Issue 20 - November 2026

u3a Orpington Bulletin for Interest Groups

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A message from our Chairman

Great work!

Last week I attended the u3a London Region AGM on behalf of Orpington.

The London Region is made up of 43 individual u3a branches and it seems that many other branches are suffering from falling numbers and are having to try various advertisements and initiatives to boost numbers.

I am very glad to say that, thus far, this has not been a problem for us. Our membership has been growing steadily over the years and has now reached almost 1200.

Some research the Committee carried out recently showed that the vast majority of our new members come to us as a result of a recommendation from our existing members.

This is very gratifying, so a **BIG** 'thank you' to all of you who have put in a good word for Orpington u3a.

Keep up the good work !

General Meetings 3.30-5.30pm

Crofton Halls, BR6 8PR

Doors open at 3.30pm for refreshments, until the main meeting starts at 4pm

Members who park at Crofton Halls when attending General Meetings will need to enter their car registration at reception to avoid a parking fine. Click **HERE** for further details.

17th November - Sir David Beamish Nancy Astor



In 1919 Nancy Astor became the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons when she was elected as a Plymouth MP. She had not been a campaigner for women's suffrage, was American-born, and was the wife of a Viscount.



15th December - Delia Taylor

A fun look back at the decade of the 50s. We take a look at how we lived during this period in the UK including the fashions, wireless, television, films and of course the music.



Spanish with Duolingo for Beginners



Do we have anyone who is willing to start a small group or give 1-1 sessions for Spanish beginners? Please let me know if you'd be interested in following a beginners Duolingo course with one other person for mutual encouragement. Please contact the Group Co-ordinators

Discussion: Group Leader needed



We are sorry to announce that the proposed 'Discussion Group' will not be able to take place as we have no volunteer facilitator to run it.

If you are interested, please contact the Group Co-ordinators



Monthly u3a Coffee Morning

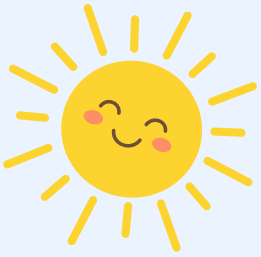
On the third Thursday of the month we have a Coffee Morning at 10.30am in the BR6 Bakehouse Café

All members are welcome



Events!

Summer trip to Brighton





So with the children back to school a large group of us went on a day trip to Brighton. Both the weather and journeys were kind to us and it was hailed a success.

Most people seemed to visit the pier and the now famous Brighton Lanes at some point. Other points of interest being the Royal Pavillion, an open top bus tour and a visit to the Marina. While some enjoyed pub lunches. We also enjoyed fish and chips at the rather classy Ivy Asia.
Looking forward to visiting another seaside town next year.



London Explorers

Monday 30th November

THE POPPY FACTORY

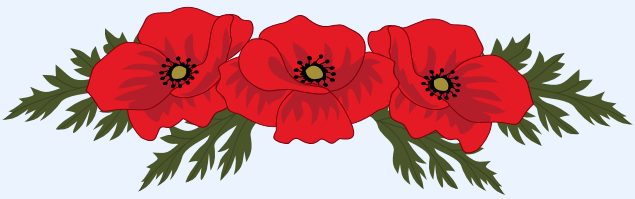
A visit has been arranged to the Poppy Factory in Richmond on Monday 30th November 2026 at 12.30. The visit is 90 minutes and includes tea/coffee and cake. There will be a presentation and viewing of the exhibition and possibly a chance to make some poppies!

We will travel by train from Orpington at 10.07 (or Petts Wood) to Waterloo East, cross to Waterloo main line and then train to Richmond. From there it is 15 minutes walk, or there is a bus from outside the station to the factory.

SOLD OUT

The cost is **£17.50** each, which includes the refreshments. Booking will be via the new trybooking.com website. Click on the link to book now.

