



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
REGISTERED CHARITY NO 296975

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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026 - GUILDFORD AREA u3a



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Gu3a members,

It seems hard to believe that a year has already passed since my first Chairman's Letter... time flies; all downhill with no brakes, as they say. Still, there's hope! If you want a longer life (or rather, perception thereof, which is what counts) then fill it with new experiences... which is what u3a is all about. I see from a report by US academics that "reading, writing and learning a language or two" can lower one's risk of dementia by 40%. You're definitely in the right organisation!

So, what's going on this spring/summer? Well, if you've read previous versions of my letters, you'll know that I'm a big fan of the Surrey Network Study Days at Menuhin Hall. Just have a look at the extraordinary breadth of topics covered there. At this point, I make no apologies for some utterly shameless self promotion... I'll be running the one in May, which I've entitled "Truth, Lies, Risk and Reason". I like my talks to be fun and interactive – no sleeping at the back! Conspiracy theories, UFOs, the Enigma code, Cold-War submarines and nuclear bombs sit alongside the tragic cases of the Lucy Letby, Sally Clark and O.J. Simpson trials; we'll learn why universal cancer screening may not be such a great idea, and what your doctor may not understand about your chances of having a disease for which you've tested positive. Plus, the dark side of financial investment management; how to choose from a restaurant menu; Darwin's and Franklin's advice on marriage; perplexing probability puzzles; and the brilliantly simple theory that, after being ignored for two centuries, is now ubiquitous throughout our data-driven lives. How can you resist? Still wavering? Well, for a taster of the style (if not the content), do come along to the April 27th Monthly Meeting at

Queen Elizabeth Park centre, where we'll be taking a sort of fun Brian-Coxy style journey through space and time... On the other hand... if you prefer taking your learning experiences from the comfort of your armchair, perhaps you might like to sample the online talks, workshops and courses offered to u3a members nationally by our umbrella organisation the Third Age Trust: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>.

And then there is the Summer School. This year it will run from Monday 7th to Thursday 10th September, at the University of Chichester. The website, with details of course listings, is at <https://southeastu3aforum.u3asite.uk/2026-2/>. These courses always have excellent reviews.

Guildford u3a is one of the larger u3a groups in the country, with a membership in excess of 1600. As I'm sure you know, this enables us to offer over 100 classes and activities to our members. There can be no doubt, though, that the best way to learn anything is to teach it. I'd therefore urge you not to be shy – step up, and have a go at being a Group Leader! Share your knowledge and experience... We are entirely a volunteer-led organisation, with the expectation that when people join they will bring something to the party and give back a little time and effort to help make the system run smoothly for all. We'd be very grateful to hear from those of you who could spare a little time to fill some of the gaps that we have at present; even a small contribution of time can make a big difference. If you're enjoying the benefits of u3a membership, now's your chance to give something back, to help others benefit in the same way.

I look forward to hearing from you - you can get in touch at chair@guildfordu3a.org.uk. Hopefully I'll see lots of you at the various events, activities, and monthly meetings. And don't forget to book that study day!

Best regards,

Philip Harris, Gu3a Co-Chair

u3a MATTERS

u3a Matters is the national magazine of the Third Age Trust and you are entitled to receive it 5 times a year as part of your subscription, should you wish to do so. When you first joined Guildford u3a you were asked whether you wished to receive the magazine and some of you said 'yes' and some did not. Are you happy with the decision that you originally made, possibly years ago?

The cost of the magazine is included in your subscription but the ever-rising cost of postage is not – that must be met by Gu3a, so we do not wish to pay postage on copies that go straight into the recycling! If you no longer wish to receive u3a Matters or if you have not seen the magazine and would like to receive a taster copy please contact me, **including your membership number**.

Sue Watson membership@guildfordu3a.org.uk or leave a message 01483 323631.

