

**Copy for next
newsletter
no 104
February/March)
should be
submitted by
23rd January 2024**

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A very wet walking group in November!

A word from the Chair

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter

Christmas is fast approaching with all the excitement it brings, such as getting all the family together to enjoy food and presents and perhaps dust off those party games that only come out at this time of year. This is also when we often think about other people, and maybe do something to help those less fortunate than ourselves. As the New Year arrives we look forward to what is to come during the next twelve months and hope for better things ahead. Hopefully some of these thoughts we turn to the u3a and how you might both gain something new from it, but also what *you* can give to help make it even more interesting and vibrant.

We have a suggestions box which is put out at our monthly meetings but does not receive the flood of ideas we would like to see. However two or three members have recently suggested that we serve refreshments at the monthly main meetings as members arrive, rather than during the interval after the notices. The committee have decided to give this a trial to see how it works, so from January we will be giving it a try out. Details of

the arrangements will be in the email reminder which I will send out before the meeting in January.

In order that the committee can get a better understanding of what our members like or dislike about our u3a and find out what improvements we could implement, we will be sending out a very short survey for you to fill in early in the New Year. We are still working on the exact details including some suggestions made at the recent Interest Group Contacts' meeting. There will only be a few questions and we want to make our activities as relevant to the members as is possible, so please help us by filling it in rather than ignoring it!

We currently have 2 intakes of new members each year but as our membership numbers have dropped slightly we have agreed to enrol new members immediately rather than waiting for the next membership year. We have also scrapped the £2 charge for potential new members at the monthly meetings.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Don

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2023 - 2024

Monthly meetings are in the Village Hall at 10.30am. Doors open 10am.

Please remember to wear your u3a badge and to register when you arrive.

6th Dec Lucy Lewis – Lighting the Fuse. A woman's life in the Army

10th Jan Roy Atkins - Highland Wildlife

7th Feb Pam Litton - An African Safari

(the programme may be subject to last minute change due to circumstances beyond our control)

You are invited to bring your own mug to the monthly meetings as it helps to save on cups but we will continue to make disposable cups available if you forget or do not wish to bring one.

Also bring your used stamps (separated into British/foreign) to put into the RNIB collection box

FORTHCOMING TALKS

In December Lucy Lewis talks about Lighting the Fuse, revealing the hidden world of bomb disposal training and how she came to be the UK's first female bomb disposal expert. From joining Sandhurst to rushing to her first bomb disposal call-out, Lucy's story is full of high stakes and tense situations that for most of us, are beyond comprehension.

In January we welcome Roy Atkins to talk about wildlife in the Scottish Highlands. Roy is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable speaker who is passionate about his subject.

In February our own u3a member Pam Litton will tell us about her very first African Safari in August this year to see all the birds and wildlife she ever dreamed of during her visit to the Kalahari and the Okavango.

You may think some of the subjects for talks are not 'your cup of tea' but do keep an open mind. Whatever the topic we can learn something outside our own range of experience and, hopefully, keep our minds flexible even if our bodies lag behind a little! Do come along and show your support.

Dates of the main meetings in 2024 are

10th January

7th February

6th March

3rd April

1st May

12th June

10th July

7th August

4th September

2nd October

13th Nov

3rd December (NB this is a Tuesday)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Membership Renewal is due in January 2024. The good news is the subscription is still being held at £15.00 and payment should be cash or by cheque. Cheques should be made payable to **Sarratt & District u3a** (no variations please).

The membership cards for 1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025 will be available from 1st February 2024. These may be collected at the meeting on the 7th February 2024, or alternatively will be posted to you **but only if you include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your payment.**

If you do not attend the Monthly Wednesday meetings it is essential to send a stamped self-addressed envelope so that I can send on your membership card.

My address is
Penny Bulgin
82 Beacon Way
Rickmansworth
WD3 7PD

I will be at the meetings on December 6th and January 10th when I will be available to collect subscriptions and stamped self-addressed envelopes.

I will also be sending out an email reminder after Christmas.

Penny Bulgin

INTEREST GROUP REGISTERS

A first reminder to those of you responsible for keeping annual registers: once you have held your last meeting in December, please would you let me have your completed registers for January to December, 2023?

If you keep them on Excel spreadsheets, please could you tailor the print area before you send them. And a personal plea - now I really have problems reading text with coloured backgrounds, please could they just be in black and white as I can't always change them if they are Read only documents?