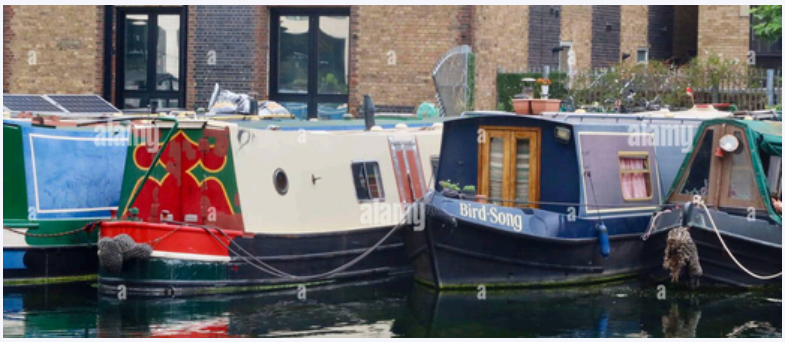
Please contact the **Group Leader**



London Explorers

London Canal Museum - Report

On 1st October we visited the London Canal Museum which is located not far from King's Cross Station. It is in a former Victorian ice warehouse, and you can still see the original ice holes that were used to store ice brought there by canal boat.





We were given an interesting and very thorough talk by one of the guides and then had a little free time to look around all exhibits before we set off on our short, guided trip on a narrowboat along the Regent's Canal and through the Islington Tunnel.

Our guide explained how in the 19th and 20th centuries, due to tunnels being built without towpaths, canal men would have to position themselves on either side of the boat in the tunnel and lying down would use their legs to push against the tunnel walls to move the boat along; usually taking an hour if it was a long tunnel. It was fascinating hearing the history of the boats and the families who lived on them. Along the trip we also saw lots of interesting house boats along the canal.

Back inside the museum there were many interesting exhibits about the canals, the barges, and the narrowboats as well as the cargoes they held. In those days, the horses were the 'engines' of the canal boats pulling the heavy cargoes along the towpaths. Shire horses were used along the Thames riverways, but ponies and donkeys were used for the narrower towpaths for the canals inland.

We also saw many examples of the folk tradition of 'Roses and Castles' canal art – families of that time would hand paint the exterior and interior of the boats with intricate paintings of flowers and landscapes as a way of showing pride in their traditions and this painting skill would be handed from father to son down the generations. All in all, an interesting and informative trip with knowledgeable and friendly guides - well worth a visit.







Walks

All walkers join the walks at their own risk

Walks are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am unless stated otherwise. New walkers are welcome to join any of the walks - but please telephone us before coming on your first walk. Please ensure that you wear suitable footwear for the walks.
Note that the walk description is only a brief guide, not a complete breakdown of the walk.

PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING MONTHS

Wednesday 18th November - Farnborough to High Elms

A 3.5 to 4 mile walk round the High Elms Estate with a few steps and a few gentle inclines. Given the time of year it may be muddy. Meet at Tommy's Triangle in Farnborough High St.
There are toilets 3/4 of the way round at High Elms café, plus drinks and food here, or at the end of the walk in Farnborough Village where there is a choice of 2 pubs, a café and a deli.



***PLEASE NOTE** there will be no walk in December, but watch this space for forthcoming walks to be held in 2027*



The Gardening Made Easy Group was warmly welcomed by a GME member to his house as he stood at the door of his front garden which still displayed lovely red roses.

Ten members were able to come others were down with the flu. As it was constantly raining the time was spent sharing garden knowledge and having refreshments which also included home-grown ripe figs.

Plants and seeds were swapped and members presented him with a harvest box, with produce grown from their gardens and other items.

If you would like to join this friendly group, please contact **Group Leader**

Industrial Heritage



In the summer we suspend indoor meetings and arrange trips to places of interest. This August a small group of IH members spent 5 days visiting a variety of sites in Somerset.

A horsehair weaving factory Castle Cary is one of only two in the world and the only one where the process is fully mechanised. It uses a technology developed by the firm's founder almost 200 years ago.



At Claverton we saw how one of the country's largest waterwheels was used to move large quantities of water from the River Avon to top up the Kennet and Avon canal. A unique, eco-friendly solution to a common problem on the canals, still in good working order almost 200 years since it was built.

Our next meeting is on 26th October. The main subject will be the life and work of Tom Rolt, one of the most important pioneers of the industrial heritage movement.

