

# Sarratt & District News

sarratt.u3asite.uk



Welcome to our Newsletter No. 113  
for September/October/November 2025

Copy deadline for  
newsletter 114  
Dec/Jan/Feb  
23rd Nov 2025

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Ian West

Regd Charity No 1139443



Garden group outing to Cedar House

## Chairman's Notes September 2025

Dear All

I hope you have managed to enjoy the hot weather and have not found it too restricting.

We all want our branch of u3a to thrive and continue. We would welcome suggestions that will enhance members enjoyment and/or improve your u3a. There is a suggestion box in the front of the hall at every monthly meeting or talk to any committee member.

Like so many community interest groups, we rely on volunteers to function. Time is a precious commodity and we all face many calls on it. However, we are still looking for new committee members in particular a replacement treasurer for Pam Bushell to hand over to before she leaves. Pam generously agreed to stay on until the 2027 AGM but, ideally, it would be great if an assistant could start the learning process during next year.

Whilst Sally Lewis has taken up the post of Vice Chairman, she does not want to become Chairman so we are

also looking for a new person who is prepared to take this on in the future.

So how about it? You are welcome to come and have a chat if you're thinking how you might be able to help.

We are still below our arbitrary membership number of 300. So, if you know of anyone who may be interested in joining bring them along as a guest to a monthly meeting so they can see what we have to offer.

The talk on estate planning in August I think was found to be useful for many of the attendees. Janet works hard to get a variety of speakers for our monthly meetings. You may be surprised that subjects which do not appeal to you at first can sometimes prove to be more interesting than you might expect, so do keep an open mind. It is also a good time to meet up with fellow members and friends and the tea/coffee and biscuits are free.

Whatever activity you take part in I hope you get some fun out of it and make a new circle of friends.

Take care, stay safe

**Roger Kemp**  
Chairman

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

see also [sarratt.u3asite.uk](http://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 to register when you arrive.
- Coffee from 10.10 to 10.30, then notices, then the talk from about 10.45 am.
- Note that 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).

Sept 10th	• <i>When was it best to be ill?</i> - Andy Relf
October 8th	• <i>Fraud and Cyber Crime Prevention</i> - Alan Maudey
Nov 5th	• <i>White Mouse Nancy Wake</i> - Paul Barwick
December 3rd	• <i>A Georgian Christmas</i> - Rob Smith

(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

September 10th - Andy Relf with a light hearted look at 'Medical Milestones' and how things in medicine are not always what they seem!

October 8th - Alan Maudey with timely advice from Herts Police. So you think you might not get caught out? Listen up and beware! Harvesting data and using it for criminal purposes is big business and pressure will intensify in the run-up to Christmas. Too good to be true? It probably is.

November 5th - Paul Barwick will tell us about Nancy Wake, nicknamed White Mouse by the Nazis due to her amazing ability to escape the clutches of the Gestapo during WWII. She became one of the most decorated Allied secret agents of the war. We explore her life, lived to the full and salute her tremendous bravery.

December 3rd - Rob Smith tells us about a Georgian Christmas. In 1644, Christmas was banned by Oliver Cromwell, carols were forbidden and all festive get-togethers were deemed against the law. After the Restoration Christmas was gradually re-instated and by the Georgian period (1714 to 1830), it was once again a very popular celebration.

### Main meeting dates 2026

January 14th  
(Annual membership renewals due in January)  
February 11th  
March 11th  
April 8th  
May 6th  
June 3rd  
July 1st  
August 12th  
September 9th  
October 7th  
November 4th  
December 2nd

### Fraud - Secrets of the Scammers

There has been a fascinating series on BBC Radio 4 "Scam Secrets" that dissects criminal scams with host Shari Vahl, criminologist Dr. Elisabeth Carter, and former criminal Alex Wood, using real-life stories and insider knowledge to reveal scammer tactics. Episodes have covered topics like fake bank calls, social media clothing scams, and romance fraud, with the goal of helping listeners spot and avoid fraud. You can listen to the episodes and find more information on the BBC Sounds website. [ Ed]

## JAUNTERS

We are pleased to invite you to join us for our trip to Knebworth Christmas Fair on Friday 21st November. We organised a trip there last year and it proved to be very popular. *The Knebworth Christmas Fair is the region's biggest festive shopping event, packed with Christmas gifts, presents for all ages and delicious festive food & drink, this really is a festive event that everyone can enjoy.*

A booking form will be available soon but note the date in your diary if you would like to go.

