



I find it hard to believe that due to the pandemic Royston U3A members have been unable to meet up in the Town Hall for our monthly meetings since the end of March 2020. However, our monthly meetings with guest speakers continue to run very successfully online.

As winter approaches and the number of Covid cases increases daily it is becoming clear that for the well-being of our members we must continue with online monthly meetings until it is considered safe to resume meeting up again physically - hopefully early next year with a welcome 'cuppa' and biscuit from Deirdre and her band of merry helpers.

Many of the outdoor interest groups have been meeting up again and several of our smaller indoor groups have been cautiously getting back together since most people have been fully vaccinated now.

Finally, we have some excellent guest speakers lined up for our meetings over the coming months so please keep 'connected' via Zoom.

Stay well and I hope to see you soon 'in person'.

Jackie Gellert Chairman

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# ROYSTON u3a news

NOVEMBER 2021 Issue 34

## Stepping back in time to stories of great eccentrics



Paul Robbins

Some of the world's great eccentrics and rogues just happened to be British – as we discovered with historian Paul Robbins.

Paul took us on a light-hearted journey at our October meeting, looking at characters from the past, many of them aristocrats with the time and money to indulge their bizarre behaviour.

Baron Walter de Rothschild was a local eccentric. Growing up at Tring Park in the 1870s he was more interested in nature than making money and his father built him his own museum at Tring for his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

He spent his life collecting natural history specimens and kept a total of 144 live giant tortoises. A famous picture of Walter sitting in a carriage drawn by zebras sums up this unconventional zoologist.

*Spike Milligan KBE  
(1918-2002)*

*British-Irish comedian, writer,  
musician, poet, playwright  
and actor*

Lord Clancarty was so fascinated by UFOs and aliens he used his fortune to fund research into extra-terrestrial life. He became editor of the *Flying Saucer Review*, and as a life peer in 1975 established a UFO study group in the House of Lords.

Mad Jack Mytton was wild as a youth and became the ultimate eccentric. Born in 1796 to a wealthy Shropshire family his exploits including riding his horse through hotels and pushing himself to the limit with crazy stunts – even setting light to himself to cure the hiccups. He came to a bad end, broke and languishing in prison.

A more recent eccentric needs no introduction – Spike Milligan's unpredictability and wit makes him an obvious choice. Actor, comedian, writer and poet he would do anything for a laugh. One of his more printable comments on accepting a lifetime achievement award was "I'm not going to thank anybody because I did it all by myself."

Pam Dajda

*Zebra-drawn carriage of  
Lord Walter Rothschild  
parked outside The Royal  
Albert Hall, London, 1900*





# The inside story of the Pharaoh's village



**Janet Brewer**

We're used to marvelling at stunning images of the tombs and treasures of ancient Egypt. But who would have thought that rubbish dumped in a village pit would reveal so much about the workers who constructed these architectural wonders?

In a fascinating talk at our September meeting, Egyptology enthusiast Janet Brewer described how documents unearthed near the Valley of the Kings give a unique insight into the lives of Ancient Egyptians.

For hundreds of years highly skilled craftsmen and their families lived in Deir-el-Medina near Luxor, building and decorating tombs for the Pharaohs. They also dug a deep well but when no water was discovered, used it as the village midden.

When the pit was excavated in the 1920s the discovery of court records and documents brought to light the everyday lives of villagers in the ancient world.

Absence registers show that eye problems, probably caused by excavation dust, were a common ailment.

The working week was eight days followed by two days holiday. This gave craftsmen time to work on their own tombs and as they were so skilled their own tombs are exceptionally beautiful.

