



I hope you and those close to you are in good

health and continue to cope with the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The past few months have been very challenging for Royston U3A. We have tried to keep our members' morale upbeat by staying connected via buddy phone calls and through our *Keeping in Touch* leaflet to inform you about things available online and free.

Thanks to the wonders of Zoom video conferencing we have been able to reinstate our monthly meetings, albeit virtually, with guest speakers. Zoom has also enabled several of our interest groups to meet virtually. Other groups such as golf, clay shooting, five mile walking and bird watching continue to meet outdoors whilst socially distancing.

I hope to see you at the next virtual monthly meeting on October 27.

**'Keep safe and well'**

*Jackie Gellert, Chairman*

# ROYSTON U3A NEWS

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

## THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS IS DOMINATING THE CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP'S AGENDA AT THE MOMENT

### HOW TO COPE IN A PANDEMIC

Technology is a great tool. We cannot meet face-to-face physically but with Zoom, Facetime and Skype we can see each other over the internet. We can easily keep up to date with current affairs via the internet, radio and television. Hertfordshire libraries offer newspapers and magazines online, thereby avoiding the risk of contamination. And contactless payment - that has been so useful.

Our Current Affairs group is small; however we do have a wide range of views and it's interesting to hear others' reactions to this year's pandemic. We are all of (or nearly) that certain age when we need to take extra care - just how much depends on underlying physical conditions, as well as mental approach.

What are our general worries? Flying varied from an outright "No way" to "I'm off soon" via "not my plans right now". Socialising outside (sometimes inside) with a few (known) people was good - but restaurants, shopping centres and holidays were too risky for some. However, another has booked a cruise for Christmas and New Year, flying off to join the ship. Wide-ranging indeed.

Those of us who had been out and about felt we had dealt with the situation, with care. There are those who get too close and who don't wear masks but overall we felt this was a situation we have to live with. We all have to take responsibility for ourselves - and avoid others who don't take the same care. Sometimes for instance that meant having to take a (watchful) detour into the road to avoid people on pavements.

A vaccine as soon as possible offers the greatest hope - for us, the physically more vulnerable, and for the economy, for our children and grand-children to find work.

It's not all doom and gloom. We will get through this.

**MEANWHILE - TAKE CARE AND KEEP SAFE**

*Marion Sweet*

- The Current Affairs group gets together to discuss a wide range of topics on anything from making vaccinations compulsory to the growing problem of knife crime.

New members are welcome to join informal meetings currently being held on Zoom. For more details contact Marion Sweet at [marion22roystonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:marion22roystonu3a@gmail.com) or 01763 273806

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*Royston Crow published 27.08.20*

## Royston retirees take part in a virtual Zoom tour of London

Members of Royston's University of the Third Age (U3A) took part in a virtual walking tour of London in their first monthly meeting since lockdown.

Welcoming everyone back, chairman Jackie Gellert said: "It's wonderful that by embracing technology we can all meet up and see one another again."



Virtual monthly meetings with guest speakers will be held on ZOOM until further notice to shield members from Covid-19.

Members will be emailed in advance with details and an invitation to join the meeting.



# AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP IN KOSOVO

Elizabeth Gowing



Who would have thought that a chance encounter with a rubbish-picker's wife would lead to life changing opportunities for families living in poverty and exclusion in Kosovo?

Elizabeth Gowing moved to Kosovo in 2006 and had been delivering a bag of donations when a young woman asked her to help her three-year-old son whose legs had been scalded.

That meeting led to a friendship with Hatemja and her family where Elizabeth learned about the realities of her community and the struggles they faced.

On hearing that Hatemja's nine-year-old daughter could not go to school because she had no shoes, Elizabeth, a teacher and education consultant, was determined to do something.

"When the little girl asked if her friends could come to school too I suddenly realised this was a systemic problem," she said. "We found a place to teach them and on the first day we had 23 children. By the end of the week we had 50."

