Newsletter

July/August 2026 No 34

Letter from the Chair

Hi everyone,

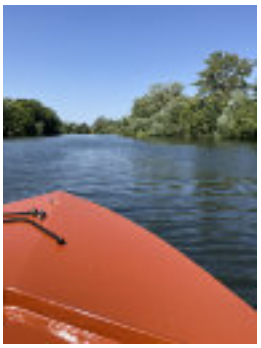
What a heatwave, although by the time you read this it may have subsided. We are advised that this could well be an ongoing issue so keep well hydrated and out of the full sun if possible. Sheila Frost issued guidance a few weeks ago and it is well worth reading her advice. It is on the website for future reference as well, presently under latest news.

I went on the Windsor boat trip which was an amazing experience Hazel and Eric Piper organised this and everyone I spoke to enjoyed it including the luxury cream tea. I don't want to say anymore as I am sure there will be a full report on this elsewhere. Here are a couple of photos: No, our boat was not the one I have here!

I am told firm bookings for next year's holiday are going well but again Deb will have something on this elsewhere (see page 7 for full details).

We have even more events coming up which you can see on our website.

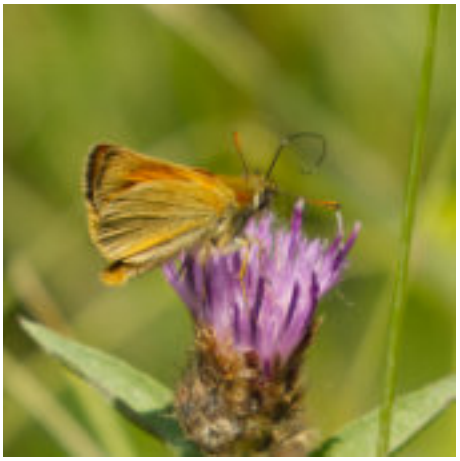
I am investigating a new sound system and making some progress on systems designed for speech so it will be better suited to the URC Hall. Tim Moulsley has given me some very good input. We are looking at column speakers for their clarity. If anyone else has some ideas, please let me know.



The committee is working on policies for health and safety and equality, diversity and inclusion. Thank you Sue Seymour for initiating this. We hope to have them published on the website soon. Thank you to Sue and all our group leaders for setting up new groups as well as maintaining existing groups as our membership grows.

Well, that is all from me. I hope you enjoy the rest of this newsletter and find our plans for this year exciting.

Paul Knight
Chair



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News from the groups

Groups Coordinator Update

We had high summer in May; April arrived in early June and now we have a heatwave! The weather may have gone a bit crazy, but you can maintain your sanity (or lose it!) by joining one or two of our groups....

Our **Wine Appreciation 2** still has places available. If you're concerned about drinking and driving, Martin has a neat little trick to help you out. With a choice of 4 or 5 wines for the evening, the dedicated driver can sample each one by having a measured 25ml per wine. A small glass of wine is 175ml so you could be under the legal limit to drive home. Take turns with your partner to drink or drive. Better still, car share with friends! Snacks are provided as is the number of a local cab company.

Ukulele 2 is a very inclusive and friendly group and keen to accept new members. All genres of music are played. The group is always open to fresh input and would welcome players with a basic knowledge upwards. They meet on the second and fourth Tuesday (morning) of the month in Woldingham.

New group started: DIY for Beginners - started on Tuesday, 16th June with Rob Griffiths. There may be a couple of places available but best be quick as they're going fast!

New groups starting:

Play Reading 2 - a second group is due to start on Tuesday, 14th July at 2pm in Sanderstead. All wannabe board-treaders, click on the group name for further information.

Gardening Group 2 - Coming very soon! This very popular group has needed a second group for some time. Gatherings will be held mornings of the 1st Monday of the month, scheduled to start August or September. Seasonal, i.e. March to November. Not my group, but I'm the contact until further notice.

Holiday Languages - someone would like help to speak French. They can read it, understand what is said to them, but need help putting their own sentences together in preparation for a visit in September so if you can help, please contact me by clicking on the group name.

19th Century Fiction - A brand new group planned for Spring 2027, courtesy of Colette Ramuz. Watch this space for further details!

New members meetings - These take place 3 or 4 times a year to introduce newcomers to our u3a and talk to them about our groups. It's a little disheartening to have to admit that many of our groups are full.... So, if you think you could facilitate a group in a topic that interests you, let me know. It can be a discussion group, learning group, craft group, or a visiting places kind of group. It can be year-round or seasonal. Entirely up to you. It can be fun too.

