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Words from the Chair

As 2023 draws to a close, it is time to review the past year. Ringmer u3a has had a prosperous year, maintaining our membership numbers and starting up three new groups which, I hope, will have a successful future. As we go into the New Year, why not make a resolution to try something different – join a new u3a group, become a convenor or even suggest a brand-new group for formation in 2024. Remember, the u3a is *your* organisation, you can make it whatever you want! Wishing you all very Merry Christmas and a Happy and peaceful New Year.

Sarah Boot-Hanford

'SCAMS' Presentaion

A talk by Tracey Firth from Age UK to discuss 'Scams' will be held at Ringmer Village Hall on 25th March 2024 starting at 2:30pm. This will be **open to all members** of Ringmer u3a and will include discussion of questions and answers.

Group Activity

2 Garden Group

The sad loss of Rita, our convener, and no one to take up her role resulted in a year when we divided the tasks of running the group. It has worked very well, developing a sense of shared responsibility. It has been a good year with very interesting outings, discovering new gardens quite close to Ringmer.

The group decided to limit the membership to 15. That is because we meet in each other houses and sitting 15 people is an absolute maximum. The result is that we have a waiting list but people on the waiting list are welcome to join the garden visits.

It was great fun to have a festive last meeting with poems and quiz and delicious treats.

Happy Christmas to all !

Marie-Claude Pullen

Astronomy Group

At the start of the year Mars was at its nearest point to our planet and was good for observing. We studied the nature of its orbit and the planet itself. Observations were carried out and Mars was photographed to show some of its surface detail. We looked at the mechanics of satellites in their orbits around the Earth in February and later in the year heard about the achievements of the Herschel family. After our summer break we heard about the nature of Galaxies and also studied the planet Mercury.

Observation evenings have been few because the weather has not been clear enough on many occasions to make them worthwhile. It is planned that we shall have more observation evenings in the coming months.

Brian Wignall

Computing & Home Tech Group

We have had a wide variety of topics at our meetings this u3a year so far, from Smart Home systems such as Wiser and HIVE to staying safe online and including a sprinkle of MS office and Apple's iWork's somewhere in between.

Our next meeting is a combined Christmas get together on the 28th December with the Family History and Photography groups, so this is an invitation to our group members to come along and join in the fun and festivities.

There are some interesting topics being proposed and planned for 2024 and we are kicking off the new year with a workshop dedicated to the digitizing and editing of photographs.

Finally, we would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Keith Moore

DNA Group



The DNA Group is an offshoot of the Family History Group and enables members to explore the results from DNA testing. This has become more popular in recent years and can make a useful contribution to building a family tree and exploring your past. The group has held two meetings so far and its next meeting will be in Thursday 1 February 2024. We will normally meet 3 or 4 times a year during the winter season. Full details about the group are on the group's web pages ([Ringmer u3a: DNA Group \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Ringmer u3a: DNA Group (u3asites.org.uk))).

The group currently has 18 members with a mixed range of experience. At our first two meetings we looked at "Ancestry" and "My Heritage" websites and then reminded ourselves of the basics of DNA research. If you have taken a DNA test, or are thinking of taking a test, then this group is for you. Most members also belong to the Family History Group although this is not essential if you already have an initial family tree going back three generations. If you want to explore your ancestry through DNA then now is the time to take a test as most sites have reduced prices. It is perhaps worth taking the Autosomal (Family Finder) test with "Ancestry" as they have the largest database and some easy to use tools. Please feel free to contact the Convenor if you want some advice.

Ian Loughborough

Family History Group

Advance notice that our December meeting will be on Thursday 28th and, as usual, will be a joint social event with the Photography and Computer and Home Tech groups. It's a good excuse to get away from the family and all those turkey sandwiches. Also, as usual, I have no idea how the afternoon will unravel but expect the usual brain teasers, left over Christmas food and lots of fun. Our plan for next year is as follows:-

- 30 January** Dead-ends: session 1, sharing problems.
- 27 February** My Story
- 26 March** Visit to West Sussex County Records Office, Chichester
- 30 April** Dead-ends: session 2, problems solved!
- 28 May** a) private researcher
b) other research methods
- 25 June** International Research
- 30 July** TBA

Garden Group

The u3a Garden Group's enthusiasm for their gardens continues. We have a full membership of 18 and we restart our monthly meetings in March 2024 on the third Tuesday of the month.

