

Copy deadline for  
newsletter 116  
June/July/August  
23rd May 2026

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After storm Chandra - our intrepid Walking Group!

## Chairmans' Notes Quarter One 2026

Dear All

Well, the first two months of 2026 have sailed by, and I am sure you are all looking forward to a little less rain and Spring putting some colour into our gardens.

**YOUR U3A NEEDS YOU:** - We are looking to strengthen our refreshment team which is on a rota basis, so you do not have to do every meeting. Please talk to Linda Crawley or any committee member if you can help.

We are still under our maximum number so if you have friends or neighbours who are interested in finding out about us with a view to possibly joining, bring them along to a monthly meeting as a guest.

If you have not picked up your new membership badge for 2026/7, please do so at the next monthly meeting or you can ask another member to pick it up for you.

Have you heard any interesting talks perhaps at another u3a? If you have, please make a note of the speaker and let Janet Taylor know. It is always good if we have speakers that come recommended.

Articles from group leaders about their group activities are a great way of letting people know what we are about and encouraging others to join or perhaps start a new interest group. There is plenty of space in the quarterly newsletter for more articles. Janet Taylor is the contact point for the newsletter and Sue Bussey for interest groups.

Whatever activity you take part in I hope you find it enjoyable (if not tell us) and that you make some new long-term friends.

Take care and 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).

March 11th • *The Life and Legacy of Anne Frank* - Gillian Perry

April 8th • *Working for Auntie: Graphic Designer at the BBC* - Christine Green

May 6th • AGM and plant sale (bring some cash for your purchases)

June 3rd • *Ghostwriting for household names* - Neil Hanson

(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

In March the subject will be *The Life and Legacy of Anne Frank*. Speaker Gillian Perry is a lecturer, educator, author, Co-founder and Honorary Vice President Anne Frank Trust UK.

In April Christine Green will illustrate her presentation as she talks about her time when she worked behind the scenes as a Graphic Designer at the BBC. Christine's output included the Queen's Christmas Speech, *Our Friends in the North*, *Tracey Beaker and Foyles War*. She received several international awards including a BAFTA nomination for her work on *Cambridge Spies*.

In May it will be a social event when we will have the AGM (making it as brief as possible) and the Garden Group will run a stall for plant sales. After the success of his quiz last year, Don has kindly agreed to devise another quiz - just for fun, it's not Mastermind!

In June Neil Hanson will tell us about his experiences while *Ghostwriting for household names* (and many others less well known). His list of subjects includes SAS men, fast-jet pilots, explorers and adventurers, a treasure diver, a kidnap negotiator, a notorious gangster, the first woman to qualify as a gamekeeper and deer-stalker, a leading surgeon and a spy'.

### REMINDER

**If you have not already done so please collect your new membership card at the next main meeting on March 11th.**

New members are welcome so tell your friends to come in and join us - the yearly subscription is good value at only £15 and **you** are our best method of advertising!

Penny Bulgin  
Membership Secretary

### Main meeting dates 2026

March 11th  
April 8th  
May 6th  
June 3rd  
July 1st  
August 12th  
September 9th  
October 7th  
November 4th  
December 2nd

## EXPLORE MARITIME HISTORY

We who are domiciled in and around Sarratt may well be a long way from anything remotely like the sea, but for many past centuries until the advent of modern air transport this island nation and many other cultures had rich and prolific maritime histories on which their countries as a whole were initially dependent upon.

It is usual on mentioning the word 'Maritime' that the minds of many turn to Naval history, but the subject is much wider than that – in fact the wartime aspects are but a small portion of the wider picture. During eleven years of activity our research has investigated many topics: ancient and modern cultures, exploration, ancient trading guilds, the seaside, fishing as an industry, pirates & privateers, and why ports developed where they are. How far did the Vikings get? How did they navigate? Where did the Spice Trade get its spices from?

It has also included the industries associated with ships and shipping and the various social systems that supported them and were affected - sometimes adversely – by their growth and decay. Also included have been the efforts of famous explorers and navigators such as Cook, Cartier and Magellan, as well as the odd notorious event or mutiny: When the French actually landed an invasion force in Britain? and what really happened on HMS Bounty?

In the extensive maritime history timescale there is room to discover the earlier Astronomer, Business Analyst, Cartographer, Hydrographer, Climatologist, Meteorologist, Mathematician and Sociologist; as well as the Engineer, Scientist and Traveller that through the ages explored the sea, formed great companies for trade and turned it to humanity's use as we might understand it today.

