

**Copy deadline for
newsletter 109
(December/January)
23rd November 2024**

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Look out - Sheila gets her gun!
Engineering Heritage visit to RAF Halton

A word from the Chair

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter

I have just celebrated a big birthday which has made me reflect on the changes that have happened during my lifetime.

When I was born Television was in its infancy, Jet travel was still to be a reality, and computers were something of science fiction let alone mobile phones. However, most of us have embraced these changes albeit with different degrees of acceptance and speed. As we get older the amount and speed of change does seem to become greater. I can remember when I was working I was at a day seminar and the leader was telling us then (in the early 1990's) that there has always been the necessity for change to enable us to progress but that the rate was increasing even then. Our u3a has not been immune from the necessity to change things and keep up to date. In recent years we have been using the Beacon system which has helped bring the membership details and our finances all into one system. It has allowed us to communicate by email to the full membership or for group leaders to contact their members if they wish to use the system. It has also enabled us to set up the use of

the scanner to register members attending the monthly meetings. We also hope to be able to announce an easier way of renewing your subscriptions in the near future.

We have been able to have our own website since we started Sarratt u3a through a method set up by The Third Age Trust which has been quite good but has its limitations and has become rather dated. The Third Age Trust have developed a new website format which they are rolling out to u3as in stages. It has been necessary to migrate the details from the old site to the new one which has involved our Web Manager Benny Michel working in partnership with Janet Taylor to set up the new site. They have been helped by the Chair of the Site Works Committee in this process which is now completed. The new site is live at sarratt.u3asite.uk so I would encourage you to take a look. The new website address is also shown at the top of this page or else you will be directed to it from the old one, which I hope you have saved as a favourite. We will have the possibility to improve our site in the future for which the help of group leaders as well as all the membership will be appreciated.

Best wishes

Don

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (see also sarratt.u3asite.uk)

Monthly meetings in the Village Hall - Doors open 10am.
Coffee from 10.10 followed by notices at around 10.30. Talk to start at about 11am.
Please return empty cups/holders before the meeting starts.

Remember to wear your u3a badge and to register when you arrive.

If you leave early sign out in the book (in case we should need an emergency headcount).

October 2nd • *Moths and Butterflies* - Nick Bowles

November 13th • *A Short History of Place Names* - Andrew Mowbray

Dec 5th **Thurs** • *A Middle, A Muddle & an End!* - Bobbie Darbyshire

Note the date is Thursday not Wednesday

January 15th • Roy Atkins - subject tbc

February 12th • *Spitzbergen* - Pam Litton

(The programme may be subject to last minute change due to circumstances beyond our control).

You are invited to bring your own mug to the monthly meetings as it helps to save on cups but we will continue to make disposable cups available if you forget or do not wish to bring one. Also bring your used stamps (separated into British/foreign) to put into the RNIB collection box (not printer ink cartridges as we have no means of recycling them)

FORTHCOMING TALKS

Nick Bowles will be here in to talk about moths and butterflies and how he surveys them. The Butterfly Conservation Trust has declared a national 'Butterfly Emergency', with results of this summer's Big Butterfly Count '*showing a marked and hugely concerning decline in numbers. It was the worst summer in the Count's history for Common Blue, Holly Blue, Green-veined White, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady and Scotch Argus. And the majority of species (81%) showed declines in the number seen this year compared with 2023.*'

In November Andrew Mowbray will tell us about Place Names. We see and use them every day, but how often do we stop and wonder what they mean? When we do, we often find that they make no sense. This talk goes through their origins and meanings as well as the fascinating history behind them.

In September Jenny Smith talked about the work of Hearing Dogs, a charity which has helped thousands of deaf people and people with hearing loss. Jenny lost her hearing due to childhood illnesses and is now profoundly deaf. She has a cochlear implant which helps to some extent but having a Hearing Dog transformed her life. She brought along her hearing dog called Tamsin who is invaluable in helping Jenny in her daily life, for example alerting her to the sound of a doorbell, smoke alarm or phone. Jenny has had a hearing dog since 1989, and Tazzie is her fourth. As a

small way of saying thank you, Jenny has given more than a thousand talks helping to raise awareness of the charity. In recognition of this she was awarded the MBE. She was invited to bring a donations collecting can to our meeting and she wishes to give a message to thank you all for your kindness and generosity, she was delighted to say it contained £214.39. Jenny also hosts a tour of The Grange for members of the public to find out more about the charity.

