

**Copy deadline for
newsletter 118
Dec/Jan/Feb
23rd November 2026**

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Garden Group visit to Wind in the Willows, near Denham

Chairmans' Notes September 2026

I hope that you are all feeling fitter and healthier as I am sure you will have been spending time exercising watering precious plants during this exceptionally hot weather. I trust none of your holiday plans have been disrupted by wildfires or delays at airports.

Do let us have any new ideas or suggested improvements that you may want to share with us. Is there an activity that you would like to see us try to set up a group for? If there is please speak to or contact Sue Bussey. This is a reminder that we welcome people to come along as a guest to our monthly meetings in order to find out about us and possibly join.

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.

We still have not finalised on replacements for the roles of Treasurer and Interest Groups Co-Ordinator. If

there are any other members who would like to be considered for these roles, please contact anyone on the committee. You do not need any special skills for either role but if you feel you can help come and talk to us to get more details as to what is involved. We would also be interested to hear from anyone who feels able to join the committee and help run your u3a.

I will re-iterate on your behalf a big thank you 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. We are all guided by you the members as to what you want our u3a to do and be.

Whatever activity you take part in I hope you get enjoyment from it, have some fun and make new long-term friends.

Take care, stay safe.

Roger Kemp
Chairman

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 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).

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

October 7th • *Wonderful World* - Anna-Louise Pickering

November 4th • *This United Kingdom* - Andrew Baker

December 2nd • *Grounded* - former airline pilot, John Garry

(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 September Scriptwriter and British Comedy Award-winning co-writer (BBC's Not Going Out, Miranda, Top Gear, ITV's Royal Variety, C4's TFI Friday, CBBC etc) Paul Kerensa will give his highly entertaining presentation about Broadcasting Century – 100 years of the BBC, radio and life as we know it.

In October Anna-Louise Pickering will talk about her wildlife artist mother Pollyanna Pickering, who was internationally acclaimed for her award winning paintings and dedication to conservation. Pollyanna was passionate about only painting animals she had seen and sketched in their natural habitats, a quest which led to her painting on all seven continents. Anna-Louise accompanied her, documenting and photographing, and writing the text for their popular books. Anna-Louise is the co-founder and president of the Pollyanna Pickering Foundation which raises funds for conservation internationally. In 2019 she won the Animal Star Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her work.

In November Andrew Baker will discuss *This United Kingdom*: A vivid portrait of the English; their culture, beliefs, enthusiasms and eccentricities. What has made this island so deeply influential in Western civilisation? Are we still a United Kingdom?

For our December meeting former airline pilot John Garry will give us a slightly cheeky world of aircrew. An exciting world where colleagues spent as much time in hotels as they do conveying passengers. Nice work if you can get it!

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

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.

Wednesday September 16th. This month's ramble will be led by John Guy in my absence. Meet at 10am in King George V Playing Fields car park, at the end of King George V Way in Sarratt, for a 4 mile ramble, passing through Commonwood, Penmans Green and Chipperfield Common Woods.

Wednesday October 21st. Meet in the car park in Abbots Langley off Gallows Hill Lane at 10.00am. The 3.8 mile ramble takes us towards Bedmond then there will be a chance to visit the old Leavesden Hospital cemetery before returning to Abbots Langley.

Wednesday November 18th. Meet on Sarratt Green, opposite the Boot PH at 10.00am. This 3½ mile ramble goes through Dawes Common, Belsize and Plough Wood.

Don Sutton

From u3a Online Events -

Visiting a museum or garden this summer? With our learning activity, Virtual Visits, you can share your experience of cultural places of interests — whether a museum, gallery or garden — for others to enjoy, explore and learn from too. Simply submit photos and a short written record of what you saw there, and we'll add it to our online collection of places u3a members can visit virtually.



Two teams of enthusiastic quizzers represented our u3a at the Chorleywood u3a Nostalgia Quiz Night on 28th August. We enjoyed an unusual quiz full of memories, familiar faces, events, music, television and everyday life from years gone by, starting with the 1960's, each round representing different decades. Gillian Hill (who has worked behind the scenes as a question verifier for Mastermind, University Challenge, The Chase etc) prepared the questions and presented the rounds at a brisk pace!

The overall winners were from Rickmansworth u3a who were presented with well-deserved bottles of wine. However our two Sarratt teams did not disappoint as we were joint first in the 'table quiz' (ie marathan rounds) to identify famous faces and film/book titles, and we were challenged to answer a tie-breaker question (how old was Richard Burton when he died, in years months and days) to win the chocolates!