The group does not make physical visits, but there is plenty of opportunity in this age for 'armchair research' by both book and computer in many of the above topics and much scope for following several different lines of interest, whether they be as individual projects or collectively between members, and in choosing our avenues of research we have travelled both in time and distance and connected with other world cultures that use the sea as well as their histories.

At present, due to the ravages of time, the crew list has been sadly diminished, and we would welcome some additional voyagers, so if you would like to join us for an armchair voyage of discovery, Brian would be happy to sign you on and co-ordinate a cruise schedule. We meet once a month on a suitable Wednesday morning in Kings Langley to share our research and discuss new voyages.  
Brian Hill 01923 267937  
brian.hill84@btinternet.com

## RAMBLES

It was nice to have a dry but cold morning for our February ramble after having had to cancel the one in January because of the heavy rain. The details of the next three rambles are listed below and I would welcome any new members to join us on our walks of about 4 miles which last about 2 hours. You can contact me through the groups page on our website.

### **Wednesday March 18th.**

Meet 10.00am at Chesham Moor Free Car Park situated between Chesham Open Air Swimming Pool & Leisure Centre (postcode HP5 1SE) and the railway bridge. Direction from Chenies is along Latimer Road. The 4 mile walk goes through Chesham Bois and the Beech Hangers.

**Wednesday April 15th. No Ramble arranged** due to holiday.

### **Wednesday May 20th.**

Meet at 10.00am in the car park on Stanmore Common for a walk of about 4 miles over Bentley Priory Park, Harrow Weald and Stanmore Common. To reach Stanmore Common from Watford go through Bushey and Bushey Heath and straight over the traffic lights and the car park is on the left on the corner of Warren Lane. If you are coming via the A41, turn right at the roundabout into Elstree Road then left along Heathbourne Road to the traffic lights where you turn left. (The nearest postcode for a SatNav is HA7 3HJ)

## Don Sutton

## SAILING

We are looking forward to the start of the upcoming 2026 sailing season, having had a break over the winter.

The schedule of dates will appear on the Dinghy Sailing page on the Chess Valley U3A website. We normally sail from 1pm to 5pm on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of the month, from April to October, although there may be variations in order to keep a two week gap between our sessions.

Troy Lake, the home of Rickmansworth Sailing Club, between Maple Cross and Denham, is where we sail, and we have the use of their club boats, kayaks and paddle board. All are welcome, from any U3A group, and no previous experience is required, although we do ask that you can swim 10 metres. At the beginning of the season, the water may still be very cold, so we recommend that you wear warm old clothing, including a waterproof jacket, and bring a change in case you get wet. We provide personal flotation devices. The cost is £10 per session which includes tea and cake.

For more information, contact [sailing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk](mailto:sailing@chessvalley-u3a.org.uk)

## GARDENING GROUP

**On Monday March 9th the Gardening Group will be intrigued by a talk with a difference. Entitled “North American Wildflowers – and How They Came to Be in My Garden”, gardening group member Pam Litton introduces the audience to a range of American wildflowers. But why are they now in her garden, and maybe yours too? Come to the talk to find out!**

**April 13th- visit to Church Gardens by car share - see next page**

**May 12th visit to Lindengate Gardens by car share - see next page**

**June 15th coach trip to Barnsdale Gardens - see next page**

**July 13th - visit to NGS garden Wind in the Willows by car share £8 entry. Booking will open after the April outing**

Aug 10th tbc  
Sept - tbc

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

**Nov 9th talk - Speaker Dr David T Jones, the Ecology of British Earthworms and their vital role in the health of our soil.**

Dec 14th tbc

**Gardening Group members were entertained by two excellent speakers to kick off the new year.**

In January we enjoyed a fascinating presentation from John Tyler about communication in the natural world; from the vocal and visual signals used by animals and birds to the colours and patterns employed by plants to attract pollinators to their flowers. John also talked about the complex chemical signalling of plants that can actually send warnings to neighbouring plants of an attack by predatory insects or grazing animals, and the communications between trees and plants via the fungal mycelium network in the soil. There is so much to learn about the natural world!

At the February meeting, we welcomed back the Teabreak Gardener, aka Katharine Woods, who gave a lovely presentation about woodland and shade planting, with some very good planting suggestions illustrated by a woodland area in her own garden and plants that she has admired in other collections. From snowdrops, cyclamen and aconites in the Spring light, to ferns and hostas in the deeper shade of summer, Katharine highlighted the different conditions that can come with shade – damp or dry, rich or impoverished soils. It was a delightful talk, filled with planting tips, humour and inspiration.

Members also enjoyed rooting through the Seed Swap boxes, where spare packets of flower and veg seeds could be taken home to grow for the year ahead. Hopefully, some of those seedlings will be coming back to the hall in May, when we have our annual plant sale at the main u3a meeting on Wednesday May 6th!

