



With the benefit of hindsight, I have been thinking how Royston U3A has evolved since it started in 2015.

Our aim from start-up was to establish something akin to a private members club where individuals of a certain age could learn, laugh, live, be involved and form friendships. By providing members with a range of activities, all run by the members themselves, we have grown to become probably the largest charitable trust in our area.

Even the pandemic has not stopped Royston U3A from growing. Technology has provided us with the means to keep in touch and I am truly amazed at how we have all adapted to the changed circumstances. Hopefully in the very near future we will get back to meeting face-to-face and socially interacting.

Last year membership was free, but we are unable to make the same offer for year 2022 / 23. Membership fees from 1st April will be £14 as previously (£12.50 if you belong to another U3A). I hope you will renew your membership when renewal forms are issued in the coming weeks.

Stay well and I hope to see you again soon.

Jackie Gellert, Chairman

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ROYSTON u3a news

FEBRUARY 2022 Issue 35

LIGHTING THE FUSE



Lucy Lewis

What goes through your mind when you're standing over a bomb? That was what we wanted to know from Britain's first female bomb disposal expert.

Lucy Lewis made history in her role in bomb disposal with the Royal Engineers 30 years ago, and more recently as the first woman University Marshal at Cambridge.

In a fascinating talk she added humour to the drama of one of the most dangerous jobs in the world.

"The worst part of bomb disposal is when you're driving to it. You don't really know what you're going to and the problem is trying to work out what it is and how to deal with it."

All sorts of things can look like a bomb, such as a rusty washing machine, and she admitted coming a cropper during a night training exercise when she was spotted trying to defuse a cowpat!

Looking back at her ground-breaking rise through the military in her memoir *Lighting the Fuse* she describes the world of a woman joining the army

in the 1980s and her drive for equality in a mainly male environment.

"Thirty years ago you couldn't get any shoes smaller than a size seven. Even now there's still no body armour designed to fit women," she said.

After a varied career serving with the Royal Military Police in Germany and Northern Ireland she embarked on her latest role as University Marshal three years ago.

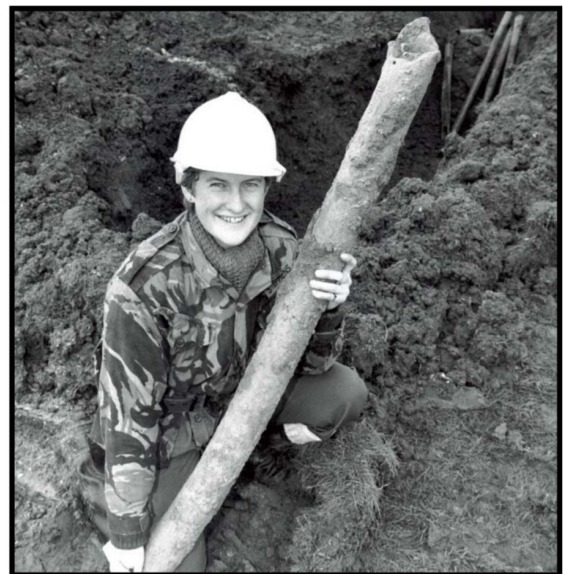
In her ceremonial uniform with top hat and mace she leads one of the oldest constabularies and it is her job to maintain the right to freedom of speech in the university.

"Army life has taught me some skills that are useful in my current job. You have to have a plan B in case plan A won't work. It doesn't matter how well you prepare - you really need to get the bigger picture."

Pam Dajda

'Every day at work could be my last'

As the UK's first female bomb disposal expert, making life or death decisions was a routine part of the job for Lucy Lewis. She reveals how she learned to think like a bomber... and why she still checks under her car



Lucy on her first mission, Operation Crabstick, in 1990, clearing 18 live wartime explosives at Eastleigh Airport

Stepping aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia



Robert Stopford

Not many jobs would include joining a birthday party for the Queen on a coral island in the Great Barrier Reef.

But that's one of the perks Captain Robert Stopford enjoyed during a two-year spell serving on the Royal Yacht Britannia.

