

Copy deadline for  
newsletter 117  
Sept-November  
23rd August 2026

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## Chairmans' Notes May 2026

I hope this newsletter finds you all well and gearing up for holidays with friends and family.

The committee will have met by the time you read this and we look forward to the challenge of matching your expectations throughout 2026/7. Do let us have any new ideas or suggested improvements that you may want to share with us.

As Sue Bussey mentioned at the AGM although we got interest from members in opening new groups none of them got off the ground due to lack of numbers or anyone willing to run them. This is the first time that has happened since we started. With that and the lack of members willing to come onto the committee I have to ask has u3a lost its way and no longer serves a useful purpose? I do appreciate that we are not the only organisation struggling to find volunteers.

This is a reminder that we welcome people who are interested in finding

out about us with a view to possibly joining to come along to a monthly meeting as a guest.

If you hear talks on interesting subjects somewhere else, please make a note of the speaker and let Janet Taylor know. It is always good if we have speakers that come recommended.

For those of you who were at our AGM, thank you for coming to that. I hope you enjoyed the quiz and thanks to Don and Sue Sutton for organising and running that for us. I will re-iterate on your behalf a big thankyou to everybody who gives up their time to help run your u3a. That includes group leaders, committee members, refreshment volunteers and the audio-visual technical crew. They all work hard to ensure a smooth operation which makes it more fun for everybody.

Whatever activity you take part in I hope you get enjoyment from it and make new friends. Take care, stay safe.

**Roger Kemp**

## 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).

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

July 1st • *A Conspiracy History of the World* - Andy Thomas

Aug 12th • *TV/Film Extra* - Rob Brewer

Sept 9th • *From the Pips to the Proms* - Paul Kerensa

(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 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...

In July the theme will be a Conspiracy History of the World. Why do people believe in conspiracy theories, and what is the evidence to support them? Andy Thomas tells the remarkable story of conspiracy theory as seen through the eyes of those who question the establishment version of events. Andy gave us a fascinating talk last year on the history and theory surrounding crop circles so now he brings us more to think about!

In August Rob Brewer will talk about his experiences as a TV/Film Extra, An ex Soldier and a retired Police Officer Rob says he fell into the industry as an TV/Film Extra after a visit to his local library.

In September Script writer Paul Kerensa will give his highly entertaining presentation about Broadcasting Century – 100 years of the BBC, radio and life as we know it. From the Pips to the Proms.

Some membership cards have still not been collected. They will be available at the main meeting on June 3rd. 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

June 3rd  
July 1st  
August 12th  
September 9th  
October 7th  
November 4th  
December 2nd

#### Main meeting dates 2027

13 January  
10 February  
10 March  
7 April  
5 May  
2 June  
14 July  
11 August  
8 September  
6 October  
3 November  
1 December

## RAMBLES

Rambles are of about 4 miles and normally take place on the third Wednesday of each month starting at 10.00a.m. and take about 2 hours. There is a short coffee break and the ramble finishes at lunchtime.

New members are always welcome to join our friendly group, if you are interested send a message to me via the group email on the Sarratt u3a website and I will add you to the email list.

The next 3 months rambles are:-

### Wednesday June 17th.

Meet at Ley Hill opposite 'The Crown PH', HP5 1UY at 10.00am for a 4 mile ramble via Tylers Hill.

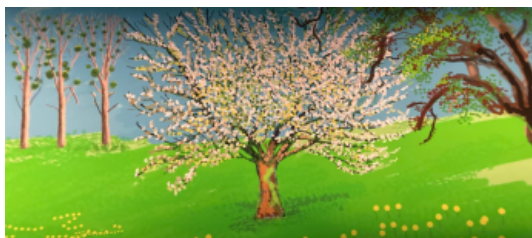
### Wednesday July 15th.

Meet at 10.00am in the car parking area in Stony Lane on the outskirts of Little Chalfont. Stony Lane is a turning to the right off the A404 as you enter Little Chalfont from Rickmansworth and leads down into the Chess Valley towards Latimer. The car park is a little way down the lane on the left. The grid reference is TQ 005982 (Explorer 172 map). The ramble distance is about 4½ miles and will be in the Latimer and Chenies area.

### Wednesday August 19th.

Meet at 10.00am in the car park next to Chipperfield Church for a 3.8 mile walk towards Kings Langley then through Scatterdells Wood before returning to Chipperfield.