JAUNTERS

The Jaunters trip to the Houses of Parliament took place on Thursday 13th August 2026, on what turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year.

Most of the group met at Rickmansworth tube station and caught the 9.38 tube heading for Westminster where we met up with those who had travelled independently. We all went to the Cromwell Green entrance to parliament and went through airport style security. We then entered Westminster Hall, where we met Emily, Gagan Mohindra MP's Senior Parliamentary Assistant, and the rest of his parliamentary staff.

Our MP Gagan Mohindra personally led the tour, he and his staff giving a detailed account of the history of the building and its artefacts as we progressed through the tour. We were also provided with an insight into the daily customs and procedures of a typical parliamentary day. Despite the heat the inside of the building was cool. The tour took approximately 2 hours and from the feedback received from the group it was interesting and in parts mind blowing, enjoyed by all.

At the end we expressed our thanks to Gagan and his team as they had made a special journey in to London during the Parliamentary recess to act as our hosts and guides.

We made our separate journeys home, some of us taking a break in the in-house cafe before departing. It was apparent that a group of 18 is the maximum to get the most out of the experience. Should there be sufficient interest I would be happy to explore organising another trip to Parliament next year.

Ian West



Our thanks go to members of Chorleywood u3a, it was an entertaining and well organised quiz which we all enjoyed.

Janet Taylor

The chocolate winners were Sue Bussey, Linda Clough, Dawn Pitts and Judith Turnbull alongside Daphne Stratton from Croxley u3a and guest Terry Dean. Three former librarians (Dawn, Jude and Sue), Terry's late wife was a librarian who used to work with both Jude and Sue years ago in different library systems, and Daphne used to work at BAE with Sue's husband, while her husband worked in Harrow at the Civic Centre where Sue was based. A lot of useful connections!

GARDENING GROUP

There have been some lovely Garden Group outdoor trips this year which started in April with a visit to Church Gardens near Harefield, in May we went to Lindengate Gardens near Wendover, in June to Barnsdale Garden in Rutland, July to Wind in the Willows, all different and all of them highlights in many ways. Our last outdoor visit for this year will be to Thundridge Hill House near Ware, followed by indoor meetings, see further information below.

Monday 14th September NGS garden Thundridge Hill House, near Ware. Visit by car share, cost £11 including refreshments. We plan to meet at 11am. It is about 45 mins from Sarratt. We need a group of at least 20 to make this visit, so if you want to go we need to know! DEADLINE TO PAY 9TH SEPT AT THE MAIN MEETING

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. If you have been on one of our trips this year or attended a talk, or you would like to join us for future trips, this will be a social event.

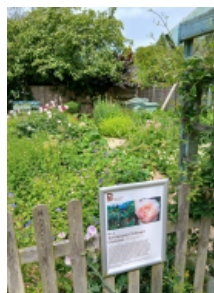
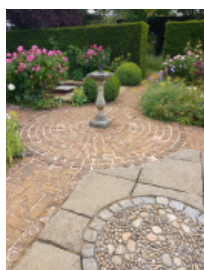
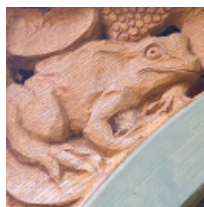
On a lovely June day the Gardening Group set off on a much-anticipated coach trip to the famous Barnsdale Gardens in the county of Rutland, home to the late Gardeners World presenter Geoff Hamilton and the garden from which he presented the TV show from 1985 to 1995. These days the gardens are run by his son Nick and are still laid out in the many garden rooms that Geoff created during his time there, although new gardens are added and designs are updated, with the assistance these days of current Gardeners World presenter Adam Frost, who trained with Geoff in his early years.

Today there are 38 gardens to visit, including Geoff's original Artisan Cottage garden, Town and Country Paradise gardens, kitchen gardens, Rockery and Mediterranean gardens, Wildlife garden, Japanese garden, Bog garden and many more. Each has a unique character and are well maintained and planted with interesting specimens. The gardens still follow Geoff's principles of organic gardening, composting and upcycling.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed exploring all the gardens, visiting the tea rooms and shop, perhaps indulging in an ice cream in the garden and definitely visiting the plant centre for some more unusual varieties of cottage garden favourites. Some lovely plants were wrestled onboard the coach at the end of the day! It was good also to see Geoff's son Nick working in the garden and chatting with visitors – he is so much like his father!