### **Pam Litton**



Hellebores have a long early flowering season, providing food for emerging bees and other insects. It is a good time of year to buy them as you can see them in colour. Although they can be expensive they are long lasting perennials and will tolerate shade.

Ferns come in many attractive shapes and sizes, they provide long lasting colour in shady areas.



## **GARDENING GROUP Continued: trips out**

**April 13th Monday – Visit to Church Gardens, Harefield, by car share arriving 10.30. Entry £18 to include refreshments.**

Spring bulbs, tea and home made cakes. We have 36 people signed up so we will need to finalise numbers and collect payment at the meeting on March 9th or the main meeting on March 11th. In advance of the meeting a list of people who have said they want to go will be sent out via Beacon.

**May 12th Tuesday – Visit to Lindengate near Wendover. Arriving 10.30. Entry £15 to include a talk, tour and refreshments.** Lindengate provides horticultural therapy for local adults. 'The secret garden is now a stunning six acre wildlife garden with a Heritage Orchard, Nature Reserve, Kitchen Gardens and 2 RHS Chelsea Gold Award Winning Exhibits'. Located next to the Blue Diamond Garden Centre it is handy for a spot of plant hunting and there is a café too if you want to stay for lunch. This visit will be by car share. At the time of writing 27 people have signed up for this visit.

**June 15th Monday - enjoy a great day out by coach to Barnsdale Gardens in Leicestershire. Leaving SVH at 9am, Barnsdale at 4pm Cost including coach and admission is only £34**

Barnsdale was created by the late TV presenter of Gardeners' World, Geoff Hamilton and is continued by his family today. Lots to see, should be a good time for roses, stunning borders in the Versailles garden, other themed gardens include Town Paradise, Japanese, wildlife and Italian gardens, allotment, kitchen and much more. *'Whether you are a keen gardener, an armchair gardener or a visitor looking for a wonderful day out with a great lunch in our tea rooms, then Barnsdale Gardens is for you'* At the moment 33 people are on the list and there is room for more.

**July 13th Monday - morning visit to Wind in the Willows NGS open garden, entry £8, by car share.**

A 3 acre, wildlife friendly, year-round garden comprising informal woodland and wild gardens, separated by streams. Many shrubs and trees, several variegated or uncommon, along with marginal and bog plants, and a bed of stripy roses. 'Stunning' was the word most often used by visitors.

Car sharing trips - we hope you will be able to make your own arrangements to share the journey with your u3a friends but we will do our best to help if you need a lift. Perhaps using the village hall as a pick up point?

Payments should be by cheque please payable to Sarratt and District u3a

## **PICKLEBALL**

Pickleball is a joint venture with Chorleywood u3a and has proved to be very popular. It is booked in advance on a term by term basis. We play mixed ability doubles on four courts at William Penn on Friday afternoons. The current term runs until April 24th. The group is full at the moment with a waiting list but there is always some player movement on each new term and there is also a new group starting up on Tuesdays

If you not a member at present but would like to play please let me know at [gordon.pell@gmail.com](mailto:gordon.pell@gmail.com).

## **Gordon Pell, Chorleywood u3a**



## **BRIDGE**

We continue to enjoy our sociable seasonal lunchtime gatherings twice yearly. And we still have room for extra fairly experienced players to join our weekly sessions on a Tuesday morning.

We meet in the Village Hall (small hall at the rear) and our members come from Bovington, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth and Chorleywood.

We play Duplicate at an Intermediate level and would welcome more players, especially from Sarratt!

## **Val MacDonald**



## ENGINEERING HERITAGE

We have a mixture of indoor talks and outdoor visits planned for the year by various members of the group who undertake to organise activities.

In February, despite travel disruptions caused by signal failures, a small band of us managed to get to the special exhibition about Mudlarking at the Docklands Museum, housed in an old warehouse in Canary Wharf. In centuries past mudlarking was a trade associated with the poorest of people living along the Thames to comb for lumps of coal or whatever 'fell' off barges or even precious jewellery dropped by people, that could be used or sold. Today mudlarks need a license to search (not dig into) the tidal shores of the Thames for items of interest, anything from Roman pottery shards to plastic sunglasses. Mudlarker Jaime was on site to talk about his finds and answer questions and it was clear that he and his fellow mudlarkers enjoy researching the history of their finds.