RAMBLES

You would be very welcome to join our group of Ramblers, just turn up on the day!

Wednesday October 16th. Meet at the car park on Kings Langley Common adjacent to Kings Langley Cricket Club at 10.00am, It is on the road from Kings Langley High Street A4251 going towards Chipperfield. The ramble will be via Barnes Farm, Shendish Manor, Scatterdells & Whippendell Woods and Langley Lodge, a distance of about 4¼ miles with one steep descent.

Wednesday November 20th. Meet at 10.00am in Rickmansworth Aquadrome car park for a ramble of about 4 miles over Moor Park Golf Course to Batchworth Heath returning via Woodcock Hill.

Wednesday December 18th. No ramble because of Christmas.

Don

GARDENING GROUP

The sun shone hot and strong on August 12th when a large number from the Gardening Group visited the Jazzy Rose flower farm at Penman's Green. In fact, so many booked the trip that it was organised in two sessions, with 26 attending in the morning and a further dozen in the afternoon!

Jazzy Rose is the name of the business founded just three years ago by Lisa, a very dynamic lady who previously had a successful career in haute couture but wanted a more rural life for her young daughter Jasmine, after whom the business is named. Lisa visited the group in January to tell her story; how she rented the farm field, dug long growing beds, installed an irrigation system and fences, bought a polytunnel, installed outbuildings for a shop and café area, dug a wildlife pond, and started to grow a range of annual and perennial flowers for floristry. She inspired the group to visit and see this remarkable venture, and we were not disappointed!

Lisa took us in groups on a guided tour of the flower beds and polytunnel, describing the work she and her assistant do to grow and harvest the wonderful flowers – from sowing annual seeds in the greenhouse, to buying and planting perennials in bulk, such as roses and peonies (200 peonies were planted this year, an investment as they will not start to flower for at least 3 years!). Lisa has had successes and failures along the way and has learnt so much about what will grow well there; and which flowers are most in demand from the florists. The fences were a huge investment but essential to keep out marauding deer; likewise, the polytunnel to extend the growing season significantly. We were all stunned by the amount of work Lisa has put into this site, her seemingly boundless energy and enthusiasm. We enjoyed sauntering round the beds admiring sunflowers, verbenas, cosmos, roses and dahlias; and had refreshments in the shade at picnic tables under a canopy, before buying beautiful bunches of fresh-picked flowers to take home. What a lovely visit it was!

Jazzy Rose flower farm is open to the public at weekends during the growing season; and Lisa also sells flowers and produce from a stall in her front garden on the corner opposite the Two Brewers pub at Chipperfield Common. Search for Jazzy Rose online to find her website

Pam Litton



Pictures on this page by Linda Hug

From October we have indoor meetings in the Village Hall. All members are welcome to come to the talks - there is a small charge of £3 towards the costs.

October 14th Francesca Murray will talk about the work of the Perennial Society.

November 11th the Teabreak Gardener Katherine Woods will talk about growing alpine plants.

December 9th - if you have been on one of our Gardening Group trips or attended one of our group talks this year you are welcome to join us for the Christmas Party. You will be entertained! More information nearer the time.

Dates for your diary next year

January 13th speaker tbc

February 10th speaker tbc

March 10th Nick Dobson, Unusual Spring Bulbs.

April 14th - either in the hall or out on a visit tbc

We are working on plans for trips out during the summer



A sunny September day saw 40 Gardening Group members heading off to Hyde Hall near Chelmsford in Essex for the last visit of the season.

Set in 24 acres of what was once farmland, the gardens continue to mature and develop. With summer intensity extending into autumn, an impressive array of dahlias added to the wow effect in the herbaceous borders with their hot planting schemes of annual and tender perennials in six colour-themed bays. We were also impressed by the Global Growth Vegetable Garden and its wonderful display of tomatoes, squashes, pumpkins, aubergines, beans and lots more sourced from around the world. In view of the cold wet summer we have endured this year, the vigour, health and size of some of the plants was enviable. No visit is complete without a visit to Hilltop Lodge with its panoramic views, for a tasty lunch or scrumptious coffee and cake. All in all, a good day out!

Linda Hug



Members of Wine Appreciation 1 also enjoyed a visit to Woodfine Vineyard in Seer Green, in their case on the 7th September.

