



Charity No T1155593

Newsletter No 131

Learn Laugh and Live

December 2023



Welcome to our newsletter for the month of December, our final edition of 2023.

An opportunity for pause and reflection. I think we can look back over the previous twelve months with a fair amount of satisfaction. Our membership has continued to grow steadily.

We have increased the number of study/interest groups available to members. A variety of trips and outings have been well supported. We continue to engage a selection of interesting and entertaining speakers at our monthly meetings. Well done everybody!

Following our meeting on the 1st December our annual Christmas lunch will take place at the Pedham

Place Golf Club. If anybody needs a lift to the venue, please let us know. A seating plan can be found in this newsletter. Please remember that drinks can be purchased at the bar before the lunch is served. This month there will be a free Christmas raffle at our meeting. Don't forget to collect a ticket when you arrive! Mince pies will also be available with your tea and coffee.

I hope everyone enjoyed listening to Chris O'Donoghue in November. This month we are pleased to welcome back Andy Thomas. His talk is called "Christmas, A Festive History". He promises to uncover the long and intriguing background to the festive season. I very much look forward to hearing him.

It seems appropriate to finish with some acknowledgements. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, our group leaders and all the volunteers who have contributed so much this year. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

Finally, I wish all members of Swanley and District u3a a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I will see you at our meeting on the 1st December. We start at 10:30 a.m.

John Baker

Swanley and District u3a Committee Members 2023/2024



Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday December 1st, 2023, at the Alexandra Suite, St Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU

The December talk is entitled "A Christmas Talk version 2" – Andy Thomas The talk is about; 'An uplifting presentation when Andy uncovers the long and intriguing background to the festive season.'

Upcoming talks over the next 3 months

January 2024:- Boxers, bandits, and a Blind Beggar - Ian Bevan

February 2024:- Doodle Bugs and Rockets - Bob Ogley

March 2024:- Mrs Thatcher the Iron lady - Tony Harris

Alan Hamling

Summary Of Activities During the Coming Month (s)

Christmas Lunch Friday 1st December at Pedham Place at 12.30

I hope everyone is looking forward to the Christmas Lunch on Friday, which will take place after our monthly meeting. Please aim to be at Pedham Place for 12.30.

Please note: We have two spaces available, due to a cancellation. If there is anyone who would like to come along at short notice, please let me know.

If anyone needs a lift from the meeting to the lunch, please let us know on Friday and we will arrange it for you.

The bar will be open for you to purchase any alcohol or soft drinks - please note that you are not permitted to bring your own. The tables are numbered and will have your names and menu choices so, you should be able to easily find your seat. Please remind yourself of your food selection, to assist the staff when they are serving.

There will be a quiz on your table, kindly provided by Dave Collins.

I hope you enjoy your lunch – feedback is welcomed!

Gill Baker

Digging4cake Gardening Group

Thriplow Daffodil Festival and Country Fair - Sunday 17 March 2024



Thanks to everyone who has put their name down for our trip, it certainly has proved popular with our 49-seater Coach now fully booked, with a waiting list.

We have tried to book a bigger Coach but unfortunately with no success.

Phil will be collecting your £20 per person at the next U3A meeting, on Friday 1 December, which will secure your place.

He will also require you to kindly say where you would like to be picked up at either Hextable or Swanley.

Payment can be made by cash (receipt given), or alternatively cheques made payable to Swanley & District U3A.

Thanks again for all your support on our groups, first coach day trip. Looking forward to a great day out.

Sandy English

OUTING Long Melford FINDERS KEEPERS Monday February 5th

There are a few places left for this outing.

If you have already paid, please check you have given us your menu details and pick up point.

8.30 Hextable

8.40 Swanley

Should be back about 5.30

Penny Collins

Group Co-Ordinator News

Swanley u3a has 36 active interest groups running at the moment lead by many different leaders.

However, did you know that in addition to our own groups there are also many u3a's Interest Groups Online and they are only a click away.

You can enhance your u3a experience by joining <u>Interest Groups Online</u> (IGO). IGO is an optional addition to your local membership and offers the opportunity to join groups from the comfort of your own home via Zoom.

