Ver-Colne Valley

u3a learn, laugh, live

Newsletter: No 214 October 2026

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*

Hello everyone,

Since our last meeting, members of the Holiday Group have visited Bulgaria, and we also enjoyed a day out at Kentwell Hall. During our visit, Kentwell Hall was hosting its Michaelmas Fair, with volunteers dressed in period costume. A full write-up, together with details of the Bulgaria trip, will appear in our November newsletter.

VCV continues to grow and take part in a wide range of activities, while our many Interest Groups remain busy enjoying their shared interests.

Our annual dance takes place on 17 October, and a few tickets are still available. The Theatre Group has visits planned to see *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Paddington*, and there is also a trip to Hampton Court. In November, the Holiday Group will be visiting Liverpool and the Northwest.

We will round off the year with our usual entertainment at the December General Meeting. The Ukulele Group will be plucking their strings, and Singing for Fun will lead us in songs and carols. There will also be a quiz and a raffle. Meanwhile, your Committee and Interest Group leaders are already making plans for 2027.



Finally, a friendly reminder:

Please remember that it is important to bring your Membership Badge and **completed Emergency Contact information** to every General Meeting, trip or group activity you attend.

If you would like tea or coffee at the General Meetings, please bring your own cup.

Please also remember to park considerately in the car park.

Please also put your phones on silent or on Airplane mode when we have a speaker talking.

Thank you.

Best 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

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.

u3a 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 October https://eastofengland.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/October-E-of-E-Bulletin-FINAL-with-additions.pdf (Control and click to follow link)

Refreshment Rota 2026

Group	Month
Table Games/Spanish	October
Walking Group 1 Amblers	November



Groups News

Hi Everyone,

Thank you to the Singing for Fun group for helping with refreshments at the GM, it was greatly appreciated. Thank you also to all those who bring their own cups with them, it does save a lot of money and wastage.

Our new yoga group has merged with Chiswell Green and they will now be leading this, I am reliably informed that now there is a waiting list only for places.

Let me know if you would like me to advertise your group, I can announce vacancies and promote group activities if needed. Also, we have a vacancy at the November GM for a group to present and share what they do with everybody. Please contact me if you are interested.

Remember if you would like to start a new group please contact me, either by email or come and chat at the next GM.

Take care and see you soon.

Julia

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

VCV Events Calendar

Event	Date	Contact	Booking status
Annual VCV Dance	17th October 2026		On sale at GM – order form on back page
Phantom of the Opera	21st October 2026	Maggie Fenn	Sold out but put your name down on waiting list
Walking Group 2	30th October 2026	Angela & John Wright	Contact Angela or John,
Walking Group 3	10th November 2026	Penny Collins	All VCV members welcome
North West & Liverpool	15 – 19th November 2026	Nick & Tina Photi	Waiting List
Garden Appreciation Group Christmas Lunch	25th November 2026	Brenda Kember	Garden Group members only
Walking Group 2	27th November 2026	Angela & John Wright	Contact Angela or John,
Hampton Court	2nd December 2026	Barbara Croom	Waiting List
Paddington	10th December 2026	Maggie Fenn	Sold out, but put your name on the waiting list
Anything Goes	3rd January 2027	Maggie Fenn	Sold out, but put your name on the waiting list
Sinatra the Musical	9th March 2027	Maggie Fenn	Waiting list
Queen Elizabeth ll – Her Life in Fashion	1 March 2027	Barbara Croom	On sale
Annual Barn Dance	17th April 2027		Tickets available at later date
Rhine in Flames	29th April to 3rd May 2027	Nick & Tina Photi	Waiting list
VCV u3a AGM	17th June 2027		Provisional
Winter Sun - Cyprus	14th - 21st November 2027	Nick & Tina Photi	Spaces available

Closing date for articles for Newsletter NO LATER than the morning of Friday 6th November 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

AMBLERS

Please meet for an 11 am start, Friday October 23rd, car park, Cafe in
the Orchard, Shenley Park, Radlett Lane, Shenley, WD7 9DW.

