



Bearsted & District u3a Monthly Reminder March 2023

Welcome to the March 2023 Monthly Reminder, which is being distributed to all members either via e-mail or paper copy. This month's meeting will be held in Detling Village Hall on Thursday 9th March starting at the usual time of 2 pm.

Chair's Chat

As we draw ever closer to someone taking over from me as Chair of our u3a, I am often asked 'What do you actually do'?

Role Description

1. To provide inclusive and democratic leadership of the board of Trustees (the committee).
2. To ensure the committee fulfils its responsibilities for the overall governance, strategic direction, financial stability, administration and sustainability of the u3a.
3. To ensure the u3a applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its charitable objects/purposes, abides by its governing document (the constitution) and complies with charity law and other relevant legislation.
4. To ensure the u3a upholds the guiding principles.
5. To oversee adherence to the terms and conditions of affiliation to the Third Age Trust.
6. To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the u3a.
7. To safeguard the good name and values of the u3a organisation.
8. To liaise with local organisations and to be the first point of contact.

Q. How many meetings do you attend?

A. We have 11 monthly Committee meetings a year. I attend all of them unless I am away. I attend a few other meetings but only if I am available or feel they are beneficial to our u3a. This usually would be u3a Kent Network or National Office.

Q. How much time do you spend on u3a 'work'?

A. Not Including the monthly meeting and committee meetings I would say between 1 to 2 hours a week.

Q. What is your favourite part of being chair?

A. To be a spokesperson and an ambassador for the u3a ensuring that the local community is aware of what the u3a is and does.

Q. Is there much paperwork?

A. Our committee is very well set up with each committee member taking on a role and the paperwork that comes with that role. I have very little paperwork; I reply to emails or pass on any information I have to the committee.

Q. How technical do you need to be?

A. There are obviously emails to be done and an understanding of Beacon (the u3a's computer system) which has its own administrator.

Q. Is organising the AGM difficult?

A. No, just a bigger version of a committee meeting. I do complete and update the Charity Commission on any new committee members and make sure they understand their trustee appointment.

Q. Do you get involved in the finances?

A. We have always had excellent Treasurers so my role is just to ensure financial transparency through detailed disclosure of financial information to the committee.

Q. How much training does a new chair receive?

A. It is my role to carry out a comprehensive handover to the new Chair. This would include as much detail as is required. I will also, as will all committee members, be on hand to help for as long as needed.

COMMUNICATION is key for a Chair role.

This is what I picked up from our National u3a to share with you this month.

1. Chichester University is home for the u3a's summer school.
2. The date this year is from Monday 4th to Thursday 7th September 2023, inclusive.
3. Residential and open to all u3a members.
4. Tutors are experienced u3a members who kindly give their time for free,
5. A range of subjects, academic through to practical and active; something to suit everyone.
6. Details of the courses will be posted on 3rd March.
7. Information on 'How to Book' and access to a 'Booking Form' will be available from 17th March:
 - In the Third Age Trust's Online Monthly Newsletter
 - In the April edition, of the 'Third Age Matters' magazine
 - On the SE u3a Forum website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum/home>
 - And on Facebook

Kind regards

Jenny

Chair - Bearsted & District u3a

01622 663743

[Speaker Secretary \(Richard\)](#)

February's talk by Linda Regan, *Acting can be Murder*, featured several amusing stories gained from her life in TV and the theatre. With a cameo appearance from her BAFTA award winning actor husband, Brian Murphy, the talk was very well received.

This month we will be joined by Toni Mount, an experienced historian, with her talk '*Medieval Housewives*' based on one of her internationally published books.

Interest Group Co-Ordinator's Update (Linda)

What do you get out of u3a?
What do you put into your u3a?

I am very pleased to report that Local History 2 is now up and running on the 4th Thursday of the month (mornings) with thanks to Carol for taking on the Coordinator role.

Latin has had its first meeting. The group meet on the 1st Monday morning of each month. They could do with a few extra members so if you want to be able to solve the Times' Latin crossword this is the group for you.

The Art Appreciation group is planning its first meeting and has space for a few more members.

Sadly, the Ukulele group is no longer continuing which is a real shame. You will have heard them play at our Open Day last September.

Can I remind everyone to let your group coordinator know if you are unable to attend a meeting. Some groups have a waiting list. If you do not give apologies on three occasions your place may be given to someone else.

We have had over 40 new members since September last year and we are holding a coffee morning just for them, to explain what u3a is all about. It will be an opportunity to get to know some other new members too.

Thursday 16th March 2023 10.15 - 12.00 a.m.
Downswood Community Centre

If you have an idea for a new group, come and talk to me at the table at the back of the hall at our monthly meetings or contact me via the website.

