

Bulletin

for Interest Groups

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Message from the Chairman

It is heart-warming to see our members engaging with one another. If there were kindness awards, I think Orpington u3a would win easily as members: offer lifts; lend an arm or a piece of equipment; help with research; check on the welfare of those in their groups; chat to someone they sit next to at the General Meeting – I have countless examples. Our Coffee Mornings, held on the third Thursday of every month at BR6, are an excellent illustration of Orpington u3a at its best. Here you will see existing and new members chatting happily together: a friendly welcome for those just joining us. Everyone seems very cheerful and upbeat, willing to share their news and talk about upcoming events. If you haven't been along recently, I can recommend it as a way of finding out what's going on, connecting to other members or just enjoying a thoroughly pleasant chat! I am so proud of all that we do as an organisation, but it is you and your actions that is the most rewarding part for me. I wish you all another enjoyable month of membership and thoughtfulness.

Chairman



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.



18 November | James Gillray | Ian Keeble

James Gillray followed William Hogarth as the leading satirist of the 18th century, elevating caricature and shaping the cartoon format we recognise today.

Fearless in his portrayals of politicians and royalty, his sharp wit was matched by superb draughtsmanship and a deep love of classical and modern art and literature. He died insane in 1815, like George III whom he often mocked, and his reputation declined in the morally rigid Victorian era. Today, he's widely regarded as the first, and greatest, political cartoonist, admired by many contemporary artists.



Do you have any paperbacks you read this summer that you would like to share with another member?

Please bring them to our sale in November and bring along some money to purchase a few more for yourself or Christmas stockings.

Hope to see you then.

'Bookworms'



16 December | Christmas

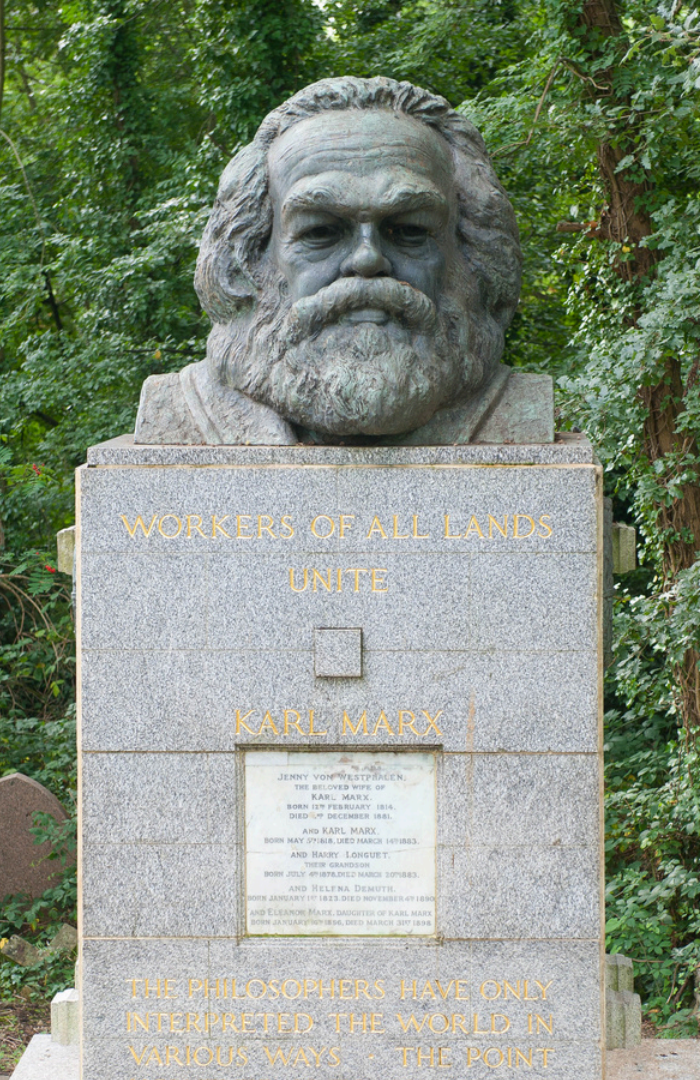
Performances from our recorders, handbells and u3a singers groups for us all to enjoy and join in with, to build our festive fun and cheer.