Joy Dabson

Theatre Trips

Contact Maggie Fenn –
theatre@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

Important booking information

- Adding your name to an interest list **does not** guarantee a ticket.
- Your name will be added to the event booking list only after payment has been received.



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



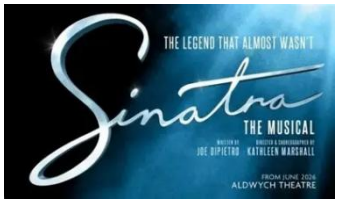


ANYTHING GOES

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



THERE WILL BE SEVERAL INTEREST LISTS FOR YOU TO SEE. If you think you would be interested in a particular show, please put your name down; it gives me some idea of how many people would be keen to see that show.

Day Trips and Events

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

Hampton Court Palace



Date: Wednesday 2 December
Price: £39
Depart GWP: 9.00am
Depart venue: 4.30pm

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.
Waiting list only

On Sale in October
Queen Elizabeth ll – Her Life in Fashion



Date: Monday 1 March 2027
Price: £61
Depart GWP: 11.00am
Depart venue: 5.30pm



Marking the centenary of her birth, this is the largest exhibition of her wardrobe, comprising more than 300 items. Visually spectacular, it includes dazzling gowns, sumptuous colour palettes and rich embroidery. The Queen was totally committed to British fabrics and craftsmanship, and the relative absence of glass cases allows for an unusually clear view of the garments. They vary from the superb wedding dress designed by Norman Hartnell to a clear plastic mackintosh, which allowed people to see what she was wearing when it was raining.
A two-course lunch is also included in the trip.

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

Holidays

Contact Nick & Tina Photi –
gptavel@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



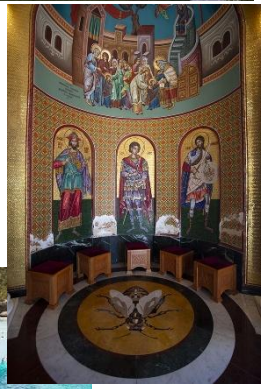
RHINE IN FLAMES 2027 - Waiting List

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

WINTER SUN 2027 – CYPRUS



Sunday 14th - Sunday 21st November 2027, 8 days / 7 nights'
PRICES: £1239pp two share ; Single supplement £149 (7 nights)
Classic Seaview supplement £199 per room
DEPOSIT: Early booking initial low deposit £100pp; 2nd deposit by 28.02.27 - £300pp
(both non-refundable/ non-transferable)
Balance due in full by the 10.09.27
Return UK airport coach transfers / Return flights Gatwick—Paphos
Private transfers Paphos airport—hotel—airport
4* Athena Beach Hotel, Paphos 7 nights B&B + 6 x hotel dinners + BBQ Cruise
HIGHLIGHTS - • Troodos & Kykos Mountains Full day + Guide • Authentic Cyprus by Coach Full day + Guide
• Blue Lagoon BBQ Cruise







News & Features



Walking Group 3 - John Hewer

After two and a half months of dry weather, it was raining as we began our walk from the hamlet of North Mymms! The rain continued lightly and intermittently, throughout the walk, before a downpour at the very end!
Undeterred, we began our journey past the cricket ground of North Mymms in its country setting before leaving the A1(M) behind, meandering along cart tracks and through fields and hedgerows before climbing into Mymmshall and Hawkshead Woods. The group dealt manfully (personfully???) with the climb before posing for a group photo at the summit.
We then descended through the mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland to a viewpoint (had the visibility been better and the hedge cut a little lower) to the village of South Mymms and the M25 below.
Next it was into the estate of North Mymms and up through Redwell Wood, noticing the recently demarcated individual areas of woodland apparently for sale (what would one do with them?)



