

Ver-Colne Valley



General meetings 3rd Thursday each month at 10am
Greenwood Park Community Centre,
Tippendell Lane,
Chiswell Green, AL2 3HW

Charity No:1156215

VCV Web Site: www.ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Newsletter: No 212 August
2026

Please Note: Date of September General Meeting
is now 24th September 2026

A very warm welcome to you all,



As a gentle reminder, please put your phone on silent while the speaker is talking. A ringing phone can be distracting for the speaker and other members, and we would like everyone to be able to enjoy the talk comfortably. If you are expecting an urgent call, please set your phone to vibrate so you can step out quietly if needed.

Since the AGM, VCV members have enjoyed a visit to the *Tereza Joanne*, a floating event boat moored at King George V Dock in East London. It was a bright and cheerful occasion, with flower leis, colourful clothing and plenty of smiling faces. Do look out for the full write-up later in this newsletter.

In this month's newsletter, you'll find details of future events and important dates, along with reports and photographs from recent visits. Many of these items have been kindly supplied by members, so please do take time to read through the newsletter — and do keep sending your contributions to the Editor.

Please remember to bring your own cup for refreshments. It's a small step that helps VCV keep costs down, reduce the need for disposable cups, cut waste and support our efforts to be more environmentally friendly.

The Theatre Group and the Day Trip Co-ordinator would be delighted to hear from you if you have ideas for future shows or interesting places to visit. Your suggestions are always welcome.

We can all help spread the word about u3a, and especially about VCV. Please mention our many interest groups, social opportunities and outings to friends, neighbours, acquaintances and family. It's a lovely way to meet new people, visit different places and make the most of life.

Regards

Nick Photi

To contact any committee member please go to:

www.ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk/contact

and select with whom you would like to communicate.

Committee News



Speaker's Corner

20th August

Jody Huizar is giving a talk titled "From Texas to Town Crier".

He describes his talk as a fast-paced amusing and interesting journey from San Antonio Texas to official Great Dunmow Town Crier. He will come in his full regalia and members will have opportunities to try out as a Town Crier.

24th September

Due to the change of date for the General Meeting Trevor Spinage is stepping in to our Speaker this month.

15th October

Fabian Hiscock "A Victorian Farm, the diaries of John White of Rickmansworth"

John White farmed in Rickmansworth 1841 to 1896 and kept a diary every day of his life. From this we learn a great deal about what it was like to live and work in Hertfordshire during that time.

19th November

Jeff Evans "Pop on the Box"

Jeff is an acknowledged expert in popular culture and has written numerous books about television including "The Penguin TV Companion" which is Britain's most comprehensive and detailed television encyclopaedia. He is also a passionate quizzer having appeared on several TV quiz shows. He is currently on the Mastermind question setting team.

Refreshment Rota 2026



Group	Month
Grumpy Old Women	August
Singing For Fun	Sept
Table Games/Spanish	October
Walking Group 1 Amblers	November



Groups News - Julia

Hi Everyone,

Thank you to the Grumpy Old men group for helping with refreshments at the GM, they didn't live up to their name, and I caught them smiling and laughing whilst attending to their duties, it was greatly appreciated.

The Bridge group are still looking for more intermediate players, they meet on Tuesdays from 9.30 – 12.00pm at Greenwood Park, a sign-up sheet will be available at the next GM, please add your name if you are interested.

The Amateur Dramatics group also still have availability; remember this is about reading playscripts not actually performing if you don't want to! A sign-up sheet will still be available at the next GM.

I only have one name on the sign-up sheet for beginners French; we will need a few more interested people if this is to be a viable group.

I hope you are all managing to keep cool and I look forward to catching up with you at the next GM.



If you wish to receive the monthly National u3a Newsletter follow the link below, they also do a "Bitesize" edition, signing up is easy. (Control and click to follow link) [You can sign up via website.](#)

Link to the East of England August Bulletin

[2026-08 E of E Bulletin](#)

(Control and click to follow link)



STAMPS

Please continue to collect stamps, if you could please trim the edges so that there is only a half a centimetre of envelope around them.

There will be a box at the General Meeting for you to put your stamps in and they will be given to a charity.