SURREY NETWORK STUDY DAYS

17th April 2026 9:30 am - 4:00 pm Study Day

Surrey Network Study Day: "England's Glory" - Development of British Battleships, 1860-1945

Presented by Andrew Choong, Curator at The National Maritime Museum
Places will be available in the hall or for on-line viewing. Bookings at April 2026 Study Day

Venue: [The Menuhin Hall](#)

15th May 2026 9:30 am - 4:00 pm Study Day

Surrey Network Study Day: Truth, Lies, Risk & Reason

Presented by Philip Harris, Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of Sussex. Bookings at May 2026 Study Day A lunchtime recital by Menuhin School Pupils is planned

Venue: [The Menuhin Hall](#)

19th June 2026 9:30 am - 4:00 pm Study Day

Surrey Network Study Day: 300 Years of English Theatre: From the Rise of the Elizabethan Playhouses to the Fall of Oscar Wilde

Presented by Giles Ramsay - Places will be available in the hall or for on-line viewing. Bookings at June 2026 Study Day A lunchtime recital by Menuhin School Pupils is planned

Venue: [The Menuhin Hall](#)

MONTHLY MEETINGS – Venue QE Park Centre

27th April 2026 2:00 pm

Monthly Meeting

Quarks to Cosmos: scales of the universe - Philip Harris is a physicist. We will take a tour through space and time, journeying from the everyday to the very smallest particles [...]

Venue: [QE Park Centre](#)

VIRTUAL COFFEE MORNINGS

These are run on Zoom, usually twice a month, the days varying in order to avoid always clashing with the same groups. Dates are listed on the Gu3a website, under Events, and the Zoom link will be sent to anyone who requests it via v-coffee@guildfordu3a.org.uk, plus regular attendees. If you can't get out and about then this provides an opportunity to meet up virtually with other u3a members for an hour of chat.

Moir MacQuaide

CARE FOR GUILDFORD - Volunteers Urgently Needed!

Do you have a car? Could you spare an odd hour, weekly or monthly, to drive local residents – mostly the elderly - to essential medical appointments? Volunteering with Care for Guildford is completely flexible. There is no regular commitment required, so you can help as and when it suits your schedule. Care for Guildford is also looking for telephone volunteers who can volunteer for one day a month from home, helping to take requests for lifts from clients and match them with available drivers.

Now in its 50th year, Care for Guildford is a volunteer-run local charity supporting people in our community who often have no one else to turn to, cannot manage public transport, or cannot afford taxis. Demand for this service is currently higher than ever, and Care for Guildford urgently needs more volunteers. If you live in GU1–GU4 and would like to help, please email administrator@careforguildford.org.uk or visit www.careforguildford.org.uk to find out more.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CARDMAKING & PAPERCRAFT GROUP



New members are welcome to join our small group of cardmaking enthusiasts. We meet on the 4th Thursday afternoon each month, at Burpham Village Hall. There is some demonstration of techniques and a lot of playing! Some paper/card/embellishments are supplied (and a small contribution to costs is required), but members can bring along their own supplies if they wish. We explore different techniques each month, and focus on seasonal cards for Christmas and Easter. Some of our members are

experienced cardmakers, but some are new to the hobby, but we all help each other.

Moira MacQuaide

ENSEMBLE



A word from our group leader Sheila

I have been a member of the Ensemble Group for over 20 years, firstly as a player and now as conductor. I do really enjoy sorting out the pieces we play, which are from all musical genres. Because we have a somewhat odd combination of instruments taking part, players don't

necessarily always play the same part for a particular piece, which is good experience and variety. We are a very friendly, good-humoured group, who appreciate that playing music together is good brain exercise and an enjoyable experience.

Recent gigs

Guildford u3a instrumental ensemble, to give us our full name, consists of a friendly group of around 14 people playing a variety of instruments- wind, string and brass. In the past year we have performed two concerts for the residents of Worplesdon view care home. The programme for the concerts has an eclectic mix drawing from the classical, folk and popular music repertoires, ensuring something for all musical tastes of the 60 plus residents. The care home makes us very welcome treat us to a mouthwatering array of cakes and sandwiches, with the residents and staff making very encouraging comments. We were invited back for another concert in February 2026, so we must be appreciated!