"Away from all the ceremony the Royal family had fun on board and to celebrate the Queen's birthday, food was brought over to the island. We all swam around and had a jolly good time," he recalled.

Robert gave our November meeting a glimpse into life on board Britannia - surprisingly the 83rd royal yacht. The tradition was started after Charles II's restoration in 1660 when he renamed the vessel he had used to flee from Cromwell in, His Majesty's Yacht Royal Escape.

Britannia was launched in 1953 and hailed as a superb example of British design and technology. With a deep blue hull embossed with gold leaf and the royal coat of arms she steamed over one million nautical miles in 44 years promoting British interests abroad.

A crew of 20 officers and 220 yachtsmen kept the ship immaculate - and on royal tours were joined by the Royal Marine Band, the Royal Barge and a Rolls Royce.

Robert ran the supply department for tours to Australia, New Zealand and the Easter Islands in the 1970s.

"One tradition was dining with the Royal family during the tour. Prince Philip didn't like small talk but conversing with the Queen was a dream as she made you so welcome and put you at your ease," he said.

Britannia had a special magic and it was a sad day when she was decommissioned in 1997. Clocks on board were stopped at the moment the Queen left Britannia for the last time.

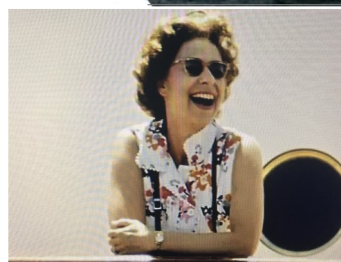
"Britannia was remarkable and much-loved," said Robert. "I had two wonderful years on board and it was a privilege. It was a wonderful experience."

Pam Dajda



Relaxing on a royal tour

far right: Prince Philip with crew members



Leaving Britannia for the last time



A sombre moment as Britannia is decommissioned



Visiting Wellington in 1970

Winter walking in all weathers

Five Mile Walkers have been exploring the countryside around Buntingford and Ashwell, as Eric Heaton reports.

Tuesday had been a beautiful day which promised great things for our November walk the following day. Wednesday however greeted us with rain and a small intrepid group of ten walkers arrived at The Beehive at Hare Street expecting to get very wet.

Luckily the rain stopped as we started out and kept away until we finished.

Our walk took us through beautiful countryside to some of the new housing developments in Buntingford and on to Layston where we saw the old parish church of Bartholomew's which had been a ruin, but has now been renovated into a wonderful home.

We continued through the old church cemetery to view the graves of three local soldiers from the First World War. Although the day had started with a poor outlook

we all had a good walk in good company, followed by a light lunch at the Beehive.

After days of rain the Wednesday of our January walk welcomed us with blue skies and was pleasantly warm. Our route took us from the Rose and Crown pub in Ashwell through lovely countryside to the village of Newnham and on to the hamlet of Caldecote with its ancient church and then back to Ashwell for a welcome lunch.

If you would like to join us for a walk of about two and a half hours in good company, our next walk will be from The Heath Cafe, Royston on Wed 23rd February. Arrive at 9:45am to order lunch if required. We will walk at 10:00 to Litlington returning at about 12:30. Contact group leader Eric Heaton if you are interested.

Five Mile Walkers in the countryside at Hare Street and taking a break outside Caldecote Church



Current Affairs - Impact of Inflation

Inflation and its likely impact, and the "Boris situation" proved interesting topics for members at the January meeting.

Andrew Neale suggested "Inflation" and introduced the factors that drive it. "Too much money chasing too few goods," summarised John Kershaw. This led to a lively discussion!

Although inflation has risen sharply recently, we felt that it is too early to be very concerned, especially in the light of the 15% to 17% interest rates we saw in the

late 1970s and '80s. Governments often like to inflate their way out of government debt, so ours may not take strong steps against it - yet. It's a global problem and they cannot fix it alone.

Interest rates remain low for now, but inflation will hit those who are on low pay, trying to get on the housing ladder or on fixed incomes - and the young, who have never experienced high interest rates. We may just have to find creative ways to cut back, and support each other through this.

Re the Boris situation we felt that he is largely the author of his own misfortunes, has picked the wrong advisers, and may try to hang on - so extending the damage. We wished that we could see an obvious successor!