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



London Explorers

Highgate Cemetery

Wednesday 29 October

London Explorers has arranged a visit to this historic Victorian Cemetery on 29 October 2025 at 12.15pm. The cost is £18 pp which includes access to both cemeteries together with a knowledgeable local guide.

We will catch the 9.42am train from Petts Wood to Charing Cross, second carriage from the front or meet under the clock at Charing Cross at 10.30 am, if you're coming from Orpington. We will go on the northern line to Archway and will then meander slowly up Highgate hill (very steep, or take a bus) and then walk through Waterlow park which is adjacent to the cemetery.

London Explorers

Backstage Guided tour at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane

Tuesday 25 November

Nestled in the heart of Covent Garden, the Theatre Royal Drury Lane has survived tragedy, fire, bankruptcy and even murder. Come on a magical journey through theatrical history at Theatre Royal Drury Lane, the oldest theatre on the same site in the world.

Immerse yourself in the birthplace of the musical, modern pantomime, moving scenery, regular rehearsals and naturalistic acting, in this beautifully renovated theatre.

Discover the origins of theatrical terms such as Crew, Props and Box Office, innovation, Royal scandal and even murder. Who knows, you may even get to see one of Drury Lane's famous ghosts!



The tour will be on Tuesday November 25th at 11.30am. Maximum 20 people. Cost £18.50 each.

London Explorers

Feedback - Visit to the Garden Museum on 9 September

A select group of 9 braved the tube strike to visit the Garden Museum which is adjacent to Lambeth Palace in a deconsecrated church. We had coffee and cakes in the café before exploring the museum. The small café garden includes the tombs of Sir John Tradescant (of bizzzy lizzie Tradescantia fame) and also Captain Bligh of the Bounty.

Inside, the museum has a host of garden memorabilia, the development of garden tools and gadgets and the history of garden design.

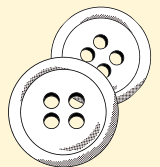
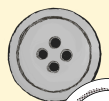
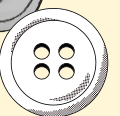
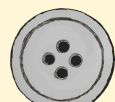
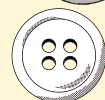
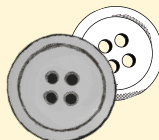
The special exhibition of Cecil Beaton's Garden Party was fascinating. He photographed everyone from the Bright Young Things of the 1920s to the late Queen and Queen Mother; all with floral themes. He designed costumes and theatre sets for opera and ballet, and famously designed the costumes for the film of My Fair Lady – his Oscar for costume design was also on display.

The church itself adds an atmosphere to this quirky museum!



October General Meeting

Pearly King Chris Conlan and a new Pearly recruit had a 'knees up' and a bit of a 'larf' at the GM - After a very interesting talk about the history of Pearly Royalty and Chris's personal experiences.





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 19 November Pratts Bottom and Norstead Manor

Meet at the Bull's Head on Rushmore Hill for a 4-mile walk commencing with a short steep hill and then walking alongside fields, through wooded areas, over one low stile and across valleys.

The route offers views of London and concludes at the Bull's Head, where refreshments are available. Park on the road or in the pub car park.

PLEASE NOTE there will be no walk in December, but watch this space for forthcoming walks to be held in 2026



Philosophy

The topic on 3 October was **Catholicism**. The session was led by a member who is a catholic priest (retired but active).

We began with a short film, Catholicism for Beginners, which gave a clear and engaging overview of the Catholic Faith. It traced its foundation by Jesus Christ through his 12 apostles, with Peter as their leader and the Pope as his successor. The current Pope, Leo XIV, elected earlier this year, is the 265th in this line. He serves as the Church's centre of unity, with all Catholic bishops in communion with him. Jesus said to Peter, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18).

