



It was wonderful to be back in Royston Town Hall in-person for the April meeting after such a long time and quite special to see so many familiar faces again. I hope those members who watched the meeting on Zoom will eventually feel confident enough to also return but I fully understand they currently wish to remain vigilant. A big thanks goes to technical guru Chris Walls who made all the technology work on the day.

Quite a number of interest groups have restarted and I am delighted to let you know that 20 members participated in a recent Solo Sundays lunchtime get-together. The History group is hoping to restart shortly. A new Yarn & Chat group for knitting, crochet, tapestry and embroidery is starting up aimed at beginners, improvers and the proficient - details can be found on our website.

We have so far received membership renewals from 72% of our members which is very encouraging. I also want to welcome several new members to Royston U3A.

Jackie Gellert, Chairman

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ROYSTON u3a news

MAY 2022 Issue 36

Mercy Ships - bringing hope and changing lives



Christine Brown

Every day volunteers on Mercy Ships are making miracles happen, transforming the lives of people in desperate need.

In a moving talk at our April meeting Christine Brown described how Mercy Ships UK provides medical care and free surgeries in Africa, on board its hospital ship Africa Mercy.

"Seventeen million people die each year because they don't have access to safe affordable surgery. Some people have never seen a doctor. It's a global crisis and we are doing something about it," she said.

Mercy Ships began in 1978 when founders Don and Deyon Stephens realised that a floating hospital was the most effective way to bring world-class volunteer medical professionals directly to some of the poorest countries.

On Africa Mercy 450 volunteers from 40 countries are changing the lives of people

like young mother Adama who went blind after having twins and lost hope of ever seeing them. A 20 minute cataract operation restored her sight and her future.

Eleven-year-old Paul suffered severe burns to his arm and surgery to remove scar tissue dramatically improved his mobility.

Bullied at school for her severe limp, Marie Madeleine had her life transformed by leg straightening surgery.

Each volunteer on board has a vital role - from surgeons, dentists and medical professionals to teachers, plumbers and catering staff.

"They are all part of that great big jigsaw puzzle that makes Mercy Ships what they are," said Christine.

She described her time as part of the team in the galley cooking 1,000 meals three times a day as "two of the best weeks of my life."

The launch of Global Mercy, the first purpose-built Mercy Ship with double the capacity of Africa Mercy, means that more volunteers are needed.

"Spread the word. We really do need your support," she said. "It's such an incredibly empowering charity to be involved in."

Pam Dajda



Photos: Mercy Ships UK ©

Bermuda's most amazing birds



Andrew Dobson

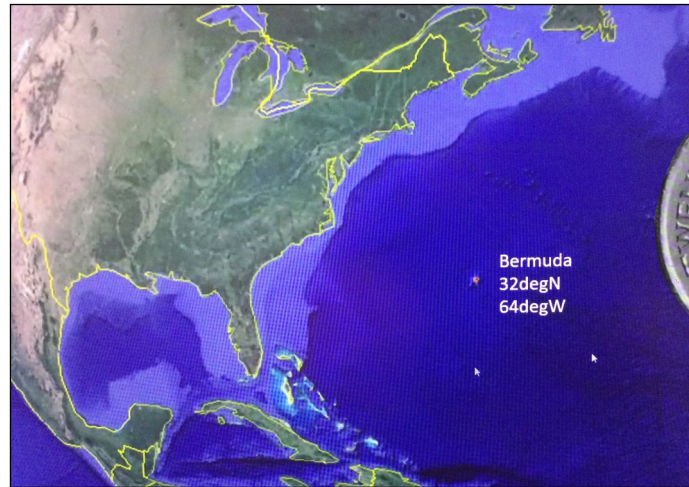
Bermuda is one of the most isolated inhabited islands in the world – and also the magnet for an extraordinary variety of birds.

The tiny island in the North Atlantic is densely populated and much of the original vegetation has gone but its urban environment attracts an amazing 400 species of birds.

