



We have now been holding monthly meetings in the Town Hall for just over a year. My thanks go to our audio visual technician Chris Walls who skilfully sets up (assisted by member volunteers) and operates the equipment to enhance these live events, ensuring everyone can see and hear our guest speakers whether sitting upstairs in the Hardwicke Hall or downstairs in the Heritage Hall.

Things don't always go to plan! Tony Earle, our guest speaker for February, cancelled at the last minute (he will be coming sometime in the future). We were very fortunate in replacing him with accomplished author Bobbie Darbyshire.

April 1 sees the start of Royston U3A membership year 2020-21. I am pleased to inform you that the annual membership fee will remain at £14 despite an increase in costs. Membership forms will be emailed or posted to you shortly. I hope you will renew your membership for the forthcoming year.

Jackie Gellert, Chairman

Where would we be without them?

To show our appreciation to the unsung heroes who make Royston U3A interest groups run so smoothly, all group leaders and helpers were invited to a cheese and wine get-together.

Thanking them all, chairman Jackie Gellert praised their commitment and the time and effort they contribute into planning and running their groups. "It does not go unnoticed

and without you Royston U3A would not be as successful as it is," she said.

To add to the friendly atmosphere a surprise prize draw for a bottle of champagne was held, with Deirdre Smith a well-deserved winner. Deirdre is Theatre group leader, Book Club 1 group leader and with her team of helpers also organises refreshments at our monthly meetings in the Town Hall.

A big thank you to Joan Westcott for organising the event at The Old Barn and to all those who helped with clearing up afterwards.



Main: Group leaders get-together.

Middle: Sylvia Jordan, Eric Heaton and Vice Chair Sandra Walker.

Right: Jackie presenting prize draw winner Deirdre Smith with her prize.



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...And more like them are needed!

1 Wanted - Royston U3A
1 members to come forward
1 to share their interests and talents.

3 With well over 30 interest
3 groups there's a wide
4 variety of activities to get
4 involved in.

5 But with membership
5 numbers soaring past 500,
6 some groups now have
6

waiting lists. And in a questionnaire to members, Spanish, Italian, History of Art, Music, Astronomy and Science were among top choices for new group ideas.

This all means that more group leaders are needed to continue our success story. "You never know, there could be things that

you want to start," said Jackie. "People sharing their talents with other members can find it quite enriching."

To find out more and get advice about starting a new activity contact new groups co-ordinator Mel Chammings on 07713 837086, or melroystonu3a@gmail.com

Raising the curtain on W S Gilbert

'the magic and flow of the words is what mesmerised me'

William S Gilbert is famous for his collaboration with Arthur Sullivan in producing a string of highly successful comic operas.

What is less well-known is that this man of many talents – dramatist, librettist, poet and illustrator - played a key role in revitalising British theatre, bringing it back from the doldrums in Victorian England.

At a packed January meeting, life-long Gilbert fan Mike Levy revealed some fascinating facts:



Mike Levy

* Gilbert usually worked at night, locking himself away with a box of cigars and bottle of whisky.

* He and Sullivan were completely different in nature - Gilbert more withdrawn than the sociable Sullivan.

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company production of 'The Mikado'



* After producing 14 famous operettas in 15 years of collaboration it is said they fell out over a row about a carpet.

* Gilbert died of a heart attack aged 75 in 1907, brought on by rescuing a woman from drowning in a lake on his country estate.

Mike became a Gilbert and Sullivan fan as a teenager, spending his pocket money buying librettos rather than on pop and rock music.

"The magic and flow of the words is what mesmerised me. I'd never come across that before," he said.

"Gilbert's lyrics were intensely singable. He left behind a tremendous volume of work. Because of the brilliance of the music the words often get left behind and it's time we reassessed that."

Pam Dajda



Gilbert with his wife Lucy

Getting hooked on novel writing

'the wait for an idea can be painfully long'

Where do novelists get their ideas from? It's a question authors are often asked and our February speaker Bobbie Darbyshire gave an insight into what inspired her to write four books.

As a child she loved writing but did not realise her dream of becoming a novelist until she left her job as a civil servant 25 years ago. Then the 'exhilarating and excruciating' process of writing began.

From the first spark of an idea to developing a novel you need structure, surprise, plot and character growth.

Bobbie Darbyshire

"Then one sentence leads to another and you begin to be stimulated by the invention. Eventually something clicks," she said.

"I like to write novels that leave me wanting to know what happens next and I hope I touch on the real human issues that readers recognise and empathise with."

The wait for an idea can be painfully long and there's always the fear of writer's block but you eventually emerge - although Bobbie revealed she must have radically rewritten her first novel *Truth Games* 10 times before she was satisfied with it.

So why do writers write?

"The answer is that we're not happy if we don't. Our addiction is writing. We get withdrawal symptoms if we go without it."

Pam Dajda



Flying high in the New Year

The New Year got off to a great start for the Birding group when the first bird spotted was a rare goosander diving duck.

Several new members joined our visit to Grafham Water in January and it was a real treat to see the goosander, along with a goldeneye and the sight of five male and two female bullfinches in one bush.