Next, we explored the Mass, the Church's supreme act of worship, which combines the Liturgy of the Word (Bible readings and preaching) and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (re-enacting the Last Supper).



Central to Catholic belief is that the consecrated bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, shared by the community. We were introduced to the other sacraments: baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, anointing, marriage, and ordination.

Our speaker, both married and a priest, highlighted that priestly celibacy is a discipline, not doctrine. The Church has had married priests historically and still does in some Uniate churches. Since the 13th century, celibacy has been required in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the 1990s, several hundred married former Church of England priests have been ordained as Catholic priests.

We then discussed the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), which addressed global challenges. Its key documents, Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes, remain influential and worth reading. The session concluded with open discussion, where members shared varied experiences of the Catholic Church in a thoughtful, relaxed, and non-judgmental atmosphere.

**The fair-haired lady of Downe woke on a damp overcast day
She had both flu and COVID injections and took it easy while away**

**William was hosting the Philosophy gathering not sure if all would come
He had prepared a video to show for Bryan's talk suitable for everyone**

**Had made the lounge look spacious by putting the chairs around
Had prepared biscuits to go with coffee, best to welcome it is found**

**The lady will then prepare a list again of things that she must take
Forgetting plate, cups and utensils would be a huge mistake**

**She planned to make another journey to Gt Yarmouth, to check that all was well
Collect greenery for the skip, gas and electricity readings, stale air expel**

**Would call in to see JoJo and Peter on the way and have a break
Nothing left inside the bungalow, so a list essential she must make**

**She was shocked to hear of carnage in Manchester at least two Jews dead
About to go in the synagogue for Yom Kippur and lifeless on the floor instead**

Surprise in Sardinia

Orpington u3a members are always out and about exploring...

Porto Conte on the Sardinian coast, with its breathtaking views of the sea and wide, expansive landscape is where two members recently discovered they were on the same adventure - Rare species in the area!!

Please send in photos of similar unexpected encounters!



Torre del Porticciolo

Science & Technology

Art from Mathematics and Science

We began by exploring the concept of time and reflected on our earliest drawings made with simple lines. From there, we saw how straight lines can be used to create curves.

Many renowned artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, M.C. Escher, Conrad Shawcross and Christian Hook have used geometry, patterns and science in their art.

Christian Hook blends art and science to reveal the unseen. Using brain scans and thermal imaging, he explores emotions, time, and energy. His layered portraits reflect ideas like entropy and synaesthesia.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nnbUdf_oMg

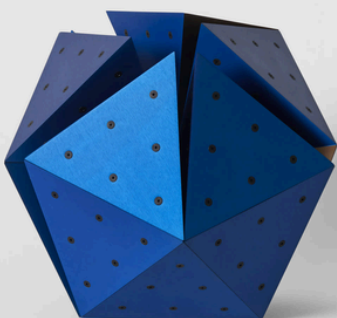
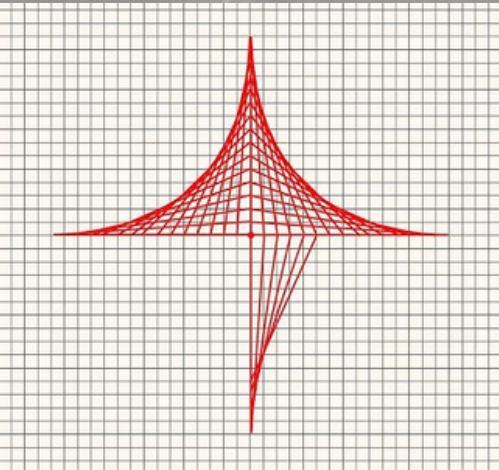
Conrad Shawcross creates sculptures inspired by maths and science. He uses geometric forms, patterns, and mechanical systems to explore ideas like time and symmetry.