Birdwatcher and teacher Andrew Dobson who lived in Bermuda for 30 years has documented and photographed many of them. In an absorbing talk at our March meeting he explained how the island's isolation made it the ideal spot for migrating birds to feed and regain energy before taking off for another long haul.

Birds are everywhere - from the exotic sounding eastern bluebird, black skimmer and scarlet tanager to the more familiar pigeons, terns and warblers.

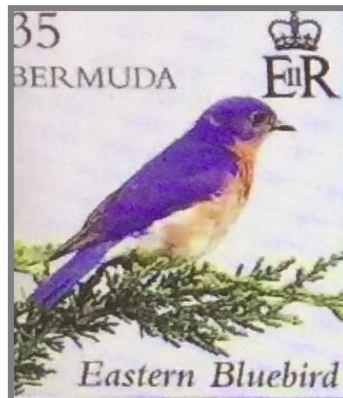
A snowy owl was even spotted on a school roof. "I guess it thought the white roofs we have in Bermuda were snow covered so it stayed a while," said Andrew. He highlighted the remarkable story of the Bermuda petrel which was thought to be extinct since 1620 when early settlers arrived. But a few were found and thanks to



Bermuda, in the middle of nowhere, is the ideal spot for migrating birds to feed and regain energy before taking off again



The Bermuda Monetary Authority features bird images on its currency



Bermuda Stamps Commemorative Issues

a programme to re-establish them numbers are up to 130 pairs – a great conservation success.

A tradition on the Bermuda birding calendar is the annual Christmas bird count which has become a valuable source of data to look at changing bird patterns and populations.

"It's amazing when you look at the number of birds that have been recorded in Bermuda. The sheer variety and the distances of migration, somehow, incredibly arriving from all over the world."

Pam Dajda



Bermuda petrel (Pterodroma cahow)

Shops and shopping through the ages



Janet Pennington

Shops and shopping will be a subject of interest to many and Sussex historian and archivist Janet Pennington reminded us to “look up!” at shop signs and frontages in her fascinating and richly illustrated talk on the history of small shops through the ages.

Janet took us on a whistle-stop tour asking “what was it like for our ancestors?” Growing up with an historian father who had a shop fitting business she became used to the architectural words used to describe the various parts of a shop - the counter, stall board, stall riser, stanchions and fascia board.

Now as a member of a building study group she continues to look up, to collect examples and images, and her father’s extensive collection is now gifted to an archive. This shows buildings he catalogued in the early 1950s and as they are now, always intriguing to those with a mind to look for evidence of shutters or canopies or awnings, the last two of which have largely disappeared from our streets.

Signs above shops abound - an engraving of an early shoe shop in Switzerland showed a row of shoes hanging above the counter, a French butchers shop sign showed a horse, a three foot high teapot now restored to its previous gilded glory in Durham where it has been hanging at least since the mid-19th century, and a gilded hessian boot sign from shops owned by Russell & Bromley, in business since 1873.



Shop signs and shop names have changed over the years. A three foot high teapot now restored to its previous gilded glory in Durham where it has been hanging since the mid-19th century

Royston too has its share of historic buildings in the town where evidence of previous use as shops can be looked for, and a barber’s shop showing the traditional red and white barbers pole which



A projecting hanging shop sign featuring a gilded Hessian Boot advertising a Russell & Bromley shoe shop, in business since 1873

originated with the service of bloodletting still stands proudly outside Carlo’s in Market Hill.

Carla Bailey

The Ukraine invasion and implications

Royston U3A Current Affairs group met in March via Zoom to discuss the situation in Ukraine.



Destruction of Ukraine by Russian forces

We had a very lively discussion and felt that the UN hadn’t responded well, hampered by Russia’s veto on the Security Council. NATO is being defensive to avoid triggering WW3. If Ukraine were willing to negotiate also ceding Crimea to Russia, might Putin agree to withdraw troops? However he might be pretending to talk, to buy time. Ultimately, he aims to restore Russia to the USSR’s “glory days”.