Originally trained as an engineer, Tom, who had lived and travelled in a canal boat, became well known as a campaigner for the maintenance and preservation of Britain's inland waterways. He was also interested in motor sport, especially vintage sports cars, and played a leading role in the restoration and operation of the Talyllyn Railway.

We're an 'open' group, so all members of Orpington u3a are welcome at our meetings. If you'd like to know more, just email the **Group Leader**

Male A Capella Choir



Calling all men! We are looking to set up a male voice A Capella (unaccompanied) choir to sing Barbershop - if you're not sure what this is, google the local group 'The Kentones'. If you are interested please contact the Group Co-ordinators

SLOW CYCLING
NEW GROUP



The leader is still interested in starting a group for slow cyclists but will now wait until the better weather returns in the spring!

Real Ale Appreciation



Since our visit to Wapping in June, the Real Ale Appreciation Group (RAAG) has enjoyed four more trips.

In July, we stayed local and visited The Cockpit in Chislehurst. This popular drinking establishment continues to feature amongst CAMRA's (Campaign for Real Ale) top spots, both locally and nationally. A former flower shop on Royal Parade, they always feature a good selection of up to 8 Real Ales, mainly from local breweries such as Tonbridge Brewery. On a warm summer's day, it was a good location to while away a few hours with good company.

It was local again in August in the midst of the hottest heat wave of the year – no one fancied travelling far!! Our first stop was the recently refurbished Richmal Crompton Wetherspoons in Bromley South then a gentle stroll up Masons Hill to the Cork and Cask. Now open all day, the Cork and Cask offers a similar experience to The Cockpit with an ever changing selection of Real Ales.

Next up, in September, was a visit to the Dog and Bell in Deptford. This is another pub that frequently features in CAMRA's list of best London Pubs. Situated in a housing estate near Deptford Creek, it is a quirky environment to say the least. Now painted bright red by the current landlords, it cannot be missed in the drab surroundings of the tower blocks! We moved from there by the 199 bus to The Richard 1st in Greenwich with its good selection of Young's Ales.



Enjoying the sun with Hammersmith Bridge as a backdrop

On a bright sunny day in October we had a trip to Hammersmith, which was postponed from August. We enjoyed a gentle Pub Crawl along the Thames River Bank, visiting four pubs including The Dove and the Rutland Arms.

Wetherpoons is about to open two more pubs in Central London, Piccadilly and Charing Cross, and we plan to "christen" both over the next few months. In addition, we will be holding our Christmas Lunch at The Bull in Chislehurst.

We are a very friendly (mixed) group and if you would like to join us for this or any of our other adventures, or just want more information, please contact the Group Leader



VISUAL ARTS

Report by a Member



Our September trip with the new Visual Arts Group took us to London Bridge. It is surprising how much there is to see: a mosaic wall and various sculptures here and there, including David Kemp's 60 foot artwork, The Navigators, at Hays Galleria. We visited London Glassblowing where we watched exclusive pieces of glass art being made. Much of what we saw was by Peter Layton, founder of the studio and still very much a creative force as he approaches 90. We then went on to the White Cube, a gallery that lives up to its name with high white walls. The show was a puzzle from the start, not least because none of the artworks were captioned and there was no printed material to fall back on. We left the gallery somewhat perplexed but there was no such confusion at the nearby Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery which had an exhibition by the English painter and printmaker, Eileen Cooper. Here, we met many young females floating, falling, standing on their heads and laying on their side. It was an original take on femininity and an enjoyable climax to a stimulating day.



NEXT TRIP

On 25th November we will be visiting Guildhall Art Gallery for the exhibition - **Beyond Bayeux: Tapestry Now**

Please contact the Group Leader if you would like to join us



Philosophy



This group really appreciated the talk given by a Member on 'British Democracy and Some of its Problems' which led to the members being encouraged to discuss the subject

The concept of democracy is that on matters of opinion we have no universally accepted means of knowing what is right or wrong so a vote is appropriate. Where the problem is technical or scientific a vote is not appropriate as specialist knowledge is required and accepted as definitive. The first problem is to know what is or is not a matter of opinion. Whether a proposed nuclear power station is safe is technical, deciding whether it is the right priority on which to spend the money is an opinion.