Thank you. Penny Haigh

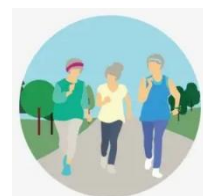
Dates for your diary

Closing date for articles for Newsletter
NO LATER than the morning of Friday 4th September 2026
Please note articles received after the deadline will be published
in the next newsletter if appropriate.
Please send your articles to
newsletter@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Event	Date	Contact	Current Position
 Walking in London	1 st & 4 th September 2026	Bob Gettleson	Fully booked Waiting list
 Walking Group 3	8 th September 2026	Penny Collins	All VCV members welcome
"Cats" Regents Park Open Air Theatre	17 th September 2026	Maggie Fenn	Contact Maggie Fenn
 Garden Appreciation Serendi	22 September 2026	Jill Fownes	Garden Appreciation members only
GENERAL MEETING	24TH September 2026		
Kentwell Hall – a Tudor Michaelmas Day	27 th September 2026	Barbara Croom	Open to friends and family
 Best of Bulgaria	27 th September - 4 th October 2026	Nick & Tina Photi	
 Walking Group 3	13 th October 2026	Penny Collins	All VCV members welcome
Annual VCV Dance	17 th October 2027		On sale at GM – order form on back page
 Phantom of the Opera	21 st October 2026	Maggie Fenn	Sold out but put your name down on waiting list
 North West & Liverpool	15 – 19 th November	Nick & Tina Photi	Waiting List
 Garden Appreciation Group Christmas Lunch	25 th November	Brenda Kember	Garden Group members only
Hampton Court	2 nd December	Barbara Croom	On sale
 Paddington	10 th December 2026	Maggie Fenn	Sold out, but put your name on the waiting list
 Anything Goes	3 rd January 2027	Maggie Fenn	Sold out, but put your name on the waiting list
Sinatra the Musical	9 th March 2027	Maggie Fenn	On sale at next meeting
Annual Barn Dance	17 th April 2027		
 Rhine in Flames	29 th April to 3 rd May 2027	Nick & Tina Photi	Waiting list
VCV u3a AGM	17th June 2027		Provisional

AMBLERS - Joy Dabson

Please meet for an 11 am start, car park beside St Paul's Church,
The Common, Chipperfield, WD4 9BQ Friday 28th August.



THE INTEREST LIST DOES NOT GUARANTEE A TICKET. PAYMENT IS REQUIRED BEFORE YOUR NAME IS ADDED TO THE BOOKING LIST FOR THE EVENT.



PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Date Wednesday 21st October 2026
Theatre His Majesty's Theatre, London
Pick up Point Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green
Depart The coach leaves promptly at 10.30 am
Return from Theatre Approx 5.15 pm
Price £56

PADDINGTON

Date Thursday 10th December 2026
Theatre The Savoy
Pick up Point Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green
Depart The coach leaves promptly at 10.30 am.
Return Approx 5.15
Price £82.00

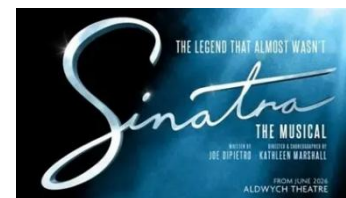


ANYTHING GOES

Date Sunday 3rd January 2027
Theatre The Mill at Sonning
Pick up point Greenwood Park, Chiswell Green
Depart The coach leaves promptly at 10.30am
Return Approx 5.15pm
Price £104 includes lunch, coach and driver's tip

SINATRA THE MUSICAL

Date: Tuesday 9th March 2027
Theatre: Aldwych Theatre in London
Pick up point: The coach leaves promptly at 10.30am
Return: Approx 5.15pm
Price : £69 inclusive of coach and the driver's tip



**HANDOUTS FOR ALL PRODUCTIONS ARE ON THE THEATRE TABLE AT THE BACK OF THE HALL
PLEASE COLLECT**

Day Trips and Events

Trips Contact Barbara Croom – trips@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

On Sale Now

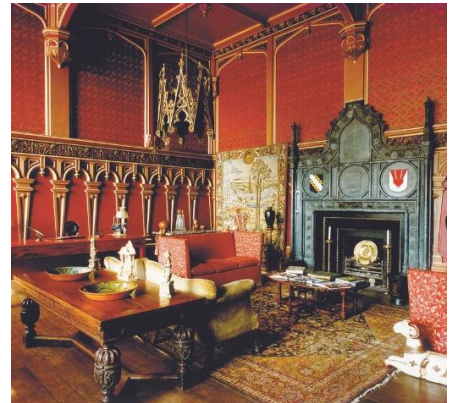
Kentwell Hall – a Tudor Michaelmas Day

Date: Sunday 27 September

Price: £35

Depart GWP: 8.30am

Depart venue: 4.00pm



With its origins mentioned in the Domesday Book, this timeless moated manor house has had a very chequered history through the centuries, including a spell as a transit camp for the army during WW2. Bought in a near derelict state in 1970 by the current owners, it has been extensively restored and now presents re-enactment events involving fully costumed volunteers.

