

Join us at **St Leonard's Church, Watlington at 2.30pm on Tuesday 17 March 2026** when **Andy Thomas** will be talking on the highly topical subject of **The Story of English Freedom – from Boudicca to Magna Carta, to Suffragettes, George Orwell and Poll Tax Riots.**

Non-members (£4 fee) and members (free) are welcome. Refreshments will be served following the talk.

**Ellen Froggatt**  
(froggattellen@gmail.com)

### WRITING FOR FUN

Last month's meeting produced some interesting pieces on our topic, 'Keeping Up Appearances,' with one of them holding us in suspense until the final sentence. We've yet to see what this month's will bring. The title is, 'I didn't know you cared.' This could be quite apt with Valentine's Day on our minds.

**Carol Nall,**  
carolmarynall@gmail.com

### Bridge Group

This group meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 10.30 to 12.30. If you are interested in joining,



**Editor, Peter Dollman,**

Articles for the Newsletter need to be sent to [peterdollman52@hotmail.com](mailto:peterdollman52@hotmail.com) by the 2nd Wednesday of the month

Please visit our website for news of Ridgeway u3a and TVN events  
<http://ridgeway.u3asite.uk>  
Registered Charity number 120292

please contact the group convenor: Berly Brown at [bkb@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:bkb@tinyworld.co.uk) or 01491 613251

### Chocolate

Would you be interested in coming to a talk on chocolate given by our local chocolatier Melissa. This will be in September/October. If you are interested please sign up on the list at the back of the church.



### A possible new Group

Called the Film/Theatre Group. It would happen on a two monthly basis. Here are a few possible dates:  
Wallingford Corn Exchange:  
4th March Othello (recorded live performance) at 2.30pm-5.15 pm  
25th March Turner and Constable Exhibition on Screen 2.30 pm-4 pm  
Theatre Royal Windsor:  
30th April Making a Killing 2.30-4.45  
if you have other suggestions or would like to become part of the group contact my email: [peterdollman52@hotmail.com](mailto:peterdollman52@hotmail.com) or speak to me at the upcoming speakers meeting.



# Ridgeway u3a

Newsletter February 2026

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### Coffee and Catch-up

We have tables booked at the Spire & Spoke, Hill Road, Watlington, for Friday 27th February, from 11am. We look forward to seeing you there.



### Tuesday Reading Group

In January we discussed **The Dutch House by Ann Patchett**, the story of a family through several generations, set in Pennsylvania and shortly after World War II. The family starts in poverty and gains great wealth through real estate purchases until the beginning of this century. Several of us who had read and enjoyed Ann Patchett's



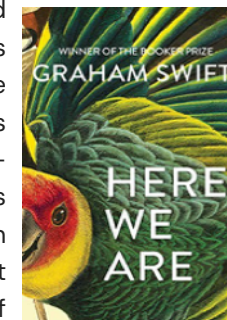
books before were disappointed with this one. Some felt it read like a fairy story echoing Hanzel and Gretel and wicked stepmothers. We also felt the ending was improbable. Altogether an easy read but there are much better books by Ann Patchett.

**Jane Kilroy**

### Monday Book Club

In January, we discussed **'Here we are' by Graham Swift**, a quietly beautiful tale of love and magic, which was enjoyed by everyone for its descriptions of a bygone age – the 1950s! There was some confusion however as to what happened to one of the three main characters – Ronnie, the magician protagonist – after his last performance.

**Barbara Noakes**



### Red Lion Book Group

#### Charlotte Betts. *The Stars Over Rome*.

The book is set in Rome in 1914. Gabrielle visits her Mother's family. She lives in England with her English father and Italian mother. She is bilingual. She meets Marc and falls in love. His family own Santorelli Publishing. They marry in England and tour Europe. They cut short their honeymoon when Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated and return to live in Rome. The book traces Italy's route to war, Marc goes to war. Gabrielle helps to keep the business afloat and is a journalist in a male dominated society. We all agreed that the book brought Rome alive and was an easy read, but we disagreed on the book's merit. Most of the group liked it, but a few felt that the plot was weak and the characters too black and white.



#### Claire Parsons

### Local History Group

We had a most interesting afternoon on 21st January when Margot Metcalfe, the Curator of Dorchester Abbey Museum and Chair of Dorchester Historical Society, gave us an entertaining and informative illustrated talk on Dorchester and some of the very varied objects on display in the museum. We then enjoyed June's tea including delectable home-made cakes. There is evidence of continuous human occupation of Dorchester for over 6000 years. The museum

displays finds from all of Dorchester's history, some very ancient, including a paleolithic stone axe.

Dorchester became the site of a Roman fort and walled town with allotments and cemeteries. Later in Saxon times it became an important centre of Christianity when St. Birinus, a missionary sent by the Pope, founded the first Cathedral. Its lands extended from the Thames to the Humber, although later the Normans moved the See to Lincoln and the Cathedral became the Augustinian Abbey church. The Abbey lost most of its wealth and treasure during the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Turning to February, Rosemary Taylor will very kindly give us an illustrated talk on "John Piper Windows". This will take place on Wednesday 18th February in the West Room, Watlington, at 2.30 p.m. There will be a charge of £3 per person payable at the door. Tea will be provided. It would be a great help if you could let me know if you are able to come.



*Haddenham Museum—lots to see*

Advanced notice: in March we are planning to have a talk at the Haddenham museum—info to follow.

#### Sue Carlyle

### Last Speakers Meeting

#### Driving along in my automobile!

Continuing their tour of local organisations, Ann & John Ford made a pit-stop at Ridgeway u3a recently to talk about their business of supplying mainly Morris Minor cars to the film and tv industries, with a detour along the way into a successful wedding business.

John was happy to take a back seat as Ann took us on a brief tour of the



*A Lilac 'Million' Morris Minor*

history of Morris Minors before embarking on a journey through the various productions for which they have supplied cars, on occasion doubling for any actors who weren't familiar with the Morris Minor. In Shadowlands, for instance, John doubled for Sir Anthony Hopkins in his role as C. S. Lewis, a not

very striking resemblance but one which through the magic of film editing was unnoticed by the viewer!

Ann & John had brought along with them a significant collection of memorabilia and John occasionally stepped into the driving seat to show us some of his prized possessions from 25 years in the business including a limited-edition leather jacket given to crew working on the film of Harry Potter & The Philosopher's Stone, and a T-shirt from the film of The Borrowers starring John Goodman and Jim Broadbent amongst others.

Ann also recalled the catalyst for their

introduction into the business which was John's determination to acquire one of the 350 lilac-coloured Morris Minors which were built in 1960 to celebrate the production of the one

millionth Morris Minor. He finally tracked one down in 1989 and, during an event day for Morris Minors, a card was left on its windscreen asking if he wanted to rent the car out for a film – the rest, as they

say, is history.

A stereotype was also born in 1960 which, to some extent, perpetuates to this day. Morris ran a competition in conjunction with the production of the limited-edition Minors which asked people to state what was the most important thing in a car. The winner was a female Nurse who had answered "The Colour" – a disservice to lady drivers everywhere!

After a long and varied career which covered films, tv programmes including Antiques Roadshow, London's Burning and Spitting Image; adverts for such as Weetabix and Sainsbury's and an early pop music video for Pink Floyd, Ann & John found media work was slowing down and took the decision to move into the business of providing Morris Minors for weddings. Their journey ended with the decision to sell their fleet of cars and venture on to a new route of public speaking.