

**u3a**  
Halstead & District

**the link**  
learn, laugh, live

February 2024

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YOUR u3a NEEDS  
**YOU**

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# Your u3a Needs YOU!

## A letter to all of our members from the Chairman and Secretary

It is the start of a new year and in no time it will be April and our u3a's Annual General Meeting. Over the past two or three years we have been in the position of being able to vote for our existing committee members to remain in office – enabling the continuity of our organisation.

### **This year is different.**

Two members of the committee will be resigning from their roles. Patricia Bouchier will be standing down as Chairman after nearly three years in the position and Howard Stanley has to resign as Honorary Secretary as he has already completed an extra year, bringing the total years in the position to four because no nominations were received for the role at last year's AGM.

### **We now need a new Chairman and a new Secretary – without them your u3a will not be able to function properly**

As Chairman, Chairlady or simply "Chair", you are the focal point of our u3a and its standing in the wider community. The most significant role is chairing the monthly meeting at the Queen's Hall and the regular committee meetings. However, if you don't like speaking in public, you can delegate this job to someone else on the committee. The "Chair" is also responsible, along with members of the committee, for ensuring that our u3a is run transparently and legally following the constitution and guidance from the u3a Trust.

Our u3a is one of the largest groups in Halstead and the surrounding area so expect to receive annual invitations to attend the Town Council's Civic Service in May and join in the Christmas Torch Light Procession at Christmas and receive an invite to an informal reception afterwards (with a mouth watering buffet). In addition, joining with other members in the town to lay a wreath on behalf of our u3a at the annual Remembrance Sunday service in the town gardens.

As Honorary Secretary you are responsible for ensuring communication between the u3a Trust and our committee officers and members. All this is now done via email, so basic keyboard skills and a reasonable wi-fi connection is essential. Liaising with the Chairman/lady/chair you arrange the agenda for the monthly committee meetings, which are relaxed occasions held at the Bull Hotel and you only have to take the minutes on the odd occasion when the Minutes Secretary is not present so shorthand is not a necessary requirement! Howard is willing to continue as editor of **thelink** – our newsletter, unless you also have journalistic skills and wish to take this on as well.

Information about what the roles involve can be found on the u3a web site and online training modules are available. In addition, our new Constitution is good guide, and both Patricia and Howard will be willing to help you take on the respective role.

We now have over two hundred members of our u3a, therefore there must be at least one person willing to take on the position of the Chair, and a second member to take on the role of Secretary. Don't be shy in stepping forward – talk to the present incumbents or any committee member for further information of what the roles involve.

Since covid, several voluntary organisations in Halstead and the surrounding area have ceased to function due to lack of members and an elected committee. Meanwhile, our u3a has thrived with more members than ever, more groups, more social occasions and outings. It would be a great shame if over two hundred members were denied the learning, living and laughter that is our u3a.

**Patricia Bouchier – Chairman**  
**Howard Stanley – Honourary Secretary**

# February Meeting



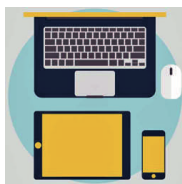
## Paula Short: Discovering Argentina

Argentina is famous for its excellent wine and food, as well as music and dance, football, beef and Eva Peron. It is the second largest country in South America (after Brazil), the fourth largest in the Americas and eighth in the world. Yet most of us know little about this country or have even visited it.

Our February speaker, Paula Short, will be able to add to our knowledge as she leads us on a journey through the country, its people, its customs and its scenery.

Doors open at the Queen's Hall at 10.00am for a 10.20am start. Once again we ask members not to enter the hall until 10.00am to allow the committee time to prepare the meeting.

## Wanted – Compute- Tech-Mates



Over ninety five percent of our members have wi-fi and receive emails. However, many of these are not computer savvy, and would love to be able to do much more, but either lack the knowledge or are scared of "pressing the wrong button".

Several of our members have expressed the desire to start a "Tech Savvy" group in which they could learn and gain confidence

in using a computer, tablet or smart phone. They wish to be taught how to write and send emails and how to go online. At the same time many are afraid of being scammed or pressing the wrong button, so want to know how to be safe and secure whilst exploring the world wide web.

Therefore, is there someone in our u3a who would be willing to act as Group Leader for a new group to help more of our members get on line? Lessons could be held either as a group or one to one sessions preferably in a location that has a strong and reliable wi-fi connection. Teaching ability is not necessary, just a good knowledge of using the internet. If you would be willing to pass on your knowledge and expertise please contact Tony Hill, Group Coordinator.  
tonyhill1946@hotmail.co.uk



## French and German Groups

Bonjour mesdames, messieurs, Guten Tag Frauen und Herren  
German group 1 meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 10.00, the French beginners group meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 9.30 am.