<https://conradshawcross.com/>

The beauty of mathematics and science is that both together have infinite possibilities

Future Meetings

- Hydraulics (Nov)
- Anti-Submarine Warfare Technology (Jan)
- Dark Matter (Feb)
- 50 years of Weather Recording in South London (April)



Gardening Made Easy

Ode to Yesterday's Gardening Made Easy B Group - 2 October 2025

*The fair-haired lady of Downe woke up on an overcast day
Had enjoyed yesterday's meeting at Gill's, now write it up without delay*

*Gill's garden demonstrated a garden that could best be 'put to bed'
Leaving seed cases for the birds, so over winter, they might be fed*

*Rosy apples hung from the tree and raspberry canes too
Still giving fruit, she shared, delicious to eat and view*

*A long garden with a lily pond, vital in drought, adding interest too
Still colourful with tall evening primrose and a private wood to view*

*Delightful refreshments and a chance to win a prize
Guessing the number of pegs in a jar, a jar of pate, the surprise*

*Another competition with packets of wallflower seeds for everyone
Each to see if planted in a pot, how far by May, they had come*

*Planting of spring bulbs in layers for winter colour if started soon
First snowdrops, crocus, Tete a Tete, narcissus, daffodils and tulips a boon*

*Plant bluebell bulbs in a separate pot as they will need more space
Once established they multiply, so colourful, subtle fragrance to trace*



LEARNING TO BE RETIRED

We have been asked to promote this online course which Bromley has been running since before the pandemic and at one point was offering to the Third Age Trust as a national course. It is run by an experienced ex HR professional and member of Bromley u3a.

A 6 week (two hours per week) online course (via Zoom) that runs from time to time each year. Latest course runs from 10/11/25 to 15/12/25

If you haven't taken to retirement like a 'duck to water', this is the course for you.

The course doesn't try to tell you what your retirement should look like – only you can decide that - nor does it cover financial matters, but the course does prompt you to think deeply about what you want from your retirement: examining what's important to you; looking at what beliefs might be holding you back; deciding which skills you'd like to carry forward into your retirement; and of course, exploring all the many opportunities open to you.

The Group Leader will lead the course and the sessions will include individual exercises followed by group discussions. Each week you will be emailed the handouts, ready for you to print off prior to the session. All you'll need to do is bring a pen and paper to the session and a willingness to share your ideas and experiences with the group.

*enjoy
every
moment.*

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC LOVERS GROUP

We are delighted to share with you the news that the Royal College of Music has once again been ranked the Global No. 1 institution for Music and Performing Arts in the QS World University Rankings by Subject. The College has proudly held the top spot in Performing Arts for four consecutive years and for Music since its introduction last year. In Music, the RCM also achieved a 100% score for Reputation with Employers, highlighting an outstanding reputation and positive collaboration with the wider industry.

Our new u3a group is into its second year now and has been very successful with members enjoying fabulous concerts at the RCM.

Each month there is a wonderful concert to enjoy.

Ticket prices range from £5 to £20

but most months the price is a mere £5!

Where else can you enjoy world class music for less than the cost of a pint or a cup of coffee?

The RCM concert for October is indicated below to give you an idea of what our monthly concerts are like. It was a tremendous success! At the RCM we perform the classical, modern, jazz, percussion, opera and over the year provide a full spectrum of amazing music for all music lovers to enjoy at a fraction of the cost of attending concerts elsewhere.

Set sail on a musical voyage with the RCM Philharmonic in a concert themed around the sea and culminating in Debussy's majestic seascape, **La Mer** – which he worked on while he was staying in Eastbourne.

Captaining the ship is world-famous conductor Ben Palmer, who directs a programme that evokes every facet of the ocean, from lapping waves to ferocious storms. Ravel sets the scene with the sparkling colours of **Une barque sur l'océan**, inspired by a cruise on a friend's yacht.

American composer Missy Mazzoli has been praised for her 'apocalyptic imagination', audible in her dramatic seascape – but, thanks to John Williams' iconic score, things take an even more sinister turn with the most threatening two-note motif ever composed...

So if you would like to sign up as a u3a member to enjoy amazing music at a very reasonable cost then why don't you contact the Group Leader for further details.