In an enthralling Zoom talk from Kosovo at September's monthly meeting, Elizabeth



*In descending order:*

*Young rubbish pickers in Kosovo.*

*Hatemja and one of her children when she first met Elizabeth*

*Hatemja's home now.*

*Royal recognition from the Duchess of Cornwall meeting volunteers.*

described how that initial aim to get children into school led to a raft of other projects to improve the lives of the desperately impoverished community.

Through her charity the Idea Partnership and supported by friends, volunteers and people in the local community, opportunities were created ranging from antenatal advice and a kindergarten to setting up a soap and sewing enterprise and offering bursaries for adults to study.

She has been awarded Kosovan citizenship by the President of Kosovo in recognition of all she has achieved since that first encounter with Hatemja.

"She had taught me what friendship made you brave enough to try," she said. "We help people in need to help themselves and half our staff are from the communities we serve."

"Kosovo is a place I love very much. I think it will always be part of my life."

Elizabeth's novel, *The Rubbish-Picker's Wife: an unlikely friendship in Kosovo*, is available in paperback.

*Pam Dajda*

# ZOOMING ROUND THE STREETS OF FULHAM AND CHELSEA

Emma Matthews



Taking 100 members on a walking tour round the narrow streets of London would have been a tough challenge for Blue Badge guide Emma Matthews.

But thanks to the wonders of Zoom we could sit back in comfort as she took us on a virtual tour of Fulham and Chelsea at our first monthly meeting since lockdown.

From fascinating facts about the vital role of the Fulham ferrymen in the days when there was only one bridge across the Thames, to moving a manor house owned by Sir Thomas More brick by brick to Chelsea, we explored two of London's most vibrant boroughs.

Our route included gems like the Bishop's Palace in Fulham with its walled gardens giving the feel of almost being in the country, heading towards Putney Bridge where a large bottle kiln is all that remains of Fulham Pottery where firing ended in the 1980s.

Skirting around Royal Hospital Chelsea and into exclusive Cheyne Walk we passed Carlyle Mansions – known as Writers' Block –

**Clockwise from above :**

*Cheyne Walk and Don Saltero's Tavern.*

*Bishop's Palace in Fulham.*

*Fulham Pottery Bottle Kiln.*

*Rossettis at home in Chelsea.*

*Sir Thomas More statue in Fulham.*



rented by the likes of Ian Fleming, Henry James and Somerset Maugham.

Other famous Cheyne Walk residents included Judy Garland, Lloyd George and the pre-Raphaelite Rossetti family who kept wombats, ostriches and kangaroos in their garden.

"The mad eclectic style of houses goes with the mad eclectic group of people who lived there, from writers and artists to spies, admirals and prime ministers," said Emma.

The Chelsea Physic Garden founded in 1673, the shop where Mary Quant designed the first mini skirt, and the houses of the rich and famous all add to the character and artistic heritage that Chelsea retains.

Thanking everyone, Emma said: "It's absolutely amazing to see you all tuning in. We couldn't have done the walk having so many people walking round the London streets. That's the nice thing about zooming - we get to zoom around."

*Pam Dajda*



## Opening a new chapter in Life Stories

The Life Stories group had a pleasant time reminiscing about their early lives at their first meeting way back in pre-lockdown days.

That initial session was led by John Bell who would like to get the group up and running again. He is planning to hold a Zoom meeting in early October to get an idea of how members would like to move forward.

“I’d like to get together for a chat to share ideas and see how we should progress in future. I think people are ready for more interaction,” said John.

As a reminder of the aims of Life Stories, Eric Heaton wrote the following report after the first meeting:

“The more we talked the more the filing cabinets in our brains opened to release even more stories about things that played an important part in our lives.

Have you ever lost a family member and wished that you had asked questions about their lives when you were able to do so but didn’t? Well now is your chance to leave your family a precious gift of your important memories.

