.

Richard Kidd and Hilary Smith will take over the administration of both groups. Both groups will walk the same walk each month; the Wednesday Group will continue to walk on the third Wednesday and the Tuesday Group will continue to walk on the last Tuesday of each month, except December. Richard and Hilary will continue to lead most Wednesday walks and the Tuesday walks will be led by members of the group, on a changing basis.

The provisional programme for 2024 is:

January	Sandford Orcas – Rimpton (on lane unless very frosty & ground frozen)
February	Fox Inn, Ansty – Melcombe Bingham – Breach Wood
March	Bradford Abbas – Thornford - Yetminster
April	Fiddleford – Piddles Wood – Broadoak-Stur
May	Wardour Castles
June	Henstridge - Plott Lane - Whitchurch- Yenston - Inwood
July	AWAYDAY To be decided, possibly – Avoncliff - Freshford
August	Bruton Combes
September	Plush – Lyscombe Hill/Bottom
October	Marnhull – Hinton St Mary
November	Okeford Hill – Blandford Forest – Airmens' grave
December	To be decided

If you are interested in walking with us, please contact me. Non-members of Blackmore Vale u3a may walk as visitors for two walks

**Richard Kidd and Hilary Smith**



## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

This is the first full year of the photography group and it has proved to be an interesting and quite successful year. Over the year we have had four 'days out' with our cameras. We had two excellent daytime outings to Wells and to Shaftesbury that produced a wide variety of photography including street scenes and wonderful shots of Wells Cathedral. Our evening outings were to local beauty spots and these worked quite well.

Our presentation at the September open day was well received and we were delighted to welcome two new members. Other people showed an interest in our group but other commitments means that they cannot join us at present but will hopefully join us in the future.

I will be out of the UK in January and have long standing commitments in February meaning that our group will not meet until March. Until then we are each doing some indoor/still life photography that we will show and review at our March meeting. New members and anyone that is interested is welcome to come along and see what we have been up to.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and successful new year and all the best for 2024

*David Foster*



## Rifle Shooting

The Rifle Shooting Taster Event will be arranged for mid-February at Frome and District Pistol Club in Shepton Mallet.

Typically, the rifles available will be:

.22LR bolt action (quiet and gentle)

.22 Semi-automatic (quietish)

.38 special underlever (noisy)

.223 or .308 bolt action (very loud)

The cost of this evening will be in the region of £50 per person. This includes use of club guns, safety equipment, ammunition and supervision. The event is open to any u3a member and will be limited to a maximum of 15 people.

if you have not yet put your name forward, please contact Martyn Lennon on 01963 548243 or email him at



## History Tour



How well do we know the area in which we live? Well in 2024 there is an opportunity to find out more.

**On Saturday May 18th** – All day event.

Stalbridge is the smallest town in Dorset, beginning in around AD 860 as Stapulbridge. It began to grow in AD 860.

The original top of the market cross, that is used as a symbol on the membership card, blew off in 1950.

To delve deep into the Stalbridge history trail, join a walk led by a guide from The Stalbridge History Group.

Meeting at Dykes time TBA

# **Future events**

(CAN BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

**January 9th**

## **Grand Winter Quiz**

Quiz arranged by Pamela Slater

**March 5th**

**AGM**

followed by

## **Julia Holman**

### **Lock'em Up or Let Them Out**

How the Parole Board works

**May 7th**

## **David Boag, photographer**

### **The Secret Wood**

A 365-Day Journey in the British Countryside

**Saturday May 18th**

**MEMBERS ONLY**

Historical Walk, Stalbridge

**July 2nd**

**MEMBERS ONLY**

**14.30 Michael Malagan, scriptwriter**

**Focusing on the funny side**

**Followed by**

**15.30 Anniversary Cream Tea**

**September 3rd  
Open Day – no speaker**

**Friday September 27th  
MEMBERS ONLY  
Historical Walk, Milborne Port**

**November 5th  
Brita Wood  
Blackmore Vale Stationmasters**

Highlighted events consist of our 10th Anniversary celebrations. Regrettably, due to limited numbers allowed, these have to be restricted to members of Blackmore Vale u3a only.

