

# ROYSTON u3a news

MAY 2021 Issue 32



It is tremendous that so many members have embraced technology and regularly join our live-streamed meetings. Feedback so far has been that you find our guest speakers subjects interesting. I hope more members will give Zoom a try as we have some excellent speakers lined up for the rest of the year.

We will be holding our AGM in June just prior to the monthly meeting talk and I hope you will join us. Two highly valued committee members have decided not to stand for re-election. If you are interested in joining the committee, please let either Sandra Walker or myself know.

Several outdoor interest groups are up and running or will be starting up again in May or June, roadmap permitting, and of course socially distancing. Please remember to keep looking at our website as the information is updated frequently.

You have probably seen in 'Third Age Matters' that The Third Age Trust has a new logo. We are gradually updating the Royston U3A logo to reflect this change.

**Stay safe and keep well.**

*Jackie Gellert, Chairman*

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## Clocking up time through the ages



**John Hope**

We fastened our seat belts for an absorbing journey travelling through time telling over the centuries.

Our April speaker John Hope took us back two thousand years when calendars were used to measure time. The Romans introduced the solar 12 months calendar, the Egyptians decided to split the day into 24 hours and the Babylonians were responsible for 60 seconds in a minute.

The first sundials designed by the Egyptians were the main method of telling time

for centuries until a little-known Turkish engineer called Ismail-al-Jazari helped shape the world as we know it today.

Born in 1136, Al-Jazari's ingenious inventions included magnificent and decorative water clocks.

"He's not been given the recognition he deserves for his contribution to technology," said John.

The introduction of mechanical clocks centuries later were again thanks to Al-Jazari who originally invented the escapement mechanism.

Moving on to the present day we learned fascinating facts about the recent £60 million refurbishment of Big Ben. Clock parts were initially taken to an unused underground car park for

repair but had to be moved hundreds of miles to Carlisle after the local council ruled it could not be used as a workshop.

The original 1868 St Pancras platform clock shattered when it was taken down to be sold, but the pieces were collected by train driver Roland Hoggard who meticulously rebuilt the large clock face on the side of a barn. Moulds from this were taken for a replica clock to be installed when St Pancras was restored to its former glory.

The vital role of maritime chronometers, railway clocks and through to the incredible precision of the atomic clock rounded off our journey through time.

*Pam Dajda*



*Al-Jazari's elephant water clock - a masterpiece of medieval engineering*



*Roland Hoggard and the St Pancras clock*

# MANNERS PLEASE, DEAREST!

## The Do's and Don'ts of Victorian Etiquette

David Allen is a storyteller with a fascination for history and an eye for the absurd, which was entered into with enthusiasm and enjoyment by the young ladies and gentlemen amongst us who attended his class at the March meeting on Zoom.

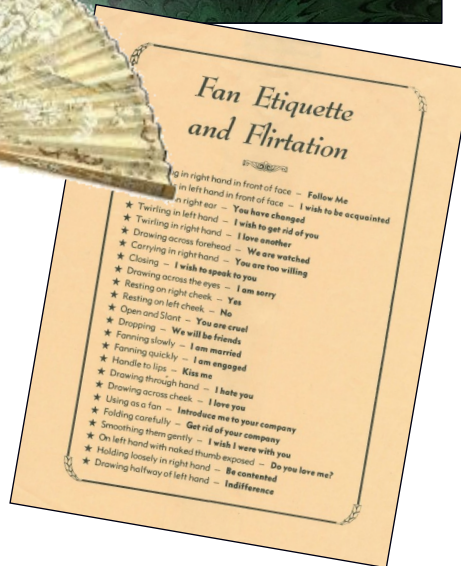
As Principal Hugo Bottomley-Smythe of The Bottomley-Smythe Finishing School for Young Ladies and Gentlemen in Cavendish Square in London (newly equipped this year of 1859 with gas lamps as recently fitted in the Houses of Parliament) he regretted the absence of his wife Mrs Bottomley-Smythe, explaining that this morning she was meeting Queen Victoria, though she hoped to be returning in time to join us for a light luncheon.

Congratulating us on our marvellous school uniforms, Mr B-S questioned sternly the young ladies on whether in addition they were wearing their chemise, their corset, and no less than the regulation five pairs of winter bloomers, reminding us that Mrs B-S would be checking later. Gentlemen were reminded that they, like young Mr Gellert, should be wearing their prescribed tight trousers in green, before returning to the ladies to emphasise that our waist measurements should be reduced by one inch every month until we reach fifteen inches! Our fashionable crinolines and dresses are six feet in diameter which must be remembered when negotiating doorways - and chamberpots. Mrs B-S would be on hand with helpful advice if needed by any young lady especially in the matter of the latter.

