

# ***Dorking & District u3a Magazine***



**u3a**  
Dorking & District



**Number 117**

**Autumn/Winter 2025**

## Cheshire & Welsh Borders Residential October 2025



1. CHESTER HERITAGE TOUR WITH OUR GUIDE LIZ; 2. PACKWOOD HOUSE: STAINED GLASS WINDOWS ; 3. GREAT HALL WITH RICH TAPESTRIES; COVER PHOTO: STRATFORD-UPON-AVON (Photos copyright by Paul Smith)

**Hello everyone.**



This magazine is our Autumn/Winter edition – we are now producing our magazines twice a year. I would like to encourage everyone to contribute articles and photographs. It is a lot of work to produce these magazines and we hope you enjoy reading the exploits and news, but we need articles, about whatever you wish to write, especially the events, days out and the residentials and group news.

We are running a photographic competition, details of which are on our website and in the magazine. Entries must be in by the end of December.

So please help us to let everyone know that far from being fuddy-duddies, we enjoy retirement and we are not finished having fun yet.

May I thank you all for being members of our very special Dorking & District u3a and for helping to make it successful.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

*Ianthe*



*Cartoon reproduced by kind permission of Julia Forsyth and artist Kate Scurfield.*



## COMMITTEE NEWS

### WELCOME!

A warm welcome to the following new members, who have joined since Summer 2025. Our next coffee morning for new members will be on **Thursday 12 February 2026** at 10.30am at St Joseph's Church Hall. If you have recently joined the u3a but not attended an introductory meeting before, you will be very welcome.

Mike Artes	Annette Hankin	Patricia Picking
John Battle	Phyllis Harvey	Elizabeth Rae
Neil Clark	Michele Hawkey	Lynn Slade
Andrew Curtis	John Hayward	Patricia Anne Smith
Annie Duffitt	Mary Hayward	David Stagg
Peter Evans	Malcolm Heyward	Linda Stagg
Ann Evans	Lorraine High	Mark Starr
Joan Francis	Jane Hudson	Barbara Steadman-
Gill French	Richard Mendelson	Allen
David Goodrick	Rosemary Miller	Barbara Stone
Sheila Gray	Brian Mills	

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewals become due on 1 April 2026, and we will email or write to you with an invitation to renew in early March 2026. We hope you will wish to renew and would appreciate you paying for your subscription promptly.

Membership subscriptions which are not renewed by 1 July 2026 will be marked as 'lapsed' and you will receive no further communications from us (including further renewal reminders, monthly newsletters, bi-annual magazines or u3a Matters if you have subscribed to this).

However, please note that new members who join us after 1 November 2025 will benefit from an extension to their subscription. They will not need to renew until 31 March 2027, rather than 2026.

John Sinclair  
Membership Secretary

### EDITORIAL NOTE

The Spring/Summer 2026 issue of the magazine will be due next May. I would welcome short articles, reports on group activities and visits, book reviews and photographs **by early April** please.

Beryl

## CHAIRMAN'S NEWS

---

### HELLO EVERYONE,

Time has flown past once again and we are now in November heading for Christmas and the New Year.

We had a wonderful summer with plenty of dry weather and sunshine. Last time I wrote to you we had just had our AGM and welcomed over 60 members to this event. It is good to see that members are attending our monthly meetings again. After the AGM, we had a very interesting talk on Bees.

In July and September, we ran two Group Leader workshops, which were well attended and ably run by members of the committee and enabled Group Leaders to air any issues which they were experiencing. Our groups are showing a very healthy increase and again this is down to the commitment of Group Leaders and the hard labour of Beryl, introducing new groups and monitoring existing groups to ensure that there is space for members to join.

We do need help and support in this venture as the more popular groups can be over-subscribed and it may be necessary to start a second or even third group. However, we do need members to come forward to lead groups. It is not especially onerous and can be very rewarding. Please contact our Group Coordinator if you are interested in helping with an existing group, or even interested in starting a new one.

October saw the start of the Astronomy Group and we hope to arrange some visits to aid our understanding of the universe and all its beauty. The recently started Art for Pleasure group is progressing very well and you can see some of the artworks they have created on the cover.

Although August is our quiet month, the work behind the scenes still continues apace so that we are ready for the autumn/winter period.

Our monthly meetings started again in September with a talk about *AI Friend or Foe*, followed by *Landscapes of the South East* in October. In November, we invited Sarah Slater to talk on *Working with Ghosts of Hampton Court* and in December we will enjoy *Wonders of Winter*. If you are unable to attend talks live, then check to see if you can join by Zoom or can access recordings after the event.

Our Days Out team, ably led by Deanne Rhodes, started up again in September with a visit to Romney Marsh, Dungeness and Rye for which we enjoyed fine weather and fish and chips. In October we visited Colchester Castle Museum and Beth Chatto Gardens. Sadly, the weather was not good, but u3a members are intrepid and it was an informative visit. We are now looking forward to the Wisley Glow in December.

Last time I wrote this letter we had just returned from our residential trip to Yorkshire. This time we have just returned from our visit to Cheshire and North Wales. I led 36 members on this trip and we had good weather and all enjoyed our visits. I am now looking at residential trips for Spring and Autumn in 2026.

## CHAIRMAN'S NEWS

---

In late October, we held a New Members meeting where we welcomed 11 new members and hopefully imparted plenty of information to encourage them to join in all our activities.

Sadly, our Webmaster Mike Docker has decided to stand down. Over the last nine years, Mike has developed one of the best websites in the SE region and it is mostly thanks to him that we are seeing more and more members join our u3a. If you have any IT expertise and can lend a hand, we would like to hear from you.

Finally, we are in the process of organising our popular Burns Night which is taking place at Buckland Park Lake on Sunday 25 January. Details will be circulated and booking can be made online through the website. It is a fun night and a good start as an event for January.

*Ianthe, November 2025*

### **DANCE 2B FIT – TRIBUTE TO AN EXTRAORDINARY GROUP LEADER, ELIZABETH CROOK**

As we go about our weekly business and attend some of the many groups now available to D&D u3a members, we might forget that these groups are managed by volunteers who give up of their time and often invite us into their homes to keep us informed, amused or just simply fit.



Elizabeth Crook joined the D&D u3a in 2000 and was one such group leader. Exercise for Health, as the group was known, started life in Westcott Reading Room with Joyce Kingsley-Jones and then Pauline Huxtable as leaders.

What makes this group stand out in my mind is that when lockdown was lifted in 2021, Elizabeth agreed to take over its leadership. She welcomed me into her home to discuss how the group could restart given the COVID regulations still in place.

Despite many family commitments, she took on the leadership challenge with grace and a sense of humour which seems to underpin the whole group. We were all shocked to hear of Elizabeth's sudden passing in July but grateful for her immense energy and commitment to the u3a movement. Elizabeth will be sadly missed by the whole of the Dance 2B Fit group.

With its new leaders Babs and Diane and instructor Michelle, the Dance 2B Fit group continues to thrive and offer that special something we all need – physical wellbeing and a lot of laughter.



*Beryl*

### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES GROUP - GOOD INTENTIONS AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES



At our September session, we looked at some of the unintended consequences which can result from the best of environmental intentions. Actions taken to protect the environment and combat damaging climate change turn out to be more complicated than we first thought.

Problems are created as well as solutions. The example we focussed on was the transition to electric vehicles from those fuelled by petrol or diesel. While

EVs are preferable across the life of the car, and will become even more advantageous with improved technology, there are disadvantages. These include the ethics and geopolitics associated with the mining of minerals such as lithium, and the timescale needed to develop the national grid in order to make good use of the rapidly growing generation of renewable energy.

Cars of any type are environmentally costly due to manufacture, congestion, tyre particle pollution and road infrastructure, and ideally the number of private car journeys should be reduced.

However what hinders such a move are limited public transport, lack of safe cycling routes, and provision for those who cannot walk or cycle or who live in rural areas. Ironically, road improvement or improved car efficiency could even lead to greater emissions because of easier or cheaper travelling.

The challenge is for individuals, companies and authorities to make necessary changes while being mindful of pitfalls. Often, the complexity is ignored or becomes so challenging that changes are abandoned.