IGO is perfect for those of you seeking to share a niche interest with others, those wanting to connect with people from other areas and those who simply want more accessible opportunities during the winter months. You can join existing groups or will be supported to start your own. View the groups on offer; with topics ranging from a Jane Austen Reading group to Science in the News.

A year's membership of Interest Groups Online costs £12, joining now will cost £6 and give you access to groups until April 2024.

The IGO link contains information about the online groups and the <u>View the groups on offer</u> list the various groups and if they have spaces available etc.

NOTE The Membership fee of the IGO is in addition to you membership fee to Swanley u3A.

Alan Hayward

Group News

Antiques Group

Everyone still seems able to produce lovely items each time we meet up - today was no

exception. Audrey recently celebrated her 40th wedding anniversary and managed to find the 'lucky' horseshoe she was given for her wedding, and two 'silver' horseshoes which were on the cake. Audrey gave us many interesting facts about horseshoes – the earliest ones found, made of bronze, in an Etruscan tomb, were believed to be from 400BC. For many years they were made of iron, and today most are made of steel or aluminium. Horseshoes are thought to be lucky because iron was believed to ward off evil spirits, and they used 7



nails. There is divided opinion however, on which way up to nail them.

Tony brought along a couple of interesting books he recently purchased at an antiques fair. One was a 1952 illustrated book about motor racing by Stirling Moss. Moss described his

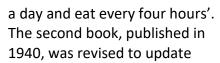
experiences as a racing driver, giving many useful tips and advice about things to consider for the profession. Many drivers were killed in those days until the cars and the tracks introduced better safety measures.

Tony's second book was a nostalgic look back at the heyday of Woolworth's stores. It was published after the stores had closed. The company began in America in 1879 and opened the first UK store in 1909 in Liverpool. The company traded successfully until 2008 when it



Judy asked us to guess the name and purpose of her mystery object – a handle with two hooks – various suggestions were made but the answer apparently was 'a hook to pull farmer's boots on'. She also brought along two first aid books for nurses. The first was issued by the Red Cross in 1939 and contained useful instructions – 'a nurse should have a daily bath and a brisk rub down afterwards' and 'their hair should be properly brushed every day so that a hair wash is only needed every 3-4 weeks' and a nurse should also ' take fresh air for an hour once



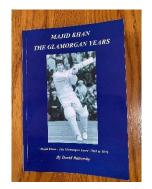


nurses on how to treat burns and other wounds during the war.

Madeline chose two items which had belonged to her mum - a Royal Doulton Character Jug from the 1940s (which Madeline thought was very ugly), and a pretty glass bell with a glass clapper, topped with an onion dome and a Russian



orthodox cross. Madeline's brother worked in Russia for a while at the end of the 20th century, so the bell probably dates back to then.

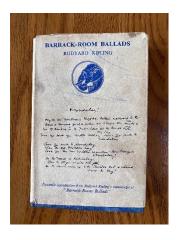


Dave was pleased with his latest cricket book, written by David Battersby about the 'Glamorgan Years 'of Majid Khan (1968-1976). This was limited to just 150 copies, and Dave has number 149, signed by the author. It has detailed research and many photos of players and matches.

We all liked the beautiful jewellery item belonging to Penny – it was given to her by her mother and may have been passed down from her

grandmother who lived in Australia. It started life as a ring, but Penny had it converted to a pendant necklace. It consists of a large opal, surrounded by other sparkling stones, possibly rubies and diamonds. About ten years ago Penny had it valued at about £100, but it is likely to be worth more now.







Wendy showed us an old book from 1953 by Rudyard Kipling, called 'Barrack-Room Ballads'. It contained famous poems such as 'Gunga Din' and 'Mandalay'. Wendy also liked that the original receipt for the purchase of the book in 1953 remained inside, purchased by WC Bold for the sum of 7/6. Bold was a student at Christ's Hospital, the charitable independent school in Sussex, famous for its ethos of social philanthropy and responsibility and diversity, and their distinctive blue and yellow uniform.

