

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

I have never been a great fan of this month so it came as no surprise to learn that Monday 20th January has been officially dubbed 'blue Monday' the most depressing day of the year. The excitement of Christmas is nothing but a distant memory, the money is already running out and its still another week until pay day, the days are short, the weather is bad and to cap it all the weekend is over and its the start of a new week. When I was working all these things fuelled my dislike of January and old habits die hard.

However this year I have decided to try and make the most of the first month of 2025 by looking both backwards and forwards as the Roman god after whom January is named was able to do. It has to be said that both personally and globally 2024 was not a great year and I will not be sorry to see the back of it. True we had a change of government to celebrate but in practical terms little altered and many people in this country have seen no real improvement in their lives. Similarly the overthrow of the regime in Syria, while widely welcomed, only served to remind us of the continuing conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine. More parochially last summer was one of the wettest I can remember and the ill health of friends both here and back in Tunbridge Wells cast a shadow over the year.

Looking forward it would be wonderful to think that January might usher in a new period of peace and prosperity both in this country and around the world. In the meantime I have decided to look at all the positives that this month has to offer. However dark it may be the days are getting longer and if the weather is bad what better excuse can there be for curling up with a good book, a nice strong brew and a slice of leftover Christmas cake? Outside snowdrops are already pushing their way through and there are catkins on the trees, nature's early indicators that spring is just around the corner. Who knows before the month is out we may even see the first rather bemused looking lambs putting in an appearance. And of course if I need an injection of sunshine, there is always the beginners Spanish group where we can practise our basic conversational skills whilst imaging we are in a sun drenched Andalusian plaza rather than in the church hall of St John's Methodist Church. True it may never be my favourite month but January has plenty to offer. You just have to look that little bit harder. So happy new year to everyone and have a happy and healthy 2025. **Robert Jackson**

u3a Settle District MONTHLY MEETING

2nd Thursday of the
month, 10 for 10.30am
at St John's and by Zoom

Thurs 9 January
Art History
Religious Painting and
Pilgrimage



by Pippa Doran, u3a
member

Thurs 13 February



**The Rise and Fall of the
Berlin Wall**

by Malcolm Brooke who
worked for MoD schools
and witnessed several
world events, including
the fall of the Berlin Wall

GROUP NEWS — FILM APPRECIATION

The Film Appreciation Group's last meeting of 2024 took place on 19 December, when members viewed Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), the film voted the Greatest of All Time in *Sight and Sound's* 2022 poll. The group was raptly engaged throughout the 3-hours-plus screening, which was followed by the liveliest discussion we have had since the 'mind-blowing' *Man With A Movie Camera*. The Group's next meeting will be at 2pm on 16 January 2025 at The Place, with (to be confirmed) Akerman's *News From Home*. Group leader **Annette Kuhn** a.f.kuhn@qmul.ac.uk

PARLIAMO ITALIANO

The new Italian conversation group has now settled into regular meetings on the first and third Tuesdays of each month in the lovely lounge at Limestone View. These aren't lessons and we aren't following a course; we choose themes for each meeting and we all enjoy learning new words and practising chatting, helping each other to improve our fluency. Our first meeting of 2025 is Tuesday 7 January from 10am to 11.30am and we'll be having a go at talking about what we did over Christmas, and researching some words and phrases about climate change. We're a friendly bunch so if you can speak some Italian and would like to improve, why not think about joining us?

Clare Leigh clare.leigh2012@outlook.com

GREAT LIVES

For our December meeting, John Jebson gave a fascinating talk about Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles I, who was the fifth child of Henry V of France. They married in 1625. At first they did not get on well but, later, their affection grew and they had nine children, two of whom would later be king. When she came to England, Henrietta Maria spoke

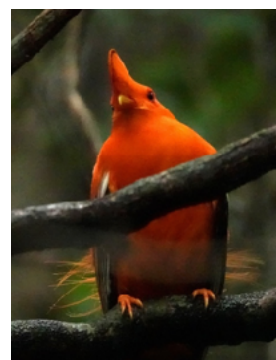


little English and was a Catholic, both of which made her unpopular in England. As a Catholic she never had a coronation. In 1644, at the height of the Civil War she was compelled to seek refuge in France. The execution of Charles I left her impoverished. Henrietta Maria returned to England after the restoration of Charles II to the throne. She died four years later, back in France. The American state of Maryland was named in her honour by her husband.