If you need more printed register forms, I will bring them to the next monthly meeting or email them to you.

Thanks!

Sue
sue.bussey@ntlworld.com



Drawing by Alfred Leete. Credit: Photo 12/ Universal Images Group via Getty Images

WANTED

We need someone to support Colin to set up and operate the audio/visual equipment at our monthly general meetings. If you think this is something you could help us with please contact me.
Don Sutton, Chairman

ANYONE FOR PICKLEBALL? New u3a Group

Pickleball is spreading rapidly in the UK and there are already over 50 u3a groups. It is a mixture of short tennis, table tennis and badminton, played indoors or outdoors, on a Badminton Court with a lower net and with a paddle and a perforated polymer ball. It is ideal for the older player with an emphasis on placement and strategy rather than strength.

William Penn can provide up to 4 courts, equipment and initial tuition. Chorleywood u3a are launching a group playing doubles in the New Year probably on Friday afternoons for 1.5 hours. They have invited Sarratt members to join them. Free taster sessions with no obligation, are at 2pm on Friday 15th December and Friday 12 January.

It is likely that a 12 week term will start in February with 12 sessions at around £3 per session, paid up front. For more details, health benefits and videos see pickleballengland.org.

Interested?? Please contact Richard Bulgin 01923 776143 or richard.bulgin@ntlworld.com for more information.

WALKING GROUP

We have been active as ever round and about the countryside. Our walk leaders plan the routes, check parking arrangements, indicate potential hazards (roads to cross, muddy ground, number of stiles..) and most importantly where the coffee stop will be!

One thing they cannot plan... is the weather.

Happily for those joining Margaret Stephenson at Coleshill village in late October the sun shone as they enjoyed the lovely rolling Chilterns. Sadly, Jean Machin and Sue Harrison had one of those November days that turned extremely wet. However, what luck that it was all round Sarratt and Chipperfield, so sodden souls could cut back home quite easily, only missing the [front page] photo opportunity. Such a shame when we had a new group member stepping out. Hope you'll be back Peter LaFarge!

Val MacDonald



Your u3a Friends Newsletter

The u3a National Newsletter for Friends of u3a is filled with information, stories and advice including items of interest or offers for you from across the u3a movement. Use the form on line to sign up and receive regular u3a updates and offers, both regional and national, direct to your email inbox throughout the month. There you will find information about events and activities across u3a and the wide range of online talks, opportunities to learn, workshops and courses for free. All these events are for u3a members only and there are details of how to join and guides to using Zoom if you are not familiar with it.

Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves; sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement. At the time of writing there are maths challenges, photography projects, logic and word puzzles, crafts gallery and a poetry competition - it won't cost you anything, give it a go!

u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter

CRAFT GROUP

The Craft group have been busy as ever. We started the year with patchwork having been donated hexagons of material. We decided to make quilts but all the work was done by hand so it's a project we have been doing throughout the year. We have also had an upcycling session, made material pots, again with donated material, made lavender bags, clay air fresheners and cards.

For our Christmas project this year we have made material stars which will look pretty special on the tree. They were a little tricky to make but everyone got there in the end, no sewing involved just folding.

We are hoping for another productive year in 2024. Anyone is welcome to come along and see what we do, we meet in the Village hall on 2nd Thursday of the month from 10.30 - 12.30.

Sue Sutton



BRIDGE GROUP

We continue to gather in the Village Hall every Tuesday morning, from various nearby villages, and the town of Rickmansworth.

So when the hall is not available it is easy to arrange "at home" foursomes. Our thanks to David Smith, Jill Swainson and John Kelly for hosting tables this week in Chorleywood, Rickmansworth and Bovingdon respectively.

Val MacDonald



GARDENING GROUP

The Gardening Group's first speaker of the autumn was Ray Martin, a rose growing specialist and the general secretary of the Rose Society.

He has been growing roses for 49 years and currently has 800 in his garden and allotments.

Ray explained that new varieties of roses are grown for health, colour and performance and when buying new plants to look out for "Rose of the Year" or "Gold Standard" on labels. He gave us a very comprehensive slide show of some of the best roses to buy and lots of advice on planting, pruning and mulching and how to prolong vase life when cutting for display. He was an entertaining speaker and very kindly brought along a red rose for our raffle.

