

ROYSTON u3a news

NOVEMBER 2022 Issue 38



Since the last Royston U3A News where we announced two new groups were planned, subsequently only the Yarn & Chat group started. Sadly little interest was shown in a proposed Glazed Ceramics group. Now that things have returned to relative normality after lockdown many of our interest groups have failed to restart because their group leader has decided to step down. We need to find new group leaders for those interest groups. If you enjoyed the camaraderie of participating in a currently suspended group and would be willing to volunteer to take over as group leader please contact Joan Westcott our Groups Co-ordinator. To our active group leaders I want to say a big thank you for giving so much friendship, pleasure and enjoyment to your group members.

I am currently very active challenging the Third Age Trust after the board put forward a proposal at their AGM to impose an increase in the amount we pay them out of your annual membership fee. I countered this with an amendment and I have been in contact with chairs of U3As throughout the UK to get their views on this. My amendment carried the highest number of votes at the AGM and the TAT proposal has been shelved for now. Since then I have been leading a forum nationally on Zoom with other U3As for us all to work together to ensure TAT works with us and listens to its members to avoid future confrontation. I'll keep you posted.

Jackie Gellert, Chair



photo: allaboutjazz.com



DEREK BLYTH

The rags-to-riches story of how a shy girl from the slums became one of the most celebrated singers of the 20th century made for fascinating listening at our September meeting.

The legendary Ella Fitzgerald recorded over 200 albums and worked with the giants of jazz including Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Benny Goodman.

"I never knew how good our songs were until I heard Ella Fitzgerald sing them," Ira Gershwin once remarked.

Life-long fan Derek Blyth traced the story of the First Lady of Song, illustrated with excerpts from some of her greatest recordings.

Born in 1917 Ella dreamed of becoming an entertainer as a child but her unhappiness caused by her mother's early death led to her skipping school, getting into trouble with the police and being sent to a reform school.

Broke and living on the streets of Harlem she entered an amateur talent contest in 1934, stunned the audience with her voice and won first prize. She was spotted by bandleader Chick Webb and her rise to international stardom began.

Notoriously shy and reserved, she came into her own on stage. The American Songbook series in which she recorded 240

songs of other musicians' albums was a sensation.

As well as touring and performing all over the world, she was a civil rights crusader and had a deep concern for child welfare. In 1993 she established the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, creating educational and music opportunities for deprived children and grants for medical research.

In her later years diabetes led to worsening health problems and failing eyesight. She died at her Beverly Hills home in 1996.

"Ella wanted to give back and left all her fortune to the foundation for the causes that were most dear to her," said Derek.

Pam Dajda

A dog's life... and holidays too!



ANDY SMITH & Tamba

Noisy, smelly and expensive to run – are we barking mad to love dogs?

Performance poet Andy Smith pondered whether it would be easier to have a dog's life when he came to speak at our October meeting.

Andy, proud owner of a whippet called Tamba, has published a book of poems called *Mysteries and Conundrums*, weaving poetry and humour through the ups and downs of his life.

Dogs play a major role and Andy suggested we have a great deal to learn from our canine companions.

A Yorkie terrier called Daisy, a “noisy, hairy, sugar-bag on legs” stars in one poem. Much-loved, she was the companion of Andy's mother-in-law who was in the early stages of dementia.

“Daisy kept her going. I think if it hadn't been for the little dog she would have needed a lot more care. That Yorkie looked after her and they were a great pair together,” he said.

Andy entertained us with meanderings about dogs and holidays, from camping trips to the Gower and rides on the funfair in Brighton, to taking the train

to Bognor Regis and walking the coastal path in Cornwall – naturally with whippet companion.

“Dogs are amazing. They create all sorts of encounters of a social kind,” he said.

In Andy's family it's certainly not a dog's life as far as Tamba is concerned.

“It's often the case in the pecking order in the family for man's best friend - it's the whippet first.”

Pam Dajda

Theatre group is back!

Yes, theatre group members went on their first trip since before Covid.

At the beginning of August we went into London to see the musical *Come From Away* at the Phoenix theatre, Charing Cross Road. It was great.

It is the story of 9/11 and how 38 planes were diverted to Newfoundland once American air space was shut down. Seven thousand people arrived in the tiny community of Gander where usually only two or three planes would arrive each week.

We have a joyous story of people helping each other, looking after each other and providing support for each other. It is a story of hope with humour, a touch of sadness but great toe tapping music. We see how the whole community has come together and forged new relationships. It is a must to see!



The tiny community of Gander where the Canadians opened their doors to stranded travellers.

We had a super day out and it was great to meet up again with old friends and some new ones.

Thank you to everyone who came along to support the trip. More trips are being planned so theatre goes look out for more details.

Deirdre Smith



COME FROM AWAY Winner of 4 Olivier Awards.