Meanwhile a member of the Garden Group is producing a monthly newsletter, full of fun, videos, peanut cartoons and the odd words of wisdom to entertain us through the winter months.

Our programme for next year includes, talks by Big Nose and Beardy and a talk about the Laughton Community Orchard. We plan visits to Pelham Plants and The Beeches at Barcombe. In-house we have organised a plant swap and a 'growing from seed' challenge as well as a discussion about a favourite shrub. We hope to meet up for a pub lunch in the next few weeks.

Jenny West

Newsround

This small group, there are 8 of us, has been running for a couple of years now and we have really enjoyed getting to know one another and coming together to discuss topics of interest from the news. Recently it has been difficult to find optimistic news items but we all participate in as much depth as possible without becoming too depressed. We must learn that we can't solve the problems of the world !

These meetings have been particularly appreciated by those who do not have others at home with whom to share thoughts on what's going on in the world. We meet once a month at 10.30 on the last Monday in the month and everyone brings along a couple of topics they have found interesting over the previous week. No one hesitates to take part and opinions vary, making the sessions very stimulating and inclusive. Eight is a good maximum number and this works very well, as we meet in one another's homes, always treated to super biscuits and cookies. We all go home feeling uplifted and having used our brains and discursive powers.

Jenny Hill

Poetry Group

Since its formation, the Poetry Group has met three times to read and discuss our favourite poems. The first meeting was a get-to-know-you meeting and we shared our favourite poems, in November we explored the Ballad format and, of course, the December meeting was on the theme of Christmas. Next month's topic will be "New Beginnings". As we are still quite a new group, there are a number of spaces around our table. If you would like to join us please call me.

Sarah Boot-Handford

Walking Group

Six new members have joined the walking group in spite of my efforts to put them off on Open Day ! "Miles and miles of walking....lots of mud....hills.....stiles and scant, if any, information about where we are actually going." To top it all I then broke my ankle in a pothole in Lewes and have just left everyone to their own devices since the end of September.

It is a tribute to all our stalwart members that the whole programme of walks has just carried on without me. I have missed their cheerful company but it just goes to show how hands off a convenor can be. The group is full for now.

Looking forward to rejoining you all and an active New Year.

Lynne Booth

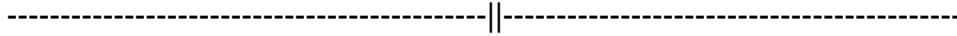
What the Papers Say

We continue to meet as a group on the fourth Monday of each month. There is so much to discuss with local, national or international news. The past few months we have deliberately included some 'lighter' subjects to discuss. Our discussions are lively and we all have the opportunity to contribute - it's amazing how much we learn from each other and leave the meetings with 'food for thought'.

Wine Appreciation Group

Over the past few months, the Wine Appreciation Group has tasted wines from the Loire Valley, Argentina and Portugal, and on one memorable occasion, we diversified into tasting Gin. This month we shared the wines we will be serving at Christmas; tasty reds and whites, a delicious sparkling white from South Africa, the lusciousness of Sauternes and the warmth of Glüwein. In the coming months, we plan to explore the wines of Greece and Germany and to revisit our gin experiments.

Sarah Boot-Handford



Group List			
2 Garden	Tuesday pm second Tuesday each month	Art History	First Friday each month
Astronomy	Thursday 7:30pm second Thursday each month	Beginners Spanish	Meeting dates/times TBA
Computer & Home Tech	Second Thursday each month	DNA	Meeting dates/times TBA
ECO	Third Thursday each month	Family History	Tuesday pm last Tuesday of each month
Gardening Club	Tuesday pm third Tuesday each month	Mah-Jong	Monday am every Monday
Newsround	Monday am fourth Monday each month	Photography	Thursday pm last Thursday of each month
Poetry	Second Wednesday each month	Walking Group	Wednesday pm first and third Wednesday
What the Papers Say	Monday 14:30hrs fourth monday	Wine Appreciation	Wednesday 2:30 pm 2 nd Wednesday of each month