Ukraine’s resistance is admirable, but they’re ultimately outnumbered

and outgunned. Putin may resort to shelling from afar. He’s already finding scapegoats amongst top FSB (Russian Federal Security Service) people, and if cornered might use chemical or biological weapons (or worse) under a false flag operation. His population is being fed propaganda and supports him by and large – but then we don’t know how much of what we hear is also propaganda!

Economic sanctions may take some time to take effect. Even if the EU stops

buying oil and gas, India, Pakistan, China and Africa may well buy it, and so fund Russia’s war. Putin may not accept any deal that he cannot portray as a “win” for him. We hope that China might help broker an end to this, as world recession would damage them too.

Sarah Hillman

Zooming back to the real world

Two years ago who would have thought that Zoom meetings would become our main way of staying connected?

Back in March 2020 not many of us had much idea about communicating via online platforms – but how times have changed!

Throughout the challenges of the pandemic the chance to get together for monthly U3A meetings via Zoom has been a real morale booster.

We've had some outstanding talks and, thanks to Zoom, have been entertained by speakers from far and wide. We sat back in comfort for a walking tour of London with a blue badge guide, basked in the star-studded history of life aboard the Cunard QE2, and were fascinated by the story of Germans who fled Hitler and became secret listeners for British Intelligence.

A special highlight was when writer Elizabeth Gowing zoomed in from her home in Kosovo to tell the fascinating story of a Montenegrin photographer princess.

Now that we are at last returning to actual meetings Royston U3A Chairman Jackie Gellert thanked members for their support.

It's quite unbelievable that it's two years since we last met in the Town Hall and it's fantastic to be getting back together again," she said.

Members have shown their appreciation of the standard of speakers with comments including:

"We very much enjoyed the lecture and the truly wonderful photographs of the Birds of Bermuda, thank you, your husband, the speaker and all concerned for organising the event."

"Zoom has certainly helped us cope with the isolation by seeing other members, the smiling faces from around the town certainly lifted our spirits and the feeling of 'we are all in this together'. Your choice of speakers covering such wide and various subjects has been much appreciated."

"Thank you for suggesting the fabulous talk on Bermuda and its Birds for the U3A talk... We are looking forward to being back in the Town Hall and meeting up with so many people, Its been excellent having Zoom speaker meetings but not quite the same."

A recap of some of our many outstanding monthly meeting talks via Zoom during the pandemic

Monthly meetings at the Town Hall will be socially distanced. For the time being they will also be relayed via Zoom.

NOVEMBER 2020

ROYSTON U3A virtual monthly meeting on Zoom Tuesday November 24, 2pm




ALEXANDER LITVINENKO - THE SPY WHO SOLVED HIS OWN MURDER

Our guest speaker, **Paul Barwick**, will give an insight into the 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.




JUNE 2021



ROYSTON U3A AGM Tuesday June 29, 2pm on Zoom

followed by 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**.

KNEBWORTH HOUSE and the Lytton Family



JULY 2021



Our guest speaker, historian **Dr Helen Fry**, will tell the story of the German émigrés who fled Hitler's regime and became secret listeners for British Intelligence during the Second World War.

From the M Room (M for 'miked') they bugged the conversations of over 10,000 German POWs, including 59 German Generals at Trent Park in North London.

During their clandestine work the secret listeners did not set eyes on a single German POW, yet their work and the intelligence they gained was as significant for winning the war as Bletchley Park and cracking the Enigma Code.

SECRET LISTENERS WHO BUGGED THE NAZIS IN WW2


ROYSTON U3A virtual monthly meeting Tuesday July 27, 2pm on Zoom





NOVEMBER 2021

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 HM Yacht Britannia in the early 1970s. His talk includes an illustrated history of Royal Yachts and a short virtual tour of Britannia with glimpses of life onboard whilst on Royal Duty.



