

ROYSTON u3a news

FEBRUARY 2023 Issue 39



As this is the first issue of Royston U3A News for 2023 I would like to wish you all a belated **Happy New Year** and a healthy and peaceful year ahead.

Our interest group activities are all about making the most of life in retirement, keeping the mind active and the body fit & healthy, being creative, learning new things, getting involved, and forming new friendships 'from retired to inspired.'

Some of our interest groups are doing really well while others remain suspended after the pandemic. We urgently need enthusiastic new group leaders to get these suspended groups restarted. We also hope to start new groups for scrabble, chess, and bridge. A singing for fun group is another possibility but all these need a group leader to get them up and running. If you are interested in volunteering please let Joan Westcott, Groups Co-ordinator know.

I look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings.

Jackie Gellert, Chair

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Chair's message**
Jan'23 monthly meeting
- 2 **Nov'22 monthly meeting**
- 3 **History group Nov'22**
- 4 **History group Jan'23**
Theatre group
- 5 **Current Affairs group**
Wine Appreciation group
- 6 **Golf group**
- 7 **Five Mile Walks group**
New Year Honour
- 8 **Clay Shooting group**
Dates for your diary
Guide to interest groups
- 9 **Interest group contacts**
Royston U3A committee

Getting that caffeine fix since 1936



Ripe coffee "cherries" - the fruit contains the coffee beans.



Brief history of coffee brewing.



COLIN SMITH

Colin Smith likes a cup of tea first thing in the morning - but the rest of his day is devoted to coffee.

Smith's Coffee Company was founded by Colin's grandfather in 1936. Starting off as a small local roaster in a family-run grocery store in Mill Hill, Smiths are now specialist coffee bean suppliers in the UK, with customers including Hotel Chocolat and TK Maxx.

Colin took over the Hemel Hempstead based company

from his father in 1980 and gave us an expert insight into how coffee is grown and the process of going from bean to cup.

"Coffee is like wine and people have to learn and understand the secrets of the different growing methods and backgrounds of the coffee," he said.

Fascinating facts we learned:

- * Coffee is the second largest commodity in the world after oil.
- * Vietnam is the second largest supplier of coffee after Brazil.
- * During washing and drying beans, everything that's left over goes into instant coffee.
- * Coffee has no flavour until it is roasted.

Colin has travelled extensively over the years visiting farms and plantations. He is a founder member

of the Specialty Coffee Association, a non-profit organisation that fosters support for coffee professionals from producers to baristas all over the world.

The Hemel Hempstead factory has state-of-the-art training and tasting facilities. The company has also taken coffee lovers on coffee origin trips to places like Jamaica, Peru and Costa Rica.

"We are a family business and pride ourselves on our distinctive passion for tea and coffee roasting. Getting the best coffee you can is what it's all about."

Pam Dajda



Always dreaming of a white Christmas



MARTIN ORKIN

The world's best-selling Christmas hit topped the charts 80 years ago. Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* has sold a staggering 50 million copies over the years - way ahead of anything else.

Its enduring appeal can only be matched by the impact of the Beatles with

the Fab Four dominating the Christmas charts throughout the 1960s.

Music fan Martin Orkin took us on a journey of festive hits, ranging from The Goons' *I'm Walking Backwards For Christmas* in 1956, and Elvis Presley's *Blue Christmas* in 1957, to Brenda Lee's *Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree* in 1958. It all changed with the arrival of the Beatles on the music scene. *She Loves You* was in the charts for three months and number one for most of December 1963. The group's next release, *I Want To Hold Your Hand* would have gone straight to the top had it not been blocked.

"These two hits by the same group were fighting for the number one slot," said Martin. "It's staggering what geniuses the Beatles were." Dora Bryan summed up their fame and influence with her hit single *All I Want For Christmas Is A Beatle*.