School days, first holiday, first job, first love. It doesn’t have to be everything that you have ever experienced, but write down everything that was important to you, and you can always edit it later.

“*you don’t need to be famous to have a story to tell*”

Children today cannot imagine a life before the internet or television - and as for school milk at break time, ink wells with dipping pens and the nit nurse they will look at you as if you lived in the dark ages.

You don’t need to be famous to have a story to tell because we have all lived through historical events, including too many wars, Sputnik, first man in Space, first man on the Moon - and seeing the Beatles live.

With John’s guidance we will be able to record things that have left a lasting impression and one day your descendants will be pleased that you did.”

*Eric Heaton*

## Stepping out again six months on - how times have changed

What a difference lockdown has made as these photos of the Five Mile Walking group show!

Wrapped up warm for bracing winter walks, we little imagined that the next time members met up we would be wearing shorts and t-shirts in the summer sunshine.

Getting together again in early September, the group set off for a socially distanced but still highly enjoyable walk at Meldreth. Leaving the garden at the British Queen by the rear gate to join the footpath alongside the River Mel towards Melbourn, we turned at the village college to walk along The Moor before crossing the A10 back to Meldreth for a brief stop at the parish church which is open for private prayer.

Rejoining a path along another section of the River Mel, we passed the old



*Socially distancing in the sunshine - Meldreth walk in September.*

*Top: All wrapped up for the Therfield walk in February.*



water mill then through a field with cattle that chose to ignore us and continued munching grass.

We continued towards Whaddon across open fields before retracing our steps back to Meldreth where eight members stayed for an excellent and well deserved lunch at the British Queen.

Group leader Eric Heaton said: “It was good to meet up after all this time. Even though we were socially distanced it was lovely to be out walking with the group on a beautiful summer day.”

*Eric Heaton*



## Gardening in all seasons

Being at home during lockdown has been the ideal time to get out into the garden - and the gardening group has been getting together to share horticultural tips.

Thanks to Zoom meetings organised by Maureen Hersee, members enjoyed catching up with each other and discussing everything from advice on planting to whether grated coal tar soap acts as a deterrent to stop cats chasing frogs!

Val Fairbanks followed with a short talk on one of her favourite gardens - Nymans in West Sussex - at the August meeting. Described as a garden lovers' home for all seasons set around a romantic house and ruins, Val said it has year-round appeal with colour and interest whenever you visit.



*Nymans Gardens and House.*  
(National Trust / Edward Shorthouse)

At the group's September meeting Anne Lauder, a guide and retired lecturer at Capel Manor College, gave a fascinating zoom talk on colour and mood in the garden.

She stressed how important it is for us to get outdoors especially in these worrying times, because of the benefits of lowering blood pressure as well as creating a feeling of calmness and improving your mood.

*The borders at Nymans in summer.*  
(National Trust / Emma Stratton)

Talking about gardening seasons she explained how colours affect your mood. Yellow, signifying happiness, is dominant in spring, summer hot colours raise your temperature, darker shades in autumn can be very restful, followed by the whites and greys of winter.

Interestingly she added that a restful garden where colours blend together gives a feeling of protection and safety.

The group's next meeting will be on Thursday October 8<sup>th</sup> with a Zoom discussion on preparing the garden for winter and spring. If you're interested in joining email Maureen Hersee for details.

[maureenhersee@btinternet.com](mailto:maureenhersee@btinternet.com)

*Val Fairbanks*

## Clay Shooting group on target

Royston U3A Clay Shooting group has been active for four years and now has seventeen members.

Throughout the current pandemic, the group has continued to shoot at a Herts league ground at Nuthampstead where guns, cartridges and clays are provided. The ground also provides instructors, electric clay traps and a variety of different styles of simulated targets to resemble birds in flight.

