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Welcome to our final newsletter of the year. Inside you will find news, information and reports on group activities. Christmas is fast approaching and I am writing this after enjoying my first Christmas lunch of the season on the Tereza Joanne at the London Royal Docks. It was a wonderful setting as our u3a group enjoyed good food looking out over the water watching the aircraft take off and land at London City Airport. We were entertained by Sarah recreating many of our favourite songs from divas ranging from Doris Day and Petula Clark to Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey. A number of us were encouraged and cajoled onto the dance floor and I am assured

that photos of the event, which may or may not be embarrassing, will appear inside this newsletter! Thank you to Elaine Nixon for organising.

Our Christmas lunch will take place on Friday December 12th at Pedham Place Golf Centre. Please arrive in time for a 12.30 start. The bar will, of course, be open before the meal is served.

I was sorry to miss Andy Thomas' talk on Lewes and Bonfire Night at last month's meeting. It was clearly well received as I am told it led to requests for an outing to Lewes. No guarantees, but our social committee will look in to the feasibility of a trip there sometime in 2026.

This month we are pleased to welcome Dr Stephen Goss who will talk to us about the wit and satire of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas with their witty commentary on contemporary Victorian society. We will learn what motivated Gilbert to write certain operas, the satire of some of the plots and unmask some of the characters which were deliberate parodies of specific Victorian politicians and notables. It should be an entertaining morning. I look forward to seeing you all at the Alexandra Suite for a 10.30 start on Friday December 5th.

Dave Collins Chairman

Reminder!

Please switch your mobile phone to silent mode during the meeting

**Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday 5th December 2025 at 10.30am
At the Alexandra Suite, St Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU**

Friday 5th December Dr Stephen Goss will give a talk entitled 'No tolerance of undeserving rank and splendour': the wit and satire of Gilbert & Sullivan – Act I

The comedy and music of the Savoy Operas has ensured they remain popular to this day. Discover the witty commentary on contemporary Victorian society woven into the libretti. Uncover the thinly veiled satire of some of the plots, what motivated Gilbert to write certain operas, and unmask the characters which were deliberate parodies of specific Victorian politicians and notables.

The talk not only provides context to the operas, but also gives an insight into British society, culture, and world view in the Victorian era.

Friday 2nd January 2026: We welcome back Tony Harris to start the New Year.

Tony will present: The Wild West was – in our mind – created by Hollywood. But it really happened! It was tough out West but characters like Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane were nothing like the way they were portrayed in the movies. Popular speaker Tony Harris dons the boots and Stetson and gives us the real story of The Not So Wild West.

Nicola Teoh

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES – During the Coming Month(s)

Bridge Club

The next meeting is on Wednesday 3rd December, 10.00am at the Howard Venue, Hextable.

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 meeting Monday 8th December at the Howard Centre in Hextable BR8 7LG.

We have a good selection of games and cards. Please bring along any games that you would like to play. As we hire the room there is a £3 charge, drinks can also be purchased at the centre.

Just come along on the day or email for further details 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

There are **2 Quiz afternoons** this month.
(£3 per person with all profits going to the RNLI):



Tuesday December 2nd-2pm

Thursday December 18th – 2pm. This will be my annual Christmas themed quiz.

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

David Collins

January NEWSLETTER

For the January newsletter can you please send articles and photos by **Wednesday 24th December** to ahayward530@gmail.com

Alan Hayward

Events and Outings

DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS LUNCH PEDHAM PLACE 12th DECEMBER

Thank you everyone who is coming to the Christmas Lunch at Pedham Place. Please arrive from 12.30 for 1.00 start. You can buy alcohol or soft drinks in the bar before we sit down.



Please note that only drinks purchased at Pedham can be consumed

The **table plan** is at the end of this newsletter (*page 18*) and will be at the December meeting and at the lunch on the premises. Please make a note of your table number.

I will bring copies of the menu choices to the lunch in case you have forgotten what you requested! If you find that you can't come, I would be grateful if you could let me know. We have given the venue your money and the menu choices. Unfortunately the deadline for refunds has now passed, so I can't repay you unless someone else is taking your place.

Let me know if you have any queries – I will be at the monthly meeting or you can contact me via our website at https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/christmas-lunch/, Many thanks

Gill Baker

JANUARY

Thursday 22nd January: Coach outing to London to visit:

The Design Museum, Kensington High Street

The World's leading museum devoted to contemporary design. Changes in design over the 20th and 21st centuries are shown through displays of around 1000 items featuring architecture, furniture and fashion, a Vespa scooter, an original Apple Mackintosh computer, a Model T Ford and an Olivetti typewriter.