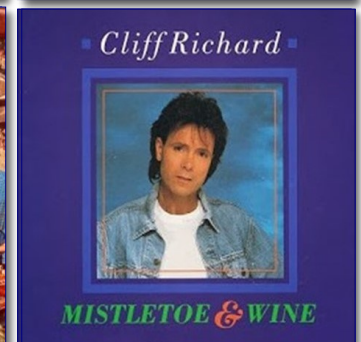
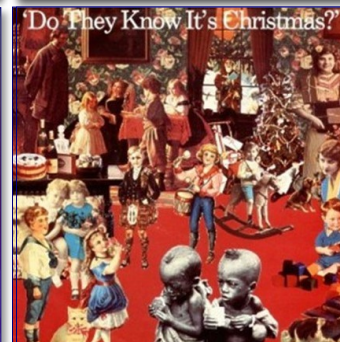
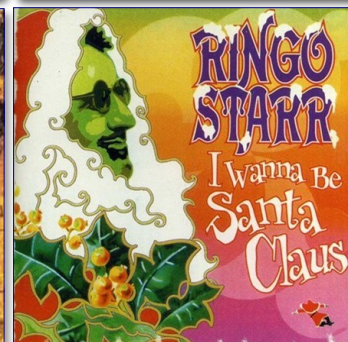
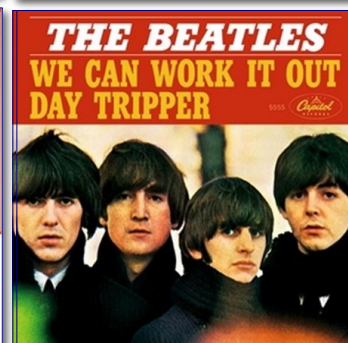
Other Fab Four festive chart-toppers were *I Feel Fine*, *Day Tripper*, *We Can Work It Out* and *Hello, Goodbye*. Although going their separate ways in the 1970s John, Paul, George and Ringo still notched up solo Christmas hits.

Stand-out chart sensations of the 1980s and 90s included Band Aid's *Do They Know It's Christmas? (Feed The World)* and Cliff Richard's *Mistletoe and Wine*.

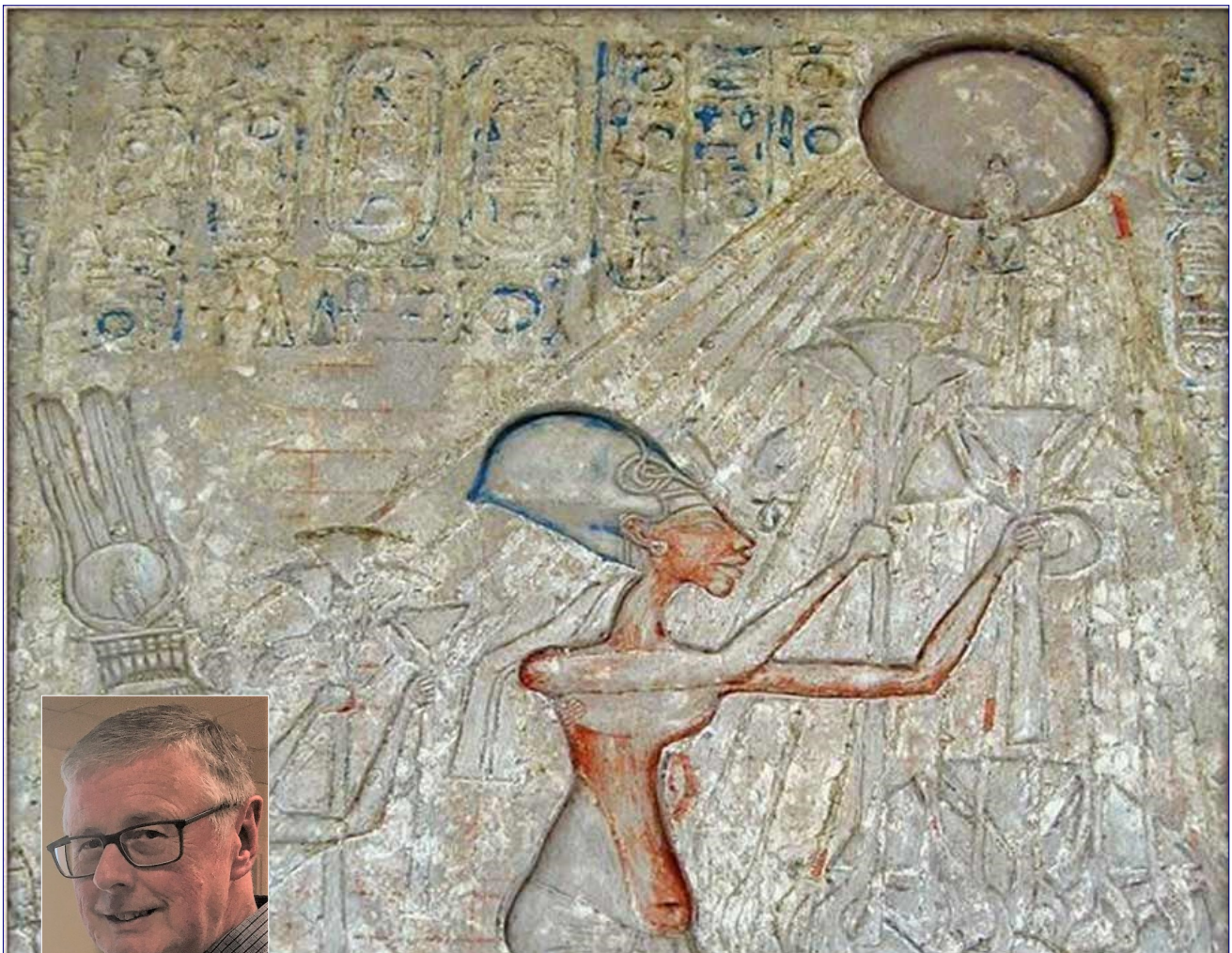
Martin wound up with that seasonal epic, Slade's *Merry Xmas Everybody*. "It's sold over a million copies, it keeps coming back year after year. No Christmas is complete without that fabulous classic."