Both are on-line and the zoom link is provided, and last for two hours with a mid session coffee break.

The sessions include conversation, reading, grammar, songs, touring Germany and France on Google maps and anything else that we think of.

We feel we could manage a few more people in each group. The German group is of an intermediate level and some knowledge of German is required unless you are brilliant at picking up languages.

The French group is at a rather lower level although some basic French might be helpful.

With being on-line we have the advantage of having people from other parts of the country and so widening our interests. We have had someone from Germany and tried contacting France but with these there have been internet problems

Those who are interested should let Jane Giffould know by email: [jgiffould@aol.co](mailto:jgiffould@aol.co)

## TuTu Man Returns!



photo: Patrick Ashcroft

Last November's speaker, Iestyn Edwards, had a large audience in fits of laughter from start to finish – plus a few tears of sadness! The general comment after the meeting from members was "when can we have him back?"

The answer is – November this year! If you missed Iestyn this year make a note in your diary and make sure you join the many members who are already fans! His ballet may not be up to standard but his talks and opera-trained baritone singing is superb and not to be missed!



# Sustainable Energy – Going Green with our u3a

## Going All-Electric at Gridserve



When travelling from Chelmsford towards Halstead no doubt you have wondered what the new Gridserve service area at Black Notley is all about. Now you have a chance to find out with a free visit being arranged by the

Sci-Tech Group to take place on Thursday 8th February from 11am.

Gridserve is a sustainable solar energy company with a commitment to deliver net zero transport at the speed and scale the climate crisis requires to prevent global temperature rises.

An integral part of delivering this are the customer focused charging electric forecourts with Brain-tree Electric Forecourt being the first of its kind in the world.

The visit will include an introduction to Gridserve, and sustainable energy, a site tour including on-site solar power, different chargers & battery technology, followed by a Q&A session with one of the EV (Electric Vehicle)

experts.

After a coffee break around midday, members will be able to book test drives on one or more of the fleet of the latest vehicles available on-site from major manufacturers enabling members getting to grips with and experience the different EV technologies, design and handling first hand.

The invitation is open to all members of our u3a, so if you are interested in this new technology or considering buying an electric car at some point, this will be an opportunity to find out more.

For further details, including car-share, email Patrick Ashcroft: [g.patrick.ashcroft@gmail.com](mailto:g.patrick.ashcroft@gmail.com)

## Engineering Our Future Energy Requirements

Wymondham u3a is inviting members of u3as throughout the Eastern region to attend a day's seminar on how we can conquer climate change in the future.

COP28 in Dubai resulted in a major achievement with all participants agreeing, at least, to phase out the use of fossil fuels. Climate change fuelled by increasing release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere was first identified over one hundred years ago by the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius but, increased industrial and transport activity from the mid Twentieth century to now has rapidly accelerated the rise in global temperature.

The effects are felt in extreme weather- extremes of heat, rain, storms and coastal erosion. The next fifty years will still see a reliance on oil and gas for energy

supply but decreasingly so as time advances. There is an urgent need to develop energy sources that do not emit carbon dioxide



Despite the recent storms, wind power is not reliable (in November there was a week when zero power was generated in the UK by wind power). Solar power may be viable in some areas but not the usual damp and cloudy UK!

To provide some insight for future options, this special interest day has been organised featuring four guest speakers. The opening talk will be given by George Freeman, MP for mid Norfolk and until recently Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation. Background on the local effects of climate change will be provided by Dr Sophie Day from

the University of East Anglia who will discuss coastal erosion in Norfolk. The prospect for future carbon free energy production will have two inputs. Firstly, the proposed Sizewell C nuclear reactor outlined by Jack Raven and finally the future outlook for fusion energy from Chris Warrick of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Each talk is about 45 minutes in duration and there will be opportunities to ask questions.

The seminar will take place at Central Hall in Wymondham on 8th March. Doors open at 9.00am for refreshments followed by a 9.30 start. There will be a coffee break and lunch break followed by an afternoon session ending at 3.00pm.

The cost per person including lunch and all refreshments is £20.00 per person and non members are welcome. For further details and to purchase tickets email [courses@wymondhamu3a.org.uk](mailto:courses@wymondhamu3a.org.uk). Tickets must be purchased by 28th February.

# STOP TAKING THE TABLETS!\*



**\*to our u3a monthly meetings**

Many thanks for all your donations of used pill blister packs to the re-cycling cause, it's good to know that some of our waste is not going into landfill.

Since I started collecting these, Superdrug have now put a limit on the number of packs being dropped off and ask only for personal and not collective bags of pill packs which makes it rather awkward.

Now that you are in the habit of collecting them, perhaps you would continue to do so but drop them off yourselves when you are next in Sudbury.

