



We meet at the
New Windmill Hall, Upminster, RM14 2QH
on the **3rd Tuesday each month.**

However, due to current Covid restrictions, our **monthly meetings are held via Zoom**, until further notice. Members will be invited to join the Zoom session **via email**.

News & Notices

- **London Region of u3as – Summer Talks May to August 2021.** For further information about the range on offer and registration, click [here](#)
- **View the latest U3a Covid advice for Group activities.** Click [here](#).
- **National u3a partner events** – The u3a has built partnerships across the UK so we can offer seminars, lectures and visits on a range of subjects, including National Gallery, Royal Institution, Guildhall Art Gallery in London, click [here](#) for further details.

Useful links

Visit our Upminster u3a website to view our current list of active Groups, click [here](#)

Upminster u3a Committee – Contact details can be found on our website, click [here](#)

Diary Dates

Our next monthly meeting will include our **AGM**, held on **Tuesday 15th June 2021 at 1:15pm, via Zoom.**

This month's **Guest Speaker** will be: Steven Dimmer, **'Four Candles – The Life and Times of Ronnie Barker'**.

Future Guest Speakers' program

- 20th July '21 – Dr Dan Smith **'Environmental Impact of Mining'**.
- 17th Aug '21 – Sarah Slater **'Working with the Ghosts of Hampton Court'**.

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View from the Chair

So here comes “flaming June” and with it, two important events.

Although it’s not a year since the last one, it’s **AGM** time again, and we need at least 100 of you to log in so we are quorate. Please join us on **15th June at 1:15pm**. After the official business, Steve Dimmer will be entertaining us with the genius that was Ronnie Barker in his presentation “Four Candles”.

The second, and more significant, event will be the end of most lockdown restrictions on Midsummer’s Day... or so we hope.

After a miserable, cold and wet May, June opened well. For once the bank holiday was hot and sunny, and I hope many of you were able to take advantage to travel and reunite with family and friends (indoors and out!). Now, we’re all holding our breath and crossing fingers and toes in the hope that Freedom Day won’t be postponed again.

So, let’s remember – when Pandora opened that box and released sickness and pestilence to the world, what was left inside was “hope” and with hope, anything is possible.

Courtney



Image courtesy of Courtney



Upminster u3a's Desert Island Discs

This month's castaway was Liz Middleton

Music

1. The Sun Always Shines on T.V.	A-ha
2. Mozart's 40th Symphony	
3. Bohemian Rhapsody	Queen
4. San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)	Scott McKenzie
5. Sweet Caroline	Neil Diamond
6. Chariots of Fire	Vangelis
7. Sandstorm	Darude
8. Children	Robert Miles

Favourite Piece – San Francisco

Book – A Short History of Nearly Everything – Bill Bryson

Luxury Item – Nintendo DS and Games

Chris Slade





Groups Update

Quiz Group

Subject, of course, to the Covid restrictions that are due to be eased on 21st June not being changed or brought back, we are planning to meet again on Thursday 22nd July at 2 p.m. at the Methodist church hall. If anybody would be interested in joining our Group and/or would like further information, please contact chrisslade1@sky.com or on 07906-433559



Chris Slade

Coach Trips

We have now released the full details and booking forms for our September (Brogdale and Faversham) and October (Canterbury) coach trips so look out for them in your in-tray or in the post if you pay extra for postal contact.

Our trips for July and August – the lunch in Ware with a boat trip and the visit to Penschurst Place – sold out very quickly so if you want to go on the September or October trips get your booking forms in as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, we have still not been able to fix a date for our postponed South Coast Art Trail trip. The Hastings Contemporary Gallery has now re-opened, but only for a few days per week and only for individual visitors at the moment. Rest assured that we are in contact with them and are doing our best to find a new date. We will contact all of you who booked to go last year as soon as we get a date from them.

If you have any questions about any of the trips, please direct them to the organiser and not to Uu3a directly. The organiser's name is on the information sheet for each trip and their contact details are on the booking form.

Chris, Beryl, Lesley, Julia, Pamela

Visits to Places of Interest

I am sorry to say that I have not been able to confirm dates for any of my planned visits for this year. This is because the places tend to be smaller and 'social distancing' is difficult. I hope that if the remaining national Covid restrictions are lifted on 21 June the places will start accepting bookings for group visits again. Group members will be contacted directly as soon as the program (or part of it) is confirmed.

