

**Copy deadline for
newsletter 110
February/March
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Chairman:
Don
Tel. 01923 443171

Vice Chairman:
Roger
Tel. 01923 260036

Treasurer:
Pam
01923 460575

Secretary/Archivist:
Kerry
Tel. 01923 284600

Membership Secretary:
Penny
Tel. 01923 776143
penny.bulgin@outlook.com

Interest Group Co-ordinator:
Sue
Tel. 01923 245454

Programme Secretary:
Newsletter Production:
Janet

Web Manager:
Benny

Hall Manager:
Colin

Meeters and Greeters
Co-ordinator:
Sally

New Committee Members
Judith
Linda
Clive
Ian

Regd Charity No 1139443



Engineering Heritage visit to Essex and Herts Air Ambulance

A word from the Chair

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter

When Sue and I retired 18 years ago and decided we would like to join a u3a we found that a new one was starting up in Sarratt, so came along to the inaugural meeting not knowing what to expect from it. We were surrounded by a room full of people who were at that time strangers to us.

After hearing from some of the committee members from Rickmansworth u3a, who were instigating the new u3a, and other speakers, we had a better understanding so we agreed to help on the committee. That day probably had a greater influence on our future lives than almost any other apart from getting married!

We have embraced the u3a's abiding principle of learn, laugh and live but more than this we have made many more friends than we thought possible when we left work. This has largely been achieved through the groups we belong to where we meet other members with similar interests. This means we have something in common and it gives us a topic to begin a conversation where we discover more about each other. In this way we have developed the friendships we now

enjoy even outside of u3a activities. I hope that you all are able to enjoy similar experiences and make new friends.

Friendship is of course a two way thing and, as in so much in life, I have found the more you put in the more you get out of it. So, if you are feeling a bit lonely and isolated why not see if you spot someone else who may look as if they are in the same boat and try talking to them, because before long you could become close friends. You can start by introducing yourself, your name, where you live, what sort of jobs you had and any particular interests you enjoy. This gives the other person the opportunity to reciprocate, and a conversation is likely to follow and then who knows what?

The Christmas season is starting to get into full swing aided by some wintery weather, so I hope you all have a really enjoyable time over the festive period and look forward to the new year with hope and anticipation for a better time for everyone.

Best wishes

Don

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

see also sarratt.u3a.site.uk for updates on meetings and events

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).

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

Note the date is Thursday not Wednesday

January 15th • *Sir Joseph Bazalgette* - Rob Smith

February 12th • *An Arctic Adventure* - 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

December - Bobbie Darbyshire will talk about how novelists come up with their ideas. There are three book groups in our u3a and many of our members belong to other local book groups, so we hope this subject will appeal.

January - Rob Smith will tell us about the work of Joseph Bazalgette. Sir Joseph William Bazalgette was a civil engineer who built London's first sewer system (still in use today), which saved lives by helping to wipe out cholera in the capital and it is often considered to be one of the greatest civil engineering achievements of the 19th century.

Meeting dates 2025

January 15th

February 12th

March 12th

April 9th

May 7th + AGM

June 4th

July 2nd

August 13th

September 10th

October 8th

November 5th

December 3rd

EARLY REMINDER - SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual membership subscriptions are due in January 2025. Please note we are now able to accept electronic transfer for subscriptions as well as cheques.

I will be sending out details of payment with the annual membership renewal email/letter in early January.

Penny

EXPLORING LONDON 2

Our last walk in 2024 was in November entitled Secrets of the Strand. This included Somerset House, Kings College and the Roman Baths. Other places visited this year included Notting Hill, Stepney Green, Surrey Quays and St James.

The first walk in 2025 will be 13 February. At present there are some vacancies to join the group. If you are interested please contact Mike at marmike.west@btinternet.com

RAMBLES

There is no ramble in December and no date set for one, yet, in January, to be confirmed, it might be weather dependent!

