



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2023 - GUILDFORD AREA u3a

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Guildford u3a members,

This edition of the newsletter comes to you as usual at this time of the year with the papers for the next AGM to be held on Monday 27 November 2023. This is the most important formal event in our calendar; if we do not have a quorum, we may not hold an AGM and we cease to be constitutional. That is why it is an excluded date, along with the Group Leaders' meeting in January. We do not want our members to have divided loyalties about where they should be. It will also be my last AGM as chairman. It has been an eventful time, covering the pandemic and the death of the Queen. As yet, we have been unable to find anyone to take over from me. If you know someone you think could do the job, please get in touch with the committee - but talk to the member in question about it first!

It was my unhappy task to have to write to Group Leaders in the autumn of 2020 about not making new members feel welcome. I am very sorry to have to say that this matter has arisen again. It is not only the responsibility of the Group Leader to make new members feel welcome; we can all play our part in greeting them with a smile, showing them how your group works and making them feel at home. I am convinced that not one of us would neglect a new member on purpose; especially at the beginning of a new academic year we are busy getting back into the swing of things, organising, being happy to meet people we might not have seen for some time, exchanging news and it is easy not to notice a new person who might be hanging back a little. We were all a new member once; we want new members to be a happy part of our inclusive and welcoming u3a.

I was so pleased to see so many of you at our restyled Monthly Meeting. We did a brisk trade in swapping books and jigsaws - and you can bring them back and swap them again next time! Our Trips and Outings organisers were there as well as Alan Wyle who is on a mission to put an end to loneliness and isolation. If you have anything you want to talk to other members about, the Monthly Meeting, at the Queen Elizabeth Park Centre at 1.30pm on the last Monday of the month is the place to be.

With all good wishes,

Julie Beattie - Chairman Guildford Area u3a

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES' REPORT

After a very successful Group Enrolment Day (GED) in August, it has been lovely to see all our groups starting again this autumn, and a special welcome to those new (and returning after an absence) groups – Bridge (Supervised Intermediate), Brush up your Shakespeare, Sir Gawain and Company. At GED there were suggestions for several new groups, including: Lip-Reading, Ballroom Dancing, Dog Walking, Mah Jong, Pickleball, Archaeology, Book group for Audio Books, Walking Netball, Modern Greek, Swedish and Birdwatching – so many great ideas. However, these will only happen if someone offers to be Group Leader! You don't need to be an expert in the subject, or a teacher, but be enthusiastic about the subject and willing to have a go. Groups could be run in people's homes, in pubs/cafes, or in one of our other venues. We now have volunteers to run new groups in Birdwatching, Play Reading and another Pubs & Churches. Watch out for details of how to join in our weekly bulletins (sent out on Sundays by our Webmaster) and on our website. We're also hoping to run a one-off session in the New Year about the challenges of hearing loss.

The Virtual Coffee Mornings, on Zoom, fortnightly, have restarted. If you would like to join in then contact me at the email address below, and I'll send you the Zoom link. The dates are on the website under Events – the days change every two weeks, so that they don't always clash with the same groups.

U3a is run by members, for members – we're all volunteers. We need people to join committees, to make teas, to move furniture, help to run a group, or there are other ways of helping. Currently, we need to find a new Group Co-ordinator for the Sports & Outdoor Leisure groups – there are 14 of them. This is a lovely role, which gives the chance to talk to Group Leaders, help with issues when they arise, and attend about four meetings each year, on Zoom. Please let me know if you'd like to have a go – my email address is below, and I can send you more information or have a chat.

Moira MacQuaide

Director of Studies – studies@guildfordu3a.org.uk

Nuffield Health Better Mobility Classes



We have now finished three blocks of exercise classes, mainly focussing on gentle circuit training. The aim is to build back some of the strength that we've lost with ageing, help with balance and become more mobile. The next block of five weeks will be in the swimming pool, doing exercises with Aqua Cycling, or Wet Bikes. The block after that, starting towards the end

of November, will be Chair Pilates, and will be advertised in the weekly bulletin about two weeks before the block starts, so watch out for more details. The photo shows our members with the Nuffield Health trainer, Sam, at the end of Block 3.

U3a Online Learning Events

There is a fantastic selection of one-hour talks available via Zoom for all u3a members in the UK. Just go to the national website – u3a.org.uk – click on Events, then Online Learning Events, then scroll through the talks. You need to register on the one you want - it's free. On 9th November at 2pm, our own Neville Lyons will give his talk on Sir Thomas Lipton – From Cabin Boy to Tea Tycoon to International Yachtsman.

