

U3A Newsletter

Gravesend,
Northfleet
& District

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Jan / Feb 2024

Keeping you informed of group activities, events, trips and meetings.



Your newsletter editors, Mick and Trevor, wish all of our readers a very happy 2024.

This month's speaker is.....

..... Jane Scotchmer.



"How Artists and Garden Designers lead us up the Garden Path!"

Jane Scotchmer, gardener, traveller and photographer will present an illustrated talk on garden design. The title is a play on words, as the talk is about garden design, illustrated by some good garden ideas (from Garden Designers) and Artists' paintings. Last year, Jane gave us a fascinating talk on her travels in Guatemala.

Gravesend, Northfleet & District



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Reg. Charity No 1180160

The deadline for notices, articles or photographs for next month's newsletter, which **Mick Brookes** will be editing, is:
12 noon on **31st January 2024.**

Please e-mail items to: grv.u3a.editor@gmail.com

On **Fri 9th February**, our speaker will be **Chris Hare**, with a talk entitled:

40 Years without a proper job

“I worked for over forty years in entertainment in many areas, as a Stage Manager, Producer and Theatre Manager. Many people didn’t consider it a ‘proper job!’ I was fortunate to work with many household names including Morecambe and Wise, Victor Borge, Tommy Cooper and Victoria Wood to name just four. In music I staged numerous artists from Dave Brubeck to Tony Bennett, Sarah Vaughan, Gladys Knight and the Pips, the RPO and many more. My musician father Ken Hare was an Ivor Novello award winner and worked with Peter Sellers and the Goons. I also include a couple of his unique stories.”



Anne Pilkington R.I.P.

We were so very sad to hear of the unexpected passing of Anne Pilkington in mid-December. Anne suffered with disability caused by Polio all her life, but despite that, was very active, never letting it stop her from doing the things that she wanted to do.

Anne had a wide range of interests - within the u3a. She was a regular member of the bowls group, and hosted and led the Rummikub group, being a keen and good player. Anne also founded, led and hosted the Photography group for many years, and was in the Gardening group for a time, being a keen gardener herself. Anne – and of course Keith – rarely missed a monthly general meeting, always looking forward with interest to the speaker of the day.

She had an amazing general knowledge and was a great quizzer. Indeed, at a quiz, the few times that we found ourselves on Anne’s team, Linda and I were delighted, because we knew we were already 75% of the way towards winning the wine or chocolates given to the winners at the end!

Outside the u3a, one of her great passions was travel and she and Keith travelled very widely around the world. On the trips she’d love to photograph the scenery and particularly the wildlife. And it wasn’t just photographing them, but, as a talented artist, painting them as well.

Throughout her life, Anne, a Catholic, had a deep faith and was fully involved with her church, helping others – especially new church members – and along with Keith, counting and banking the church collections.

Anne will be dearly missed and our thoughts are with Keith and her family at this very sad and difficult time.

Colin Nice



Thank
you

It is pleasing that all of the Creative Writing Collection of Stories booklets were sold, generating an overall profit of £20, which was donated to the Ellenor Hospice. The group appreciates your support very much.

Colin Nice

Each month, for many years now, two of our longer serving members, have painstakingly proof-read your newsletters before they are sent out to the members. Our thanks go to **Brian and Carol Edwards**, who have kept your editors on the right track with their invaluable proofreading and common sense advice.

Thank you, both.

We welcome their replacement, **Jane Holman**, to keeping us in line.

Mick & Trevor

Reminders:



New Year's Resolution:

Could we remind members to bring their own tea/coffee cup, or container to meetings, if possible, in order to minimise waste and recycling?

Your co-operation is very much appreciated.

Sue Kirwan

NEW U3A MEMBERS - - *Always welcome!*

Have you met up with family and/or friends over Christmas/New Year who could benefit from joining your amazing GN&D U3A Community? Any of them live alone, retired or just don't get out much? We are working with Gravesham Borough Council to help Improve Mobility, and Mental Health & Wellbeing for local residents.