**Clearing the Air** by Hannah Ritchie addresses some of the complicated questions our group considered. It even offers some real hope for the future; vital if people are to believe that their positive actions do make a difference.

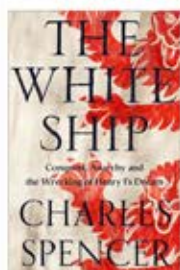
The Environmental Issues group meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday from 10am–12 noon at The Point, Lyons Court, Dorking, RH4 1AB. More details on the D&D u3a website. Our December meeting will consider the environmental impact of Christmas, while still appreciating some of the good things festivities bring (see cartoon on page 1).

*Sheila Pearson*



## HISTORY READING CIRCLE

With two book groups running successfully at Dorking Library, I thought I would launch another group focusing on historical fiction and non-fiction. I know nothing about history other than what I learnt at school. But with so many programmes and resources available, how hard could it be to get some basic knowledge and share this with others?



Several members met in October to discuss the focus of future meetings. Taking as a theme women (and men) who changed history, we chose as our first novel the *Lady of the English* by Elizabeth Chadwick. This deals with the struggles of Empress Matilda to maintain control of the kingdom after the death of her father Henry I.

As a child, Matilda or Maud had been sent to Germany to marry the future Henry V; at his death, she returned to Normandy to marry Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou. When Henry I died, Matilda was the only legitimate and direct successor to the English crown, her brother having drowned in 1120 in the White Ship disaster along with other royal family members. Matilda faced opposition from the barons who considered her foreign because of her marriage into the Angevin family and disliked her proud and overbearing character. Henry's nephew Stephen of Blois, with the backing of the English Church, took steps to consolidate his new regime. Ultimately the power struggle between Matilda and Stephen threw England into civil war for 19 years.

Whilst Matilda was never crowned queen, Stephen agreed in 1153 that her son Henry of Anjou would succeed him at his death. Only a year later, Stephen died and Henry was crowned King Henry II, the first Plantagenet king.

There are a plethora of books to help us understand Matilda's struggles and how arguably one of the greatest British kings came to power, books authored by Helen Castor, Carol McGrath and Alison Weir and others which will make researching this and future periods fascinating.

We welcome a few more members to meet with us on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday afternoon of every month, starting in January. Contact Beryl [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com) if interested in joining this new group.

## PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP



This group no longer meets, mainly due to lowering attendance. Should you need help with your camera (e.g. settings) or wish to know how to transfer your photos from your camera to your computer, please contact John [johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk) or 020 3949 0707.



## SINGING FOR PLEASURE/UKULELE - THE SOUND OF MUSIC



In October, residents of Nower House were treated to the 'sound of music' when both the Ukulele and Singing for Pleasure groups performed their medley of tunes and songs.

Virtuoso playing by the Ukulele group and their guitar accompanist had staff and residents singing along to tunes that reminded them of their younger selves. Both groups will be welcomed back for Christmas celebrations. It's one way of engaging with the community whilst giving purpose to the groups' practice sessions.

## ASTRONOMY - WHAT IS SPACE?



Our members meet with the Guildford u3a group on Zoom on the first Wednesday of each month. In October and November, we looked at 'what is space?' and considered some of the more surprising discoveries in our universe.

Space is an almost perfect vacuum, devoid of matter, except for bits of gas, dust and other particles floating around "emptier" areas of the universe, while more crowded regions can host planets, stars and galaxies. One of the main methods of determining distance in space is to use standard candles, astronomical objects that have a consistent inherent brightness. The dimmer they appear to us compared to this true brightness, the further away they must be.

American astronomer Henrietta Leavitt (1868-1921) discovered that some stars have a consistent brightness no matter where they are located, making these so-called Cepheid variables a good measuring stick for astronomical distances. Her work helped astronomer Edwin Hubble (1889-1953) measure galaxy distances and develop the theory that the universe was indeed expanding, driven by an unseen phenomenon called 'dark energy' that acts as a kind of anti-gravity.

The Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is one of the most important astronomical developments. Since it was placed in orbit in April 1990, it has travelled over 5 billion km and sent back a huge amount of scientific data and incredibly detailed images of every type of object in the sky. It has allowed the study of exoplanets, the expansion of the universe and the formation of galaxies. Its observations have led to the discovery of dark matter and provided insights into the life cycles of stars. Cosmic expansion is key to the Big Bang theory. Recent studies now suggest that the universe's expansion may actually have started to slow down.

We currently meet online but we plan face-to-face sessions and visits in the spring for D&D u3a members. For more information, email [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com) or Ianthe Cox [dorkingu3achairman@gmail.com](mailto:dorkingu3achairman@gmail.com)

## **GARDENING 2 - JOLLY PLANT QUIZ!**



This new group met in November at Hilliers Plant Centre to plan sessions for the coming months. Under the leadership of Ollie Mann and with the kind support of Vivian Wildman who runs Gardening 1, we hope to focus on what needs to be done in our gardens each month, including pruning, sowing seeds and taking cuttings. Each member of the group has a different size garden - we will host meetings in different locations to learn from each other. We ended our meeting with a plant quiz set by Roger (Jolly). Our December meeting promises to be more festive as one member will be showing us how to make a Christmas wreath.

## **LOCAL HISTORY 2**

This new group met for the first time on Monday 8 September. We will continue to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month at 2.30pm in The Lincoln Arms for the foreseeable future. Please contact John Sinclair if you are interested in local history, we may still have room for you, as not all of our members come to every meeting. [johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk) or 020 3949 0707.

## **MILITARY HISTORY - BARRIE FRIEND MEMORIAL LECTURE**

On 21 April 2026 at 10.30am, the Military History Group will be holding the Barrie Friend memorial lecture. Barrie Friend sadly passed away in January 2025. Antiques Road Show celebrity Mark Smith (of medals fame) will be talking about *The Somme*. Venue: Old Barn Hall, 55 Church Street, Great Bookham. Entry fee: £5 includes coffee and biscuits on arrival.

For more information please contact Jim Barnes: [jimbarnes31@gmail.com](mailto:jimbarnes31@gmail.com) or Liz Lockhart-Mure 01737 844173.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

In October, one member presented an illustrated story of Nîmes which she had recently visited. Nîmes, often referred to as the most Roman city outside Italy, became a Roman colony before 28BC, with veterans of Julius Caesar's Nile campaigns settling there.

The city, originally a Celtic settlement around a sacred spring, was named Nemausus after the local Celtic god. Roman influence is evident in its architecture and symbols, such as the crocodile emblem representing Rome's victory over Egypt. Key landmarks include:

1. **Les Jardins de la Fontaine:** A site containing the sacred spring that attracted early settlers and later became part of the Roman imperial shrine, the Augusteum,



dedicated to Emperor Augustus and the local deity Nemausus.

2. **Tour Magne:** A Roman tower built on the site of an earlier Gallic structure, part of the Augustan walls, and the only surviving tower today.

3. **Castellum Aquae:** A Roman water distribution structure connected to the Pont du Gard aqueduct, rediscovered in 1844.

4. **Porte Auguste:** One of two remaining gateways from the original walled city built by Augustus.

5. **Maison Carrée:** A Roman temple built in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, dedicated to Augustus' heirs, symbolizing Roman control and allegiance to the emperor's dynasty.

6. **Amphitheatre of Nîmes (Les Arènes):** A well-preserved Roman arena built in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, accommodating up to 24,000 spectators.