## Don Sutton



© David Hockney

*Did you know that there is a copy of the Bayeux Tapestry in Reading Museum? The replica, stitched by about 40 Staffordshire women, finished in 1886, was bought by a Reading alderman Arthur Hill for the town in the 1890s after it had toured the world. It isn't an identical copy as it is alleged that a male curator at the V&A gave them censored images from which to work so a few vital statistics are excluded from a very male dominated story! [Ed]*

## CRAFT GROUP

We have tried a couple of new crafts to us as a group.

We tried our hand at diamond painting — it combines cross stitch and painting by numbers. You use an applicator tool to place tiny flat backed resin beads onto a colour coded self adhesive canvas . The result a mosaic work of art. We made either a bookmark or a photo frame using a kit. It is relaxing and therapeutic and everyone enjoyed doing it.

The other thing we have done just recently is chicken scratch embroidery, a hand stitching technique done on gingham fabric. Using the grid of the checks as a guide it creates motifs using a few basic stitches without the need to transfer or draw patterns . The technique also known as Amish embroidery gained popularity in US in the 1930s , and it's designed to mimic expensive lace using readily available household materials.

## Sue Sutton



## ART GROUP

20th May Tube - strike or no Tube strike ? Thankfully called off, which made life easier for 11 members of the Art Group to visit the David Hockney exhibition *A Year in Normandy*, conceived over 12 months and in homage to the Bayeux Tapestry.

The weather stayed kind to us as we strolled through Kensington Gardens, to the Serpentine North Gallery where the exhibition was free, a nice bonus .

We enjoyed a delicious and very social lunch beforehand and finished off a lovely day with an ice cream overlooking The Italian Gardens.

## Carole Maddison

## GARDENING GROUP

**June 15th coach trip to Barnsdale Gardens - Stop Press: a few seats available, see below**

**July 13th - visit to NGS garden Wind in the Willows by car share £8 entry.** Booking list open, see next page

Aug 10th tbc- open to suggestions for somewhere to visit by car share

Sept - tbc - open to suggestions for somewhere to visit by car share

**Oct 12th talk - Speaker Gwenda Kyd, Medieval Medicinal Plants: Miasmas, Monks and Mandrake.** In the village hall.

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

Dec 14th - Christmas party in the village hall.

**Gardening Group Indoor Meeting dates for next year in the hall**

Jan 11th

Feb 8th

March 8th

October 11th

November 8th

December 13th

**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'* There are currently 44 people booked on the trip, including two guest members from Dacorum u3a, and there is room for a few more - see Janet at the main meeting on June 3rd.

**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. See Janet at the main meeting on 3rd June to book and pay for this visit.

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**

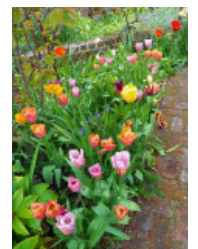


In April, (thanks to Dawn for arranging it) our group enjoyed a private visit to Church Gardens, in Harefield, always a delight. This is very much a family enterprise, restoring a 17th Century walled garden from what had become a run-down nursery. But it isn't only about history, the family have worked hard to bring in their own ideas and innovations, with recycling, sustainability and organic gardening at the core.



We were greeted in their Arcadia Tea Room by owner Kay who gave us an update on the ongoing projects and with her daughter Aideen served a welcome cuppa and home made cakes. Obliging the drizzle outside stopped in time for us to wander freely round the garden. This was early Spring but there were plenty of perennials to maintain interest while the annuals and veg garden get into full bloom, plenty to admire and for me the intermingled tulips of different colours and heights in various borders were particularly attractive.

**Janet Taylor**



## GARDENING GROUP Continued

In May at the AGM we held our plant sale - thank you to everyone who brought plants along, the team on sales duty, and those who bought plants, the sale made £191 towards our funds

Also in May, 30 members of the Gardening Group had an exclusive visit to Lindengate Gardens (thanks to Marion for arranging it) near Wendover. Lindengate was founded in 2013 when a local couple determined to create a space to give people help with their mental and physical wellbeing. They approached the Wyevale garden centre (formerly World's End, now Blue Diamond) about a patch of unused land, and the garden was born. Since then the charity has flourished, the garden now covers almost 6 acres and is managed by a small team of staff and over 200 volunteers. To date they have helped nearly 4000 people (ranging in age from 5 to 97 years) with regular activities or one-off visits, from gardening workshops and nature sessions to crafting and wellbeing courses.