Pamela



Bridge for Beginners Group

After many months, our group was able to resume playing bridge. We enjoyed playing and having a chat. Hand sanitizers and disposable gloves were provided for anyone to use. We agreed a date for the next bridge meeting in June.

Pauline & Russ

Garden Visits Group

A visit and free guided tour have been arranged to the garden of the Royal College of Physicians at The Regent's Park on **Thursday 12th August**. The garden, which, with justification, has been described as the most interesting in London, contains over 1,100 plants, all with links to medicine. The real joy of the garden is in its unique and bespoke collections of plants that offer living examples of the history of medicine from the era of the pyramids of Egypt to today's life-saving prescription drugs. The myriad of stories they tell come from diverse cultures, different countries and from every age in recorded history with some form of medicinal link.



There are plants whose names commemorate physicians such as Rudbeck, Dahl, Fuchs, Kniphof and Zinn, and a descendant of the tree under which Hippocrates taught medical students 2,400 years ago. Many of the plants have no current medical use, but they offer an illuminating window into the history, beliefs and culture of medicine through the ages.

The tour, which will last about 90 minutes, is condensed into a walk of just a couple of hundred yards.

The response from the members of the Garden Visits Group has meant that there are several places still available. If you are interested, or would like further information, please contact me at chrislade1@sky.com or on 07906-433559.

Chris Slade



Cinema Group



I can't believe we are in June already; I have watched a few really good films.

Army of the Dead. Netflix, Horror

This is a zombie heist film, if you like Waking the Dead, you will love this film, not a boring minute in it.

Ocean 8, Netflix an American comedy, starring Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Ann Hathaway and Helen Bonham Carter, how can it fail, it was brilliant.

The Bounty Hunter, Amazon Prime. An action comedy, the story is about a bounty Hunter (Gerald Butler) hired to retrieve his ex-wife (Jennifer Anniston) who has skipped bail.

TV. Two very good series that have been on during the last month, which I binged watched as they were so good.

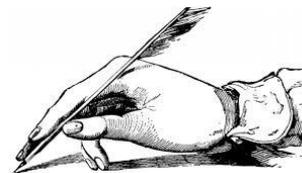
Innocent. ITV hub. A four-part series. Crime drama, starring, Katherine Kelly (Sally Wright) who was wrongfully convicted of murder, she gets released and the hunt for the killer starts again.

The Pact, BBC IPlayer. A six-part series. The story revolves around an unexplained death. Five friends bound together by a fragile pact.

Linda Weiss

Poetry Appreciation Group

Our May meeting was totally enjoyable and the subject matter very interesting! We looked at a poem written by the poet Brian Bilston, REFUGEES, frequently described as the Poet Laureate of Twitter. This is a unique poem to be read from top to bottom, and bottom to top.



With World Refugee Day on 20th June, this is very topical. We explored T S Eliot's THE NAMING OF THE CATS, an amusing piece of work presumably for children, and a world away from Eliot's usual style! The Guest Poem was a very powerful and honest piece of work entitled what 1.6% of young men know (presented in low case text) written by Andrew McMillan, a young poet, who is a breath of fresh air to the world of poetry.

We are hoping to meet up in person in July, however, we await further government roadmap guidelines.

Michelle Blythe



STEMM Group

Our group leader Lyn asked for contributions explaining why we group members find the subject interesting. So here is my attempt.

When the Uu3a was first formed, my friend Chris mentioned that he would be joining the STEMM group. I had not the faintest idea what it would be all about but thought – why not? Technology, Engineering and maybe Maths are more my ‘thing’ I left Science, Physics and Biology behind at school more than sixty years ago (and wasn’t particularly interested back then anyway).

So, entering the world of science at this late stage via the Uu3a has been somewhat of an eye opener as you can imagine. Lyn has an amazing number of contacts, and we experience a wide variety of subjects. However, turning to the question as to **why is STEMM interesting for me?** I have to say that my curiosity is continuously being sparked by the sessions. It is simply not enough to be told “If you do x then y happens” – my mind tends to ask the inevitable = why?