Passing through undulating areas of fields and woodland, we arrived at the boundary of Grade 1 listed North Mymms House, an Elizabethan building very similar in design to nearby Hatfield House. Ownership having passed through many families, it was occupied by Glaxo from 1992 to 2018. It is currently an exclusive conference and wedding centre. Unfortunately, the house and grounds are (purposely) surrounded by an impenetrable holly hedge. . . And then it rained heavily!
But the group repaired to the Woodman Inn at nearby Waterend where a good meal was enjoyed by all!

Garden Appreciation Group visit to Serendi - Cathy Jones

On an unseasonably warm late September day, fifteen members of the Garden Appreciation Group travelled to Letchworth Garden City to visit Serendi, a National Garden Scheme garden open to the public on certain days of the year.



The house is owned by a lovely lady who took us on a private tour around her beautiful garden and served us tea and delicious homemade cakes afterwards. Thank you Jill and Tina for organising this outing. We all enjoyed it immensely and will possibly return next year at tulip time.

News & Features

Walking in London September – South of Kings Cross

This brand-new walk started outside Kings Cross Station, in Euston Road under the clock. The clock was made for the Great Exhibition and moved to Kings Cross Station 2 years later in 1853.

John told us that there are rumours that Queen Boudica may be buried under Kings Cross Station.



A short distance away we could see the "Kings Cross Lighthouse". It is believed this was built to advertise the company that occupied the ground floor – a glass and lead foundry.

A short distance along Gray's Inn Road we arrived at our first stop, by St Chads Street. The river Fleet runs underground here, and it was the site of St Chads Well. The building that is now a Travelodge is topped by a statue of the god Mercury.

Further along Gray's Inn Road, we stopped at the Water Rats pub. This was once called the Pindar of Wakefield. This was the post held by the first landlord in 1517. Customers include Friedrich Engels, Lenin and Karl Marx. It is also a music venue and has hosted Bob Dylan, the Pogues and Oasis.



Our route took us along Swinton Street, across Kings Cross Road into Percy Circus. On the way we passed a Blue Plaque to Lenin. From here we followed Great Percy Street to Amwell Street. Here there is a Blue Plaque to the cartoonist George Cruikshank, who also has a street named after him.

Around this area, there are several plaques placed by the Amwell Society. These celebrate people who have contributed to the local community. These plaques are not awarded for fame.

We then learned Claremont Square was built by the New River Company. There is a covered reservoir. The houses were used in the Harry Potter films – Grimald Place.

We moved on to Myddleton Square, which is named after Sir Hugh Myddleton who brought the New River to London. This brought clean water to homes for the first time.



Heading along Chadwell Street, we paused at Angel Church, also known as Mount Zion Chapel.

We walked along St John's Road and turned into Roseberry Avenue. We stopped at Spa Green opposite Sadlers Wells Theatre. John told us of the rich history associated with the theatre and surrounding area.

The junction with Hardwick Street marks the place where the New River ended. There is a building called New River Head, once the offices of the New River Company but now apartments.



Continuing along Roseberry Avenue, we turned into Spafield Street and paused at the Christo Liberato Church in Exmouth Market.

We walked through Exmouth Market and rejoined Roseberry Avenue opposite the Mount Pleasant Sorting Office. This was once the site of Coldbath Field Prison.

The junction with Laystall Street marks a point which was once on the route to Smithfield. There was a cattle pen which stored the dung from the cattle being herded towards Smithfield.

Our journey continued into Clerkenwell Road, past a plaque to Disraeli, across Gray's Inn Road into Theobalds Road. We then walked along John Street to the junction with Northington Street. Here there is a lovely quotation on the wall shown in this photograph.

News & Features

Walking in London September -continued …….



We continued into Doughty Street, past plaques to Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby. Then, to John's delight, we arrived at the Charles Dickens Museum.

We turned into Guilford Street pausing at the Goodenough College before ending the walk at Coram's Fields. This is the original site of the Foundling Hospital.

Once again, John treated us to a fascinating walk packed with information, anecdotes and urban myths.

The next walk is in November and will be in Rotherhithe.