Group Activities

Lunch Bunch (Nigel)

Next month's lunch is at the Carpenters Arms, The Street, Eastling ME13 0AZ nr. Doddington on Tuesday the 28th March 12.15 for 12.45.

Gardening Group (Babs)

The topic for our February meeting was rose pruning with a demonstration. It was a little cold to stay in the garden and we quickly returned indoors for a hot drink where we then planned some garden visits and put a few dates in our diaries - something to look forward to. Just for fun, the meeting finished with a quiz.



Photo: Cyclamen Coum (member's garden)

15th February 2023 – The first 'Hidden London Walk' (Patricia)

Titled: Hidden Wren and other Architectural buildings

The inaugural walk was during the half term school break, which made travelling on the trains and tube a quieter experience than was normal.

The day was bright and we had a fair turnout of group members. As the title suggested the walk concentrated on a number of Sir Christopher Wren's Churches and also featured a number of the modern iconic buildings as a contrast.

Commencing at The Monument, we briefly learnt the history of the Great Fire in 1666. This destroyed 7/8th of the City of London as we understand it. The City of London was densely populated and some 80 churches, amongst other buildings were completely destroyed. King Charles II set up a commission to manage the rebuilding. Christopher Wren being one of the Commissioners, set out to produce an imaginative rebuilding plan, based very much upon the appearance of Paris,

with its wide boulevards, geometric grid system, parks and gardens. However, the citizens had other ideas; forestalled the Commissioners and started rebuilding on the charred remains of the foundations and old street patterns to enable their lives to carry on as quickly as possible. But the Commission were able to introduce the first 'Building Regulations' in the world, by banning thatch, and leaning buildings over narrow streets.

Modern buildings included the two youngest 'Listed' buildings, being Richard Rogers' designed Lloyds Building very much in the style of 'Bowelism' and No 1 Poultry, by James Stirling (see picture below).



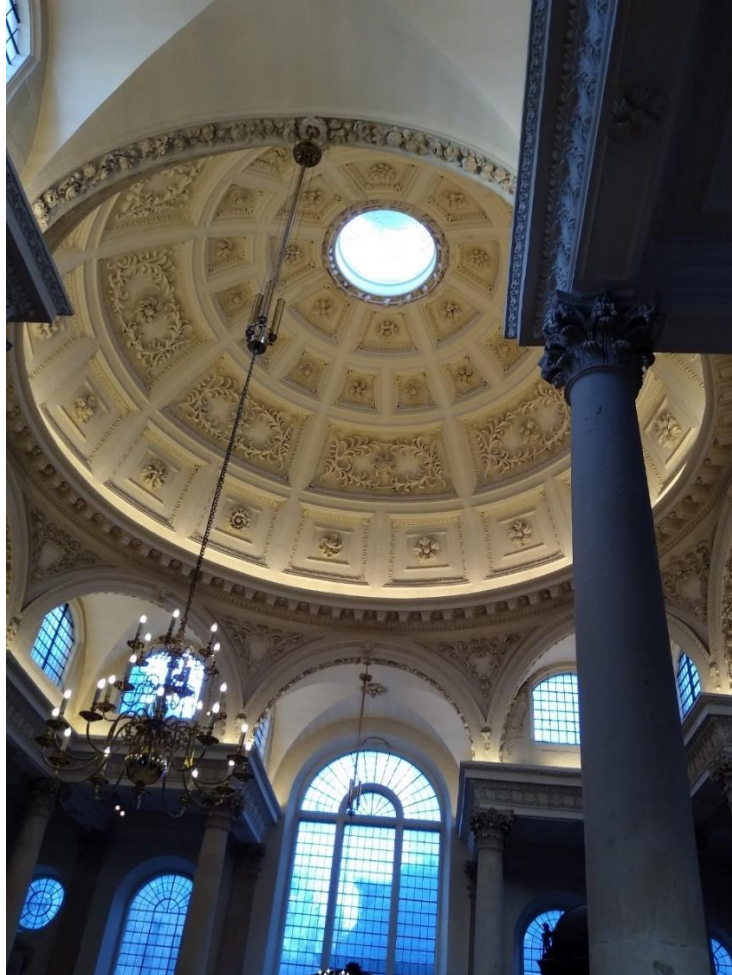
We marvelled at the heights of the Walkie Talkie Tower, at 160m high and heard the history of ownership. The Cheese Grater as the Leadenhall Building is known, by architect Richard Rogers and Graham Stirk, is 225m high, and the Willis Building by Norman Foster a mere 124 m. The Gherkin, by Norman Foster is 180m high. But topping them all within the City limits is 22 Bishopsgate, at 278m. Just a few meters shorter than The Shard.

The tip of St Paul's Cathedral reaches a mere 111 metres.

