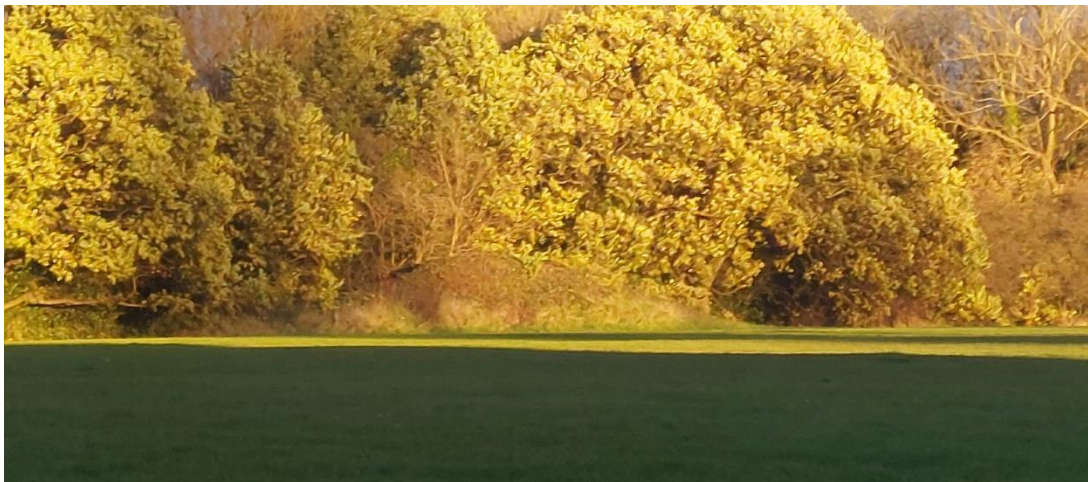




Newsletter

December 2023



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*The Officers and Committee
would like to wish all members a
Happy Christmas and a healthy
and interesting New Year.*



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the December 2023 edition of the High Lane u3a newsletter. This month, we have a roundup of the year from the Chair and an important message from the Treasurer, sad news about the Choir – and not forgetting the usual reports of group activities. Thanks to all the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions. The cover photo this month was taken during an afternoon bridge session at the Village Hall – we all remarked on the spectacle of the sun shining so beautiful on the trees.

This month brings the Christmas party with some seasonal entertainment and afternoon tea plus the Dining group's annual Christmas lunch. From National u3a we have the poetry competition and a selection of learning events and talks. If you wish to take part, book a place as soon as you can as they get booked up very quickly.

You can read the National u3a November newsletter [here](#). This includes news from u3as across the country, an inter-u3a table tennis tournament and more information about the first u3a Festival in July next year.

I would like to thank all the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions throughout the year. Please keep them coming. Can I remind you that I am always pleased to hear from individual members as well as well groups – please feel free to share some of your news, your interests, or items you have found that you think would be of interest to other members.

The next issue of our newsletter will be in the New Year, January 2024 so please send your contributions to me by 27 December 2023 at newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

My best wishes for a happy Christmas and New Year.

Diane Saxon



Thank you!

The Committee would like to thank the Group Leaders for their support during the year. We wouldn't exist without you.

The Committee would also like to say a big thank you to the tea ladies who, as usual, have looked after us so well at the Monthly meetings.

CHAIR'S REPORT 2023

Another year nearly over. A lot of doom and gloom in the world, but at least Covid is under control and most people have tried to return to normal. Our u3a has had a busy time this year thanks to your committee members and group leaders. There is a lot of work that goes into planning and organising activities for our u3a.

Events that we have held this year were the Murder Mystery evening, held over from last year due to Covid. This was very well attended and there were quite a few different solutions that the audience came up with. Well done audience.

After the Murder Mystery we held a Cheese and Wine evening, and this was enjoyed by all who attended. We sampled seven different wines. One fizz, three white and three red complemented with different varieties of cheese. The evening was presented by a very knowledgeable wine expert from Waitrose.

