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Welcome to our newsletter for the month of June. Inside you will find news of future planned events and outings, reports from some of the interest groups and general u3a information. Many thanks to all of you who came to our AGM last month. It was good to see so many of you there.

John Baker's Chairman's report for 2024-25, which he gave verbally at the meeting, is available to read inside this newsletter.

I would like to thank John for continuing on our committee as Vice Chairman and Susan Baugh who has agreed to join the committee

as Assistant Treasurer. I would also like to thank Clive Baugh for agreeing to examine our accounts next year. After the official business of the AGM it was good to see my quiz was so keenly fought, with a tie break question needed to decide the winning team!

Unfortunately the **William Morris trip** planned for July 1st has had to be **cancelled**. The boat yard has closed preventing the river cruise and we have been unable to find a suitable alternative for afternoon tea. We are sorry to have to disappoint you but there are still other trips to sign up for later in the year.

Everyone who has paid for the trip will get their cheques or money returned. Please collect at the June or July meeting.

We will return to our usual agenda at our next meeting when our guest speaker will be Margaret Watson. She invites us to take a trip with her as she delves into the 5000 year history of the harp. We will learn about its complex mechanism – it has over 1400 working parts – and together with light anecdotes showing how versatile, fun and modern the instrument can be, she will give us lots of harp playing. It should be an interesting presentation and it is certainly the first time our visiting speaker has asked the committee for help bringing a large musical instrument into the monthly meeting! I look forward to seeing you at the Alexandra Suite on **Friday June 6th** for my first meeting as Chairman. We start at **10.30 am**.

Finally, I need to tell you that the date for our July meeting has had to be moved from the usual first Friday of the month. It will instead be on Friday July 18th at the usual time and place.

Dave Collins Chairman

Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday 6th June 2025 at 10.30am

At the Alexandra Suite, St Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU

6th June Margaret Watson – “Life on a Harp String”

A jam-packed talk of information and entertainment. Take a trip with Margaret as she delves into the 5000 year history of the harp. Boasting over 1400 hundred working parts, you will learn about the complex mechanism – together with light anecdotes and lots of harp playing, Margaret shows how surprisingly versatile, fun and modern this ancient instrument can be!

18th July Kent County Council Safer Road Users Team

They will deliver a road safety video presentation specific to the needs of mature drivers & their passengers. The presentation is delivered as a seminar encompassing general road safety advice for all road users, smart motorway driving, motorway breakdowns, eco driving and pedestrian safety. It also covers topics such as decline in peripheral vision, reduced mobility, and various forms of impairment.

The presentation is about an hour long and delivered in two short videos. The KCC Safer Road Users team will be present during and after the presentation to answer questions from the group.

Attendees will receive a free copy of the new highway code and other useful advice, information and driving literature.

Nicola Teoh

**Swanley and District u3a
Chairman's Report 2nd May 2025**

I am pleased to present the chairman's report at this AGM of the Swanley and District u3a. The purpose of this annual report can be divided into three categories - to reflect upon the last twelve months of activity, to consider and evaluate our present situation, and to look forward to potential opportunities and development.

Your committee has met on a monthly basis during the last year. It should be recognised that the smooth running and stability of Swanley and District u3a can be attributed to the hard work and commitment of the committee. These people are volunteers and give their time to maintain the success and cogency of our organisation. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside them. I extend my sincere thanks to all of the committee members: Alan, Carol, Clive, Dave, Gill, Gill, Jacky, Nicola, Penny and Sandra. Their dedication and support is greatly appreciated. I should also convey thanks to Alan and Janet Hamling who have now left our u3a after several years of service on our committee. Our u3a flourishes due to the diligent efforts of so many people. I include the volunteers who prepare and serve the refreshments at our monthly meetings, those who sell the raffle tickets, the members who help by monitoring arrivals at the door and the volunteers who generally help, often at short notice, when we need extra hands at our meetings, and all the people who organise trips and visits.

A major achievement in recent months has been the construction of our new website. This will increasingly become an important channel of communication and information for our u3a.