*(Photos are copyright)*



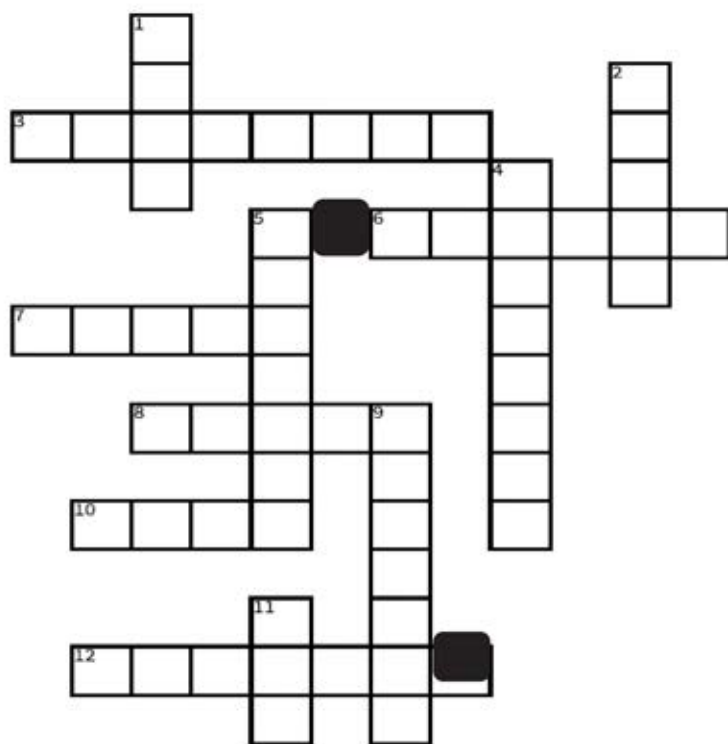


## WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

*The weather out there is frightening, so here's a quiz that's entertaining.  
We'd like you to have a go but there's no SNOW!*

Rosemary Harbridge suggests the following word puzzle. Use the clues to find all the weather words. Answers on page 27.

# Weather



### Down

1. Hello and welcome!
2. Honeymaker we've heard
4. Forceful vertical descent
5. Shakespeare play
9. Ruth and Ned make a noise
11. Married in reverse

### Across

3. Second-rate reptile
6. All-over wash
7. Fuss about nothing in teacups
8. Wet and cold steel rearranged
10. Found in month of August
12. Sounds like soft French cheeses

## NATURAL HISTORY NOTES - The Blackberry Bush or Bramble

---



Locally abundant, the blackberry bush (*Rubus fruticosus* agg, from the Rose family) is a common sight with an uncommon and complex biology. So complex is its ecology that there is a special science "batology" (from the Greek *batos* meaning bramble) devoted just to the study of blackberries.

It can hybridise with close relatives and seeds may be formed without fertilisation (*apomixis*). There are hundreds of varieties varying in size, leaf shape, taste and time of appearance of the fruit. A consequence of this is that you can pick local wild berries over several months from July to September, although folklore suggests that they should not be picked after Michaelmas (11 October) because "*the Devil has spoilt them!*"

The first-year growth, known as a "pioneer" or "primocane" has an especially thick stem, is fast-growing with large thorns but no flowers and fruit. These appear in subsequent years. It is native to Europe, North America and parts of Asia. If a primocane reaches the ground, new roots form. Its long arching stems with fierce thorns were once known as "lawyers" because of trouble escaping if you fall into their clutches! "*The Bramble Thorn is the Worthy Protector of the Sweet Blackberry*" (Angela Abraham, 2020)

Unlike many fruits, the red berries are unripe, giving rise to the old saying "*blackberries are red when they're green*". The berry at the end of the stalk is the first to ripen and is usually sweeter and larger than its neighbours. Blackberries may justifiably be called "superfoods" as they contain vitamins A,B,C,E & K, antioxidants, minerals and fibre. The fruit is a food source for many birds and animals and the bush is a habitat for birds and reptiles.

The flowers attract a wide variety of butterflies and other insects - the photo shows a Dark Green Fritillary on Box Hill, feeding on the nectar of bramble. The prickly bush can also protect coppiced trees from deer. In short, despite occasional inconvenience, this is a bush to be cherished!

(Photos and text by Robert Edmondson)



## SCRIBBLERS - THE SECRET MEETING

---

There's a secret meeting tonight, and I intend to be there. If I was the only person in our block of flats who hadn't been invited, then I knew something was being plotted and planned and that something involves getting rid of me.

No! I don't mean knocking me off, but forcing me out! Me, the first person to move into this dump, described by the estate agent as *'the ultimate in senior living, an exceptional retirement community and with communal areas, so you will never feel alone.'* Well, absolutely right there! You never feel alone as you can always hear the noise of the flat next door. Deaf as posts on both sides of me, with TVs blaring 24 hours a day. This whole place is one big communal area, with absolutely no privacy at all.

Now, twenty years after I moved in, this place looks like a Salvation Army hostel. Despite the regulations, some of the old dears here decided they wanted to personalise the communal areas, putting up photos of the King, sellotaping pictures drawn by great grandchildren on the wall, pot plants on the window sills, trip-hazard mats on the floor and Marjorie down the way installed her budgie in the lounge, to cheer everyone up she says. Well, it doesn't cheer me up, with its constant squawking, poo and seed all over the floor. Filthy, dirty thing. Never go in there anymore in case I catch psittacosis.

Yes, on the subject of pets, old Alf in flat five has a cat, which is strictly against the rules, and when I open my door and find it sitting on my doormat fluffing itself and showering white hair everywhere, then action must be taken! It seemed to like the taste of the syrup of figs I put in with a sardine and then I sent it on its way back to Alf. Upset the cleaners no end when they found the mess it left on his shag pile rug.

And then there's Ethel upstairs and the fuss and bother about my ciggy smoke that she claims vents upstairs to her flat. Absolute rubbish, as I'm always careful to smoke at the table near the window – I'm keen on keeping the place smelling nice. Nah, they're just a bunch of old whingers, all of them, except Mr Elkins. A real gent for whom I've a bit of a soft spot. I found some Newbury Fruit Jellies in the cupboard my son gave me a few years ago, a bit out of date but still with the cellophane wrapper on, so quite ok. Doctor warned me off sweet things, due to my diabetes, so I thought it would be a nice gesture to give them to him. Hope he enjoyed them.

Anyway, I've repeatedly made my complaints clear to the managing agents as I will not put up with bare-faced flouting of the rules. The shelter outside is designed for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. They should NOT be left cluttering up the hallway when the lazy old dears can't be bothered to walk to the lifts. The communal kitchen is a haven for botulism and the fridge full of mouldering food. Daphne's 80<sup>th</sup> was two months ago and there's still a piece of cake in there. Never use the fridge myself but I like to check so I can inform the authorities. After all, it's only for the good of the poor



old dears.

Well, as for this secret meeting, it's not much of a secret when I saw notes in all the pigeon-holes except mine. Naturally, I took a look at one, nicely typed out so that must be Edna, the ex-journalist, who annoyingly tappy-taps away all day in the lounge producing the community newsletter, and that's a joke. News, what news? Majorie's budgie looking a bit seedy? I thought fat balls were good for birds, ha ha. Shame about the spelling errors but the message was clear. 'All who can, gather in the lounge tonight at seven to discuss what to do about Camilla and her constant bullying and busy-bodding.' Busy-bodding my foot! I was the first one in and I have rights, and I intend to be there tonight to fight my corner.

Gill Williamson

### DORKING READERS / FRIDAY READING CIRCLE

At first glance, Kafka's surrealist novella *Metamorphosis* would not be everyone's bedtime read of choice. But Dorking Readers engage in a wide range of books from Mick Herron's *Slow Horses* to Tim Marshall's *Prisoners of Geography*.

The Friday group's recent selection, Emily Howes's debut novel *The Painter's Daughters*, recounts episodes of the life of the Gainsborough family – the bright and witty but self-obsessed Thomas, his practical but egotistical wife, Margaret, illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Beaufort, and their two daughters, Molly and Margaret (otherwise known as 'Captain' by her father). The girls are often left to their own devices, while their parents entertain the smart society of Bath, and they become inseparable. The older sister Margaret is the only one aware of her younger sister's mental breakdown. Despite a genteel upbringing and artistic skills, the girls eventually enter the marriage market with disastrous results.

The novel is stylistically beautiful to read, almost lyrical. However, author Emily Howes admits that other than Gainsborough's letters, she had few sources to draw from and the story lacks the depth of other similar art-related novels. It does however make you reassess the family portraits that Gainsborough painted, particularly those of the two girls. The best known paintings in the National Gallery show Molly and Margaret either chasing a butterfly, symbolising the frailty of life, or dressed in blue and cradling a cat, underlining their devotion to each other.