Following the cheese and wine evening we held the annual lunch at Hazel Grove golf club. Again, this was well attended, and it was an excellent meal.

The year was rounded off with the Folk evening at the village hall. Anthony John Clarke and his wife, Julia entertained us with a mixture of Folk songs coupled with many witty stories.

Still to come in December is the Christmas lunch, at Browsholme Hall organised by the Travel group followed by the Christmas party at the Village Hall.

At our monthly meetings we have had a very varied and excellent supply of speakers well chosen by Sheila.

Your committee members, travel group and group leaders are very busy planning activities and holidays for next year. Thanks again to your committee and group leaders for all the hard work they put in.

If you have any ideas for new groups or ideas for evening entertainment or think that we could do something different in any way, please let us know.
Happy Christmas and New Year.

Paul Kenneth



A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

As we approach the festive season, I would like to thank the Group leaders and assistants for all their help during the year.

To ensure financial figures are up to date it is essential that group returns are received without delay, and I thank you all for your extra time and effort in completing this. With this in mind as most of you will not meet after say the 22nd December I would be grateful if your figures could be sent to me immediately after you finish instead of waiting for the New Year.

New sheets for next year will follow shortly.

Have a great Christmas and New Year.

Les Birks

For Group Leaders - Accident reports

In the event of any accidents during your group activities, please ensure that an accident report form is fully completed and signed and sent to me and a copy to Lynn.

If you don't have a copy of the Accident report form, you can find this via the Group Leaders link on the What we do page of the website. [Accident report form.PDF](#) (highlaneu3a.org.uk)

Paul

And a gentle reminder from Paul

As winter is approaching can we please remind everyone that if you have colds, sniffles or you have a cough, would you please refrain from attending the monthly meetings or any of your groups. We are all getting older and if we have any of these symptoms it is easier to pass on and harder to get rid of them. Many thanks.

MEMBERSHIP FOR 2024

Looking ahead to 2024, membership will be due at the AGM in February. We are pleased to say that we have been able to keep the membership fee for this year at our excellent value of £8 with just another £3.50 for the next five issues of the u3a magazine (see below). Renewal forms will be available at the January and February meetings.

AGM

The AGM is on 14 February 2024. This year, we need to re-elect the Officers and Committee members. If you would like to get involved with running your u3a you will be very welcome. This year all the roles need to be nominated and elected for 2024. A nomination form is included on the final page of the newsletter. If you would like to be nominated for any of the roles, you will need to be nominated and seconded by current members, sign the form and return it to Lynn Arnold, the Secretary before the date of the January meeting.

THIRD AGE MATTERS MAGAZINE

The Third Age Matters magazine is available to all members at a very good value of £3.50 for five issues: February, April, June, September and November. It contains news from the Trust and u3as across the country. There is a competition in each edition; the current edition's prize is a visit to Hampton Court Festival or another RHS garden. There are regular sections including letters from members, a crossword, bridge notes and maths puzzles, and much information and advertisements relevant to u3a members.

Here we have a sample page and the Maths challenge from the November edition.



You can arrange your subscription to the magazine when you renew your membership for 2024. Just £3.50 for five issues.

Maths challenge

Problems and puzzles are posed weekly online by Gordon Burgin, Andrew Holt, Rod Marshall, Ian Stewart and u3a maths and stats subject advisor David Martin.

Question 1
Robert is twice as old as Sue and four years ago he was three times as old as Sue. What are the ages of Robert and Sue?

Question 2
A security door code is a five-digit number. The digits are all different and are ordered from lowest to highest, with a sum of 20 and product of 336. What is this code?

FOLK EVENING

ANTHONY JOHN CLARKE

The evening got off to a good start with very tasty choices of either lasagne or hotpot followed by a delicious apple pie with cream.

Then, the main event.....