The Docklands museum is certainly worth a visit and is free to enter. The top floor area has a display about Britain's part in the sugar trade and the wealth it created for the elite, particularly in London. Small wonder there was such opposition to the abolition of the slave trade. Another display was about pirates, rife in the 17th century, who if caught were often brought to London for trial. The probability of conviction was high, the outcome being a public hanging in Wapping, attracting large crowds. Gruesomely, the corpses would be dipped in tar and hung in a gibbet as a lesson to others.

Further trips in planning include a hard-hat tour of the Paper Mill in Apsley, a Big Ben tour (because the numbers are so restricted that only a few of us were able to go last year) a gunpowder mill and backstage at the Royal Opera House. Speak to Sheila Malin if you think you'd like to join the group.

### Janet Taylor

#### Natural History Museum - Women in Science Tours

Last year members of Engineering Heritage enjoyed a behind the scenes tour looking at the architecture of the Natural History Museum. The museum is now offering a free tour, *Women in Science*, to hear the gripping histories of several women scientists, including some who've worked, and some who still work, at the Natural History Museum. Encounter numerous treasures, such as specimens collected by Mary Anning, and learn more about our displays and cutting-edge science....After being told by her lecturer that she'd be better off in the kitchen, Ursula Marvin became an award-winning geologist. She won the Women in Science and Engineering Lifetime Achievement Award and even has an asteroid named after her.

[www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/highlights-women-in-science-tour](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/highlights-women-in-science-tour)

Every Tuesday and the third Saturday of the month.  
12:15–13:00 and 13:15–14:00 There are 12 spaces per tour and these are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

There is much to discover in this wonderful building including *Our Story with Sir David Attenborough 'It's the final months to watch as the walls and floor burst into life around you in this cinematic experience. Witness the birth of life on our planet and see it evolve over billions of years'*.

**On u3a British Women's History Day 12th March**, there is a series of talks:

Empress Matilda: the first queen England never had  
The Match Girls' Strike and how it changed British labour history  
The Lancashire Witches  
Katherine Swynford: myth and reality

You need to be quick to register because there are few tickets left - google u3a on line learning events



### WALKING GROUP

"There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing." This saying has been sorely tested on our walks so far this year, when sunshine has been all but absent, but MUD and rain plentiful. On several occasions we have agreed to meet, but secretly hoping everyone would choose to adjourn somewhere for coffee....However, each time we've pulled on our boots and rainproofs, and never failed to enjoy the walk and one another's company - even opting out of shortcuts- and usually finding that conditions eased during the morning.

As ever, there are signs of new life if we look hard enough: snowdrops have cheered us, along with hazel catkins and pussy willow. Bluebell shoots are starting to appear, and by the time you read this we hope Spring will be well on its way, and we can shed some of our layers of clothing!

New members are always welcome, so if you can walk 5-6 miles and would like to meet new friends, contact Valerie Macdonald 07789 501062 [maggie4ward@gmail.com](mailto:maggie4ward@gmail.com)

**FREE Online Learning Events via Zoom. Just a few of the forthcoming events offered by the Third Age Trust, available to u3a members only, find more subjects at [3a.org.uk/events/educational-events](http://3a.org.uk/events/educational-events) or just google u3a on line learning events.**

Free to members but you have to book on line - and be quick as some dates are filling up fast!

### **Spring-clean your vitality with Qigong**

Online event Tuesday, Mar 10 from 10 am to 11:30 am GMT

Paul will guide us through an hour of Qigong to refresh our vitality and help us move into spring with more energy.

Qigong is an ancient Chinese meditative movement practice with multiple health benefits, similar to Tai Chi, but easier to learn. This class is suitable for those with experience, complete beginners and those with health conditions. Whilst usually performed standing there is the option to use a chair.

### **The evolution of AI and our changing world**

Online event Wednesday, Mar 11, 2026 from 2 pm to 3 pm GMT

Demystifying AI: the noisy new kid on the block. Learn what it can do, what to watch out for, and talk about it with confidence. AI is the new chapter in a story that started two hundred years ago. AI is the new noisy kid on the block. It can do amazing things. Make good things better and bad things worse. How is your AI literacy? Join Barry Claydon as he talks about the impact AI is having and will have on people, relationships and society. After this event you will feel more confident, moving from AI ignorance to AI literacy. You will be able to engage in meaningful conversations with family and friends. Maybe you will also be able to influence our government on AI Safety legislation. He is passionate about "AI for All" and believes that, just as people have learned to use the internet, satnav and smartphones safely, it is now time to learn how to use AI safely and confidently too.

### **London Thames Bridges**

Online event Tuesday, Mar 17 from 2 pm to 4 pm GMT

Brian Cookson will take us round the bridges in London from Tower bridge to Westminster Bridge and learn about their history and design. Millions of us cross over the river Thames in London every day. Most often we are too concerned with traffic congestion and the need to reach our destination to notice the structures of the bridges we use, let alone consider their history or the efforts and dangers that went into building them.

