

**Copy deadline for
newsletter 111
April/May
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Spring is on the way!
Hellebores provide early nectar (Janet Taylor)

A word from the Chair

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter

As this is the first newsletter of 2025 I would like to wish all our members a very Happy New Year. I hope we will see a better world at the end of it than it is now.

I think we must all be grateful that we live in a country where we have a fairly stable political system and are free from armed conflict, unlike too many other parts of the world. Although we will always complain about our weather we don't normally have the extremes some other countries experience resulting in severe flooding or cyclones, tornados and wildfires like those seen in Los Angeles recently for which we should be thankful.

On a personal note, I am looking forward to a number of holidays throughout the year so am keeping my fingers crossed that the weather is kind to us. I know people go on holidays for a variety of reasons, some purely for relaxation others to experience the culture of other places, while yet

others because of a special interest such as Art, Architecture, Walking, Birdwatching or many others. There is always the natural beauty to enjoy particularly if holidaying in the UK as we are blessed with such a diverse variety of landscapes to enjoy from the seashore to mountains, lakes and rivers.

We also have some of the most wonderful gardens to visit as you will have appreciated if you have watched the recent Monty Don TV series. British history must be some of the most fascinating in the world with so many historical sites to visit many of which are cared for so well by National Trust or English Heritage. I know that Sue and I are still finding places to visit and enjoy for the first time even at our age. I hope many of you will be able to enjoy some time away and to return with happy memories.

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).**

February 12th • *An Arctic Adventure* - Pam Litton

March 12th • *Plague Houses* - Alison Wall

April 9th • *Women in Intelligence* - Dr Helen Fry

May 7th • *AGM and Plant Sale* - social event

(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

February - Last year Pam Litton gave a highly entertaining talk with wonderful photography of wildlife she saw on her first safari in Africa. This time around we look forward to joining in with her adventures in the Arctic.

March - Local historian Alison Wall has spent years researching Plague Houses (including some in local areas) and exploring beliefs about medieval medicine, referencing the Great Plague of the 17th century and the public health impact of the recent Pandemic.

April - Historian Dr Helen Fry will shine a light on the hidden legacy of the brave women who worked in intelligence across two world wars. Helen is an authority on the social history of the Second World War, including intelligence, espionage and spies, and the 'secret listeners', men and women who eavesdropped at sites operated by British Intelligence during WWII.

Further main meeting dates 2025

March 12th

April 9th

May 7th + AGM

June 4th

July 2nd

August 13th

September 10th

October 8th

November 5th

December 3rd

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Thank you to all the members who have already paid for their membership renewal.

The use of electronic transfer seems to have gone really well. There were one or two hiccups – but that is to be expected with a new system. I have noted some errors and I will try to iron them out by next year. If anyone had a difficulty that I don't know about, please get in touch and I can see if there is a way round the problem. Sometimes the banks are not very customer friendly!

I must thank Judith Cleveland for all her help this year. Checking details of cheques, entering all the bank transfers to our system and updating renewals and then printing out membership cards is quite a time consuming task. To have company makes the job so much easier and I'm sure I wasn't so stressed this year. (Honest Judith, ask Richard!). We had some good laughs and still got the job done.

Membership cards will be available to collect at the meeting on 12th February 2025.

Outstanding subs will need to be with me by 10th Feb if you wish to collect your card on the 12th. We would love for you to continue your membership of our u3a and the annual subscription remains at only £15, excellent value for money. However, please note, if you haven't contacted me by then it means your membership will lapse.

Penny

JAUNTERS IN JEOPARDY

As previously announced by email and emphasised by Don at the last main meeting, Jaunters are in desperate need of 3 to 4 members to help with organising future activities. Have you enjoyed trips out with Jaunters? Would you consider joining the organisers and helping out? If you are new to u3a it would be an excellent way of making friends and sharing interests.

If there are no 'willing helpers' to come forward it means that a group which has been running for about ten years will have to close. A great shame!