Royston U3A virtual monthly meeting via Zoom Tuesday November 30, 2pm





MARCH 2022

AN INTRODUCTION TO **BERMUDA AND ITS BIRDS**

Our guest speaker **Andrew Dobson** had a life-long career in teaching. He moved to Cambridge in 2018 after almost 30 years in Bermuda. He was President of the Bermuda Audubon and currently serves on the board of Birds Caribbean and is a regional editor for North American Birds.

Andrew is renowned as a highly accomplished author and photographer and his bird photographs have appeared in many books, journals and travel magazines.

Royston U3A virtual monthly meeting via Zoom Tuesday March 29, 2pm

A taste of the finer things in life

Twenty-two members of the Wine Appreciation group took to Zoom for a tasting of outstanding fine wines one evening in March as the prospect of meeting up in person still seemed too risky.

James Aldridge of Corney & Barrow hosted the event on Zoom and provided in advance to each group member small tasting samples of a range of fine wines, three whites and three reds, from France Italy and the USA together with his food suggestions for pairing with each wine.

Group members were advised that they would be

in for a treat as the wines were going to be quite exceptional and for us to simply savour the flavour irrespective of the price.

The group appreciated just how truly outstanding the six wines were and, regardless of the high cost, some members realised this was not an opportunity to be missed and placed an order for a bottle or two to keep for a future special occasion.

Well, you only live once so you might as well enjoy something wonderful.

Jackie Gellert



Wildflower spotting with the Strollers

The Strollers have been checking out signs of spring, spotting bluebells in Melwood and pasque flowers on Therfield Heath.

Eleven members joined the traditional April walk to Church Hill and were rewarded with a good show of rare wild pulsatillas - a sure sign that Easter has arrived. Thanks to Brian Holson for leading the walk.

Twenty members enjoyed the March walk in bright sunshine to Melwood. We welcomed newcomers Sandie Kowkabzadeh, Bill and Diane Croke and Debbie King (Mervyn's wife). Nobody won the prize for spotting the bluebell but we did find some daffodils to pose in front of for the group photo. Many enjoyed refreshments in Melbourn Community Hub after the walk.

In February 15 members set out on a short walk in Basingbourn. Walking conditions were good and the route chosen was pleasant. From the village green we went down Spring Lane and took the footpath to Bellevue Farm and followed Ashwell Street (Icknield Way) to Clunch Pit Wood. We passed Wellhead Springs and returned back to Spring Lane, in time for welcome refreshments at The Hoops.

I am grateful to Barbara Rout for selecting the route and leading the walk.

David Walker

Top: The Strollers on the traditional April walk to Church Hill to see the rare wild pulsatillas (inset)

Right: The group in bright sunshine in March walking to Melwood



Housing and Solar Farms - and Ukraine

Bill Croke raised interesting housing and development questions at our Current Affairs group meeting in February.

Barkway Road development is on hold, awaiting a Masterplan document, but why it was being considered when it is outside the North Herts District Council Plan? There seems to be no overall plan embracing the town centre and key services (health/education/parking) to meet demand.

We felt that if we resisted more housing, it would be imposed on us, so it was better to embrace it and take control. A Neighbourhood Plan (as done in Braughing) might stop such off-plan developments.

We also considered solar farm developments, especially those on land needed for growing food. We need energy but wind farms are more productive, with a lower footprint.

The solar farm at Wendy was negotiated *with* the community and included a nature reserve for the benefit of local wildlife and residents - an example worth following?

Finally, we noted the Ukraine situation and felt that Russia was seeking buffer states between itself and NATO countries, and Putin may feel that Russian voters approve.

The Baltic states were also feeling threatened and we hoped that logic would prevail. Ultimately Ukraine might not be allowed to join NATO. (But a UK/Poland/Ukraine trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation has just been signed!)