From the start we were made very welcome by Fundraising Manager Jacqui. A large polytunnel was laid out as a café and the group enjoyed tea and biscuits whilst Jacqui gave an introductory talk. She and her colleague Matt then gave us a guided tour of the gardens, which were a delightful mix of nature-friendly wild areas, beds of shrubs and perennials, raised veg beds, polytunnels and a developing orchard. Everyone enjoyed the lovely roses, herbs and especially the collection of Bearded Iris varieties, and marvelled at the numerous veg seedlings packed into greenhouses and polytunnels.

The group then returned to the 'café' area for more tea and delicious homemade cakes and were then free to explore the gardens again, and then to visit the huge garden centre next door, with many staying for lunch and some retail therapy! The weather was kind to us and it really was a lovely visit, with the two neighbouring venues providing enough for a whole day out – definitely somewhere to go again! Lindengate gardens are open to the public Wednesday to Saturday (see their website for details).

## Pam Litton



## WALKING GROUP



No comment!



You've been waiting how long?



Where are they...?



Rustic charm enough for Chelsea!

After months of rain and mud we have at last been rewarded with brighter weather and the joys of Spring in the beautiful countryside around Sarratt. In recent weeks we have paced the boundaries of Croxley Green, and completed a circuit of the Gade Valley, from Kings Langley across to Bedmond and back. Another walk took us from the Aquadrome along the Grand Union Canal towards Harefield, returning via peaceful Stockers Lake, glittering in the sunshine.

By late April the fields of bright yellow rape had reached jungle height, while in the woods the bluebells had put on an early spurt and were in full profusion. Bottom Wood aka Dragons Wood (near Maple Cross) was looking sadly devastated, following widescale tree clearance to eliminate ash dieback. We certainly had a vast choice of logs to sit on for our coffee break, but hopefully the open spaces will soon encourage more wild flowers. This walk ended with an excellent lunch at the Rowan Garden Centre.

Our final walk before this newsletter was a circular route from Ley Hill through fields and woods, with the last colours of the bluebells and rape, and a rewarding pub lunch at the end.

As ever, the walks have been varied, and full of discoveries along the way, and we are grateful to all those who lead them and also those who come to take part. Newcomers always welcome.

**Frances Ashley**

## ENGINEERING HERITAGE

In April we had an interesting tour of the Paper Mill (the Museum, not the pub!) at Apsley near Hemel Hempstead, 'the world's oldest mechanised paper mill, still in making artisan papers in the heart of Hertfordshire'. On a private tour of the site (where work goes on to refurbish and restore after a fire arson caused a lot of destruction) we were welcomed with tea and coffee accompanied by an introductory presentation to set the scene. We heard an overview of the history of paper, of the local paper mills and the work of the Apsley Paper Trail charity. Paper has been made at the site since the 1700's, but the dream was for a continuous paper making machine and the world's very first was installed at Frogmore Mill in 1803. Although that machine is no longer in use at this site the process of turning pulp into paper was explained and we were able to see single sheets of paper being produced. I still have some A4 sheets bought many years ago from the mill which contain tiny fragments of paper money - they can't do that any more now that the notes contains polymers instead of traditional cotton-based paper!

### Janet Taylor



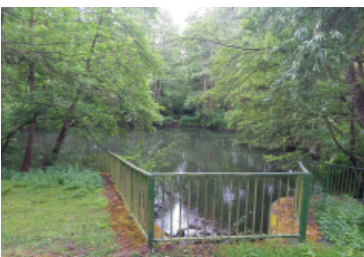
In May our group visited the Royal Gunpowder Mills, situated at Waltham Abbey, Essex. After a brief introduction by one of the volunteers, where we were shown how gunpowder was made, also its successor cordite, we then embarked on a Tractor Trailer Tour of the vast grounds, a site of 170 acres containing much amazing industrial architecture. Our first notable glimpse however was of the 2 types of charming fallow deer roaming freely about the site.

Anyway, back to the subject, we were introduced to various experimental sites, some still classified. In one instance the remains of a blown-up hut where severe weather conditions freezing the material brought about an explosion with the tragic loss of life of the small team.