Anthony John Clarke accompanied on this occasion by his partner Julia. Anthony who grew up in Belfast is a singer/songwriter of over thirty years who regaled us with a heady mixture of humour and thoughtful songs which reflected his own experiences both growing up in Northern Ireland and his life in Liverpool, which was his home when he came over to live in England. He has toured the length and breadth of the UK and many countries overseas attending festivals and playing gigs in a variety of venues.

His songs were interspersed with witty anecdotes which gave context to his songs. He gently (with Irish charm) encouraged audience participation and we were soon joining in with every chorus. He and Julia were an extremely entertaining duo both musically and in their light-hearted banter with one another.



We didn't let them go without an encore. A truly enjoyable evening; if you get the chance, do go and see him perform.

Thanks to Barbara for organising this event.

Lynn and Mike Arnold

MONTHLY MEETING

The speakers at the November monthly meeting were Janet and Brenda from The Hearing Dogs Charity. They were ably assisted by Janet's cocker spaniel Lexi.

They gave us information about the charity which is run solely by volunteers and depends on donations from fund raising events, raising awareness talks and money bequeathed in wills. It is very expensive to fund a hearing dog through its life.

We heard about the socialising and training during the puppy years and how each dog is carefully matched to its eventual owner. We learned about the breeding programmes and what happens to the dogs who don't quite make the grade.

The talk was interspersed with videos showing the dogs at work and there was a heartwarming testament from a lady who had lost her hearing in later life. She reinforced that hearing dogs are life changing.

Donations were made from the U3A and by individual members.

The next meeting is the Christmas party on Wednesday 13th December. This is a ticket only event.

Kath Wareham

Paul reports that we have received a letter from the ladies who gave the presentation at the November meeting saying, "With grateful thanks to High Lane u3a for helping us raise an incredible £150.69 to help fund and support partnerships between hearing dogs and deaf people".



ST THOMAS CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

The first Christmas festival at St Thomas, held over the last weekend in November, was a great success with a constant stream of visitors over the three days. There were 12 trees from local organisations and businesses. The winner of 'Best tree', voted for by the visitors, was crafted by High Lane scouts.

The 'star of the show' (we got a certificate) was the knitted tree which at 13 feet high dominates the corner of the Church. A huge thank you to all u3a members who contributed either providing wool or knitting leaves. If you did not get a chance over the weekend to see the result, pop into the Church at any time and view the results of our labours. The Church is open from 9am to 4 pm daily.

Perhaps at next year's festival there will be a tree from the u3a?

Janet Bailey



Calling our poets ... u3a Poetry Competition Open Now

The u3a national poetry competition has been launched for its fourth year, with the theme of 'What If'.

Your poem should be a maximum of 16 lines and the deadline for submission is 12pm on Friday 26 January 2024.

You can enter now on the u3a website learning pages.
[u3a - Poetry Competition](http://u3a.org.uk/learning/poetry-competition)

POETRY PLEASE!

The u3a National Poetry Competition is back for another year, and this year the theme is 'What if...'. The competition opens on Wednesday 8 November, and will close at midday on Friday 26 January, so there's plenty of time to enter. To read the rules and submit your poem, please visit u3a.org.uk/learning/poetry-competition



CHOIR – an announcement from Margaret Glynn

With regret, Margaret and Julie are hanging up their boots!

Tony and I took over a U3A singing group in 2006 from Sue Dintinger. When I was asked if I would take over the group I said no, I couldn't possibly do it but Tony was asked separately and he said yes; so of course we did it. No regrets honestly!