Thanking Martin for his entertaining talk, Jackie Gellert also praised Deirdre Smith and her magnificent band of helpers for serving warm mince pies, mulled wine, and other sweet treats.

Pam Dajda



Egypt's Most Fascinating Pharaoh?



Explaining the Weirdly Alien Looking Statues of Pharaoh Akhenaten

ROB WHATMOUGH

We've all heard of Nefertiti, the beautiful queen of Ancient Egypt. But far less well-known is her husband, Pharaoh Akhenaten.



A colossal statue of Akhenaten

Although he only reigned for 17 years, Akhenaten made huge changes to Egyptian life - turning his back on traditional gods and moving the capital city to a new site on the east bank of the Nile.

He was probably the father of the boy-king Tutankhamun, but has a much greater claim to fame, according to Rob Whatmough, a self-confessed Egyptology nerd.

"My fundamental claim is that Tutankhamun is only of interest because 100 years ago his tomb was found intact. As a king he's a relative nonentity,

but his father is utterly fascinating," he said.

In an absorbing talk to the History group Royston U3A member Rob gave us a flavour of the life of this highly unusual pharaoh.

Ruling from 1353-1336 BC he introduced a new outlook on religion, choosing to worship only the sun god Aten.

"He said the sun gives life to everything and that's what we should worship," said Rob

He had a much-celebrated marriage, describing Nefertiti as 'the great one in the palace and beautiful of face.'

He moved Egypt's capital from Thebes to a new site named Akhetaten, quickly constructed for a population of up to 50,000. An elaborate tomb was built as he wanted to be buried there.

But under Tutankhamun the pendulum swung back, the city was abandoned and Akhenaten himself was written out of history. He was largely forgotten for millennia until the excavation of the site of Akhetaten began and slowly people realised what extraordinary upheaval there had been under the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaten.

Pam Dajda

Rock'n'Roll with the 45!

MIKE BISTER



Rock'n'Roll came into its own in the 1950s - and the History group heard that much of that was down to the spectacular success of a new disc format.

In 1949 RCA Victor introduced the 45rpm vinyl record and for young rock'n' roll fans like Mike Bister it opened up an exciting new music scene. RCA was up against stiff competition from arch-rivals Columbia Records who had introduced 33rpm LP discs the previous year.

"To capture the market RCA had to make sure they had an affordable record player to suit the 45 format and they had to make sure there were a lot of records available," said Mike.

Intriguingly the first 45s were issued on coloured vinyl for different types of music. It was green for country and western, sky blue for international music, midnight blue for popular classics, yellow for children's entertainment, red for classical and black for popular music.

Mike built up his collection of 45 rpm records during lockdown and also researched the craze for the flexi disc, a record made of a thin, flexible vinyl sheet.

Made to be lighter, more durable and cheaper than the 45, the first flexi discs were pressed in Japan, followed by France, the USA and UK.

"They became very useful as a giveaway. The Beatles always sent their fan club a special Christmas recording on a flexi disc," Mike said.

He rounded off the afternoon playing several early RCA Victor records, featuring children's favourite Roy Rogers, country music singer Eddie Arnold, and Mike's own favourite Bill Haley and the Saddlemen - as the Comets were previously called.

We agreed that the quality was surprisingly good and music from the 1950s has definitely stood the test of time!

Pam Dajda

Singing along to Big Band Classics

At the beginning of December the Theatre group held their final trip for 2022.

Despite the fog we set off for Saffron Hall to hear the mellow, velvety sounds and lively dance rhythms of the Glenn Miller Orchestra.