In a letter to a friend, Gainsborough, best known for his portraits, wrote: *"I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my Viol da Gamba and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint landscapes and enjoy the fag end of life in quietness and ease"*.



## PHOTO COMPETITION

---



Our photo competition will be closing on 31 December 2025. We want to encourage you to be creative but also to generate images that we can use in our u3a publicity to brighten the pages of the website and Newsletter. We have more than 50 groups, and it would be great to get images from all of these in the competition. But of course, it is not limited to just those activities – all members' creativity is welcome!

### RULES OF THE COMPETITION

- Two classes: one for Photography group members, and one for the rest of our u3a members. In each class there will be three categories:
  1. A single photo, on any subject
  2. A group of 'three on a theme'
  3. A video entry
- When entering, you agree that your photo may be used in any Dorking & District u3a publicity
- Permission must be sought from those in the photo or video that the photo/video be used (unless it is a 'general view' type shot)
- To make it a little more interesting and challenging, each entry should be accompanied by a short resumé (no more than 20 words) of what inspired the photo, what you were thinking when you formulated its composition, or why you feel it is special
- Each entry should have a brief title: the location, event, or situation when it was taken
- Entries may be digital or printed photos
- All photos must have been taken since 1 July 2025
- Each u3a member may submit up to five entries in each class/category. Be sure to give your name and contact details with your entry

### HOW DO YOU TAKE PART?

1. Email your entry to Steve Hooker at [stevedorking@gmail.com](mailto:stevedorking@gmail.com).
2. Post or deliver your entry to Steve at 16 Lonsdale Road, Dorking RH4 1JP
3. Place your entry direct on to our Facebook page, saying that it is a competition entry (To place your entry on Facebook click on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/Dorkingu3a>)

### JUDGING CRITERIA

1. The quality/creativity of the photo, and its accompanying text
2. How useful the judges consider it will be in promoting and enhancing the image of Dorking & District u3a
3. Most Facebook shares/likes

There will be PRIZES. The three judges will be Steve Hooker, Ianthe Cox, and John Thom. The judges' decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into around any entries.

THIS COMPETITION IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF DORKING & DISTRICT U3A and we hope that many of you will take part: not just those in the Photography group, but ALL!

## Monthly Meetings

Meetings take place in St Joseph's Church Hall, Dorking RH4 3DL on the second Wednesday of each month (except August), starting at 2.30pm. Doors open at 2.00pm for refreshments.

If you find it difficult getting to monthly meetings and would like a lift, please contact Tony Parker, Welfare Officer, on 01306 884050. If you would like to be added to the list of drivers willing to collect members, please let Tony know.

If you have suggestions regarding topics and/or speakers for monthly meetings, please get in touch with Denise Hooker [dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com](mailto:dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com). Thank you.

### 14 January 2026

#### THE GHOSTWRITER

NEIL HANSON, a successful author with 70 books to his name, has not only published his own, much-acclaimed work, he has also worked as a "ghost writer". His clients include many famous people including a legendary English cricketer and one of Britain's most decorated soldiers. He has also written for less celebrated men and women who have led extraordinary lives or achieved remarkable things. His amusing talk gives a privileged glimpse into the hidden worlds of his clients and also reveals the truth behind one of the most earth-shattering events of our times.



### 11 February

#### FRAUD: THINK YOU'RE IMMUNE? YOU MIGHT NOT BE!

ROGER TRISTRAM is part retired after working in international banking, technology and consultancy. He has travelled extensively and lived in the Middle East and Scandinavia. He has run his own consultancy business for 20 years and advised clients in the UK and Europe as well as in other far off, less well known locations. Roger's talk looks at the extent of personal fraud, how it's been increasing in recent years, the many different and sophisticated types of fraud, and what we should ALL do to protect ourselves.



### 11 March

#### THE SOCIAL LIFE OF TEA AND COFFEE

STEPHEN CHATER's talk considers changing fashions in non-alcoholic drinking in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and their effect on the development of the City of London and its business and cultural interests.



### 8 April

#### EUROPE IN SPACE

GEOFF SAUNDERS will be talking about the European Space Agency which must be one of the best kept secrets in the UK! He will focus on some of Europe's space missions, past, present and future with video and animation to illustrate our achievements.





## ***Interest & Activity Groups***

Details of current interest groups can be found in the handbook or on the Dorking & District u3a website [www.dorkingu3a.org.uk](http://www.dorkingu3a.org.uk). Members may join as many groups as they wish. Just contact the group leader(s) for further information. If you have difficulty in joining a group or have suggestions for new groups, please contact the **Membership Secretary** by emailing [johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk).

### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

Peter Horitz: 01306 898057  
[peter.horitz@uwclub.net](mailto:peter.horitz@uwclub.net)

### **ART FOR PLEASURE**

Beryl Sinclair: 020 3949 0707;  
[dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

### **ART & ARCHITECTURE**

Roger Stones 01306 886754  
[roger.stones@btinternet.com](mailto:roger.stones@btinternet.com)  
Beryl Sinclair: [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

### **ASTRONOMY**

Beryl Sinclair: 020 3949 0707;  
[dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

### **BADMINTON / PICKLEBALL (Oddfellows)**

Nicholas Jupp: 01306 899655  
[njbjupp@gmail.com](mailto:njbjupp@gmail.com)

### **BOWLS – INDOOR GROUP (Oct – April)**

Ann Watney: 01306 889115  
[ann.watney@btinternet.com](mailto:ann.watney@btinternet.com)

### **BOWLS - OUTDOOR GROUP (May –Sept)**

David Pettman: 01306 883043  
[david@pettman.co.uk](mailto:david@pettman.co.uk)

### **BRIDGE**

Sue Greenacre: 01306 886832  
[suegreenacre49@gmail.com](mailto:suegreenacre49@gmail.com)  
Lesley Pearce: 07954 381873  
[lesleypearcemassage@gmail.com](mailto:lesleypearcemassage@gmail.com)

### **CARD GAMES PLUS**

Mike Giles: 01306 884598; 07710 500116  
[mibridge@mac.com](mailto:mibridge@mac.com)

### **CULTURE COMPANIONS**

Helen Mardell: 07894 859162  
[helen.mardell@gmail.com](mailto:helen.mardell@gmail.com)

### **CURRENT ISSUES 1**

Andrew Gibbons: 01306 742650  
[andrew.gibbons@pobox.com](mailto:andrew.gibbons@pobox.com)

### **CURRENT ISSUES 2**

Ian Norman: 07921 492790  
[iannorman6@outlook.com](mailto:iannorman6@outlook.com)

### **CURRENT ISSUES 3 (NEW)**

Philip Holland: 07528 703759  
[philholland1954@btinternet.com](mailto:philholland1954@btinternet.com)

### **DORKING READERS/FRIDAY READING CIRCLE**

Beryl Sinclair: [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

### **DANCE 2B FIT**

Diane Prout: 07799580906  
[diane.prout@btopenworld.com](mailto:diane.prout@btopenworld.com)

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

Pat Smith: [pat2africa@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pat2africa@yahoo.co.uk)  
Andy Tanner: [andyjtanner@me.com](mailto:andyjtanner@me.com)

### **FRENCH CONVERSATION**

Angela Day Tel. 07762 752322  
[angela\\_m\\_d@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:angela_m_d@hotmail.co.uk)  
Christine Lawrence: 01306 882316  
[french@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:french@dorkingu3a.org.uk)

### **FRENCH LUNCH**

Geoff Saunders: 01306 884812  
[geoff.m.saunders@gmail.com](mailto:geoff.m.saunders@gmail.com)

### **GARDENING 1**

Vivian Wildman: 01306 644950  
[vivian.wildman.12@gmail.com](mailto:vivian.wildman.12@gmail.com)

### **GARDENING 2 (NEW)**

Ollie Mann [ollie@twelvetree.co.uk](mailto:ollie@twelvetree.co.uk)

### **GENEALOGY**

Sally Hulbert: 07770 874769  
[hulberts\\_molev@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hulberts_molev@yahoo.co.uk)

### **GENEALOGY FOR BEGINNERS**

Karl Barclay: 07836 366235;  
[karlbarclay@virginmedia.com](mailto:karlbarclay@virginmedia.com)

