



Gravesend, Northfleet & District



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

On Fri 8th December, our speaker will be **Dr. James Taylor, FRSA.**, a former curator of paintings, drawings and prints at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. He will present a talk on: **"Grace Darling and the Fine Art of Saving Lives at Sea."**

Darling's daring rescue of steamship passengers off the Northumberland coast in 1838 brought her international fame. Discover more about her bravery, short life (she died aged 26) living in the Brownsman and Longstone lighthouses and her influence, alongside the artistic contribution that has helped to keep her in the public eye. Grace became the 'poster girl' of the RNLi and was the first woman awarded their medal for gallantry.

**Reg. Charity No 1180160**

Next month, our speaker will be Jane Scotchmer - gardener, traveller and photographer, who will give a talk entitled **How Artists and Garden Designers lead us up the Garden Path!**



## Group Information December 2023

**Art appreciation.** Our group leader, Robert, has decided to call it a day after many years. There is a possibility that Tessa Barnby might take on the role, depending on the continuing interest of the group members and if an appropriate venue can be found. Contact Ray Maclean for further information.

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

**Sunday Lunch Bunch** - Our next meal will be on Sunday 14th January, 12.30 p.m. at V's Punjabi Grill at The Canal Tavern, Canal Road DA12 2RS

**Photography 1** We will next meet on Wed 6th December to avoid being too close to Christmas. However, from January onward, we will change to meeting on the **THIRD** Wednesday of each month at 10am. Please also note that the group is now full *Colin*

### Mindfulness meditation

Julie writes: "We've made a great start with happy, smiley, enthusiastic members enjoying the first 2 sessions of **Mindfulness Meditation** in November. If you signed up and haven't made it yet, don't worry. Just come along when you can. Our catch words are: BE KIND TO YOURSELF, BREATHE and ADOPT A BEGINNER'S MIND.

December sessions are Monday 4th at 1 pm and Tuesday 12th at 1 pm (note it's the 1st AND 2nd week as Legends has school holiday activities on the 3rd week.)

We will attempt to have two sessions a month. In the New Year, sessions will be 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1 pm, school holidays and my holidays permitting. However, there will be **NO** Mindfulness Meditation sessions during January and we will restart on 6th February and 20th February, both at 1 pm." *Julie Redmond*

**Creative Writing 1's** latest 48-page anthology of short stories and poems "**Blood, Sweat and ..... Ink**" will be on sale at our December General Meeting. Priced at just £1.00 (any profits going to the hospice), it makes brilliant bedside reading and a great stocking filler. *Bring a £1 to the next meeting and buy your copy! Colin Nice*

## U3A Membership for 2024 - £16

**Now** is the time to renew your membership as U3A membership expires at the end of December 2023. The membership fee for 2024 is £16. In 2023 there were additional costs as well as price rises and so regrettably it has been necessary to increase membership by £1. We hope, though, that you feel that this still represents extraordinary value for money. Our membership fee is still one of the lowest, if not the lowest, in Kent. Especially when considering that there are no additional charges for attending groups or our monthly meetings with a speaker at CPC and which include free refreshments, biscuits and sometimes cake!

**Renew On-line.** It's easy to renew On-Line, and it saves volunteer administration time, paper, postage, and the processing of cheques. We hope you will take advantage of this. Simply visit our Website Members area and click [MEMBERS LOGIN](#) to enter your details, then click **Renew your Membership**. This enables you to easily and safely use a Debit or Credit card or PayPal (as used by Amazon, John Lewis, M&S, Boots, Argos and many others).

**Help** - As many may be aware Doreen, our Membership Secretary, is currently fully occupied with Dennis's post operative care. Please consider asking a family member or friend to help complete this for you On-Line, or our Tame your Tech group can help you. Alternatively, Peter will be at our next two General Meetings to help you to renew your membership.