The documents give an insight into people who lived in the village. A woman called Naunakhte disinherited four of her children because they did not care for her. Paneb, the local bad boy, was convicted of plundering a tomb and probably

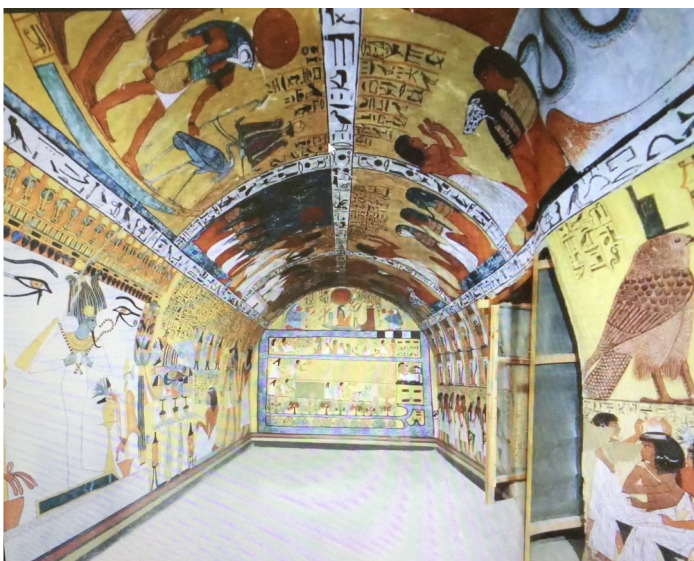
executed. And a young woman called Heria who was convicted of stealing a copper chisel and an incense sensor.

These records of community life dumped in a rubbish pit were unearthed at the time the world was enthralled by the tomb of Tutankhamun - and in their own way both discoveries shine a spotlight on the significance of the Valley of the Kings.

*Pam Dajda*

*Naunakhte - A Woman who knew her mind*

*Paneb - The Bad Boy of Egypt*



*Sennedjem's tomb*



*Workmen from the tomb of the Vizier Rekhmire*



## Current Affairs group has been debating two key issues in recent meetings on Zoom

### Free speech - under threat?

Our August Current Affairs group discussed the Online Safety Draft Bill (May '21) which will require social media companies to take down "harmful content" - including some content which is legal!

Ofcom is to be both the judge and enforcers. Companies face huge fines for failure to do this and may over-censor to avoid the risk. They will have to use Artificial Intelligence to scan the millions of posts per day. (AI is poor at recognising irony, humour, etc).

An all-party parliamentary group (APPG) of experts is looking at this Bill and will report in December.

We felt that the major issue was who should decide the rules and who will enforce it.

Young people are more influenced by social media and more outspoken than previous generations, though they may mellow with experience. Social media do give those with extreme thoughts an audience.

Misinterpretation also causes huge problems. Trolling could be reduced by people having to have digital IDs, so that authorities can enforce the law and those targeted could have redress. It is technically possible, but some of us felt this simply wouldn't happen.

We just hope that the APPG can make this workable!

*Sarah Hillman*

### Shortages - the likely impact

We started our October Current Affairs meeting by thanking John Kershaw for his splendid leadership this year, and hope to see him in future meetings.

HGV driver and gas shortages will have serious effects on both industry and consumers. The wait for HGV driving tests is evidently 5+ months in England (only weeks in

Scotland) but the DVLA is impossible to speak to if there is any query. EU HGV drivers have better facilities and are more respected there, so they may not come here. Clogged ports and shortages may affect Christmas and will curb the recovery. Businesses need to commit to training HGV drivers if they will commit to staying for X months.

Gas prices have rocketed because of shortages across the world. Asia is now buying 25% more liquid natural gas as they cut coal use - and they're paying to get priority. Gas prices to consumers seem unlikely to fall and this will hit the poorest hardest. Crime may increase.

The government seems to be poor on strategic "what if" planning, so had inadequate contingency plans.

Abuse of MPs underlines the need for more civility. Politicians need to lead us all by example on this.

*Sarah Hillman*

### Getting together for Sunday lunch

A highlight for the group has been actually getting together for Sunday lunch for the first time since the beginning of lockdown.