One of the benefits of membership is the diverse range of over thirty study and interest groups. We should be grateful to all the hosts and group leaders who play a key role in this aspect of our organisation. It is without doubt the feature which makes us so unique. The recent formation of a social sub- committee is already providing significant benefits. There are more visits and outings available. The joint group initiative took place once again earlier this year. The theme this time was “All Creatures Great And Small”. It was enjoyed by the members who contributed music, poetry, stories, photography and paintings. It was a showcase for the broad range of talents to be found amongst our groups. The monthly meetings at the Alexandra Suite have, once again, been well attended. We continue to engage a wide range of interesting, informative and entertaining speakers.

So where do we find ourselves at the present time? A recently published list of statistics from the Kent Network provided a comparison with other u3a's in the county. Although our membership is smaller than the average, we are certainly not the smallest. We continue to pursue our target of three hundred members. We are able to publish twelve newsletters every year and provide twelve monthly meetings. Not all u3a's are able to offer both of these provisions. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the percentage of members attending our monthly meetings is far greater than expected elsewhere. We recently established a new record when 176 people came to our March meeting. Regarding costs for members, we find ourselves very similar to other u3a's in Kent. I think that £20 per annum is good value for money. It is important to note that financially we are in a sound position.

I believe that we can look to the future with confidence, but not complacency. We should be proud of our attainments, but always seek to grow and improve. A plan is important. I am reminded of the conversation between Alice and the Cheshire Cat. Alice complains that she does not know where she wants to go. If you do not know where you want to go just keep walking and eventually you will arrive somewhere says the cat. In other words, do not be like Alice. Decide your destination and have a plan to get there!

Part of the u3a ethos is that everyone can contribute. On a personal note I would encourage people to contribute to the monthly newsletter. Articles, features, news reports foster a sense of belonging and help to build a cohesive organisation. The establishment of additional study and interest groups would be of great benefit. As I have said previously, expertise is not essential, but enthusiasm is a distinct advantage. Consider what you might be able to contribute. The u3a concept is very special. It is what makes us different. It is vital that together we guard and nurture this unique thing.

And so I come to the valedictory conclusion of this report. After two terms as chairman, it is time to step down. Nevertheless, I wish to continue to play a role and be part of Swanley and District u3a. The key to success is based on strong and effective team work. I feel this is something we have established. I give my thanks to all the people who have served on the committee over the years since our foundation in 2013. They have all played a significant part in our story.

This ends my Chairman's report for 2024/25. I wish you all well for the future.

J D Baker Chairman of Swanley and District u3a

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES – During the Coming Month(s)

PLANT SALE

At our monthly meeting on Friday 6th June, our Gardening Group will be holding their annual plant sale. This is an excellent chance to purchase plants for your garden, patio, pots or window box at bargain prices. A great opportunity not to be missed!

Bridge Club

Hi folks, the Bridge group meets on the first Wednesday of the month. The next monthly meeting is on Wednesday 4th June, 10.00am at the Howard Venue, Hextable.

Do you want to keep your brain active? Are you a keen card player? Bridge is a great way to keep the grey cells ticking over. Why not come and join us? New members welcome.

See the Bridge group page on our website for further details

https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/bridge/.

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

Board and Card Games

Next get together is on Monday June 23rd 2025 at the Howard Centre in Hextable BR8 7LG. There is a charge of £3 which is used for hire of the room and buying games.

Everybody is welcome we are a friendly bunch. We have a wide selection of games codenames, Sequence, scattergories, Yahtzee, Boogle, Crowns, UNO, cribbage, Linkee, scrabble, etc. Just come along on the day bring any games you would like to play or email me via the Board & Card group page on our website for further information

(https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/board-card-games/)

PLEASE NOTE NO MEETINGS JULY or AUGUST, START AGAIN 22/9/25

Joyce Wood

Members on Their Own

We are now firmly established & well catered for at Molly's in the Elim Church in Cherry Avenue. So the next meeting will be on Thursday 19th June at 12.15, come along.

For more information see our website group page https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/moto-members-on-their-own/.

