

ROYSTON u3a news

MAY 2023 Issue 40

I wish I'd asked my granny more



Welcome to the latest issue of Royston U3A News. Our new membership year started on April 1st with over 70% of existing members renewing immediately, quite a few new members joining and several lapsed members re-joining. Thank you all for renewing your membership.

We also had a very quick response for our forthcoming trip to Sandringham Royal Parkland, House and Gardens in July which sold out within two weeks of announcing the outing.

We are hoping to start a *Singing for Fun* group in the coming weeks for members who enjoy singing for the sheer pleasure of it. You don't have to read music or be a Streisand or a Sinatra to join. More details to follow.

Just a reminder that only fully paid-up Royston U3A members can attend an interest group. Non-members can only attend one of our monthly meetings as a guest after which they must become a member if they want to come to further monthly meetings. Everyone attending a monthly meeting has to register as they arrive so we can record who attended as a guest and who has renewed their membership.

Finally a plea for volunteers to come forward to join the committee. Most of the current committee have agreed to remain in post for one more final year but without succession planning there is a big risk that Royston U3A will fold in a year's time and that would be a great shame.

I look forward to seeing you at the next monthly meeting.

Jackie Gellert, Chair



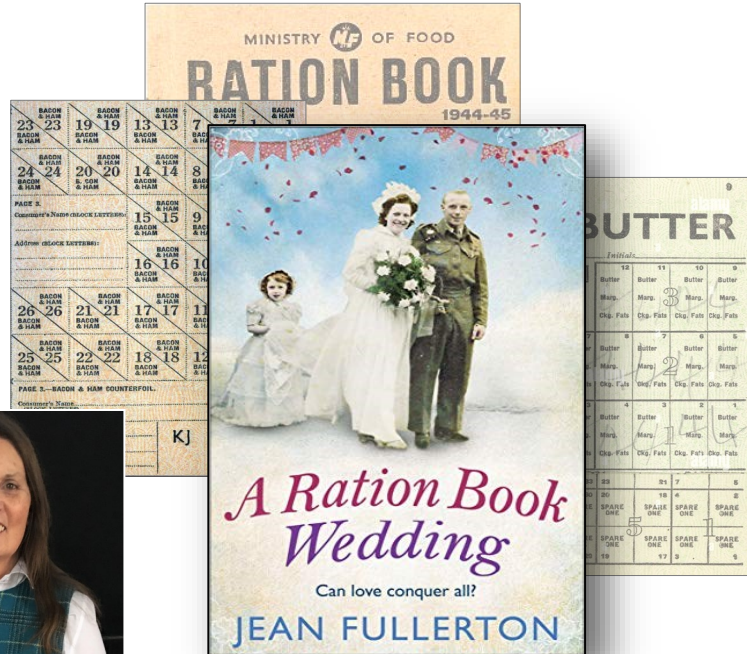
JEAN FULLERTON

We may think we've led fairly ordinary lives - but that's not the case and we should be writing down our memories.

That was the advice of author Jean Fullerton who has written extensively about growing up in the East End of London.

"We're the children of the 1960s and we've lived through extraordinary times," she said. "The Swinging Sixties, the three-day week are historical events now."

Speaking at the March monthly meeting she encouraged us to put pen to paper for our children and grandchildren.



The book cover for *A Ration Book Wedding* is an old family photograph of Jean's Uncle Charlie and Aunt Martha on their wedding day.

"I'm so passionate about writing my story. None of us have had ordinary lives," she said. "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."

Jean has published her autobiography and is currently working on her 22nd novel. She draws on family history and photographs, her own memories and talking to relatives while they are still around.

Research can also involve tracking down birth and death certificates, looking in regional archives, newspaper files, church records and genealogy sites.

For her *Ration Book* series about life in the East End during the Second World War, Jean found diaries written by people living through the Blitz a key source of information.

A man in bomb disposal, a woman ambulance driver and an air raid warden recorded details of their day to day lives.

"They are ordinary people. The fact that they wrote it down makes this sort of first-hand account totally invaluable."

"We've all lived fascinating lives," she said. "Through your story your family will live on."

Pam Dajda



Come to the Cabaret "Old Chum"



RUTH LEON

Ruth Leon's life-long love of the arts gave a unique and entertaining glimpse into the world of cabaret at our February meeting.

A critic, writer and broadcaster, she was married to the late Sheridan Morley and has been immersed in cabaret all her life.

"I never say no to anything and as a result I've had an absolutely amazing career," said Ruth who books cabaret acts for the Pheasantry supper club in London and other venues owned by Pizza Express and gets to hear great singers every night.

"Cabaret is different. It isn't theatre, it isn't opera. Cabaret can be anything you say it is. It's the magic that happens between the performer and the audience."