All shooting is conducted on a friendly basis and the monthly Top Gun Trophy is awarded to the top scoring participant. Group members usually have an enjoyable



*Damien O'Dell being presented earlier this year with the Top Gun trophy by Frank Martin (left in picture) after scoring 20 out of 24 points.*

Wednesday afternoon with a (socially distanced) mid-afternoon coffee break in the club's canteen.

Group members have progressed over the months to a standard they never would have envisaged at the start of

their adventure, all based on a non-competitive footing.

Before stepping onto the range, novices need to attend a health and safety talk where safety, gun handling, shooting postures and general information are discussed with Frank Martin, the group leader who has passed several courses in shooting procedures, safety and gun handling with the CPSA and the BASC. Frank also carries out the scoring on behalf of each group member.

Due to the pandemic the group is currently closed to new members.

*Frank Martin*

## Birding group out and about again

*In early September Birding group members had their first outing since the pandemic started.*

Six of us drove in our own cars (no car sharing) to Amwell Pits, near Ware, where we first had coffee, all at a distance, then spent a very pleasurable few hours checking for birds, first from the viewing platform and then a gentle walk around, again, all at a distance. We did not use the hides.

The weather was very kind to us, not too hot, and we saw plenty of birds. These included the elusive kingfisher, the equally elusive snipe (of which we saw three), common sand-piper, plenty of the usual ducks and also different gulls. We were finished by lunchtime having had a very enjoyable morning.

We hope to have our next meeting on Wednesday 7th October which will be to Fen Drayton Lakes.

*Carol McGeogh*

● As we went into lockdown way back in March, I contacted Birding group members and asked if they would like to join the WhatsApp group I was forming. Most, but not all, did.

We had some wonderful times through the spring and summer, relating to the birds we saw in our gardens, having time to watch their behaviour and even watching the butterflies, dragonflies and lots of other insects mainly around our ponds.

Often photos were posted, sometimes just for enjoyment and sometimes for help with identification. Most days there was some action, often with the use of books and some friendly banter. I know I have benefited from this and I am sure group members have. We aren't using it so much now as we are all getting about more, but it's there if you get a rare sighting!

*Carol McGeogh*

## Dates for your diary

### October

Tuesday 27, 2pm on Zoom

#### A POOR EXISTENCE - STREET LIFE IN VICTORIAN LONDON

In the mid-19th century many of London's poorest inhabitants earned their living on the streets by legal and sometimes not so legal means. Our guest speaker, **Graham Harrison**, will be introducing us to some colourful characters of Victorian London, some of whom may have inspired Dickens.

### November

Tuesday 24, 2pm on Zoom

#### ALEXANDER LITVINENKO - THE SPY WHO SOLVED HIS OWN MURDER

Our guest speaker, **Paul Barwick**, will give an insight into this spy's life. Litvinenko spoke openly critically about what he saw as corruption within the Russian government before he fled retribution to the UK, where he remained a vocal critic of the Russian state.

## Easy Guide to Interest Groups

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM		Art	Fitness	Birding	Walkers: Strollers	Book Club 2
		Golf Croquet	Seated Exercise	Book Club 3	Who do you think they were?	
				Life Stories		
				Patchwork		
				Walkers: Five Mile		
PM	Solo Sundays	Current Affairs	MONTHLY MEETING last Tuesday of month	Clay Shooting	Gardening	Classic Novels
		Curry Club	Book Club 1	Film	Golf	Petanque/Boules
		French Conversation	History	Wine Appreciation	Mixed Crafts	Pilates
		Pottery (Hand Building)	Ukulele		Quiz	
		Tai Chi				
EVE				Jazz Appreciation		

For frequency and contact details about all interest groups please see the chart on the final page or check our website for more information. Announcements about future Events & Outings and Theatre Trips will be posted on our website when details become available.

## To those non-Zoomer members not able to join us online.....

This is an excerpt from my welcome address to Royston U3A members who linked in online in late September to our second Zoom monthly meeting since the start of lockdown.

