

Epping Forest u3a News Bulletin

"Welcome to our new web news bulletin. This will be published each month to provide updates about meetings, events and other activities taking place at Epping Forest u3a.

While we hope our existing members will find it of interest, this news bulletin is designed to let visitors to our website who are not currently members know about what we get up to.

Epping Forest u3a is part of national movement - the University of the Third Age - that was established in 1982 to provide retired and semi-retired people with things to do during their retirement. Its focus is on learning and one of its founding principles is that "you are never too old to learn".

Learning at the u3a, however, is also designed to be fun. For that reason, most of our learning activities do not involve formal instruction (although some do). Instead, members meet together to form their own interest groups and to pursue activities they have always been interested in or have always thought about doing if only they had the time.

At Epping Forest u3a, we offer a wide range of activities that include academic subject study, discussions, practical arts and crafts skills, playing board and card games, engaging in different types of exercise and sports, visits to places of interest, and social events with entertainment.

If you have entered partial or full retirement and are looking for things to do, where you will also get the chance to meet like-minded people and make new friends, then Epping Forest u3a could be the place for you. Through this bulletin we will try to give you a flavour of what we have to offer."

New Year's Resolutions – What's It All About?

Here we are in another year and almost a quarter of the way through the 21st century. Amazing! Where has the time gone? It's also the time for making your New Year's resolutions. According to research by Forbes Advisor, nearly a third of people in Britain (30%) will make New Year's resolutions in 2024.

It seems, however, that these resolutions are more for the young than the old. Over half of Britons aged 18 to 34 (51%) reported making resolutions for the year ahead, while far fewer older Brits, aged 55 and over (12%), did so.

What's it all about though? Why do we make New Year's resolutions? Apparently, the earliest recorded people to make these pledges were the Ancient Babylonians over 4,000 years ago. Their new year started in March at a time of planting new crops. Pledges were made to the gods in the hope that they would favourably upon them and also to the king with a pledge to repay all debts in the year ahead.

The Romans continued with the tradition, again celebrating their New Year on 15th March (The Ides of March). In 46BC, however, Julius Caesar introduced a new calendar with the year starting on 1st January to celebrate the Roman god, Janus. Janus had two faces, one looking back at the year just gone and the other looking forward to the year ahead. New Year's celebrations were held in which pledges were made to Janus and to the Roman Empire.

In the Middle Ages (500-1500AD) medieval knights renewed their vows of chivalry each year, not just out of nobility and valour, but also to reinforce continuation of the social status privileges of knighthood – an elite membership club.

While many resolutions in ancient times had strong religious overtones, in modern times they tend to be more secular and certainly contemporarily they centre of self-improvement. It is a pity that older folk seem to be less inclined to participate in this ritual and perhaps they should.

So, here's an idea for a New Year's resolution for all you retirees out there casting around for ways of improving your life. Why not join the u3a?

We have lots of activities to suit a wide array of personal tastes for you to join in with. You can be as structured or unstructured as you like in what you choose to do. You will keep your brain and body active and get the chance to meet new people and make new friends. Go on, give us a try in 2024!

Barrie Gunter, Vice-Chair, Epping Forest u3a.

Groups News

Epping Forest u3a offers a wide range of interest groups and other activities to its members. All activities are run by the members themselves on a volunteering basis. Members are invited to come forward with ideas for new groups that they would like to introduce and help to run

Clothes Group

This lively group of ladies who love to talk about fashion – old and new – will meet this year to discuss different colour themes each month that match the mood of the seasons. Looking back at 2023, of course, the group enjoyed guest speakers who talked to them about ‘confident dressing’ and ‘accessories and body shaping’. The group intends to follow the convention established in 2023 of also going out for occasional lunches together.

Reading Groups

Our three reading groups are looking forward to 2024. We have our fortnightly Monday morning Reading Group that will read a new selection of classic and modern books. The Reading Together for Pleasure Group will continue to meet in the mornings of the first and third Tuesday of each month. From Classic Books to Modern Novels will meet fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons. Through an arrangement with a local bookshop, this group gets 10% discounts on book purchases. The last two groups currently have vacancies for new members. Anyone who is thinking of joining our u3a who not only like to read novels but engage in lively discussion with others about them, these groups might have something to offer to you.

Amo, Amas, Amat – Join the u3a and Learn Latin

Did you study Latin to “O” Level or equivalent? If so, how about reviving your interest? At Epping Forest u3a, we have a small, friendly group who enjoy reading, translating and talking about the Latin language and Roman culture, literature and history, not to forget the great contribution of Latin to our own language. Currently we have reached the later stages of the Cambridge Latin Course, but don’t worry if you’re rusty: so are we all, especially after the summer break. For more advanced students, a smaller group meets on Zoom to translate pre-“A” level passages. Anyone interested in joining the Latin Group can find out more via the Contact page by sending a message to the Groups Coordinator.

Art History – New Group

This new group will cover different periods of art history. During its first year, it will focus on Italian Renaissance Art. Members will be led by the group convenor, an experienced art historian, through the lives of individual artists such as Verrocchio, Botticelli and da Vinci, an examination of the Medici dynasty and Renaissance cities. In two-hour meetings, members will view DVDs and then engage in discussion led by the convenor. The group is for beginners, those with some knowledge and those who already have a special interest in art history.