THAMES CLIPPER ROAMER TICKETS

Uber Boats the company operating on the Thames, offer a £10.60 'roamer' ticket to those with concessionary bus passes. for example you could go from Putney to Greenwich and back several times for the price

https://booking.thamesclippers.com/?gad=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw1aOpBhCOARIsACXYv-f3UPGkLRebsZunnPpg7HR_5QP7ESxNZUJ9iQ60JjllutfmZLv9eSUaAi9aEALw_wcB

VENUE for EVERYMAN

*A poem by **Michael Tanner** about the place where the u3a Ensemble orchestra meets, the nature of the Ensemble's activity and the building Old Church of Emmanuel*

How quiet and calm the Old Church now, stone bastion between converging lanes of cars and pavements for those on foot, unconsecrated now but still a house for saints and martyrs held in stained glass with Mary and her babe transposing winter sun through crimson, gold and blue to patches on a carpet warming cold tiles.

And quiet and still the names of men stamped black and red into bright brass, soldiers of Queen and Empire fallen in places far from home against rebellious tribes manning the Khyber Pass, forerunners of Jihad long before two World Wars. One notes the names of some familiar in these parts, their rank but not their manner of dying amongst those bullets and the unforgiving rock.

This very morning, toddlers on hands and knees busied themselves across the sun patched floor. This afternoon it is the turn of Senior Citizens: a little orchestra, some dozen strong. Pedestrians hurrying past sometimes pick up the strains of melodies descending from the sky, Meanwhile the shadows lengthen and the evening falls though sunshine never falls directly on these plaques whose weekly polished brass harvests what light there is, inviting casual eyes to query names, events and places otherwise forgot.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CALIGRAPHY

We changed our group name to **The Art of Calligraphy** to better reflect the way the class has developed. Below are examples of some initials which show the joint emphasis on calligraphy and illustration.



Janet Thorpe - Course Leader

CHAMBER MUSIC GROUP

We had a successful first meeting this year and we are exploring the chamber music of Max Bruch next month. The programme for the next year will include the following composers : Max Bruch, Haydn, Beethoven, Grieg, Sibelius, Dvorak and Smetana

Introduction to Digital Devices Group - Unlock the Digital World

Are you feeling a little overwhelmed by the ever-evolving digital landscape? Do smartphones, tablets, and laptops sometimes seem like a foreign language? Well, worry no more! Guildford U3A's Introduction to Digital Devices group is here to empower you in the digital age.

Our mission is simple yet powerful: to bring together individuals like you and provide a supportive environment where you can gain confidence in using digital devices. We understand that starting can be intimidating, and that's why we welcome members with little to no prior experience.

Why Choose Our Digital Devices Group?

1. **Personalized Guidance:** Our program is designed to cater to individuals at all levels of digital expertise. Whether you're taking your first steps with a smartphone or trying to master your laptop, our experienced members are here to guide you.
2. **Practical Sessions:** We believe that hands-on experience is the best teacher. That's why we offer interactive sessions where you can bring your own digital

device and get assistance with specific problems. No question is too basic, and no issue is too small.

3. **Build Connections:** Joining our group is not just about learning; it's also about building lasting friendships. You'll meet like-minded individuals who share your curiosity and desire to embrace the digital world.
4. **Stay Current:** Technology is constantly evolving, and we're here to help you stay up-to-date. From the latest smartphone features to useful apps and software tips, we'll keep you informed.
5. **Boost Confidence:** Our goal is to boost your confidence and empower you to navigate the digital age with ease. You'll be amazed at how quickly you can become tech-savvy!

How to Join?

Joining Guildford U3A's Introduction to Digital Devices group is easy. Either speak to a committee member or go to the Guildford U3A website "Groups" "Intro to Digital Devices". Click on the email link and you'll be welcomed with open arms. Don't worry if you don't have a device yet; we can help you make an informed choice.

Embrace the digital age, connect with peers, and gain the skills you need to confidently use smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Guildford U3A's Introduction to Digital Devices group is your gateway to a more connected and informed retirement.

Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in the digital world. Join us today and embark on an exciting journey of digital discovery!

Paul Kassell, Leader

The above article was written by Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT. I simply told ChatGPT about our aims and some of the things we promote, and the article was generated for me. If Artificial Intelligence is something that interests you our Digital Living Group will be providing updates.

SINGING FOR FUN

Singing for Fun – and that's just what we do - every Monday morning, in the wonderful St Catherine's Village Hall in Chestnut Avenue, Guildford (GU2 4HF) (10 a.m. to 12 midday).

We are a happy group who just love singing (and we have a great deal of fun and laughter on the way). Everyone can sing - it doesn't matter if you can't read music - we learn by doing it and you'll be dragged along with the others.

