Ver-Colne Valley

u3a learn, laugh, live

Newsletter: No 215 November 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,

Our December General Meeting and Christmas Party are fast approaching, and we're looking forward to celebrating with you! We'll welcome you with a glass of something bubbly or a soft drink, along with savouries, mince pies and nibbles. There won't be any tea or coffee at this meeting. As usual, there will be no sales of books, cards, theatre or day trips. You can look forward to a free raffle, entertainment from The Ukulele Sunshine Band and Singing for Fun, and a quiz to round off the morning.

Bob Gettleson will be chairing the November General Meeting while I'm away visiting the Northwest with the VCV Holiday Group. Please give him the same warm welcome and kindness you always show me!



Just a few friendly reminders to help everyone enjoy our meetings and activities:

- Please avoid parking in Greenwood Park car park when you're heading off on day trips or theatre visits.
- Please put your phone on silent or airplane mode when we have a visiting speaker.
- Please remember to bring a cup for refreshments.
- Please bring your membership card along to all VCV activities.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the Christmas Party on 17 December. It will be lovely to celebrate together!



And finally, a big thank you to the Committee and all the members who helped set up and tidy away after our very successful Annual Dance. Well done, everyone!

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

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.

21st January

Duncan Hess will give a talk about his 40-year career at the BBC. He was a researcher and director at the BBC. He has directed many programmes including the 10 o'clock News, Newsnight, Antiques Roadshow and Ready Steady Cook. His last major job was directing the lying-in-state of Her Majesty the Queen.

18th February

Bobby Derbyshire

The title of her talk is "A beginning, a middle and an end." Where do novelists get their ideas?

She says her talk prompts laughter and lively questions and draws on the experiences of many well-known authors. In 2008 she won a fiction prize at the National Academy of Writing.

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 November
https://eastofengland.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/November-E-of-E-Bulletin-Final.pdf

(Control and click to follow link)

Refreshment Rota 2026

Group	Month
Walking Group 1 Amblers	November



Groups News

Hi Everyone,

Thank you to the Table-top Games and Spanish group for helping with refreshments at the GM, it was greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Denise Manning for sharing with us the beautiful flower arrangements made by the 'Flower Petals'. If your group have been inspired to share what they do with everyone please let me know and we can schedule you in!

The Art Appreciation group still have room for a few more members, we meet on the 4th Thursday of the month at 10.30am, in members' homes, please let me know if you are interested in joining.

Just a little reminder to all; if you attend any group meeting it is advisable to bring your U3A membership card with you, with your emergency contact details on the back. Always good to be prepared!

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

VCV Events Calendar

Event	Date	Contact	Booking status
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
Garden Appreciation Group /Planning Meeting	26th January 2027	Tina Photi	Orton Hall 14.30 – 16.30
Walking Group 3	12th January 2027	Penny Collins	All VCV members welcome
Walking Group 3	9th February 2027	Penny Collins	All VCV members welcome
Queen Elizabeth ll – Her Life in Fashion	1 March 2027	Barbara Croom	On sale
Sinatra the Musical	9th March 2027	Maggie Fenn	Waiting list
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

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

Closing date for articles for Newsletter NO LATER than the morning of Friday 4th December 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 27th November, cafe, The Range, St. Albans.
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.

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



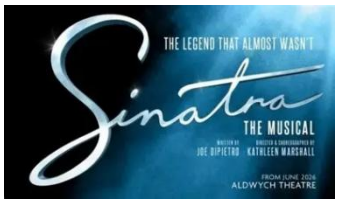


ANYTHING GOES

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:	Greenwood Park
Departs	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 Now



Queen Elizabeth ll – Her Life in Fashion



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

Marking the century 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 a relative absence of glass cases allows for an unusually clear view of the garments. They vary from the superb wedding dress designed by Normal Hartnell to a clear plastic macintosh so that people could still see what she was wearing if it was raining.
A two-course lunch is also included in the trip.

Family and friends now welcome.

On Sale in January
Highclere Castle (aka Downton Abbey)





Date: Monday 12 July
Price: £44
Depart GWP: 8am
Depart venue: 4pm

Like many big houses, Highclere Castle has a history going back to before the Domesday Book. Renovated extensively in the 1840s it is now home to the 8th Earl of Carnarvon. It has been used frequently by TV and film companies, beginning with the Antiques Roadshow in 1979, the most recent and perhaps the best known, being Downton Abbey. Some of the rooms used in the filming have been retained unaltered for visitors to see.
Much of the rest of the house is open to visitors on a self-guided tour, and you are free to wander round the extensive gardens containing several follies as well.

Also of interest is the Egyptian exhibition in the cellars of the castle. The 5th Earl was an enthusiastic amateur Egyptologist and sponsored the search for Tutankhamun's tomb, hiring Howard Carter. The exhibition was set up in 1922 following the discovery and tells the story of how it was found.

