



Upminster



u3a

Learn, Laugh, Live

December 2023



Newsletter



SEASON'S GREETINGS

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

News & Notices

London Region Events click [here](#)

Useful Links

Upminster u3a website click [here](#)

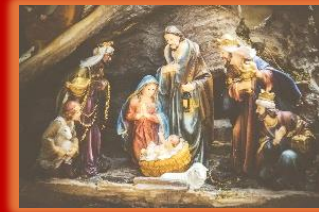
Upminster u3a Committee
Contact details click [here](#)

For future news, articles, and feedback,
please email

Barbara Smith, Newsletter Editor
uu3abarbara489@btinternet.com

Newsletter entries must be received by Barbara
by the 1st of each month. Thank you.

The Editor reserves the right
to amend or omit content.



For your Diary

Our Christmas Party
will be on

Tuesday 19 December '23,

held at
The New Windmill Hall
This is instead of the Monthly Meeting

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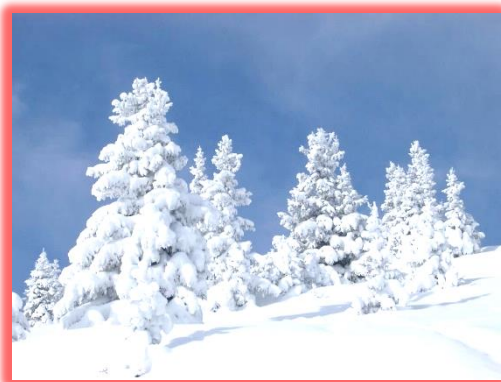
Future Guest Speakers at Monthly Meetings

Please note that some speakers are different to those shown in previous newsletters

19 Dec	 Christmas Party (no speakers) – other treats instead! 
2024	
16 Jan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gary Lucas - talking about Hitchcock's Leytonstone 2. Richard Jeremiah-Clarke from Connect Lifetime Mortgages together with Legal and General to talk about Equity Release.
20 Feb	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Veronica King - talking about her time as a store detective. 2. Gillian Ford, organiser of Upminster Dementia Choir (<i>originally scheduled to talk at November meeting</i>). Gillian is also Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Adults & Wellbeing and represents Havering Residents' Association, Cranham Ward.

View from the Chair

December is officially the start of winter with the shortest day, the winter solstice and generally the coldest weather. It is, however, a time when our hearts are warm and they open up to the festivities of Christmas.



As far as I am concerned, Christmas is family and friends with connections rekindled. It is like being in a ***big hug*** with everyone looking out for each other. There are other times of the year when this is replicated (birthdays, anniversaries etc) but Christmas enhances the idea.

There are some who will not have this opportunity to gather with loved ones so please be aware, look out for them and offer a hand of friendship. We all need each other!

Merry Christmas to One and All.

Susan Mayes



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Membership Information

Since our last newsletter we have welcomed one new member and she does not want her name mentioned in the newsletter. New membership usually tails off at this time of the year

As at the end of November we had 618 current paid-up members.

Pamela Freer

Notices and Information

Are any members interested in the following, which has emanated from the London Region of u3as?

Shared learning project with Transport for London Corporate Archives

Are you up for a challenge?

The Transport for London Corporate Archives have secured external funding for the digitisation of the Minute Books of the meetings of the London General Omnibus Company (L.G.O.C.) from 1855 to 1933. During these years, the L.G.O.C. became the largest bus company in London, eventually forming part of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933.

A team of U3A volunteers has been working on the transcription and indexing of these Minute Books. We now need extra volunteers to fulfil our ambition of making all the transcriptions freely available online by the bicentenary of the first London omnibus in 2029.

So, if you want to challenge yourself with deciphering Victorian handwriting, have an interest in social history or are just passionate about buses, now is your chance to take part in an interesting project.

For further details please contact **Jo Walters on jo.walters.slp@gmail.com**.

* * * * *



Thank you to all members who remembered to bring their own cups for the November meeting. We were delighted at the response and so will continue in the same way next year.

The Tea Ladies.

Continued...



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Following on from the above message from the tea ladies, and for Members who are not aware of the u3a new environmental initiative in that respect, here is a note from **Susan Mayes**:

Polite Reminder to bring own cups/mugs for tea/coffee at Monthly Meetings

Following my message to you in the October and November newsletters '**Refreshment Initiative at Monthly Meetings**', please remember to bring your own cups/mugs for tea and coffee.

Just to remind you, too, that refreshments will still be free - with tea being poured at the hatch in the usual way.