To find out more about what is involved please contact either Sue at susan.f.deane@gmail.com or Judith at judith.cleveland@gmail.com

RAMBLES

Wednesday February 19th.

Meet at the free Car Park in Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green at 10.00am for a walk of about 4 miles along part of the River Chess then following a short section of the canal to Croxley Hall Farm and returning over Croxley Green.

Wednesday March 19th.

Meet at 10.00am on Sarratt Green opposite The Boot PH for a 4½ mile walk via Bucks Hill, Jeffery's Farm and Chipperfield Common Woods.

Dates for these and future rambles are now on the website sarratt.u3asite.uk

Don

WALKING GROUP

January is maybe a time to count our blessings.

Last year we managed 20 walks in 14 different locations. John Swainson topped the leader board with 5, but altogether there were 9 leaders, or pairs of leaders.

Jean Machin and John Guy joined the most walks (17). Top attendance (14) was on two walks: one from Rickmansworth in October, led by Jean with Sue Harrison, and another in November led by Terry and Sue Wallman, which started in Chipperfield.

We are all looking forward to another year of gatherings with friends in the pleasant countryside which surrounds Sarratt and beyond.

Val MacDonald



BRIDGE

We continue our weekly meetings and our seasonal lunchtime gatherings at a nearby hostelry. Everyone plays a part in running the group; be it setting up tables, bringing refreshments, taking in money or taking away the "travellers" to tot up the scores. Some of us have been there from the start, and we are happy that one of our newer members, Judi Stylianides, recently agreed to take on running the meetings along with John Pilkington.

Val MacDonald

Judi Stylianides

EXPLORING LONDON 2

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

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'. The current term started in January. We have players at all levels and new players are very welcome. Please contact richard.bulgin@outlook.com



GARDENING GROUP

Our December meeting was an opportunity to get into the Christmas groove! Over 50 members came along and made it a very enjoyable occasion. Coffee and mince pies were followed by the first activity which was a time-honoured tradition: the Parcel Game! Members each donated 2 little wrapped gifts, which were collected in baskets and then distributed around the tables – a frenetic dice-throwing game then ensued, with parcels being won and lost at the turn of a six, and everyone ending up with at least one or two gifts at the end: things that they never knew they needed! We then had a slightly calmer interlude, when several members took to the microphone to share a Christmas themed poem, story or joke – a mixture of nostalgia and humour which was very entertaining. And finally, with the generous contribution of foliage from a number of members, everyone had the opportunity to make a Christmas wreath, using a wire frame. Some created them as a team, others did them individually or in twos – there was enough greenery, cones, ribbon, wire and baubles for all to take part. The resulting lovely wreaths were displayed before everyone wished friends "Merry Christmas" and took their decorations and gifts home. It was a happy morning!



At our first meeting of the new year, on January 13th, we had a very interesting talk about the National Gardens Scheme, the national programme featuring private gardens that open to the public for limited dates and raise funds for charity. Katie Cheetham told the fascinating history of the NGS, which was founded in 1927 by The Queen's Nursing Institute to raise funds for district nursing. We learned about the origins of the movement, when industrialist and philanthropist William Rathbone funded district nursing for the poor in Liverpool and drafted in Florence Nightingale to assist in setting up nurse training. Her influence resulted in Queen Victoria founding the Queen's Nursing Institute.

Since the inception of the NGS, the scheme has provided more than £67 million in funding for various charitable causes such as hospices. Katie went on to describe some of the lovely gardens in our area that take part in the scheme, and a little about how gardens join the NGS. Her friend Candy Whittome then showed us photos of her walled garden, which she renovated and planted prairie style; and described her experience of joining the NGS and sharing her garden with visitors. The ladies finished their presentation by encouraging us to buy *The Yellow Book*, visit NGS gardens and think about joining with our own gardens!

Pam Litton

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:

February 10th Ian Barrow, Propagation. Also a seed swap

March 10th Nick Dobson, Unusual Spring Bulbs.