Madeline Opitz

Walking Group

Thursday 12th June 10.00 for 10.15

Meet Clive at the "Chequers", Darenth Road South, Darenth DA2 7QT for a fairly flat walk of between three and four miles with the option of cutting it short for those that wish to.

Directions: by car: From the Swanley interchange on the M25 (J3) take the A20 (NOT the M20) towards Farningham. At the Farningham roundabout take the first turning left onto the A225 Dartford Road passing under the M20. Continue for about three miles passing through Sutton at Hone and at the roundabout turn right (Parsonage Lane) towards Darenth and Fruit Distribution Centre. Darenth Road South is opposite the Fruit Distribution Centre where you turn left. The "Chequers" is a short distance along the road on the left. Please contact Clive at https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking-group-as-notified/ to let him know you are coming and say whether you will be staying for lunch after.

Thursday 3rd July 2025 10.00 for 10.15

Meet Julia at "The Greyhound", Commonside, Keston BR2 6BP for a walk of about 4.5 miles around Nash, through attractive woodland, farmland and Hayes and Keston commons. Please note there is one steep uphill climb, one steep downhill descent and one stile.

Directions: By car: Take the A21 away from Bromley and as you go across Bromley Common, turn right into Oakley Road. When you reach the traffic lights, turn right onto the Croydon Road (A222) then take a left after the 40mph speed limit sign, into Commonside and after a short distance you will reach the pub on the green where you can park in the public car park just before the pub.

By public transport: The pub is about 1.3 miles south of Hayes station. It is also served by 146, 246, 320,353, 654, 664 and R2 buses. Please contact Julia at:

https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking-group-as-notified/ to let her know you are coming and say whether you will be staying for lunch in "The Greyhound" after.

Clive Rayner

QUIZ DATES

Dates for this month's Quiz afternoons
(£3 per person with all profits going to the RNLI):

Tuesday June 3rd - 2pm.

Thursday June 19th - 2pm.

Please join us at the **Howard Venue** if you would like to join a U3A team on either of these dates.



David Collins

July NEWSLETTER

For the July newsletter can you please send articles and photos to ahayward530@gmail.com

The closing date is **THURSDAY 26th June 2025**

Alan Hayward

Events and Outings

June

Theatre trip to Churchill Theatre Bromley to see **Five Mistakes That Made History**

Friday June 20th

A hilarious historical storytelling show performed by historian and comedian Paul Coulter about how mistakes big & small changed the world.

Cost £20 for show Tickets.

We will travel on the **18.41** train from Swanley to Bromley South.

If you want to make your own way there, please ask **Penny** for your ticket or meet her at **7.00pm** at the theatre.

THIS TRIP IS SOLD OUT



If you need further information, please contact Penny Collins via our website:

https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/churchill-theatre-to-see-five-mistakes-that-made-history/

Penny Collins

September

Tuesday 9th September THE SUFFOLK COASTAL TRIP

Cost: £62

If your name is down to go on this trip, please pay at the **JUNE** meeting.

The list is full so if you are not able to go, please let me know so I can offer the seats to someone else. The meal is fish and chips --please let me know if you are vegetarian.

It's always helpful if you fill in your cheque prior to coming to the table as this saves time. (SWANLEY AND DISTRICT U3A) Cheques won't be cashed until July.

Our first stop will be near the Orwell Bridge, where we pick up our guide.

I will keep you informed of exact departure times nearer to the date but it's likely to be around 8:30/8:45 am. Should be a very good day!

If you need further information, please contact Sandy via our website:

https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/the-suffolk-coastal-trip/



Sandy Treloar

October

Friday 24th October Meal at the City View Restaurant followed by a visit to Greenwich

City View Restaurant is part of Shooters Hill Sixth form College, it's on the 4th Floor, there's a lift. The current price for a 3 course lunch plus a mini bottle of wine or a beer is £15.75, or £13.95 for 3 courses and a soft drink.

There may be a slight increase, because of course it will be the start of a new college year.

The cost includes a cup of coffee or tea. This trip comes highly recommended.

After lunch we will be going to Greenwich for some free time.