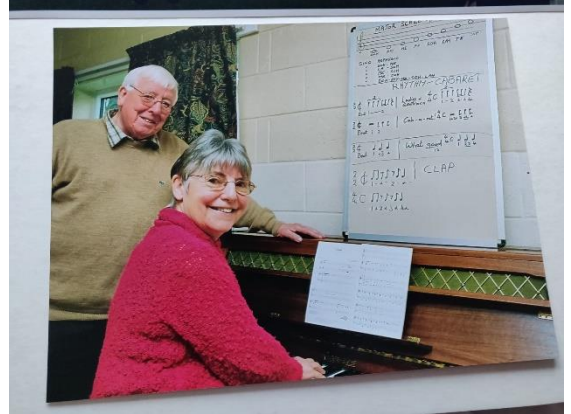
At first, we rehearsed in our house, and we still have a number of the original singers singing with us today. In 2008 we had 21 members, including the two of us, and we gave our first concerts for Marple and High Lane U3As. The type of music we have sung has not changed and ranges from traditional folk songs to modern classics and songs from musicals and of course Christmas Carols. Due to illness, Tony passed the baton over to Julie Sutton during a concert at High Lane Methodist Church in 2018. So far, the choir has performed 40 concerts, and we still have 2 more to give this December.

We've had some memorable experiences over the years – Julie's first concert as director played to a packed house at Windlehurst Methodist Church. The proceeds, which totalled around £400, were given to the church who donated it to charity. Recently the last-minute summer concert in High Lane Village Hall was standing room only and raised a phenomenal £500 towards the cost of the new hall keyboard.

Sadly, though, all good things must come to an end, and, after a lot of soul-searching, Julie and I have decided to call it a day. There are still members of the choir who wish to carry on singing so if anyone out there wishes to step forward to run the choir, then I'm sure they'd be very welcome. I have lots of music and audio tracks to pass on.

The choir and I have much to thank Julie for. She has been a fantastic musical director and has taken a huge amount of the workload and her patience is legendary.

Margaret Glynn



GROUP NEWS



ART

We were challenged to paint a beautiful winter scene which was inspired by the artist Matthew Palmer. We could choose which type of media we wanted to paint this in. Most of us chose watercolours.

The contributors are

Jim Gilligan
Val Dockerty
Madeleine Hennessy
Linda Jones

Margaret Jones
Wendy Dickinson
Sylvia Williams
Lynn Smallwood

Betty Smith
Valerie Brown



Val Brown

BACKGAMMON

The Backgammon group meets up fortnightly in the Bull's Head, High Lane, Wednesdays at 2pm. The next meeting is on the 6th of December. We have 10 members, but new players are always welcome. If you have never played before, one of us will sit with you and lead you through it all. Season's greetings to everyone.



Ken Jackson

CRIME FICTION READING



Our book for December was the *Skeleton Road* by Val McDermid. The *Skeleton Road* is the third Karen Pirie thriller, the series that inspired the ITV drama, *Karen Pirie*. You can catch this on ITVx.

A skeleton is found in a disused gothic building in the centre of Edinburgh. Karen Pirie is given the case to find the identity of the corpse. Her investigations lead her to the history of the Balkans, to war crimes and their consequences. Nearly all members of the group enjoyed this complex story and it achieved one of our highest ratings of the year.

Our book for January is *The Snowdonia Killings*, the first book from a prolific author, Simon McCleave. His home is in Wrexham, and the books are set in North Wales. This is a new author to all of us and there was definite excitement at getting to grips with a new series, a new detective, DI Ruth Hunter, set in areas that we know well.

Diane Saxon

COME DANCING WITH US – FREE TRIAL (DETAILS BELOW)

As BBC's Strictly nears its 2023 conclusion, be ready to forget the sequins, the acrobatics, and the quirky tunes. Instead, start 2024 with much pleasanter, gentler dancing with the High Lane u3a Ballroom Dancing Group. This is one of the original groups and was started by Kath Taylor when High Lane and local Marple and Romiley u3a groups first began. Initially there were separate days for ballroom and Latin, but nowadays we combine ballroom and Latin, and intersperse with some sequence and the occasional line dance.

We are not expert, and many of us can't dance as we used to when younger; but we enjoy a wide variety of genuine dance music, and learn from each other, with a little teaching thrown in. Dancing a slow waltz or social foxtrot, is perfectly fine, but we will have a go at any of the Strictly dances – to applause if pasadoble or Argentine tango is attempted! Our sequence repertoire is pretty extensive, with expert guidance given; and we can do half a dozen or so easy line dances, with virtually everybody taking part.