We came away inspired to make some room for modern roses in our gardens.

Marion Brown

At the group's November meeting, garden historian Kate Harwood gave a very interesting, illustrated talk about historic garden designs, concentrating on the Tudor age and what influenced those gardens of the 16th and early 17th centuries. Through contemporary written and illustrated accounts, and paintings depicting characters in gardens, she was able to show us that the great Tudor designs took many ideas from the Italian Renaissance and French formal gardens of the preceding century.

Tudor gardens included paths framed by trained avenues of trees, orchards, flowers and, of course, knot gardens. We did learn, however, that unlike the 'restored' knot gardens we see today, Tudor knots were intricate patterns of hedges but did not enclose flowers or other plants. Instead, they contained just stones or even coloured crushed brick. Kate showed us also some lovely examples of carved heraldic beasts standing on plinths or poles, which were popular in the royal Tudor gardens. It was also interesting to learn how many of the flowers we grow today were already being cultivated for these pleasure gardens, such as roses, carnations, snapdragons and lavender.

Kate's expert knowledge and presenting skills made this a fascinating talk, which left us all wanting to see more of the Tudor gardens of England at places such as Hatfield and Hardwick Hall.

Pam Litton

Maureen Toppin's colourful autumn arrangement for our November meeting





Roger Kemp Vice Chairman Sarratt & District u3a

I was elected to this position in May this year after some persuasion from Don who had approached me earlier but I then had too many other commitments. My wife Gill and I owned an electrical accessory manufacturer that I managed from 1996 until 2021 when I sold it.

I have been a member of Sarratt & District u3a since 2017 when I gave up full-time employment. My wife Gill has been a member since 2015 and is a member of the gardening group and is one of the meeters and greeters. I am a member of the 2nd London Exploring Group.

We will shortly be publishing in the newsletter the Guiding Principles of The Third Age Trust just as a reminder to us all of why this Charity exists. All u3a Groups are run by the members for the members. There is no age barrier, but you cannot be in full time employment. Without new blood joining to come onto the committee or run/help run interest groups we will surely fail.

Meetings have to be fun and interesting and if you have any ideas that you feel we should consider/adopt then do tell us. Remember it is your u3a group and we want you to enjoy being a member as well as finding it stimulating and perhaps teaching you new skills.

Find me at one of the monthly meetings if you would like to have a chat!

Roger

All u3a groups are run by the members for the members - come in and join us!

FRENCH CONVERSATION 2

We are a small group, devoted to (unsurprisingly) French conversation, and we meet every week in rotation, at members' homes. We enjoy coffee and biscuits and often over-run our session because we are quite an enthusiastic and sociable group! Contact between us is generally by our Whatsapp Group, but we do use email when necessary, and even the telephone.

The subjects range widely, for example, it might be about mountains or rivers that we know, a book enjoyed recently, false friends (grammatically, not people), your last holiday, we might play a question and answer word game, read articles in French from a paper or the net. The whole object is to give a basis to get conversation flowing. We have also worked through and enjoyed quite a number of French Classics. I for one had only heard of and didn't know that The Little Prince is, deservedly, one of the two best selling books of all time, translated into very many languages, with over 200 million copies sold. It is an interesting read in the original French.

This all sounds like work but is not really as we make it fun, and is in the spirit in which u3a was established. However we also have a Summer BBQ or garden party and a Christmas get together, to both of which significant others are invited.

Tony Gower

tony_gower@btinternet.com / 07776 18 16 58

[If anyone wants to set up another similar group - French or another language - speak to Sue Bussey]



CHATTERBOX

The link to the latest news about our interest groups

Weather getting you down?

Maybe you can't escape this year?

Couldn't come to the meeting because you were off on holiday (again)?

If you like discussing places you have visited, giving prospective visitors helpful tips about the best places to eat or cheapest way to get from A to B, or even love looking at other peoples' photos of wildlife or interesting buildings, then Armchair Travellers could be the group for you. There will be a sign-up sheet at main meeting on 6th December or contact Sue at sue.bussey@ntlworld.com

ENGINEERING GROUP

Our October trip took us to the South Bank and inside the National Theatre. The whole site contains three theatres – the Olivier which has a revolving stage, the Lyttleton which has the more traditional Proscenium stage and finally the much more intimate Dorfman where here the staging and seating can be adapted in all sorts of ways. All three theatres have one thing in common and that is all seats have a clear sight of the stage with no unfortunate pillars.