She traced the history of cabaret from the days of Le Chat Noir opening in Paris in 1881- a cheap and convivial place for those in search of a good time. Le Moulin Rouge and Folies Bergere introduced new sensations - can can dancers, and stars like Maurice Chevalier and Josephine Baker.



Until 1914 cabaret was indisputably French. The Great War shifted the

emphasis to Germany, changing it from being largely music based to satire and political consciousness.

"It was a febrile, exciting time. Berlin gave opportunities to people like Lotte Lenya and Kurt Weill who saw it as a protest tool sending up the establishment," said Ruth.

The rise of Hitler put an end to all that and New York became a magnet for immigrants moving from a devastated Europe to a new world where everything seemed possible.

Today there is cabaret all over the world. Small rooms where the spotlight is on one performer holding an audience spell-bound with a song written over 50 years ago.

"That's all it takes - that's cabaret."

Pam Dajda



A walk round Lavenham

Colourful timber-framed historic tudor houses at Lavenham.



ROSEMARY WHEELER

Lavenham's claim to fame is for not only being England's best preserved medieval village but also one of the most picturesque.

With its timber-framed buildings, stunning Guildhall and magnificent St Peter and St Paul Church, it is hard to beat.

Rosemary Wheeler took the history group on an imaginary illustrated walk, pointing out the rich history of the village she was born and brought up in.

And what was equally captivating was the picture she gave of her life growing up there in the 1930s and 1940s.

"I was born in Lavenham and I prefer to call it a village because it was and still is a very closeknit community," she said.

Rosemary's father ran a butcher's shop in the High Street - one of six butchers at the time and now the only one still there. Her memories included seeing the gas lighter doing his rounds, having milk in a churn delivered by horse and cart, and horses lined up at the forge waiting to be shod.

One of her chores was taking a pail to get drinking water from the well before mains supplies were installed in 1936.



1 High Street, Lavenham

Wheeler's butcher's shop on the High Street.

During our walk she highlighted many glorious buildings and her own favourite – the 15th century Wool Hall.

Among fascinating facts we learned that the artist John Constable attended grammar school in Lavenham and the famous poem and lullaby *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* was written by Jane Taylor while she was living in Shilling Old Grange.

Pam Dajda

Folk in the Foyer at Saffron Hall



Contemporary folk/acoustic duo
Gilmore & Roberts

Katriona Gilmore (fiddle, mandolin) and James Roberts (guitar).

Luckily the March snow disappeared and the theatre group were able to go on the first outing of 2023 to the Saffron Hall Folk in the Foyer.

We went to see Gilmore & Roberts, a very talented folk duo who write most of their material. Their songs generally had a personal story to them which they shared with us.

A lot of their music was a little melancholy but the setting in the Foyer was lovely. We sat around little candlelit tables and there was a pop-up kitchen with Spanish artisan street food. Those who chose to eat enjoyed it!

All in all a good evening out and now we look forward to our next trip in May. Do look out for more

trips to be announced later in the Spring.

Thank you to everyone who came along to Saffron Hall.

Deirdre Smith



Fancy a good read with a friendly group?

If you've never got round to reading those books you always meant to, the Classic Novels group could be the answer.

Members get together on the last Friday of the month for an informal chat about their latest read.

This month's book is *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Recent choices have included *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, *Under the Net* by Iris Murdoch, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*.

"We don't go for heavy books like Homer and James Joyce," said group leader Sue Biggs.

"Members suggest a list of books so everyone has a say.

"We're an informal and friendly group and we welcome new members. No-one has to do a presentation, we just sit and chat about what we like and dislike about our current novel."

At its next meeting on May 26th the group will be going through the rabbit hole into the fantasy world of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

"If you're interested in coming along get in touch to let me know. Come and see what you think," said Sue.

Meetings are held in Royston Conservative Club at 2pm and members can join via Zoom if they prefer.



Record turnout for Current Affairs!

Over the last few meetings the Current Affairs group has been discussing a wide range of topics including earthquakes in Turkey, the invasion of Ukraine, the SNP, Royston Health Centre becoming part of Granta Medical Practices, the Cambridge Congestion Charge Zone, and Industrial Action as Sarah Hillman reports.

The devastation caused by the **earthquake in Turkey** was the first concern at our February meeting. Millions of people lost their homes and not enforcing building regulations aggravated the problems - but then, we've had similar issues over cladding!

On **Ukraine**, Ben Wallace says 97per cent of the Russian army is there. The UK is vulnerable having given so much weaponry, sending planes could aggravate things and not help. As Russia has 4000+ military aircraft "speak softly and carry a big stick" might be a better approach. NATO's decision-making needs to be better/faster too.