Barbara Garrod

November

Tuesday November 25th Matinee Christmas Divas Party and Christmas lunch at the Tereza-Joanne in the Royal Docks.

Cost approx.: £69

2 course lunch with tea/coffee including coach fare.

There are still places available so please sign up at the **June** meeting if you would like to go on this trip. Payment to be made at **September** meeting.

NB This is a coach outing completely separate from our U3A Christmas Dinner.

Elaine Nixon

Membership for 2025-2026

Our new membership year begins at the beginning of April 2025 and runs until March 2026. The cost is £20.

Thank you to all those people who have renewed or who have joined for the first time this year. It means that our organisation will be financially viable for 2025-2026.

Anyone who has not renewed, and who has not contacted me by Friday 6th June, will be removed from the database as I assume that they do not wish to continue their membership.

They will no longer be eligible to attend the monthly meeting, nor any interest groups, outings or events.

However, they are welcome to rejoin at any time if their situation changes.

We are still welcoming new members. If you know anyone who wants to join us, please tell them that they can come to any monthly meeting to see what we do before committing to membership.

If they decide to go ahead, they should fill in a form with their contact details.

Payment Methods:

a) Our preferred option is that you pay your £20 renewal subscription by bank transfer.

The bank details are:

Bank: Natwest

Account number: 51170027

Sort code: 60 21 10

Account name: Swanley & District U3A

IMPORTANT When your bank asks you to insert a **reference**, please put your **surname and membership** number so we know who made the payment! (For example - **BAKER117**).

PLUS Please confirm that you have made this payment by emailing Gill Baker at gillbaker@talktalk.net If you are paying for a spouse or partner in addition to yourself, please provide both names and membership numbers in the email.

b) If you prefer, pay by cash or cheque at one of the monthly meetings. Cheques made payable to **Swanley and District U3A** please.

The membership card will be available at the monthly meeting.

I hope this covers everything – please contact me if you need any clarification.

Gill Baker Membership Secretary

GROUP / EVENTS NEWS

Bridge

Do you want to keep your brain active? Are you a keen card player? Bridge is a great way to keep the grey cells ticking over. Why not come and join us? New members welcome.

This month's question:

♣ AQ8 ♦ AK4 ♥ 43 ♠ 9753

Here you can see the dummy hand. Your opponents' contract is 4 spades. You have won the first trick. The dummy hand is to your left and you are leading through it. What will you lead?

Answer next month.

** Reminder and answer to last month's question.

♣ KT42 ♦ K875 ♥ QJT ♠ T6

Your opponents have finished the bidding at 4 spades. What will you lead?

Try to avoid leading suits where you have a single picture card with low cards. In this case clubs and diamonds would not be a preferred lead. The safest lead is Q of hearts.

Explanation: When you have 3 cards in a run (eg QJT) then lead the highest of the three cards (Leading the Ten is okayish but the top card of a run is a better option).

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

Word Magic

THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW
DOG ADMISSION APPLICATION

That mut Rufus must go
to the Chelsea Flower Show
The judges would obviously choose him
Once they saw that stupid apologetic grin
As he inadvertently trampled upon
All their prize-winning chrysanthemum.

He would make a splash in their artisan crafted ponds
And chase the goldfish round, on and on.
Then he would find a specimen tree
To use its trunk to have a pee.

Being such a loveable smarty
He would easily gatecrash the Royal Party
Who in their most refined voices always ask, "And what do you do?"
He'd reply, "I love to chase those lady labradoodles."

Mark Fittock 1 May 2025

This year at the Chelsea Flower show Monty Don was doing a special dog friendly garden and taking his Golden Retrievers. There was a competition for one more dog to be invited. As a fun exercise we had to put in a bid for our own dog to be included. Mark's poem was one of those imagined bids.

Penny Collins

Looking at Art

We arranged a visit to the Prince Phillip Maritime Collections Centre in Kidbrooke. This houses art and artefacts from the Royal Greenwich Museums. Items are stored and restored in different areas of the site.

Our tour guide took us into the Framing room, where we saw huge old frames which were being regilded in gold leaf and repaired.