And this is what I find fascinating. It provokes a fair amount of internet research, in line with the u3a’s stated aim of “live and learn”. You can guess what happens when I think I’ve finally got my head round something. Yes, that’s right – another STEMM session, another subject, and off we go again on another tangent.

Peter Gerrard

Short walks Group 1

We set off in the rain and it was still raining when we got to Southend Central, but the gods were looking after us, the clouds broke, and we had lovely sunshine. We walked past the very impressive Queen Victoria statue and the squares with their wonderful Victorian houses.

This small part of Southend is a hidden gem. We made our way down to the promenade through the gardens. Like Russ’s group we stopped at Rossi’s but sat in with coffees. How nice it was to be able to sit and chat. We walked on to Leigh where some of our group stayed for a meal and some made their way back to Upminster.

Helen



Short walks Group 2

Starting from Southend we walked along the pier as it was a fine day. This was unlike the planned day when it was wet and blowing a gale. From the pier we saw a floating pontoon with what appeared to be brown fir like trees on it. This was part of the display for Estuary 2021 that is an arts festival that celebrates the lives, landscapes, and histories of the Thames estuary. It runs at various locations until 13 June see estuaryfestival.com for details.



Image courtesy of Russ Barnett

On the way to Leigh, we stopped for ice cream at Rossi's. We saw a couple of swimmers and some surfers. On reaching Leigh we had a drink at The Mayflower.

Russ

Theatre Matinee Group

Well, what can I say – what an awful 18 months – so many wonderful theatre trips were cancelled. Should we start booking trips or not? The latest Covid-19 information I have found is:

“Venues in England are now allowed to open with socially distanced audiences in place. A number of venues have decided to go ahead with this tactic however, the majority of venues have extended their closure dates to ensure that when they reopen, they can do so with no such restrictions.”

It also looks like some theatres will have their matinees at the weekends only. So, what to do? Should we wait until 2022 or are we ready to get some shows onto the calendar? If you are like me, sitting in a theatre is not my biggest worry – it is the train journey to and from London.

Carole found two shows with Wednesday matinees and it would seem prices have increased by about £5 per ticket.

[The Drifters Girl](#) – Wednesday matinee best available from 4th November 2021 to 26th March 2022

[Pretty Woman](#) – Wednesday matinee best available from 8th July 2021 to 1st May 2022
Carole and I would love to hear your views.

Susan and Carole



Walking with Wildlife



With the lockdown being relaxed after May 17th I was able to revert to the normal date for our walks, this being the 4th Thursday in the month and allowing up to 30 members on walks. Two Tree Island was chosen for the walk and one of the first new birds to be seen was a red kite being harassed by a crow out over the eastern end of the island. Another unusual bird for the time of year, was a flock of Brent Geese, which should have been in Siberia by now. It is

great to see that the Essex Wildlife Trust has replaced the hide by the lagoon, the previous one had been burnt down. The new one provides a great viewing platform over the lagoon, where avocets were also seen.

Our next trip will be to see the orchids in Chafford Gorge, here are at least four different types of orchids there, and they produce a wonderful display.

Terry Smith

Art History/Appreciation



Over the last two months we have managed a series of meetings following the rule of six and socially distancing restrictions. Cancelling and rearranging dates due to the dreadful weather along the way.

We began in the garden with warm spring sunshine which unfortunately did not last. Followed by low temperatures and chilly winds.

We began in the garden with warm spring sunshine which unfortunately did not



Then finally following the Government's roadmap, after 12th April we came inside with central heating – even if well ventilated with windows and doors open.

All proved worthwhile. It was great to see everyone and be able to look at and discuss art together after such a long time.

Chris Meham



Creative Writing Group

During Lockdown we've continued to tap into our imagination and written a 1,000-word story based on a set theme that we've e-mailed to each other. How lovely it was to meet back in person in May and read aloud our stories instead. Our interpretation of 'Leaving' resulted in typically diverse subject matter. Below is the beginning of James' fictional story. If you wish to read further, please click on the link at the end.:

LEAVING

It is a popular misconception held by newly wedded women that the person they have chosen will be a good companion, breeder, and DIY expert. Since the exception proves the rule, I have to declare my total inability to measure up to the last of those expected qualities. It's true that I decorated the master bedroom in our first house, but that was out of the necessity to claim my marital right to share both room and bed with my brand-new wife. The previous occupants had obviously been heavy smokers, evidenced by the smell of nicotine and tell-tale brown patches above the bed.