Sarah Hillman

Fifty walks and going strong!

It was celebration time when Five Mile Walkers group members notched up their 50th walk together in April.

Fifteen walkers met at the King William IV pub in Heydon and set out on a pleasant spring morning, writes group leader Eric Heaton.

We walked through the village before taking a path that led downhill to the ancient Icknield Way and then on to Bran Ditch which was the site of an Anglo-Saxon earthwork which ran from Heydon to Fowlmere.

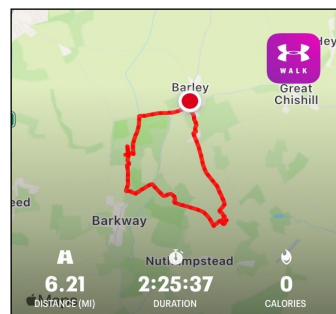
Most of the ditch has been lost to agriculture. Some selfish people have chosen the site to dispose of their old sofa, building material, fridge and other household rubbish. Why?

We continued our walk back to Heydon passing Holy Trinity Church which was bombed in 1940 and the tower was replaced with a brick structure. On our return to the pub nine people stayed for lunch.

In March, 19 members met at the Fox and Hounds in Barley for a walk through open country to Cokenach Estate and then on to the edge of Barkway. We continued on to Newsells Village before returning to the Fox and Hounds for lunch. Our walk took just two and a half hours to complete with good company in a beautiful part of the county.

In February our walk started from the car park at Therfield Heath, taking a footpath towards Litlington, before turning on to Ashwell Street (Roman Road) and returning for lunch at the Heath café.

Eric Heaton



Barley route map (should you want to give it a go!)

The Five Mile Walkers on their celebration 50th walk in April



The group walking through open countryside around Barley

Solo Sundays - our first outing in two years!

The Solo Sundays group had a very enjoyable lunch at the Old Bull Carvery. It was our first get-together since the lockdowns and was attended by 19 ladies and one (very brave!) gentleman.

Everyone was pleased to be able to see each other again, although some of us had been able to Zoom during the past two years in order to have a chat and exchange news.

It was a very strange feeling as several of us said that, despite the long gap, we felt that we were chatting and catching up after the previous month's lunch!

We have some new members of the group and several suggestions have been made for future venues so we look forward to getting back to normal(ish!).

Sandra Restall



Sunday lunch at the Old Bull Carvery

Anyone for Golf Croquet?

The mallets have been repaired and revarnished, the weather is warming up - which means the Golf Croquet group is preparing to swing back into action!

Current members are getting together for the first time and courses for beginners are planned later in the summer.

The group uses Meldreth Croquet Club's lawn behind the British Queen pub and group leader Sue Barnes Bishop is looking forward to the new season.

"We play on Monday mornings throughout the season and last year managed to play until the

first week in December," she said.

"It is a very friendly, social group which combines gentle exercise with a great deal of good humour. It is ideally suited to being 'covid safe' as we are outdoors, keep a reasonable distance from each other and all equipment is disinfected after use."

"The beginners course will probably be on Monday afternoons in July and anyone interested should contact me as then I'll be able to keep them informed."

Sue can be contacted via the groups section on the Royston U3A website.



Looking forward to the new season

Help needed to restart the History group

The popular History group is starting up again - but members are needed to help out at meetings in the Town Hall.

Group leader Reg Hounsell says: "I am looking to restart meetings, the first one on Tuesday May 10 at 2pm, but it is dependent on

obtaining a little help from a couple of members to work with me on putting a programme together; and to offer help to Kathy with refreshments.

"I would like to hear from any member who would be willing to talk, or give an illustrated presentation,

on any historical based subject, or can recommend someone from outside Royston U3A to give it. I also need to have an idea of how many members will be willing to turn up, but I realise numbers attending will not be as many as pre-Covid."