WALKING GROUP

On 13 August, led by John Guy and Colin Harrison, Sarratt was our start point for the first time this year. We followed the Coronation walk devised by Sarratt Parish Council to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III. First stop Cart & Horses, beer house since 1765 when it refreshed workers heading to Watford market. We had a lovely leisurely stroll through Chipperfield woods (coffee stop) then down to the Chess via Belsize. The Watercress Farm dated from 1886 and was run until a few years ago, long after others had disappeared. We returned to Church End where the current Almshouses date from 1821 and replace those built in 1550, which were occupied by several families sharing a room or two. Quite a history lesson en route!

Val MacDonald



WINE APPRECIATION 2

On Saturday 3rd August it was pouring with rain, an inauspicious start to our visit to the vineyard/farm in Seer Green. My father was very fond of saying 'rain before seven, fine before eleven'. Our small group clambered aboard Jenks (the bus) at just around midday, with Anthony at the wheel who got us safely to Seer Green. Some strange stares as we passed by in the pre-war bus, but the weather had already improved; my Dad knew what he was talking about!

We were conducted around the Farm, seeing the grapes on the vines as well as the orchard where apples are grown for cider production. We saw the vegetable garden and the chickens that play an essential part in maintaining the vineyard. After an extremely informative tour we returned to the winepress and were treated to a selection of cold meats and locally sourced cheeses at the same time as sampling some of the wine and cider produced at the vineyard.

For information about tours contact woodfinewine.com/shop/tours.

Clive Turner



PICKLEBALL

The Pickleball Group plays on Friday afternoons at William Penn Leisure Centre in Mill End, Rickmansworth, hosted by Chorleywood u3a.

Pickleball is played on a badminton court, with a net about three feet high. The bat is solid, about twice the size of a table tennis bat, and the ball is plastic. We have players at all levels and new players are very welcome. The game is expanding quite rapidly, and a new group is being formed by another local u3a who are planning to play on Thursdays. If you cannot play on a Friday, there will be an opportunity to play on Thursdays.

One can even play Pickleball on a Cruise ship ! Interested ? Contact Richard Bulgin 01923 776143 or richard.bulgin@outlook.com



Penny on the cruise playing pickleball - so who fetches the ball when it goes overboard?

FAMILY HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS

A new Group has begun for absolute beginners who wish to start researching their family history. It takes the form of six weekly sessions for a small group and aims to point the members to the sources available for the novice researcher. We are full and if successful it is hoped to run further classes after the New Year. Members will need to start together and commit to the whole course. I have a waiting list for next time and I will let members know when I start the next course.

Margaret Roberts

u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through their membership. Events are exclusively for u3a members. See u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events Early registration is recommended. Here are a few of the dates in October:

Friday October 4th 2-3pm

Vincent van Gogh

A personal journey through the places he painted, by Dr Peter Webb

Thursday, October 10th 2 - 3pm

Visualising Statistical Concepts.

With a pile of stones, a packet of crisps, 2 jigsaws and other easy to find props we are off on a journey exploring statistical summaries, sampling, hypothesis testing and p values - the concepts not the maths.

Monday October 14th 2-3.30pm

My work at Bletchley Park

Ruth Bourne talks about her time working in the 'code breaking factory'.

Thursday, October 24th 2-3pm

A Life in Expeditions

Alastair Newton talks about his amazing experiences leading expeditions in the world's remotest places.

Tuesday, October 29 3.30pm- 4.30pm

Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie

Bring more joy and laughter to your life with Laughter Yoga - an aerobic exercise with playful exercises combined with deep yogic breathing

u3a Learning Activities - All Our Yesterdays

The u3a Learning team, working with Trust Volunteer Carole Chapman, are planning a new initiative to collect memories from members for a series of stories to share online. Following successful programmes such as *Battle of Britain & the Blitz* and *Kindertransport* we would now like to gather stories of the 1950s and 60s that stand out in your memory.

This was an eventful time in history with far reaching events such as the building of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of President Kennedy and the birth of pop culture. Of course, these are the well-known events we have all heard of, but you may have more personal recollections that didn't make the headlines.

u3a members are invited to contribute experiences to this collection of material. Do you have memories from the 1950s and 60s? Is there a family history that has been preserved, perhaps in documents or photographs?

If so, and you would like to share this, please either fill out our online form or contact Trust Volunteer Carole Chapman

This is an extract from u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities/all-our-yesterdays where you can find out how to submit your contribution.