I'm sure that a lot of the group will feel, like me, that they want to make a return visit to these delightful gardens.

Pam Litton



GARDENING GROUP Continued

Our group of 30 spent a delightful July morning touring Wind in the Willows, near Denham, a private 3 acre garden sandwiched between the River Misborne and its millstream, and what was once a commercial watercress bed, creating an island of mature woodland garden where lots of trees provide shade.

A red 'Monet' type bridge, built by our host Ron James, leads to an oriental inspired area with acers, camellia, a pagoda tree and bamboo underplanted with hostas. Another bridge leads to the wild garden with mostly native species, a damp meadow, where cowslips flower first, and a bog meadow to encourage the wildlife especially butterflies and birds.

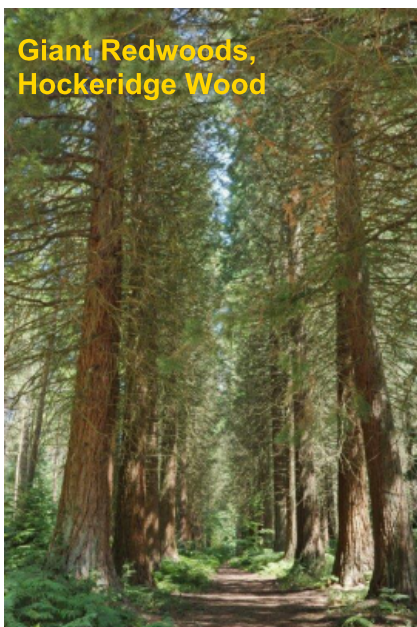
We were there on a very hot day and enjoyed the shade of the tree cover while Ron led us round his garden, which he described as 'still a work in progress' even 30 years after they bought the house, purely because they loved the site. It was a very different kind of a garden to the ones we often visit, but well worth the trip.

Then in August we met on another sunny day at the Memorial Park in Old Amersham where the garden and the town made a glorious show of colours. They have been prize winners in their category of the RHS Britain in Bloom competition multiple times thanks to community support of adults and children. This year there is a Sensory garden and one to attract wildlife, amongst several other themed areas. Although the grass was brown the flower borders were full of colour with echinaceas and rudbeckias contrasting with purple salvias. Hanging baskets along the high street had a purple petunia theme and were obviously being well looked after. It was also very convenient for coffee and cake afterwards in local cafes and I never knew there were so many pubs there! Worth a visit and easy parking only a short walk away.

'Please thank the team for finding and organising such a lovely visit to Wind in the Willows garden. It was really interesting and I loved the guy who showed us round & kept forgetting the names of the trees & plants! Just like the rest of us!! Wonderful!! Popsi



Walk - What walk?



Giant Redwoods,
Hockeridge Wood

WALKING GROUP

The recent succession of heatwaves has, not surprisingly, disrupted our planned walks. Sturdy though we like to think ourselves, as the temperatures threatened 30+c, we heeded H&S warnings and either postponed walks, or amended our routes to make them shorter and shadier.

A stroll through Chipperfield Woods and Penmans, ended in a very enjoyable long coffee stop at Blackwells Café, and a second substitute walk took us to Hockeridge and Pancake Woods at Ashley Green. These woods have an interesting history, including previous ownership by the Thomas Coram Foundling Hospital, London. In 1952 the woods were bought, in a state of disrepair, by Miss Mary Wellesley, a direct descendant of the Duke of Wellington.

She had them replanted, and included an avenue of giant redwood trees, (Wellingtonia / Sequoidendron giganteum) in his memory. Although still less than 100 years old they tower above the surrounding woodland, so if they reach maturity in about 2000 years time they should look very impressive!

Another Wellingtonia was planted on 18th June 2015 "by Mary Wellesley", but probably at her request, to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo.

Our final walk before this newsletter took us out of Rickmansworth along shady paths to the R Chess, Loudwater, and back via Croxley Green before the afternoon heat.

What will autumn have in store for us? If you want to find out come and join us!

Frances Ashley

ENGINEERING HERITAGE



Kersey Guitars Visit

We had a wonderful few hours on a private visit to Kersey guitars near Hatfield in July. Matt (the owner) explained that a friend had played in a group and that he thought 'Oh' that's a good idea as you get to meet plenty of girls'. This was when he was only 13 - his family were surprised as he had never shown interest in this before!