Superdrug only have collecting points where there is a pharmacy – Sudbury being one of them. You just put them in the appropriate box or leave a bag of them – you don't need to queue or speak to anyone. If you have difficulty in getting to Sudbury please speak to Lin Gronland at one of our monthly meetings.

**In the meantime, please do not bring any more tablet blister packs to our monthly meetings but keep collecting them at home.**

The committee will be discussing alternative ways of recycling them at their next meeting.

**Lin Gronland**

## STOP PRESS!

**We have been informed that it may be possible to take your empty pill packs to Halstead Hospital for recycling. Once we have verified this we will let members know further details.**

## u3a Travel Club Tulips and Cherry Blossom Time



A belated Happy New Year to everyone.

It is now time to think about our coach trips for 2024 and we hope we have a good selection for you to enjoy.

Starting on 1 May we have our trip to RHS Wisley Gardens. Wisley is the historic home of the Royal Horticultural Society and houses one of the largest plant collections in the world. You will be able to enjoy swathes of bulbs and blossom in the Spring. A 'Celebration of Tulips' showcases 1000's of tulips in dazzling shades and Wisley is also home to more than 140 Yoshino cherry trees, smothered in white to pale pink blooms. Let us hope that the weather is on our side and both tulips and blossom will be in abundance.

RHS Hilltop is the new centre and home of gardening science with a chance to see the valuable research being carried out plus a visit to the Old Laboratory and a step back in time to discover the early days and story of Wisley.

A variety of themed 'gardens' and the huge cathedral-like Glasshouse await our visit and a number of eateries providing differing food and drink options. The gardens cover a large area and it is recommended that comfortable footwear is worn.

We will start taking bookings for Wisley at the February meeting. The cost for non RHS members is £42.00 for coach and entrance. RHS members plus one guest qualify for free entrance, so the cost for coach will be £26.00 each. Please tell us if you are an RHS member when booking and remember to take your RHS card with you on the day. Payment should be made at the time of booking, and no later than 17th April (Bookings are non refundable). Cheques made payable to Halstead and District u3a.

The coach will leave Butler Road, Halstead at 9.15 am and should arrive at Wisley around 11.15. We will depart Wisley at 4.00pm and arrive back in Halstead between 6.00 and 6.30pm.

More exciting trips in the pipeline for this year are;-  
July 18 – TBC but we are hoping to Visit RAF Biggin Hill Museum in the morning, then on to Chartwell for the afternoon.  
September 10th – Greenwich, a do-as-you-please day  
December 17th – Christmas Theme

Hoping to see you on 6th February to book the Wisley trip.  
Best Wishes Ann and Jean.





## Theatre Group: Live Screenings at The Empire, Halstead and Cineworld, Braintree

### "Manon" by The Royal Ballet Halstead Empire

Wednesday 7th February 6.30pm for 7.15

This is Kenneth MacMillan's adaptation of Abbe Provost's novel which tells the story of the heroine's desperate struggle to escape poverty. Tickets £16.50 (discount possible depending on numbers).

### "Uncle Vanya" by the National Theatre Braintree Cineworld

Thursday 22nd February at 7pm

The phenomenal Andrew Scott (Fleabag, Sherlock, Hamlet) stars in this one man version of Chekov's play. This production was a sell out in London. Tickets £19.50 adults, £18.50 seniors.

### "Hamlet" Braintree Cineworld

Tuesday 27th February at 7.30pm

Ian McKellen leads a stellar cast which includes Steven Berkoff, Frances Barber, Jonathan Hyde, Jenny Seagrove and Francesca Annis in a modern take on Shakespeare's classic tragedy. Tickets £19.50 adults, £18.50 seniors.

If you would tickets for any of these events please contact me by e-mail or phone by **Sunday 4th February**. After the closing date I will contact you to confirm the booking and the cost. Please note that it is not possible to give refunds once the tickets have been booked.

Unfortunately the two screenings at Braintree Cineworld are not available at the Empire.

Malcolm Swainsbury 01787 472133 /  
m.swainsbury@hotmail.co.uk

## Christmas Festivities at our u3a

Before Christmas becomes a distant memory it is time to remember the great time enjoyed by our members at the Christmas Party and Christmas Luncheon, plus on the outing to a festive Holkham Hall'

### Party Time!

DJ Dave leading the revellers in YMCA and the Theatre Group's dramatic interpretation of the "Twelve Days of Christmas".



### Holkham Hall

Even the Servants Hall was decorated and laid ready for a great festive feast. Unfortunately we did not have time to join in - prosecco and mince pies were waiting for us!



### Christmas Luncheon

Meanwhile we enjoyed great food, wine and company at our the Christmas lunch held at Weavers, Bocking.