After more than a year of meeting up on Zoom, group leader Sandra Restall said lunch at the Old Bull Inn in September was a real treat.

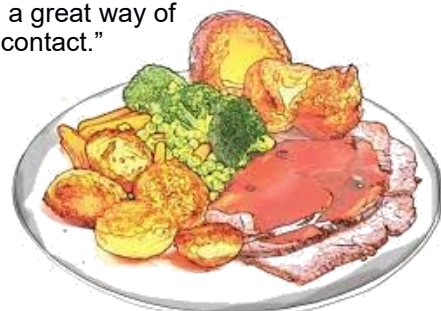
"It was such a relief to actually see other people in person and it was lovely.

There were five of us, we were very careful and everything at the Old Bull was sensibly arranged," she said.

The next Solo Sunday lunch is likely to be in the new year when members have had their booster jabs. "Everyone I've spoken to is happy to be very careful. We do want to get back together again but I think it would be sensible to wait," she said.

Zoom has been a lifeline and we meet on the second Sunday of the month at 2.30pm for a post lunch coffee. It's not as good as seeing each other in person but it's been a great way of maintaining contact."

For further information on this group please select the Groups page on our website to email us with your query.



## Strumming along on the ukulele

The Ukulele group is back in action, strumming along at weekly sessions at Coombes Community Centre.

Over the past year members managed to get together on Zoom, and group leader John Bishop says it's good to be able to have actual socially distanced meetings again.

A highlight was playing their first gig for over a year, entertaining residents at St George's nursing home in September.

"We gathered under a big awning outside and they were sitting inside listening," said John. "We played songs including 'London Girls' 'Beautiful Sunday' 'Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue' 'Have A Drink On Me' and my favourite - 'Tickle My Heart'. The residents really enjoyed it."

The group is hoping to arrange follow-up gigs at other venues in the area and welcomes new recruits along.

"It doesn't matter if you can't read music or play any other instrument and total beginners are welcome," said John.

The group meets on Tuesdays for 90 minute sessions starting at noon in a well ventilated room at Coombes Community Centre.

For further information on this group please select the Groups page on our website to email us with your query.



Entertaining the residents at St George's nursing home

## 'Shaken not stirred!' Cocktails in the sunshine

Twenty-five lateral flow tested members of Royston U3A's Wine Appreciation group met in Jackie's garden (all socially distanced) with James Aldridge of Corney & Barrow for an afternoon of cocktail making.

We were treated to six different cocktails; a Mango Bellini, a Classic Gin Martini, a Mojito, an Espresso Martini, a Long Island Iced Tea and to finish with, a Pina Colada. All six cocktails were prepared by James, who in a previous life worked in a hotel as a cocktail maker.

James demonstrated how to make each cocktail, revealing the spirits, liquors and juices needed with the appropriate measurements to make the best classic cocktails. He gave a brief background history about each cocktail – for instance why is a Martini shaken and not stirred?

Over a sun-drenched afternoon members took the opportunity to taste each cocktail (some samples were bigger than others!) and gosh James did everyone proud. He certainly knew his stuff and showed how exploring the world of cocktails can be thirsty work!

The afternoon was a lot of fun, and everyone left a little bit merrier than when they arrived with the added bonus that the weather had been absolutely perfect for an outdoor socially distanced get-together. It was a real joy to see two individual group members enjoying the afternoon, both now recovering from serious medical conditions and looking well.

Happy days!

Jackie Gellert

*Lockdown looks so much better after a cocktail or two with friends*

James shows how to make classic cocktails - delicious Mango Bellinis in the foreground





## Stepping out with the Five Mile Walkers

The group has been making the most of the late summer sun with walks exploring Chrishall, Weston and Aspenden, as Eric Heaton and Peter Andrew report.

In August we met at the Red Cow pub at Chrishall for a circular five mile walk, first to Holy Trinity Church which lies outside the village. At one time the church was at the village centre until the plague of 1348-1350 when the village moved to its present site. There is a plague pit under the Church car park.