You help yourselves to coffee, milk, sugar and biscuits available on two tables away from the serving hatch. Hot water for the coffee will be available at the hatch.

As this environmental initiative is in its infancy and there may be problems both for u3a members and the ladies serving, I'm hoping we can solve them together to make us a more sustainable u3a.

Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

I am sorry to say that I have needed to make the decision to stand down as a Committee Member because I have other commitments. I am happy to say, though, that I am able to continue as Newsletter Editor.

I'm therefore showing below a revised list of Committee Members.

Barbara Smith.

Chair	Susan Mayes
Vice Chair	Linda Davey
Secretary	Chris Marvin
Minutes Secretary	Jill Coombes
Treasurer	Malcolm Henderson-Begg
Assistant Treasurer	Mike Massey
Membership	Pamela Freer
Website	Richard Strauss
1 st Speaker Organiser	Sue Jiggins
Groups Coordinator and Development	Chris Slade
Beacon Administrator	Russ Barnett
2 nd Speaker Organiser	Beryl Patient



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Monthly Quiz

It's December and it will soon be Christmas, so, a bit of each.

1. According to the bible, how did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
2. On 26 December in which year was the USSR officially dissolved?
3. Name the animals that, according to the bible, were specifically mentioned as being present when Jesus was born.
4. What was created in December 1979 in Montreal by Scott Abbott and Chris Haney after they found pieces of their Scrabble game missing?
5. How many gifts did my true love give to me according to the Twelve Days of Christmas song?
6. Only two books in the New Testament describe the nativity of Christ - which are they?
7. How old was William Pitt the Younger when he became British Prime Minister on 7 December 1783?
8. In the film Home Alone, where is the family going on holiday when Kevin gets left behind?
9. What transaction took place on 20 December 1803 which doubled the then size of the United States.
10. What are the names given to adult male turkeys, juvenile males, and adult females in the U.K.?

Chris Slade

Groups

It is a source of great frustration to me that over 600 members in Uu3a cannot suggest new Groups. So, when Christmas is over and you've sat through The Sound of Music, The Great Escape and White Christmas **again**, make a New Year's resolution to suggest a Group to me that we haven't already got.

I'm not asking you to start one, just make a suggestion!

Chris Slade

Coffee Mornings



Let's hope the weather is better for our next Tuesday morning get-togethers at 11am on Nov 21st, Dec 5th and Dec 19th at Roomes Café.

The dates for the New Year are Jan 2nd and Jan 16th at the same time and venue.



I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and best wishes for 2024.

Angela McDonald



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Creative Writing

Last month's topic was 'The Joke' and, as usual, everybody had very different thoughts and the compositions were completely different. We tend to emphasise the 'creative' nature of writing and the importance of entertaining the reader. Shirley is a newer member who initially found implementing imagination difficult. With Christmas approaching we hope you enjoy her story as much as we did.

"The Joke"

By Shirley Ward

"Come on Pip, wake up!" said mum, vigorously shaking him. "You know it's time to leave, your brothers and sisters went ahead of you."

Pip wiped the sleep out of his eyes and nearly fell out of bed. "Mum, do I have to go, can't I leave it till another time?"

"No!", said mum, "It has to be today, time is precious!"

Mum saw Pip off to the meeting point. He stared at those assembled there and recognised lots of his friends.

This getting up early lark, he thought, I'm not sure I'm keen on this!

A vehicle appeared and they were instructed to climb in. "All aboard, let's go and get cracking!" the driver said.

They drove for what seemed miles to Pip and stopped at a place called a factory. He could hear machinery working inside and they were taken to one side where there were benches and a conveyor belt, and people dressed in overalls and protective caps on their heads.

Laid out in rows was a variety of coloured paper, an assortment of bows and small toys and gifts.

"Everyone, please gather around the long table" said someone in authority who was dressed in an orange-type boilersuit.

They all did as they were told and waited to see what was going to happen.

"Thank you for coming", said the boiler-suited man, who was called the Supervisor. "Find yourself a space on the table and we will proceed!"

The whole group did as instructed. Next minute Pip felt a pair of hands grab him! He was manhandled, but not too roughly, and he found himself wrapped inside a cardboard roll, together with a toy and what looked like a long strip of thick paper.

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He felt a bit squashed by all this, then he heard a noise. He had been put on a conveyor belt, which was slowly going into the mouth of a machine, which went Chomp, Chomp, Chomp and he was getting nearer and nearer the noise.

CASHUM, CASHUM, BANG, BANG, CLICK, CLICK, CHOP, the machine thundered.