Over 80% of our groups have spaces, and the CPC can hold twice as many members every month. Every year around 50 members do not renew, for a variety of reasons.

Please ask your family/friends to **Google - Gravesend U3A – and JOIN ONLINE** - they'll be glad they did!

Every day they can - LEARN something new LAUGH with new friends & LIVE life to the full – just like you!

Gravesend, Northfleet and District U3A – Membership Renewal



We hope you had a great Christmas. If you haven't already renewed membership, the easiest, fastest and lowest cost way is via our U3A Gravesend Website. Please Click here **MEMBERS LOGIN** and open link.

- If you **have already set up a Password** you only need your Email address and Password to enter. (f you have Forgotten your Password click Forgotten Password)
- If you **haven't set up a Password** yet - ignore Password – Please look further down and you will see

If you have not created a password for your membership account, use the Register link below to set one up.

Click - Register for a membership account then follow instructions.

Click Renew your membership

Renewing on our Website saves considerable U3A volunteer administration time, paper, postage and the processing of cheques.

Please tick Gift Aid box - if you are a tax payer HMRC will gift us £4 - at no cost to you

Click - Make Payment, scroll down and you will be given the option to use your Debit/Credit card. When completed, you will receive an email to confirm renewal membership payment.

Help

Most of our members renew via our website, however, if after following the above, you are uncertain how to renew on our website, please ask a U3A Group friend or family member to help you complete this with you, on our website in first instance. Alternatively, our Tame your Tech group can help you. Also, Peter will be at our January General Meeting to help you to renew membership.

GROUP MEETINGS ANNOUNCEMENTS



Ramble

Fri 19th Jan.

with Peter



Istead Rise and Ifield.

Peter leads our ramble on a walk of about 5 miles. It's an undulating route with a couple of short steep inclines. There are good hard surfaces, mixed with fields, and these will be muddy. Starting and ending at the Cyclopark means that there are toilets and a café at the start and end!

Meet at 10:00am at the Cyclopark car park (near the building).

Parking at Cyclopark £1.70 for 3 hours, £4.50 all day.

You can park in Morrisons for 3 hours for free -there is a foot exit at rear left hand corner of their car park (by the hand car wash and to the left of it) that leads through to Cyclopark.

Colin Nice (contact details at end of newsletter).

Sunday Lunch Bunch Sunday Lunch Bunch will be meeting at 12.30 pm at
Sun 14th Jan. V's Punjabi Grill at The Canal Tavern, Canal Road DA12 2RS
with Marilyn.



Marilyn Pascoe (contact details at end of newsletter).

Hike
Fri 2nd Feb.
with Dennis

Cobham and District.

Our 4½ mile walk starts from Cobham and follows a circular route in our area of outstanding natural beauty. Dennis Nichols is leading. Please contact Colin if you'd like to join.

Being a short walk, meet at 10am in the car park in the centre of Cobham behind the Primary school (access is alongside the school).



Colin Nice (contact details at end of newsletter).

Walkers take part at their own risk.

Sunday Lunch Bunch Sunday Lunch Bunch will be meeting at 12.30 pm at
Sun 4th Feb. R & M Italiano, 158 Parrock Street, Gravesend.
with Marilyn.



Marilyn Pascoe (contact details at end of newsletter).

GROUP NEWS:

Genealogy will hopefully be resuming in January led by **Ben Winder**.

Art appreciation group is now led by **Tessa Barnby**. Group meetings are due to resume in February. The venue and schedule has yet to be confirmed.

Photography 1. From January onward, we will change to meeting on the THIRD Wednesday of each month at 10am. Please also note that the group now has two vacancies.

Colin

Mindfulness meditation. We will attempt to have two sessions a month, but there will be NO Mindfulness Meditation sessions during January This year, sessions will be on 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1 pm, school holidays and my holidays permitting.