Our friendly group is an open group and has always had members from other local u3a groups. Dancing groups are fairly rare in the u3a organisation, in spite of the health benefits often heralded for dancers.

Currently we have 3 DJs, each with their own style and choice of dances or music tracks – but each session will have a short break, with a chat and a biscuit or two.

As this note has been written on 24th November – Black Friday – obviously there must be an offer – so there is! To encourage more dancers, if you are a couple, or can find a partner to dance with, join us for free on any of our first three meetings in 2024. Our open meetings will be Friday afternoons (2 – 4pm) on January 5th and 19th, and February 2nd. The venue is Hawk Green Reading Rooms, Upper Hibbert Lane, Marple.

See you there! To keep dancing!

Walter Mason

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Once again, we had a variety of topics to discuss, submitted by members of the group. The 1st was about illegal immigrants. Should they be sent to Ruanda? There were mixed views on this, and the discussion covered other topics such as the lifeboat association and scrap metal collectors!

Number 2 was Booth's supermarket. Their self-service checkouts are being abandoned, which we all thought was a good idea. It's a pity there isn't a store near here.

Topic 3 was the return of David Cameron. One member questioned whether the government was short of talent so they brought him back, another suggested that he has experience and can give advice to Sunak, but some don't feel that they can trust him. It was suggested that Andrew Mitchell could have been made foreign Secretary.

Sainsbury's was number 4 topic, and the planning permission given to build a mini store in High Lane. We all agreed it's a good idea, one member saying, "We can't wait!" Car parking in High Lane was the subject of some discussion, too.

Topic 5 were pay rises, and how they have overtaken inflation, but it was pointed out that pay rises are averaged, and therefore uneven figures. Some prices are coming down in the shops and we also discussed the £600 fuel allowance.....mixed views on that! Then we enjoyed a break of tea and coffee with cake, courtesy of Margaret.

Topic 6 was King Charles and his waste food project which we all agreed was a good idea. He seems to be acting in a different way than the Queen, who didn't get involved in public affairs. It was noted that the Prince of Wales is following his example, too, with his sponsorship of the Earth project.

The court proceedings relating to the Covid activities were topic 7, with discussions about the arguments, money wasted, and disorganization. Comments were made about Matt Hancock, Dominic Cummings, and as one member said "Why do we always get back on to Boris? Have we seen the last of him on the public stage?" Mixed views again.

Finally - "Winter is on its way". We were asked what our thoughts were on this. Some said they wanted to hibernate, others quite enjoyed the crisp weather, but the general opinion was that we'll all be glad when Spring comes. Although, the plumbers do well in the winter!

We were a slightly larger group this month, meeting at Margaret McDermotts house, but there is room for more so if you'd like to join our discussions do come and join us.

Mavis Dean

GARDENING

A successful year was rounded off with a very pleasant early Christmas meal. Fourteen of the group enjoyed the Festive Menu at the John Millington in Cheadle Hulme; even better as our lunch was enhanced with complimentary prosecco, due to our early booking! Meanwhile we are resting on our gardening laurels until spring-like warmer weather restarts the group.



Walter Mason

GERMAN

We are continuing to meet every Friday morning and are almost up to maximum numbers. Our last meeting before Christmas will be on 15th December when we shall have a little celebration of the festive season.

Marlene Brookes

MEMOIRS

There was a good turnout for the November meeting and a wide variety of topics, ranging from visits to Buxton as a child to preparations for a wedding and photos of the event.

Stewart read some of his poems which were sad, touching and funny in turn.

Barbara showed us a prized bracelet and invited us in turn to speculate on its history.

This was a first.

As ever we enjoyed sharing memories and felt stimulated to go home and write some of our own for next time.