Pip was scared but he remembered his mother said everything would be fine.

In the end, he was doing a good job, and this would help generate money for the family's income.

The machinery had tied two ends of the package, with him inside, complete with bows. He felt himself on the conveyor belt coming out of the monster machine and into the light.

A pair of hands picked him up, "You look splendid", said a female voice. "Children will just love these", and she packed him into a box, along with eleven others.

Where was he going? What was happening to him? He felt alone, strange and unloved.

He found himself being transported in the box with many other boxes piled on top onto another conveyor belt, and again into a vehicle and he was whisked away.

It seemed a long journey, to him, in the dark, and he drifted off to sleep.

"Wake up, wake up, sleepyhead" said Mummy and Daddy.

"Do you remember what day it is? Its Christmas Day!"

"It's presents under the tree, and crackers with our lunch, with all the family coming."

"I wonder if the jokes will be as good as last year?" said Dad.

Later that day, Pip awoke from his slumbers, and he found himself on a dinner table, that was laid out with cutlery, serviettes, a red tablecloth, wine glasses, candles and beautiful red crackers with bows.

He stretched, "Where am I? I need to get out!"

It was dark in his cylindrical nest and he heard someone say, "It's time for crackers now". "Everyone must have one".



"Let's cross arms to pull them", said Mummy, and the family of three plus various family members, aunties, uncles, cousins joined in by standing up and each took a cracker and crossed arms.

He felt himself being picked up. What was happening?

"One, two, three!" shouted Mummy.

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Bang! went the cracker. He felt an explosion and he felt himself propelled out of a hole that had appeared as the cracker came apart!

"I've got the joke, I've got the joke!", said young Mimi.

"What does it say?" asked Mummy.

"What runs along the street? Answer The pavement!"

"Ha, Ha! said Mummy and Daddy, "Good Joke.

Glad we bought them at Aldis, what a lovely Christmas we've had.

We will have to see if we can find a better joke next year!"

Pip woke up and found himself in a bulging orange bag. It was full of Christmas Wrapping paper, bits of crackers, tinsel, ribbons and he met up with some his other buddies he'd travelled with in the box from the factory.

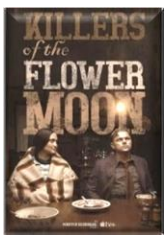
"Well, what an adventure we have had", said Pip. "Mum said Work Experience was fun, and soon I will meet up with my siblings to be recycled and start again, and mum gets an allowance for us taking part"



Jill Hilton

Cinema Group

We saw two films this month and both of them were well supported.



The first film we saw at Romford Vue cinema was 'Killers of the Flower Moon'. This was over three hours long, but was needed to tell the story. The film was based on actual events in the early 20th century. The film portrayed how evil, coupled with immense greed, can overtake people's lives and at what length they go to achieve their goals.

The acting was incredible, the landscape beautifully presented, albeit in a very grim and harrowing background. Martin Scorsese, now in his eighties, created another masterpiece.

The second film was Napoleon, which many of us had been waiting to see. Joaquin Phoenix did a good job playing Napoleon. There were a lot of interesting action scenes, plus a lot of drama - it showed Napoleon as he truly was, a deeply troubled person who reached positions of power.



If you go with an open mind you will enjoy it. A cinematic masterpiece that nails the basis of an historical event.

Annette Gaskin



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Classical Music Group

The group continues to increase in size and strength.

Our last meeting started with the Concierto d'Aranjuez by Rodrigo. This well-known piece, which has often been copied, gave a Spanish flavour to our listening and is a guitar concerto featuring a cor anglais solo introducing the main theme. Some discussion followed as to why the instrument is called the cor anglais which translates as the English horn although it is neither English nor, indeed, a horn! It seems that in its original curved form it resembled a horn although where the word English comes from is anybody's guess. It is really a tenor oboe used extensively as a solo instrument.

From Spain to France for our next piece - the duet from the Pearl Fishers by Bizet. Bizet is one of those composers who had to wait until after his death to achieve fame and is mainly known for his famous opera Carmen, which has never really dropped out of the repertoire. The performance chosen was by Enrico Caruso, who recorded this version in the early years of the 20th Century, singing into a horn attached to a wax cylinder. Not the very best quality but clever remastering gives a good impression of his impressive voice.

Then to live performances of Für Elise by Beethoven on piano, a piece known by all, and then some examples of harpsichord pieces played in this case on an electronic keyboard. I haven't got room for a real harpsichord and the group will have to wait for an authentic performance when we visit the Handel Hendrix Museum where I perform on the real Harpsichord and Clavichord each Thursday morning.