“A BIG WELCOME EVERYONE TO OUR SECOND MONTHLY MEETING ON ZOOM SINCE LOCKDOWN.”

”For the past few months the sunshine and good weather have been kind to us but now things are changing and we will all have to look to more indoor pursuits to keep ourselves occupied and that’s where Royston U3A can be a great source of help – we have quite a few groups that are functioning either by phone, email or Zoom.

Also just to let you know that Royston U3A current membership, although slightly smaller than last year, has not reduced significantly despite there being this devastating pandemic and a big thank you for sticking with us – the committee and I really appreciate it – it makes what we do unnoticed in the background feel tremendously worthwhile.

Whilst on thank you’s, I want to say a massive thank you to the group leaders who have, during

these uncertain and challenging times, made an enormous effort to keep their interest groups going and also in some cases got to grips with technology and are hosting Zoom meetings – please keep going if at all possible during the winter months; your group members have commented on how much they appreciate your efforts and I second that with a huge vote of thanks.

It seems bizarre not to be able to meet face-to-face but for those who are able,

Zoom video conferencing has become the next best thing – it is what we and other U3A’s are able to do to ensure we keep in touch without endangering the wellbeing of our members.

Let’s hope that, fingers crossed, by Spring next year we will be able to get together and get back to a new type of normality and enjoy a cup of tea again with each other.”

Jackie Gellert  
September 28, 2020

## Some of the comments from members following the September monthly meeting on Zoom

Thank you for finding such an inspirational person who has changed the lives of these very poor and under-privileged people. It was absolutely magnificent.

NK

It was nice to see some of you on the Zoom meeting yesterday afternoon - a very interesting talk with a good speaker.

SR

What a wonderful, wonderful talk by Elizabeth. Unfortunately we had to leave due to previous commitments, but do thank you so much for arranging it.

JW & JD

I found the talk inspirational. This was seeing a problem and not just throwing money at it but getting into the causes and working hard to solve them. Helping the community to help itself. Wonderful stuff.

That was an inspiring and fascinating illustrated talk and definitely one of the best Tuesday talks ever. I’ll certainly be buying Elizabeth’s book

RH

Thank you and the committee for sourcing an excellent speaker for this afternoon’s meeting, which I was this time easily able to join. The linkup with you gave me confidence that I could master this technology, perhaps arriving early and having the patience to wait to be admitted helped too, I’m now greatly looking forward to the next meeting.

PK

Great meeting today, very interesting.

PW

It is quite remarkable how Elizabeth initiated life changing opportunities for the Ashkali community living in poverty in Kosovo. Without doubt the most inspirational talk Royston U3A has had up to now.

RG

Absolutely excellent. An inspirational speaker talking about the work she is carrying out amongst the poor and under-privileged community in an area of the world that we know little about.

CB & MB

I would like to say how much I enjoyed the talk on Kosovo, Thank you Jackie for helping to set it up. It was a very interesting afternoon. Looking forward to the next one.