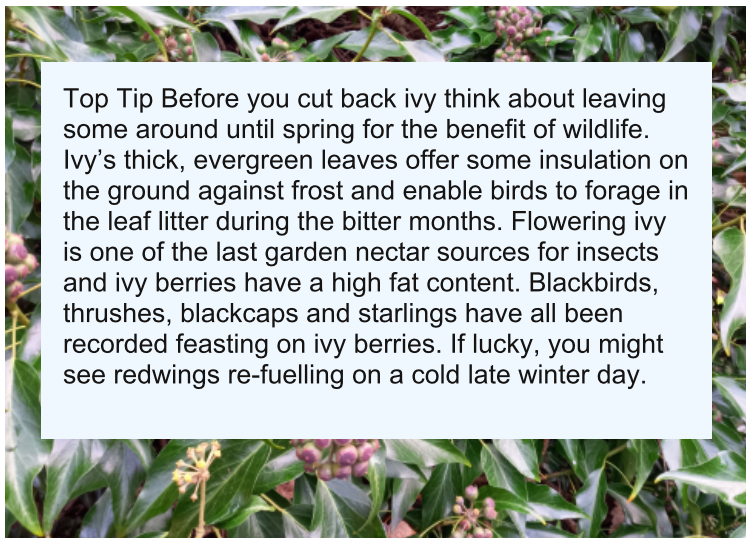
Backstage we were introduced to a vast arena consisting of workshops and storage areas where much activity was taking place including carpentry, props and scenic painting. In some cases we were able to handle various props and in one instance discover how wigs and false beards were made (wigs- human hair, beards- from the white belly hair of Nepalese male yaks – apparently no allergic reaction here unlike dog or horsehair!). One other thing we learnt was the ingenious way to prevent actors getting drunk on stage was to insert a can of tonic water within an empty can of beer! Our excellent guide Mica made it very much an informative and enjoyable day.

Towards the end of November members of the group had a lively discussion over coffee at Blackwell's to outline a programme of visits next year. Various team members have agreed to undertake research with a view to leading activities next year, rather than having one or two people being responsible for organising outings.

Sheila Malin



Just part of the vast scenery and props areas - our guide said it was like having a huge factory in the middle of London! The building reminded us of the Brutalist style of architecture that we saw on our trip to the Barbican.



Top Tip Before you cut back ivy think about leaving some around until spring for the benefit of wildlife. Ivy's thick, evergreen leaves offer some insulation on the ground against frost and enable birds to forage in the leaf litter during the bitter months. Flowering ivy is one of the last garden nectar sources for insects and ivy berries have a high fat content. Blackbirds, thrushes, blackcaps and starlings have all been recorded feasting on ivy berries. If lucky, you might see redwings re-fuelling on a cold late winter day.

Beacon is a national u3a database used by many u3a branches but which keeps the data secure and separate for each u3a. We use it for Sarratt & District u3a and most information is sent out by email using Beacon in order to keep costs down. If the newsletter is not reaching you call Penny on 01923 776143 she will be pleased to get your details updated. If you don't have access to email arrangements can be made to post the newsletter to you in return for a small administrative charge to cover costs - speak to Penny.

The winter months are when your garden birds need the most help. Natural food isn't readily available and when the ground freezes over, birds really do struggle, if you are able to do so remember to put out fatballs or other high energy food to keep them going through the cold.

Join the BTO Garden BirdWatch
Participate for free in a great citizen science project by telling British Trust for Ornithology what you see outside your window on a weekly basis. Help Britain's birds and get more pleasure from your garden today. You can join for free or offer a donation if you wish to do so. bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/taking-part

Copy for next newsletter no 104 (February/March) should be submitted to the Editor Janet by 23rd January 2024. It would be lovely to have input from some of the other groups. If you have any comments about the newsletter or items you would like to see contact Janet at j.taylor0402@ntlworld.com

Please remember to take photos of your u3a activities which we might be able to use on the website or the rolling screen or in the newsletter. Some 'action' photos would be welcome and try different perspectives sometimes. If you enjoy what you are doing it will show. If you take pictures of people please check that you have permission as it is assumed that any u3a members shown in photos submitted for the newsletter are happy to be included.