On the day of our visit, we will be able to step back to 1553 and experience the sounds and sights of everyday Tudor life from the gentry to more ordinary folk, brought to life by Kentwell's skilled Living Historians. With the crafts, cooking, food, music and dancing – as well as the gossip that accompanies the life of a small village - wander round the house and gardens on a self-guided tour for a fascinating visit with a difference.

Now open to friends and family.



On Sale in August

Hampton Court Palace

Date: Wednesday 2 December

Price: £39

Depart GWP: 9.00 am

Depart venue: 4.00 pm



Step into the enchanted world of the Winter Palace. Wander through the spectacular rooms where each one is different, dressed in gold, emerald and copper with frosted Christmas trees and garlands. Meet friendly puppets and gentle mythical creatures. See moments of mischief and encounter a sleeping dragon.

You will also be able to visit the other rooms of the palace, and the gardens – if the weather allows.



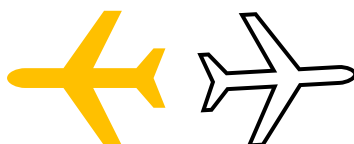
Holidays

Contact : gptravel@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Northwest & Liverpool Waiting list

5 days / 4 nights departing Sunday 15th -
Thursday 19th November 2026
4 nights half board 3* Farington Lodge Hotel
Double or twin room - £799pp
(Single supplement £99 (4 nights))
Return Executive Coach Travel
Excursion package included

- National Memorial Arboretum + Land Train • Leighton Hall Guided Tour + Lunch
- Lakeland Motor Museum • Liverpool Guided Tour • Magical Mystery Tour
- World of Glass + Demonstration • Imperial War Museum North • Fish 'n' Chip Dinner, Dance & Singalong
- World of Wedgwood & Light Lunch



RHINE IN FLAMES 2027 - Waiting List

PRICES: £1099pp No single supplement - 5 days/4 nights - 29th April - 3rd May 2027

DEPOSIT: £200pp (non-refundable/ non-transferable) Balance due in full by the 01.03.27

Executive Coach Travel

Short Channel Crossings

4 nights B&B + 3 hotel dinners

HIGHLIGHTS

Rhine in Flames Spectacular Cruise, Champagne Reception + Buffet Dinner + Music Excursion • • Vulkan-Express narrow-gauge railway
Benedictine Abbey Maria Laach, Lunch + Tour
Andernach Geyser + Museum
Boppard
Anton Hammes Wine Cellars
City of Bonn



News and Features

Walking in London July – Mayfair

Dressed for heatwave and suitably covered in sunblock, the Ver-Colne Valley “London Walkers” met John, our wonderful Blue Badge Guide at Green Park underground station.

Keeping in the shade as much as possible, we ventured into Green Park and paused at the blue gates. These were once the entrance to Devonshire House, the townhouse property owned by the Dukes for Devonshire. Cambridge House now roughly occupies the site.

Leaving the park behind, we made our way along White Horse Street to Shepherd Market. Here we learned that Mayfair is so called because there used to be a fair here every May. Who’d have thought!

Mayfair has always been a very affluent area of London. This is still evident today. Shepherd Market was laid out in the 1730’s. It is a network of alleyways and courtyards. There are many shops and several pubs here.



Keeping to the shady side of the street, we made our way along Curzon Street into Trebeck Street, where we paused opposite the Saudi Embassy (no photography here!).

Passing through one of the Shepherd Market alleyways, we entered Hertford Street. We paused by the Chesterfield Arms where there is a blue Plaque to Wendy Richard (famous for Come Outside, Are You Being Served and Eastenders). Her parents used to run the pub.

Number 10 Hertford Street has 2 Blue Plaques. These are for General John Burgoyne and Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Continuing the walk into Down Street, we paused by 2 points of interest. One is the original headquarters of Radio Luxembourg (who remembers Horace Bachelor?) and the other is Down Street Station which closed in 1932.



We made our way through Curzon Square, past a flat once owned by Harry Nielsen, into Curzon Street. There is plaque to Benjamin Disraeli and Leconfield House, which was once the headquarters of the Secret Service.