### **GERMAN CONVERSATION**

Bob Crooks: 01306 740062  
[robertcrooks@rocketmail.com](mailto:robertcrooks@rocketmail.com)

**GUITAR**

Brian Joannou: 01306 887411  
[brian.joannou241@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.joannou241@btinternet.com)

---

**INVESTMENT & MONEY**

John Holder: 01737 845907  
[holdj851@gmail.com](mailto:holdj851@gmail.com)

---

**JIGSAW EXCHANGE**

Hilda Burden: 01737 842516

---

**LINE DANCING**

Gill Crooks: 01306 740062  
[gillcrooks1@gmail.com](mailto:gillcrooks1@gmail.com)

---

**LOCAL HISTORY 1**

Paul Smith: 01306 640791  
[paul3msmith@hotmail.com](mailto:paul3msmith@hotmail.com)  
Valerie Rayner: 01306 640791  
[raynervj@gmail.com](mailto:raynervj@gmail.com)

**LOCAL HISTORY 2**

John Sinclair: 020 3949 0707  
[johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk)

---

**LUNCHEON CLUB**

Tony Parker: 01306 884050  
[topamail@mail.com](mailto:topamail@mail.com)

---

**MAHJONG**

John Thom: 07768 397731;  
[johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk)

---

**MILITARY HISTORY**

Jim Barnes: 07967392532  
[jimbarnes31@gmail.com](mailto:jimbarnes31@gmail.com)  
Contact: Liz Lockhart-Mure: 01737 844173

---

**PHILOSOPHY ONLINE**

Virginia Wheeler  
[virginia.s.wheeler@gmail.com](mailto:virginia.s.wheeler@gmail.com)

---

**PHILOSOPHY**

Roger Walsom: 07831 571786  
[rwalsom@hotmail.com](mailto:rwalsom@hotmail.com)

---

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Faith & Mike Docker: 01306 501640  
[faith.docker@gmail.com](mailto:faith.docker@gmail.com)  
[michael.docker@gmail.com](mailto:michael.docker@gmail.com)

---

**PILATES**

Janet Hoad: 07802 377873  
[jahoad@hotmail.com](mailto:jahoad@hotmail.com)

---

**PLANT LOVERS**

Denise Hooker  
[dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com](mailto:dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com)

---

**READING FOR PLEASURE**

Jill Roome: 01306 883023  
[e.taylor40@btinternet.com](mailto:e.taylor40@btinternet.com)

---

**READING HISTORY**

Beryl Sinclair: 020 3949 0707;  
[dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

---

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Richard Rumble: 01372 450142  
[richrumble747@gmail.com](mailto:richrumble747@gmail.com)

---

**SCRIBBLERS**

Gillian Williamson: 0798 9962237  
[rowewill@aol.com](mailto:rowewill@aol.com)

---

**SHAKESPEARE & HIS CONTEMPORARIES**

Jackie Rance: 01306 887416  
[jaxrance@gmail.com](mailto:jaxrance@gmail.com)

---

**SINGING FOR PLEASURE**

Meike Laurenson  
[milaurenson@talktalk.net](mailto:milaurenson@talktalk.net)

---

**SPANISH (Conversation)**

Beryl Sinclair: [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

---

**TEXTILES & TEA**

Juliet Eberle: 01306 884569  
[juliet.eberle@ntlworld.com](mailto:juliet.eberle@ntlworld.com)

---

**UKULELE**

John Hammond: 07847 674338  
[jbw.hammond@gmail.com](mailto:jbw.hammond@gmail.com)

---

**UPWORDS**

Sue Jex: 07768 816386  
[suelucas51@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:suelucas51@yahoo.co.uk)

---

**WINE APPRECIATION**

Geoff Saunders: 01306 884812  
[geoff.m.saunders@gmail.com](mailto:geoff.m.saunders@gmail.com)

---

**WORDS, WORDS, WORDS**

Rosemary Harbridge: 01306 881520  
[rharbridge@sky.com](mailto:rharbridge@sky.com)

---

## ***Dorking & District u3a Groups - When do we meet?***

		1st in month	2nd in month	3rd in month	4th/last in month
Monday	am	Singing for Pleasure	COMMITTEE MEETING Reading for Pleasure	Plant Lovers Singing for Pleasure	Luncheon Club
	pm	Bridge German Conversation Mahjong	Bridge Local History 2 Mahjong	Bridge German Conversation Mahjong	Bridge Mahjong
Tuesday	am	Badminton Dance 2B Fit Military History Shakespeare & his Con- temporaries (online)	Badminton Dance 2B Fit Luncheon Club Scribblers	Badminton Dance 2B Fit Shakespeare & his Con- temporaries Words, Words, Words	Badminton Dance 2B Fit
	pm	Photography Pilates 1, 2 & 3 Textiles & Tea	Genealogy for Beginners Pilates 1, 2 & 3 Upwords	Philosophy Pilates 1, 2 & 3 Textiles & Tea	Archaeology Pilates 1, 2 & 3 Upwords
Wednesday	am	Current Issues 1	French Lunch	Current Issues 2 Local History	Environmental Issues
	pm	Astronomy Card Games Plus Genealogy Philosophy (online)	MONTHLY MEETING	Card Games Plus Philosophy (online) Science & Technology	Art & Architecture
Thursday	am	Guitar	Current Issues 3 Guitar	Creative Crafts Guitar	Guitar
	pm	French Conversation Pickleball	Spanish Conversation Pickleball	Dorking Readers French Conversation Photography Workshop Pickleball	Spanish Conversation Pickleball Art for Pleasure
Friday	am	Line Dancing Ukulele	Gardening Ukulele	Line Dancing Ukulele	Ukulele
	pm	Indoor bowls (Oct-April) Outdoor Bowls (April- Sept)	Outdoor Bowls (April- Sept) Reading History Circle	Indoor Bowls (Oct-April) Outdoor Bowls (April- Sept)	Friday Reading Circle Outdoor Bowls (April-Sept) Investment & Money



### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - FRIEND OR FOE?

Russel Whitworth, 4 May 2025



Artificial intelligence or AI can be defined as computer systems designed to perform tasks that usually require human intelligence such as learning, reasoning and problem solving in contrast to standard computer procedures that do exactly what the program specifies and no more. AI learns by examples and by extensive training e.g. by viewing hundreds of images of cats from many angles and with many variations it learns the meaning of the word "cat" and similarly for other words of the language. This is the "classifier" stage. The next step is the "generator" where the different words are interpreted to produce a meaningful text or image, however improbable, e.g. a cat and dog in formal dress at a dinner party. The behaviour of such AI systems is complex, emergent, unpredictable and constantly evolving.

The achievements of AI to date are impressive. In 1997 IBM Deep Blue defeated Kasparov at chess and in 2016

AlphaGo claimed victory in the world Go championship. Text GPT-5 is estimated to have been 'trained' on 855 trillion words (about 950 million books with web pages and internet based books). The average person reads 700 books in their lifetime; GPT-5 has "read" and retained the equivalent of 1.4 million people each reading 700 different books!

AI can answer complex questions and can continue the discussion. It can be asked to adopt a persona; it can summarise legal and medical documents or translate languages. It can offer help with domestic repairs and instruction manuals and organise meetings and timetables. Self driving cars developed by AI are now widely deployed in the United States in San Francisco, Los Angeles and elsewhere and in 2024 they were approved for testing in the UK. AI has been used to produce artistic images that are unique, free from copyright and have a consistent style. Music too can be produced by AI. An ironic song was presented about "The joys of the M25" in the style of jazz fusion with both melody and lyrics produced by AI.

Possibly the greatest benefit of AI is in data analysis especially in diagnostic medical scans e.g. X-rays. It can detect patterns or anomalies in a complex image more quickly and accurately than a radiologist.

Nevertheless, there are challenges with AI such as the loss of personal



creativity. Many lower level jobs such as medical or legal assistants could be lost as well as accountancy and admin positions, such as receptionists and ticket collectors. Fewer people will be employed in film production and graphic arts although new jobs will be created.

Answers provided by Chat GPT may be inaccurate or misleading. If the query is important - check the sources!