Moral issues are always a matter of opinion, and as such voting cannot make something morally right or condemn it as immoral. What can be voted on is whether the proposed policy is acceptable to society or not. The recent debates on assisted dying are an example. Similarly, what is or is not in the 'national interest' is a matter of opinion and cannot be determined factually.

Finally, democracy is undermined by voters and politicians making illogical claims. It is easy to believe in magic solutions to complex problems, but when these unravel, confidence in democracy is reduced. One solution usually suggested is to educate voters better, but how is this to be done?

If you would like to join this very friendly group please contact the Group Leader

Wine Tasters

Welcomes New Members



We are a friendly group who enjoy learning from each other and one certainly does not need to be a wine expert to join. This is a fun way to expand your wine knowledge and expertise and the group would warmly welcome new members. We meet once a month on the second Tuesday at a group member's house. Afternoon meetings in winter, early evening meetings in summer.

Each meeting one of the group presents wines chosen, following a theme of their choice. We taste them and discuss their characteristics. Recent meetings have featured Chilean wines, female wine producers, Sicilian wines and wines from Germany and Austria.

If you are tempted to try us out by coming along to one of the meetings, then please contact the Group Leader





A member would like to start a beginners group for Mahjong at her house at a date to be decided in October.

If you are interested, please contact the Group Co-ordinator

HISTORY GROUP

WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The History Group would like to welcome new members. We meet on the first Tuesday of the month from 13.45 - 15.45. The group selects a history topic and members take turns to research and present a short talk on an aspect of the topic, followed by discussion and tea. This is very informal and friendly.

For example, previous topics have included; great explorers, cities, past cultural figures, crafts and trades and famous roads/routes. Next year we are choosing subjects within the 1350 to 1500 timescale.

The group is seeking people interested in history and who are willing to be actively involved. For further details, please contact the Group Leader

NEW GROUP



BEGINNERS WELCOME

Our Membership Secretary is exploring options for running monthly whist drives for up to 20 people per session, at a central Orpington location. The sessions would be daytime with an expected cost of £4 - £5 per session to cover room rental etc.

She would like an indication of those interested before making formal room rental arrangements. Please send her a ‘no obligation’ email to let her know if this is something you would be interested taking part in. Thank you

Science & Technology

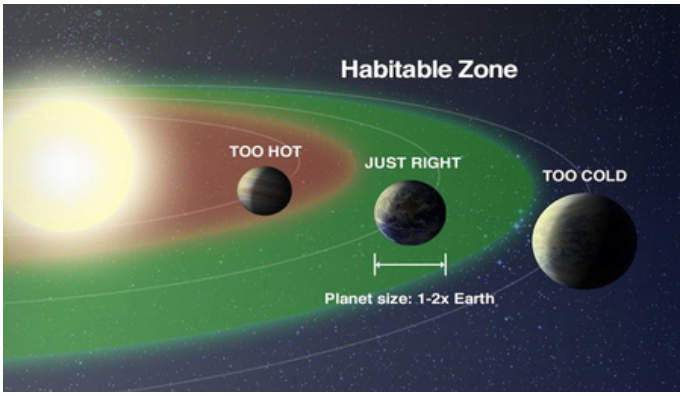
Exoplanets

This month's talk explored the rapidly developing field of exoplanets – planets orbiting stars other than our Sun. For centuries we understood our Solar System as the Sun, eight planets, and a collection of minor bodies, and many assumed this arrangement was unique within the Milky Way. As telescopes and technology improved through the 20th century, astronomers realised the galaxy contains billions of stars, many similar to our own, and likely accompanied by planetary systems.

The breakthrough came in 1995, when Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz detected a planet orbiting the Sun-like star 51 Pegasi, 50 light years away. Since then, astronomers have confirmed the existence of more than 6,300 exoplanets.

The talk outlined the main detection techniques:

- Radial velocity, measuring the tiny wobble of a star caused by an orbiting planet
- Transits, observing slight dips in starlight as a planet crosses in front
- Direct imaging, capturing faint planetary light directly
- Microlensing, using gravitational effects to reveal hidden worlds
- Astrometry, tracking precise stellar movements



Attention then turned to what makes some exoplanets especially interesting. Worlds in the 'Goldilocks Zone' (not too hot, not too cold) may support liquid water. Astronomers also search for biosignature gases in planetary atmospheres and potential radio transmissions, though none have yet provided evidence of life.