**Gift Aid** An extra **£4** can be reclaimed by Gravesend u3a from HMRC against the Income Tax you pay and at no cost to you! This enables us to keep the membership fee low. **Please tick option - £12,500 or more income including pensions before Tax?** If your answer to this question is **YES**, then please tick the first small box on left: '*I am a UK tax payer etc etc*'

**Paper/Cheque renewal** - We hope you will use the options shown above for renewal. However, if you are unable to, please complete a renewal form, available at our monthly meeting or from our website and **tick the box for Gift Aid**, if able, and post it with your **CHEQUE for £16** per person, payable to **Gravesend U3A** and send to the address shown on or before **31st December 2023**, together with a **stamped addressed envelope** for the return of your membership card. Application forms will also be available at our monthly meeting. **Cheque, post and SAE option costs £17.50 in total.** The small number of members without Email will receive a separate letter.

*Alan Scott*

## **Ramble - Ightham Mote and Wilmot Hill – Fri 15<sup>th</sup> Dec**

Enjoy the English countryside on this lovely, though challenging walk, around the estate. Ben leads this walk along part of the Greensand Way, with some stunning views. It's a hilly walk which can be muddy, so good strong boots will be needed and bring walking poles if you have them. There's a lovely cafe at the end of the walk.

**Meet** at 10am at Ightham Mote outside the back of the cafe where the toilets are located.

Directions: TN15 0NT Take A227 Wrotham Rd to Borough Green.

Take A25 towards Seal and Sevenoaks

After 2 miles turn left (signed : Hatch and Ightham Mote)

Follow past The Plough PH, then bear right after 100 yards.

Ightham Mote is 150m on left

-----

## **Hike – Camer, Sole St and Cobham - 5<sup>th</sup> Jan**

Peter Finch leads us on a lovely, fairly level, 5 ml circular walk through woodland and fields, which includes Camer Park, Sole St and Cobham. Guaranteed mud, of course, so if you've got them, bring walking poles, but at the end there's a warming cuppa at the café in Camer.

Please contact Colin if you'd like to join.

Meet at 9.30am in Camer Park car park

## **Swan Lake**

Something new for Gravesend U3A - Ballet! Linda Howe is organising a visit to the Orchard (in its temporary home) for Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, which is being performed by the International Ballet Theatre on Thursday 18th January 2024. The cost per ticket will be approximately £38.00, to be confirmed, but time is short. If you are interested, please contact Linda directly with a cheque made out to 'Linda Howe' ASAP.

## **Singing for Fun**

We had 17 at our November meeting, having a good old sing song. You do not need to have a good voice, whatever voice you have its ok for Singing for Fun and 17 voices together make a great sound. This is group Karaoke, we have the music and words on a TV screen and we meet every second Wednesday.

**Everyone welcome to join** - come on your own or with friends for this fun group. Parking and Refreshments available and Bus stop outside.

**Next meeting Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 11:30 – 13:30 Legends Sports, Thong Lane, DA12 4LG -- Only £1. Interested? Please Click Join Group on Gravesend U3A Website – or just turn up!** *Alan Scott*

## **A Beautiful Noise**

By way of a contrast, this homage to the music of Neil Diamond is on Sunday 14 January at 7.30 in Orchard Theatre West - price £30.50. Concession prices are available with proof of age. Carers go free. If you would like to come along, please contact Sue Northcott (see listing of Social Committee) - Payment will need to be with them before Christmas.

Note that Orchard Theatre West is a temporary theatre complex on the Westgate site, at 20-54 Hythe Street, a '30 second' walk from the original theatre, and is planned to open on 9 December. Details are on the Orchard website, with info on different seating arrangements etc.

## **Handyperson List**

Cutting your toenails gets more difficult with age. Age UK does provide a service for those of us who need help cutting them, but unfortunately they have just increased their charges for the second time in six months to £28.50 - £2.85 a toe (for most of us!). Fortunately the Handyperson list now has an ex-AgeUK nail cutter on the list at a much fairer rate.

I get requests from members for recommendations every other day. My thanks to all of you who have contributed to the list. It does mean you may be contacted by other members wishing to know about the person you are recommending. If you don't mind being contacted and have people to recommended, I would love to hear from you.

Gardeners and general handypersons (capable of putting up shelves etc). are always in demand. And there would appear to be very few about in Gravesham.