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

Coach trip 9th June Mottisfont (National Trust) - see info below

Coach trip 8th September destination tbc

We are still working on plans for trips out during the summer.

The Gardening Group team is organising a trip by coach to a National Trust property, Mottisfont, near Romsey in Hampshire. The date will be Monday 9th June.

Mottisfont is an 18th Century house with a medieval priory at its heart and a big collection of old fashioned roses flowering in June, so we hope the gardens will be a highlight of our visit, as well as the history of the house. We plan to leave at 9.30am and the journey time should be under 2 hours.

The cost will be:

£20 coach only IF you are a National Trust member (proof of NT membership required).

£40 coach and admission if you are NOT a National Trust member.

Booking will open at the Garden Group meeting on February 10th, when Ian Barrow of Sunnyside Trust will be giving a talk about propagation.

Booking will be open to all at the main meeting on February 12th



Mottisfont
(picture: Google Search)

In connection with open gardens, this comment came from Sue Bussey - *The Red Cross used to have Open Gardens for charity in 1890s as my great grandfather was a professional gardener at a big estate in Hampstead. His Orchid House featured in an article about the Open Day in "The Times", with a picture of him in his gardener's apron and straw boater wheeling a wheelbarrow.*

Ashridge House near Berkhamsted has joined the list of over 230 RHS Partner Gardens in 2025. If you are a RHS member you can have free access to the gardens at Ashridge House throughout the year. To visit the gardens, take your RHS membership card with you and show to the team in The Bakehouse to receive free entry (applies only to the member named on the card).



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.

Topics for free talks in February/March include: Freda Kahlo; Penguins in Antarctica; Claude Monet's Garden in Giverny; a celebration of Hadrian's Wall; AI; Vedic Maths; Sustainable travel in Europe; Laughter Yoga; making your smartphone or tablet easier to use as you get older....and many more!

ENGINEERING HERITAGE

We began meetings for this year on 28th January with a DVD by Robert Opie about our Throwaway History, a nostalgic history of branded packaging. This was followed by a pub lunch! In February a small group will visit the Cabinet War rooms and in March we will have a *Secrets of the Museum Tour* at the Natural History Museum.

There is space for a couple of new members if you would like to join the group!

Sheila Malin

MUSEUM OF BRANDS

If you ever happen to be in London near Notting Hill a visit to the Brands Museum of London would be a worthwhile detour. It is open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm. The nearest underground station is Ladbroke Grove, only a short distance from the museum at 111-117 Lancaster Road. Members of the Engineering Heritage Group visited last July and had a lovely time going through the *Time Tunnel* of packaging from Victorian times to the present day. Lots of "my mum had one of those" or "ooo I remember that..." comments ensued! There is also a cafe and a delightful garden in which to enjoy refreshments.

*More than fifty years ago consumer historian Robert Opie began to unravel the fascinating story of how consumer products and promotion had evolved since Victorian times. By 1975 Robert had enough material to hold his own exhibition, *The Pack Age*, at the Victoria & Albert Museum. In 1984 he opened the first museum devoted to the history of packaging and advertising in Gloucester.*

In the early 2000s, the collection needed a new home. With the help of sponsors the Museum became a charity in 2002 and opened in Notting Hill, London. After ten successful years, the Museum had outgrown its building and in 2015 relocated to a larger site nearby, just around the corner from the world-famous Portobello Road Market.
museumofbrands.com

There is a connection between Robert Opie and Christine Adams, who gave us a talk a few years ago about May Savidge of Ware Hall. May used to hoard every bit of paper that came her way, from bus tickets to Kit Kat wrappers, which she recycled for shopping lists, and the Radio Times, which she used as a diary and filing system for her copious correspondence! Robert Opie purchased some of her hoard for his museum, which also helped Christine to fund restoration work on Ware Hall, and fulfil her promise to May.

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!

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.

Copy for newsletter no 111 April/May should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd March 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.