Keith Bradshaw

BIRDWATCHING

With winter having arrived the group retired to Langcliffe in December, with Richard and Tamsin Candeland warming us up with Part II of their fascinating look at the birds of Colombia. This time they introduced us to several more of the 1,900 bird species which find a home in this amazing country. We marvelled at noisy screamers, mysterious oilbirds, secretive antbirds, thrushlike ovenbirds, and weird species like the potoos. And we were dazzled by the more colourful hummingbirds, motmots, jacamars, puffbirds and toucans. But the real treat was the stunning Cock-of-the-Rock (pictured above alongside the Chestnut-crested Antbird).



Next month (3 February at 2 pm) we're at Langcliffe Institute again when Phil Simnett will be introducing us to the Birds of the Galápagos, the remote volcanic islands which proved so inspirational to Charles Darwin. For more information about the birdwatching group contact group leader **Les Chandler** on lchandler52@gmail.com

OLD BUILDINGS

December took the Group underground in York to a former nuclear bunker, one of a network built by the UK Government in the 1960s. If nuclear weapons had fallen on the UK at that time the volunteers in the bunker had the job of warning the public of the radiation threat. Luckily the facility was never used, but had it been life for the occupants would have been grim. Clean water was rationed and they had only 30 days' food.



The Group's next visit is to the imposing Otley Methodist Church on 25 February. Then it's a tour of some of Settle's most historic buildings on 11 March; a visit to impressive Leighton Hall (22 April); and a trip to Stott Park Bobbin Mill in Ulverston (13 May). For more information about the Group contact **Les Chandler** on lchandler52@gmail.com.

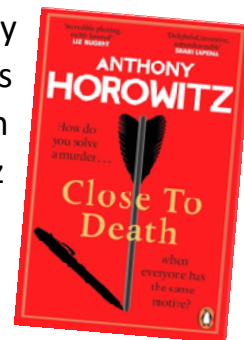
FAMILY HISTORY

Since our last newsletter contribution the group has continued sharing significant places in their family tree. Lynda Boyce shared her research on the history of the old Settle School where she now lives. Chris Taylor found that she had strong connections to the Bradford Wool Exchange in more than one branch of her family. Sarah Lister then completed our programme with the photograph of Lizzie Ball and her son Geoffrey Ball from the Horner Collection and the sad background to her family life. Thanks to Margaret Brenchley for hosting the

Christmas dinner and social for members in December. The group meets again on the 4th Friday in January, the 24th, 10.30am at the Friends' Meeting House. Group Leader **Eileen Bamford** Bamfordfamhisu3a@aol.com

CRIME BOOKS

December's book choice was 'Close to Death' by Anthony Horowitz, the latest in his Daniel Hawthorne series in which Anthony Horowitz takes a key role in the sleuthing. This mystery focussed on the murder of the selfish, unlikeable Giles



Kenworthy who had just moved into Riverview Close, upsetting all the neighbours. It was generally well received by the group. Group leader **Elaine Sargeson** reminded the group of *Jolabokafloð*, the Icelandic tradition of exchanging books on Christmas Eve to enjoy over the next few days. What a perfectly civilised tradition! The January book choice is *The Girl who Died* by Ragnar Jonasson, a rather gothic scandal noir novel set in a remote corner of Iceland.

CONDOLENCES

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Jean Asher recently. Jean was a valued member of the u3a and founder of the Family History group. We send our condolences and warm wishes to her family and friends.

Thank you for your newsletter contributions. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the committee. The deadline for the next edition, 150 words max, is **5pm on Monday 3 February**. We may need to edit articles without consultation.

Send to sdu3a.newsletter@gmail.com

Some 2024 highlights. We have such talented members!