Nicola Sturgeon's resignation was felt to be inevitable. The SNP hasn't achieved its key goals. The succession will be interesting! The trans-gender legislation hasn't helped and more attention to psychological issues is needed before trans surgery.

On **strikes**, the government was perhaps seeking to weaken the unions.

Strikers may run out of money but have the sympathy of the public at present. We differed over whether the government could afford to "print more money". The gap between CEO pay and the average worker's is disproportionate, widening, and needs to be addressed.

We had record turnout of 14 members for a varied discussion at our March meeting, writes Sarah Hillman.

We started with **virtual wards** in the NHS where a patient can be returned home and given equipment to monitor their condition and have video consultations with the medical team in virtual ward-rounds. One in East Anglia frees up 40 beds.

On NHS staff vacancies, should doctors and nurses trained by the NHS be obliged to work for it for a few years (as lorry drivers trained by their companies are?) Conclusion: it probably wouldn't help.

There was some concern that GP triage and virtual appointments have continued post-Covid, but this allows GPs to meet increasing demand. Our **Health Centre is merging with the Granta practice**, (which includes Market Hill and Barley) which has more resources and technology, which may help overcome problems in getting through to the surgery.

Cambridge Congestion charge zone covering Addenbrookes, will be a concern, but we hope that lower cost "season tickets" for frequent visitors may be available.

Israel - Mr Netanyahu's "undemocratic" plan to appoint right-wing judges, and resulting general strike, caused a crisis. He has since said he will "delay" this. We heard strong pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel views, but "The Holy Land and Us" BBC2 programmes on iPlayer were seen as balanced.

Next meeting – Monday 15th May, 3:00 for 3:15pm at the Banyers. New members always welcome.

Sarah Hillman





Tackling a muddy challenge during the walk in March.

Mud, mud,
glorious mud

Winter walks down Ashwell & Cottered way

The February morning started misty, with a temperature of -4 degrees and a thick frost on my car. A duvet day suddenly seemed very appealing, but we had a walk to lead. By the time we met other walkers at The Three Tuns at Ashwell the mist had cleared and the temperature had improved for what was to be possibly the best morning so far in 2023.

Unfortunately there were only eight of us on a very enjoyable walk from Ashwell to Hinxworth and back. We spotted red kites soaring above in a clear blue sky and there was an abundance of snowdrops as the countryside comes alive again after winter.

Our March walk took 15 of us along a circular path from The Bull at Cottered south of the village and included a section of the old Roman road from Braughing towards Baldock.

It proved to be a pleasantly warm day but with areas of standing water and plenty of sticky mud after the recent rain. If I hadn't cleaned the mud off my boots I would now be the six feet tall that I've always wanted to be.

Two horses wanted to join our walk as we entered their field but as beautiful as they were we had to decline their request. We returned to The Bull after a walk of almost five miles

that was enjoyed by all and only took two and a half hours. We ended the walk at The Bull and twelve stayed for lunch.

If you would like to do some gentle exercise in good company and end with a pleasant lunch we usually meet on the second Wednesday of the month and start our walk at 10am. Details on the Royston U3A website. You are welcome to invite guests to join you at the pub at about 12:30pm. If you don't want lunch you are still welcome to join us for the walk.

Eric Heaton

On the trail of Hertfordshire's Almshouses



Louisa Cottages, Tring.



Queen's Road Almshouses, Royston.



Moss Cottage Homes, Ashwell.

Colin Wilson set himself quite a challenge when he volunteered to list all the almshouses in Hertfordshire.

"I started six years ago and I've nearly finished. I've got to 180 and some are rather obscure," he said.

"If you think almshouses are small, easy to find and all the same size, you are totally wrong."

In his talk to the History group we discovered they come in all shapes and sizes - from thatched cottages and Tudor style buildings to Victorian terraces and modern almshouses built in 1982.

His quest to track them down has involved extensive research. Combing through history books, visiting churches,

examining maps and wills and death notices in press archives.

"It's the newspaper notices that give you details and human interest stories of people who lived out their lives in almshouses," he said.

Most residents were poor widows as until the 1880s married women had no property rights if their husbands died.

Almshouses have been in existence for many centuries, and some are still in use today. The oldest in the county is in Old Stevenage and dates back to 1440.

If we'd had traditional small cottages in mind it was a surprise to see Louisa Cottages in Tring. These imposing Tudor style almshouses were

built by the Rothschilds for estate workers in 1893.

In Royston, Mary Barfield almshouses were named after the wife of Abraham Barfield, the first congregational minister of Ashwell, who also ran a boys' school in Royston.

Queen's Road almshouses were established by Frederick Edwards in 1885. Described as one of Royston's most successful sons and a kind benefactor, he returned home after setting up a printing business in Australia.