We will restart on 6th February and 20th February, both at 1 pm.

Julie Redmond

Geography 2 is up and running. We meet on 2nd Thursday of each month 10am-12noon, so our next meeting is Jan 11th with me leading. There is space for 1 person more.

Colin

The Psychology group will continue in the New year with some major changes. The venue will be at Lin's house in Northfleet. The maximum membership will be capped at 10 persons, due to limited space. The new schedule will be 4th Wednesday of the month and commencing in January.

Lin Fridd

The Fishing (fresh water) group. Graham has been in touch with the membership and the first meeting will likely be late March or early April. At a local venue like Shorne Park Woods.

MODERN JIVE BEGINNERS CLASS

Been to a party over Christmas/New Year and wished you could learn how to dance with a partner? Modern Jive can be danced to lots of music, which is often played at parties. There is one hour coaching session where we walk through four moves and demonstrate hand positions, etc. Followed by one hour of practice, freestyle and socialising.



This is a great way to meet people, have fun and keep fit in a relaxed atmosphere, all whilst learning to dance.

Singles, couples or friends welcome, no experience is necessary and it is ideal for men or women with no rhythm, or have never danced before, as we change partners regularly.

Make 2024 different, you will be glad you did!

Meet 7:30 pm every Monday - Christ Church Hall, DA12 1NR only £2

On our website GROUPS click join group - or just turn up

Alan & Lynne Scott

Of course I talk
to myself...
sometimes
I need expert
advice.

For English Language Lovers. What is the difference between 'Completed' and 'Finished'? No dictionary has been able to define the difference between 'Complete' and 'Finished.' But in a linguistic conference in England, Sun Sherman an Indian American, was the clever winner. His response: When you marry the right woman, you are 'Complete.' If you marry the wrong woman, you are 'Finished.' And when the right woman catches you with the wrong woman, you are 'Completely Finished.' His answer received a five minute standing ovation.



Walks in December.



At the start of the month Barry Bell led a six mile walk from Shorne Woods, which passed close to the mausoleum in Cobham Wood, before completing a loop back to the start. Fortunately, eighteen of our very toughest walkers took this on, because the temperature was 0 deg throughout, and an hour or so into the walk there was a little bit of snow. Fortunately, a few sharp hills warmed everyone up, as did seeing some deer and highland cattle, and a cuppa at the end.

Later in the month Ben led a lovely five mile walk from Ightham Mote. There had been been a lot rain and plenty of gooey mud was expected. In the event, the weather was beautifully sunny and the views were stunning. What's more there was relief that the mud was nowhere near that expected!

Colin Nice

Birdwatching Group trip to Leybourne Lakes:

Our last group trip of the year was to Leybourne Lakes C.P. Here there is a variety of habitats. Lakes, open grassy areas and woodland. At this time of the year we might expect to see ducks, grebes and geese on the lakes, maybe some winter thrushes such as fieldfares and red wings feeding on berry bearing trees and shrubs and the usual native birds like robins, blackbirds and tits.

In the car park blackbirds and magpies were noisily announcing their presence. On reaching the main lake by the cafe, coots, mallards and greylags were either swimming around or resting on the side. Cormorants could be seen diving along with a few great crested grebes and mute swans were regally paddling their way around the lake.

Further on around another lake, we spotted a couple of little grebes feeding and comically "running" over the surface of the water to escape some unseen danger. Then at last we caught sight of some thrushes flying overhead. We were never fortunate enough to see them perched in a tree, but after much watching and listening it was decided that they were mainly a flock of fieldfares.

On our return a kestrel gave us a display of hovering while appearing motionless. A mixed group of long tailed tits, blue tits and great tits flew from bush to bush foraging as we walked along. We finished our walk with a very welcome stop in the cafe for a hot drink. A nice end to the year.



Irene Robson

Geography – Canada.