In Philpot Lane we saw the smallest statue in London approx. 10" long, dating to 1862, showing two mice with a piece of cheese between them, to commemorate the tragic tale of a builder losing his life by falling off the building during an argument.

Of the 8 churches mentioned in the walk, we went inside 4. These being St Mary Abchurch with its painted domed ceiling and Grinling Gibbons ornate carved reredos. This was a first attempt by Wren to perfect 'the dome'. We saw St Swithun church's hidden garden, now nestling beneath the huge Walbrook Centre Building and a peaceful place to have lunch. The outside of the Walbrook Centre

Building dwarfed us as we walked towardst he St Stephen Walbrook church of 1672, with its Henry Moore carved marble altar and breath-taking dome (see picture below). Again we could see Wren had almost perfected the dome intended for St Paul's – and learnt that the St Stephen Walbrook church was known as Wren's finest parish church. On show too is the 'telephone' used by Chad Varah the vicar who in the 1950's set up the Samaritans organisation.



St Mary le Bow of Bow Bells fame which in 1942 was completely flattened and although completely rebuilt, has the most amazing stained glass in its windows which is contrary to Wren's designs. Finally St Brides, (known as the printers and journalist's church and housed the first printing press in the 1500's), was the first church to be rebuilt after the Great Fire, and finished in 1675. It suffered later damage after a lightning strike in 1764, and near total devastation during 1940. The original spire at 234ft was only added in 1703, but at its final rebuild remains at 226ft, and Wren's highest spire. The crypt under St Brides was very interesting with its historical content and artefacts and information. A stunning chapel has also been made within the medieval area. The crypt was only found as a result of the damage caused by a bomb in 1940.

We passed through alleyways where gents tailors' had their businesses, seeing the array of paper patterns for clients hanging in open wardrobes as well as the multitude of fabric sample books.

We saw so much, but eventually arrived at a modern shopping centre, named 1 New Change, to see The Nail. A 12 metre bronze sculpture, treated as the title implies, to appear like a giant rusty nail

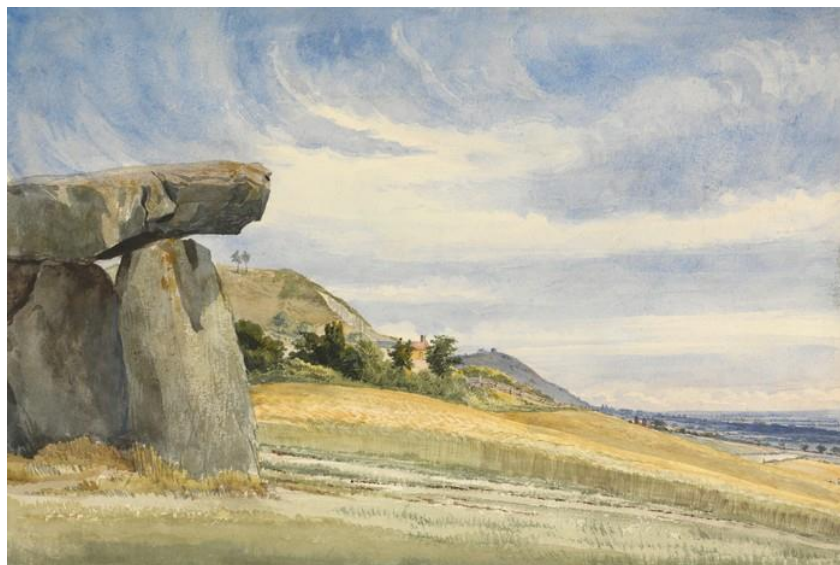
hammered between the old – St Paul’s Cathedral – and the new, Jean Paul Nouvel’s shiny glass shopping centre. A very symbolic statement with various explanations.

We crossed the road to enter the grounds of St Paul’s Cathedral, Wren’s greatest, from Paternoster Row, and although we didn’t go in, heard a brief history of its construction and had the dome element precisely explained. We wandered down to the Original Western City Gate, commissioned by Charles II, and is thought to have been designed by Wren; known as Temple Bar, and created in the 17th Century as a sumptuous entryway into London.

We ended our journey here, and made our own way home via the tube at Blackfriars.

Local History 1 (Damian)

One of our members gave a short presentation entitled “Dickens in Kent” where the author’s connections with the local area were explored. An attempt was made to extend the five items beyond the purely Dickensian and so give a flavour of the locations as they were in the mid-19th Century. The titles of the different pieces were: Cobtree Manor; West Malling; Bluebell Hill (mentioning Kits Coty House – see picture below); the Staplehurst Railway Disaster; and Dickens’s last walk.