His grandfather helped him build his first guitar and it was a bit of a flop but he never gave up on his dream. Matt's parents sent him on a carpenters course (under protest at first but it proved to be invaluable) and from there he went on to where he is now, making both acoustic and electric guitars. A group called The 1975 asked him to build a guitar for one of the guitarists and he played it at Glastonbury 2024.



Matt talked us through the process of the types of woods used, ash, maple, mahogany, teak etc (which also have an influence on the sound produced) and how to bend the wood for the shape of the sides, frets and all the process to build it. He is currently building an acoustic guitar and you really didn't realise how much carpentry is inside the body. There are lovely inlays on the outside, it was very beautiful and tactile.



Liz Hanchard

PS Matt got the girl - having met his wife, a musician too, through his work!



Matt Kersey - man of many talents!

u3a Festival Fun!

I attended the second u3a Festival which was held in July at the campus of York University. I didn't look it up beforehand so had no idea what to expect but found it to be an impressive location, with amazing facilities, for sports as well as lectures and music, surrounded by a large lake and green spaces, supporting wildlife populations as well as students. The fun began on the train journey when I met other travellers going to the Festival and then we gathered quite a gaggle as we took advantage of our bus passes to get from the station to the campus.

The development and organisation absolutely demonstrated the ethos of u3a; done by a volunteer team of only 8, supported by the Third Age Trust, and an army of between 80-100 volunteers on admin roles and stewarding who gave up their time to check us in and help us to get where we needed to be – on such a big site it took a while to understand the layout, even with a map!

More than 1000 u3a members took part during the 3 day event and there was a wide range of around 200 activities and events. It was great having something in common, all being u3a members it was easy to sit down next to anyone and start a conversation. I would definitely consider going to another one.

Janet Taylor

u3a podcasts

u3a hosts a monthly radio series on Youtube and podcast channels. Created by a team of u3a members with radio experience, the u3a radio podcast comes out on the 17th of each month. It showcases the amazing things happening across the u3a movement. The August edition covers the u3a Festival. You can see other subjects covered via the online Learning page of the national u3a website.



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 information about these subjects and others at 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!

Drones, huh? What are they good for? - follow-up discussion

Online event Friday, September 11 • 2 PM - 3 PM GMT+1

Join Dr Steve Bullock, Bristol Flight Lab, University of Bristol for a discussion on the growing and evolving role of drones in our skies. In Steve's recent u3a online talk he covered the growing and evolving role of drones, and his work using drones to support wildlife conservation in Africa. There were many great questions that we didn't get to, both during the session and in feedback, so by popular demand Steve wings his way back! He will briefly recap what was covered in his previous session, then open the floor for some interesting discussion and opinions.

Exploring World Faiths: faith and gratitude

Online event Monday, September 14 • 10 AM - 11:30 AM GMT+1

Explore how three faith traditions understand gratitude and discover the enduring value of thankfulness in everyday life. World Gratitude Day, celebrated each year on 21 September, encourages people around the world to pause and reflect on the people, experiences and communities that enrich their lives. Initiated in 1965, the day has since become a worldwide opportunity to celebrate gratitude as a positive force for wellbeing, understanding and human connection. We will explore the theme through the perspectives of three different faith traditions, all offer rich insights into the importance of gratitude in everyday life. Organised by the Exploring World Faiths Subject Adviser, Dr Peter Rookes.

Life in your smallest rooms: the history of personal hygiene

Online event Wednesday, September 16 • 10 AM - 11 AM GMT+1

Learn about the history and science of washing, shaving and personal hygiene, with David of Wrekin u3a and Wolverhampton u3a. People spend lots of time and money on the many facets of their personal hygiene. Do we practice what our forefathers did, and if so do we carry these out correctly? Now is the time for you to flush away misconceptions and get good clean answers!

Secrets of the human brain: sleep and dreams

Online event Monday, September 21 • 2 PM - 4 PM GMT+1

This talk explains how different parts of the brain are responsible for keeping us awake and making us go to sleep, how we have different kinds of sleep and how we dream. Dr. Bob Pullen is a member of the u3a and a retired University Lecturer who has spent many years giving lectures on the brain. He has also undertaken brain research in England and America. During this time, he has learned many amazing facts about the human brain which he includes in these talks.