Practising in our weekly sessions gives us a focus and real purpose for sharing the music we make and preparing for a concert and has considerably expanded our repertoire. Sheila Kuban our dedicated musical director and conductor keeps us working hard to ensure that we meet her high standards and produce an enjoyable experience for audience and players. **Graham (flute)**

Comments from newer members

I really enjoy playing in the ensemble group. Everyone is friendly and welcoming, even though I don't manage to attend every time. At first, I was so rusty I hardly played anything at all but now I join in and as the music is written in so many parts for all the instruments, I can always find a part I can play. Recently we have played to small audiences in informal settings, which is enjoyable and rewarding. **Jan (clarinet)**

I'm so pleased I discovered the U3A ensemble. My flute had been hiding at the back of a wardrobe gathering dust for many years and joining the group gave me the impetus needed to start playing again. The group is a relaxed, supportive environment in which to make music and have fun. **Amanda (Flute)**

I joined the Ensemble in September 2023 to play violin, which I hadn't played for years. The group is very friendly, encouraging and was very tolerant of my poor playing, which has since improved with the practice of playing with the group – much more fun than playing on one's own. Sometimes we perform small concerts in care homes and elsewhere. **Peter (violin)**

U3a Ensemble is a great opportunity to play music with like-minded musicians. Our group leader works hard to find a wide range of music for us to play, which is a lot of fun. I was new to playing saxophone with others at the point of joining almost 2 years ago and the relaxed and friendly approach has made the whole experience a real pleasure. If you're looking to play music with others, practise your own musical skills and simply enjoy a relaxed and practical musical experience, then this is the group for you! **Veronica (Alto Sax)**

EXPLORING LOCAL HISTORY 2

We meet on the last Friday afternoon each month, except December, in Burpham Village Hall, and our members do some research then give talks about what they've learned. We usually have one external speaker each year, and members contribute to the cost of the speaker fee. This year's talks so far have included George Mallory, Crime in Surrey in the 19th Century, The Castle and Guildford Park, and we have three more to come. We run the meetings as hybrid, so that some members can join us from home, via Zoom, and we also record the presentations and circulate these to members after the meetings. We always welcome new members, especially those who are willing to give talks.

Moir MacQuaide

ITALIAN INTERMEDIATE PLUS



This friendly group continues to thrive and this year we have welcomed four new members, bringing the total to fifteen. We have been studying a 'giallo', an Italian detective fiction book, following the exploits of Commissario Bonardi as he solves a dastardly murder.

In addition, during our 'conversazione libera' at the start of each session, where we divide into pairs or small groups for discussion, we have kept ourselves informed about cultural topics and events in Italy. These have included ideas on Italian cooking, the 'Vino Novello' in November, World Children's Day, the Feast of Sant'Agata a

Catania and the Battaglia delle Arance ('the Battle of the Oranges') at the Carnevale di Ivrea. We have also held some interesting and lively discussions about our visits to Italy, how we celebrate Christmas and New Year, our theatre preferences, reflections on life today and we recently read and discussed some readers' Italian magazine questions to see issues affecting ordinary Italians. All of these topics have added to our enjoyment of the language and knowledge of the country and have also improved our confidence in speaking and listening.

After our last session before Christmas we retired to the pub to partake of coffee of choice (espresso, cappuccino, or café latte) with some traditional Italian biscuits and "Baci" chocolates.

New members with a reasonable knowledge of Italian are always welcome. We are working at level B2 and towards C1 of the Common European Language Framework.

Katherine Lees-Cobb, Group Leader

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY GROUP



The Social Anthropology group meets at the Yvonne Arnaud café at 10.15 on the 15th and 30th of each month. The venue is closed Sunday and Monday so we meet the previous Saturday where applicable.

Thirteen of us gathered mid-November for one of our twice monthly regular social gatherings. This one was special. We celebrated the 96th birthday of our oldest member Taka who has been a stalwart attendee since its inception some around 8 years ago. Sadly, since having a stroke eighteen months ago Taka has not been able to attend my class but she welcomes the twice monthly social contact. After arriving in Guildford, Taka gained much support and lasting friendships through U3A. This proves that, in addition to a learning experience, U3A offers a sense of 'belonging' through ongoing social contact.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY VISIT

I am sure it could be written in tablets of stone that to repeat an outing 'due to Popular Demand' could come to no good end! Last June, we had to amend our intended itinerary in favour of the Military Cemetery due to the excessive heat of 31C. There was much enthusiasm for a re take in Spring, but when I eventually finalised a date, it was apparent I would never fill the coach. Understandably, dates clashed and interest waned. But it would never have worked I because it soon became obvious that many people lived nearer to Brookwood than to the pickup point in Burpham realized it was not the cheapest option. So, car share was approved and 18 of us arrived at the Lodge on the most beautiful Spring afternoon.