Friday 21st November 2025, coach leaves Sarratt at 9.30 am returning from Knebworth at 3pm. Total cost £24pp

**Ian West**

Did you know there are medieval wall paintings at Piccotts End Hemel Hempstead? They are in a private house and the owner, Karen, a historian, gave our small (on this occasion non-u3a) group a very interesting talk about interpretation of the pictures and speculation about why they are there. Worth a visit. info: [piccottsendpaintings.uk/about-the-cottage/](http://piccottsendpaintings.uk/about-the-cottage/)

## ART GROUP

Way back in lockdown we were a thriving happy little art group who wanted to keep in touch during those strange days. Some of us decided to do a picture a day and post them on our WhatsApp group. It got so chatty we set up a second WhatsApp group called pictures only. I decided to make us a website. Failed, so I set up a Facebook Page. It's called Sarratt U3A Art please take a look. Settle down with a cuppa there are about 3000 of our pictures to browse through!

At the beginning of each month Roz set the task, which we all interpreted the differently so there are many different pictures of the same subject. We are not so prolific now but I still add our monthly efforts

**Carol Maddison**



## RAMBLES

### Wednesday September 17th.

Meet in Rickmansworth Aquadrome at 10.00am. We will be following a 4 mile route via Stockers Farm and Cripps Cottage before returning along the Canal Towpath. This is a walk from Peter Wakeling's leaflet 'Walk out from the Aquadrome - Ten Walks' which we will be doing as a tribute to him.

### Wednesday October 15th.

Meet at Primrose Hill Recreation Ground Car Park, Kings Langley WD4 8HZ at 10.00am. You need to get a ticket from the machine for 3 hours free parking. From Chipperfield come down Vicarage Lane, straight across into The Nap and bear right along Waterside then left into Water Lane and left again into Primrose Hill and the car park is a short way along on the left. From the Watford or M25 direction turn right by the church into Church Lane then right into Water Lane and then follow the previous directions. The ramble is nearly 4 miles and goes through the Bedmond area.

### Wednesday November 19th.

Meet at 10.00am on Sarratt Green opposite The Boot PH for a 4 mile walk via Church End and Sarratt Bottom.

For further information contact Don via the Rambles Group section on the website [sarratt.u3asite.uk](http://sarratt.u3asite.uk)

**Don Sutton**



## BRIDGE

We never get tired of playing bridge. Meeting up every Tuesday morning and playing Duplicate. We recently revived an old custom of having a lucky dip for partners once a month, to provide a bit of variety. As always everyone does their bit to help things run smoothly which is greatly appreciated.

And of course we have our twice a year pub lunch!

We could do with another player or two, so if anyone feels like trying us out, please do get in touch.

**Val MacDonald**

## THE WALKING GROUP

We were very saddened to hear, in late July, of the death of Peter Wakeling who, together with Margaret, founded the u3a Walking Group in February 2007 and guided it until 2018. He recorded that during this time there were 237 Tuesday walks, totalling 2,370 miles!

Initially, Peter and Margaret led walks once a month, but such was their popularity that within a year these had been increased to two per month, (10-12 miles with a pub lunch) led by volunteers from within the group, and with Peter co-ordinating activities. The walks became more ambitious, reaching not only along the Chilterns, but as far as Windsor, Henley, Wheathampstead and beyond. In addition, a "Tiger Party" was formed, led by Jan Plummer, which walked the London Capital Ring, The Chiltern Way, and the Ridgeway.

In 2018 Peter and Margaret handed over the co-ordination to Neil and Frances Ashley, and activities continued until the Covid outbreak, which brought these glory years to a close. We remember Peter's role in leading and guiding them with gratitude and affection.

After Covid it was decided to shorten the walks to c.6 miles, with occasional optional lunch or picnic afterwards. However, with few new members joining us, the number of regular walkers has declined and we should very much welcome some new faces (and younger legs!) We continue to walk on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, enjoying keeping fit in the company of friends and in our beautiful Chilterns countryside. To join us, please contact Val McDonald.

### Frances Ashley

#### Seated Shibashi Tai Chi

Walking is such good exercise, for fitness and for well being, especially in the company of others, but if you don't have the capacity or inclination to go on walks you might be interested in learning about a seated form of Tai Chi. **Shibashi** is a set of 18 exercises based on the philosophy and principles of Qigong Tai Chi and can be done either standing or seated. There are lots of videos on Youtube, some require you to stand but *My Simple Steps seated Shibashi* features a person facing forward showing easy to follow repeated movements.