Industrial Heritage

Our group has an interest in all aspects of Britain's rich industrial heritage - history, technology and science, together with the lives of those who created and worked in British industry. In the summer we had two day trips.

Wapping Walk - Wharves, docks, boats, bridges and the occasional noose!

We had a very pleasant walk along the waterways past several docks, a Scherzer bridge and on to a pub lunch. The first photo shows the view from the Prospect of Whitby. This was the favourite pub of the "Hanging" Judge George Jeffreys during the 17th century. We finished the day with a short trip up the river on the Thames Clipper.



Mountnessing Windmill

A grade II listed post mill located in Essex, built in 1807 and restored to working order in 1983.



September's Industrial Heritage meeting looked at the story of Britain's iconic red phone boxes, some of which have been saved from 'modernisation' by BT; others escaped destruction by having themselves exported to all sorts of sites in the rest of the world. We also looked at the rise and fall of the 'cash carrier' systems that used to whizz across the ceilings of department and large grocery stores in the days of our youth.

Our October 27th meeting will look at the story of the Thames' magnificent sailing barges. About 50 of these survive to the current day – but now mainly used for leisure, tourism and sedate racing.

We meet on the last Monday afternoon of the month from 2:30 to 4:30 in the Liberal Club hall (opposite Tesco). Meetings are open to all Orpington u3a members.

Interest Groups Update

We have several new Interest Groups available or in the pipeline

Slightly Ballroom *With Orpington u3a!*

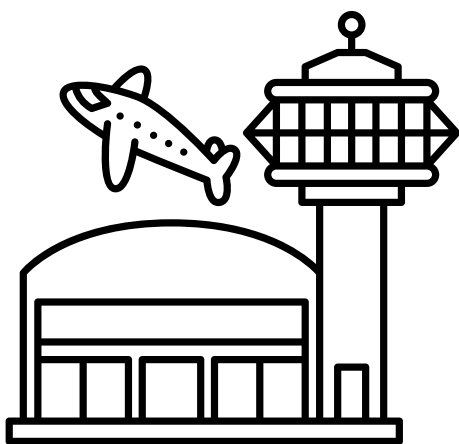
Would you like to join a social Ballroom and Latin Tea Dance class?

No pressure, just a bit of fun, exercise and a cup of tea with friends. We know dancing men are in short supply, so gentlemen may expect to be shared, and ladies to dance together sometimes.

2.30 - 4pm with tea in the middle,
six Monday afternoons
from **January 5th** 2026
in the Aubrey Mullock Hall
at Orpington Village Halls.

There will be a **£5** per session charge
to cover the cost of premises,
£25 for the six sessions (one free) if you pay in advance.

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



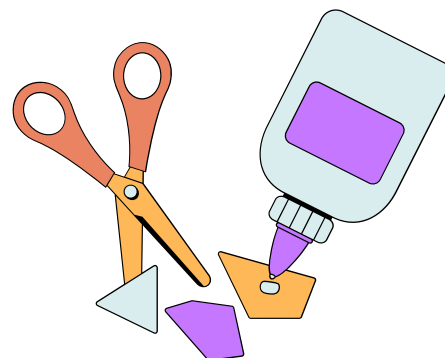
AVIATION

We are excited to advise you all about a prospective new interest group covering all aspects of aviation and aeroplanes. The prospective leader, Richard Jowitt, is a qualified flying instructor and anticipates that the group will have a variety of activities including talks, visiting speakers and visits to airports, museums and air shows. There is even the possibility of being taken up for a flight!

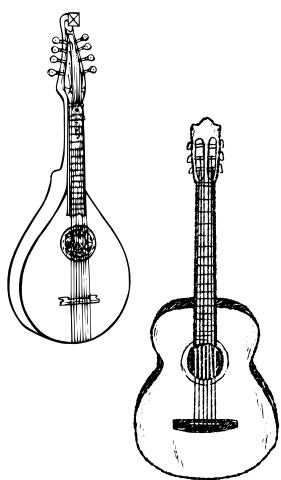
If you are interested in finding out more about Aviation please contact the Group Coordinator.