Don

GARDENING GROUP

For our first Autumn talk we welcomed Collette Carus, one of the fundraisers for Perennial who stepped in for her colleague at short notice.

Perennial is the only charity dedicated to support gardeners and their families and those retirees going through hard times whether it be illness, redundancy, old age or other difficulties. Jobs within the gardening industry can be challenging, often very physical with low pay and sometimes seasonal working.

Collette's talk was about the origins of the charity formed 185 years ago, formerly known as The Gardeners Benevolent Institution, and some of their past recipients. She explained that before the Welfare State was established, many gardeners of the past received no pension and had no homes once they retired or infirmity stopped them from working, and Perennial's predecessor was founded to provide some but not all with a pension. Pension provision was a lottery and only the most "deserving" received one!

Clearly times have changed and Perennial now provides confidential advice on a wide range of issues: legal, debt, financial and benefits. There are other services including physiotherapy, training, careers advice, a helpline and support for families. Collette's talk raised our awareness that even today gardening can be precarious as a career but Perennial helps to provide a safely net for many doing gardening work.

Incidentally, York Gate and Fullers Mill gardens, which featured recently on Gardeners World, are two of the gardens bequeathed to this charity to help raise funds from visitors.

Marion Brown

[Perennial is calling on garden enthusiasts and consumers to purchase their 'barer than ever' Naked Gardeners Calendar to help fund their work supporting people in horticulture perennial.org.uk/about-us/news/baring-all-for-a-good-cause-with-perennials-2025-naked-gardeners-calendar]



Growing alpine plants can be a great, relatively low maintenance choice for many gardens. And one of the easiest ways to grow these plants is in troughs. This one was planted up by Pam for her garden.

Currently our meetings are indoors in the Village Hall. All members are welcome to come to the talks - there is a small charge of £3 towards the costs.

Dates for your diary next year

January 13th Katy Cheetham will talk about the work of NGS - The National Open Garden Scheme (the yellow book).

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. Coach trip dates are likely to be 9th June and 8th September.

At the group's November meeting we welcomed a new speaker, Katharine Woods, who goes by the epithet "The Teabreak Gardener" when writing about her garden in different seasons and giving gardening tips in a series of online blogs.

Although not a professional gardener, Katharine has studied garden and landscape history, and regularly gives talks to groups and societies. On this first visit to us, her subject was alpine plants, and she started by giving a general description and definition of this category of plant, being species that grow at higher altitudes, being usually smaller than other family members that grow lower down and being more tolerant of cold conditions than of wet. She showed a series of photographs of alpine varieties grown at such places as RHS Wisley and Kew, as well as exhibits at the Alpine Plant Society shows, before going on to take us through the story of building her own alpine rockery in her Chilterns garden. Not one for doing things by halves some of her 'rocks' are massive and needed a forklift truck to get them into position!

Katherine showed many examples of alpine planting schemes suitable for small gardens, using troughs, sink gardens and terracotta pots, and gave practical tips and advice on covering a sink or other container with mock stone, making suitable compost mixes, buying and planting alpiners. Her presentation was excellent, her photographs gorgeous and her enthusiasm for these plants inspiring. As one member put it "I didn't think I would find much of interest but was very much mistaken and now thinking about coating my Belfast sink and putting in new alpiners!" We are hoping to negotiate a visit to Katharine's garden in 2025, so watch this space.

Pam Litton

CRAFTS

The Craft Group has had another productive year. We started the year knitting chicks for cream Easter eggs to help the vicar of Holy Cross church with her project of giving each primary school child an Easter egg. We managed to knit over eighty chicks between us, a very good effort.

We have made fabric and paper flowers and carrying on that theme decorated glass jars with dried flowers to use as candle holders. We have embellished bought hessian shopping bags where everyone had their own ideas, appliqué and fabric painting being popular techniques. Making gift bags was a more challenging project but in the end proved successful as you can see from the picture.