Extra slices of lark pie were promised to those keen young people who managed those most difficult of deportment exercises - balancing a book on one's head while walking. Mr Bottomley-Smythe was most encouraging to the class, calling out approval to many of the young Lords and Ladies present. Moving on to courtship he had tips on how to achieve a marvellous blemish free complexion - with Dr Mountebank's Arsenic Lotion!

Ringling a bell between lessons and requesting that his class answer him when spoken to, Mr B-S moved on to the skills required in

husband well. The young ladies attending these important lessons were taught how to curtsy on being introduced, with praise for the most graceful, while the gentlemen were coached in how to bow.



identifying a suitable suitor. Mama and Papa would no doubt be asking searching questions - does he have a town house and a country house? How many servants does he have, and indeed how many do we? Does the gentleman have good breeding, and for the gentleman does the lady expect a good dowry from her father?

He impressed upon his young charges that ladies must beware of gentlemen who liked low pursuits and amusements as once married all of one's money would be given to our husbands. Divorces are costly and rare, in 1856 only 322 were granted, so choose your

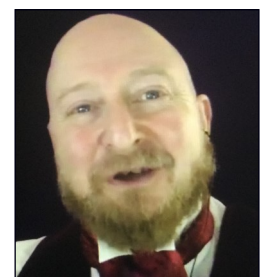
teaspoon like a paddle back and forth, no circular stirring. Mr B-S advised us against weighty conversation, chit chat is what is looked for!

Dinner manners and menus followed, ladies seated first by their escorts with our light luncheon today consisting of only ten courses including that marvellous lark pie. Eat slowly (remember that corset!) and do not laugh if you have bad teeth, although the new dentures can be helpful in that - ivory, hippopotamus, or the new cheaper versions of human teeth, though it may be best not to ask where they come from (grave robbers!)

Our fans, said Mr Bottomley-Smythe most archly, can contain secret messages to our suitor, depending on whether they are held to your left or right cheek, or is open or closed, he will know whether to advance or retreat! Given practice in pressing his suit further, the young gentlemen were invited to relieve that joyous occasion when asking the question "Will you marry me?" Mr Bottomley-Smythe completed these most interesting lessons by offering a "Hurrah!" to us all as perfect wives to our husbands, and perfect mothers with absolutely silent children. Which he will tell us how to achieve in our next classes!

Carla Bailey

We learned the correct etiquette for ladies accepting flowers from a gentleman, with our left hand if we want to welcome their overtures, and with our right hand if not! The morning call is always made in the afternoon and is often the next stage in a courtship with an invitation to take tea with a prospective groom's mother. What a minefield of Do's and Don'ts - lift cup and saucer together, take small sips (no slurping!) stir back and forth with your



David Allen



## A trailblazer of her time

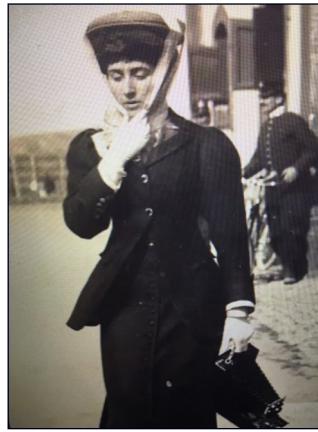


Elizabeth Gowing

Few of us have heard of Princess Xenia of Montenegro but as a talented photographer with a deep love for her country she was a trailblazer in her day.

Her remarkable story was revealed by our February speaker Elizabeth Gowing who moved to Kosovo 15 years ago and is working on a book of inspiring women from the Balkans in the last century.

Xenia's life was bound up in the formation of Montenegro which gained independence in 1878.



Photographer princess

Born in 1881 she was expected to follow her father Nicholas I's masterplan and marry into royalty. With five daughters married to princes and kings Nicholas was nicknamed 'the father-in-law of Europe'

But when Alexander I of Serbia came to ask for her hand the 18 year-old princess shuddered, fled from the room and refused to marry him, marking the end of her marriage prospects.

"She must have been



Out in her car

amazingly bold to stand up against her father and the whole state," said Elizabeth.

Creating another role for herself she became a photographer, capturing pictures of daily life in Montenegro. She became the first woman in the country to learn to drive and became her father's trusted confidante.

This came to an abrupt end in 1916 when the king and his family had to flee to Paris. Xenia spent the rest of her life in exile and

became reclusive, dying in 1960.

