

Charity No 1155593

Newsletter No 151

August 2025

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Welcome to our newsletter for the month of August. Inside you will find general u3a information, news about future planned events and outings and reports from some of our interest groups. The newsletter is our main channel of communication with members. I hope it continues to be an interesting and enjoyable read. We always have a small number of copies available at the monthly meeting, which are intended for those of you unable to access the internet.

I was not able to be at the July monthly meeting, but it was good to hear that 139 of you attended. I hope you enjoyed the presentation by the team from the Kent Safer Road Users group. They were delighted and said you were the biggest audience they had ever spoken to! Thank you to those who provided the evaluations they were looking for.

See thank you letter from the Kent Safer Road User Group on page 11

Our speaker at the August meeting will be Professor Mark Donnelly who will be giving a talk on Noel Coward and the Great War. Although Noel Coward's brief experience of army life was somewhat traumatic, he managed to achieve an amazing insight into the soul and temperament of the soldiers, the value of camaraderie, and the imprint the War left on the lives of ex-servicemen as well as civilians on the home front. It should be an interesting talk.

I would like to remind you again to log in your car registration when attending our meetings. Unfortunately another of our members has been hit with a £60 fine. With regard to car parking, I should point out that workers on site also park there so there may well not be enough spaces for us. If you enter the car park and have to leave straight away because it is full, you do not need to log in your registration. Everyone is allowed 20 minutes between entering and leaving before the fine kicks in.

I look forward to welcoming you to our meeting on August 1st. We start at the usual time 10.30 am.

Dave Collins Chairman

Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday 1st August 2025 at 10.30am

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

1st August Professor Mark Donnelly "I think I was better off in the trenches": Noel Coward, The Great War and the veteran mentality.

This talk will explore the depth and breadth of Coward's interpretation of The Great War and the imprint it left on the lives of ex-servicemen and home front civilians. Although Noel Coward never saw full service in the Great War, and his extremely brief experience of army life was somewhat traumatic, he nonetheless managed to achieve an amazing insight into the soul and temperament of the soldiers, understanding the value of camaraderie and how the war should be remembered. He not only explored the 'khaki' view of the war but also that of the civilian.

Mark Connelly is Emeritus Professor at the School of History, University of Kent, and is a specialist in the way Britain, the former empire and Commonwealth commemorated the two world wars.

Friday 5th September Guy Bartlett talk entitled 'Concorde – Supersonic Cover Up?'

An Air France Concorde crashed shortly after take-off from Charles De Gaulle airport in July 2000. After an extensive investigation the world was told the cause was a strip of metal which had fallen from a DC – 10 and burst one of Concorde's tyres.

However, the truth is far more disturbing. Using official crash investigation reports, a new theory has emerged.

This talk will explore what actually happened on that fateful day and why Concorde was really stopped from flying in 2003. This talk will make you rethink what you thought you knew...

Guy has presented to our group numerous times before. His passion for all things aviation related results in energetic and inclusive talks. There will be something for everyone, whether they like aeroplanes or not.

Nicola Teoh

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES – During the Coming Month(s)

Bridge Club

Hi folks, the Bridge group meets on the first Wednesday of the month. The next monthly meeting is on Wednesday 6th August, 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

PLEASE NOTE NO MEETINGS in AUGUST

We restart again on the 22nd September 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/)

Joyce Wood

QUIZ DATES

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

Tuesday Aug 5th – 2pm.

Thursday Aug 21st – 2pm

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



David Collins

September NEWSLETTER

For the September newsletter can you please send articles and photos by Thursday 28th August to ahayward530@gmail.com

Alan Hayward

Events and Outings

TUESDAY 9th September SUFFOLK COASTAL TRIP

Cost: £62

This trip is nearly full. No-one has indicated that they are vegetarian.

I have been notified of 2 scooter/buggies.

Cheques have been banked now so if you find you can't go before September, please find your own substitute as I'm sorry but can't refund, as costs are calculated on the numbers going.

Coach pick up times:

Hextable 08:30

Swanley (back of Asda) 08:40

We should leave Suffolk at approx. 16:30/45. Arrival in Swanley will depend on the traffic, as always!