Malcolm Henderson

Coach Trips: Strawberry Hill House and London Lights



On 20th November we left Upminster Station at 12.30; the M25 and M3 behaved themselves and we arrived at Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham at 14.00. The weather was so mild that some of us had our refreshments sitting in the garden before the tours of the house began.

Strawberry Hill House was bought by Horace Walpole, youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's first Prime Minister, in 1747 as he always wanted a house by the River Thames in Twickenham and proceeded to turn it into his little gothic castle. Horace was a great man of letters and collector of antiquaries. During our tour of the house, we were shown round this gothic interior and told how he liked to frighten his guests with dark corridors that seemed to go nowhere and candles that showed creepy shadows on the walls. He wrote the first gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* which inspired novels like Jane Eyre and Dracula.

After a very atmospheric tour, we boarded the coach to see the Christmas Lights on our way back to Upminster. The traffic was horrendous and personally I found the Oxford Street lights slightly underwhelming but the lights in Regent Street were lovely and eventually we arrived back to Upminster at 19.30.

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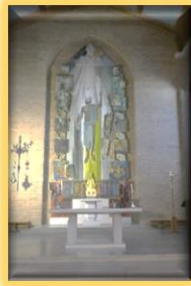
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Here are some photos taken by Russ Barnett during our outing:

St Mary's University Chapel



One of the Rooms



Angel Christmas Decoration



Jill Coombes

(Future) Coach Trips

Coach Trips 1

We are pleased to announce our next coach trip. This will be to the **Royal Gunpowder Mills at Waltham Abbey**. If you think you may be interested please save the date: Wednesday 27 March 2024. We are still sorting out the details so we will only send out full details and booking forms in the new year.

Coach Trips 2

We are now busy researching places for our coach trips to visit in the new Uu3a year from April 2024 to March 2025. We will be meeting on Tuesday 12 December to decide on destinations and dates. If you would like to join us on that date to make an input to our decisions please let me know (pamelafreer@samson-freer.co.uk or **07941 295343**). Even if you don't want to or can't join our meeting, if you have any particular place you would like us to consider also let me know. We are particularly keen to find places to visit in the bleak winter months of January to March as many of the prime destinations close over that period.

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Coach Trips 3

As you all know, we have organised our first weekend away and a short holiday.

The Leicester weekend away on 23-25 March is finalised and is now open for booking. It is, at the time of writing, filling up fast but we may be able to secure additional rooms. The price has reduced to £309.00 per person sharing a room and £323.00 per person in a single room. At this stage only a £20.00 deposit per person is required to confirm a place. Contact me on the above email if you are interested and I'll send you a booking form.

The 12-16 May holiday to the West Country is still not finalised as it was too expensive for most single members so we are trying to find a cheaper (but still good) hotel. A lot of members have expressed an interest in this holiday so we are working hard to make it work for everyone. We'll keep you posted.

Pamela Freer

STEMM: Solastalgia (Sociocultural implications and permutations of climate change)

Unlike nostalgia (the sadness and longing induced by separation from a loved home), **Solastalgia** is the distress produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment.

Our inspirational group leader, **Lyn Haynes**, gave us this very interesting and well-researched presentation, following her recent encounters with First Nations people during her backpacking travels across Canada. Her thinking was influenced too by a range of sources, but particularly by James Raffan's book 'Circling the Midnight Sun'.

Lyn opened her presentation with an Inuit folk tale about Raven and the Whale, illustrating the profound interdependence of living things and the importance of listening and caring for all species. This is an understanding held instinctively by First Nations people, who have lived for 6000 years in harmony with an unforgiving environment, which has shaped their culture and way of life.

However, with the Arctic warming 4.5x faster than the rest of the world and the melting of Greenland predicted to lead to an 8-meter rise in sea levels, the impact of global warming on the Inuits, Lapps and Sami living in the Arctic Circle is urgent and immediate. Elevated temperatures are leading to glacial melting, lack of snow and thinning of the ice as well as biting insects and altered animal behaviour patterns - factors adversely affecting traditional ways of life. This is in addition to the severe social problems they already face, such as unemployment, poor housing, education and health, violence, suicide, high infant mortality, language erosion and cultural decay.



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While interviewing an Inuit woman, James Raffan pointed out the apparent contradiction between her intense desire to preserve the natural world which, since time immemorial, has been the coastal precinct of her people and, at the same time, her support for industry, particularly emerging gas and oil interests, offering the prospect of jobs and prosperity which might solve or alleviate these social problems. Yet for these 4 million Northerners, (representing 0.5% of the world's population) life is changing at an unprecedented rate and what is at stake is their very survival! So it is just not that simple! We are in no position to judge or pity them. They don't need sympathy. They need to be heard.