"There's no evidence of a single photo she took after she left Montenegro," said Elizabeth. "I think her photography was so linked with telling the story of Montenegro and the rest of her life is rather sadder, living first with her sister and then alone.

"She found a creative way to express herself but also to shape her country. She was courageous and I think she inspired."

*Pam Dajda*

## Tasting seriously good sherry at home

The Wine Appreciation group recently met up virtually with wine professional James Aldridge of Corney & Barrow for a sherry tasting experience. This followed on from two previous very enjoyable and highly informative tasting sessions on gin and port via Zoom.

James hosted and live-streamed this exclusive Royston U3A tasting to 24 group members in March by providing a home tasting kit in advance comprising a range of four different styles of sherry each accompanied by a comprehensive set of tasting notes and recommendations for the best

foods to pair with each sherry.

James informed the group that sherry is one of the oldest wines in the world and is a uniquely versatile wine ranging from sweet to dry.

First off the group tasted Tio Pepe, Fino de Jerez, that had been chilled – this was the driest and youngest of all the sherries to be tasted. Fino is made without any oxygen and the first exposure to air the wine gets is when the bottle is opened. It was paired perfectly with manchego cheese, olives and almonds.

Next we tasted the Amontilado; this starts off as a Fino for 3-5 years and then gets fortified up to 18% and receives further oxidative ageing in the barrel. The recommendation was to pair this with hot or cold chicken, cheddar cheese and grilled mushrooms.

Moving onwards, the group tasted Oloroso, this is wine from the second pressing and is immediately fortified to 18% and entered into barrels where it remains exposed to oxygen for up to 40 years. Absolutely delicious with gruyere cheese and red meats.

Then finally we sampled a cream sherry, Croft Original which is made for the British market and is a blend of Fino and sweet Moscatel. Perfect when paired with a Sicilian orange cake, a slice of fruit cake or even an apple strudel!

This wonderful lockdown event all about sherry and the delights of complementary foods was enjoyed by everyone. Thanks to James for providing all the samples and notes.

*Jackie Gellert*

With so much turmoil in our lives over the past year the Current Affairs group has been looking at two key issues in recent meetings on Zoom.

## The issue with Vaccination

Vaccination has been going on for hundreds of years but the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has brought the whole issue into sharp focus.

In a discussion led by Steve Westcott the Current Affairs group looked at the thorny issues of individual rights and choice weighed against compulsory vaccination and vaccine passports.

Steve pointed out that billions of people have benefitted from inoculation over the years, with diseases like smallpox being eradicated. But doubts set in after fraudulent claims linking the triple MMR vaccine to autism. The ramifications of that and the anti-vaxxers are that the UK lost its measles-free status in 2019.

Current negative publicity over the Astra Zeneca vaccine is having a similar impact in some countries, despite statistics that you are four times more likely to get blood clots from taking the pill than from the AV vaccine.

The general feeling of members was that we have a civic responsibility to protect others and have the jab. The sense of duty to do something for the rest of society comes above issues of personal choice.

“As more mature citizens of our country did we have consultation when as children we had our jabs, did our parents, or did they simply do what was required through a sense of duty?” said Steve.



“In the age of political correctness it seems we have a choice, and always had a choice. However, I am not sure that individuals are aware that exercising that choice comes with responsibilities.”

## Who do you think are possible future Senior Ministers?

Current Affairs group members have been busy reshuffling the Cabinet with wide-ranging discussions on who to move or sack. As you can imagine there were quite strong views on all sides, always politely put forward!

Our reshuffle created spaces at Cabinet level, which we now need to fill:

- **Priti Patel** at the Home Office (rumour is still that she will go and we removed her).
- **Michael Gove**, if we sack him from the Cabinet Office - or if he is moved (which is said to be likely).

- **Robert Jenrick** from Communities and Housing (might be moved by Boris Johnson).
- **Therese Coffey** from Work and Pensions (also likely to be removed).

At a follow-up meeting we looked at junior ministers who might be moved to a more senior role and recommended promotions for:

- **Kit Malthouse** to the Home Office.
- **Penny Mordaunt** to Work and Pensions or Communities and Housing.

- **Anne Marie Trevelyan** after the November United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Ministers we decided to leave where they are include:

- **Stephen Barclay** – needed where he is as Secretary of the Treasury.
- **Brandon Lewis** - needed where he is as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- **Jacob Rees-Mogg** - Leader of the House.

- **Helen Whately** - needed where she is as Minister for Social Care – has only been in post for a year.
- **Lucy Frazer QC** – as Minister for Prisons.

There is a new crop of junior Ministers, but they have only been in post since February 2020, so they lack breadth of experience. Promising ones are put up for TV interviews, so watch out for these, as they are likely to progress.