So, what do we sing? Well, pretty much a bit of everything – songs from stage musicals and films; a bit of 'pop' (well, our 'pop' anyway); folk songs; sacred; classical – just about anything you can think of. Some of our favourites: "Oklahoma!" but you have to yelp loudly; we might enter the world of Les Miserables, with "Do you hear the people sing?" – then there's some Bach and Mozart - and how about Alex North's "Unchained Melody"; even a nursery rhyme, "Sing a song of sixpence"; and loads more.

Each season we have a set of music to go through which may be used to entertain – like **this Christmas** we'll be at **St Nicolas Church, Bury Street, Guildford (GU2 4AW)** for our **Christmas Show, on Wednesday 13 December at 2.00 p.m.** (Free admission and all are welcome. Retiring collection towards church expenses)

And our friends at the Milford & District u3a Singing Group will be **with the Hart Male Voice Choir at Holy Trinity Church, High Street, Guildford** We're all Bizzy! Bizzy!! Bizzy!!!

Singing really is fun, so why don't you come along and join us – you never know what you can do until you try!! You can be of any age – just not in full time work – and you need to join Guildford Area u3a (www.guildfordu3a.org.uk). Go on – give it a go! You know you want to!!

John Varney, Leader

OUTINGS AND VISITS REPORT

On our outings and trips we usually incorporate an educational element - we are not just out to enjoy ourselves! And our visit to **Chichester Theatre** in **August** was certainly both as we included an optional behind-the-scenes backstage tour in the morning of our matinee of the ***Sound of Music***. We were shown not just back stage, but under the stage- where we later saw the nuns and von Trapps disappear. We visited the costume department (with washing machines and irons permanently on), went carefully around the scenery on stage and learnt how it's moved about, and the tech consoles were explained to us. The new word I learnt that morning was vomitorium – voms for short - the area from where the actors 'spew forth' onto the stage. I'm now just waiting for someone to ask me what that area is called, and I'll be ready with my reply. Those who didn't go on the tour, spent the morning in the town, visiting shops or the cathedral. I thought this classic show was very enjoyable – Maria and Mother Superior's voices were brilliant and the children were delightful. A chill went through the audience as the uniformed Nazis appeared behind us. But all ended happily as we expected.



Our theatre trip in **September** was quite a different story. The venue was the magnificent surroundings of the **Council Chamber of the old London County Hall**, the setting for the trial of Leonard Vole, accused of murder, in **Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution***. I won't tell you what happens in the end of this play, in case you want to see it in the future. The big leather seats were arranged as though we were in the courtroom itself, and made us feel very important. It was a gloriously sunny day, and we arrived late morning with time to have a wander along the South Bank for refreshments or to just people-watch before the play started.





These two theatrical trips were followed by theatre of a different kind later in September. This was Bletchley Park 1940's day. A number of our group dressed up in 1940's attire and Jackie and Ann were astonished to find that they were 'twins' in their choice of fancy dress, completely by chance. There was a real festive atmosphere and it was great fun seeing those dressed up for the occasion. At Bletchley we met 'Churchill' who was most convincing and was amenable to be photographed. Also many very glamorous 1940's ladies were

encountered, with fitted costume suits and stylish hats perched on the side, as we explored the more serious side of Bletchley Park. Some of the original huts were there and it was most interesting hearing how the Enigma code was cracked. Swing music and dancing throughout the day heightened the party mood and we felt very much as if we were re-living those days. It was a unique and special day where the sun shone all day – so lucky.

Another sunny day outing followed this in October to Leeds Castle. This trip has proved to be popular with two trips full both times, with a waiting list. The weather was perfect for watching an exhibition of the Birds of Prey where their handlers showed off what the birds could do and then we had an opportunity to see close-up a variety of owls. We could touch one of them where the feathers were soft as down. We enjoyed a 1930's type exhibition of when Lady Baillie inhabited the castle and you will be able to see how some of our group really got into the mood with champagne bottles (empty unfortunately) and glasses. The castle has been dominated by female owners, six queens, all of whom made their mark there, plus Lady Baillie who squandered millions of pounds of her own money on her glamorous, socialite life, entertaining many famous guests .



We are really looking forward to our next two planned trips – in **November** we are going underground on a tour of the old tube platforms beneath **Charing Cross**, now mainly used as a film location and for staff safety training. This is part of London Transport Museum's 'as seen on TV' Hidden London series. And in **December** we are returning to the small and intimate **Mill Theatre at Sonning** for their Christmas musical **High Society** which is sure to be an elegant production. We are currently busy planning our trips and outings for February onwards, and these will be circulated by email alert when finalised. Please send an sae if you do not use email and would like to receive details.

Ann Elms and Jackie Ring

CONCERT VISITS

Music trips re-started.

It was a dark and stormy night. Well not quite, the storm was due in the next few days but the rain came down heavily. Guildford was gridlocked. This delayed the coach and people reaching their pickup points. With the weather and traffic bad our driver Marc valiantly weaved the coach through the rush hour traffic, to get us to the Barbican with a few minutes to spare.