Interestingly it was claimed that the Gunpowder Mills site was named by Hitler as a target NOT to be bombed as he had a ready use for it once the war was won!!

Transportation on the site came from the canals, the nearby River Lee and a railway network. We stopped at a large pond which being extremely deep was used to test the accuracy of the bouncing bomb of WW2 Dambuster fame.



After the tour of the grounds, we visited the Rocket Vault where we learnt about the phase of the site in connection with the cold war activity. Then after lunch we visited the Armoury and the Main Exhibition. The Armoury had a wealth of weaponry from early 16th century muskets to weaponry covering major conflicts such as the Napoleonic Wars, Boer Wars, 2 World Wars and more recent conflicts. The Main Exhibition not only has interesting artefacts and historic detail but some fun interactive activities. Some members proving their aptitude in mixing their gunpowder accurately, enough to ensure employment, others sadly not! (Should have read the notes in the exhibition first!) All in all, a fascinating and very unusual place to visit; well worth a trip.

### Sheila and John Malin

## FRENCH CONVERSATION 1

Would you like to practice speaking French? Then join our small French conversation group! You only need to be able to carry out a basic conversation in French and be able to read and understand simple French texts.

Our aim is to improve our fluency and knowledge of the language, and to spend an enjoyable morning with like-minded friends. We usually have a topic for discussion for each meeting for which we can prepare in advance. Meetings include reading and translating. For this we use *La Vie Outre-Manche*, a French magazine designed for English speakers who are seeking to improve their French. Importantly, we help each other, for instance if one of us is struggling with a translation. We have also played games and watched videos.

We are keen to have more members to share our sessions, and perhaps add their ideas. We are a friendly group that meets twice a month on Mondays from 10am to 12 noon, coffee and biscuits included. Come and join us and improve your French while enjoying yourself! Contact me on 01923 775250 to find out how.

Jill Swainson



**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](https://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 fill up fast!

An ABC of Victorian painting

Online event Thursday, June 11 • 2 PM - 4 PM

Simon Evers explores three Victorian painters—from famous to forgotten—and a surprising discovery that transformed oil painting forever. This talk explores the work and legacy of three contrasting Victorian painters whose careers illuminate the richness and diversity of 19th-century British art; Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, one of the most celebrated artists of his day, renowned for his exquisitely detailed depictions of the ancient world; Ford Madox Brown, a painter whose evolving artistic vision reflected shifting social and cultural concerns, and whose work challenged conventional expectations; Philip Hermogenes Calderon, an artist now largely overlooked, yet once an influential figure within the Victorian art establishment.

Lost and Found: Recent discoveries by Film is Fabulous!

Online event Friday, June 12 • 10 AM - 11 AM

This charitable trust is run by film collectors, cinema lovers and vintage television enthusiasts, with a primary objective, to advance, educate, and encourage public interest in film as a medium, and its role within British culture. By working closely with film collectors and their families, the team have been granted access to numerous collections. Many of these belong to former industry professionals, and contain unique film and television items. These efforts have led to several missing episodes of vintage television, and a lost silent feature film, being recovered. Justin Smith is Professor of Cinema and Television History at De Montfort University, Leicester, and Chair of Trustees at Film is Fabulous!

Mrs Charles Dickens tells her story

Online event Thursday, July 2 • 2 PM - 3:30 PM

A powerful reimagining of Catherine Dickens' silenced voice, revealing love, betrayal, and truth behind Charles Dickens' marriage. After twenty-two years of marriage, and aged forty-five, the famous author fell in love with an eighteen-year-old. Charles banished his wife, Catherine, from their home with their nine children and wrecked her reputation to protect his own. On her deathbed, Mrs Dickens asked her daughter to publish his letters, 'So the world may know he loved me once.' Annie Elliot brings Catherine back to life to fulfil her dying wish and speak up for herself using dramatic readings and authentic documents from her groundbreaking new novel Mr & Mrs Charles Dickens - Her Story - 'So the world may know he loved me once.'

The history of shoes

Online event Wednesday, July 8 • 2 PM - 3 PM

Step into the fascinating world of footwear and discover how shoes have shaped fashion through the ages. Robin Taylor takes us on a journey from historical styles to modern trends, sharing insights from a career as a shoe designer. With regular trips to fashion hubs like Bologna, Paris, Rotterdam and London, he stayed at the cutting edge of design and will bring those experiences to life. We'll also get a behind-the-scenes look at how a shoe is created, from the first sketch on the last to the finished product, along with entertaining stories from the factory floor. Whether you love fashion, history, or simply a good story, there's something here for everyone.