After some mulled wine and mince pies we settled into our seats for two hours of beautiful music. The orchestra played a variety of pieces including many of the best known tunes - *String of Pearls*, *Pennsylvania 6-5000*, *Moonlight Serenade* and many more.



photo: Raymond Gubbay / Sony Music

The orchestra and singers entertained the audience with their repertoire and encouraged us to join in, though I am sorry to say we were not very good!

We all agreed it had been a very enjoyable couple of hours. Thank you to everyone who supported the Theatre group on its return following lockdown.

We look forward to more trips in 2023 so please do continue to come along and enjoy new plays, music and drama.

Deirdre Smith

Current Affairs

Over the last few meetings the Current Affairs group has been discussing a wide range of topics, from House of Lords reform and energy costs to the NHS and the Royal family, as Sarah Hillman reports.

In December we wondered are we nearing a **General Strike**, with recession and inflation becoming a long-term problem?

Twenty per cent of workers belong to a union and most are negotiating salary increases, not striking. Some poorly paid workers - in hospitality for example, aren't unionised. The public sympathises, as long as emergency services are maintained. Two rail unions have now settled, but the RMT is resisting reforms.

In under-staffed public sector work like the NHS, low pay is leading to vacancies. Pressure on remaining staff is causing more to leave and exacerbating the problem. Hence strikes are a symptom, not a cause, especially where these workers see larger private sector pay-deals. It's complex, so there aren't easy answers.

Should the government get involved in negotiations? We felt that this was a cop-out - management is in charge and the government cannot know the important details of terms, conditions, pay scales and possible efficiencies that could be made in each sector or provider. The government can intervene, rarely, on major reorganisations of NHS local services, but not on operational issues - NHS England is responsible for these. The media should perhaps make this clear?

At our January meeting we pondered **what is the Royal Family for?** Answers of Head of State and Ceremonial led to a wider discussion about who else would do it, whether it should skip a generation to William, but recognising that King Charles does a huge amount of charity work.

On the Prince Harry issue comments ranged from: he found a wife and lost the plot, he has no way back but has made a lot out of the book, to it will be interesting to see whether Harry is invited and attends the coronation.

Having failed to sort that out, we moved on to **the NHS!**

We felt it lacks clear boundaries about what it covers and some expectations cannot be met. Some people go to GPs for trivial reasons and others go to A&E because they cannot see a GP. NHS111's quality is patchy, sometimes excellent.

Requiring nurses to have degrees excluded many competent ones *and* cut learning on the job. The care system needs a huge overhaul and more funds.

On end of life care, we agreed you should listen to the patient. In summary "thou shalt not kill but need'st not strive officiously to keep alive." (Arthur Hugh Clough's satirical poem)

Next meeting: Monday 20th February, 3.15pm at the Banyers. New members always welcome.



The joy of cheese & wine

What could be better than some wonderful cheeses and wines to taste before Christmas?

The Wine Appreciation group gathered in early December for an end of year pre-Christmas special tasting event to pair a selection of cheeses to a variety of wines. The seven exceptional wines were provided by James Aldridge of Corney & Barrow with The Cheese Plate in Buntingford supplying six

excellent cheeses matched to the grape variety of each wine.

Also, a few members brought festive nibbles to share with other members, all of which were delicious.

The afternoon was a great success and I want to thank everyone involved for making it such an enjoyable early Christmas treat.

Jackie Gellert





The first tee at the undulating 18-hole Mowsbury Golf Course.

Struggling to hit them long and straight!

Despite dire weather conditions, the Golf group has continued to play in wind, rain, frost and even arranged to play in snow but were unable to meet up as the golf course was closed. During the winter months between eight to eleven hardy members regularly played every week not even interrupting play over the Christmas and New Year period.

On the 8th November seven golf group members travelled up the A1 for an Away Day at Mowsbury Golf Course just north of Bedford. Weather conditions were favourable with the forecast advising a little rain for later in the day.

The following description of the course was taken from Mowsbury's website and turned out to be spot-on.

“The undulating 18-hole golf course offers a fair challenge to beginners and low handicap players

alike with strategically placed ponds, ditches and bunkers waiting to claim any wayward shots.”

The first nine holes were low scoring for most group members but the second nine holes proved a lot more challenging with hurricane force winds and horizontal rain, and on turning the corner and looking up the 16th fairway, the green disappeared into the mist.

We all made it back to the club house where we enjoyed a good meal, some drinks and swapped tales about our wonderful game of golf.

On the 8th December following a round of golf, we held our traditional Christmas meal at Kingsway Golf Centre. We sat down at about 2pm to our usual Christmas fare of a big breakfast, although a couple of the group had burgers. An enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

We always welcome new members to spend an enjoyable Thursday afternoon having a good walk, a nice chat, a cup of coffee and a meal if we arrange more Away Days. Join us and don't worry about the golf, that's just a minor part of the enjoyment.