CRAFTING

We are very pleased to announce that one of our members, Karen Cox, has agreed to lead this group and we already have considerable interest from members. It is anticipated that the group will encompass a variety of different crafting projects according to the wishes of its members. Karen hopes to start the group next month with a Christmas related theme. If you are interested in finding out more please contact the Group Coordinator.



MUSIC MAKERS



A group for mainly fretted instruments (guitar, mandolin, ukulele etc.) Playing traditional and modern music from around the world.

Sheet music and lyrics will be emailed before each meeting.
No minimum standard required.

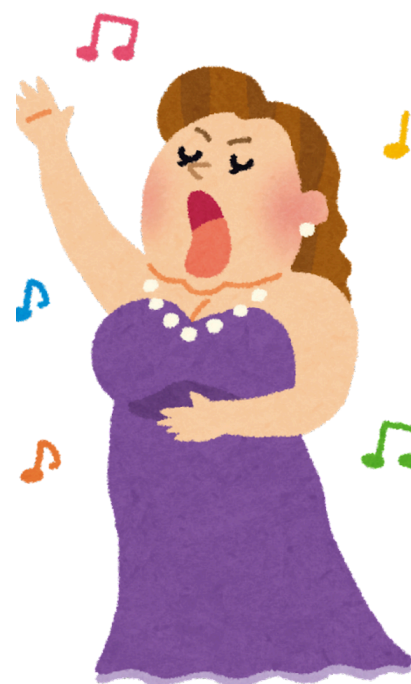
1st & 3rd Fridays of month 1:45-4:00pm

OPERA - When the slightly chubby lady sings!

I am suggesting a New Opera Group for Orpington u3a as the previous Opera group is sadly no more, much like the Norwegian Blue. Obviously its demise was not as tragic as the end of Tosca or even Iolanthe, but I certainly miss the meetings. I'm not an opera buff myself, more a fan and I am sure there are others who might enjoy getting together to share experiences and enjoy some music or whatever else we decide on. It doesn't matter if you don't know your arias from your elisir d'amore, I am hoping it will be fun.

Rather than dive in with the Lady of the Lake I thought it would be useful to get together with anyone interested to discuss how we might move forward.

If you are even a little bit intrigued and would like to discuss how you think the meetings could be structured, please contact the Group Coordinator.



Thanks for reading (assuming you managed to stay awake this long).

What I did on my Holidays

My kids think that I'm regressing to my teenage years which is rubbish since I can't remember what I had for breakfast most days let alone stuff that happened over six decades ago. They are shocked that in August I went to a Rock Festival in Cornwall in a camper van – the Rock festival was good, but the camper van less so!!

Then at the beginning of this month I was at the u3a South East Summer School at Chichester University which was brilliant. I can't remember how I found out about it (no surprise there) but I signed up on line and managed to secure a place. As far as I'm aware I was the only one from Orpington u3a and at first the other delegates (which is what they called us) seemed slightly wary of me – possibly as I was the only one in the some two hundred there who sported a visible tattoo. They relaxed when I explained that nearly everyone in our u3a group had tattoos...even some of the men.

It was a 4 day residential course and I was a little nervous as I didn't know anyone who was going – I really needn't have worried, everyone was very friendly, and I never once found myself sitting alone. The cost was £400 and this included – welcome drinks, accommodation, all meals, parking, 15 hours of tuition, evening entertainment, and farewell drinks. Pretty good value I think!! The rooms were obviously for students, but surprisingly better than you might imagine – spacious with a bed (as you'd expect), desk, tea and coffee making and a wardrobe and chest of drawers. There was an ensuite shower wet room and toiletries were supplied.

The meals were excellent – Breakfast – cereals, fruit, yogurt, pastries, full English plus vegetarian options. Tea, coffee, milk and fruit juice. Morning – tea and biscuits. Lunch was soup, rolls, salad, choice of several hot dishes and a selection of desserts. Afternoon – tea and cake. Evening meal – similar to lunch but with different hot dishes – again including vegetarian options. Every table had bottles of still and sparkling water.