We also had a couple of card making sessions and our usual Christmas decoration making morning and of course our Christmas lunch at The Boot after our December meeting. Roll on 2025 .

Sue Sutton



PICKLEBALL

The Pickleball Group plays on Friday afternoons at William Penn Leisure Centre in Mill End, Rickmansworth, hosted by Chorleywood u3a. Costs depend on the length of the 'term' and the new one starts in January.

If you cannot play on a Friday, there may be an opportunity to play on Thursdays with a new group being formed by another u3a.

We have players at all levels and new players are very welcome **contact richard.bulgin@outlook.com**

MARITIME HISTORY

As one of the two Maritime History groups in the U3a, we voyage to places both near and far.

A local visit by old charts and maps on the history of the London Docks really did give an idea of the tremendous expanse of the area set aside for waterborne trade to the city over the past several hundred years. Mostly all gone now apart for some small pockets that still have water in and may, if you are lucky, provide a way to the sea. This was supported by a look at 'Policing our Waterways' the formation, history and current responsibilities of the World's first organised Police Force – The Thames River Police. Another topic, mostly forgotten, was the work of the National Service Girls on the Canals of Britain, known colloquially as 'Idle Women' due to their large IW badge from the Inland Waterways.

Moving further afield, a look at the rise of Venice as a maritime power provided a view of what had been the world's first major industrial complex on prefabrication where ships were constructed from parts and sailed out of the dockyard in the 14th and 15th Centuries, well before the assembly lines of Henry Ford.

China's massive water project at the Three Gorges brought a modern view of water storage, and the matter of Whaling was sensitively dealt with, from past to the present. There was an interesting presentation on 'The Romance of the Sea' taking us from classical times to more modern aspects, trying to see why the sea has such an attraction.

A look at the time before aircraft and fibre optics brought home the time when letters and packages were many weeks travelling to their destinations around the world by the Postal Packets of Falmouth and the courtesy of merchant ships.

We finished the year by asking: if an army marches on its stomach, how does a fleet manage? This had the effect of bringing many parts of our earlier research such as supplies, ammunition, crews and maintenance all together in one package to give a good understanding of how a Navy is supported by land and by sea.

We voyage on.....

Brian Hill

Do remember to check out the website sarratt.u3asite.uk It has the capacity to display more information and pictures about group activities as well as listing forthcoming events. Help to keep it up to date!

Remember that u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through your membership. Events are exclusively for u3a members. See u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events Early registration is recommended.



Would you like to learn how to play Bridge? Subject Advisor Steve has created a u3a Bridge Groups website which includes the opportunity to sign up for the next u3a online beginners course starting in January 2025. www.bridgewebs.com/u3abridgegroup/

FAMILY HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS

A new group for absolute beginners in Family History was run as a six week course in the Autumn. Five members, armed with laptops and tablets, pencils and various certificates met together to embark on a new hobby aiming to research their family history.

Week by week we each explored the various resources to be found on the Internet, searching for names, dates and places to put together a Family Tree.

As we found, this is not for the faint hearted, but can be fun, frustrating and fascinating. Progress was made and several beginners are now well on their way. I wonder what they will find!

There was much interest in this subject so a new group will be started in the Spring and all those who expressed a wish to join will be contacted in the New Year.

Margaret Roberts

Engineering Group visit to The Trenchard Museum



The Royal Flying Corps at War. For many of the pilots their life expectancy would be short, less than 3 weeks for some.



Taking turns on the flight simulator.

BOOK GROUP 2

Our reading group meets on the third Thursday of the month, taking a break in December when members have too many demands on their time, and another break in August, peak of the holiday season. That leaves us with 10 books to choose, largely from the list of books available to book groups by Hertfordshire libraries.