Jenny treasures the beautiful cut glass scent bottle which belonged to her grandmother who had it from the early 20th century. It has a silver top but sadly the original stopper has been lost.





John showed off the old Chapati box that we purchased recently from an antique centre in

Suffolk. It is made of brass and is probably from North India, made in around 1900. It has various inscriptions and patterns around it. Its original use was for keeping chapattis warm in the home. Sometimes they were used as lunchboxes for work. We use it by our log fire for containing firelighters.

I love the old wooden puppet heads from Germany that I bought from the same centre in



Suffolk. Punch and Judy shows originated in Italy in the 16th century, Judy was known as Joan to start with. They appeared in the UK from 1662 when Charles II allowed theatre performances to be held, after Cromwell had banned them earlier. They started as adult entertainment but by the Victorian era they were aimed at children. Their popularity at seaside resorts grew when rail travel was developed. The puppeteer held a swazzle in his mouth to voice Punch – this was made of bone or ivory originally. Traditionally characters included Punch, Judy (the name was changed because it was easier to say with a swazzle), a baby, a crocodile, a policeman and some sausages, and sometimes Toby the dog. Storylines included bad behaviour, violence, domestic abuse, and hitting the baby – today the shows continue but with changes to bring them up to date with modern standards of moral behaviour.

Gill Baker

Bridge Group

Bridge news

We've just held our 3rd monthly meeting, and everyone is settling nicely. All the players are mucking in and helping each other which is great to see. Skills are definitely progressing. The player to your left has passed so you are the first player to open the bidding. What would you bid?

C AQ53

D J

H KT942

S QJT

Happy bidding. Next month we look forward to seeing everyone again.

Meeting dates; December 6th, January 3rd, February 7th

Answer next month.

Colin and Carolyn

Croquet Pétanque Table Tennis and Kurling

This is my last missive of the year. Hoo ray I hear you say

TABLE TENNIS

This is this Friday December 1st, in the new year I will be retaking names for this, if you want to play, please let me know... Also, if someone does not attend three on the trot(without letting me know) I will assume that they no longer wish to play, and I will remove them from the database.

PETANQUE

This has finished for the winter(but Princes park is still open if you want to go up there on your own)We have been asking for a donation of 50p for charity, and I have handed a cheque for £76 to the Mayor of Swanley. All who attended have enjoyed it ,I think(see photo).

KURLING

This is now full, but I will start a waiting list as it may be possible to run more sessions in the new year.

Joint Christmas meal Friday December the 8th at the Bull at 1oc, if I have not had your choice of menu ,please see me A.S.A.P Please bring cash as this makes my life easier.

There will be a prize for the best Christmas jumper (optional) and a prize for the best contents of your cracker???

I would like to thank all who have supported all of the above, and wish everyone in the U3A a happy Christmas an see you all in the new year

William Hammond

Birdwatching Group

Visit to <u>Riverside Country Park</u>, Lower Rainham Road, Gillingham ME7 2XH on Wednesday 15th November.

Five of us; sorry, six including Daisy; met up on site on a bright sunny morning with an incoming tide and had an enjoyable couple of hours as a group.











The birds seen were Redshank, Greenshank, Little Egret, Sandpiper, Avocet, Cormorant, Feral Pigeon, Black-headed Gull, Carrion Crow, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Teal, Lapwing, Magpie, Dunlin, Brent Goose, Wigeon, Curlew, Shelduck, Grey Plover, Great Crested Grebe, Reed Bunting, Oyster Catcher & Lesser Black-backed Gull making a total of 24 species spotted.

There will be no outing in December our next trip will be in January 2024 (date and location to be advised) New members made most welcome; no need to be experienced, we are all friendly amateur watchers.

Tony Scale

MURDER MYSTERY LUNCH at Theresa Joanne Venue. Wednesday, November 8th

















Sandra Treloar

We set out for this trip with a slight sense of mystery as to what we were letting ourselves in for. All we knew was that it was a murder mystery with lunch. It actually proved to be a lot more than that!