An email is always the best way to contact me:

Keith Pilkington. [keithpilkington@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:keithpilkington@hotmail.co.uk). 01474 357931

### U3A Birdwatching trip to Riverside Country Park

This month, six of the group made a trip to Riverside C.P. near Gillingham. On arriving in the car park we decided it was woolly hats and gloves weather as there was a strong north-westerly blowing. Suitably attired we made our way straight out onto Horrid Hill where the tide was right in. On our way we spotted wigeon and brent geese either side of the causeway. Some pied wagtails and we think rock pipits were flying along in front of us as we walked. A couple of turnstones flew off from the edge where they had been inspecting the seaweed for tasty morsels.

Arriving at the point looking over the Medway towards Nor Marsh we could see, from a distance, many roosting waders that were difficult to identify. Another



birdwatcher told us that there were lots of dunlin, grey plovers and curlew there, waiting for the tide to recede so that they could once more start feeding on the mud. Turning right, at the point, allowed us to look over some saltings where shelducks, redshanks, teal and wigeon and also a group of avocets were sheltering out of the wind. As the tide dropped we started to see small groups of waders flying about, dunlin and redshank, probably searching for any mud that had been uncovered.

*Black headed gull in winter plumage*

We headed back along the track seeing a few small birds, robin, goldfinch, blackbird. On visiting the woodland area where there are some feeders, we also had nice views of dunnock, blue tit, chaffinch and great tit coming in to feed. Above through a gap in the trees we had a hovering kestrel.

Starting to feel cold we made our way back to the cafe for a welcome hot drink. Despite the wind, we had an enjoyable couple of hours walking around the site and counted 29 species in total. *Irene.*

---ooo000ooo---

### Letter to Agony Aunt by Caroline Cowell (C W 2)

**Dear GiGi**

Please help me! A guy that I've liked for ages, recently asked me on a date.

Things were going really well until he expressed his disappointment when I ordered chocolate brownie for dessert: apparently, he expected me to opt for the fruit salad as I clearly (in his words) "have a few pounds to lose!"

I should probably point out here that I am a girl who likes to dream in chocolate and whose idea of a balanced diet is a slice of cake in both hands! So, you will appreciate that his words were about as welcome as nails on a chalkboard!

Surprisingly, he's now texted to ask if I would be up for a second get together. He is cute, but if I were to accept a date with a guy who is obviously a fully-fledged member of the food police, would I simply be sending myself down the rocky road (chocolate free of course) of calorie counting, guilt and shame?

Yours affectionately *Chocolate Chip Cookie*

### **Dear Triple C** (aka Chocolate Chip Cookie)

You are clearly a woman after my own heart! I once thought a guy I was dating had suggested "extra fries," when he had in fact mentioned that I needed "more exercise!" We finished shortly after that, if I remember correctly, when he asked me which I'd choose if I could either drink wine or be skinny and I answered "red, white or rosé?"

As far as I'm concerned, we all have to nourish in order to flourish. Life is too short for self-hatred and celery-sticks, don't you agree? If we were meant to survive on carrots and lettuce, we'd all be living in hutches looking forward to Easter. Anyway, I suspect that, like me, you only eat chocolate on two occasions in your life – when you are happy and when you are not! And what's wrong with that? If you ever want to feel skinny, you can always do what I do and hang out with some seriously obese people for a while!

As for Mr Fat Phobia, who is presumably either so insecure or so entitled that he feels the need to make asinine comments about other people's eating habits, you basically have two courses – oops, I meant choices.

You could give him another chance – but make sure he takes you to a ridiculously expensive Michelin starred establishment if you do. If / when the body shaming starts again you could either point out that you always eat for two – you and your inner diva, who just happens to love nachos and ice cream; or patiently explain that you could lose weight if you wanted to, whereas he's stuck with that face for life!

Alternatively – and this would be my preferred option, darling - "doughnut" give him another thought. Accept that he is "a pizza work" who will never be happy "pudding up with" a foodie for a soul mate. Move on to a man who will savour you and all your delicious curves and who has already had the wisdom to embrace that most invaluable of life lessons, which tells us that women carrying a few extra pounds tend to live longer than the men who are foolish enough to mention it!