Members decide the books they wish to recommend, either because they have enjoyed them or heard of them from friends, or indeed were convinced by an introduction on *Between the Covers* on BBC2. This last year, we have read authors as poles apart as Maggie O'Farrell, Robert Harris or Elif Shafak. We seldom agree on our appreciation of the book read but the discussions are always amiable ...and we enjoy getting together. Individual scores out of 10 can vary as widely as 3 (a waste of time) to 9 (a brilliant read and I want to try more titles by this author). This is a good way to pick up books you would not normally have read and also to make friends with the same interests.

Annie Williams

ENGINEERING HERITAGE

Activities this year have included a behind the scenes tour of the Royal Albert Hall, followed by visits to the National Space Centre near Leicester, the Army Museum in Chelsea, the historic Dockyard at Chatham, the Museum of Brands in London, the Trenchard Museum at RAF Halton, and to Portsmouth Dockyard, a very large site with much to see, the highlight of which was the Mary Rose exhibition

Our final outing for the year was in October when a small group of us ventured into Essex to visit the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance Trust (EHAAT) Centre at North Weald. We were greeted by two volunteers who gave us an excellent interactive talk about the vital service provided by EHAAT. The helicopter was out on a job and anticipation was building as the volunteers gave us updates while we waited to see if it would arrive back in time for us to see it. Eventually we watched it land on the pad and after the pilots had completed refuelling and other tasks we were allowed a close up inspection. One of the pilots even treated us to a talk about the aircraft and his rewarding role with EHAAT in bringing the hospital emergency services to the patient.

I would like to thank all of our members who have organised our various activities. Our group is a team effort and we had a meeting in November where we exchanged ideas and have outlined a plan for 2025. There is space for a couple of new members if you would like to join us!

Sheila Malin

WALKING GROUP

In early October the group went along the Chess Valley from Stony Lane in Little Chalfont towards Bovington. Though showery to start with the walkers were fairly dry at the end, much better than the other way round!

A better day later in the month saw a group of 14 follow a route from the Rickmansworth lakes along the canal to the Coy Carp. This walk, originally drawn up by Peter Wakeling, then goes up the Hillingdon trail to Hill End giving lovely views over countryside. We were delighted that Margaret and Peter came to greet us at the start, although they are no longer able to join us on a long walk.

In November it was a day of full sun when Terry and Sue led us on a route they adapted to make the most of open countryside. We walked from Chipperfield to Flaunden and back via Sarratt to Chipperfield woods. A finely calculated 6 miles, with plenty of colourful leaves to kick along the way.

Val MacDonald



BETTER WATCH OUT, YOU BETTER BEWARE....!

Be on your guard - scumbags are always devising new scams! Whether you are shopping on line or receive a call or email claiming that something is wrong with your bank account or credit card, and trying to panic you into taking urgent action, stop and think! They are very persuasive, their objective is to gain your trust in order to get personal/financial information from you!

If you receive a call you're not expecting, be suspicious. The vital things to remember are that your bank and the police would:

- NEVER ask for your bank account details or PIN number over the phone, so do not disclose these to anyone, **no matter who they claim to be.**
- NEVER ask you to withdraw money or purchase high value items and send it to them via a courier, taxi or by any other means.
- NEVER ask you to send your bank cards, or any other personal property, to them via courier, taxi or by any other means.

Beacon, the national database is used by many u3a branches, keeping 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.

End the call if you are suspicious of the caller. Do not give any personal information. You can call 101 or report online to herts.police.uk/report. In an emergency or if a crime is in progress call 999.

Remember, scammers can hold the telephone line open and often advise you to call 999 to give you a false sense of security.

- If you receive a suspicious call, avoid redialling any number they provide.
- Always try to use a different device when making a follow up call.
- Call a trusted friend/family member. If they answer and you recognise their voice, the line has been cleared.

Contact your bank without delay if you have concerns about your account.

Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre has information and advice.
www.actionfraud.police.uk

Copy for newsletter no 110 February/March should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd January 2025. 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.