Evening entertainment – Monday – there was a quiz, I entered alone and a table of ladies grabbed me (not like that unfortunately) to be on their team – presumably assuming I could help on stuff like sport. This proved not to be the case and we came last!! Tuesday was a screening of 'Conclave' on the big screen – well worth a watch if you haven't seen it yet. Wednesday - an interesting book talk by an author (Beyond Beliefs by Sohail Husain).

There were a number of courses available including Roman History, several European languages, Opera, Mai Jong, Philosophy and Latin. I had chosen Opera and the tutor was very good and made every session interesting.

Delegates attended from u3a groups all over the South East including Brighton, Dorking, Southampton and Chichester (and Orpington Obviously).

I would 100% recommend the Summer school – the next one is September 2026 – details come out in March and bookings in April...but you have to be quick as, not surprisingly, places fill rapidly – it's not quite like Glastonbury or Oasis, but, as I'm told, not far behind.

I will certainly be going in 2026 and am happy to car share with anyone who's interested.

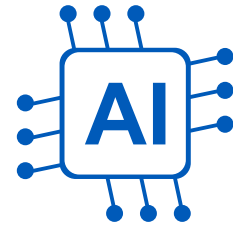
Thanks for reading!

KENT u3a NETWORK EVENT

“AI FOR EVERYONE”

RUSSELL WHITWORTH

Monday 10th November 2025, 10.30 - 12.00



In this talk, Russell Whitworth looks at Artificial Intelligence: What is it, how does it work, what is it good for, and what are the dangers and issues?

Starting with a brief look at the history of AI, this talk explains Generative AI (such as ChatGPT) and gives everyday examples of how it can be used particularly in a u3a context.

He will also consider some of the issues - such as hallucinations, fake news, and power consumption - and look to the future of Artificial General Intelligence.

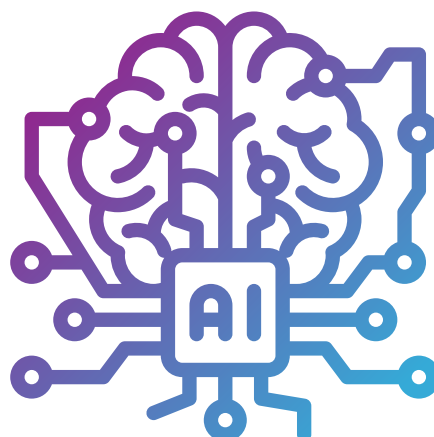
For those wishing to take the subject further, Russell will provide pointers on how to introduce AI as a topic in your local u3a.

Russell Whitworth is a retired management consultant who spent his career in the telecommunications industry, mainly building mobile phone networks around the world. He is a member of Guildford and Wokingham u3as, as well as a member of the national "AI for Everyone" project team.

We can host a large number of participants for this talk so please share this invitation with your u3a. Russell is particularly keen that anyone who is interested in exploring AI further as an interest or study group within their u3a should be part of this session.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Chair Kent u3a Network



BRAND NEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WALK

TUESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2025

16:00 - 18:00

GUIDE : ELENA PAOLIN



December is the right time to see London at its most magical with a festive walk through Mayfair and St. James. The walk commences at the towering Christmas tree (the gift of Norway) in Trafalgar Square and then on to the quaint Georgian streets and elegant Victorian shopping arcades festooned with twinkling lights. Famous for its centuries-old shops, Jermyn Street sparkles with festive illuminations and its listed shop windows are a treat for the eyes. Mayfair gives us Bond Street's luxury boutiques, wrapped like gifts themselves and narrow alleys still full of the charm of old-world London. Nothing says a London Christmas like Fortnum & Mason, home to the original Christmas hamper, which dates back to Victorian times. With a host of historical titbits and Christmas stories you will surely be consumed with festive spirit.

Bookings launch **1st November** Max 15 participants Cost: £10.00. No refunds.

The Christmas lights information can be found [here](#).