AI does not understand time. The information given may be outdated.

AI may invent scientific references or legal cases.

It may also exhibit bias (racial, religious or political) depending on the material used for training.

It requires large amounts of energy. An AI request uses ten times the energy of a conventional Google search. The electricity demands of a local AI data centre may affect the local supply.

The material used in training may infringe copyright

Artificial General Intelligence or AGI is the hypothetical intelligence of a machine that possesses the ability to understand or learn ANY intellectual task that a human being can perform. If AI is developed into AGI, without regulation or ethical guidelines, there are likely to be major problems of governance and control.

*Robert Edmondson*

## **HISTORIC HAUNTINGS AT HAMPTON COURT**

**Sarah Slater, 12 November 2025**



Sarah Slater has worked as guide lecturer at Hampton Court Palace since 2008. Her stories about the

lives of royals, together with the costumes Sarah wears, bring history to life. In November, she gave a humorous talk about what it is like to wander the Hampton Court galleries

late at night and gave her own interpretation on some of the ghostly sightings at the Palace that have been reported over the last few hundred years.

In 1999, on separate occasions, two lady visitors fainted in exactly the same spot in the Haunted Gallery. To determine whether ghosts were 'all in the mind', noted psychologist Richard Wiseman asked volunteers to record unusual experiences as they wandered around the Palace. Incidents in places like the first floor gallery and the

Georgian rooms suggested that there might be paranormal happenings but it was more likely to be due to residual electro-magnetic energy in the walls affecting people's perceptions.

In 1871, two male skeletons in shallow graves were unearthed under a cloister in Fountain Court during a routine excavation. An elderly woman living in a nearby grace and favour apartment had complained of constant banging and knocking on her walls, but no one had believed her. Disturbances ceased when the remains were properly interred. While it has been suggested that the anonymous men were victims of Roundhead villainy during the Civil Wars who were hastily buried in unmarked graves, it is more likely that they were workmen who succumbed during Wren's building of the baroque palace in 1689.

There have been numerous sightings of the 'Grey Lady' or Sybil Penn who was servant to four Tudor monarchs, and wet nurse to Edward VI. Having devotedly nursed Elizabeth I through smallpox in 1562, Sybil died of the same disease. A loyal family servant, she was buried in nearby Hampton church. When the church was renovated in 1829, her tomb was disturbed, and wardens reported finding

the effigy sitting bolt upright. Sybil is also linked to mysterious spinning wheel noises that were said to come from behind a wall in a grace and favour apartment. Legend has it that when the wall was removed, an old, much used spinning wheel was discovered. In October 2003, an image of a ghostly figure flinging open a fire door appeared on the Palace CCTV. The door flew open on three consecutive days. A carpenter was called to inspect the antique door but found nothing amiss with the locks. No living soul has ever come forward to admit that this was their prank. Security staff remain baffled!



#### **NEW MAHJONG GROUP**

Every Monday, 2.00-4.00pm; Venue: Beare Green Village Hall

We have a new Mahjong group starting in November. If you are interested but have never played before, don't hold back - you are welcome to come and watch before committing. You will soon pick up the principles of Mahjong. It is an interesting and challenging game when you can play it to the full!

For more information email [johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk) or call 07768 397731.



## DAYS OUT

---

### Romney Marsh and Dungeness, 4 September

---



On Thursday 4 September, D&D u3a members visited a desert. There were no camels, palm trees or sand dunes – instead, we saw miles of shingle beach, with lighthouses and once-abandoned railway carriages converted into chic residences. Sea and sky merged into greyness, with abandoned Dungeness Power Station as a bleak, square presence in the wilderness.

We travelled to Dungeness via Ashford after an early start. As we entered Romney Marsh, trees and hills dropped away into a flat expanse of grazing land, covered with sheep and crossed by ditches and canals. The area is famous for sheep... and smugglers. Our Blue-Badge guide told stories of vicious gangs and several of us had read stories of Dr Syn, clergyman/smuggler who ran a gang called The Marshmen. Written by Russell Thorndike, the stories sound like a good winter read. Our guide also told us how churches were often used to hide contraband in vaults, tombs and even fountains.

It was clearly time to visit a church. We wandered around St Augustine's Church in Brookland, famous for its detached shingle-clad tower. A notice saying '*Last bar opening of the year 13 September*' gave an idea of its use as a much-loved community asset. It's also known for its lead font and part of a fresco showing the death of Thomas a Becket, possibly painted in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We found no contraband but it was a fascinating example of the unique churches of Romney Marsh.

Then to Dungeness and the Britannia Inn for a delicious lunch of fish and chips, served with commendable efficiency. Many of us took the chance to wander on the shingle beach and gaze at the breakers and desolate landscape. Despite the sun, it was chilly in the strong wind. Our guide told us of the poverty and isolation of the area in days gone by, and how locals had to wear backstays, like snowshoes, to get around.

We went slowly around the area by coach, admiring quirky buildings, lighthouses turned into residences, tiny cottages and once-abandoned railway carriages (one recently on the market for £600,000). A train from the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway chuffed past and we stopped at Prospect Cottage, one-time home of artist, filmmaker, gay rights activist and gardener Derek Jarman. His garden sums up the quirkiness of Dungeness. Made almost entirely from beachcombing treasures and the few plants that would grow in this hostile environment, it had a wild beauty of its own.

On arrival in Rye our guide offered to take us for a short walk to the top of the hill for those who felt fit enough. We walked along cobbled streets past some very old and interesting houses including 'Lamb House' built in 1723, the one-time home of Henry James. This amongst others was passed to the National Trust in 1950. We also walked by the famous Mermaid Inn with its cellars dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and which was notorious for smuggling gangs during the 1700s.



The whole day out was a fascinating insight into a unique part of England. Thank you so much Deanne and team who work so hard to make our excursion days to treasure.

*Pat Smith*

## **Colchester Museum and Beth Chatto Gardens 23 October**

---



A visit to Beth Chatto Gardens in late October is probably not the best idea - it was rather wet and cold but 28 members still braved the weather and many admitted it was an enjoyable day out nonetheless.

Our first stop at the gardens meant we could enjoy homemade soup and pastries as well as visit the plant centre. Members of staff could not have been more welcoming and the break in the weather

meant we could enjoy the autumn colours.

Our visit in the afternoon to Colchester Castle which houses the museum was equally rewarding. Some members enjoyed a guided tour of the Roman Vaults, the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, accessible sadly only by very narrow stone steps. On the ground and upper floors, the interactive displays include the famous Sheepen Cauldron, a huge, mysterious vessel from the Bronze Age, and the hastily hidden Fenwick Hoard of silver and gold jewellery from Roman Britain.





**Wednesday 4 February 2026**

### **The Foundling and Postal Museums**

Join us as we travel to the Bloomsbury area of London for a visit to two fascinating collections of social history.



We start by travelling to the **Foundling Museum** which begins with the story of the Foundling Hospital, the UK's first children's charity and public art gallery, supported by leading 18th-century artists such as Hogarth and Handel. It was originally established by Thomas Coram to care for babies at risk of abandonment, and it continues today as the children's charity Coram. Having been divided into two groups we shall have a tour with knowledgeable guides who will take us on a journey through the history of the Foundling Hospital. Through them we shall learn about the Museum's many treasures and the people, places

and stories behind their displays.

We will then travel a short distance by coach to the **Postal Museum** where we will have the opportunity to have a light bite in their café.

After lunch, we have the option to travel on the Mail Rail which was the world's first driverless electric railway for transporting mail, opening in 1927. The Mail Ride lasts approximately 15 minutes and is an immersive underground experience. It may not be suitable for those sensitive to small spaces, motion, loud noises and flashing lights. Visitors must be able to transfer themselves onto the ride, leaving any aides in the storage provided next to the platform where visitors will board and disembark. Due to size restrictions, no loose items, including handbags, are permitted on the ride - items must be left in the cages provided.

Alternatively, there is an accessible Mail Rail show for those who do not wish to ride the train. In the main museum section, highlights include the history of design within the Postal Service including posters, uniforms, letterboxes and maps, and iconic design such as the Penny Black. Additionally, there are several other collections for you to discover. We anticipate leaving London at 4.30pm.

