

**Copy deadline for
newsletter 112
June/July
23rd May 2025**

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A Walk on the Wild Side! Frances Ashley

A word from the Chair

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter

Welcome to this newsletter, which will be my last as Chairman after nearly 4 years in this role.

It has been a privilege to lead our committee over this time and I would like to thank all of them, both past and present for their hard work and dedication on behalf of our u3a.

Roger Kemp has offered to stand for election as our new Chairman at the AGM on 7th May. I know he has some ideas regarding the future of Sarratt and District u3a, I wish him well and I am sure you will all support him, together with the other committee members.

I was elected as Chairman in September 2021 following an 18 month break in our 'live' meetings because of the Covid pandemic which started 5 years ago. It was interesting to have the talk by Allison Wall about Plague Houses at our March meeting as this was very topical and something to which we could all relate.

We were fortunate that we did not have a significant drop in our

membership during and following the lockdown although I know a number of other u3a's in the area did see a sizable reduction in their numbers. We made every effort to run meetings on Zoom and keep in touch via the newsletter and other communications which is very much part of our ethos of trying to be a friendly and welcoming u3a.

I am someone who likes to look to the future rather than dwell on the past because you cannot change history, but I believe you can influence the future. Having said that I realise that there is plenty that can be learnt from what has happened before. It is with this attitude that I look forward to a continuingly thriving u3a in Sarratt based on what we have already achieved.

Best wishes

Don

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

see also sarratt.u3asite.uk for updates on meetings and events

Monthly meetings are in the Village Hall - Doors open from 10am.
Remember to wear your u3a badge and register when you arrive.
Coffee from 10.10 to 10.30, then notices, followed by the talk from about 11am.

We do our best but timings are not always exact!

Please return empty cups/holders before the meeting starts.

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

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|-----------|--|
| April 9th | • <i>Women in Intelligence</i> - Dr Helen Fry |
| May 7th | • <i>AGM and Plant Sale</i> - social event |
| June 4th | • <i>Denham Film Studio</i> - Colin Richards |
| July 2nd | • <i>The Crop Circle Mystery</i> - Andy Thomas |

(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 disposable cups will be 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

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. During the lockdown period, when meetings were not allowed, Helen gave us a very informative talk via Zoom about captured high ranking German officers, held in the Tower of London and Latimer House during the war, who were unaware of the microphones hidden in all manner of secret places!

May - AGM and Plant Sale and an opportunity to socialise

June - Colin Richards from Watford and District u3a will talk about Denham Film Studio

Further main meeting dates 2025

May 7th + AGM
June 4th
July 2nd
August 13th
September 10th
October 8th
November 5th
December 3rd

Online Learning Events -Just a few of the forthcoming events available free to u3a members, find more at 3a.org.uk/events/educational-events

Friday, April 11th, 10am -11.30am Duplicate Bridge Tactics for Improvers

For people who are relatively new to duplicate bridge and are looking to improve their game.

Monday, April 14th, 10am - 11.30am How AI can save you hours when researching your family history

Steve Doyle shows how, using simple non techie approaches, you can use AI to increase the effectiveness of family history research. Artificial Intelligence is often viewed as a "techie" subject that seems far removed from everyday tasks. The chances are you're already using AI without even realizing it. Platforms like Ancestry, FamilySearch, and FindMyPast rely heavily on AI to enhance their services.

Tuesday, April 15th, 2pm -3.30pm Using the web to learn something new

Whether you've always wanted to learn a new hobby, pick up a new language, or engage in a short course at your own pace, here you may gain some insights on how to develop or expand your range of interests.

Friday, April 25th, 2pm - 3pm The Assassination of President Kennedy

Join Pete Mellor, Oldham & District u3a for this talk on a topic he has researched for over three decades.

SAILING

We are sailing, we are sailing...getting ready for the 2025 sailing season! The dates of our sessions have been posted on the Chess Valley U3A web page. Our usual sailing days are the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month, from 1pm to about 5pm, but please check the timetable for variations.

All are welcome, whether beginners or experienced sailors. We are a friendly group and although we cannot provide formal qualifications, we are keen to encourage our members to 'have a go' in a safe environment. Our lake is sheltered and shallow but there is always a safety boat on standby, manned by trained volunteers.

The first session of the year is on Tuesday April 15th and we look forward to seeing you then.

Steve Booth

RAMBLES

Wednesday April 16th.

Meet at 10 am in the free Car Park on Chorleywood Common just after passing the cricket ground coming from Rickmansworth. The 4 mile walk goes across the common, through The Swillett to Bullsland Farm.

Wednesday May 21st.

Meet at 10.00am in the Car Park in Langley Park Country Park, Billett Lane, SL0 0LS (Parking charges are £4.20 for 3 hours). To get there either take the A412 or M25/M40 to the Denham roundabout then continue on the A412 towards Slough. After passing through Iver there is a roundabout by The Crooked Billett PH, stay on the A412 and Billett Lane is the first turning on the left. The 4 mile walk will take us through Langley Park where there should be a beautiful display of Rhododendron and then cross into Black Park.

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

Don Sutton

WALKING GROUP

Until recently, the Walking Group has talked about "Lucky Tuesdays" bringing us fine weather for our walks, whatever the season, but our recent expeditions have been muddy, very muddy and VERY, VERY MUDDDY! This was at times energy -sapping, and the effort needed to stay upright occasionally diverted us from the wonderful countryside around us! We look forward to repeating the routes in kinder conditions, when we can better appreciate our surroundings and the efforts of our leaders to recce the paths.

"Why do it, then?" you may ask. Because walking with a group of friends is a sure way to improve your mood whatever the weather. Not only can you hear discussions about sport, politics, books, holidays etc going on simultaneously, but it's the best way to share worries, so much easier and more comforting than face to face across a table, or on the phone. Thus, however bedraggled we may be on our return, we are always cheerful, and glad we made the effort to get out of our warm houses and share time together.