Seated, the concert of works by Frederick Handel began. First ironically with the Water Music as there had not been time to visit the facilities. After the interval Soprano Lucy Crow showed off her virtuosic voice control with one of Handel's most beautiful Latin motets "Silete venti" which finished in a dazzling Alleluia. This was followed by Music for the Royal Fireworks but first the music director Lawrence Cummings introduced the Contra-bassoon, the only one playable in the U. K. We had an encore when Lucy Crow, soprano, returned to sing "Let the bright Seraphim" from the oratorio "Samson" with its horn calls played on the natural trumpet.

Everyone who went thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a bit of learning curve for me as unfortunately there were no previous notes from Iris. Looking to the future I am looking to try to avoid London while the road works continue at the A3/M25 junction which was also a cause for our delay. Currently I am looking at a concert of Glinka, Rachmaninov, Greig, and Sibelius on Friday 5th April and before that on the 16th of February, an afternoon performance of Tchaikovsky Sleeping Beauty at the Anvil, Basingstoke. Others I hope may follow

Steve Moore

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY VISITS

TRIP TO SOUTHWARK SEPTEMBER 2023

The rain stopped; the sky cleared resulting in a warm, golden Autumn day for Southwark. We were dropped off at Southwark Bridge and took the steps down to the Embankment. Many people had their own agenda but I am always willing to have people stay with me if they are uncertain (or maybe enjoy my company) but I found about 20 people accompanied me to Pret A Manger for a coffee. Then, like Mother Duck, I set off, past the Winchester Hall and the Golden Hind, through the crowds at Borough Market, to eventually end up at the Herb Garret and Old Operating Theatre in St Thomas Street. Most of us spent almost an hour in this display of medical instruments of the past, herbs and a comprehensive history of medicine. It is utterly fascinating. The Old Operating Theatre was used to train past students. The museum is housed in the attic of St Thomas' Church, approached by a 51 step winding staircase although now there is a lift on request.

At two o'clock, 26 of us set off to see the treasures of Southwark, First, Keat's blue plaque then over to Kings College to see the inspiring little chapel of Sir Thomas Guy. Through the spacious courtyards and alleys to find the supposed start of the Canterbury Pilgrim's journey from the Tabard Inn. A quick peek at The George, the oldest coaching inn and off to the quiet streets known to Dickens. First stop was Crossbones Graveyard and Remembrance Garden, open only between 12 and 2 so we only lingered over the outside plaque. Originally the land was given by the Bishop of Winchester to bury single women and their children (prostitutes) not allowed in hallowed ground. They were the Winchester Geese.



Turn now into Red Cross Street to the tranquil Red Cross Gardens with the six almshouses built by Octavia Hill, founder of social housing and the National Trust. It is managed, like similar garden gems by the Bankside Trust as an open space for the community. Further on, never losing sight of the Shard, to Mint Street Gardens. This once derelict area shadowed by Peabody Trust flats, was created as a green space and facilities for the community. Finally, across to Copperfield St with more Octavia Hill Cottages to the gardens of the bombed

out All Hallows Church which belongs to Southwark Cathedral. So peaceful.

Before this stage, half the group had made for Southwark Cathedral while the remainder rested over a cup of tea and watched the river go by - Southwark is full of 'gems' with an amazing range of architecture. Ten minutes from the bustle of the Embankment or Borough Market and you can be in a tranquil garden with mums preparing for a birthday party.

I had decided that this would be my last Outing after 18 years. It seems that since Lockdown, people are less inclined to venture out on my type of outing, invariably to different parts of London, which enables you to get to a destination but leaves the choice to you. My intention is that you may wish to return and explore further. The same applies to the many museums we have visited. There have been several successful visits to Oxford but with the option to visit the wonderful Pitt Rivers Museum. We have explored markets and ethnic supermarkets, but have also had arranged tours of mosques, temples and synagogues, not forgetting Highgate Cemetery. We even had a day in France. The idea is that my Outings have a cultural connection, So, do I sacrifice my front seat on the coach? I had threatened to give up if take up to the Horniman was low. People had requested I ran it again but take up was impossibly low so I cancelled. On the other hand, seeing everyone trip off the coach telling me what a lovely day they had, thanking me enthusiastically, and asking me not to give up, I might just be persuaded to do the odd one. ***Sheila Darzi – Leader of Social Anthropology Group***

THE DEADLINE for the **SPRING 2024** newsletter is **15 MARCH 2024**: please submit your contributions as a **Word.doc or compatible** in **Arial** font, single spacing. **Photos as individual jpg files** please. Anything sent after the deadline will be held over until the next newsletter