We headed for Docklands through the Blackwall Tunnel, around the various Docklands basins, past

the small boat which was the venue and then things got a little confusing, as the coach driver seemed intent on taking us to wasteland, quite some way off from the venue.

We wound along very bendy, narrow unmade tracks, but miraculously ended up right in front of the boat, which was not too soon for those of us with mature bladder syndrome!

Inside the venue was a lovely, spacious, well-appointed room with a focal area which we assumed was the stage, and a bar. The tables all seated eight, so it was possible to stay in friendship groups or to sit with new friends. In a very short time, we were greeted by a gentleman who was one of the actors taking part. He introduced all the characters, and it was already becoming clear that this was going to be an event with laughs a plenty – more 'Up Pompeii!' than 'I, Claudius'. The jokes and humour were coming at us right from the start, helped by the inclusion of our very own Sandy English, who 'volunteered' (well, maybe not!) to lead



the dance needed to travel in time back to the Roman era. We all duly joined in and were transported to the murder, intrigue, and villainy of the period. The various characters acted out their

parts clearly and at a good volume, often placing themselves amongst our tables. Another of our members found himself in the role of Julius Caesar – it was best to just go along with it all!

Then it was time for lunch – part two of the story would follow lunch. The food was both plentiful and delicious, a Christmas dinner (except no sprouts – hurrah!), the first of the season for most of us. The dessert was a lovely apple and sultana tart with custard followed by tea or coffee. Most of us would happily eat at this venue again.

The drama continued, with the characters also coming around each



table for a short time so that we could question them. After that, we had to decide as a group who the murderer was, how the murder was committed and what the motive was. The cast went off to work out the points and the winning table were then presented with certificates. In amongst this though, we had to get back to modern times, so once again Sandy English led us in the time travelling dance.

All the tables were photographed with the cast, and it was a good end to a very enjoyable afternoon. Many thanks to Penny for organising it – such a shame that she couldn't be there. And thanks to Sandra Treloar for organising us on the day itself.

Looking forward to the next one!

Nicola Hammond

MOTO (MEMBERS ON THEIR OWN) - WEDNESDAY, 6th DECEMBER, 2023

This is for all members who are living on their own and would like to meet up and have a coffee/tea and chat. Please come and join the group in the Mulberry Café at RUXLEY GARDEN CENTRE. We will be sitting inside the restaurant at the far-left hand side. The group is intended to be a way for people to arrange their own meetings, outings, activities in small groups. Please note the change of venue.

It would be helpful if you let me know you if intend to come so that I have some idea of numbers.

My contact details are Tel: 01322 559534, email: sheila.derek@btinternet.com

Sheila Botterill

DECEMBER - STROLLERS WALK - WEDNESDAY, 13 TH DECEMBER - DARTFORD CENTRAL PARK -

Meet at the Cranford Road entrance where there are a limited number of parking spaces at 10.15

for a 10.30 am start.

ALL FUTURE WALKS NOW TAKE PLACE ON THE SECOND WEDNESDAY IN THE MONTH.

This is an initiative for people who like walking at a slower pace. All welcome not just for people on their own. Please let me know if you intend to come.

My contact details are Tel: 01322 559534, email: sheila.derek@btinternet.com

Sheila Botterill

Off the Beaten Track Shoreditch and Hoxton Walk 16/11/23

Sixteen of us met John and Alan for a very interesting walk around Shoreditch and Hoxton on a cold day, luckily, we did not get very wet. The walk was a repeat of the previous one done last month and was enjoyed by all of us.

Shoreditch was an ancient parish, (old English "scoradic") several origins have been suggested for the name but one that is likely is that the river Walbrook ran from Hoxton down Curtain Road in a ditch. The waterway was important to the Romans.