Speaking of which - we still need another table tennis group, and a Natty Needles or similar. I anticipate that these might be best started around September, given that it's now holiday season. Current group leaders are willing to help you get started, as am I. The commitment to a group is whatever you want it to be.

Our current group leaders/facilitators do an excellent job; some of them hosting 2 groups or more. Thank you to you all. Where would we be without you? Always happy to help support you in any way I can, any time you need.

Sue Seymour

London Discovery trip to Beddington Energy Recovery Facility

Members of London Discovery recently had a very interesting trip to Beddington Energy Recovery Facility, where we learnt about the 347,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste from local boroughs that goes there to be burnt at very high temperatures. This produces a much reduced amount of ash suitable for road maintenance and also generates electricity to power local homes. A huge improvement on the old landfill solution. Dressed for the occasion we then had a tour of the facility. A huge thank you to Adrienne for organising the visit.

Liz Whittaker

Gardening Group

The gardening group took a trip to Morden Hall in June to see the rose garden. We managed our visit before the rain returned. The wind had damaged some of the roses but there was still plenty to see. One of the gardeners came to talk to us about the methods used to control pests and diseases which was.... let nature take its course. No special insect spray, feed or compost. Beds can be left for a couple of years to recover if need be.

Isabelle Holmwood

London Discovery trip to the International Maritime Organisation

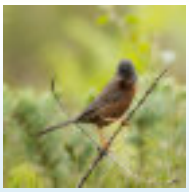
I wonder how many u3a members have heard of this institution? It is the only part of the UN to have its headquarters in the UK. It has its very opulent offices on the Albert Embankment, opposite the Houses of Parliament on the South bank of the Thames.

About 19 Caterham members defied the heat and joined Sutton u3a on a wonderful and informative tour. Our brilliant and very funny guide told us all about the organisation, founded in 1947, and showed us the beautiful artefacts which were on display throughout the building. They were mainly gifts from participating countries. I have included some photographs of some of the artefacts.

We were taken out onto the roof terrace to admire the views, and concluded our tour in the General Assembly Hall, where we were invited to ring the bell which is used to start the meetings. One interesting fact we learned: there are 6 official languages. All meetings use simultaneous translations, but all delegates have to speak one of those 6 languages, in addition to their own. The languages are English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Spanish. If anyone is interested, the IMO will be open to the public over the weekend of 12 and 13 September for Open House London, and if anyone does go they will have the opportunity to see the flags on display. The flags are all of the national flags of the participating countries. They will be removed on Friday 25 September.

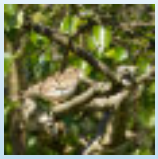
Mike Brigden

Bird Watching Group

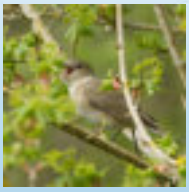


Rare birds have kept on popping up for Caterham's birders in the past few months.

At Thursley National Nature Reserve near Godalming we not only had wonderful views of Dartford warblers but also saw a newly fledged family flitting through the gorse.



There and at Sussex Wildlife Trust's Old Lodge Nature Reserve tree pipits and woodlarks charmed us with their songs. We twice saw cuckoos which are usually easy to hear but very hard to find.



Wherever we have been, the birdsong has been superb. At Bough Beech reservoir in Kent we found six warblers, including a garden warbler which sat out in the open for us while a cuckoo kept calling from near the oast house.

At Kent Wildlife Trust's Sevenoaks Reserve we found a little ringed plover newly in from south of the Sahara as well as our first sand martins, swallows and house martins of the year.

There are plenty more trips planned and beginners are welcome.

John Ingham

Photos: Dartford warbler, woodlark, garden warbler, little ringed plover

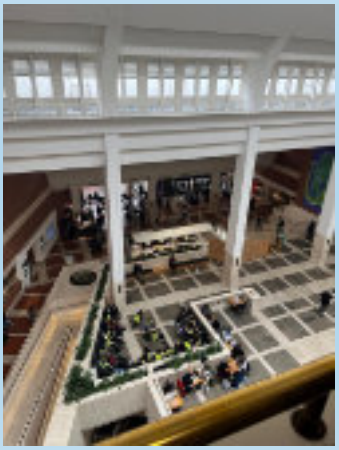
London Discovery visit to the British Library

I am sure that many members will be familiar with the British Library, which of course used to be at the British Museum, but now occupies a very futuristic building near to St Pancras Station. A number of London Discovery members recently went to a combined architecture and Treasure tour.