The talk highlighted how far the science has come in just three decades, and how much more we may learn as new telescopes and missions continue the hunt for other worlds.

For more information about this group please take a look at the **Science & Technology Flyer** on the website or contact the Group Leader

Slightly Ballroom

with Orpington u3a!



Come and join us for another **social** Ballroom and Latin beginners' Tea Dance class. The next series of six classes will be from Monday 9th November until 14th December. **No experience necessary!**
PLEASE CONTACT THE GROUP LEADER to register an interest and go on the mailing list for updates.

We dance on Mondays from 2.00 - 3.30pm with a drink in the middle, in the Aubrey Mullock Hall at Orpington Village Halls. Gentlemen are especially welcome, may expect to be shared, and ladies to dance together sometimes. There will be a **£5** per session charge to cover the cost of the hall hire. Parking is free for 3 hours under Tesco.

Why not give dancing a go; you might be surprised at how much you enjoy it.

Volunteer Group leader is an Associate member of the United Kingdom Alliance of Teachers of Dance.

‘Old School’

I don’t mean old school in the traditional sense – this is, in fact, a Summer School for old blokes and blokesses!

This was my second time at the SE u3a jolly, and it was even better than last year. I don’t think attending twice actually qualifies me as being a frequent flyer, but I was a trifle disappointed not to find any Green Shield Stamps under my pillow. I’m saving up for an electric can opener and am still a few books short. The big surprise, though, was that Linda – a very nice lady who spends most of the year as part of the team organising the event – invited me this year to pitch up and help with the registration process. To be honest, I suspect Linda had me marked out as trouble in 2025 and wanted to keep an eye on me. This may well have been because the only tattoo visible amongst the many guests was on my arm. Obviously, she had me down as a probable geriatric hooligan. I deliberately didn’t mention the new one I’ve had inked recently.

Her big job for me was to stand out in the road by the entrance and direct people to the main car park. My suspicion that this was a ruse to keep me out of the way was reinforced when I found myself standing directly in front of a huge sign with very clear directions to ‘The Main Car Park’.

Whilst I was occupied out in the road, Linda was sorting out everything and everyone – with considerable efficiency. Linda has incredible energy and dedication and is always making sure everything works. She makes the Duracell Bunny look like an asthmatic ant carrying some heavy shopping. A simile shamelessly plagiarised from Blackadder Goes Forth. But what about the four days, you may ask? Or not – frankly, I don’t much care. I’m going to tell you how much fun it was anyway.

I’d signed up for the AI course – imagine my surprise when I discovered this wasn’t a study of major trunk roads in the UK. It turns out AI is something to do with computers and intelligence, neither of which are in my skill set. I’m more Bill Sykes than Bill Gates. However, the course was brilliant, as was our tutor, Glenys, and we learned an awful lot in between laughing and eating. More of that later. Much more, as it turned out. The learning curve from knowing absolutely nothing to achieving a small degree of competence was massive, and I can now produce original pictures, music and realistic photographs, plan holidays and flights and, apparently, get recipes simply by listing what I have in my fridge. Good luck with that!

I can also do open-heart surgery and predict the jackpot lottery numbers. Obviously, I made those last two up – although, with the way things are changing so rapidly, you never know. Nevertheless, I did manage to make a Pixar-style picture from a selfie. This turned out to be extremely flattering and now features prominently on my dating app profiles. No doubt any unsuspecting lady is going to be incredibly disappointed when she swipes right!

What else? - Well, I had a very comfortable room with an ensuite shower, a comfortable bed and plenty of cupboard space. There was also a kettle, tea and coffee, plus a chair and desk. I had three very pleasant nights. It was quiet and peaceful. The room was next to what appeared to be a fully equipped kitchen. I live on my own, so obviously I didn’t have much use for this. Not with a pub down the road. I’d like to tell you that the accommodation was a major improvement compared with my student days. Unfortunately, I wasn’t smart enough to go to university, so I have no idea. But I can tell you that I have stayed in hotels that weren’t as comfortable.