We each had a province of Canada to research this month. Each province varied somewhat, but Canada is the second largest country in the world, but has a population of only 38 million – little more than half our population - with 90% of people living in the far south of the vast country, within 150 miles of the U.S. border. Consequentially, our provinces all had a lot of space! They also featured stunning scenery, from the sheer beauty of the wilderness towards the north, the Rocky Mountains in the west, the spectacular lakes, and the Niagara Falls towards the east. A number of our group had visited Canada, and they had been stunned by its beauty. Finally for those with an aversion to rats (and don't we all!), the province of Alberta maintains a rat-free status and the authority takes great steps to keep it that way. Now that sounds like my sort of place!



FOOTNOTE: A second Geography group has now begun, meeting on 2nd Thursday at 10am and there is one space. First come, first served - but beware, there is homework!

Colin Nice

Petanque:

Would you turn out in hammering rain on a grey and cold December day, cross a muddy field to throw metal balls across a stoney surface???? Fifteen of us did – crazy we must be – and we still managed to enjoy a couple of games of petanque together, fortified by mince pies and Lebkuchen. Good fun, lots of laughs, a little exercise – what more do you need? We would love you to join us this year. No experience, commitment or equipment is needed. Interested? Go onto Beacon and add yourself to the Petanque Group. You will then be included in any emails I send out. Our first session is Tuesday, 9 January, 1215 hrs at Gravesend Rugby Club.



Happy New Year from Group Leaders,

Joan, Rob and Peter

Quote of the Month:

“Adults are always asking children what they want to be when they grow up because they're looking for ideas.”

Paula Poundstone

Photography 1: Polhill Garden Centre.

We had a visit to Polhill Garden centre, near Sevenoaks, in December. Polhill was, of course, beautifully festive, and we were spoilt for choice with our photo opportunities. Here are some of our efforts.

On a much sadder note, we were shocked to hear of the sudden passing of the group's former leader, Anne Pilkington. Anne was the founder, host and leader of our group for many years, and did a brilliant job. She was also a really good photographer with a penchant for wildlife. Being widely travelled, she had a great collection of wildlife photos that she'd taken. We will miss her hugely.

Colin Nice



MEMBERS' JOTTER FOR RECORDING TRIPS / WALKS BOOKED AT THE MEETING

Trip/Walk	Date	Details	Cost	Organiser

Creative Writing 1 – Story of the Month.

The Mysterious Girl by Colin Nice

I can't put my finger on it when I first noticed her as such; at some point I gradually became aware of her. At first, I thought nothing of it, but then she often seemed to be passing my flat whenever I came out – it happened a few times – or if I was in town she'd pop up on the other side of the road from me. In truth, I probably wouldn't have noticed, but she was very striking, slim with long blonde hair and a pretty face. She dressed very nicely, too, nothing too showy, but simply and attractively. I suppose it wasn't for maybe a few weeks that she did begin to register with me. Maybe it was because, for whatever reason, she always glanced in my direction. But then, why should it have registered? I was a greying and balding fifty year old, divorced for ten years and living alone in a small flat. I wasn't particularly fit and was developing a slight paunch. She, on the other hand, was in her late twenties, I would guess, maybe early thirties, and, as I've said, very attractive.

I'd got married when I was twenty five. It was good for the first ten years, but then we simply drifted apart – we both worked long hours – and finally decided to go our own way.

Anyway, to continue, after some time, we began to acknowledge each other when she passed, as neighbours often do. Just a 'morning, nice day' or 'morning, have a good day' and so on. She seemed to appear almost whenever I left the house. Why, she could have been stalking me – though that's ridiculous, of course. And so it went on. And then, one evening there was a ring on my bell and when I opened the door, there she was. I muttered something and she said, in a slightly nervous and hesitant tone,

'I, er, I do apologise. M..might it be possible to come in and speak to you for a moment or two. It...it might be better if a came in rather than speak to you on the step.'