IW

# Interest Groups

Don't forget to check our website for regularly updated information

GROUP	DAY	TIME	FREQUENCY	GROUP LEADER	CONTACT DETAILS
Art	Mon	9:30am	Suspended	Sylvia Jordan	sylviahjordan41@gmail.com 07599 212882
Birding	Wed	8:30am	Monthly 1st Wed	Carol McGeoch	carol.mcgeoch@hotmail.co.uk 01223 207354
Book Club 1	Tues	2:00pm	Monthly 1st Tues by email	Deirdre Smith	deidreroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 244700
Book Club 2	Fri	11:00am	Monthly Variable in Gardens	Janet Burton	janet.a.burton@gmail.com 07984 600295
Book Club 3	Wed	10:30am	Monthly last Wed in Gardens	Elizabeth (Lee) Towers	ladytowers@gmail.com 01763 241488
Classic Novels	Fri	2.00pm	Suspended	Sue Biggs	biggs1633@gmail.com 01763 847200
Clay Shooting	Wed	2:00pm	Variable	Frank Martin	theofmartin@outlook.com 07831 898234
Current Affairs	Mon	3:30pm	Monthly 3rd Mon on Zoom	Marion Sweet	marion22roystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 273806
Curry Club	Mon	12:00pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Events & Outings (open to all)	Variable	Variable	Suspended	Sandra Walker	sandraroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241896
Film	Wed	2:00pm	Suspended	Carla Bailey	carlaroystonu3a@gmail.com 07968 261101
Fitness	Tues	9:30am	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
French Conversation	Mon	1:00pm	Fortnightly Variable on Zoom	Barbara Fielden	fieldenbarbara@hotmail.com 07850 455211
Gardening	Thurs	2:30pm	Monthly Variable on Zoom	Val Fairbanks	t.fairbanks@ntlworld.com 01763 230724
Golf	Thurs	1:00pm	Weekly	Ralph Gellert	ralphroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 248097
Golf Croquet	Mon	10:15am	Suspended	John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
History	Tues	2:00pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Jazz Appreciation	Wed	7:30pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Life Stories	Wed	11:00am	Suspended	John Bell	john.bell99@btinternet.com 07710 176161
Mixed Crafts	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	Rosie Cowsley	rosie.cowsley@ntlworld.com 07809 047380
Patchwork	Wed	10:00am	Suspended	Maureen Strugnell	maureen.strugnell@ntlworld.com 01763 241967
Petanque / Boules	Fri	2:30pm	Suspended	Sue & John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
Pilates	Fri	1pm & 2pm	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Pottery (Hand Building)	Mon	2:00pm	Suspended	Rosie Cowsley	rosie.cowsley@ntlworld.com 07809 047380
Quiz	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	Sharon Camilletti	sharon.camilletti19@gmail.com 07725 847303
Seated Exercise	Tues	10:45am	Suspended	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Solo Sundays	Sun	12:00pm	Suspended	Sandra Restall	sandra.restall@gmail.com 07775 508533
Tai Chi	Mon	3:15pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Theatre Trips	Variable	Variable	Suspended	Deirdre Smith	deidreroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 244700
Ukulele	Tues	12:00pm	Weekly in Gardens	John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
Walkers: Five Mile	Wed	9:45am	Monthly 2nd Wed	Eric Heaton	ericroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 242989
Walkers: Strollers	Thurs	10:15am	Suspended	David Walker	djwalker3@aol.com 01763 241896
Who do you think they were?	Thurs	10:45am	Suspended	Sharon Camilletti	sharon.camilletti19@gmail.com 07725 847303
Wine Appreciation	Wed	2:00pm	Suspended	Jackie Gellert	jackieroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 248097

## Royston U3A Committee

Chairman	Jackie Gellert	jackieroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 248097
Vice Chair	Sandra Walker	sandraroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 241896
Treasurer & Speakers Secretary	Barbara Andrew	barbararoystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 245363
Secretary	Karen Heaton	karenroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 242989
Membership Secretary	Marion Martin	marionroystonu3a@gmail.com	07526 930168
Minutes Secretary	Sylvia Fuller	sylviaroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 243006
Existing Groups Co-ordinator	Joan Westcott	joanroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 220812
New Groups Co-ordinator	Mel Chammings	melroystonu3a@gmail.com	07713 837086
New Members Contact	Carla Bailey	carlaroystonu3a@gmail.com	07968 261101
Publicity	Pam Dajda	pam@dajda.net	01763 246234
Royston U3A News	Ralph Gellert	ralphroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 248097
Co-opted Committee Member	Eric Heaton	ericroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 242989

### Get it in the News

If you're involved in a group why not publicise it in Royston U3A News? Send in a short report of your latest meeting or outing - photos welcomed too - to Pam Dajda at [pam@dajda.net](mailto:pam@dajda.net) or phone 01763 246234