It should be a really good day out. It's a lovely coastline with a Blue Badge guide to tell us all about this part of Suffolk.

A reminder that the trip includes morning coffee/tea and 2 course fish and chip lunch at the famous Flora Tea Rooms on the beach at Dunwich.

If you need further information, please contact Sandy via our website: https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/the-suffolk-coastal-trip/

Do hope you enjoy the day!

Sandy Treloar



October

Wednesday October 15th: A visit to Hall Place Butterfly House- Instead

Meet at Hall Place outside the Butterfly House at 10am.

Please contact Penny (https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/a-visit-to-the-butterfly-house-at-hall-palce) if you need a lift by car or can offer a lift.

If you haven't visited the Butterfly House then this is a marvellous experience. The Conservatory has been upgraded and made into a wonderful Butterfly House with huge colourful butterflies flying past your nose or even landing on you.

Please pay on the day- £7.50 and enjoy a stroll round the gardens and take tea and cake in the cafe.

Penny Collins

November

Tuesday November 25th Arrive 11:30am Depart 3:30pm

Tereza Joanne Matinee Christmas Divas Party at London Royal Docks

Two course Christmas lunch and tea/coffee included Licensed bar on.

Enjoy the chart topping hits of the best female vocalists of the 50's to 70s in a show full of nostalgia.

Cost approx.: £69 (includes coach)

I can confirm that places have been reserved for everyone who has registered their interest for this event, including those on the waiting list.

Please can anyone who hasn't given their contact details provide them at the next U3A meeting. Payment to be taken at the September meeting. Please let me know if you will not be at this meeting or need any further information.

Pick up times to be confirmed nearer the date.

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

Elaine Nixon

Membership for 2025-2026 Please encourage friends and family to join us!

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, has now been removed from the database. 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 looking for 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 can fill in a form with their contact details. Forms are available from me at a monthly meeting, or by contacting me via the Membership page of our website.

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 - **BAKER**).

PLUS Please confirm that you have made this payment by emailing Gill Baker via the contacts on our website <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/contact/> 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

RESTARTING OF THE BIRDWATCHING GROUP – with Bob Parker

We now have a new leader for the Birdwatching Group.

Bob is looking at trying to restart our U3A birdwatching outings with outings in Kent and Essex.

Meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month as before and running from September until November to start with.

First meeting will be on the **17th of September 25**

Meet 10am at RSPB Cliffe Pool Parking, Rochester, off Salt Lane. Post Code ME3 7SU (What3words //glare.detect.punks).

<https://group.rspb.org.uk/medway/local-wild-places/cliffe-pools/>

We will be walking for a couple of hours.

Please join me, bring your binoculars, beginners welcome. If you have any suggestions for future outings, please let me know."

For more information about joining the group or to let him know if you are interested in going, please contact me through our website on the Bird watching group page (https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/bird-watching/)

Thank you.

Bob Parker

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:

♣ ♦ KQT8764 ♥ KQ2 ♠ AJ9

You are first to bid. What will you open? What do you hope to bid when it is your turn to bid again?

Answer next month.

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

♣ AJ9 ♦ KQ84 ♥ A43 ♠ Q63

You are the first player to open the bidding. What will you bid? If your partner replies 1 spade; what is your second bid? What information have you given your partner? How many points would your partner need to have to consider bidding a game bid?

It's a flat (even) hand. NT???

1NT means I have 12-14 points. You are stronger than that with 16 points so start by bidding your 4-card suit; 1D (means I have at least 4 diamond cards and 12-22 points).

After your partner's reply of 1S check you don't have 4-cards in his suit. No! So now is your chance to tell your partner some additional information by bidding 1NT. (A 1NT second bid by opener says I have 15-16 points and a flat hand).

Your partner now knows you have 15-16 points.

You usually need a combined point count of 25 to consider a game bid, so your partner needs at least 9 points or preferably 10, or more to bid a game contract.