Good lunch: sorry – typo: that should be good luck! Love GiGi

### **A Cautionary Tale**

A few days ago, I received a phone call from O2 saying as they had taken over from Virgin Mobile, I was entitled to a 25% discount and a free gift of a watch. Although somewhat suspicious, as nothing is for free in today's world, I went along with it. The following morning my parcel arrived and it wasn't a watch. It was a brand new iPhone 14pro! As I have connections with the local police I immediately phoned them - and was warned of the scam. Within a few minutes of the parcel arriving, I had a telephone call saying there had been a mix up at dispatch and I had been sent the wrong gift. Someone would be round later to collect it. At this point I told them that they could collect it at the local police station as I'd realised it was a scam. The line went dead.

This is the scam:- Somehow the scammers get your details and order on your behalf a new phone contract which includes a brand new phone. They then come and collect it from you. It is now theirs to sell on, while you then get a very large bill for "your" new phone.

After 3 hours of calls to Kent Police, police fraud, O2 and my bank things returned to normal.

I was lucky, but please be aware!      *A U3A member*

### **London Theatre Group visit The Lion King**

A record 34 members joined us for the excellent performance of The Lion King at the Lyceum Theatre on November 8th. As it is the highest grossing Broadway show of all time it had a lot to live up to.

Having enjoyed a variety of lunches in the surrounding area, some of us were a little perturbed to see several school parties entering the theatre in a state of youthful excitement, however their enthusiasm didn't detract from our enjoyment of the wonderful scenery, puppetry and evocative spectacle on stage.

Some of us could remember seeing the show over 25 years ago and we agreed that the technology has progressed greatly. As ever, the musical score by Elton John had the audience joining in to "Can you feel the love tonight " Hakuna Matata" and "Circle of Life ".

To round off a most enjoyable day, some of us walked to Covent Garden to see the beautiful Christmas tree and lights, which had been switched on the day before, a truly magical end to a rainy November day!      *Jan Rees*



**Photography 1** Our theme for the month was 'Put a lid on it' and we found it pretty tricky! Here is a selection of our efforts *Colin Nice.*



## Walks in November

Dennis Nicholls writes: "How lucky were we with the weather for our hike early in the month. With storm Ciaran the day before, we had brilliant sunshine and light winds for the walk, and, considering the rainfall, very reasonable conditions underfoot. Sixteen had started at Cascades on the 6.5 mile circular route, with a stop part way at Shorne woods country park café for a cuppa, where we met up with Colin".



Two weeks later it was our ramble from the Medway at Teston and storm Debi had deposited a lot more rain, resulting in flood warnings along the river. Tessa Barnby led the 5.5 ml walk, re-routing it to avoid any flood problems. In the event, Tessa's son joined the walk to inject some youth on what turned out to be a gloriously sunny walk - and mostly on firm ground!

Our trip to **Wisley RHS Glow** was simply magical, walking around and seeing the magnificent sights: the wisteria walk, the lake, with beautiful music to name just a few. All in all, we had a great day out! *Sue Northcott*

**Photography 2 – Open Doors** – Looking in, out and through for our November theme, and not just being nosy! As usual, these are just a few of the shots we take. No need for an open door in Rob’s photo as that was his Picture of the Month. Meet Hamish (guess who had the joy of getting him dry when he got home?)

Our next theme is ‘Barriers’ and we have compiled photos for our calendar so we can enjoy our efforts during 2024. *Joan Porter*



**Information given below is directly copied from the Beacon website as at 29Nov. If your group's meeting is missing or wrong, please contact the relevant Group Leader!**

**FRIDAY 8th DECEMBER**

10:00 Photography 2 - Ben Winder  
**13:45 Meeting at City Praise Centre**

**SATURDAY 9th DECEMBER**

**19:30. Quiz Night Christ Church Hall**

**MONDAY 11th DECEMBER**

10:00. Ten Pin Bowling - Arthur Part'n  
10:00 Tai Chi - Alan Scott  
14:00 Jazz Appreciation - Brian Edwards  
19:30. Modern Jive Dance - Alan+Lynne

**TUESDAY 12th DECEMBER**

10:00 Philosophy - Jean Stephens  
12:15. Petanque - Joan Porter  
14:30. Mindfulness Med'n - Julie  
16:00. Cribbage 2 - Anne Stott