The largest one was from Turner's painting of the Battle of Trafalgar. We saw Turner's huge unframed painting later in the Painting storeroom.



Turner Frame

Battle of Trafalgar

The building had to be designed with very tall doors to enable the works to be moved around



In another room we saw a model of a sailing boat (HMS Prince Albert) which was being prepared to go on display at Chatham Dockyard – the conservator had already spent many hours painstakingly making tiny improvements.



The Small Objects storeroom held a wide variety of things – we were shown a small teddy bear called Humphrey which in 1989 was the mascot of the first all-female crew in the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race, skippered by Tracy Edwards. It was lost in a storm but found weeks later in a bilge pump, having lost its legs.

Another interesting item was a locket of hair from Lord Nelson, together with his signature which was believed to be written on a letter to his wife after he lost his arm in 1797.



Our next visit was to the Paper room, to hear about the work of the paper restoration team. They work with old books, manuscripts, maps, globes and photographs.

In the older part of the site we saw a huge collection of naval equipment and machinery. Of interest was a fireplace made for the Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert III which launched in 1899 just after the death of Queen Victoria. Victoria's extravagant requirements contributed to the ship being overweight which meant it tipped over when the dock was flooded, causing significant damage to the boat.

The centre is not generally open to the public, but tours are arranged once or twice a month.

Gill Baker

Antiques and Collectables Group

The theme this month was 'Wood'. We were missing a few people for various reasons but we still had an interesting meeting, with a varied selection of items.

Audrey brought along a size 43 shoe tree and told us a bit about the history of them and of shoe making. I didn't know that originally shoes were made to fit either foot, not right/left. In the Middle Ages, people wore tall wooden platforms under their shoes, to raise them above the mud and muck in the street. Later, stretchers for shoes were developed to expand the width and length of shoes to customise fit. Shoe trees were used to keep the shape when shoes were stored. Cedar was often used as it drew out moisture and bacteria caused by sweat and reduced unpleasant odours.



Tom inherited a beautiful ebony walking stick which originally belonged to his grandfather. It dates from around 1860. He doesn't know where it came from, although his grandfather worked on the docks in Harwich, which may have been the source. It has ivory inserts as decoration, and the handle is in the shape of an elephant's head. Once, sticks were just of practical use to assist with walking or protection. Later they became a fashion accessory which reflected the social status of the owner. Ivory is now not allowed to be sold in the UK unless items date before 1947. It is also illegal to import ebony wood except from sustainable sources.

Sue showed us a lovely brooch which she had purchased for 20p in a school jumble sale in Rochester in 1978. It is carved from bog oak. This is formed when an oak tree has been submerged in a peat bog for thousands of years. It becomes very hard and black and has been used to make jewellery, particularly in Ireland. Often it was made as mourning jewellery and became popular after the Great Exhibition in Dublin in 1853. It often features shamrocks and other Gaelic emblems. This one has a castle but Sue does not know where it is.



I bought some interesting bottle stoppers at Detling Antique fair recently. They were made by a company called Anri which was set up in 1912 in Austria by Anton Riffeser. The area became part of Italy after WW1. Anton carved wooden figures based on people in his village. Many were articulated with string pulls or levers so that they could raise a glass, or their hat. Some were made in pairs as kissing couples. They were all different. As the business grew, Anton recruited other carvers and introduced more lines, such bottle openers, corkscrews, letter openers, and cruet sets. The company ran until 1960, but by this time the figures were more caricatured for the wider market. My figures date from around 1920-30

John passed round a charity box from the London City Mission which he thinks is dated 1923. This organisation was founded in 1835 to address the spiritual and material needs of the poor in London. It also established the Ragged Schools to provide education and support for disadvantaged children. Paid workers were tasked with collecting money for the cause. There were no Social Services at that time. Unfortunately John's box was passed back to him still empty!



Gill Baker

Digging4Cake - Gardening Group

Great Comp Visit

On a grey afternoon in April, 13 members of our gardening group met at Great Comp Garden for a guided tour of the seven acre estate.



The senior gardener met us warmly and gave a brief history of the estate.