Lunch is not included but there are two cafes in the museum as well as a museum shop.

After lunch we will take the coach to:

Mail Rail at the Postal Museum

All aboard for a fifteen minute train ride through underground tunnels deep below the post office's Mount Pleasant sorting office. Discover a unique piece of industrial heritage and see and hear the people who worked on it. The audio-visual shows at the two station stops on the ride takes passengers back in time to the railway's lively 1930's heyday. Please note that there will be some moments of pitch darkness and some loud noises and flashing lights.



After the ride take the zebra crossing to the opposite side of the street where you will find the postal museum exhibition and the museum's café.

Cost: £37

For more information about both the Design & Postal Museum follow the link to our website https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/visit-to-design-museum-postal-museum-london/

If you are interested in going, please sign up at our monthly meeting or by email via the 'Organiser' on the website link above.

Pick Up Times: 08.45 Hextable Village Green 09.00 Swanley (back of Asda)

Return Time: Leave Postal Museum around 4.30pm.

Veronica Brazier

February

Friday February 6th 2026

Jack and the Beanstalk Pantomime performed by the:
Axstane Players at Farningham Village Hall.

For more information re the Axstane Players follow the link to their website https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/jack-and-the-beanstalk-pantomime/



Cost- £14

You will be able to sign up for this at the December meeting or by email via the 'Organiser' on the website link above.

Penny Collins

Date for your diary

March 21st 2026- Murder Evening with Fish 'n Chips supper- Five Wents Hall, Swanley.

More information nearer the time.

MEMBERSHIP

GREAT NEWS! WE HAVE ALMOST REACHED OUR TARGET OF 300 MEMBERS!

**WE ARE STILL OFFERING HALF PRICE MEMBERSHIP FROM NOW UNTIL MARCH 2026
SO PLEASE HELP US REACH 300 BY ENCOURAGING YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN!**

Our membership year begins at the beginning of April 2025 and runs until March 2026. The cost is usually £20. People can join at any time during the year.

From October to March, the cost for the half year is reduced to £10. Anyone who comes in from October onwards can join for just £10. Their membership is valid until April 2026, when everyone is invited to renew.

If you know anyone who wants to join us, please tell them that they are welcome to 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. Forms are available from Gill Baker Membership Secretary at our meetings or by contacting her via the website.

Payment can be made by cash or cheque at a monthly meeting. Cheques made payable to **Swanley and District U3A** please.

Alternatively, the £10 (half year) subscription can be paid by bank transfer.

The bank details are:

Bank: Natwest

Account number: 51170027

Sort code: 60 21 10

Account name: Swanley & District U3A

IMPORTANT When the bank asks for a **reference**, please put the **surname** so we know who made the payment! (For example - **BAKER**).

PLUS They need to confirm that they have made this payment by contacting Gill Baker via the Membership page on the U3A website: <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/membership/> or by letting her know at a meeting. If they are paying for a spouse or partner in addition to themselves, they should provide both names in the email.

AN APPLICATION FORM needs to be completed for each new member and returned to the Membership Secretary at the monthly meeting, where they can collect their membership card(s).

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

Many thanks!

Gill Baker Membership Secretary

GROUP / EVENTS NEWS

Tereza Joanne Matinee Christmas Divas Party at London Royal Docks



There will be more Photos plus Videos in the Slideshow at the December monthly meeting

Creative Writing Group

THE CAVE

On the 23rd June 2018, a group of teenage boys from a local junior football team named the Wild Boars were looking forward exploring the Tham Luang Nang Non cave complex in a mountain range on the border between Thailand and Myanmar after football practice. The 12 boys left their bicycles near the entrance and set off with their assistant coach through the network of narrow passages and winding tunnels.

At around 7pm that evening, the head coach checked his phone and found many missed calls from parents saying their children had not returned. Being informed by an older boy that the group had entered the caves, he raced to the scene to be met by water seeping into the entrance. Although heavy rainfall was not normally expected until July, a deluge had started and was flooding the cave system, trapping the group and blocking their way out.

A rescue operation had to be put in place without delay. Thai Navy Seals began searching the cave but visibility was so poor even with lights they could not see where they were going underwater. The British Cave Rescue Council was called in together with the US Air Force Para Rescue Men, a team of specialist response group divers from Australia and the Beijing Peaceland Foundation divers. Although drones and robots were used to scan the surface, no technology existed to scan for people deep underground.