Local housing and developments will be the topic at the next meeting on Mon 21st February at 3.30pm.

The group meets on Zoom so contact group leader Sarah Hillman if you are interested.

Sarah Hillman



Fresh air, strolling - and Birds!

Having missed our 2020 annual birding trip due to Covid 19, a small group of us set off to Poole Harbour at the beginning of December 2021. What a wonderful outing it turned out to be, writes Marje Veale.

When we arrived we stopped off at Upton Country Park to stretch our legs. A short walk to the edge of a shallow inland wet area gave us an instant view of hundreds of waders resting and feeding in the muddy pools. What a view! Without having to move we could see seven species of duck, along with avocets, geese, godwits, curlews, golden plover - to name just a few!

Those of us who wanted to stroll further around Holes Bay were greeted by an array of woodland birds as we set off. The best bit was when a cheeky nuthatch and a coal tit couple came within arm's length to investigate us.

We were now really ready for our morning Poole Harbour boat trip around the bay the next day. It was quite windy,

but we were wrapped up warmly sitting on the upper deck hoping to see birds sheltering from the rough Channel. A local bird expert on board was there helping us, just in case we missed any exciting sightings.

We saw 36 different species in total, including marsh harriers quartering the reed beds, whimbrel as we turned around Brownsea Island, as well as more ducks, now adding scaup, scoters and black necked grebe to our growing list. However, the most memorable for me, were the great northern diver and pairs of red breasted mergansers swimming quite close to the boat.

A great birding weekend made even better by a wonderful Saturday Nepalese meal at 29029 (it took me a while - 29029 is the height of Everest!) and thanks to our brilliant organiser Carol, for making sure we were socially distancing at all times, thankfully pre omicron.

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month and new members are very welcome. If you're interested contact Birding leader Carol McGeoch via the groups section of the Royston U3A website.

The Great Northern Diver



Red breasted Mergansers

French Conversation going from strength to strength

Ça ça de mieux en mieux - that's the verdict of the French Conversation group on the 'Zoom' effect!

Far from missing face to face sessions, the impact of Zoom has brought a change of format, more frequent meetings and a great deal of fun.

"I'm delighted," said group leader Barbara Fielden. "We're doing really well. As we're on Zoom we're now meeting once a fortnight. I've altered the format and we've really got into more spontaneous conversation

rather than building vocabulary around set topics. I've tried to keep things topical: we've talked about Covid of course but then decided to ban the 'C' word!

"As our meetings are less formal I don't have a set structure. Just before Christmas we had a session where we talked about a parent or a significant carer in our lives. I usually send a link, to some relevant vocabulary in advance so those who wish to can brush up ahead of the session.

"We have chats about anything from people's plans for the future, places they would like to visit, what irritates them in life and what they hope to achieve in 2022.

"We always manage to raise a laugh and I absolutely love it. Our online meetings have turned out to be really good fun.

"We regularly have eight to ten members and we all help each other. It's a testament to the group that they want to meet come what may despite the

adaptations we've had to make with Zoom."

If your French is intermediate level or above and you're interested in finding out more about the group contact Barbara via the group section of the Royston U3A website.

Clay Shooting is back on target

Clay Shooting members are getting back into action on February 23rd - their first meeting post lockdown.

Group leader Frank Martin welcomes new members to come along. The group meets in the open air, Covid restrictions are always observed and the ground is being refurbished.

"We shoot at Nuthampstead and guns, cartridges and clays are provided," he said. "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

goes to the top scoring participant. Members have an enjoyable Wednesday afternoon with a mid-afternoon coffee break.

New recruits attend a health and safety talk where safety, gun handling, shooting postures and general information are discussed before stepping onto the actual range. This is held at Royston's Conservative Club and each member will be with an instructor when shooting on the range."

Frank has passed courses in shooting procedures, safety and gun handling with the CPSA and the BASC.

If you would like to come along and meet us, contact Frank via the groups section of the Royston U3A website.