CATS **– Regents Park Open air Theatre 17th September - Brenda Kember**



Following the cancellation of the trip (by the theatre) during this summer's heatwave, there was much long-awaited anticipation about the weather for the new date. Rain was forecast for the day, but it turned out to be a wonderful sunny afternoon at Regents Park Theatre.

Since its opening in 1981 Andrew Lloyd Webber's ***CATS*** has made people scratch their heads in confusion. What is the story, where is the plot? Basically, the show is a variety of musical acts based on T.S. Eliot's 1939 poetry collection.

In the finale, this revival, directed and choreographed by the show's artistic director Drew McOnie, successfully answered that age-old question, is there a link between the poems? The open-air setting acted as the perfect solution to the show's plot weaknesses.

As the show began, watching the *Jellicle* annual gathering of preposterously named moggies who celebrate themselves until dawn, the greenery around the stage was charming.

McOnie has completely redrawn Gillian Lynne's iconic original choreography, but it worked beautifully. The dancers flowed with a fiercely modern, relentless energy, trading traditional musical theatre jazz lines for dynamic street and breakdance sequences.

Act I: Occasionally it felt a bit disjointed as there was a rapid succession of the named moggies. Charlotte Riby as *Jennyanydots* and Elliot Broadfoot as *Bustopher Jones* brought plenty of character to their numbers, though the pacing struggled a little under the weight of the introduction-heavy first half.

Act II: The production truly lit up. The arrival of Melanie La Barrie's warm *Old Deuteronomy* added strength to the proceedings, paving the way for a succession of great highlights.

Gary Wilmot was wonderful as *Gus the Theatre Cat*. He gave a sense of old-school theatrical showmanship, and Jaydon Vijn's *Rum Tum Tugger* returned to his sensual rock-star roots.

Diante Lodge made *Macavity* an amazing presence on stage that was set alight with gas flames, and Jet Yau's gravity-defying performance as *Mr. Mistoffelees* brought rapturous applause.

News & Features



***CATS* – Regents Park Open air Theatre continued.....**

In the finale, the final brilliant rendition of the hit song 'Memories' was used to indicate the decision that aged *Grizabella* (performed by Rachael Wooding) was the cat selected to begin the last of her nine lives.

The show didn't fix the flaws of a not having a plot, but it hid them brilliantly with charm, passion, and amazing energy. The show successfully bridged the gap between 1980s nostalgia and 2026 contemporary flair.

Cats is described as a sung-through musical but danced-through is probably a more accurate description, demanding an enormous amount from its hard-working 25-plus cast who were on stage for most of the show and were central to bringing the different stories to life.

Thank you, Maggie, for all the hard work that went into to sorting out the new date, coach and tickets. You are a star.



My grateful thanks to Mike Taylor for this month's Quiz.

If anyone else has anything suitable for the quiz (with answers), please send it to the Newsletter email address. Thank you

1. When it flows (!!!), the Danube passes four European capitals. Which are they? (4 points)
2. Who sailed by "The Rivers of Babylon"?
3. Where would you find the River Po?
4. Where would you find the River Puddle?
5. Who had a 70's hit with (So still runs) The River?
6. Who had a hit with "Yellow River"?
7. Where would you find the River Potomac?
8. Whose hit was "Moon River"?
9. Whose hit was "Moody River"?
10. Where would you find the River Hudson?
11. Who sang "Down to the River to Pray" and from what film? (2 points)
12. What musical did "Ole Man River" come from?
13. Who was deep in the river and mountain high?
14. Where would you be if you paddled in the Liffey?
15. Who got lost in the "Fog On The Tyne"?

ANSWERS
1: Vienna, Austria. Bratislava, Slovakia Budapest, Hungary Belgrade, Serbia; 2: Boney M; 3: Turin, Italy; 4: Puddletown, Dorset; 5: Ken Dodd; 6: Christie; 7: Washington DC; 8: Andy Williams; 9: Pat Boone; 10: New York; 11: Allison Krause & Union Station from Oh Brother Where Art Thou; 12: Showboat; 13: Tina Turner; 14: Dublin; 15: Lindisfarne