We started at Shoreditch High Street station, previously Bishopsgate Railway goods yard, and made our way up the High Street to Holywell Lane where there once was the Augustinian Holywell Priory, now gone. On the way we saw some truly amazing graffiti some of it very artistic. We stopped to hear about the theatre district. The Standard National Theatre built 1837 was enormous and could take 3000 people, it no longer exists. "The Theatre" was built in 1576 and was an Elizabethan playhouse frequented by William Shakespeare (he sits on a seat outside The Theatre site) and was the first permanent theatre in London. After a dispute the actor-manager, James Burbage, dismantled it completely and set it up again in Southwark where it was known as The Globe.

same area, New Inn Yard, are the offices of Amnesty International. Further down Curtain Road, (so-called because it was the outer wall of the Holywell Priory) was the site of the second oldest playhouse built in 1577, The Curtain theatre. Both Ben Johnson and Shakespeare performed there.

Curtain Road was also the furniture makers' area, and the buildings still exist. The furniture was traded far and wide. Furniture making must have been thirsty work because there are still several very old pubs in close proximity to each other, curiously many of them painted black. Onward to St Leonard's Church. This was where the major roads of the city met. Roman roads to Lincoln and York, Cambridge, Royston in Hertfordshire, and Silchester near Colchester.

Unfortunately, we could not gain access to the church, but it is an important one and has had many well-known historical people buried there in the crypt. It is known as the actors' church.

We passed the Wells and Company Ironworks where they generated their own electricity and Shoreditch Town Hall which was one of the grandest buildings in its day (now a five-star hotel). It had been home to the Old Street Magistrates Court and Police Station. The Kray twins trial was a high-profile case held there.

Next to Hoxton (old English Hogesdon, an Anglo-Saxon farm belonging to Hoch or Hocq) in medieval times a rural area of Shoreditch and used for archery practice. Later pleasure gardens and big houses developed in an area known as Pimlico, named after a publican. The present-day

Pimlico was named after it. By the 17th century the big houses were converted into schools, hospitals and mad houses and benefactors-built alms houses.







We managed to go inside St John the Baptist Church to see its lovely ceiling and walked around Hoxton Square. Some of the buildings built in the 1680's still exist, and it was well known for its coffee houses. Dr James Parkinson lived there, famous for his paper describing Parkinson's disease.

Other interesting places included the Orphan Working School built 1758, the site of the Britannia theatre built 1841, the Hoxton House Asylum, Hoxton Hall, Hoxton Community garden and the lost botanical gardens of Hackney near Ivy Street where by 1688 there were at least three nurseries in business.

St Leonard's Hospital was originally the infirmary for the workhouse and Edith Cavell worked there as assistant matron. It suffered severe bomb damage in 1941 but was later taken over by the newly formed NHS in 1948. It is now the St Leonard's health centre.

We passed the Framework Knitters alms houses in Kingsland Road built in 1727 for poor men, their families or wives who had worked for the Framework Knitters Company, the area has now been re-developed. Our walk ended at the Ironmongers Alms houses and Geffrye Museum, (now known as the Museum of the Home). Sir Robert Geffrye made his money from the slave trade and in his will in 1704 he donated money to the Ironmongers Company for the building of the alms houses. The museum is open to the public and is very interesting.

Just behind the museum is The Bakery. Go in there for fabulous bread and even better, cardamom buns, you will not be disappointed!

Our thanks go to John and Alan for a fascinating walk, well researched and fun.

Margaret Williams

Wine and Dine Group

The Wine and Dine Group has had another successful year. We meet 4 times a year and our restaurants are usually chosen by personal recommendations from members of the group.

In February we visited The Coach House at Ruxley Manor and can heartily recommend the truly excellent Italian food there.
At the end of April, it was Efsane in Longfield which offered us Turkish cuisine. I have to warn potential customers of this restaurant that the portions are huge, and it helps if you are a carnivore!



August saw us revisiting The Kentish Hare which is set in the lovely village of Bidborough Ridge near Tunbridge Wells. The meals here are of a very high standard indeed and rightly this pub is considered one of the best gastropubs in Kent - it is in the top five of the Top 50 Gastropub awards and has been awarded a Bib Gourmand in the Michelin Guide.