We were divided into two groups and our group had a very flamboyant, and funny guide. I understand that the other guide was excellent, but perhaps not quite as amusing. Both tours were good, and we were all very impressed with both the beautiful building and very comfortable and functional offices, and of course the wonderful collection of books. Every book and publication in the UK has one copy filed at the library, and the system that they have to find and retrieve books is truly amazing. However, I think that the highlight was seeing one of only 3 copies of the Magna Carta, and the earliest known copy of the Works of Shakespeare. The British Library is very easy to find, so if anyone missed the tour, I can recommend doing it by yourself.

I am attaching 5 photos. One shows a bust of Anthony Panizzi — the 19th-century librarian who helped create the modern cataloguing system and expanded the library that eventually became the British Library. The two photos of the building show the collection of very rare books, and the study room. Finally I took a picture of Magna Carta, but could not get very close, and the works of Shakespeare. I am grateful to Penny Kingsmill, who led the second group for three of these photos

Mike Brigden



Science Group

We had a very enjoyable social at Kay's home, in May, although we had to be indoors due to the weather. It was lovely to get together to chat, as we usually meet on zoom. We had some fun games, loosely Science based and a good time was had all round.

Our June meeting was a very interesting presentation from Martin Hogbin on colour. We learned that the 3 real basic colours are extreme red, extreme violet and psychedelic aquamarine. Colours of light are on the electromagnetic spectrum and the human eye can only detect a tiny portion of this. Visible wavelengths ranging from 380 to 780 nanometres, approx. Violet has the shortest wavelength and red the longest. Because red has the lowest energy wave length, it is used for communication with submarines.

Our colour purple is not in the spectrum; it does not have it's own physical wavelength of light, but our brains create purple as a clever neurological workaround when our eyes process red and blue light together. Martin covered many other points, including: bulls cannot see red; we think they see a sort of ginger. We can tell some of the colour wavelengths detected by animals by looking at the retinas (from dead animals) to see which rod cells (black and white, low light and peripheral vision) and cone cells (colour wavelengths) they have. Some animals have good colour vision. Bees can see more colour than us - their range extends into the ultraviolet, which helps them see markings on flowers to lead to the nectar. Colour vision helps animals and birds see if fruit is ripe, detect predators and prey better. Someone asked if it would help cheetahs to be green, camouflaged from prey, but prey are red/green colour blind, so, no.

A fascinating talk, thank you Martin.

Patricia Barnard

I always preferred the English spelling of “diarrhea”, which is “diarrhoea” because it really looks like you’ve lost control of your vowels

Quiz time
If 1961 was the last time a year date was the same when you read it upside down or the right way up (1961) when will be the next time? (answer on page 5)

London Discovery Group – RAF Kenley

On Sunday 14th June, 21 members of the London Discovery Group made a visit to the historic Kenley Airfield. Established in 1917, aircraft were constructed in sections and the pieces were flown to Europe for assembly and combat in the First World War.

In the Second World War, RAF Kenley was one of the three main fighter stations (Kenley, Croydon and Biggin Hill) and was responsible for the air defence of London during the Battle of Britain, with spitfires and hurricanes flying from here.

RAF Kenley has been identified as "the most complete fighter airfield associated with the Battle of Britain to have survived". Unlike other fighter stations that have been modernized, Kenley has retained its original runways, giving visitors a true flavour of its historic purpose.

We were guided by Linda Duffield and her team from the Royal Air Forces Association Kenley and Caterham Branch. We walked around the perimeter road while RAF cadets flew gliders above us. We were shown and told about the significant features of the airfield including the blast pens (where the planes were stationed awaiting duty) with their air raid shelters, the firing range (skilled use of a rifle was expected of everybody on the airfield), the Officer's Mess (where officers would have their boots cleaned and polished by female Batmen).

Douglas Bader served here in 1931 and Hammond Innes was an artillery gunner during the Battle of Britain. It is thought that he used some of his experiences in one of his early books titled "Attack Alarm".

There are two squash courts which date back to c.1921 which predate the universal rules of squash, relating to the court size. They are quite possibly unique. They even have different quality coat hangers for officers and "others".

The Airfield was closed as an operational base in 1959, but the runway and the remaining buildings are still owned by the Ministry of Defence. It's still an active airfield: Surrey Hills Gliding Club operate there on weekdays and the RAF Air Cadets use it on weekends.