Colin is a volunteer with Hertfordshire Archives and all his work is online at:

<https://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/category/herts-history/places/almshouses>

Pam Dajda

The wonderful world of watercolours

Painting with watercolours is absorbing, challenging and great fun as Art group members are discovering.

Graphic artist Sylvia Jordan runs monthly meetings at Coombes Community Centre, giving tips and tricks on painting techniques.

"Watercolour is such an exciting medium," she said. It's also the hardest technique of all which I discovered after years concentrating on graphic art.

"There's so much to learn and we've been looking at the different tricks and things you can do with watercolour. We've tackled how to paint sky, trees and figures, including some from our own photos."

The group meets on the last Monday of the month at 2pm and Sylvia loves seeing members getting inspired and trying something new.

"One of the really good things about U3A is that

someone who may have worked in an office all their life is now getting a chance to do something creative and discover skills they didn't know they had or last used when they were at school.

"We're a warm and friendly group. It's fun and I love it."

Owing to lack of space at Coombes the group is currently unable to take more members, but anyone interested can join the waiting list.



Len Little with police dog Haiko.



In the footsteps of Dixon of Dock Green

Len Little gave an insight into what policing was like in the East End of London at the History group's February meeting.

Len's first posting on joining the Metropolitan Police was to Bow, Whitechapel and the London docks area - the setting for the BBC's *Dixon of Dock Green* police series.

With a large and diverse population vying for work life was tough for the dockers and their families. Slum conditions worsened as shipping changes resulted in dock closures. Drunkenness was rife and stabbings and fights were common.

Len said the Salvation Army, which had begun as the East London Mission in 1865, played a vital role. Sometimes having worked

a weekend night shift, he and his colleagues would have a couple of hours sleep at the police station, then go back on voluntary overtime for several hours! One regular routine was helping round up drunks lying in the streets and taking them to the Salvation Army centre for an overnight stay.

He described several incidents he attended during his time in the East End. He was particularly vocal in his belief that today's lack of policing focusing on the local community is a cause of many modern problems. In his time policemen were always 'walking the beat'; and knew and were respected by the local people. Sometimes the policeman's family were part of the community.

Later Len applied for a transfer into Hertfordshire and moved to Letchworth. He became a dog handler specialising in drug and general patrol dog searches. He is pictured with police dog Haiko in 1985 after winning the trophy for the best operational dog team in Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Len brought along a large display of police memorabilia, including a truncheon, handcuffs, several photographs and books for members to have a look at during a tea break. Being Valentine's Day, cakes were included with the refreshments!

Reg Hounsell

The fun way to keep fit!

It's never too late to get more active - and joining the Fitness group is the fun way to start.

Members meet for Tuesday morning sessions at the Market Hill Rooms in Royston, and there are currently spaces for newcomers interested in having a go.

Classes are led by Irene Gibson, a qualified instructor, who brings along a range of equipment from hula hoops and steps to balls and resistance bands.

"It's good fun. It's a mixed class and no-one takes it terribly seriously," said group leader Kathy Hounsell.

"All the routines are set to music, whether we're doing circuits, cardio fitness or dance moves."

As we get older, it's especially important to do exercises that improve muscle strength, balance and flexibility.

Our instructor checks with new members about their

fitness levels and any health issues she needs to be aware of and offers advice on exercises.

"Nobody has to do anything they are uncomfortable with or feel they have to push themselves to the limit," said Kathy. "The whole idea is to have fun – not to flatten yourself!"

Sessions start at 9.30am and cost £4. If you're interested in joining please contact Kathy Hounsell.



Dates for your diary

MAY

Tuesday 30, 2pm at Royston Town Hall and on Zoom

Guest Speaker: William French

BUTLER TO THE ROYAL FAMILY AND FILM STARS

William worked for several years as a butler to the Royal family including time on the Royal Yacht Britannia. He also worked as a butler to several famous film stars. William will regale us with stories you will be amazed at.

JUNE Royston U3A AGM

Tuesday 27, 1:45pm at Royston Town Hall and on Zoom followed by

Guest Speaker: Lysa Hardy

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF HOTEL CHOCOLAT

A talk about this premium award winning British chocolatier whose mission is to make people happy, bringing you chocolate that is more exciting, more beautiful and - more importantly - made according to their mantra: 'More Cacao, Less Sugar.'

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	Art	MONTHLY MEETING last Tuesday of month	Clay Shooting	Gardening	Classic Novels
		Current Affairs	History	Film	Golf	Petanque/Boules
		French Conversation	Ukulele	Wine Appreciation	Mixed Crafts	
		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	2:00pm	Monthly last Mon	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	12:00pm	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