Finally, in November we went to Sophie's Choice in Sidcup. A few of us had been before and we knew what we were getting - but those new to the venue were blown away by the truly remarkable value for money the restaurant provided - beautifully cooked food, fantastic service with a smile and all for a very reasonable price. You do need a fairly robust appetite though as the portions are not aimed at nouvelle cuisine enthusiasts. A bonus is that there is a car park just behind the restaurant and you can access the restaurant from it. Our group generally averages 12-15 people at any one meeting and we are open to enquiries from anyone who has an interest in joining us for future meetings. We are a very friendly group, and we promise to welcome you!

All the best for Xmas and the New Year - and do enjoy what you eat and drink during the festive season.

Santha Blankley

Newsletter

The closing date for the next newsletter will be Friday 29th December. Please send articles and pictures to tscale001@gmail.com , thank you. **7**owy



Contact Details

Chair John Baker johnbaker52@talktalk.net

Vice Chair David Collins dacollins53@hotmail.co.uk

Business Secretary Carol Willingham carolw8920@gmail.com

Social/Outings Coordinator Penny Collins pennycollins@hotmail.com 01322 669724

Membership Gill Baker gillbaker@talktalk.net

Group Co-ordinatorAlan Haywardachayward2512@yahoo.co.ukAssistant Co-ordinatorDavid Collinsdacollins53@hotmail.co.uk

For contact details of group leaders please contact Alan Hayward achayward2512@yahoo.co.uk or David Collins dacollins53@hotmail.co.uk

Website-https://u3asites.org.uk/Swanley

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Swanley U3a Group Timetable October 2023

Group	Leader	Meeting Day
Antiques and Collectables	Gill and John Baker	3 rd Tuesday Morning
Art and Craft	Penny Collins	2 nd Tuesday Afternoon
Art Appreciation	Margaret Austin	1st Monday Morning
Art/Painting & Drawing Art Outdoors	Gill Baker	2 nd & 4 th Tuesday Evening
Art – Looking at Art	Gill & John Baker	As Notified
Bird Watching	Leader As Advised	3 rd Wednesday Morning
Board & Card Games	Joyce Wood	2 nd or 4 th Monday Afternoon at Howard Centre Hextable
Book Group	Sue Scott & Wendy Keable	2 nd Monday pm Swanley Library
Bowls (Indoors)	Bob Mellor	4th Thurs pm at the Whiteoak's
Bridge	Carolyn & Colin Chapman	1 st Wednesday Morning
Chess	Terry Bennet	4th Wednesday Morning
Creative Writing	Penny Collins	1st Thursday Morning
Croquet	Bill Hammond	Wednesday Afternoons- Summer
Gardening	Sandy English	4th Wednesday Afternoon
Geography	Penny and Dave Collins	3 rd Friday Morning
Family History	Clive Taylor	4th Thurs 10:30 @ Swanley Library
History Modern	Jackie Griffiths	4 ^ե Tuesday Afternoon
History of London 1	John Baker	2 nd Thursday Morning
History of London 2	John Baker	4 th Thursday Morning
Let's Speak French	Barbara Ramsey	1st & 3rd Wednesday Morning
London History Walks	Alan Hayward & John Baker	As Notified
MOTO (Members on their own)	Sheila Botterill	1st Wednesday Morning
Music Making	Mark Fittock	Every Tuesday Morning
Petanque	Bill Hammond	2 nd & 4 th Tue pm.Princes Park Dfd
Photography (Digital)	Alan Hayward	2 [™] Friday Afternoon
Play Reading	Penny Collins	3 rd Friday Morning
Quiz Team	Dave Collins	As Notified in Newsletter
Rugby-Walking & Appreciation	Alan Hayward & John Baker	As Notified
Singing Group		Not meeting at present
Spanish	Ruth Wilkinson	Every Thursday Morning
Strollers	Sheila Botterill	2 nd Wednesday Morning
Table Tennis	Bill Hammond	1st & 3rd Friday Afternoon
Theatre Trips	Sandy Treloar	As Notified
Word Magic on Zoom	Gill Heath	2 nd Wednesday Morning
Walking Group	Clive Rayner	As Notified in Newsletter
Wine and Dine	Santha Blankley	As Notified
Wine Tasting	Robert Brickell	4th Wednesday Evening

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