Peter Walden



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

Mud, glorious mud for the Five Mile Walks group

Fifteen intrepid walkers or fifteen slightly bonkers walkers gathered at Barkway on a January day that could have been a washout with yet more heavy rain.

However, the day's weather was kind to us as we walked up Periwinkle Hill and on into Reed Village, through the grounds of St Mary's Parish Church, parts of which are late Anglo Saxon and then heading back to Barkway.

We all gathered several inches of mud on our boots before a welcome lunch at The Fox and Hounds at



Taking a break in the January sun.

Barley after an enjoyable five mile walk. When we practised the walk in December we saw a herd of more than 50 deer including three white and another herd of six on our way home. Today the

sensible deer stayed to shelter in the woods! Why not join us on Wednesday February 8th when we take the number 18 bus from Royston at 9:21 to Buckland then walk to Therfield and then back to Royston

for lunch at the Old Bull on the High Street. You can order lunch before we catch the bus to Buckland but there's no need to stay for lunch to join the walk.

Eric Heaton & Peter Andrew

New Year Honours for David

Royston U3A member David Allard has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List.

David was nominated for services to the community in Royston and is one of 29 Hertfordshire people to

be recognised in the first honours list under King Charles.

Recipients are awarded for their outstanding contributions in areas including sustained public service, youth engagement and community work.

A keen walker for 70 years, David is a life member of the Ramblers, regularly leading walks and is footpath secretary for North Hertfordshire in the Hertfordshire and North Middlesex Area of the Ramblers.

He is also involved with the Royston and District Local History Society where he is treasurer, books speakers and organises the annual outing.

The first he heard of his honour was when the Cabinet Office phoned to request that he reply to an email he had been sent. Subsequently he received a congratulatory letter from the Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Robert Voss and from local MP Sir Oliver Heald.

"I didn't mention it to anybody, bought the Telegraph on December 31st and found I was in the list," he said. "I was surprised but very pleased."

David has not heard when the formal presentation will be, and in the meantime is carrying on walking as well as his other activities.

"I go for Sunday walks of up to 12 miles and also sometimes morning walks during the week. You have to keep fit and rambling is sociable as well as keeping you fit."

Jackie Gellert added "Many congratulations David on being awarded this honour, a great tribute to you."



David Allard keeping fit in Hertfordshire's beautiful countryside with its excellent network of footpaths and bridleways.

Set your sights on Clay Shooting

William Hooper is pictured celebrating TopGun status at a recent Clay Shoot at Nuthampstead.

Group leader Frank Martin said William started from the beginning with the group, obtained his licence, bought his own gun, made it to TopGun status and is now dedicated to the sport.

He is pictured with instructor Peter Godfrey, left, and fellow gun Damien O'Dell, right.

The group meets at the Clay Shooting ground at Nuthampstead, a Hertfordshire League Ground, on Wednesday afternoons, with about four or five weeks between each shoot.

New members are welcome and everything is provided. If you are interested it is essential to contact Frank Martin in advance as a health and safety training session is compulsory for new members.



Dates for your diary

FEBRUARY

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

SHOW BUSINESS AND OTHER DISASTERS

Guest speaker: Ruth Leon

Join us for an inside glimpse into the showbusiness life of critic, writer, producer, and broadcaster Ruth Leon. This is a life peppered with incident, much of it inadvertently hilarious, and it's the missteps, the mishaps, the mistakes, and the funny stories about show business royalty that you'll remember.

MARCH

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

I WISH I'D ASKED MY GRANNY MORE!

Guest speaker: Jean Fullerton

Jean Fullerton is a Historical Fiction and Romance author. Born into a large East End family, she grew up in the overcrowded streets around the Tower of London. She lives five miles from the place she was born, as she feels that it's her background that gives her historical East London stories some authenticity.

Easy Guide to Interest Groups

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM			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	Art	Gardening	Classic Novels
		Curry Club	History	Clay Shooting	Golf	Petanque/Boules
		French Conversation	Ukulele	Film	Mixed Crafts	
		Pottery (Hand Building)	Yarn & Chat	Wine Appreciation	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	Wed	2:00pm	Monthly last Wed	Sylvia Jordan
Birding	Wed	8:30am	Suspended	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				
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	Brenda Brown
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	1st and 3rd Thurs of month	Christine Cawdell
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

u3a | learn
Royston | laugh
 live
 FROM RETIRED TO INSPIRED