When it opened in 1854, Brookwood was thought to be the largest cemetery in the world. For the benefit of Quiz buffs, Wadi-al Salam (Vale of Peace) in Iraq is the largest, covering 1,845 acres. It contains over 6 million bodies and has been there for 1,400 years. Brookwood covers about 450 acres and is still a working cemetery. There is much detail on the website and including about the Monthly Guided Tours.

There is such a peace and calm about this vast area, with it often scattered graves amongst the giant redwood trees. We followed an easy route sometimes picking our way over the tree roots and long obliterated graves. Our knowledgeable volunteers picked out various graves with gems of anecdotal interest. Of note, was the monument of Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (see report on June 2025 Woking trip) who commissioned the Woking Mosque and set up the Oriental Institute. A Jewish Hungarian who later became a Muslim, he was denied burial in the Muslim area by his sons.



Back to the Center where we all sat round a large table in the beautiful late afternoon sunshine for our welcome cup of tea and homemade nibbles. A very enjoyable half day Outing. The first ever!

The afternoon visit was such a success that I am considering another one - to Haslemere - with its wonderful 100 year old museum, with clear, brief posters designed for children but most welcome for the other end of the age range.

Sheila Darzi

TRIPS AND OUTINGS REPORT

We've had a busy few months since our last report. Back in October 2025, which seems a long time ago now, members enjoyed a fascinating visit to the historic **Chatham Dockyard**, one of Britain's most important naval shipbuilding and repair yards for over 400 years. Touring through the vast site gave a vivid sense of the scale and complexity of the Royal Navy's operations in earlier centuries. The group explored



several of the preserved buildings, including the impressive Victorian Ropery, where rope for naval ships was manufactured along a remarkable 346-metre ropewalk. We had a demonstration of rope-making using U3A members as volunteers which showed how vital this craft was in the age of sail, when miles of rope were required for rigging and anchors. The visit also included time aboard some of the historic warships, HMS Gannet (1878), HMS Cavalier (1944), and HMS Ocelot (1962), preserved at the dockyard, offering a glimpse into life at sea. Some bravely volunteered to tour HM Submarine Ocelot and it was amazing to see how cramped it was and what hardship the men must have endured with water rationed for cleaning one's teeth and cooking. It was also somewhat challenging scrambling through the 'porthole' doors or hatchways, once one was on the tour and a relief to escape through the final hatch.



Fans of 'Call the Midwife' enjoyed a tour of the dockyard being shown where different scenes were filmed, culminating in a colourful display of the costumes used. In addition, there was a huge display of lifeboats covering over a hundred years, providing a long-term display of the RNLI's history.



This photo shows the magnificent display of 11,000 handmade poppies, representing the 11,000 men lost aboard Royal Navy destroyers during World War II and commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE/VJ Day. Exhibits around the yard illustrated the development of naval technology, shipbuilding techniques, and the lives of the thousands of workers who once kept the dockyard running.

In November we visited the **Tower of London** which last year also marked 80 years since the end of the Second World War as they commemorated this with their special exhibition of **The Tower Remembers**. The theme was 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' and we could see this throughout the site, with displays of the red ceramic poppies returned from the 2014 installation and on loan from the Imperial War Museum. The displays were very striking and moving, designed to resemble a wound at the heart of the White Tower with ripples flowing outwards into other areas. While there, we were also able to see the many other exhibits covering almost 1000 years of history, including the Line of Kings armoury and horses, the execution site, and the magnificent Crown Jewels only recently adapted for King Charles' coronation (and luckily we weren't there for the 'apple crumble and custard' event three weeks later). We could also watch a Changing of the Guard Ceremony, which takes place every two hours, where the officer in charge goes to find out his orders for the day (the same as every other day, we presumed, to guard the Crown Jewels) but importantly the new password - the man next to me whispered to his wife 'It'll be password123'. Most of us joined a Yeoman Warder tour which included entertaining but gruesome stories



from the Tower's long history, and some were fortunate to leave the noise of the tourists and nip into the quiet Chapel while workmen were taking a break to see the final resting place of three (yes, three) executed Tudor queens.



We celebrated the Christmas season with two events in December. One was a return to the Royal Albert Hall for the **John Rutter concert**. This put us all in the festive spirit with a joyful and uplifting celebration of music and song. The varied programme included traditional Christmas songs, some film music, popular tunes such as *Sleighride*, and carols which we sang along to, and a rousing fanfare finale of *Hark the*

Herald! when we were joined by trumpeters of the Coldstream Guards– and of course his quiz.