After the tour we were permitted access to the Portcullis Club where there is a large number of photographs and memorabilia on display.

Ray Jessop

Quiz answer
6009
Thanks(?!) to Mike B for this

Coach Trip to Faversham, 9th June

The Social Committee arranged a trip to the picturesque and historic town of Faversham: Kent's oldest market town, with a Charter Market that runs on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

We managed to shelter from most of the showers as we were given guided tours of the town by the volunteer members of the Faversham Society: Catherine, Martin and Mary. Our tour started at the Guildhall in the heart of the marketplace, and we were shown some of the many historic buildings and sites and heard about the town's fascinating history.

The town was an important centre for the manufacturing of gunpowder from the 17th until the early 20th century. An accidental explosion at one of the factories in 1916 killed over 100 workers: all men. This was because the explosion occurred on a Sunday when the women were allowed to stay at home. The industry declined in Faversham after the accident.

The town is home to Shepherd Neame, England's oldest brewery, who have been producing beer on the site since 1698.

I recommend Faversham as a place to visit, it's less than an hour's drive from Caterham. There are many beautiful medieval buildings to see, history to discover and some lovely cafés, restaurants and shops –

Penny Kingsmill
Social Committee.

Murder Mystery Evening with dinner

Save the Date: Thursday 22nd October at 7:00pm

Following last year's hilarious Murder/Mystery Dinner, we have invited the actors to act out another fun Whodunnit evening for us (including Dinner) at Surrey National Golf Club.

It's another chance to dress up, get involved in the action, play Detective and solve the Murder from the clues provided.

More details to follow soon.

Keith Lawrance

Luxembourg 5-9 April 2027

The Duchy of Luxembourg, may be small in size, but is packed full of beautiful landscapes: from the bustling capital of Luxembourg City, to the lush surrounding countryside dotted with ancient castles and picture-postcard beauty spots. We stay in the small town of Vianden, which has a picturesque location on the banks of the River Our, set amidst magnificent Luxembourg scenery, close to the border with Germany

Monday 5th April Departing early morning (time to be confirmed) from your local pick-up point at Caterham, Warlingham or Godstone, we make our way to Dover for our ferry crossing to Calais. From here we make our way to Lille, where we shall have time to find a late lunch and have a quick look around before continuing on to the Belle Vue Hotel in Vianden, Luxembourg.

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Tuesday 6th April Departing after breakfast, we travel to Trier, reputedly Germany's oldest city. Once the regional Roman capital, it offers a host of well preserved reminders of these bygone days with its amphitheatre and thermal baths. Here we shall have a 2-hour cruise on the River Moselle and free time to explore this historic town. Returning to the hotel in time to freshen up before dinner.

Wednesday 7th April Today we have a full day excursion to Luxembourg City, including a 2-hour guided tour by coach, followed by time at leisure to explore. You might wish to take the Pfaffenthal Panoramic Elevator, which connects the "Pescatore" park in the city centre to the Pfaffenthal area at the bottom of the Alzette valley. The ride in the glass elevator (71m high) features sweeping views and is free of charge. Or maybe see the Luxembourg Castle ruins, the Grand Ducal Palace, the Cathedral of Notre Dame or perhaps go shopping. The day is yours. We return to the hotel with time to prepare for dinner.

Thursday 8th April This morning we leave the hotel for an excursion to Grevenmacher, an important wine-growing centre on the River Moselle. Here we shall have time to explore with a tasting of the local tipple before we return to the hotel in time for dinner.

Friday 9th April Leaving our hotel after breakfast, we make our way to Mons, a historic city known for its "mountain" (Latin: mons) location, serving as a fortress since Roman times and a major cultural centre. We have time to explore and get lunch before heading to Calais for our early evening ferry back to Dover. We continue homewards, arriving late in the evening.

What's Included:

4 nights dinner, bed & breakfast at the Belle Vue Hotel, Vianden
Time to explore Lille, Trier, Luxembourg City, Grevenmacher and Mons
River Moselle boat trip
Coach tour of Luxembourg City

Cost for twin/double £709 per person
Single occupancy supplement £138
Deposit £100 per person

Pfaffenthal Panoramic Elevator

Please ensure that you have travel insurance to cover you on this trip. Please complete the Insurance Disclaimer provided and return to Deb Skinner with your booking form.