Now we hope rewards are in sight: those welcome snowdrops have already given way to primroses, bright celandines and early blossoms, and now the bluebell shoots are waiting for their moment of glory under the beech buds.

Come and discover them with us! We would love to welcome some new members.

Frances Ashley



GARDENING GROUP

The Gardening Group have had two enjoyable presentations recently. At our February meeting we welcomed back Ian Barrow from the Sunnyside Trust, who brought his great experience as a nurseryman to give us a practical demonstration of different methods of propagating plants, including taking cuttings and dividing clumps. The group also enjoyed a seed swap, with a great selection of donated flower and vegetable seed packets on offer; most of which were snapped up!

In March a new speaker to the group, Nick Dobson, gave a lovely slideshow and talk entitled *Unusual Spring Bulbs*. Nick took us through many varieties of colourful spring flowers, from irises to hyacinths, fritillaries to winter aconites; with other gems including dog's tooth violets, trilliums and alliums. Many of Nick's photographs were from his own garden and he also showed flowers from the famous Keukenhof gardens in the Netherlands. Everybody enjoyed the presentation, and it really made us feel that Spring was on the way. Following Nick's talk, he very generously sent us the file of his presentation, which was forwarded to those who had attended so they could read it at leisure. And to accompany the talk, members had brought in a lovely selection of spring flower posies and pot-grown bulbs for the display table.

Pam Litton



Whether or not you have a garden you can help bumblebees. With longer days and warmer temperatures, the soil is starting to warm up, a good time to get ready for summer and plant a variety of plants for bumblebees, other bees and insects, in your garden, or maybe a pot on a windowsill. Three of the most common early emerging bumblebees are the Buff-tailed bumblebee, the Early bumblebee and the Tree bumblebee. All will be searching for somewhere to set up home. What can you plant for bumblebees? Top picks at this time of year are mint, bugle, hardy geranium, and nasturtium. Hellebores are perennial plants which provide early nectar for bees. Lots of information can be found at bumblebeeconservation.org

April 14th - Easter break no meeting or activity

May 7th - plant stall at the main meeting

May 12th - tbc

9th June Mottisfont (National Trust) - see update below

July 14th - visit to Cedar House - see below

August - tbc

8th September coach trip Borde Hill Gardens - see info below

That will complete our plans for trips out this year and we will commence indoor meetings on the second Monday of the month from October 13th

May 12th - tbc - if you can think of a local garden worth visiting (by car share) let us know.

Monday 9th June - The Gardening Group visit to the National Trust property, Mottisfont, near Romsey in Hampshire has just one spare place, if that fills there will be a waiting list.

Monday 14th July – by special arrangement with Sarah Nicholson we are planning a morning visit to her garden Cedar House near Wendover, arriving at 10.30. Sarah opens her garden for the NGS. The cost will be £10 including cake and a cuppa. This will be by car share so we will need volunteers to drive and offer lifts to passengers. Maximum of 10 cars. We have started a booking list, if you want to join it come to the desk at the main meeting.

Monday 8th August – trip tbc

Monday 8th September – Coach trip to Borde Hill Garden near Haywards Heath, West Sussex. Cost will be £28 to include the coach and entrance. We already have some names on the list and will be open for bookings at the main meetings from 9th April. The journey time should be under 2 hours.

LONDON OPEN GARDENS 2025

On Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 June 2025, more than 100 secret gardens in the city will open exclusively for the London Open Gardens event to support London Parks and Garden's (LPG) work protecting city parks. Here's your chance to uncover some of the city's lesser-known horticultural highlights, among hidden squares, rooftop spaces, community gardens and re-wilded areas that aren't usually open to the public. A weekend ticket gives access but must be booked in advance. RHS Affiliated Societies (as the Gardening Group is) enjoy £5 off adult tickets with code [RHSGROUPLOG2025](https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/gardens-we-love/secret-urban-gardens) (£19 plus booking fees instead of £24). Find info at [rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/gardens-we-love/secret-urban-gardens](https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-inspiration/gardens-we-love/secret-urban-gardens)

ENGINEERING HERITAGE

In February a small group visited the vast Cabinet War rooms situated under the Treasury in London where Winston Churchill and his Cabinet directed operations during WWII, in secret, underground headquarters.

We had a fascinating self guided tour of the labyrinth of corridors and historic rooms, walking in the footsteps of Winston Churchill and the many men and women who worked, ate, and even slept here during the tense days and nights of the war. Many of these rooms were left as they were on the day the lights were switched off in 1945. It was very atmospheric and thought provoking.

In March another small group enjoyed a *Secrets of the Museum Tour* at the Natural History Museum. Our enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide Glenn started the tour outside looking at the history of the building and introduced us to a life sized replica of Fern, the Diplodocus, in the garden. The cathedral style architecture of the building is beautiful and fascinating in itself, both outdoors and indoors and Glen pointed out so many details that we may not have spotted or known about otherwise. Group size is limited to 10 by the museum but we will consider making another group tour in the future.

The museum is certainly worth a visit, entry is free except for special exhibitions. The Wildlife Photographer of the Year is on until 29th June (seniors get a reduced price on off peak weekdays) and there were some stunning photos on display.

Mike Hanchard is organising a visit in May to the Science Museum next door which is also free entry but pre-booking is required.

We are a friendly group of people with wide ranging and varied interests in "how things work" and how they affect our social and personal environment. There is space for a couple of new members if you would like to join the Engineering Heritage Group!

Sheila Malin



Diplodocus - Deborah Robertson

Remember the website sarratt.u3asite.uk 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 112 June/July should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd May 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.