I wasn't at all sure but I heard the words spilling from lips, 'yes.....yes, Ok, do come in,' and I opened the door and beckoned her in.

'You may want to sit down', she said, as we drew alongside the door into the sitting room. Obediently I followed her instructions – in my own home(!) – and sat down. She sat in an armchair opposite me.

'I don't know how to say this but, I.....I.....',

'Spit it out', I said gently

'Is your name James Friar?' I nodded in reply

'Did you used to go out with Helen Scott back in your early twenties?' I didn't have to think too hard as I did go out with the girl for a few weeks before we had a fierce row and cut our friendship dead. Again I nodded.

Then the bombshell. 'James, I'm pretty sure I'm your daughter, Sammy.'

I was flabbergasted; I had no children. There was just me.

'I managed to get mum to tell me who my father was. She didn't want to tell me – even on my birth certificate it says 'father unknown', but she's not in good health now and I guess it no longer matters to her.

I asked the question I had to ask. 'How do you know that I'm your father?'

'Mum said that it was the first time she'd had sex and that after that she didn't have another boyfriend for a year. I managed to find out where you lived from records. My partner has been urging me for ages to speak to you, but I've kept putting it off.'

So there you are. Me, suddenly a dad at 50. We both agreed to take a DNA test, just to be absolutely sure, which, of course, showed a positive match. Discovering that I'm Sammy's father has bucked me up. I've been on a diet, been taking more care of myself and my appearance, and have now met a woman myself. We've been together now for three months. I'm not at all sure that would have happened before knowing about Sammy. What a difference a day can make!

Photography 2: “Barriers” Fences, hedges, walls, moats, fly-tipped debris blocking a country lane or those blasted station ticket barriers . Ann B found her Factor 30. Barriers to a good photo? Cold fingers and grimy lenses. Next theme? We’ll keep you guessing. **Joan Porter**

Jill Pritchard



Ann MacEwan



Mariam Armstrong



Alan Scott



Rob Porter



Joan Porter



Ben Winder

Ken MacEwan



Ann Buttle



Social Diary dates:

2024 Forthcoming events:

- Sun 14th Jan:** "A Beautiful Noise" 7-30pm Orchard West Theatre.
- Wed 17th Jan & Thurs 18th Jan:** "Swan Lake" Orchard West Theatre. Linda Howe.
- Sun 25th Feb:** Crayford Dog Racing.
 Tickets being booked in the next few days Thurs 25th Jan.
 Doors open at 1245. Racing 1345 to 1730. Cost £15.
 Includes a three course meal in the Heathview Restaurant.
- March:** "Kentish Lady" trip to Allington Castle. TBC.
- Tues 9th April** Cobham Hall tour and cream tea.
Wed 10th April Big Ben tour. Must be booked by 10th January. Linda Howe
- Wed 8th May** Big Ben tour. Details available at CPC General Meeting on 12th January. Linda Howe

BIG BEN TOUR.

Wednesday 8th May 2024.

A tour of Big Ben, the Elizabeth Tower in London, is now offered to visitors. The tour takes you up a narrow **334** step spiral staircase to the belfry where Big Ben, the great bell hangs.

(Visitors must be comfortable climbing the staircase as no lift is available)

Along the route, a guide will reveal details of the most extensive and complex conservation project in the Tower's history. They will also see the inner workings of the clock mechanism and stand next to the world famous Big Ben bell as it strikes the hour, and also step behind the dials, each 6.9 m in diameter. (Earplugs will be provided!)

The duration of the tour is 90 minutes. There will be toilet facilities available before and after the tour only.

The cost of the visit is £25.00 per person. The next set of tickets will be released on Wednesday January 10th for visits in April. If you are interested in this tour, you have to read the newsletter before 10th January. Please email or phone me .

I am also willing to book tickets for the tour in May. (I will have to book them in February!)