Our second Christmas event was a visit to **Brick Lane Music Hall** for their **Magic of Christmas Show** which included a three-course traditional lunch. This was nothing but Christmas sparkle and glitter in their unique venue, a disused chapel, decorated to the hilt – we even enjoyed reading the comments painted on the toilet walls, and there was much comparison between the niceties on the Ladies' walls (such as 'You Look Lovely Today' above a mirror) compared with the slightly risqué comments on the Gents' (of which, I will give no examples!). The performances included carols, songs and show tunes interspersed with jokes and sketches, all in the music hall style.



As February is often quite grey and dismal, we decided we needed something jolly to cheer us all up, so we went to London to see **Mamma Mia!** the stage musical. And cheer us up it did! After a couple of hours in Covent Garden for lunch and enjoying the atmosphere there, we were then transported to the warmth of a Greek island for this now well-known story and of course incredible Abba songs. I thought it was simply joyful, and just what was needed.



Our next outing was to two quite different places – with the theme of the motoring industry in the area. At our morning visit to **Oxford Bus Museum** we were able to see their many interesting exhibits of preserved and restored vintage vehicles, mainly from the local area and from a viewing platform we could see a variety of restorations in progress – very intricate and painstaking work which takes volunteers hours and hours to complete. Housed here was also the

Morris Motor Museum with their exhibits including a 1977 BMC Mini (relevant to the afternoon visit), and we noticed the restored and beautifully polished Ford Anglia Police Panda Car as in Heartbeat. There were many comments of ‘we used to have one of those’

For our afternoon visit we travelled right into the present day for a guided tour of the **BMW Mini Plant**. We were split into three groups, relieved of all our personal belongings especially phones so we couldn’t take photos, and given hi-viz jackets to wear. A mini bus took us to the factory entrance as we weren’t allowed to walk around the site. After a short film which explained some of the assembly process, we were taken in to the first part of the tour – this was a huge area where more than 1200 robots lifted huge metal body parts, accurately placed them on another part, spot welded them (and sparks did fly), and then passed them on to the next piece of the process in the assembly chain to eventually create the car frame. Our guide explained what each robot was doing, and how they receive their instructions (from a human). Parts are delivered automatically to different areas of the factory along specific routes so you have to watch out for little trolleys travelling along a line in the floor – they will stop if they sense you in their path but they won’t (can’t) move out of your way. They even have a small robotic SPOT dog which helps with monitoring and overseeing the maintenance of the plant and equipment – they have named him FIDO (Factory Inspection Dog (Oxford)). The next stage was the paint room which we weren’t allowed in to – can you imagine the dust we’d spread, but were shown a film about how they achieve the different colours and paint effects. So then to the final assembly hall where all the Minis are finished off, each to an individual specification – this means adding everything else to the frame with all the correct parts delivered in the correct order to the correct place and waiting to be fitted – engines, doors, seats, carpets, sun roof or not, music and speakers, steering wheel, wheels, etc. etc. Until finally they check the lights and brakes are



working ok, and emissions pass the test – and the new car is then finally driven off the end of the assembly line – with a celebratory ‘peep’ on the horn to make sure that is working ok too. Over 1000 new Minis per day are then lined up ready to be delivered to their new owners. Henry Ford could never have imagined that what he’d started would be like this.

We have a number of outings already booked and more being planned. Please do check the Outings page of the Groups section on the website. Once an Outing has been circulated and is open for booking, it is listed under the Events section of the website, so if you think you have missed something, please check there. Details of every Outing are circulated to all members via the weekly Bulletin. On the Outings pages there are also some pictures of previous trips which you might find interesting.

Visits already circulated are Waddesdon Manor, Living Crafts at Hatfield Park, *My Fair Lady* at Chichester Theatre and a Festive Lunch on a cruise ship – so we hope to see many of you then.

Ann Elms and Jackie Ring

THE DEADLINE for the **SUMMER 2026** newsletter is **14 JUNE** please submit your contributions as a **Word.doc or compatible** in Arial font, single spacing. **Photos as individual jpg files** please. Anything sent after the deadline will be held over until the next newsletter