After a very good, very wet walk round the lovely reserve we rounded off the morning with a post-Christmas lunch at a nearby village pub.

We also had three new members with us which was wonderful for our December visit to Amwell Pits near Ware.

It was a bright morning, the light was just right, and there were plenty of



'We had three new members with us which was wonderful'

birds. These included the shy and difficult to find snipe (we saw two), goldeneye, kingfisher, shoveler, pochard and several different gulls.

Some went on to the pub for lunch, a couple were meeting up with friends and the rest of us went home. Everyone enjoyed themselves and we always welcome new members who would like to join us.

Carol McGeogh

Former CEMEX gravel pits have been restored to create a diverse wetland nature reserve of international importance for conservation. Now the Amwell Nature Reserve near Ware, the site attracts rare wintering water birds and 19 species of dragonfly and damselfly

Getting a taste of Portugal

Portugal has a long tradition of winemaking with a wealth of grape varieties as Wine Appreciation members soon discovered!

Guided by James Armitage from wine merchants Corney and Barrow, the group got down to the demanding task of tasting and assessing eight wines from different regions.

You don't have to be an expert to enjoy the wine and members rose to the challenge, judging a range of varieties with characterful and sometimes unpronounceable names.

Favourites included a light white Quinta de Chocapalha Arinto 2018, and a red Manoella Wine

and Soul 2015 - a port blend from an ancestral vineyard in the Duoro Valley where grapes are still trodden by foot.

The highlights were left until last when members faced their sternest test - tasting two ports - a 2013 Croft vintage port and a Warre Otima Tawny port. James explained that it's all down to the ageing process. Tawny ports are aged in wood for their

entire life to give a smooth nutty coloured wine, while vintage ports are matured in wooden vats and then in bottles.

The group awarded high scores to both ports, rounding off an entertaining afternoon tasting quality wines in a fun environment.

Pam Dajda

'the group got down to the demanding task of tasting and assessing eight wines'



Wine expert James Armitage (right) with an appreciative member

Return to Hitchin and the golden years of rail travel

The History group travelled back to the days of steam and diesel when Royston U3A member Bill Crooke recalled his time working at Hitchin station.

'the railway brought in manufactured products along with bricks and building materials for the rapidly expanding town'

Bill who worked for British Railways for 10 years, has been researching the impact the coming of the railway in 1850 had on Hitchin and how the market town became a busy railway junction for passenger and goods trains.

His illustrated talk with more than 40 photographs and postcards included a line-up of more than 80 people who were working at Hitchin station by 1910.



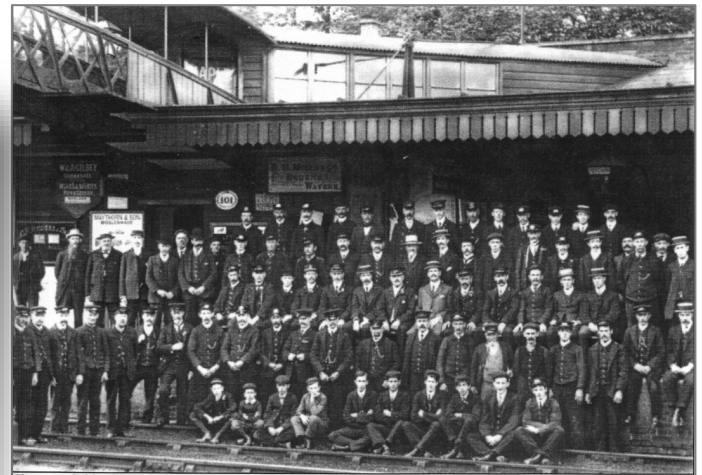
Bill Crooke working at Hitchin station

With the Royston (later Cambridge) Branch and the Midland Railway arriving in 1858, merchants came from long distances to trade. The railway brought in manufactured products along with bricks and building materials for houses for the rapidly expanding town.

Nowadays it is difficult to realise how many different trains stopped or terminated at Hitchin - from London, Bedford, Leicester, Royston and Cambridge, to York, Newcastle and Leeds.



Hitchin station footbridge c1880



1910 Hitchin station staff

In the late 1850s the Hitchin signalman's practice of holding up Midland line trains to favour Northern trains led to Midland Railway building their own line direct to London via Luton and St. Albans, resulting in that wonderful terminus, St Pancras.

Sadly the Midland branch line has gone and long distance express trains stop at Stevenage instead, but the Midland railway branch is still fondly remembered for two things - special weekend trains to Henlow camp station

for RAF personnel coming and going on leave, and the use of the old Bedford branch for the setting of that wonderful film *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines!*

Reg Hounsell

Vaccinations - should they be compulsory?

OUCH! A quick straw poll of Current Affairs group members showed 25 per cent in favour and 75 per cent against. The discussion which followed showed this was far from being a black and white subject. In fact, we all agreed that vaccinations were a force for good health in the world – think polio, smallpox, diphtheria.

Our debate centred on the best, most effective, way to ensure the 95 per cent compliance rate recommended by the WHO (World Health Organisation) as the 'safe level' target.