**Cost per person: £65 to include coach and driver's gratuity**

Information on all days out, including prices and pick-up points will be advertised on the D&D website and in the monthly newsletter. You may also email [deannerhodes@btinternet.com](mailto:deannerhodes@btinternet.com)





## **AUTUMN RESIDENTIAL - A poem by lanthe Cox**

---

The Sun had got his hat on and was coming out to play  
Heralding the start of the Dorking u3a Autumn holiday.  
Traversing the Surrey roads to reach the M40, via the M25  
Our first comfort stop gave us a chance to revive.  
Later, a long lunch break at Packwood House gave us an insight  
To a loving restoration to house and garden, which was a delight.  
Onwards and upwards to Forest Hills, Frodsham for our hotel  
A nice welcome, comfort and dinner served us all well.

Our Blue Badge Guide joined for our tour the next day.  
A friendly introduction and we were well on our way.  
Our first visit was to the City of Chester for a guided walk -  
City walls, The Cathedral, The Rows, Bronze elephant all made a good talk.  
After lunch we gently cruised on the River Dee and rested our feet,  
Going south of the city past the Eaton Estate and enjoying the treat.  
Finally, back to the hotel for pre drinks and our dinner  
We all agreed our excursions had proved a winner.

Next day we went into Wales to visit the estate of Erddig,  
An historic house and gardens which was extremely big.  
Previous owners had pictures of their servants on display  
Shown in the basement hall an unusual and charming array.  
The afternoon saw us on the World Heritage Pontcysyllte Aqueduct up high  
126 feet above the Dee Valley we slowly crossed the stream in the sky.  
Our narrowboat cruising the canal was called Little Star  
Bravely transporting us to Llangollen which was quite far.

RHS Bridgewater Gardens was our next port of call  
A beautifully laid out area and friendly to all.  
Mobility scooters were available to help people get round,  
Our four racers set off at speed and covered much ground.  
Next stop was at Dunham Massey in the borough of Trafford -  
A moated house so full of treasures, such an impressive hoard.  
Back to the Hotel and farewell to our lovely Blue Badge guide  
Her knowledge and friendly personality ensured we enjoyed the ride.

All too quickly our holiday in Cheshire had come to an end.  
We enjoyed it all and the weather had been a good friend.  
We were off home via Stratford-on-Avon, a brief visit with time to feed  
Plus, a behind the scenes tour of Shakespeare's Theatre, a treat indeed.  
Finally, back, on to the motorways for the journey to Surrey  
Drop-offs at various points in Dorking were done without hurry.  
Thanks to our nice coach driver for driving and helping us to roam  
We had covered about 800 miles and it was time to go home.

## AUTUMN RESIDENTIAL - PHOTO STORY

1. Touring RHS Bridgewater Gardens in style; 2. Chester Cathedral's flamboyant gothic arches; 3. Erdig, history frozen in time; 4. Stratford-upon-Avon - behind the scenes in the costume gallery; 5. Symbols of wisdom (Photo 1 by Ianthe Cox; photos 2-5 by Paul Smith)



## AUTUMN RESIDENTIAL - CHESHIRE, THE WELSH BORDERS AND RHS BRIDGEWATER (6-10 OCTOBER)



Residentials are all about connections – connections with people sharing experiences over a glass of prosecco, and with heritage and culture. As one who dreads coach travel, I can attest to our driver Steve's skill in negotiating the narrow Cheshire and Welsh country roads and all with superlative good humour.

Despite severe weather warnings, we could not have wanted for more clement weather enable us to enjoy leisurely garden strolls and two boat excursions.

The National Trust properties we visited could not have been more different. The restored 15<sup>th</sup> century Packwood House offered an insight into the wealthy way of life of Graham Baron Ash between the two wars and is a testament to his passion for exquisite furnishings and fine English furniture. Of particular interest were the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch stained-glass panels that were embedded into the Georgian windows.

Conversely Erdig seemed frozen in time as its last owner, Philip Yorke III, insisted that the NT keep the property as they found it. The previous owner, his reclusive brother Simon, was a consummate hoarder and the house was filled from top to bottom with all manner of artefacts, including a mother-of-pearl and glass model of the Ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra created in 1773. A 19<sup>th</sup> century portable shower complete with hot-water tank which had to be pumped to ensure a steady flow was a highlight of the collection. Nestled in beautiful parkland, Dunham Massey contains a collection of fine 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century clothing and accessories, including a pair of silk velvet mittens embroidered with gold and silver thread. Of particular interest is the hoard of Huguenot silver and a Grinling Gibbons screen.

Our visits were made all the more enjoyable by our very personable Blue Badge Guide Liz whose entertaining commentary and historical explanations about Cheshire and its many quirky traditions enabled us to appreciate what an important contribution coal and the ports made to the economy and social fabric of the area. Cheshire takes its name from an early name for Chester and is mainly a rural county, with agriculture mostly based on the dairy trade, and cattle. During the Industrial Revolution Cheshire saw population changes as farm workers moved to the factories in Manchester and Lancashire. The Cheshire chemical industry was founded in Roman times, with the mining of salt. Over the centuries, the salt mines have eroded the earth and caused subsidence and this was a particular problem mentioned during our visit of Erdig which needed shoring up.



The distinctive local red sandstone has been used for many monumental and ecclesiastical buildings throughout the county, including Chester's Gothic cathedral which boasts fine medieval carvings and stained glass windows. Chester was founded by the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and named Deva, after the River Dee and was a major military stronghold and a trading hub, with a large harbour and an impressive fortress. As we strolled around the heart of Chester, we were able to admire the unique Rows galleries, double-decker medieval buildings lining the main streets. The stunning Eastgate Clock has the distinction of being one of the most photographed clocks in England, second only to the mighty Big Ben. Dating back to May 1899, the Eastgate Clock was opened to honour Queen Victoria's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and is a beloved landmark of Chester.

All roads lead to the river Mersey and in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries many canals and railways were built. During our visit, we were able to enjoy a trip along the Llangollen Canal and marvel at the panoramic vistas of the surrounding Welsh countryside. Designed by Thomas Telford and William Jessop and completed in 1805, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is the longest aqueduct in Britain and the highest in the world. It was built to carry the Llangollen Canal over the River Dee, in the Vale of Llangollen in northeast Wales, providing a vital link for transporting goods and people during the Industrial Revolution, helping to boost the local economy and opening up the region to new markets.

One of the highlights of our trip was the visit to RHS Bridgewater, a 156-acre garden bringing back to life the historic grounds at Worsley New Hall, built for the Earl of Ellesmere in the 1840s. It only opened its doors in May 2021 and includes one of the largest walled gardens in the UK. A unique feature is its focus on sustainability and conservation. Designed to be a haven for wildlife, the garden features bird hides, bat boxes, and bug hotels integrated into the landscape. There are also several sustainable technologies in use, including rainwater harvesting, solar panels, and biomass boilers.

Our final day was just as eventful with a visit to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon with a behind-the-scenes tour and explanation of how props such as blood and prosthetics are made and how costumes are maintained for the delight of theatre goers. Long after the trip is over, memories will remain of extraordinary visits and good company.

Beryl

(Photos by Paul Smith)





## Programme and menu



Celebrate Burns Night in Style – Sunday 25 January 2026

at The Reverie, Buckland Park Lake

6.15–6.55pm: Arrival – Burns Night cocktail

7pm: Chairman's welcome

The Selkirk Grace

**First course: Cullen Skink or Veggie option**

Parade and address of the Haggis and wee dram

**Main course: Haggis, neeps & tatties in a Whisky sauce (veggie option or chicken available BUT please specify when booking)**

Immortal Memory

Burns poems

Tops & Tails

**Dessert – Topsy laird or cheese**

Address to the lassies and reply to the laddies

Raffle

**Coffee/Tea and shortbread**

Singing of Auld Lang Syne

11.00pm: Carriages

Cost: **£50 per head** for the evening (includes welcome drink and service charge); wine not included.

Please book online or send cheques and booking to Ianthe Cox on 01737

843105 / email [ianthecox72@gmail.com](mailto:ianthecox72@gmail.com).