Other videos include guidance for breathing during the exercises - general principles of inhaling as the chest expands or hands lift, then exhaling during chest contractions or when pushing hands forward. The rhythm of breath corresponds to each movement's flow and can be learned by following a video. Searching via Google will find them on youtube.

u3a is one of the largest member organisations in the UK but sometimes it feels like we are a hidden secret! Those of us who are no longer in full time work learn together, make friends and have fun, so tell your friends!

When I was at work I was envious of my retired friends because they were always off out somewhere, socialising, going out on trips, meeting friends, and I wanted some of that too! I joined Sarratt u3a because friends were members. Not long afterwards there was an appeal for somebody to take over production of the newsletter so I volunteered and joined the committee.



Not everyone wants to do that of course but u3a is what we, as members, make of it.

As you can tell from this newsletter some groups are very active but there are more than 30 groups covering a range of activities, and more in the pipeline, but we need people to help lead them, even better if you work as a team sharing the load. Take a look at the website if you want to know more about the groups. If there is one that interests you contact Interest Groups Coordinator Sue Bussey to let her know, if the group is full or has a waiting list it may be possible to start another! [Ed]

## GARDENING GROUP

**There are spaces available on our final outing for this year on Monday 8th September – Coach trip to Borde Hill Garden near Haywards Heath, West Sussex. Cost will be £28 to include the coach and entrance. The journey time should be under 2 hours. Contact Janet asap if you are interested 07948 259363**

Indoor meetings will commence on the second Monday of the month in the Village Hall. Admission £3 to help cover costs.

October 13th - Kate Harwood on Arts and Crafts gardens

November 10th Kay McHugh from Church Gardens Harefield will tell us her family's story, how they have spent 25 years restoring a semi derelict walled garden. We hope to follow up by arranging another visit to this wonderful garden next year (possibly 13th April tbc) to see the Spring Bulbs display and the changes made since the last time we were there.

December 8th events tbc

January 12th - Natural Signals, John Tyler will talk about how plants and animals communicate - and what they are saying!

Feb 9th - The Teabreak Gardener, subject tbc

March 9th - Pam Litton will talk about Prairie Plants. We are planning a coach trip to Sussex Prairies Wild on **Thursday 3rd September** so note this date in your diary! Lots of interesting and colourful plants that you might not think of as originating from the prairies eg rudbeckia, echinacea, which are now thriving in our climate and increasing in popularity. Lovely cafe with home made cakes too!

April 13th- visit to Church Gardens tbc

May 11th tbc

June 15th coach trip to Barnsdale Gardens, originally created by the late *Gardeners World* presenter, Geoff Hamilton. Details tbc

July 13th tbc

Aug 10th tbc

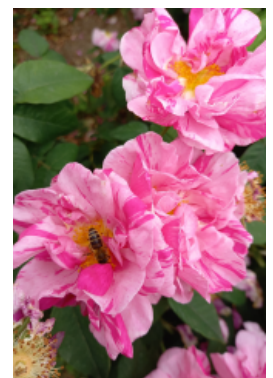
Sept 3rd Coach trip to Sussex Prairies Wild - details tbc

Oct 12th talk - Speaker Gwenda Kyd, Medieval Medicinal Plants: Miasmas, Monks and Mandrake

Nov 9th talk - Speaker Dr David T Jones, Ecology of British Earthworms

Dec 14th tbc

Our first coach trip of the year was to see the famous walled garden at Mottisfont, home to the National Collection of Pre-1900 Shrub Roses. They were of course the stars of the show, still fragrant and looking beautiful when we went in June. The wide variety of underplanting in wide borders with hardy perennials geraniums, peonies, scabious was inspirational with lots more to see in the wider vistas of the garden. Sweetpeas, sunflowers and dahlias flower in the Kitchen Garden in late summer, and the raised beds are full of scented herbs and produce. Lavender planted along the pathways of the walled garden were giving out their scent and nectar for bees and butterflies. Most of the historic roses flower just once a year, but produce ornamental fruit or 'hips' which, as well as brightening the garden in autumn, provide local birds with an important source of winter food. For this reason, the older varieties are not usually deadheaded.