The Enchanted Archipelago - a journey through the Galapagos

Online event Tuesday, September 22 • Starts at 2 PM GMT+1

HX Ambassador and ex-Royal Marines Officer Monty Halls has a relationship with the Galapagos that spans three decades. President of the Galapagos Conservation Trust, he lived in the islands with his family, during which they filmed the Channel Four series "My Family and the Galapagos". This talk tells the story of this most iconic of archipelagos, from their volcanic birth to discovery in 1535, to the first human settlers, through to being granted the status of the first World Heritage Site in 1978. It is also a chance to learn more about the wildlife both above and below the waves, a truly unique ecosystem that inspired Charles Darwin, and continues to enthrall visitors.

Promoting brain health: From evidence to action

Online event Thursday 24 September • 2 PM - 3:15 PM GMT+1

Join our panel of researchers as they explore evidence-based ways to improve and maintain brain health. As we age, we may experience changes in our thinking and memory skills. However, people differ in the way our brain health develops and changes as we get older.

Your guide to feeling connected in a digital world

Online event Tuesday, October 13 • 2 PM - 3:30 PM GMT+1

Feeling isolated or unsure about using technology? You're not alone. Build confidence online and discover simple, safe ways to stay connected, make friends and communicate with others using technology. Join AbilityNet, in partnership with BT Group, for a friendly session designed to help you build confidence online, stay connected with family and friends, and discover simple digital skills that can make everyday life feel easier and less lonely. Whether you're just getting started or want to feel more comfortable using your device, we're here to support you every step of the way.

Other subjects in Sept/Oct include laughter yoga, cryptic crosswords, mindfulness, Mods and Rockers, AI news/chatbots, cooking demo, Aviation, Bruce Springsteen - go to u3a online learning to find out more!

u3a book groups share their summer read recommendations (this is extracted from the national u3a website (u3a.org.uk/latest-news/u3a-book-groups-share-their-summer-read-recommendations) but it prompts the thought that perhaps our own book groups may like to tell us about their recommendations?

Bakewell u3a Book Group Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt

Light but beautifully crafted summer reading, this is a wonderfully told, gentle story, in print and audio. Although the premise sounds a bit wacky - the narrator and eponymous hero is an octopus, Marcellus, who bonds with the aquarium night cleaner and solves the mystery of her disappearing son - the book explores themes of family, love, connection and healing across generations. There's even an excellent and very moving film starring the ever-wonderful Sally Fields. We read it as a Christmas 'extra' and there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Shimna u3a Book Group Seven Sisters by Lucinda Riley

"This series, based on the Seven Sisters stars constellation, tells the story of seven sisters from around the world."

Hungerford & District u3a Book Group The Fortnight in September by RC Sheriff

We have just finished this novel. A very gentle read, this brought lots of memories for our older readers. Coincidentally it was given a write up in Giles Coren's 'restaurant' review in the Saturday Times!

Hay u3a Book Group The Leopard by Tomasi Di Lampedusa

This novel, set in 1860's Sicily follows the toppling of the Bourbon kingdoms by the invasion of Garibaldi's Redshirts. The subsequent decline of the power of the aristocracy is reflected in the plot of the novel. Prince Fabrizio and his family play a chess like game, negotiating their way through the new regime. Recently included in The Guardian's top 100 novels of the century, the prose is sublime.

Newcastle u3a Novels in Translation Group After Midnight by Irmgard Keun

This tells the story of a naive young woman in 1930s Germany who gradually becomes aware of the horrors of that time.

u3a Office Book Group The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Gothic, engrossing and faintly magical, this is a fairytale-esque story about the power of books, all set against the backdrop of post-war Barcelona."

Scam Secrets on Radio 4 Listening to another episode from this informative series it was shocking to learn that some people are effectively slaves, forced to work in the scams industry, lured by false promises of good jobs but instead imprisoned in compounds, brutalised if they don't achieve targets, subject to ransom demands and due to 'fines' forever in debt to the criminals who run the gangs.

International efforts are being made to join forces, including via Interpol. to break the gangs but it is very difficult. It was said that 40% of crime in the UK is down to scams. Anyone can fall victim, be on your guard and don't believe anyone who tries to rush you into making decisions or giving away financial information.

Be on your guard! Despite frequent warnings people are still falling victim to the scammers. In August Herts Constabulary raised awareness of bank scams when one Watford resident had over £63,000 stolen.

Whether you've seen something suspicious or been a victim of fraud, you should always report it. Providing details of what happened will help the police crack down on the criminals and could prevent the same thing happening to others.

stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk/reporting-fraud

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 118 Dec/Jan/Feb should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd November 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

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.