**WEDNESDAY 13th DECEMBER**

10:00 Mah Jong 2 - Sandra Parker  
10:00 Tame your Digital Tech - Peter B  
11:30. Singing for Fun - Alan Scott  
12:00. Virtual Get Together Peter B  
14:00 Badminton - Sandra Parker

**THURSDAY 14th DECEMBER**

10:00. Cribbage 1 - Brian Edwards  
10:30. Low Impact Fitness - Lynne  
13:45 British History - Mick Brookes

**FRIDAY 15th DECEMBER**

10:00. Ramble Ightham Mote - Ben  
14:00. Canasta - Sylvie Stickings  
14:00. Pool - Tony Tigg  
14:00. Mex Dominoes - Peter Buttle

**MONDAY 18th DECEMBER**

10:00. Psychology - Lin Fridd  
12:00. Ukelele - Alan Scott  
14:00. Rummikub - Anne Pilkington

**TUESDAY 19th DECEMBER**

10:00 Spanish - Janet Rees  
10:00. Short Mat Bowls Ray Maclean  
10:30. Creative Writing 2  
12:00 Fully Loaded - Ben Winder  
13:00. NK College Lunch  
14:00 Reading - Margaret Groom

**WEDNESDAY 20th DECEMBER**

10:00. Mah Jong 1 - Linda Mei Stevens  
12:00. Virtual Get Together Peter Buttle  
14:00 Badminton - Sandra Parker  
14:00 Classical Music App'n - Carol E  
14:15 Line Dancing - Linda Howe

**THURSDAY 21st DECEMBER**

10:00 Creative Writing - Penny Collins  
14.00 Geography - Colin Nice

**FRIDAY 22nd DECEMBER**

10:00. Bird watching - Irene Robson

**TUESDAY 26th DECEMBER**

14:00 Bridge - Anne Stott

**WEDNESDAY 27th DECEMBER**

10:00 Tame your Digital Tech - Peter B  
12:00. Virtual Get Together Peter Buttle  
14:15 Line Dancing - Linda Howe

**THURSDAY 28th DECEMBER**

10:00 Creative Writing - Penny Collins  
14.00 Geography - Colin Nice

**FRIDAY 29th DECEMBER**

14:00. Mex Dominoes - Peter Buttle

**TUESDAY 2nd JANUARY**

10:30 Sewingtogether - Edina Geering  
10:00. Poetry Appr'n - Theresa Johnson  
10:00 Spanish - Janet Rees  
10:00. Short Mat Bowls - Ray Maclean  
14:00 Local History - Joyce Bell  
14:00. Rummikub 3 - Anna Burroughs

**WEDNESDAY 3rd JANUARY**

10:00. Film Apprec'n - Jean Stephens  
14:00 Art Appreciation - ?????  
14:15 Line Dancing - Linda Howe

**THURSDAY 4th JANUARY**

10.30 Senior Elastixs - Jan Elci

**FRIDAY 5th JANUARY**

09:30. Hike - Camer Park 5m circle  
14:00 Table Tennis - Tony Tigg

**MONDAY 8th JANUARY**

10:00. Ten Pin Bowling - Arthur Part'n  
14:00. Jazz Appreciation - Brian Edwards

**TUESDAY 9th JANUARY**

10:00 Philosophy - Jean Stephens  
12:15. Petanque - Joan Porter

**WEDNESDAY 10th JANUARY**

10:00 Mah Jong 2 - Sandra Parker  
11:30. Singing for Fun - Alan Scott

**THURSDAY 11th JANUARY**

19:00. Cribbage 1 - Brian Edwards  
13:45 British History - Mick Brookes

**FRIDAY 12th JANUARY**

10:00 Photography 2 - Ben Winder  
**13:45 Meeting at City Praise Centre**

**SUNDAY 14th JANUARY**

12:30 Sunday Curry at V's DA12 2RS



Next month's issue will be edited by Trevor Woodward. Please send all editorial contributions to [grv.u3a.editor@gmail.com](mailto:grv.u3a.editor@gmail.com) , deadline Wed 3rd January 2024