*Sarah Hillman*

## French conversation in lockdown? Pas de problème!

We have been ‘zooming’ fortnightly since the first lockdown and have become masters et maîtresses de technologie!

Every session has provided lots of opportunity for laughter and encouragement during ‘le confinement total’. I can report that we have several cases of total commitment and a thriving pre-existing condition called francophonie!

Nine or ten of us regularly get together and conversation is varied with most recent topics including Et si? (And if?), L’amitié (friendship), Qui êtes-vous? (Who are you?), La technologie et toi, (Technology and you). We use newspaper articles, films, television, French blogs, current vocabulary and our own experience to fuel our discussions, sharing resources in

advance. Zoom has meant that some prepared questions and answers help the flow.

Conversation is generally at an intermediate to advanced level but our focus is participation. Our experience is diverse and group members are very supportive of each other particularly in sharing interest based vocabulary. This is a

fabulously supportive group to be part of.

I am happy to put interested parties on a waiting list but given we would normally meet in each other’s homes our regular group of 12 is really the maximum for now. It may be that we will have a couple of spaces once normal service resumes.

*Barbara Fielden*

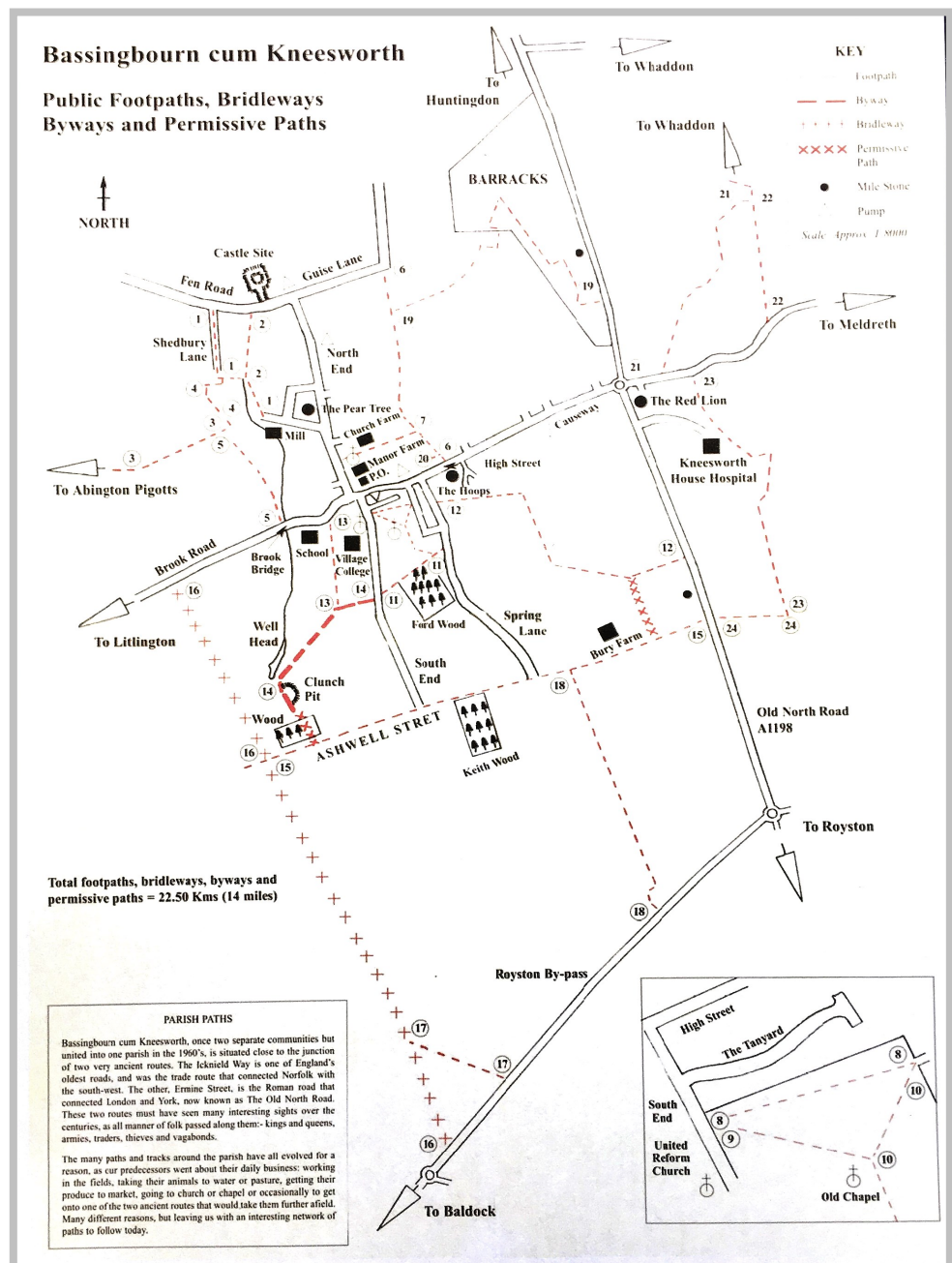
## Looking ahead to Five Mile Walking again!