Clayshooter - Damien O'Dell (right) being presented with Top Gun Trophy for February 2020

Christmas Cheer for the Golf group

Ten members of the Golf group got into the Christmas spirit for a festive round of golf at Kingsway Golf Centre in early December.

"We all started our rounds merrily on high, but by the end, we were as usual in the bleak mid-winter!" said Peter Walden.

"We had ordered a festive meal timed for the end of our golf, this being 3.30 in the afternoon. We started with a discussion on whether we were having a late lunch or an early dinner, and to make

matters even more confusing most of us had ordered the Big Breakfast!

Kingsway had provided wonderful Christmas crackers and with joy we pulled the crackers and wore the paper hats, much to the amusement (we think) of the other golfing patrons.

The food was excellent, the conversation wide ranging and we left looking forward to the New Year and many more rounds of golf."



Golf group members about to tuck in to a 'Christmas Big Breakfast' after their festive round of golf

Winter walks with the Strollers

The Strollers have been getting out for autumn and winter walks around Bassingbourn, Melbourn and Therfield Heath, as David Walker reports.

Seventeen members enjoyed our November short walk, in sunshine, around

the footpaths and byways of Bassingbourn. We are grateful to John Bell for previously checking the route and for leading the walk. The sun provided a feast of autumn colours in Keith Wood that I felt lucky to have seen. Welcome refreshments were had in

The Hoops afterwards.

Fifteen members turned out for December's walk on the Heath in cold but sunny conditions. Thanks are due to Brian Holson for leading the walk. Refreshments were had in the Heath Café after the walk.

Eleven members braved the elements for our first short walk of 2022. Despite the January cold, walking conditions were very pleasant on the Melbourn to Meldreth route. Of note, Brian Holson spotted an egret in Melwood.

Carrying on with a good read...

All three book groups have been getting together for a good read – whether it’s by Zoom, meeting in gardens, well-ventilated living rooms or pubs!

Members of Book Club 1 enjoyed an outing to Royston Library for a talk by crime writer Rachel Lynch, author of the Detective Kelly Porter novels.

“We had such a nice evening,” said group leader Deirdre Smith “The books are set in the Lake District and having met her we thought we’d like to read something by her so we’ve started on *Dark Game*, the first in the DI Kelly Porter series.”

After months of meeting on Zoom, members are getting together in person again. The group meets on the first Tuesday of the month and currently has a vacancy, so anyone interested should contact Deirdre.

Book Club 2 managed with Zoom and Kindle Books during the first lockdown, then met in a member’s garden in the summer before going back to meeting in a quiet area in a pub.

Group leader Janet Burton said popular reads have included *Troubled Blood* by Robert Galbraith, *The Bee Keeper of Aleppo* by

Christy Lefteri and *The Doll Factory* by Elizabeth Macneal.

Book Cub 3 is also going strong, meeting up again after a few Zoom sessions. Group leader Lee Towers said recent highlights included a summer get-together in a member’s garden and a late Christmas celebration at The Bull.

Monthly meetings are on Wednesday morning and *The Cellar* by Minette Walters is the current read.



Dates for your diary

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 22, 2pm on Zoom

SHOPS AND SHOPPING:

The history of the small shop through the ages.

Guest speaker **Janet Pennington** will give a fascinating talk with illustrations. We take shopping for granted, using our local shops and going to the supermarket. We can order online and have a home delivery at our convenience. How different was it for our ancestors?

MARCH

Tuesday 29, 2pm on Zoom

An introduction to BERMUDA AND ITS BIRDS

Guest speaker **Andrew Dobson** moved to Cambridge in 2018 after almost 30 years in Bermuda. He is renowned as a highly accomplished author and photographer and his bird photographs have appeared in many books, journals and travel magazines.

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 (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	Tues	9:30am	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell
French Conversation	Mon	1:00pm	Fortnightly Variable on Zoom	Barbara Fielden
Gardening	Thurs	2:30pm	Suspended	Val Fairbanks
Golf	Thurs	1:00pm	Weekly	Peter Walden
Golf Croquet	Mon	10:15am	Suspended until Spring	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
Petanche / Boules	Fri	2:30pm	Suspended until Spring	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	Tues	10:45am	Weekly	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

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

