

Ridgeway u3a

June 2026 Newsletter

Issue: no 200

Coffee & Catch-up

This month we will be back at the Spire & Spoke in Watlington, on Friday 26th June, where we have tables booked from 11am. We look forward to seeing you there.

Bridge Group

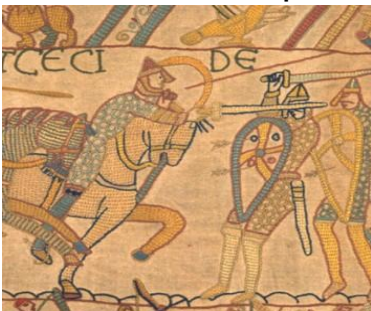
This group meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 10.30 to 12.30. If you are interested in joining, please contact the group convenor: Berly Brown at bkb@tinyworld.co.uk or 01491 613251

Lunch Group

The next lunch will be on **Wednesday 24th June at The Black Horse, Thame**, meeting at 12 noon for 12.30 pm. Please add your name to the list and select from the menu at the Speaker Meeting or contact Annette on 07771 992724.

Local History Group

Bayeux Tapestry (Replica!) visit on the 17th June at 2.30pm



For our June outing we are going to Reading Museum for a guided tour of the full-scale Victorian Replica of the 11th Century Bayeux Tapestry which was created in 1885 by 35 skilled women in Leek, Staffordshire, led by Elizabeth Wardle to ensure Britain had its own accurate representation of this historic embroidery. The cost of the guided tour will be £10. We suggest having lunch in the Museum cafe before the visit and carsharing will make parking easier. Further details can be found by the notice board. **Sue Carlyle**

The Reading Group

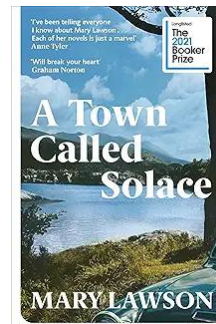


Our book for May was **'Blue Sisters' by Coco Mellors**. On the front cover of this book it is described as a Sunday Times best

seller, but it was a disappointment to most of us and not everyone finished reading it. The book follows the addictions, grief and traumas of four estranged sisters, Avery, Bonnie, Nicky and Lucky, who are meeting up after the death of Nicky. None of the characters were likeable and their lives and relationships failed to grip us!

Jane Kilroy

The Red Lion Book Group



A Town Called Solace by **Mary Lawson**: everyone liked this book, some more than others who felt it was a sad tale. It is set in a North Canadian Town of the title. Each chapter concerns one of three characters. Clara is nearly 8yrs old, Elizabeth her neighbour is in hospital with heart problems and Liam in his thirties who was Elizabeth's neighbour when he was a young boy. Elizabeth has given him her house and he has returned from Toronto with a failed marriage. Clara continues to feed Moses, Elizabeth's cat, she also waits at her own window for her sister (16) to return home as she has run away. The book vividly illustrates small town life, where everyone knows the history and business of all the inhabitants. Well written and a good read.

Claire Parsons

Last Speaker Meeting

"For God's Sake look after our people"

When Captain Robert Falcon Scott wrote these words, as he lay dying in his tent in the frozen wastes of Antarctica in 1912, the people he would have had in mind were the wives and families of the four colleagues who accompanied him on their unsuccessful attempt to become the first people to reach the South Pole. Scott's own Bohemian artist wife, Kathleen; Ted Wilson's devout wife Oriana; Edgar Evans's Welsh working-class wife Lois; the mother and sisters of "Birdie" Bowers and "Titus" Oates' devoted mother Caroline would have had no idea as to the fate of their husbands and sons until months after their deaths.

In her fascinating talk to Ridgeway u3a recently, Anne Fletcher gave us an insight specifically into the wives behind the men whose names and exploits live on more than 100 years after they died. Scott met his wife Kathleen Bruce at a party in London and was immediately drawn to her independent, Bohemian qualities. Ted Wilson and his wife Oriana were both very devout Christians and, although Oriana had anticipated life as the wife of a GP in Cheltenham when she married Ted, they both felt it was God's purpose for him when he joined Scott's Terra Nova expedition in 1910. Edgar Evans was from Rhossili and had achieved a degree of local celebrity as part of Scott's earlier Discovery expedition. A Petty Officer in the regular navy, he married his cousin Lois in 1904 and she was settling down to life as a navy wife before Evans too agreed to return to Antarctica with Scott in 1910.