In July we visited a private garden, Cedar House near Wendover. The owner Sarah Nicholson opens the garden to the public by arrangement only, in support of the National Garden Scheme. Her garden was recommended to us by Katherine, The Teabreak Gardener and what a lovely day we had there. Sarah took us on a tour and then left us to enjoy wandering round while she organised tea and coffee and home made cakes. One of the first things she created at the start was a big swimming pond, using a digger to dig down into the chalk to a depth of over 9ft at the deep end. Now it looks as though it has always been there, secluded by planting and decking it is beautiful, but users have to share it with newts and frogs! The variety of trees, shrubs and plants is huge and includes native orchids in a wildflower meadow. With plants available to buy who could resist!

## GARDENING GROUP continued



Aware that Chenies Manor was holding a Dahlia Festival at this year's August Bank Holiday, the Gardening Group booked a private visit to the gardens the week before, so that members could enjoy the lovely gardens exclusively. The group met at the Manor and were welcomed by the current owner, Charles Macleod Matthews, who gave an introductory talk, briefly outlining the history of the house and how his parents bought it in the 1950s from the estate of the Dukes of Bedford. He explained that his late mother was the real gardener and attributed the beautiful gardens to her hard work and expertise. He went on to say that today it is run very much as a business, used as a location for filming and as a wedding venue, the latter influencing particularly the colour schemes used in some of the planting, as pastel shades are more suitable backdrops for wedding photography. This commercial approach has enabled the family to maintain the house and estate more comfortably than was sometimes the case in his parents' day. The gardens are planted and maintained by a small team of gardeners equating in hours to two full time personnel. It was obvious to his audience that, although he admitted to not being a gardener, our host often had to roll up his sleeves and get involved in the physical work of the gardens and estate.



After this welcoming and interesting introduction, our group were left to enjoy the gardens for the rest of the morning. The borders were up to their usual standard of planting, with bolder coloured dahlias in the sunken garden, alongside Salvias, Crocosmias and Agapanthus. Although most of the dahlias were double flowered pompon style blooms, a few were single flowered, which presented more opportunity for insects to feed and are better choices for those of us keen to help the bees. I particularly liked a dark magenta variety called Mystic Wizard, which was attracting plenty of bees to its flowers (photo).



In the White Garden, dahlias were joined with statuesque nicotiana, clouds of dancing cosmos and glorious hydrangeas such as the lovely H. arborescens 'Annabelle'. A few pale lemon blooms were planted in amongst the white, to give a little contrast.

The borders surrounding the open lawn, with its garden furniture laid out for events, were planted in more pastel shades, which we could now appreciate were the perfect choice for wedding photos! Dahlias in lovely pinks and mauves were accompanied by yet more cosmos, and interspersed with tall pink and white cleomes, or Spider Flowers, a subtropical bloom that attracted a lot of attention from our gardeners.

The group whiled away a lovely couple of hours perusing the dahlias without the crowds, pottering around the walled Physic Garden and photographing their favourite borders. Some then retired to one of the local hosteleries or the local garden centre for lunch or a cuppa and cake. A lovely way to spend a Monday morning!

**Pam Litton**



## ENGINEERING HERITAGE

In June a small group of us were able to climb 'Big Ben' - on the inside not the outside! This 90 minute guided tour of the Elizabeth Tower takes you up a narrow 334-step spiral stairwell to the belfry where the Great Bell hangs. We didn't climb the stairs all at once, we stopped at various stages for a rest while the guide talked about the history and the conservation work, involving over 500 people from across the UK and their traditional crafts including stone masonry, glass blowing, gilding, plastering, cast iron and clock mechanics. We stood behind the dials, each spanning more than 6m diameter, and we stood (wearing ear defenders) next to the inner workings of the clock mechanism and heard Big Ben strike the hours for 2pm. Next time you look at a picture of the dial what 'strikes' you as odd? None of us had ever noticed it before!\*

Our thanks to Popsi who went to some trouble to organise this fascinating tour. As total group numbers are very limited and security is tight only a small number of us were able to go but another member of the group has expressed an interest in planning a group visit next year, so fingers crossed!

In July Mike Hanchard arranged a group visit to Blackberry Forge near Hatfield to meet Blacksmith Jude Berry at his Forge and Workshop. Jude specialises in making knives and runs various Fabrication courses including Knife Making, Blacksmithing, Ring Making and Axe Making. Jude is very knowledgeable about the history of steel making around the world and the techniques used and gave up his time to tell us all about steel, at the same time demonstrating how to make a superb knife from start to finish, which he generously presented to organiser Mike at the end of the talk. Thanks Mike for organising the visit.