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

London History Group(s)

CHARLES DICKENS IN SOUTHWARK

Members of the London History Group recently took part in a circular walk from London Bridge. The focus was Charles Dickens and the places he knew in this district of London.

We started at Nancy's Steps adjacent to the bridge. A blue plaque incorrectly informed us that it was the location of her tragic death in *Oliver Twist*. Wrong! It was on the steps she was overheard betraying Fagin and Sikes. The subsequent violent murder took place elsewhere.

The nearby Southwark Cathedral was known to Dickens, but in those days, it was St. Saviours Church. It only achieved cathedral status in 1905. We walked through the busy Borough Market to emerge onto Borough High Street. For many years this was London's arrival and departure point for thousands of travellers. Dickens referred to the "great rambling inns with their galleries and staircases." Today only one remains – The George Inn.



In Angel Place we saw the intimidating high wall which was once part of the infamous Marshalsea Prison. Dickens father was incarcerated here in 1824 because he had failed to pay his debts. Charles was only twelve years old and working in the blacking factory at Hungerford Stairs. He used to walk across London from Camden Town. Later he found lodgings in nearby Lant Street and regularly visited his father and family in the Marshalsea.

The family of a debtor often lived in the prison as well.



The church of St. George the Martyr features in Dickens' novel, *Little Dorrit*. Today she can be seen as a small figure in one of the stained glass windows. The vicar made us very welcome and gave us a brief history of the church. It actually has its origins in the early 12th century, although most of today's building is from the 18th century.



Walking through the tranquil Trinity Square, we arrived at Newington Gardens.

Newington Gardens

Southwark
Council

Newington Gardens occupies the site of Horsemonger Lane Gaol which, along with adjoining Sessions House, was erected in accordance with an Act passed in 1791 'for building a new common gaol and sessions house, with accommodations thereto, for the county of Surrey'. At the time it was built it was the largest prison in the county of Surrey. It consisted of two sections, one occupied by debtors and the other much larger area by people arrested on criminal charges.


Leigh Hunt, celebrated poet, essayist and reformer was a prisoner at Horsemonger Lane Gaol for having written disrespectfully of George IV, Lord Byron and Thomas Moore visited him in his confinement.

Charles Dickens came here on 13 November 1849 to see the crowd of spectators which regularly formed at the time of a public execution and gather materials for some of those vivid pictures of London life contained in his novels. The next morning he wrote a strong letter to *The Times* urging the suppression of public executions.

Horsemonger Lane Gaol was closed in 1878. When it was pulled down the Surrey justices permitted a portion of the site to be used as a public playground until it might be sold or utilised for other county purposes. The playground was laid out by the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and opened to the public by Mrs Gladstone on 5 May 1884. The Association also maintained it for a short time, but in the following year the management was transferred to the Vestry of Newington.

Long after the gaol was abolished the lofty external wall and the massive gate house were retained, so the recreation ground still presented a very prison-like appearance. The park was popularly known as 'Gaol Park' for many decades.

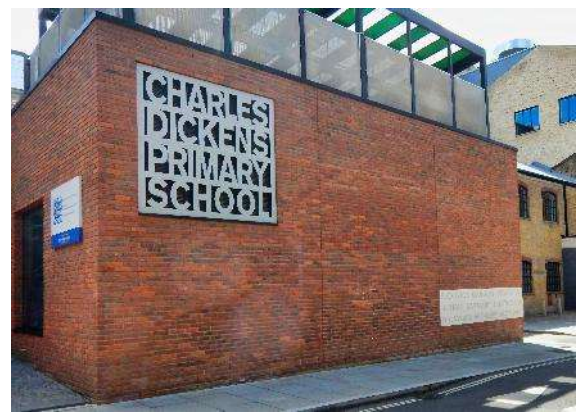
Horsemonger Lane Gaol



Enching by courtesy of Southwark Borough Library

This was the site of the Horse Monger Gaol. In 1849 Dickens came here to witness a public hanging. He was disgusted by the behaviour of the crowd and wrote a letter to The Times the next day. He complained that “no community can prosper where such a scene of horror and demoralisation is presented.”