Our walk continued to Duddenhoe End where we visited the thatched Hamlet Chapel. We went on to Elmdon with its many interesting buildings including thatched cottages and a house with an unusual clock on the front wall. We then returned to the Red Cow where we enjoyed lunch in the pub garden.

On a pleasantly warm September day with a clear blue sky 12 walkers met at the Cricketers at Weston for a stroll through

beautiful countryside. The walk took us to Chesfield Stables where we could see the ruins of the 14th Century Chesfield Church along a section of road before joining a footpath to Graveley with a visit to the village pond. No fishing here but lots of large fish can be seen. After a brief stop at St Mary's Church we re-joined the footpath to Weston followed by lunch at The Cricketers.

On a lovely autumn day we started our October walk in Aspenden - which means the valley of Aspen trees. Our route included a section of the Roman Road of Stane Street which is now a tree lined byway and also the site of the medieval village of Wakeley.

We had to negotiate a fallen tree which blocked part of our route but this just added interest to a lovely walk. We returned to Aspenden for a welcome lunch at the Fox Inn.

of space to spread out so people feel safe. I took an iPad with Zoom on it so one member who preferred to stay at home could join in.

"Meeting by Zoom has been ok but if you're discussing a book and relaying your feelings it's nice to be able to see facial expressions, so the group was pleased to be together again."

*Walking through beautiful countryside around Weston*



*Taking a short break on a lovely autumn day near Aspenden*

## New chapter begins for Classic Novels

At long last the Classic Novels group is holding actual meetings again - getting together at the Conservative Club in Royston.

"We had our first face-to-face meeting in September and it was lovely to see members again," said group leader Sue Biggs.

"We have a room to ourselves, there's an air filtration system and plenty

The group's latest read John Steinbeck's *'Of Mice and Men'* prompted discussion on a variety of issues. *'Rebecca'* by Daphne du Maurier is their next novel, followed by *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* by Harper Lee and *'Lolita'* by Vladimir Nabokov.

Books are provided by the library and new members are welcomed to the group which meets at 2pm on the last Friday of the month.

"We had seven members including three newcomers and with the space we have there's room for a few more," said Sue. "Although the group is called Classic Novels it's more about modern classics – books that people have never read and feel they should make a point of reading."

For further information on this group please select the Groups page on our website to email us with your query.

## Carry on Croquet!

Despite not having been able to play last year Golf Croquet members have been meeting since May and getting back into the swing of things.

The group meets on Monday mornings at the British Queen in Meldreth and sessions are carrying on into autumn, weather permitting.

“Croquet is ideally suited to social distancing and with some new rules about not touching the balls or hoops, and all mallets thoroughly cleaned after each session we can enjoy our games once more,” said Sue Barnes Bishop. “Even the weather has been kind to us so far this year.”

The group is so popular that sessions are currently fully booked.

“It’s good exercise, you’re outside, we maintain social distancing and are very strict with cleaning. It’s a very popular group and it’s lovely to be meeting again,” she said.

For further information on this group please select the Groups page on our website to email us with your query.



The Golf Croquet group back in the swing

## Dates for your diary

### NOVEMBER

Tuesday 30, 2pm on Zoom

#### ROYAL YACHTS: a look back in history

Our guest speaker **Capt. Robert Stopford RN** had a varied career in the Royal Navy, including a two-year spell on The Royal Yacht Britannia. His talk includes an illustrated history of Royal Yachts and a short virtual tour of Britannia with glimpses of life onboard when he served on Royal Duty.

### DECEMBER No monthly meeting

**JANUARY** Tuesday 25, 2pm on Zoom

#### LIGHTING THE FUSE

Imagine standing over a bomb – you need to make a choice, your life depends on it. Our guest speaker **Lucy Lewis** reveals the hidden world of bomb disposal training and how she came to be the UK’s first female bomb disposal expert.