The Inuits have been adapting to the effects of climate change for some time. This puts them in the rare position to teach the rest of the world about what is to come. Our future depends on our willingness to listen and learn from their experience.

Thank you, Lyn, for your brilliant, informative and thought-provoking talk, which was much appreciated by the audience!

Chris Attiwell

POETRY APPRECIATION GROUPS

We met on a very cold and frosty winter morning. However, this did not hinder our enjoyment of Seamus Heaney's poem *Digging* in which the poet describes how his art and craft is highly comparable to that of his father and grandfather's craft who worked the land in Ireland.

We also looked at and discussed some of Heaney's comments on his sensitivity and perceptions he made at the lecture he gave when receiving the Nobel Prize for poetry some years ago.

We then read and enjoyed the poem *The Rainy Day* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow a much-acclaimed American poet who endured a somewhat tragic life. Interestingly, there is a bust figure of Longfellow in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey.

Our Guest Poem was *The Birthday of the World* by Marge Piercy, which stirred much comment and debate!

Unfortunately, we were unable to present our Guest Poem at Group Two meeting, and this will be carried over to our January gathering.



Season's Greetings to All.



Michelle Blythe



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Art History/Appreciation: Visit to the Ben Uri Gallery for the exhibition 'Sheer Verve: The Women's International Art Club (1898-1978)'

"The club for unconventional and international women who were ahead of their time", which was founded in 1898 in Paris at a time of restricted opportunities for women artists amidst a male-dominated art establishment. Given their historic exclusion from art institutions, the club's creators recognised the need for networking opportunities among professional women artists; spaces for mutual support and most importantly an exhibition platform.

Ceremonial Dance, Orovida 1927



The exhibition presents an exhilarating snapshot of the club's radical output over seven decades. The women artists defied assumptions about 'feminine' genres and subjects by embracing internationalism and experiments of the avant-garde. The art works, notable for their stylistic variety, demonstrate the club's artistic inclusivity.

*Head of an African Woman
Dora Gordine, c.1920s*



Marlow Moss piece, 1953



During our visit we were given an excellent talk and guided tour by the curator. It was fascinating to hear the thinking behind her curation – how the works were displayed thematically while creating unity between the artists. Equally fascinating was hearing each artist's unique story.

*Woman in a Hat,
Else Meidner, c.1950*



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A small gem of an exhibition thoroughly enjoyed by all. Timely, original and bursting with the 'sheer verve' of its title. The exhibition continues at the Ben Uri Gallery until 15 December.

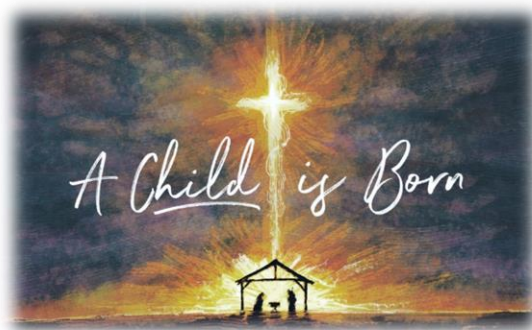
Ben Uri is an art museum and education charity known as "The Art Museum for Everyone". Their focus is on art, identity and migration.

Chris Mecham

Quiz Answers

1. The bible doesn't say.
2. 1991.
3. None.
4. Trivial Pursuit.
5. 364.
6. Luke and Matthew.
7. 24.
8. Paris.
9. The Louisiana Purchase. The U.S. acquired 828,000 square miles of land (more than ten times the size of Great Britain) at about 4 cents an acre. N.B. Not just what is now Louisiana.
10. Stags, jakes and hens.

Chris Slade





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STOP PRESS

We have received the following from London Region of u3as

London Parks and Gardens Trust

[u3a volunteers required for a collaboration initiative - not just for gardeners](#)

Project Proposal

The main theme of this project is to look at the contribution of Migration to London's Parks and Gardens. This may be anything from researching 17th century Huguenots onwards. It could involve parks, community gardens, cemeteries etc.

LPGT is a very well-established charity with an excellent website and we will have lots of advice and support given to us in our research.

<https://londongardenstrust.org/conservation/inventory>

If you are interested in joining an existing small team of volunteers starting work early next year, please let me know.

Jo Walters, at jo.walters.slp@gmail.com