Transforming Royston Parish Church

photo: roystonparishchurch.org.uk



PHIL BURCHELL
Treasurer and project manager for the church.



Above: Royston Parish Church of St John the Baptist after four years of restoration.

Left: The severely damaged church after the devastating fire in December 2018.

The bells of St John the Baptist Church are ringing out again after almost four years of silence.

In the devastating fire of December 2018 all eight bells in the tower cracked from the extreme heat. They have been recast and hung in the original bell-frame in time to toll for the late Queen's funeral.

The bells sum up the long-awaited restoration, the scaffolding shroud gone to reveal a stunning refurbished church to serve the Royston community.

Church treasurer Phil Burchell, guest speaker at the History group, described the long and arduous process of restoring the water and fire damaged building.

"It was a pretty sorry sight. Most damage was to the bell tower and lead on the nave roof melted in the 800c heat," he said.

Casualties of the fire included the old organ with 1,350 pipes, but miraculously the stained glass medieval and Victorian windows suffered only minimal damage.

Restoration work revealed intriguing discoveries beneath the destruction. Graffiti was found on the chancel timbers, different types of tombs were discovered under the floor and samples of medieval wall paintings on the north wall.

The renovation has provided the opportunity for the church to modernise. Underfloor heating and York stone flooring have been laid, chairs are replacing the Victorian pews, a digital organ and audio-visual

system are being installed, and a new kitchen and toilets fitted.

The whole of the west end of the church has been opened up and the font moved to free up more space.

"It's quite a stunning sight when you go in," said Phil. "It's staggering how big it looks and means we can make it a lot more flexible.

"We will be virtually a new church. A church for the 21st century that will really be striking."

Pam Dajda

Behind the Scenes at Westminster Abbey

Every Wednesday Jane Pavey goes to Westminster Abbey to help repair and conserve clerical robes. Jane is a member of the Guild of St Faith, a group of nine volunteer needlewomen, and came to the History group to talk about her work.

The volunteers' job is not to restore, but repair and conserve and make new robes if necessary. When new sets of robes are made, they work closely with David Gazeley from Watts, who also supply new material when needed. David will go to the Abbey to advise on particularly tricky assignments. Ten sets of robes must be available for each ecclesiastical season, and each volunteer is a specialist in certain aspects of sewing.

Old robes and altar frontals are repaired by removing worn patterns and resewing them onto new material which is inserted into the correct place, almost invisibly. New sets of robes are also made, like those seen at the Queen's funeral, and which were made especially for "the Event" as it was termed.

Jane explained that gold thread is used and as it is thin and sharp garments containing it have to be repaired relatively frequently, but all robes should last 80 plus years. Robes must be altered to fit clergy of different sizes and shapes, and female clergy are often much shorter than their male colleagues. Many robes

are very old; one cope - a semi-circular cloak Jane has worked on - was made in 1661 for Charles II.

A set of red copes, made by the Guild in 2013, deserve special mention. The design includes a cross and martlets from the coat of arms assigned to St Edward the Confessor and the crossed keys of St Peter with St Edward's ring. This fabric was specially woven for the Abbey.

For the service marking the 750th anniversary of the dedication of Henry III's church in October 2019 the Guild made a new set of copes in white and gold. These include designs showing St Peter's keys and the cross of St Edward

the Confessor, with shields of arms of Henry and Edward and the cypher of Queen Elizabeth II.

Jane has been going to the Abbey for over 20 years, but with the team of needlewomen being of similar age, who will follow them in this important and unpaid role?

Annette Guttridge

Members of the Guild of St Faith at work.

Westminster Abbey has many embroidered vestments and altar hangings in its collection.



photo: thesocialgolfer.com



Royston U3A Golf Group Playaway Day

In August the Golf Group exchanged their usual golf course at Kingsway in Melbourn, to the exotic location of Thorpeness Golf Club.

The day was organised by one of our members Nick Vaughan who is a member at Thorpeness.

Three cars started off from different points around Royston and met up at the Farm Café near Wickham Market on the A12 within 10 minutes of each other for the most important meal of a golfing day - a big breakfast.

Well fuelled up we then drove to Thorpeness and prepared to play.

“Thorpeness is regarded as one of the finest coastal heathland golf courses in Britain, and one of the best golf courses in Suffolk.

Golfers can expect a winding course, through heather, gorse, pine and silver birch trees, hitting from firm quick drying soil with rare birdsong in the ears and the tang of sea salt in the air.”

The above quote is taken from their website and all eight of us can testify to its accuracy, particularly the gorse bushes which we found to be very painful to try to play out of.

As usual we did not talk about the number of strokes attempted or the number of lost balls but we all agreed that we were proud to have completed all 18 holes.

We were then welcomed into the interesting clubhouse with many cups and competition boards with winners going back many years.