Sheila Harrop

HISTORY

Our guest speaker, Diane gave us a talk on Ada Lovelace. Born in 1815, she was the daughter of Lord Byron. Her parents separated when she was only 5 weeks old.

A sickly child, Ada was privately educated by the best tutors and received university level teaching in logic, mathematics and science, anything but poetry which her mother tried to avoid because of Byron. Aged 12, she studied the mechanics of bird flight and designed a flying machine which never got off the ground.

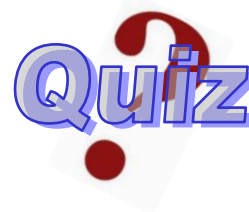
She lived during the Industrial revolution and took a keen interest in engineering and the new technology. At this time Charles Babbage was also experimenting with a mechanical general-purpose machine known as the analytical engine. He collaborated with Ada, who is credited with inventing the first algorithm.



Her work went unnoticed for many years but was discovered by Alan Turing at Bletchley Park in 1944 and helped to shape his thinking in developing the Bombe to help decode German Enigma messages. Her legacy lives on via the Ada Lovelace awards and an annual Ada Lovelace day supporting girls and women in STAM careers and ventures. She is hopefully now getting the credit she justly deserves. A really amazing woman well ahead of her time.

Sheila Harrop

QUIZZING



We were a small group this month, but we all enjoyed Margaret's challenging quiz. The first round was international parliaments – and we did pretty badly, actually very badly, with these.

Can you name the parliaments of the following countries?

Isle of Man
France
Israel
Germany
Netherlands
Iceland
Ireland

This is a very relaxed and sociable group, and we have fun whilst trying to learn new things or remember what we once knew. You would be very welcome to join us. Please contact me for details.

Diane Saxon

READING

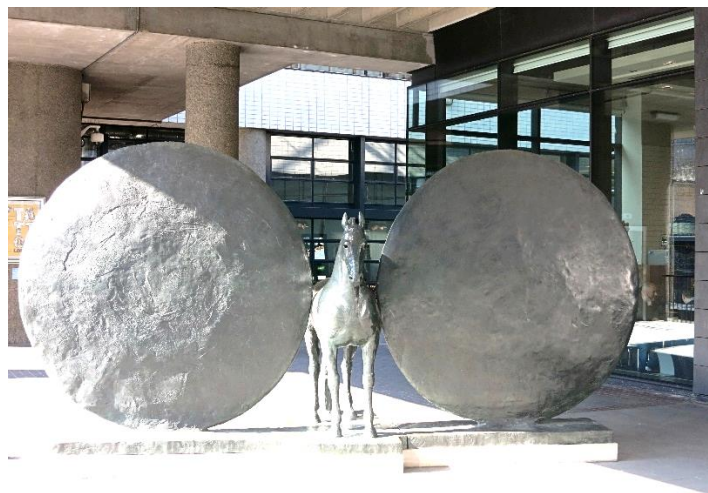
Our book for November was LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY by Bonnie Garmus, recently serialised on Apple TV. It tells the story of an exceptional female chemist who, in 1950s America fails to get the recognition at work that she deserves. On the death of her partner, she earns a living for herself and her daughter by hosting a TV cookery programme in which she educates her audience by explaining the chemical reactions that occur in the cooking process which prove to be both educational and controversial. It is a very entertaining but also illuminating book which went down well with almost all the group.

Our next meeting will be hosted by Ingrid who has invited us to her home for afternoon tea. We shall be reading short humorous pieces in our last meeting this year. Our book for January is NORTH and SOUTH by Mrs Gaskell.

Marlene Brookes

PHOTOGRAPHY

Joint 1st Hill 62 – Jeff, and Rogues' gallery – Ken
3rd London museum – Diane



The subject for October is **A Decorated Door**.

We would welcome new members.

Advanced technical skills are not necessary. All you need is a camera or a phone that will take pictures. If you fancy having a go, please get in touch.