Holidays

Contact Nick & Tina Photi – gptavel@ver-colnevalleyu3a.org.uk

RHINE IN FLAMES 2027 - Waiting List

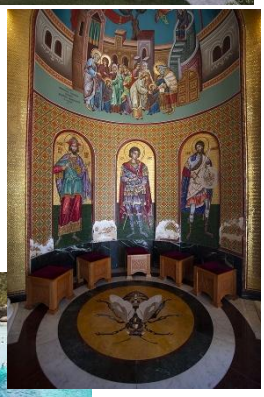


PRICES: £1099pp No single supplement - 5 days/4 nights - 29th April - 3rd May 2027
DEPOSIT: £200pp (non-refundable/ non-transferable) Balance due in full by the 01.03.27
Executive Coach Travel / Short Channel Crossings
4 nights B&B + 3 hotel dinners
HIGHLIGHTS
Rhine in Flames Spectacular Cruise, Champagne 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







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
Raffle: Lai Hughes

News & Features



Kentwell Hall

It was a bit of an effort for everybody to get up early on a Sunday but in the end it was worth it. The main house has been extensively restored to as it would have been in the 1530s, although the work is still continuing. As with many other big houses we were able to walk round, but I think for most of us the main interest was outside. Scattered across the grounds are a variety of sites with volunteer actors in period clothing demonstrating the many activities and trades that the ordinary folk of the time were involved in.

The first stall we saw was the barber/surgeons with all their tools spread out on the table – some of them rather gruesome! From there we started on the Woodland Walk. In the forge they were making arrow heads and nearby were the archery butts where they were demonstrating their skills. We learnt how, in the 16th century, boys started archery from the age of seven, and all men had to practise every day so they were available should the local militia ever be called up.

A bit further on in an old part of the house, we found the kitchen with its dairy, bakehouse, brewhouse and still where all the food and drink were prepared for the gentry. They also prepared the food for the servants, which was not quite as lavish.





In a separate part of the old house was the area where they made most of their clothes. From cleaning the raw wool after shearing through to the finished item, including dyeing, embroidery and lace making for the lord and lady of the house.



Keeping a big house going required many skills and we saw demonstrations of making pottery, basket making and medicines. Finally, as we were there at Michaelmas, one of the important quarter days of the year, we watched as the servants were paid – not all of them happy with what they got!

As we set off home everybody agreed it had been a fantastic day, helped admittedly by beautiful weather.

Barbara Croom

News & Features

Walking Group 3 - Penny Collins





This month Elaine and Maggie kindly led our walk from the charming village of Tewin.

The walk was just over 4 miles long and twenty-two of us gathered together in the car park of the Plume of Feathers pub in fairly light rain. We were in a lovely part of Hertfordshire and we set out, crossing open fields with the most splendid views of the countryside. Passing Coltsfoot Country Retreat, we stopped to admire this popular wedding and events venue set in the Hamlet of Bulls Green. One of the larger fields was covered in small plants, which none of us recognised. We found out that this was Blue Tansy, or Lacy Phacelia, which is used by farmers as a fast-growing cover crop and green manure to improve soil health. Following footpaths, we walked alongside woodland to more open fields with even more stunning views and came across a hen coop with a large honesty box nearby, where some people stopped to buy eggs. Eventually the sun came out, so we took the opportunity to take our half-way break in the quaint little village of Burnham Green. It was also a good chance to take a group photograph on the picturesque village green. During our walk we passed many animals, including alpacas, sheep and horses. This was a lovely walk with no shortage of animals, amazing scenery and good company. Finally arriving back at the Plume of feathers, we sat down for a well-earned lunch. A big thank you to Maggie and Elaine for yet another successful walk!



Phantom of the Opera – Wednesday 21st October

An amazing performance of Phantom of the Opera. The sets were so cleverly designed, dramatic and imposing. The rising and fall of the chandelier was spectacular.
The powerful voices of the actors brought real emotion to the roles and the costumes especially the masquerade scene was wonderful.

Lynda Bysouth

Not many people get to have their photo taken with actor Rhys Whitfield (Raoul, Vicomte de Chagny.)

News & Features



Walking Group 2

On Friday 30th October we had a lovely walk from The Gate pub, across open fields, through Bricket Wood Common and down by the side of Munden House to the ford. We returned by Drop Lane and up through the Hanstead estate back to the pub. 19 of us walked the four miles and 22 of us enjoyed a convivial lunch.
We experienced warm sunshine and the paths were fairly dry.
The Autumn colours were magnificent, and we felt so lucky to have such beautiful scenery on our doorstep. Our November walk will be on Friday 27th and our destination will be Sarratt. Please contact Angie Wright if you would like to join our group.



Many thanks to Trevor Spinage for the following Quiz.

Can you name the title and the author of the following books from their opening words?

1 It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...

2 It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife….

3 “Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents,” grumbled Jo….

4 Call me Ishmael….

5 A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea….

6 A squat grey building of only thirty-four stories. Over the main entrance the words, CENTRAL LONDON HATCHERY AND CONDITIONING CENTRE….

7 It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen….

8 No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely….

9 Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy….

10 There were four of us….

Quiz answers

1. A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens; 2. Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen; 3. Little Women by Louisa May Alcott; 4. Moby-Dick by Herman Melville; 5. The Mill on the Floss by George Eliot;
6. Brave New World by Aldous Huxley; 7. 1984 by George Orwell; 8. The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells; 9. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis; 10. Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K. Jerome.