The view as Dickens may have seen it

Kits Coty House, near Maidstone

Alfred Gomersal Vickers 1810-1837

Read it Aloud (Damian)

Because our usual host was unable to accommodate our February meeting, Rosemary kindly offered her house as an alternative. The subject was “Young and Old” but allowing “New and Old” as well. As usual a good variety of prose and poetry was offered ranging from classics to children’s literature though one piece, now

considered to be for younger readers, was actually originally conceived as being for adults! See below also.

Emergency contact details

Members are reminded to keep their emergency contact details up to date. If you need to make any changes, please let Claire know via the website.

Share your Knowledge!

We know that many of you have hidden talents and so we would be interested to know whether anyone would like to make a presentation at our monthly General Meeting. Full support will be given so if you would like to share knowledge accrued in your working life or that reflects your interests, please let Richard or Jenny know through the usual channels.

Contributions from Members

This month's Quiz. Subject: *Literary Figures* (Damian)

- 1. Geoffrey Chaucer's career as a writer and civil servant flourished under which two English kings?**
- 2. Sir Thomas Malory, author of "Le Morte d' Arthur" wrote his book whilst languishing in prison during which conflict?**
- 3. "The Two Noble Kinsmen" has been fairly recently added to William Shakespeare's list of works. Who was the co-author?**
- 4. When Napoleon III abolished the democratic system in France, Victor Hugo became unwelcome when he called the emperor a traitor to his country. On which British island did he go into exile?**
- 5. Anthony Trollope, author of "the Warden" and "Barchester Towers" amongst others, worked for which well-known public organisation, recently privatised?**
- 6. Sir Henry Rider Haggard was famed for his romances "She" and "King Solomon's Mines", but what did he get his knighthood for?**
- 7. Lamb House in Rye had two famous residents, both well-known writers. Who were they?**
- 8. John Buchan, who wrote "The Thirty-Nine Steps" was also later Governor General of which of Britain's dominions?**
- 9. "Just William" was the first of Richmal Crompton's many books about William Brown but who illustrated 33 of them, from 1922 to 1962?**



10. What was mostly harmless in Douglas Adams's book of the same name?

Answers to last month's quiz

1. Which planet is closest in size to the Earth? **Venus.**
2. Jupiter is the largest planet. How much of the Solar System's planetary mass does it possess? **Nearly 67%.**
3. Saturn is famous for its ring system but which other planets also have rings? **Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune.**
4. In 2006 Pluto was demoted to the status of dwarf planet. What is the next largest dwarf planet and where is it located? **Ceres, in the Asteroid Belt, between Mars and Jupiter.**
5. What is peculiar about the rotation of the giant planet, Uranus? **It lies on its side with its poles alternating in pointing toward the Sun.**
6. Which planet is the hottest in the Solar System? **Venus.**
7. Mercury has the shortest year of any of the planets. What is its length in days? **88 days.**
8. Mars has two moons. What are their names? **Phobos and Deimos.**
9. Pluto could be described as a dwarf binary planet, a binary being where the centre of gravity of the system is between the two objects

(the Earth and the Moon are not binary planets because the centre of gravity is within the largest of the two). What is the name of Pluto's partner? **Charon.**

10. Which planet has the fastest winds in the Solar System? **Neptune at 1,800 mph.**

Request for Contributions

Everyone is invited to make a contribution to the next Reminder or to comment on this one. Please contact Damian via our website. Book groups might like to send a photograph of the cover of a book they have been reading; or you might like to submit a picture of a member carrying out a u3a activity.

Many of you subscribe to "Third Age Matters", the magazine of the national u3a. Members are invited to contribute their thoughts to The Reminder on any interesting articles they read there. If you wish to do so, please let Damian know via the website.

Website

Dan, who is responsible for our u3a's publicity, would like members to send him any particularly attractive photographs of Bearsted that they think would be appropriate for the Welcome page of the Bearsted and District u3a website. If you have any, please contact him using the publicity link on the contact page of our website. He will give instructions on how to submit them.

Up-to-date details of our u3a are on our website. For access use the link: <https://u3asites.org.uk/bearsted/home>

The national u3a newsletter is full of useful and interesting things you can become involved in, including podcasts. All u3a members can now obtain access to national newsletters from the u3a website available at <http://www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter>. It is easy to create an account to use it. If you want to listen to u3a radio podcasts, you can do so by accessing the [u3a YouTube channel](#). **Please note: should clicking on any link not work simply cut and paste the link into your browser.**

Deadline for Contributions to the April 2023 Reminder

Please note that the **deadline** for contributions to the April 2023 Reminder is Friday **27th March** (earlier than normal to take account of Easter occurring early in the month). The committee will need to scrutinise a draft before issue so prompt responses would be appreciated. Also some of our members are not online and so time needs to be allowed for them to receive paper copies by post. It would be appreciated if any contributions could be submitted in WORD format.

Members will not need reminding (although we are going to do so), that we do not use members' surnames in The Reminder for privacy reasons.