### **Deafness and beyond: the tribulation and triumph of Ludwig van Beethoven.**

Online event Thursday, Mar 26 from 2 pm to 3:30 pm GMT

One of a series of talks illustrating how the creative arts can enhance our wellbeing.

Beethoven experiences intense anguish in his early 30s when he realises he is becoming profoundly deaf. In his Heligenstadt Testament he debates whether or not to continue with his life and his art.

This talk will be accompanied by a downloadable activity guide which attendees can take to their u3a groups to further explore the music of Beethoven.

### **Flight Inspirations Aviation: The British Airman of the First World War**

Online event Tuesday, Apr 7 from 10 am to 12 pm GMT+1

From WWI's final aerial combat to the global legacy of air warfare: pilots, training, and life in the First World War skies, with Jim Butler from The Shuttleworth collection.

Beginning with the story of the pilot involved in the final aerial combat of the First World War, this talk explores the world of the First World War airman and the realities of early aerial warfare.

### **The Magic of Magic Squares**

Online event Friday, Apr 17 from 2 pm to 3 pm GMT+1

In this talk, Alison Eves reveals an intriguing link between a 16th Century Durer etching and a 20th century carving on the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Magic squares have fascinated mathematicians for centuries. Magic squares are rich in history, appear in some surprising places, and have astonishing patterns within them. Together we will explore how magic squares can quickly increase in complexity, going from satisfying puzzles that we can all enjoy, with no mathematical background, to being the subject of academic research, in just 3 orders of magnitude!

**You should have received an email from Kerry James via Beacon, We have been invited to take part in a national u3a survey which explores what u3a means to us and what impact it has on our lives. It is open to all members, so please take a moment to complete it. It is a great opportunity for members to share their experiences and support our u3a to thrive into the future. The survey closes on 31st March, 2026.**

### **Get involved in u3a Eye**

u3a Eye is a rolling photography project to encourage members to take and submit pictures of their surroundings.

*We post a different theme every two months and invite you to submit your photo on that topic. This is not a competition and it is not only about your photographic skill – we are looking for any interesting photos and interpretations of the theme. Anything which has captured your imagination or caught your eye. One photo per person, per theme. At the end of every deadline, we will choose and publish up to 15 photos in the online gallery.*

*This time, we are looking for your best and most interesting photos on the theme of 'Layers'.  
Deadline for submissions: 12 midday on Thursday 19 March 2026.*

*We are now opening each theme for submissions for two months. To help you plan ahead, the theme for April and May is 'Fancy'.*

*Judges pick based not only on the quality of the image but also on the interpretation of the theme. If you go to the website gallery you can also see interesting images chosen from past themes.*

### **Be Aware and Don't get Caught!**

Across Hertfordshire in 2025, Hertfordshire Constabulary received 5,278 reports of fraud with a total loss of £34 million. Fraud is when trickery is used to gain a dishonest advantage, which is often financial, over another person. Cybercrime is any criminal act dealing with computers and networks. To report an incident of cybercrime or fraud and for further information visit the Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) website.

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Remember the website [sarratt.u3asite.uk](http://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.

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.

### **Interest Groups on Line**

Our new learning activity, *Virtual Visits*, is underway with presentations on our website, from exhibitions at The British Library and The Vietnamese Museum of Fine Art in Hanoi. Now we need your contribution: when you're next visiting a gallery, museum or garden, take photos and write a short visit record to share with us. This will then be turned into a presentation to be shared with members across the UK. Together we can travel much further than we could on our own. See more on the *Virtual Visits* page.

To join a group you must first subscribe to Interest Groups Online. This is separate to a local u3a membership.

### **Hidden Batteries Can Cause Fires**

Loose batteries and batteries hidden in our electricals can cause fires in bin lorries and recycling centres.

How do these fires start?

1. If binned, the battery or electrical is emptied into the bin lorry with your household rubbish or recycling.
2. The lorry's powerful 'compacting blade' compresses the rubbish together in the back of the vehicle so that it can fit more in
3. If the battery gets crushed or damaged in this process, air and water can react together with the chemicals and batteries begin to spark which can start a fire!

Battery fires are particularly dangerous as the lithium in them releases its own oxygen. This intensifies the fire and makes it more difficult to extinguish. So remember, never bin batteries or electricals. Always recycle batteries separately from your household waste and recycling.

**Copy for newsletter no 116 June/July/August should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd May 2026. 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)**