Friday Art

This group meets every Friday. Its members work in a variety of media and with a range of materials. Some members like to sketch, some like to paint, and others have tried digital painting. Members can choose the styles they are most comfortable with. Other more experienced members are always on hand to give advice. The group does have vacancies and anyone thinking of joining our u3a to pursue their interest in art should contact the Groups' Coordinator on the Contact page of our website. This group welcomes prospective new members who can arrange to come along for a taster session with refreshments.



Football Banter Group

Come and join our football banter group as things are hotting up. The second half of the football season beckons and domestic and European knock-out competitions and trophies galore are being competed for.

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at a local pub. We also have a WhatsApp group that members can use to keep in touch and engage in online football banter. We make predictions for games and have a predicted league table chart too all for fun

Cricket Group

This relatively new group meets on the third Monday of each month to reminisce about memorable matches and players of yesteryear and to talk about the modern game. It meets in a local pub, always welcomes new members, and in 2024 hopes to attend some local and county-level matches over the summer.

Snooker

Our snooker gents (see left) will continue to meet for their twice monthly morning of humiliating cue ball mis-hits and the relentless search for a break that reaches double figures. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful game and the rare occasions when a potted red is followed by a black makes it all worthwhile.



Events News

Forthcoming Monthly Meetings for 2024

Held in Theydon Bois Village Hall

Starting at 10.30 a.m.

Dates	Speakers	Subjects
8th January 2024	Mark Carroll	DNA, Surnames and Family History
5th February 2024	Tony Tutton	My life in music coronation to coronation
4th March 2024	Tania Harrington	The Mona Lisa
8th April 2024	Siobhan Pierce	Clown to Corporate
13th May 2024	Andy Strange	History of WWII Airfields in East Anglia
3rd June 2024	Andrew Baker	Charles Dickens
1st July 2024	Philip Caine	The Silk Road
12th August 2024	Mark Butterworth	Make The Bold Move - Write That Book

Reviewing Our Monthly Speakers

We have a small team of members who write reviews of our monthly speakers for the members' monthly Newsletter. We are always on the look-out for new contributors to join this team and devote a small amount of time to produce a summary and round-up of these talks. We are usually looking for 300-500 words of copy for each review. Anyone thinking of joining our team who enjoys writing and would like to be part of this team should contact the Vice-Chair via their contact button on the Contact page of this website.

Capital Ring Walks

This series of walks is gradually taking its members all the way around the outside of London. The next stage will take place in February and is a six-mile stroll from South Kenton to Hendon Park. The walk is largely on a fairly level, good surface apart from the middle section through Fryent Country Park which is hilly and maybe muddy too. The walk starts at South Kenton station, proceeds through Preston Park to Uxendon Crescent, across Wealdstone Brook, up Barn Hill, across to Gotfords Hill, St Andrew's Church in Kingsbury, across the M1 and on to Hendon Central Station.

King Henry VIII aka Tony Harris

Members were royally entertained by the brilliant actor, comedian and raconteur Tony Harris at our December monthly meeting in Theydon Bois Village Hall. He regaled us with tales of Christmas Tudor style and skilfully wove great humour and comic-timing with many interesting facts about Henry VIII, his wives and other aspects of his life. Tony is familiar to our members having entertained us twice during our COVID-19 Zoom days, and then last year as a Pantomime Dame.

Of course, we heard again about Henry's six wives, Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr, also known through the saying: divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded survived. The first two wives gave him only daughters (Mary and Elizabeth) but Seymour finally produced a son, Edward VI, who was sickly and died at age 16 after six years as a child king. He was succeeded initially by Lady Jane Grey – the nine-day queen and then, in turn, by his two elder sisters.

The divorce from his first wife of 24 years led to major constitutional upheaval and Henry's break-away from the Roman Catholic Church, despite having been earlier titled Defender of the Faith by the Pope. This action led to the establishment of the Church of England. In his later private life, Henry quickly offloaded Anne of Cleves finding her unattractive at first sight and executed the much younger Catherine Howard for her serial infidelities. His final wife outlived him but only by about 18 months.



After the death of Jane Seymour, Henry considered marriage to Christina of Denmark, a well-educated and connected Princess and Duchess who rejected his advances given his reputation with former wives allegedly telling him: "If I had two heads, one should be at the King of England's disposal".

As he entered, in a seasonally relevant snippet, Tony Harris's Henry VIII told us that the first use of the term "Merry Christmas" occurred in his court, directed at the King himself, although there has been a claim that its first use actually occurred in a letter to Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister, from Bishop John Fisher of Rochester who wrote: "And this our Lord God send you a merry Christmas".

Tony Harris is probably one of the most entertaining speakers we've had and he's also very knowledgeable as his equally informative Q&A session at the end showed.

A montage of visual memories from some of the outings enjoyed by members of Epping Forest u3a in 2023, including a day out in Canterbury, a central London “spy walk” taking in MI6, and a peek behind the scenes at Wimbledon



Above left – Canterbury Cathedral. Above right – Headquarters of MI6

Below: Centre Court, Wimbledon



u3a Festival 2024



This year the u3a is holding its first ever festival at the University of York between 18th and 20th July.

There will be a wide range of activities from sport to music and workshops.

Our national body, the Third Age Trust will be releasing further information on a dedicated festival webpage and video blog in the months ahead. You can visit its website to find out more - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>