Watercolours with Tony

Online event Monday, July 6 • 10 AM - 11:15 AM

Have you always wanted to take up watercolour painting? Or are you already a painter and want to develop your skills? This interactive tutorial will help you learn and develop painting techniques whatever stage you are at. You will be painting along with Tony Burke. Or just watch if you prefer. See more information on line for list of painting equipment recommended.

The Role of Women in Ancient Egypt

Online event Friday, July 10 • 2 PM - 3 PM GMT+1

This talk explores the status of women in the Ancient Egypt. This includes deities, royalty, nobility and the working class. Neil Stevenson is the u3a national subject advisor for Egyptology. He leads and lectures at Upholland and District u3a Egyptology Group and has run residential courses in Egyptology. He has also led several study trips to Egypt, most recently in November 2025.

## MUSIC GROUP

This year the Music Group has been listening to music connected to the initial letter for the month. As usual these have been very varied.

In J for January, we covered works whose composers' names began with J, song titles or orchestral works beginning with J or even the lyrics starting with a J. So our selection ranged from Frank Sinatra: Just in time, Barbara Dickson: January Man, Julie Felix: Forever Young, John Williams: J.S. Bach's Air on a G String, The Jellicle Ball from Cats, John Denver: Sunshine on my shoulder, Nora Jones: Come away with me, Billy Fury: Jealousy, Joseph Haydn : the Allegro from The Trumpet Concerto, Ji Lui playing Beethoven's Fur Elise, Chuck Berry's Johnny be good, Joan Baez: Jericho Road, to The Circle of life from The Lion King, composed by Elton John.

We didn't meet in February but in March we had Hank Marvin playing Sealed with a kiss, Katie Melua singing On the road again, a movement from a Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, the overture to Wagner's The Meistersingers, Cecilia Bartoli singing Deh vieni non tardar from the Marriage of Figaro by Mozart, Mussorgsky's Market Place at Limoges from Pictures from an exhibition, a movement from a Mozart Horn Concerto, the Intermezzo from Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana, Perry Como singing Mandolins in the moonlight, Mars from Holst's Planets suite,

## SEQUENCE DANCING

Calling all Sequence Dancers - dust off your dance shoes and join us!

Whilst you may already know some sequence dances or perhaps have a knowledge of ballroom and latin, did you know SWHerts u3a has an afternoon of sequence dancing which is open to members from other u3a groups. We meet on the 1st Friday in each month from 2- 4pm in Garston.

Currently a small group, originally formed in 2004, looking for more members for a social afternoon of sequence dancing incorporating popular favourites, tea and tuition, providing variety and enjoyment for all. So why not put on your dancing shoes and come along and join us and do not forget to bring your u3a badge with you. Don't be shy, you are welcome to contact me for more information and to find out how to join the group, on 01923 264884 email [dandlclough@btinternet.com](mailto:dandlclough@btinternet.com)

### Linda Clough

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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.

....Mendelssohn's Overture to A Midsummer night's dream, Johnny Cash's Man in black, George Michael singing The first time ever I saw your face, Moon River from Henry Mancini, and Mark Knopfler's Catch me if you can.

In April Craig Ogden played Albeniz's Sevilla, Karl Jenkins: Adiemus, Acker Bilk: Stranger on the shore, the King's Singers: Bye, bye Miss American Pie, Kurt Atterberg's 2nd Symphony: Titan, Cilla Black's What's it all about, Alfie?, Verdi's Anvil chorus from La Traviata, Louis Armstrong: Ain't misbehaving, Lesley Garrett singing Mozart's Alleluia, Apples in winter by Celtic Spirit, Albinoni's Adagio in G minor, and Alexander Armstrong singing Summertime from Bizet's Carmen.

I think you will see from these selections that our musical tastes are very wide-ranging – and we often amuse ourselves by listening to well-known works played or sung by unlikely artists and trying to guess who they are.

### Sue Bussey

**Copy for newsletter no 117 Sept/Oct/Nov should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd August 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)**

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. If members pose for pictures it is assumed that any u3a members shown in the photos submitted for the newsletter or the website are happy to be included. If you don't wish to be included please feel free to step aside and make your wishes known.