Our route took us along Chesterfield Street, passing Blue Plaques to Caroline Norton, Beau Brummell and Anthony Eden, through Charles Street into Hay’s Mews.

We stopped briefly at a pub called the Footman. Previous names were “Running Horse” and “I Am The Only Running Footman”. These are references to the bygone days when travel was by horse drawn carriage.

Next stop was in Farm Street by the Jesuit Church. There are Blue Plaques to Lady Thelma Furness, John F Kennedy and Gloria Swanson here as well.

We passed through Mount Street gardens, which was once a burial ground, into Mount Street. We paused at the Connaught Hotel before proceeding to Berkeley Square.

The square boasts the oldest plane tree in London as well as the home of Clive of India and a fetching statue of a triceratops.

The Claremont Club and Annabels are in Berkeley Square and number 50 is said to be haunted.

The walk finished in Bruton Street where there are blue plaques to Jean Muir and Sir Norman Hartnell. Once again John was informative, amusing and as entertaining as ever.

Our next walk is a brand new one – South of Kings Cross. Details have been circulated to all Group members and are shown on the VCV website.

News and Features

Garden Appreciation Outing - Sweet Briar Flower Farm - Bronwen Hewer

When a group has been visiting beautiful gardens every month for in excess of ten years, it becomes increasingly difficult to find new places to visit but our esteemed leader for the day, Pat, had found a place no one had come across before.

It was Sweet Briar Flower Farm near Hertford, and it proved to be a real surprise. It is next door to Foxholes Farm Shop.

Nicola, the owner, met us and took us to her patch, which consisted of two garden plots, each not very much bigger than an allotment size, which she had procured four years ago, and transformed out of a soggy clay field, to grow flowers which she uses for her business of flower arrangements for such things as weddings, funerals and other occasions.

The flowers, most of which she grows from seed which she saves from her own plants, are grown in rows with a polytunnel and a greenhouse as her workshop. Needless to say, watering this year, has proved extremely difficult. Not only are the plots at the top of an incline, but even with piping laid in places, it takes four hours to water daily.

It was a colourful area. Roses were plentiful and there was a wide variety of other garden flowers of all kinds.

Nicky's patch was surrounded by pens of animals for young children to visit and feed and there was also some glamping for a pleasant holiday.

It felt as though we were right in the country.



Naturally our trip included a lunch which was found at the Galley Hall Pub nearby which went highly recommended by everyone present with excellent food and generous portions. We concluded it was definitely worth another visit.

Our thanks go to Pat who miraculously organised a completely new and interesting visit for us all to enjoy.

Really Useful Members

Joint Membership Secretary: Sue Darvell

New Members' Liaison: Neil Hutchison

Third Age Magazine Co-Ordinator: David Collins tam@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Speaker Secretary: Ann Hutchison speakerssec@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Theatre Trip Organiser: Maggie Fenn theatre@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Trips Organiser: Barbara Croom - trips@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Newsletter: Tina Photi: Email: newsletter@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Sound & Lighting: Roger Barry / Trevor Spinage

Welfare: Pam Kimber: Email: welfare@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Raffle: Lai Hughes

News and Features

Walking Group 3 – Penny Collins

For our July walk, John Wright very kindly led us around Northaw Great Wood in Cuffley. The area of nearly 300 acres was once part of a huge Norman wood stretching across most of the parish of Northaw. It would have been used to graze livestock, gather wood for fuel and feed pigs. Its importance to biodiversity, therefore, lies in its history as wood pasture common - not as woodland.



During the Second World War, the woodland was included as part of the Outer London Anti-Tank Stop Line and is now one of Hertfordshire's largest remaining historic wood pasture commons and comprises open bracken glades and wide rides with oak, hornbeam and birch woodland.

After weeks of heat from the hot sun, we were happy that the walk through the wood was just pleasantly warm and less than four miles long. We meandered up and down some of the gradients and took our time to look at various features as we walked along, such as the famous swallow holes, which are a natural feature formed at the end of the last ice age. These were made by seasonal streams and surface water becoming slightly acidic, after passing through the sands and gravel deposits of the ice age. The water then chemically reacted with the calcium carbonate in the underlying chalk, slowly dissolving the rock and forming fissures and underground caverns. The surface layers then collapsed, resulting in the distinct "swallow hole" craters visible today. We remembered when as children, in the spirit of adventure, we ran full pelt down the sides of swallow holes and straight up the far sides. In reality however, some of us did manage to gingerly scramble down a couple and claw our way up the other side, with a great feeling of achievement and a heightened sense of adventure!