### Janet Taylor

On Tuesday 26th August twelve of us visited the Grade 2 listed Signal Box situated alongside the London Midland Mainline and by St Alban's City Railway Station.

First we visited the attractive garden, complete with its model railway circuit, where there were several old semaphore style railway signals which we were invited to operate. We then moved to an area devoted to present day lighted signalling and here it was explained the significance of each colour together with relevant stopping times of trains.

Then to the signal box itself and its significance in context with adjacent boxes at Harpenden (North) and Napsbury (South). The communication with these boxes was then demonstrated. The purpose and colour of the many levers before us was explained and a simulation of moving a train at the Napsbury Branch line was shown.

The number of Passenger Trains was noted but Goods Trains are now comparatively rare. The modern signalling process is now much computerised where in this case operations are at West Hampstead and then Derby and trains from St Pancras serving Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield and a few on to Manchester. Also Thameslink from Bedford to Brighton.

An interesting point- the substantial curve on the tracks when entering the station from the south was necessitated by the presence of a Victorian Prison, now just used as a Registry Office and featuring the well-known gates from Slade Prison in *Porridge!*

A great visit enhanced by such welcoming, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers. It took 4 years of fundraising and hard work to restore the signal box, which was almost derelict and being vandalised, before they felt able to secure its future and welcome visitors, but the work is ongoing. It also houses a museum with lots of railway artefacts and memorabilia, donated or even sourced via ebay! Plenty to see and well worth a visit on their open days which are spread throughout the year.

### John Malin

\* Answer: there is no roman numeral X at position 10



**FREE Online Learning Events via Zoom. Just a few of the forthcoming events available free to u3a members, find more subjects at [3a.org.uk/events/educational-events](https://3a.org.uk/events/educational-events).** Free to members but you have to book on line.

Tuesday, September 9 · 10 - 11:30am

Railway History at the National Archives

In this talk, Dr. Jessamy Carlson will discuss the wide variety of records relating to railways in the care of The National Archives. Drawing on collections which cover the whole country, to very niche sets of records relating to short-lived rail companies, the talk will consider a variety of sources for tracing the history of the railways, and those who worked on them across the last two hundred years.

Thursday, September 11 · 10 - 11:30am

Upgrade your Urban Driving with IAM RoadSmart

Join Richard Gladman from IAM RoadSmart who will share hints and tips for driving on urban roads

Whether you're heading out on your daily commute or planning a longer journey, road safety starts long before you turn the key. In this session, we'll explore practical tips for preparing your drive, from journey planning and managing your parking to using sat navs effectively. We'll also break down the rules around bus lanes and shared spaces, highlight key areas from the Highway Code – especially around pedestrian crossings – and discuss vulnerable road users. This webinar is perfect for anyone looking to stay confident, informed, and in control behind the wheel.

Mon, 22 Sep 2025 14:00 - 15:00

Eating Well for Health and Vitality in Later Life

Want to stay healthy and energised in later life? Discover how nutrition can support your strength and wellbeing.

Sue Maxen works at Age UK as a Nutrition Support Worker, located within the NHS Community Nutrition and Dietetics team in West Hertfordshire. As well as Nutrition Support, she helps people access services such as benefits, care services, exercise, and social activities. She works with a very passionate team about healthy eating and tackling malnutrition via online and group talks.

Friday, September 26 · 2 - 3pm

Why the Still Got It! Photo project?

Join Mike Longhurst for some tips on photographing people and find out how to be part of the Still Got It project.

This talk discusses how perceptions of older age-groups presented in the media and by politicians has normalised ageism and discrimination in ways which have been outlawed in areas like sex, race and other "isms" and described how photography can help to rectify this by showing the reality. This one is open to non-u3a members.

Friday, October 3 · 2 - 3:30pm

The Ultimate Guide to Editing Your Creative Writing

Sara Grant discusses her systematic approach to editing and shares practical tips and simple exercises to help you improve your short story.

The national u3a Short Story Competition is back. The theme for this year is Lost and Found. u3a members are invited to use their creative writing skills and write a story with a maximum of 1,500 words. Sara will be helping to judge the competition. All u3a members can enter, including those in Interest Groups Online. You must be a member by Thursday 21 August and stay a member until the end of February 2026. Submit your short story by Friday 17 October. See [u3a.org.uk/learning](https://u3a.org.uk/learning) for info and rules.

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Remember the website [sarratt.u3asite.uk](https://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 114 Dec/Jan/Feb should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd November 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](mailto: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.