For further information, offers to help or just to let him know they would like to attend meetings, contact group leader Reg Hounsell via the groups section on the Royston U3A website.

Strumming along in Barley

The Royston U3A Ukulele group has been up and running for some time and is well attended, writes Reg Hounsell.

We organise occasional 'gigs' which helps to keep the group's profile in the public eye.

The latest gig took place on Thursday April 21 when ten members of the group played for nearly an hour at the Barley Over Sixties (Barley Community group) meeting at Barley Town House.

Song sheets were handed out so the audience could sing along to all the tunes we played. Players chose to wear a variety of very colourful tops.

Songs included *Lovely Bunch of Coconuts, Sweet Caroline, Gypsy Woman, Sunny Afternoon and the Blackpool Bell.*

If you are interested in joining the group's weekly sessions at Coombes Community Centre contact John Bishop via the groups section on the Royston U3A website.

Keep Fit back in action

As Covid restrictions have now eased, Fitness group members have been returning to Tuesday weekly sessions at the Market Hill Rooms which are led by fully qualified instructor Irene Gibson or a member of her team.

A fitness class at 9.30am is followed by a seated exercise session at 10.45am and there are a few spaces for new members interested in joining, says joint group leader Reg Hounsell.

"Compared with pre-Covid classes numbers are still

restricted, our members are fully jabbed and everyone is spaced out in the hall," he said.

"Fitness sessions start with a warm-up often using bands, balls or light weights provided by the instructor. The seated exercise class is shorter and is all about improving joint flexibility, occasionally using bands Everyone works to their own individual level and it's good fun."

Anyone interested in joining should contact Kathy Hounsell via the groups section on the Royston U3A website.

Dates for your diary

MAY

Tuesday 31, 2pm at Royston Town Hall and on Zoom

Robert Maxwell - did he fall or was he pushed?

Robert Maxwell's body was found in the sea on November 5, 1991. Guest speaker **Roger Mason** will describe in detail the circumstances of his death and talk about the life of this extraordinary man. He will then weigh the evidence to try and establish whether his death was murder, suicide or an accident.

JUNE

Tuesday 28, 2pm at Royston Town Hall and on Zoom

Robert Voss CBE CStJ

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire

will talk about his long and distinguished career in industry and describe the selection process prior to his appointment as the Queen's representative in Hertfordshire, what his duties involve, his personal commitment and the protocols and procedures of the role.

Easy Guide to Interest Groups

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

GROUP	DAY	TIME	FREQUENCY	GROUP LEADER
Art	Mon	9:30am	Variable	Sylvia Jordan
Birding	Wed	8:30am	Monthly 1st Wed	Carol McGeoch
Book Club 1	Tues	10:30am	Monthly 1st Tues	Deirdre Smith
Book Club 2	Fri	11:00am	Monthly Variable on Zoom	Janet Burton
Book Club 3	Wed	10:30am	Monthly last Wed	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	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	
Fitness	Tues	9:30am	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell
French Conversation	Mon	1:00pm	Fortnightly on Zoom	Barbara Fielden
Gardening	Thurs	2:30pm	Suspended	
Golf	Thurs	1:00pm	Weekly	Peter Walden
Golf Croquet	Mon	10:15am	Weekly	Sue Barnes Bishop
History	Tues	2:00pm	Monthly 2nd Tues	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	Fri	1pm & 2pm	Suspended	Kathy Hounsell
Pottery (Hand Building)	Mon	2:00pm	Suspended	Rosie Cowsley
Quiz	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	
Seated Exercise	Tues	10:45am	Weekly	Kathy Hounsell
Solo Sundays	Sun	2:30pm	Monthly 2nd Sun	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
Wine Appreciation	Wed	Variable	Monthly in-person or on Zoom	Jackie Gellert
Yarn & Chat (New group)	Tues	2:00pm	Monthly 3rd Tues	Melanie Pluck

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