Would making them compulsory push more people against them? Would education be effective? When is the best time to educate? How can you successfully appeal to the better side of people's nature? It's not often these days that people consider others their top priority. But that is just what is needed.

Some vulnerable people cannot have the vaccinations; however these people are protected when 95 per cent of the population is vaccinated, simply because the disease cannot spread.

None of us changed our view but it was interesting finding out how many and who had received their 'flu jab this winter!

Marion Sweet



'we all agreed that vaccinations were a force for good health in the world'

Dates for your diary

March

Tuesday 31, 2pm
Hardwicke Hall at
Royston Town Hall

Andy Smith

will give a talk on
**WARTIME AND
ROMANCE**

April

Tuesday 28, 2pm
Hardwicke Hall at
Royston Town Hall

Jill Campbell

will give a talk on
**KNEBWORTH
HOUSE AND THE
LYTTON FAMILY**

May

Tuesday 26, 2pm
Hardwicke Hall at
Royston Town Hall

Mick Casson

will give a talk on
**TALES FROM
THE TOWER**

June

Tuesday 30, 2pm
Hardwicke Hall at
Royston Town Hall

Royston U3A AGM

then by popular request
Robert Habermann
will be performing
**FRANK SINATRA
HIS WAY**

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.

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	Monthly 3rd Mon	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	Deirdre Smith	deidre.roystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 244700
Book Club 2	Fri	11:00am	Monthly Variable	Janet Burton	janet.a.burton@gmail.com 07984 600295
Book Club 3	Wed	10:30am	Monthly last Wed	Elizabeth (Lee) Towers	ladytowers@gmail.com 01763 241488
Classic Novels	Fri	2:00pm	Monthly 3rd Fri	Sue Biggs	biggs1633@gmail.com 01763 847200
Clay Shooting	Wed	2:00pm	Variable	Frank Martin	theoformartin@outlook.com 07831 898234
Current Affairs	Mon	3:30pm	Monthly 3rd Mon	Marion Sweet	marion22roystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 273806
Curry Club	Mon	12:00pm	Monthly 2nd Mon	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Events & Outings (open to all)	Variable	Variable	Occasional	Sandra Walker	sandraroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241896
Film	Wed	2:00pm	Monthly 1st Wed	Carla Bailey	carlaroystonu3a@gmail.com 07968 261101
Fitness	Tues	9:30am	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
French Conversation	Mon	1:00pm	Monthly variable	Barbara Fielden	fieldenbarbara@hotmail.com 07850 455211
Gardening	Thurs	2:30pm	Monthly Variable	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	Weekly	John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
History	Tues	2:00pm	Monthly Variable	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Jazz Appreciation	Wed	7:30pm	Monthly 2nd Wed	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Life Stories	Wed	11:00am	Monthly last Wed	John Bell	john.bell99@btinternet.com 07710 176161
Mixed Crafts	Thurs	2:00pm	Monthly 3rd Thurs	Rosie Cowsley	rosie.cowsley@ntlworld.com 07809 047380
Patchwork	Wed	10:00am	Monthly 1st Wed	Maureen Strugnell	maureen.strugnell@ntlworld.com 01763 241967
Petanque / Boules	Suspended till Spring 2020			Sue & John Bishop	bishop190@btinternet.com 01763 246703
Pilates	Fri	1pm & 2pm	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Pottery (Hand Building)	Mon	2:00pm	Fortnightly Variable	Rosie Cowsley	rosie.cowsley@ntlworld.com 07809 047380
Quiz	Thurs	2:00pm	Monthly last Thurs	Sharon Camilletti	sharon.camilletti19@gmail.com 07725 847303
Seated Exercise	Tues	10:45am	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell	kathyroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Solo Sundays	Sun	12:00pm	Monthly 2nd Sun	Sandra Restall	sandra.restall@gmail.com 07775 508533
Tai Chi	Mon	3:15pm	Weekly	Reg Hounsell	regroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 241805
Theatre Trips	Variable	Variable	Occasional	Deirdre Smith	deidre.roystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 244700
Ukulele	Tues	12:00pm	Weekly	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	1st & 3rd Thurs of month	David Walker	djwalker3@aol.com 01763 241896
Who do you think they were?	Thurs	10:45am	Monthly last Thurs	Sharon Camilletti	sharon.camilletti19@gmail.com 07725 847303
Wine Appreciation	Wed	2:00pm	Monthly Variable	Jackie Gellert	jackieroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 248097

Royston U3A Committee

Chairman
Vice Chair
Treasurer & Speakers Secretary
Secretary
Membership Secretary
Minutes Secretary
Existing Groups Co-ordinator
New Groups Co-ordinator
New Members Contact
Publicity
Royston U3A News
Co-opted Committee Member

Jackie Gellert
Sandra Walker
Barbara Andrew
Karen Heaton
Marion Martin
Sylvia Fuller
Joan Westcott
Mel Chammings
Carla Bailey
Pam Dajda
Ralph Gellert
Eric Heaton

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karenroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 242989
marionroystonu3a@gmail.com 01763 246876
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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 or phone 01763 246234

Next deadline for submissions:
Wednesday April 15, 2020