## 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		
				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 (non U3A)
		Pottery (Hand Building)	Ukulele		Quiz	
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

1st and 3rd ThursGROUP	DAY	TIME	FREQUENCY	GROUP LEADER
Art	Mon	9:30am	Variable on Zoom	Sylvia Jordan
Birding	Wed	8:30am	Monthly 1st Wed	Carol McGeoch
Book Club 1	Tues	2:00pm	Monthly 1st Tues on Zoom	Deirdre Smith
Book Club 2	Fri	11:00am	Monthly Variable on Zoom	Janet Burton
Book Club 3	Wed	10:30am	Monthly last Wed on Zoom	Elizabeth (Lee) Towers
Classic Novels	Fri	2:00pm	Monthly last Fri	Sue Biggs
Clay Shooting	Wed	2:00pm	Monthly variable	Frank Martin
Current Affairs	Mon	3:30pm	Monthly 3rd Mon on Zoom	Sarah Hillman
Curry Club	Mon	12:00pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell
Events & Outings (open to all)	Variable	Variable	Suspended	Sandra Walker
Film	Wed	2:00pm	Suspended	Carla Bailey
Fitness (non U3A)	Tues	9:30am	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell
French Conversation	Mon	1:00pm	Fortnightly Variable on Zoom	Barbara Fielden
Gardening	Thurs	2:30pm	Monthly Variable on Zoom	Val Fairbanks
Golf	Thurs	1:00pm	Weekly	Peter Walden
Golf Croquet	Mon	10:15am	Weekly	Sue Barnes Bishop
History	Tues	2:00pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell
Jazz Appreciation	Wed	7:30pm	Suspended	Reg Hounsell
Life Stories	Wed	11:00am	Suspended	John Bell
Mixed Crafts	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	Rosie Cowsley
Patchwork	Wed	10:00am	Suspended	Maureen Strugnell
Petanque / Boules	Fri	2:30pm	Weekly	Jane Dottridge
Pilates (non U3A)	Fri	1pm & 2pm	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell
Pottery (Hand Building)	Mon	2:00pm	Suspended	Rosie Cowsley
Quiz	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	Sharon Camilletti
Seated Exercise (non U3A)	Tues	10:45am	Weekly on Zoom	Kathy Hounsell
Solo Sundays	Sun	2:30pm	Monthly 2nd Sun on Zoom	Sandra Restall
Theatre Trips	Variable	Variable	Suspended	Deirdre Smith
Ukulele	Tues	12:00pm	Weekly	John Bishop
Walkers: Five Mile	Wed	9:45am	Monthly 2nd Wed	Eric Heaton
Walkers: Strollers	Thurs	10:15am	1st and 3rd Thurs of month	David Walker
Who do you think they were?	Thurs	10:45am	Suspended	Sharon Camilletti
Wine Appreciation	Variable	Variable	Variable on Zoom	Jackie Gellert

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

## 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 welcome too - to Pam Dajda at [publicityroystonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:publicityroystonu3a@gmail.com)

## Contacts

Please use the Royston U3A website contacts page to email us with any queries.

For general information about Royston U3A please contact the Chair or Vice Chair.

For information about interest groups please select the option Interest Groups Co-ordinator stating the group in which you are interested.

For information about membership please select the option Membership Secretary.

For queries about our website or if you wish to send updates please select the option Website and Updates.

## Royston U3A Committee

Chairman	Jackie Gellert
Vice Chair	Sandra Walker
Treasurer	Barbara Andrew
Speaker Secretary	Barbara Andrew
Secretary	Marion Martin
Membership Secretary	Marion Martin
Minutes Secretary	Sylvia Fuller
Groups Co-ordinator	Joan Westcott
New Members Contact	Carla Bailey
Publicity	Pam Dajda
Royston U3A News	Ralph Gellert