We eventually arrived in Lant Street. The older buildings are no longer there.



The oldest is probably the Charles Dickens Primary School which was built in 1877. The only connection with the author is the sharing of his name. Dickens actually died in 1870.

Our route back to the station took us past Octavia Hill's Red Cross Cottages, built in the 1880's.



We also paused to observe the Cross Bones Graveyard where prostitutes from Southwark's brothels were buried in medieval times. It closed in 1853 but is still looked after by volunteers.





Cross Bones Graveyard



The Mint & Gospel Lighthouse Mission – Shaftesbury Society – 1907

Before our return train journey, some of us ate lunch in the courtyard of The George Inn. The hostelry was familiar to Dickens and features in Little Dorrit.



John Baker

Digging4cake

This month 13 members of the gardening group visited Arnold Yoke in Leeds, Maidstone.

The weather was just right. Not too hot and not raining.

We were welcomed by the owners Richard and Tricia who have had the 15th century house with a one acre garden since 2011.

On arrival we were treated to tea and homemade cake while Richard told us the history of the house and how they reconfigured the garden to what it is today.



We were then taken on a tour of the garden which features a yew and box framework with varied borders, a square pond with water lilies, a paradise garden with a water feature and rill and a selection of special trees.



Richard and Tricia were so knowledgeable and were very happy to answer all our questions.

A lovely time had by all

Sandy English

Swanley U3A - Friday 18 July - Thank You for Hosting & Post-Evaluation for Mature Drivers & Passengers Presentation

Dear Nicola

Thank you to U3A Swanley for hosting Mature Drivers & Passengers.

Jack, Sarah and I were very pleased to meet everyone at Swanley U3A and to be given the opportunity to present Mature Drivers & Passengers to your group last Friday, 18th July.

We are, however, sorry that we did not get the opportunity to meet you on the day, and hope you are now recovering well? The presentation appeared to have been very well received by all those that were in attendance.

John Baker and others looked after us very well, ensuring everything ran smoothly.

We spoke with many attendees following the presentation, and hopefully answered most of their questions. However, if any further questions have arisen since the presentation, please ask your members to contact us via the Safer Road Users team mailbox and we will do our best to provide the information required.

Our email address is saferroadusers@kent.gov.uk

Please feel free to pass on our contact details to any group, or anyone you know, that may be interested in hosting one of our presentations.

There is also lots of information available on our website about the range of programmes we offer, including Young Driver & Passengers for secondary schools, Kent Road Safety Club for younger children, and Young Cyclists & Bikeability courses for people of all ages. The website covers road safety topics relevant to all road user types, drivers, motorcyclists and pedestrians.

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Here is the link to the road safety website: www.kentroadsafety.info

Thank you once again for your hospitality and for providing us with the opportunity to deliver Mature Drivers & Passengers to U3A Swanley.

Kindest regards, Teresa

We also wish to thank the people who completed the paper copies of our pre & post evaluation forms on the day.

Please can you forward the following information onto the people who completed the online pre-evaluation ahead of last Friday's presentation:

Thank you for attending our Mature Drivers & Passengers Road Safety presentation to Swanley U3A on Friday 18th July, and for completing the online pre-evaluation form via RS Evaluate.

To complete the Mature Drivers Road Safety evaluation process, please can you complete the online post-evaluation by following the link below.

Please be assured that the evaluation is anonymous, and data will NOT be shared outside of the KCC Safer Road Users Team.

Post-Presentation RS Evaluate Link:

[Mature Drivers & Passengers -Post-Evaluation \(2025\)](#)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the Safer Road Users Team.

Kind regards, Teresa

Teresa Shiel | Safer Road Users Technical Support Officer
Kent Road Safety & Active Travel | Kent County Council |

Tel: 03000 418181 www.kentroadsafety.com 

Direct Line: 03000 413845 Mobile: 07977 278948

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

You can contact any of the above committee members by going to the Swanley & District Website committee page at <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/contact/> and clicking on the appropriate name.

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	Bob Parker	3 rd Wednesday as notified in Newsletter / Website
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 Friday2-3.30pm 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