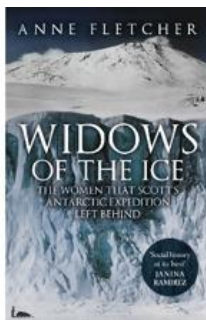
Lois said goodbye to Evans at their home in Portsmouth before the Terra Nova set sail but, as officers' wives, Kathleen and Oriana were invited to join the ship as far as New

Zealand. Tensions became apparent early on as Kathleen and Oriana did not get on and Bowers in particular disliked having women on board ship especially as Scott discussed the expedition with Kathleen and was prepared to take her advice. Once the Terra Nova left for Antarctica, Kathleen and Oriana returned home and they, and Lois, were to be widowed for a year before news broke that the five-man party to attempt the South Pole had all perished.

Telegrams were immediately sent to the three wives but, through a combination of circumstances, each heard the news before any telegrams arrived. Oriana had travelled to New Zealand to await Wilson's return and was given his letters and diaries in which he told her that they would meet again in heaven. Kathleen was en route to New Zealand when the ship's captain was notified of Scott's death and broke the news to her. Kathleen and Oriana did meet in New Zealand and were able to comfort each other but never subsequently met again.

The most unfortunate was Lois, back home in Wales and in financial difficulties due to Evans prolonged absence, who heard the news when reporters came to her door claiming that Evans, as a non-commissioned officer, had somehow been responsible for the death of his comrades. While Oates is remembered for his heroic last words "I'm just going outside and I may be some time", and the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers were found with their letters and diaries and were interred for all time in a snow cairn where they died, the luckless Edgar Evans died from a head injury following a fall and his body was never recovered. It was therefore easy to scapegoat him, the working-class non-commissioned officer, as the weak link in the expedition despite the fact that Scott had specifically asked for him not only to join the expedition but to be part of the final assault on the South Pole.

A public appeal raised the equivalent of £3.5m for the families of the five men who died but, in keeping with the times, the money was allocated strictly according to the men's rank and social status with the result that Kathleen Scott and Oriana Wilson received a significant lump sum and a pension from the fund whereas Lois, who needed the money the most, received only a pittance. Lois herself paid for a memorial to Evans in their local church.



The full story of the women that Scott's Antarctic expedition left behind can be found in Anne Fletcher's book, Widows of the Ice.

Join us at St Leonard's Church, Watlington at 2.30pm on Tuesday 21 July when Liz Woolley will be bringing back memories of Children and War – experiences of WWII in Oxfordshire. Liz is a local historian specialising in aspects of the history of Oxford and Oxfordshire.

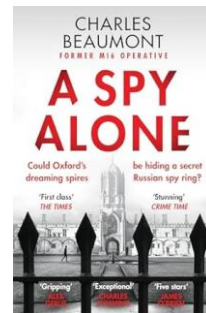
Non-members (£4 fee) and members (free) are welcome. Refreshments will be served following the talk.

Visit to Foxington



At the end of May we returned to Foxington for a tour of these beautiful gardens, followed by tea with home-made cake in the birthday-themed barn. Those flowers looked amazing and the bees were very happy - Thank you, Mary!

Monday Book Club



At our last meeting we discussed 'A spy alone'

by Charles Beaumont. Not everyone had managed to read the book,

but those who did found it gripping with a chilling and plausible plot based on the concept of an Oxford spy ring. Unlike the Cambridge spy ring and communist ideology, this spy ring was centred on the influence of money and power on politics and the world order. Some of us found it difficult to get into but after the initial chapters enjoyed the gripping and fast paced read. Barbara Noakes

Writing For Fun

Last month's topic, 'Glamping,' produced some hilarious as well as factual accounts. This month we have 'A Mixed Bunch' to look forward to. We meet on the third Monday afternoon of each month and would welcome any prospective members, who might want to find out what it's all about. For details, please contact, Carol Nall, carolmarynall@gmail.com

NEW – u3a Getaways

U3a Getaways is a new programme of bespoke holidays exclusively for u3a members and friends. The first *u3a Getaways* trip will be **The Agatha Christie Story** from 14-18 September 2026. The trip will explore the beautiful houses and coastlines which inspired her famous mysteries. Other short breaks are planned up to May 2027.

Full details of u3a Getaways can be found at

<https://www.justforgroups.com/u3a-getaways>

Be reassured - Peter Dollman will return as Editor next month!

Articles for the Newsletter need to be sent to 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>

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