We saw the tents and heard the distant voices of a party of children camping in the woods and some of the walkers remembered when a large area next to the wood was designated as a campsite for school children. For generations of London and Hertfordshire schoolchildren in the 1990s, a trip to Cuffley Camp was a rite of passage. It typically involved sleeping in large canvas bell tents, learning orienteering, building campfires and tracking wildlife. Some of our group, who had either been teachers, or whose children had attended the camp had some very amusing stories to tell!

After the walk our stories continued, as we ate a delicious lunch served by very friendly staff at the newly renovated Cock 'o the North pub in Bell Bar.



News and Features

Tereza Joanne – Totally Tropical

The Tereza Joanne is a unique floating venue boat which is moored at the King George V dock, which offers breathtaking views of the city and the opportunity to witness the taking off and landing of planes at London City Airport runway.

For many of us it was our third trip to the Tereza Joanne, having previously been entertained to ABBA and the 50s and 60s Golden Oldies. This time, Pete George, a very talented singer and guitarist, entertained us to a tropical theme. Many of us were festooned in colourful outfits and garlands to embrace the occasion.

Once we were all aboard and allocated our tables, having previously visited the well-stocked bar, we were served the first course of our lunch. The food was good and the staff were friendly and accommodating. This was followed by dancing until our dessert course and coffee were served. We continued dancing which, of course included the 'must-have' conga, until it was time to go home.

Maggie Simpson



Quiz Answers
1: Kent; 2: Paris; 3. Capability Brown; 4: Zen; 5: Clarinet; 6. Saxophonist; 7: Cello; 8: Piano; 9.
Basilisk 10:Centaur; 11: Pheonix; 12 Pegasus

News and Features



IT'S SHOWTIME! Rod Harman

Are your Fruit, Veg and Flowers up to scratch?

There's only one way to find out - by dropping into the Parish's biggest and brightest horticultural extravaganza. Run by St Stephens Gardening Club (many of you will be members) the show's this **Saturday 22nd August**, here at Greenwood Park, with doors opening to the general public at 2.00pm. **Entry is free** and refreshments will be available... including some irresistible cakes.

Prizes up for grabs

Gardening club members will be pitching their best efforts to be top-of-some 100 classes, for Fruit, Vegetables and Flowers... no garden show is complete without flowers and floral competitions will be running the whole alphabetical gambit, from Asters to Zinnias.

You too can enter

Although the show's main competitions are exclusive to club members, non-members (at least those with green fingers and a competitive spirit) can also join in the fun and games. Known as Open Classes, anyone can compete in a wide range of challenges.

How about entering the Novelty Veg category – for the heaviest potato or the longest runner bean? Then there's Flower Arrangement and Flower Decoration classes for flower artisans to demonstrate their floral dexterity.

Even though you may not be a passionate gardener you'll still find the show a great afternoon out for all the family. ***Remember the date – it's this coming Saturday 22nd August.***



Gardens

1. Which county is known as the Garden of England?
2. The Luxembourg Gardens is a park in which European capital city?
3. English gardener and landscape architect Lancelot Brown was more commonly known by what name?
4. What name is given to a minimalist dry landscape also known as a Japanese rock garden?

Can you name the instruments that the following well known musicians played

5. Benny Goodman
6. Charlie Parker
7. Julian Lloyd Webber
8. Count Basie

Mythical animals

9. Which mythical animal can kill with a look?
10. What has the head of a man, with a body and legs of a horse?
11. What bird rises from its ashes?
12. Which winged horse in Greek mythology is usually depicted as a white stallion?



VCV

Saturday 17th October 2026

Doors open at 7.30

Music from 8.00 till 10.45

Price: £16.00
per person

to include sandwiches and cakes
supper but bring your own drink
& water

(Please let us know of any special
dietary needs)

If you wish for a group of over 8 please
let us know and we can put you on 2
tables next to each other.

(PLEASE DO NOT MOVE TABLES
TOGETHER) There will be a table plan

music by

“Simply 60s Band”

Tickets on sale NOW at the General Meeting

Name	Mem No	Cheque No	Dietary Needs

If you wish for a group of over 8 please let us know and we can put you on 2 tables next to each other.
(PLEASE DO NOT MOVE TABLES TOGETHER) There will be a table plan on the night

Cheques only