After a long lockdown I’m sure that we are all looking forward to the day when we can meet up and walk as a group and then enjoy a pleasant lunch at a village pub.

Until that day comes I need to get out there to build up my stamina. If you too need a little practice why not try one of the routes on the Bassingbourn public footpaths.

I can recommend route 18 which is accessed from the A505 opposite Costa Coffee on the industrial estate. This route takes you past the solar farm, generating green electricity. Keep an eye out for two Red Kite that are often flying over the fields here, looking for lunch. On your return you could enjoy a welcome drink at Costa.

*Eric Heaton*





## Enjoying the world of butterflies in your garden

Fascinating facts about the butterflies of Hertfordshire were revealed at the Gardening group's March Zoom meeting by Andy Holtham from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Andy started by telling us the differences between butterflies and moths, how to identify them by their different antennae and the way their wings lie when they land. He explained that you can't simply distinguish them by those that are active during the day or night.

With some wonderful pictures to illustrate his talk we learned about the life cycle of butterflies and how you only see certain species at a specific time of year. For example, Ringlet butterflies are only around in July and then die off. Others such as the Peacock butterfly hibernate over winter and then die at the end of May. Some also prefer certain types of plant and locations - a point to remember when planting your garden.



ringlet butterfly

A butterfly can lay up to 50 eggs of which 30 develop into caterpillars, 10 can survive as chrysalises and then only 2 develop into butterflies.

Of the 18,00 species of butterflies world-wide about 400 are found in



peacock butterfly

Europe and 59 in Britain. Sadly there has been a 50 per cent decline since 1976.

For further information he recommended looking at the butterfly-conservation web site.

Maureen Hersee

## Dates for your diary

### May

Tuesday 25, 2pm on Zoom

#### CUNARD HISTORY and GLAMOROUS STARS

Our guest speaker, **Steve Herra**, is a third generation Cunard employee. His last ship was the QE2 where he was a purser. Steve's talk on the history of Cunard from 1840 until the present day will include some of the more famous liners and some of the celebrities and stars who sailed aboard Cunard ships

### June

**Royston U3A AGM** Tuesday 29, 2pm on Zoom

followed by

#### KNEBWORTH HOUSE and the LYTTON FAMILY

An introduction to the history of Knebworth House, home of the Lytton family for over 500 years, and the interesting lives of some of its inhabitants, with the Knebworth House archivist, **Jill Campbell**.

## Easy Guide to Interest Groups

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM		Art	Fitness (non U3A)	Birding	Walkers: Strollers	Book Club 2
		Golf Croquet	Seated Exercise (non U3A)	Book Club 3	Who do you think they were?	
				Life Stories		
				Patchwork		
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 (non U3A)
		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.

# 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	Variable on Zoom	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 on Zoom	Deirdre Smith	deidreroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 244700
Book Club 2	Fri	11:00am	Monthly Variable on Zoom	Janet Burton	janet.a.burton@gmail.com 07984 600295
Book Club 3	Wed	10:30am	Monthly last Wed on Zoom	Elizabeth (Lee) Towers	ladytowers@gmail.com 01763 241488
Classic Novels	Fri	2.00pm	Monthly 3rd Fri on Zoom	Sue Biggs	biggs1633@gmail.com 01763 847200
Clay Shooting	Wed	2:00pm	Monthly variable	Frank Martin	thoefmartin@outlook.com 07831 898234
Current Affairs	Mon	3:30pm	Monthly 3rd Mon on Zoom	John Kershaw	jk4business@yahoo.co.uk 01763 248555
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 (non U3A )	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 (non U3A)	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 (non U3A)	Tues	10:45am	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Solo Sundays	Sun	2:30pm	Monthly 2nd Sun on Zoom	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 on Zoom	John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
Walkers: Five Mile	Wed	9:45am	Suspended	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	Variable	Variable	Variable on Zoom	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
Groups Co-ordinator	Joan Westcott	joanroystonu3a@gmail.com	01763 220812
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