Event limited to 48 people.



## FORTHCOMING EVENT



### **Picnic in the Park** **Wednesday 17 June 2026**

**12.30h – 16.30h**

**BUCKLAND PARK LAKE**

*Park Lake Drive, Buckland,  
Betchworth, RH3 7FE*

Bring a picnic and enjoy the  
music and fun.

For further information

[www.dorkingu3a.org.uk](http://www.dorkingu3a.org.uk) or

contact Ianthe Cox on 01737 843105 or email

[Ianthecox72@gmail.com](mailto:Ianthecox72@gmail.com)

### **THE COMMITTEE**

**IANTHE COX - Chairman** 01737 843105; [dorkingu3achairman@gmail.com](mailto:dorkingu3achairman@gmail.com)

**JOHN SINCLAIR - Vice Chair / Membership Secretary**

020 3949 0707; [johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnsinclair@dorkingu3a.org.uk)

**BERYL SINCLAIR - Secretary / Groups Coordinator** [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

**CHRIS HALL - Treasurer** 07899 870243; [chrandmich@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chrandmich@yahoo.co.uk)

**ROSEMARY HARBRIDGE - Minutes Secretary / Sub-editor** [rharbridge@sky.com](mailto:rharbridge@sky.com)

**Webmaster - Bob Crooks (interim)** [robertcrooks@rocketmail.com](mailto:robertcrooks@rocketmail.com)

**DEANNE RHODES - Days Out** 01737 844768; 07770 273407;

[deannerhodes@btinternet.com](mailto:deannerhodes@btinternet.com)

**DENISE HOOKER - Monthly Meetings Coordinator** [dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com](mailto:dorkingu3ameetings@gmail.com)

**JOHN THOM - Communications Coordinator** 07768 397731; [johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk](mailto:johnthom@dorkingu3a.org.uk)

**KARL BARCLAY - New Members Coordinator** 07836 366235;

[karlbarclay@virginmedia.com](mailto:karlbarclay@virginmedia.com)

**TONY PARKER - Welfare Officer** [topamail@mail.com](mailto:topamail@mail.com)

### **RESIDENTIALS**

**IANTHE COX** 01737 843105; [Ianthecox72@gmail.com](mailto:Ianthecox72@gmail.com)

### **EDITORIAL TEAM**

**BERYL SINCLAIR - Editor** [dandu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:dandu3asecretary@gmail.com)

**ROSEMARY HARBRIDGE - Sub-editor** [rharbridge@sky.com](mailto:rharbridge@sky.com)

**NICK EDWARDS - Distribution** 07761 757790; [needwards@hotmail.com](mailto:needwards@hotmail.com)

**PRINTER - Eyes Wide Digital** 01306 875150



## SURREY STUDY DAYS



**SURREY STUDY DAYS** are held at the Menuhin Hall in Stoke d'Abernon. Full details and application forms can be accessed on the D&D u3a website or on the Surrey u3a Network website.

To book you should send a completed booking slip, with a cheque for £12 for members (£15 for non-members or registration on the day) or £7 for online attendance via Zoom, payable to Surrey u3a Network, or bank transfer to HSBC Account No.

11519018 Sort Code 40-27-07, to Denise Dobbs –

u3a, 5 Aldridge Rise, New Malden KT3 5RJ, Phone **07964 798791** or send an email to [surreyu3astudyday@outlook.com](mailto:surreyu3astudyday@outlook.com).

The following study days are planned for 2026:

Friday 20 February - **The Story, Development & Operation of the National Garden Scheme**, presented by Clare Bevan, Clare Waters, Georgina Waters, Sarah Wilson, Vicky Flynn & Richard Claxton

Friday 20 March - **Global Warming & Your Grandchildren's World**, presented by Dr Colin Summerhayes & Professor Jan Zalasiewicz

Friday 17 April - **Current Threats to UK, NATO & European Security**, presented by Major Gordon Corrigan, Military Historian

Friday 15 May - **Truth, Lies, Risk & Reason**, presented by Philip Harris, Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of Sussex

Friday 19 June - **The History of Theatre**, presented by Giles Ramsay

Friday 18 September - **The Bayeux Tapestry**, presented by Imogen Corrigan

Friday 16 October - **World Affairs in Middle East & Africa: Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa & Nigeria**, presented by Steve Bird

Friday 20 November - **The Music and Satire of Gilbert and Sullivan**, presented by Bernard Lockett, Gilbert & Sullivan Society

*For some study days, students of the Menuhin School will perform musical interludes during the lunchtime break.*

*For help to print out forms or if you would like transport to attend the study days, please contact Beryl Sinclair on 020 3949 0707.*

### WORDS, WORDS, WORDS Weather Crossword solutions

**Down:** 1.Hail; 2.Gales; 4.Downpour; 5.Tempest; 9.Thunder; 11. Wed.

**Across:** 3.Blizzard; 6.Shower; 7.Storm; 8.Steel; 10.Gust; 12.Breeze.

## Calendar of Events: January – December 2026

<b>2026 January</b>	14	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	The Ghost Writer, speaker <b>Neil Hanson</b>
	25	<i>Event</i>	Burns Night (Buckland Park Lake)
<b>February</b>	4	<i>Day Out</i>	The Foundling and Postal Museums, London
	11	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Fraud: Think you're immune? You might not be!, speaker <b>Roger Tristram</b>
	12	<i>Event</i>	New members' meeting - St Joseph's at 10.30am
	20	<i>Study Day</i>	The National Gardens Scheme, presented by <b>Clare Bevan, Clare Waters, Georgina Waters, Sarah Wilson, Vicky Flynn &amp; Richard Claxton</b>
<b>March</b>	11	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	The Social Life of Tea & Coffee, speaker <b>Stephen Chater</b>
	20	<i>Study Day</i>	Global Warming & Your Grandchildren's World, speakers <b>Dr Colin Summerhayes &amp; Professor Jan Zalasiewicz</b>
<b>April</b>	8	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Europe in Space, speaker <b>Geoff Saunders</b>
	17	<i>Study Day</i>	Current Threats to UK, NATO & European Security, presented by <b>Major Gordon Corrigan, Military Historian</b>
<b>May</b>	13	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	The Wicked Wit of Winston Churchill, speaker <b>Stewart Linford</b>
	15	<i>Study Day</i>	Truth, Lies, Risk & Reason, speaker <b>Professor Philip Harris, Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of Sussex</b>
<b>June</b>	10	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Death by Shakespeare, speaker <b>Kathryn Harkup</b>
	17	<i>Event</i>	Summer Picnic, Buckland Park Lake
	19	<i>Study Day</i>	The History of Theatre, presented by <b>Giles Ramsay</b>
<b>July</b>	8	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Not Just Safaris, speaker <b>Sue Flipping</b>
<b>September</b>	9	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	The Golden Age of Travel 1836-1936, speaker <b>Ian Porter</b>
	18	<i>Study Day</i>	The Bayeux Tapestry, presented by <b>Imogen Corrigan</b>
<b>October</b>	14	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	1066: What actually happened and why?, speaker <b>Steve Bird</b>
	16	<i>Study Day</i>	World Affairs in Middle East & Africa: Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa & Nigeria, presented by <b>Steve Bird</b>
<b>November</b>	11	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Lest we Forget: Remembrance & Poetry of the Great War, speaker <b>Jonathan Jones</b>
	20	<i>Study Day</i>	The Music and Satire of Gilbert and Sullivan, presented by <b>Bernard Lockett, Gilbert &amp; Sullivan Society</b>
<b>December</b>	9	<i>Monthly Meeting</i>	Walking with Polar Bears, speaker <b>Gillian Lloyd</b>

## Cheshire & Welsh Borders Residential



1. DUNHAM MASSEY HALL; 2. ALL ABOARD THE THOMAS TELFORD CANAL BOAT;  
3. GROUP PHOTO AT ERDDIG; 4. RHS BRIDGEWATER GARDEN (Photos copyright by Paul Smith)



## *Art for Pleasure*



1. BROCKHAM VVILLAGE (*Sue Mikhalovicz*); 2. BLUE HUES (*Jenny Baker*);  
3. FLORALIS (*Renate MacLennan*)