The Belle Vue Hotel is situated just a few minutes from the centre of Vianden. Hotel facilities include a sun terrace, indoor swimming pool and sauna, and a large restaurant serving a set menu. Bedrooms are equipped with TV, telephone, WiFi, mini-safe, kettle and hairdryer. The hotel has a lift. https://hotelbv.com/en

Please note: The town of Vianden is built on a steep hill, although our hotel is on the flat beside the river.

Monday Talks

All Monday talks take place at 2.00pm (note new time) at the United Reformed Church, Harestone Hill, Caterham CR3 6RX. Please do arrive by at least 1.55pm so that the talk can start promptly at 2.00pm. If you can help with putting chairs out (& away again afterwards) that would be much appreciated. Feel free to stay for a coffee & a natter after the talk too. It's a good way to meet fellow members & catch up with old friends.

27th July - *The Ghostwriter - Neil Hanson*

Author Neil Hanson has led a extraordinary life in his own right, but as a professional ghostwriter of over 60 published books, he has also worked with a remarkably diverse collection of the most interesting people around. His clients include household names – an American showbiz legend, England's most famous cricketer, a famous actor, one of Britain's most decorated soldiers and an England football manager – but also many less celebrated men and women who have led extraordinary lives or achieved remarkable things. They include SAS men, fast-jet pilots, explorers and adventurers, a treasure diver, a kidnap negotiator, a hugely successful businessman, a spy, a notorious gangster, a round the world walker, a submariner, a maxillofacial surgeon and many more. His hugely entertaining talk gives us privileged glimpses into the hidden worlds of his ghosting clients. It is revelatory, insightful and very, very funny.

Extra talk! 24th August - *How sheep fleece becomes yarn - Jen Best*

Learn how yarn is made - from meeting the sheep, through the spinning process, to dyeing. There will be a practical spinning demonstration after the talk, with the opportunity to have a go.

28th September - *Painting whilst singing (the 60s) - Paul Lillie*

Paul Lillie trained at Wimbledon School of Art and is currently Artist In Residence at Nottingham QMC and City hospitals. His unique mixture of art and music has proved a huge success in supporting the well-being and mental health of patients as part of the Hospital Trust's award winning Arts programme. In his illustrated music talks Paul performs songs on his guitar and paints large scale images.

26th October - *Planning for Your Future - Tel Martin*

This talk by Tel Martin from Age UK is useful for anyone approaching retirement, those who are already retired and those supporting those in their later years. It encourages people to start thinking and planning and to give people support in finding out the information they will need to plan for an independent future.

u3a Study/Exploration Days, Stoke d'Abernon

Friday 18 September - The Bayeux Tapestry: Its Creation & Its Interpretation Presented by Imogen Corrigan The study day will look at many of the scenes in detail and explore what might be learned from this depiction of a turning point in our history. Perhaps the preeminent turning point in our national history

Friday 16 October - World Affairs in the Middle East & Africa: Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa & Nigeria Presented by Steve Bird. *Editor's note:* I suspect his talk is changing by the minute currently!

Friday 20 November - The Music & Satire of Gilbert & Sullivan Presented by Bernard Locket, Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Gilbert and Sullivan's works have delighted audients around the world for over 150 years. The talk will be illustrated with videos of performances of some of their works.

Friday 19 February 2027 - Life in Victorian times & Curating Exhibitions for the V&A Museum Presented by Steve Bird

Friday 19 March 2027 - Developments in AI & Use of AI in the u3a Movement Presented by Russel Whitworth & others

Friday 16 April 2027 - The Brilliance of British Architecture Presented by Ian Swankie

These study days are open to all u3a members and are held in the Yehudi Menuhin Centre at Stoke d'Abernon (and can also be viewed online). It is a beautiful venue, and if you do go, it is a very nice day out, as well as being highly educational (and extremely good value at only £12 (if pre-booked) including unlimited tea and coffee!) Registration starts at 9.30, the talks are from 10am till 4pm, with a break for you to eat your sandwiches and chat with other attendees.

Prior booking is essential, so if you are interested, please contact Denise Dobbs, Booking Secretary for the U3A Surrey Network - Phone 07964 798791 or E-mail surreyu3astudyday@outlook.com

Usually about half a dozen Caterham u3a members attend each study day, with car sharing/lifts arranged for those that want/need them. I will be attending most of these Study Day and will have 2 to 3 free seats in my car. Please call, text or email me if you would like a lift with me. If there are more than 3 of you that wish to attend, then I will endeavour to arrange lifts with other regular attendees.

Alan Speed
Surrey Liaison Officer

Copy date for the next newsletter is 27th August