Linda Howe (Contact details at the end of the newsletter)



Reminder - all Groups, Activities and Events are undertaken at your own risk

Calendar of Group Meetings and Events

The information printed below has been derived directly from the Beacon website as at 27th December 2023. If your group meetings are missing or incorrect, please contact the relevant Group Leader.

SUNDAY 14 JAN

12:30 Sunday Lunch Bunch – Marilyn Pascoe
19:30 **A Beautiful Noise – Orchard West Theatre**

MONDAY 15 JAN

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
12:00 Ukulele – Alan Scott
14:00 Rummikub 1 – Margaret Pullen
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUESDAY 16 JAN

10:00 Spanish Intermediate – Jan Rees
10:00 Short Mat Bowls – Ray MacLean
10:30 Creative Writing 2 – Sally Spellman
12:00 Fully Loaded Lunch Club – Ben Winder
14:00 Reading – Margaret Groom
14:00 Genealogy – Peter Buttle
14:00 Afternoon Tea – Maggie Hart

WEDNESDAY 17 JAN

10:00 Mah Jong 1 – Linda Mei Stevens
10:00 Photography 1 – Colin Nice
12:00 Virtual Get-together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker
14:00 Classical Music Apprcn – Carol Edwards
14:15 Line Dancing Beginners - Linda Howe

THURSDAY 18 JAN

10:00 Creative Writing 1 – Penny Collins
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 19 JAN

10:00 Ramble – Colin Nice
14:00 Pool – Tony Tigg
14:00 Canasta - Sylvia Stickings
14:00 Mexican Train Dominoes – Peter Buttle

MONDAY 22 JAN

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
14:00 Readers' Forum - Carol Edwards
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUESDAY 23 JAN

12:15 Petanque – Joan Porter
14:00 Painting – Judy Dutfield
14:00 Bridge – Anne Stott

WEDNESDAY 24 JAN

10:00 Tame Your Digital Tech – Peter Buttle
10:00 Psychology – Lin Fridd
12:00 Virtual Get together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker
14:15 Line Dancing Beginners – Linda Howe

THURSDAY 25 JAN

10:00 Rummikub 2 – Sandra Parker
12:45 Crayford Dog Track Lunch – Peter Buttle
14:00 French Conversation – Anne Stott
14:00 Geography 1 – Colin Nice
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 26 JAN

10:00 Birdwatching – Irene Robson
14:00 Wine Appreciation – Brian Edwards

MONDAY 29 JAN

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

WEDNESDAY 31 JAN

12:00 Virtual Get-together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker

THURSDAY 1 FEB

10:00 Solos _ Linda Howe
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 2 FEB

09:30 Hike – Colin Nice
14:00 Table Tennis – Tony Tigg
14:00 Mexican Train Dominoes – Peter Buttle

SUNDAY 4 FEB

12:30 Sunday Lunch Bunch – Marilyn Pascoe

MONDAY 5 FEB

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
12:00 Ukulele – Alan Scott
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUESDAY 6 FEB

09:30 Sewing together -
10:00 Poetry Appreciation – Theresa Johnston
10:00 Spanish Intermediate – Jan Rees
10:00 Short Mat Bowls – Ray MacLean
10:00 Model Making – Chris Hewlett

13:00 Mindfulness Meditation – Julie Redmond
14:00 Local History 1 – Joyce Bell
14:00 Rummikub 3 – Anna Burroughs

WEDNESDAY 7 FEB

10:00 Film – Jean Stephens
10:00 Tame Your Digital Tech – Peter Buttle
12:00 Virtual Get together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker
14:15 Line Dancing Beginners – Linda Howe

THURSDAY 8 FEB

10:00 Cribbage 1 – Brian Edwards
10:00 Geography 2 – Colin Nice
10:30 Low Impact Fitness – Lynne Scott
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour
14:00 British History – Mick Brookes

FRIDAY 9 FEB

10:00 Photography 2 – Ben Winder
13:45 General Meeting CPC

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