You want to know about the food – of course. See what I did there? Food was plentiful, good quality and offered a huge range of options at every meal. Breakfast included cooked options, cereals, yoghurt, fresh fruit, croissants, pastries and toast – enough to ensure that nobody was in danger of wasting away before the morning session. Lunch offered two hot dishes as well as a full salad bar, followed by a choice of desserts, premium ice cream and fresh fruit. Dinner consisted of two different hot meal choices plus, inevitably, more desserts. Soft drinks and water were always available. In between sessions there was tea, coffee and biscuits. The only downside is that I am now several pounds heavier than I was last week. A word also for all the kitchen staff, cooks and servers. Without exception, they were always friendly, helpful and smiling. There were welcoming drinks on Monday and farewell drinks on Wednesday.

Concerned that I could not be entirely trusted in the vicinity of free alcohol, Linda placed me outside the bar as the resident bouncer. To be fair, not many of the u3a members looked as though they were likely to cause much trouble, and I wasn’t expecting to be required to break up any gang violence. I’m no Jack Reacher, but equally I’m not saying I didn’t fancy my chances against a bunch of octogenarian gangsters.

Entertainment on Monday was a quiz night. I joined a lovely group who were sensible enough to ignore most of the contributions I attempted to make. I’m not kidding – I didn’t even get the Manchester United question right. On Tuesday we were in the theatre for a showing of the recent film ‘Mother’s Pride’, a British feel-good film from earlier this year. I enjoyed it a lot and, judging by the laughter around me, so did everyone else. Wednesday night featured a Churchill talk. However, I was involved in a discussion in the restaurant after dinner and missed it. I wasn’t too worried. I already have car insurance.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention the free car parking and charging points available – especially as I was a sort of car park monitor on the first day, along with another helper, a lovely lady called Lesley.

All of the above, plus the 11 course sessions, cost less than £400. Probably not cheaper than staying at home – but not far off it, and a hell of a lot more fun. I also met friends from last year and had the opportunity to see what the other groups were doing and to talk to several of the tutors. I haven’t mentioned the names of all the friends I saw from last year, or the ones I made this week. There are so many and, at my age, I can’t remember all the names – so I tend to overuse ‘dear’ and ‘mate’ far too frequently. Anyway, you know who you are!

I will definitely be booking again for 2027, always assuming I haven’t joined the ‘Choir Invisible’. I haven’t found many benefits in getting old, but a Freedom Pass and the Summer School are two of them. A third is that Linda kindly reminds me when the course details and bookings become available.

On the off chance you’re still reading this nonsense, I strongly recommend that you think about going next year. Seriously, though, none of us are getting any younger and if you’re looking for interesting courses, excellent food and the opportunity to meet some very nice people (not including me, obviously), then I can definitely recommend the SE u3a Summer School.

And if you are still here – Thanks for reading.

SE u3a Summer School Report

LOVE GOLF?

So do we!

ALL ABILITIES WELCOME

FUN, FRIENDLY AND RELAXED

JOIN OUR FRIENDLY U3A GOLF GROUP



Now that the cares of work are behind you, why not embark on a new exciting path, filled with fresh challenges, great friendships and plenty of enjoyment.

Whether you're an experienced golfer or just getting back into it, you'll be very welcome.

FRIENDSHIP • EXERCISE • ENJOYMENT

A friendly group of around 20 golfers

GREAT COMPANY
Like-minded golfers who enjoy golf and good banter

REGULAR GOLF
Organised golf days at a variety of local courses

ALL ABILITIES WELCOME
Play at your own level in a supportive and relaxed atmosphere

FLEXIBLE & SOCIAL
Play when it suits you and enjoy coffee, lunch and laughs afterwards

GREAT VALUE
Low annual membership – great benefits



Stay active. Stay social. Stay golfing!

Interested?

Come along to one of our friendly meetings or find out more.

CONTACT US TODAY!

- 07885 306554
- u3agolfgroup@gmail.com
- www.bromleyu3a.org.uk/golf
- Meets monthly – details on our website

u3a
learn, laugh, live
...and play golf!

Your local U3A Golf Group

GOOD FRIENDS. GREAT COURSES. MEMORIES THAT LAST.