In his Word from the Chair, Don referred to the new SiteWorks website sarratt.u3asite.uk so please do take a look at it. You will see that it has the capacity to display much more information and pictures in different formats and the design is visually much more interesting. It was a daunting prospect to begin with and a steep learning curve but we have both really enjoyed working on it, and we will continue to change and update it regularly. You will also find a list of events, so remember to keep looking!

u3a SiteWorks is a huge u3a volunteer-led project providing WordPress based customised websites to u3as, replacing the existing Site Builder platform. This impressive project absolutely demonstrates the ethos of u3a with members learning from each other across the organisation. Most of the volunteers have never met each other, it has all been achieved on line.

The early development stages began in 2021/22 with the aid of volunteers in design and testing and the actual rollout began this year. Around 365 sites have now gone live with others in various stages, but the target is to have all 700+ sites migrated by the end of the year. Our migrator 'buddy' Chris Winner (who Chairs the Beacon Siteworks Committee and is therefore part of the national rollout) said she, and the other volunteers who have made it all happen, would like to have their Christmas back!

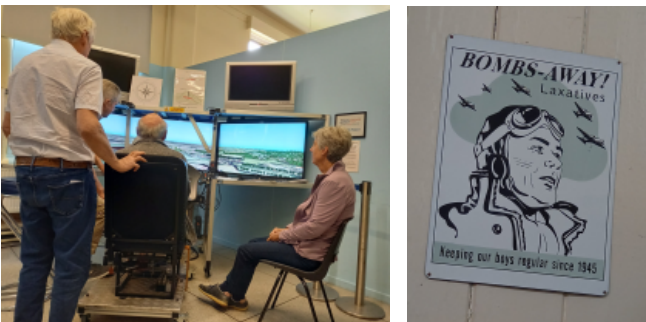
Janet Taylor and Benny Michel

ENGINEERING HERITAGE

Our August visit was to RAF Halton to see the Trenchard Museum which preserves and displays items relating to the history of the Royal Air Force.

Marshall Trenchard is regarded as the Founding Father of the Royal Air Force and also founded the Aircraft Apprentice Scheme. There is a large collection of exhibits including complete aircraft, aircraft cockpits, simulators and a variety of artefacts outlining the life and training of aircraft apprentices. Some brave members tried their hand on the simulator piloting an aircraft overlooking the surrounding countryside and then landing on the grassy runway that I couldn't even see!

A very interesting place and thank you Benny for organising this.



There were fascinating displays about life on board the Mary Rose, The Victory and HMS Warrior, we can't do them justice here so a visit to Portsmouth is highly recommended!

Our September trip took us to Portsmouth. Our main objective was to visit the Mary Rose Museum in the Historic Dockyard. However on seeing how many attractions there were available a group of us decided to stay a couple of days to explore other exhibits such as HMS Victory & HMS Warrior.

Back to our main objective: the Mary Rose. It is the most riveting exhibition and so well presented with a huge (19,000 –didn't see all of them!) range of artefacts and scientific information. By examining the recovered skeletons scientists could distinguish where crew members originated e.g. the Master Carpenter was probably of Spanish extraction; some crew from West Country inland and some from the coastal regions.

Obviously the main feature is the Mary Rose itself seen in all its glory – now not behind glass or being continuously sprayed with water. A truly magnificent sight! The culmination of the visit is a new 4D immersive theatre experience giving visitors the chance to experience what it was like to dive down to the Mary Rose.

All in all it was a great experience and with our year-long explorer ticket I would definitely like to visit again and see further exhibits. Thanks Peter for organising this.

Sheila Malin



Beacon, the national database is used by many u3a branches, it keeps the data secure and separate for each u3a. We maintain your data and send emails via Beacon in order to keep costs down. If the newsletter is not reaching you call Penny on 01923 776143 and she will be pleased to get your details updated. If you don't have access to email, arrangements can be made to post the newsletter to you in return for a small administrative charge to cover costs - speak to Penny.

Copy for newsletter no 109 December/January should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd November 2024. It would be lovely to have input from some of the other groups, and it doesn't have to be from the group leader. If you have any comments about the newsletter or items you would like to see contact Janet at j.taylor0402@ntlworld.com

Please remember to take photos of your u3a activities which we might be able to use on the website or the rolling screen or in the newsletter. Some 'action' photos would be welcome and try different perspectives sometimes. If you take pictures of people please check that you have permission as it is assumed that any u3a members shown in photos submitted for the newsletter or the website are happy to be included.