The large house fell into complete disrepair and has been slowly renovated, having had a new roof last year. Application has also been made to the National Lottery fund to get money to further help with the restoration project.



The gardens as they are now, were started by the owners Roderick and Joyce Cameron in the 1950s and have developed over the years. There are plants of all kinds but especially acid loving ones that include rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, hydrangeas and heathers.



The garden is divided into different areas of interest, woodland walks, Italian garden and follies to name just a few.

Ongoing changes are being made all the time, by the new enthusiastic senior gardener.

Lots of good ideas and gardening tips were gained throughout our visit and we rounded off our tour with the compulsory tea and delicious cake.

Sue Saunders

Swanley and District u3a Committee Members 2025/2026

			
Dave Collins Chair	John Baker Vice-Chair	Carol Willingham Business Secretary	Clive Rayner Treasurer
			
Gill Baker Membership Secretary	Gill Morrin Minutes Secretary	Penny Collins Social Secretary	Alan Hayward Newsletter/Website
			
Nicola Teoh Speaker Organizer	Jacky Taylor Publicity Secretary	Sandra Evans Group Co-Ordinator	Susan Baugh Assisted Treasurer

Contact Details

Chair	David Collins
Vice Chair	John Baker
Business Secretary	Carol Willingham
Membership	Gill Baker
Social/Outings Coordinator	Penny Collins
Group Co-ordinator	Sandra Evans
Newsletter and Website	Alan Hayward

Website: <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/>

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Swanley u3a Groups Timetable

Group	Leader	Meeting Day
Antiques and Collectables	Gill and John Baker	3 rd Tuesday Morning
Art and Craft	Penny Collins	2 nd Tuesday Afternoon
Art Appreciation	Margaret Austin	1 st Monday Morning
Art/Painting & Drawing Art Outdoors	Gill Baker	2 nd & 4 th Tuesday Evening
Art – Looking at Art	Gill & John Baker	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Bird Watching		Not meeting at Present
Board & Card Games	Joyce Wood	2 nd or 4 th Mon pm Howard Cen Hex
Book Group	Sue Scott & Wendy Keable	2 nd Monday pm Swanley Library
Bowls (Indoors)	Bob Mellor	4 th Thurs pm at the Whiteoak's
Bridge	Carolyn & Colin Chapman	1 st Wednesday Morning
Chess	Terry Bennet	4 th Wednesday Morning
Creative Writing	Penny Collins	1 st Thursday Morning
Croquet	Bill Hammond	Every Tues at 2pm Swanley Rec Gardens
Gardening	Sandy English	4 th Wednesday Afternoon
Geography	Penny and Dave Collins	3 rd Friday Morning
History Modern	Jackie Griffiths	4 th Tuesday Afternoon
History of London 1	John Baker	2 nd Thursday Morning
History of London 2	John Baker	4 th Thursday Morning
Kurling	Bill Hammond	Every Mon 10—12. White Oak
Let's Speak French	Barbara Ramsey	1 st & 3 rd Wednesday Morning
London History Walks	Alan Hayward/John Baker	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
MOTO (Members on their own)	Madeleine Opitz	3 rd Thursday at 12.15 Elim Church Swanley
Music Making	Mark Fittock	Every Tuesday Morning
Petanque	Bill Hammond	Weds 2pm Princes Park Dartford
Photography (Digital)	Alan Hayward	2 nd Friday Afternoon
Play Reading	Penny Collins	4 th Friday Morning
Quiz Team	Dave Collins	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Rugby-Walking & Appreciation	Alan Hayward/John Baker	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Spanish	Ruth Wilkinson	Every Thursday Morning
Strollers		Not meeting at Present
Table Tennis	Bill Hammond	1 st & 3 rd Friday 2-3.30pm White Oak
Outings and Theatre Trips	As Notified by the Social Committee	
Word Magic on Zoom	Gill Heath	2 nd Wednesday Morning
Walking Group	Clive Rayner	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Wine and Dine	Santha Blankley	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Wine Tasting	Robert Brickell	4 th Wednesday Evening