Jeff Robinson

WALKING

FIVE HALLS WALK CHAPEL EN LE FRITH

On a very crisp, frosty Wednesday morning, 20 walkers arrived for a 6 mile walk in Chapel. Steve and Sandra Barber led the walk starting near the marketplace.



Our first point of interest was St Thomas Becket Church dating back to 1225. In 1648 the church held 1000 Scottish prisoners taken by Cromwell in the Battle of Preston for two weeks. Unfortunately, 44 of them died and earned the church the title Derbyshire Black Hole.

We then went through a small amount of housing, heading to Bowden Hall. Bowden Hall was built in the first half of the 19th century and has a lovely clock face originally in the church. The route then went uphill to a lovely hamlet called Malcoff. From there we proceeded to Ford and Ford Hall. Ford is believed to be the oldest part of Chapel. The Hall dates back to Henry 111 (1216 - 1272). The Hall is now three houses.

Onwards to Slack Hall, in lovely sunshine, and we stopped for lunch.



Slack hamlet for several centuries was a Quaker stronghold. When the owners of Slack Hall, in the 1800s, found that there was to be a turnpike road which would cut through his garden, he built a new residence near Chapel.

It was then up to Stoneyford towards Bagshawe Hall. We had ice on the path going down to the Hall – everybody handled it well. Bagshawe Hall is now a farm dating back to the 14th century.

The last hall, New Slack Hall, was quite a way from the path and is known locally as Pretty Fields. From there we went along the road back to Chapel.

Sandra Barber

David Burke

NATIONAL OFFICE LEARNING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER

Some talks you might want to book. These are normally very well supported. All are free via Zoom. Click here for details and to book a place.

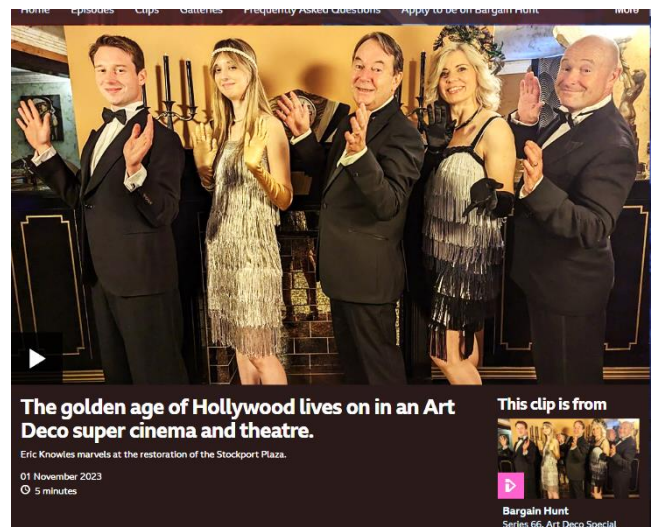
<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

- 5 Dec When Art and literature meet at Christmastide
 - 6 Dec The art of William Morris
 - 15 Dec Climate change and the oceans
 - 11 Dec Exploring world faiths
 - 13 Dec Family History: where all is not as it seems.
-

BARGAIN HUNT AT THE PLAZA 1 November.

This is an interesting short cameo about the Plaza and its history. You can watch it here.

[BBC One - Bargain Hunt, Series 66, Art Deco Special, The golden age of Hollywood lives on in an Art Deco super cinema and theatre.](#)



HIGH LANE u3a

OFFICER AND COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS FOR 2024

The Officers and Committee for 2024 are to be elected at the AGM on 14 February 2024.

If you wish to nominate a member for any of the roles, please complete the form and return it to the Secretary, Lynn Arnold, by the date of the monthly meeting on 10 January 2024.

Please ensure you have the permission and signature of the person you are nominating.

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	NOMINEE	SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE	NOMINATED BY	SECONDED BY
Chair				
Vice Chair				
Treasurer				
Secretary				
Committee Member				

Note: people nominating and seconding must be members of High Lane u3a and not currently an Officer or Committee member