Royston U3A Golf group members on the first tee at Thorpeness Golf Club.

A good supper and a few beers before driving home with the lucky few who were not driving having a gentle snooze. It was a good day, hopefully the first of many using different golf courses

We are a friendly group and always looking for new members so give Peter a ring or an email.

Peter Walden

Current Affairs: - recent events reviewed

At our September meeting we noted with sadness the death of the Queen. A member of our group had been to her lying-in-state and remarked on how extraordinarily well it had been organised, how good the security was, and the perfection of the funeral and procession.

The incoming government was viewed with some misgivings, given the Markets' responses to the mini-budget - "the biggest unauthorised spend in peacetime" - favouring rich

more than poor and the South over the North. The resulting fall in Sterling stokes inflation.

The government seemed to have too many novices and the Prime Minister needs more skill in getting

the best people into the right jobs. Labour will also be novices if they come to power in two years. Urgent climate and waste issues have not yet been addressed.

War in Ukraine and sanctions are driving energy costs and worldwide food shortages and causing existing worldwide strains to worsen. Putin is sabre-rattling, though his conscription is causing unrest and he lacks China's full support, but he is likely to persist. We dreaded even to think that Trump might be added to this mix in 2024...

Sarah Hillman



- after the mini budget and reversal

Our October meeting was just after Jeremy Hunt had reversed most of the Truss/Kwarteng mini-budget and we wondered how quickly Liz Truss herself might go. We had wondered who had helped manoeuvre Hunt into that role and what might drive the selection of the next Prime Minister, probably by a less democratic process than we would like. In contrast Xi Jinping in China had been

re-appointed for a third term by a carefully selected congress – a very different model of "democracy" from ours.

We compared today's financial worries with the hardships and rationing following the World Wars and how the stress of war impacted peoples' health long afterwards. We noted how slowly refugees, who are above average for

dynamism and determination, are integrated into UK. Often even the very well-qualified ones have to work their way back up from very menial jobs, or wait years for recognition of their qualifications – doctors, for example - when we have high levels of vacancies in those roles.

A number of us had just received flu vaccinations. We were concerned about

the proportion of anti-vaxxers amongst younger adults – not just against covid, but polio, etc, which may leave a generation of children less protected.

Our next meeting is on November 21st in the Banyers Lounge. New members are welcomed.

Sarah Hillman

Spectacular ballet in Stevenage

Theatre group members went to see the beautiful ballet *Sleeping Beauty* at the Gordon Craig Theatre in Stevenage.

The Classical Ballet and Opera House are on their annual UK tour and in early October staged a one night only performance in Stevenage.

Group leader Deirdre Smith said: "It was a beautiful show. A vibrant and enchanting production with stunning choreography and sumptuous costumes. It was a real spectacle.

"It was great to be in a full, local theatre again with everyone enjoying an evening out.

"Nineteen of us went along - but come on theatre goers let's see more of you next year!

"Thank you to everyone who supported our trip and see you again soon."

Deirdre Smith





The clink of ice on glass means 'it's cocktail time!'

With the easing of restrictions in summer '21 the Wine Appreciation group resumed in-person get-togethers by holding a really enjoyable cocktail making & tasting event in Jackie & Ralph's garden. The event proved to be so popular last year that several requests were made to have a repeat event this August, weather permitting. Twenty-six group members turned up on the day for cocktails and a chat in the

sunshine. We were so lucky with perfect weather as the following day it poured with rain all day.

James Aldridge of Corney & Barrow delighted group members with some delicious cocktails. Starting with a Pimms Cup with cucumber spirit, followed by a superb Pina Colada, then moving onto a Sunshine Lagoon that looked amazing but didn't



taste so great, and to finish with, a delicious Mango Bellini.

Jackie provided hot dogs in brioche rolls with optional ketchup and mustard, finishing off with melon and chocolates.

Everyone went away happy after another thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Jackie Gellert

Croquet competition winners

On Sunday October 2nd Meldreth Croquet Club won the East Anglian Croquet Team final. The team faced Sudbury in the final having previously beaten Watford and Enfield.

The exciting part of this result is that half of the team had begun their croquet experience via Royston U3A.

Players who helped win this trophy include U3A members John and Sue Bishop and David Edwards. Other U3A members in the team who are also members of the Meldreth club are Roger and Lin Wallbridge. So joining a U3A club has brought much enjoyment and success in a tournament!

David Edwards



Five Mile Walking in Nuthampstead and Chrishall

On a pleasant September morning 17 walkers met at the 17th Century Woodman Inn at Nuthampstead. The route took us along what remains of the USAAF wartime airfield, home to the 398th Bomber Group and the 55th Fighter Group. There are many photographs of those times at the pub plus memorials outside to the aircrew who served.