"I'm not sleeping in there," she said. "Can you do something about it?"

This was on the first day of moving into our tiny house, bought cheaply because it 'needed attention' was the explanation by the estate agent. My desire to share sleeping quarters with my wife inspired me to expedite the job in only two days, but I have to confess that my oldest friend, Maurice not only helped but provided the tools required. I've been in his debt ever since, and that was a lifetime ago.

Over the years I've struggled to satisfy my DIY responsibilities, despite once falling through the loft rafters, mercifully with both legs through the same gap, and on another occasion falling sideways from a step ladder followed by two litres of paint that landed on the floor beside me, spreading like an African delta in the rainy season. So it was, with some trepidation that I attempted to decorate our new porch using a short step ladder and a large tin of emulsion. I prepared the area, secured the ladder against a wall, and climbed to the top step, ready to start cutting - in below the coving. My mobile phone rang, and I answered it thinking it might be my wife checking on my progress from the garden centre where she was to spend the day. It was my friend Maurice.

"You've gotta' help me," he whined. "I've left Rose and I need to talk."

"Not now, I'm up a ladder and just starting a job," I replied.



"I'm serious, Jack, this time it's for keeps." He sounded wounded, but he always managed to overact.

"You're always leaving her, and no doubt you'll creep home in time for Eastenders." I was getting angry with him. He should never have married Rose, and all his friends had warned him of her temper. But Rose lived opposite Maurice, and he found it suited him to have a girlfriend near to hand. "It avoided a taxi home," was his explanation at the time. The doorbell rang. "I've got to go," I said, "there's someone at the door." What a blessed relief.

"I know," said Maurice, "It's me."

"You!" I exploded, "It can't be you, you're on phone to me." I hadn't considered the possibility that he had driven to our place and was standing outside, but I was mistaken, and he rang the bell again.

"Jack, you've got to let me in, I've got no-where to go."

I abruptly ended the call and descended the ladder to open the door. I had to move the steps to allow enough space for Maurice to squeeze through. Once inside he made for the lounge where he made himself comfortable on the sofa.

"Can't go down the pub," he said, "It's lockdown, so have you got a beer?"

I was wearing overalls and didn't want to sit down, but more than that I didn't want Maurice to assume I would join him for a long conversation. He quickly stated his reasons for leaving home.

"She's letting the dog share our bed." Maurice sounded like a man utterly defeated.

I had no choice but to quickly remove my overalls and sit next to him, fearing that offering any sign of sympathy was the prelude to hearing a long story. I brought two bottles of beer from the garage, and he began to cry.

Maurice and I had met as national servicemen and had remained close friends. We came from the same town but didn't know each other before joining the air force. After demob we found work in the same company, both in sales. We holidayed together, first with our mates and later with our wives, and our children regarded each other as cousins. We were very close friends, but our wives didn't share our enthusiasm for this relationship, and as time went on, we stopped socializing altogether. Maurice and I now met only occasionally.

When he stopped crying, he suddenly asked me if I thought dogs were capable of schadenfreude.



"What do you mean?" I said.

"Well," he said, "her dog nestles down between us and looks at me, enjoying my discomfort."

"That's ridiculous, why don't you go home and tell her she has to choose between you and her dog."

"I've tried that."

"And?" There was a long pause and Maurice sobbed.

"She chose the dog!"

"Maurice," I said, "you can't stay here, I'm not a marriage counselor and Ann wouldn't stand for it."

He asked for another beer, and I produced two more bottles so as to keep him company.

My phone rang. It was Ann. "I've changed my mind," she said, "I'm coming home for lunch and I'm bringing in some fish and chips. After lunch I'll help you with the second coat of emulsion."

I panicked and tried to convince Maurice it was time for him to go home. But he'd overheard the conversation and suggested he might stay for lunch. "Could I have another beer?" he asked.

The doorbell rang. I let Ann in. She spotted Maurice, saw that nothing had been done, five empty bottles of beer on the coffee table, and threw the fish and chips down heading for the front door.

"Where are you going?" I pleaded.

"I'M LEAVING!" she said.

By James Johnson