Our walk took us to the edge of the village at Anstey and then toward Meesden before returning through woodland to the Woodman, where 12 of us stayed for an excellent lunch.

The October walk started from the Red Cow at Chrishall. We took a field path from the pub over to Elmdon, choosing to walk through the village to take in the church and the pretty village centre.

From there we joined a path travelling south via the cricket ground and continuing on through the estate of Lofts Hall. At Duddenhoe End we stopped to admire the thatched Hamlet Church, before continuing to Chiswick Hall. At this point we turned north to return to Chrishall passing the parish church where we stopped for a group photograph. Twelve people were in the group, most of whom enjoyed lunch at the Red Cow.

If you would like a little gentle exercise in good company, and possibly join us for lunch which is optional, walks are generally on the second Wednesday of the month. Please see the Royston u3a web page for further details.

Eric Heaton & Peter Andrew



The Five Mile Walks group out and about in Nuthampstead (top) and Chrishall (above).

Picking up writing tips from the East End expert

Don't we all wish we'd asked our granny more? That was the message from author Jean Fullerton who has written extensively about life in Cockney London.

Known as the Queen of the East End Saga, Jean shared her memories of growing up in the tough post-war years in an entertaining talk at Royston Arts Festival.

Several Book Club 1 members went along to join her in a nostalgic trip back to the 1950s and 60s.

"The way we lived then has long gone, even though it's still in living memory. I love the history of ordinary people and think their lives are worth recording," said Jean.

The author of 19 novels including the *Ration Book Series* series about life in the East End during WW2, Jean embarked on her autobiography during the Covid pandemic.

Encouraging us to write our own life stories for our children and grandchildren she advised: "It's not an easy thing to do as you have to be selective and you have to make it entertaining.

"We've lived through extraordinary times from a social history point of view."

Jean's family have lived in East London since the 1820s. She described the never-ending variety of the docks with waves of immigration over the years

and multi-cultural communities. The biggest change has come with housing - tower blocks replacing terraces and areas gentrified leading to rocketing house prices.

Her memoir *A Child of the East End* is an extraordinary celebration of a bygone era and a time we can all identify with.

Pam Dajda



Jean Fullerton (third left) meeting Book Club 1 members.

Knit natter and needlecraft

The inaugural meeting of the relatively new Yarn & Chat group was held in May 2022 when we decided to meet on the 1st and the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Banyers Hotel at 2pm.

Our first, and subsequent meetings, have been great fun and attract members with a variety of needlecraft skills. We regularly have knitters, cross-stitchers, embroiderers and crocheters of all abilities. The group is very inclusive and the

conversations vary from crafting to television programmes to recipes to anything!

One of the group joined to improve her very basic knitting skills and, whilst we don't set out to 'teach', several of us have been able to interpret the pattern, show her how to achieve the stitches and encourage her on her knitting journey. We are absolutely delighted that she has persevered and enjoyed making a very beautiful hat (pictured right) just in

time for the colder weather. Along that journey other knitters have also picked up new techniques too.

We all share different 'tricks of our trade' such as the latest portable light, chargeable as you would a mobile phone.

Do come and join us, just buy a drink (the lattes are nice!) and relax in the warmth of Banyers lounge. Contact Melanie Pluck via the groups section on the Royston U3A website.

Melanie Pluck



Dates for your diary

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 29, 2pm at Royston Town Hall and on Zoom

Christmas Hits by The Beatles and many others Guest speaker: Martin Orkin

Following his popular talk in July on 'Rivals Of The Beatles' Martin is making a welcome return to play and discuss some of the iconic Xmas-related music of the 1960s and 70s. Join Martin for a fun celebration to start the festive season while he is 'Rockin Around the Christmas Tree' in his 'Winter Wonderland'!

DECEMBER No monthly meeting

JANUARY

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

History of Coffee from Tree to Cup Guest speaker: Colin Smith, Smiths Coffee Company

Many people start the day with a cup of coffee and you probably make yourself a cup without thinking too much about it. There's always more to learn about coffee even if you're an espresso expert. Colin's talk will cover everything about the beverage with samples to taste.

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	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	
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	2:00pm	2nd and 4th Mon of month	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	
Life Stories	Wed	11:00am	Suspended	
Mixed Crafts	Thurs	2:00pm	Suspended	
Patchwork	Wed	10:00am	Suspended	
Petanque / Boules	Fri	2:30pm	Weekly	Jane Dottridge
Pilates	Fri	1pm & 2pm	Suspended	
Pottery (Hand Building)	Mon	2:00pm	Suspended	
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	Variable	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	Suspended	
Wine Appreciation	Wed	Variable	Monthly in-person or on Zoom	Jackie Gellert
Yarn & Chat	Tues	2:00pm	1st and 3rd Tues of month	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

Chair	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 Committee Member	Ralph Gellert
	David Edwards