After negotiating very narrow flooded sections, strong currents and zero visibility, on the 2nd July, British divers John Volanthen and Rick Stanton found the group alive on an elevated rock, about two and a half miles from the cave mouth. The journey to reach the group took six hours.

Frantic work was taking place outside the cave with systems installed in an effort to pump water out of the cave and divert flows that were entering it.

Now how to get the boys and their coach out? It was decided to fully sedate the boys to prevent them panicking on the journey. The anaesthetic lasted only one hour so had to be topped up by trained divers as they progressed. Each boy was tethered to a diver in case they were lost in the murky water, dressed in a wetsuit, fitted with a full-face mask and with an oxygen cylinder clipped their front, carefully led through the passages. When a dry section was reached, the dive gear was removed and the boy was transferred to a drag

stretcher over rocks and sand hills. Then the process repeated for the next submerged section. A careful and precise operation with the boys being medically checked at intervals, all carried out by this experienced team of rescue divers. As they waited for their turn to be transported, the boys were fed with easy to digest high energy food with vitamins and minerals under the supervision of Thai Navy Seals with medical experience.

One of the British divers Jason Mallinson offered the boys and coach the facility to send messages to relatives using his wet notes pad. This gave huge reassurance and encouragement to those anxiously waiting for news.

As they approached the treacherous path out of the cave, the boys on the stretchers were carried, slid and zip lined along a complex arrangement of pulleys installed by rock climbers. The initial journey out of the cave took about five hours but lessened considerably after a week of draining and clearing the mud path using shovels. By 10th July the last four boys and their coach were rescued from the cave. It was a miraculous rescue. The boys had lost weight but were otherwise in a good condition. They wore sunglasses as a precaution while their eyes adjusted to the daylight.

An army doctor found out that the boys had tried to dig their way out of the cave by using rock fragments to create a hole five metres deep.

Classmates of one of the boys made 1,000 paper cranes for him while praying for his safe return. Local people rallied round to help cook, clean and support the missing team's families and the rescue teams.

No blame was attached to the assistant coach Ekkaphon for taking the boys into the caves as the rain had arrived earlier than usual. Previously a Buddhist monk, in fact he has been regarded a hero for keeping the boys calm by guiding them in meditation and instructing them to drink the relatively clean water dripping from the cave walls instead of the murky floodwaters that trapped them. He apologised for putting the boys in danger.

Sadly, there were two fatalities. Saman Kunan a former Thai Navy Seal lost consciousness underwater delivering three air tanks and could not be resuscitated. He was posthumously awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant. Another rescue diver and Thai Navy Seal died the following year from septic shock having acquired a latent blood infection during the rescue operation.

An estimated 10,000 people contributed to the rescue effort. More than 100 divers, 900 police officers, 2,000 soldiers and numerous volunteers. Ten police helicopters, seven police ambulances and 700 diving cylinders with 500 being used in the cave at any time, 200 waiting to be refilled. More than a billion litres of water (the equivalent of 400 Olympic size swimming pools) was removed.

At the time of the rescue, the assistant coach Ekkaphon and three of the boys had no nationality. They were from tribes in a region known as the Golden Triangle with no clear borders across parts of Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Southwestern China. Being stateless, they had no passports which created problems in travelling to play matches. Thai officials promised legal help in obtaining citizenship for the boys which was granted on 26th September 2018, normally taking up to six months.

Everyone watched, waited, hoped and prayed throughout this amazing cave rescue, with the whole world turning out to help.

Delma Gould

Left and Right

'Thank you for that lovely meal, you can't beat home cooking,' said John, as he relaxed back into his chair, and placed his knife and fork neatly on his plate.

'Glad you enjoyed it,' said his cousin, Anne, as she refilled his wine glass.

'I'm sorry to hear that poor old Aunt Mabel has move into a nursing home. She was always such an independent lady,' John remarked.

Oh, don't be sorry. She is having a whale of a time. When I visited her last week, they were all in the lounge having a good old sing song. She's got plenty of company, and she says that the food is excellent. You should visit her.'

'I might do that. Where is it?'

'Just follow the Old Roman Road, leading out of town, and when you see a large church on the left-hand side, you turn right and then left.'

'That sounds simple enough. I might go next weekend.'

'She would be delighted to see you,' said Anne.

The following Saturday John purchases a box of chocolate and a bunch of flowers and set off along the Old Roman Road. Unfortunately, he got stuck behind a large lorry which was chucking out a cloud of black smoke, and he decided to overtake. So, he didn't see the church at the side of the road.

A little further up, there was a large building, which could have been a church, and he turned right there. He was surprised that the next left was such a small country lane, but he saw a large sign that said 'Utopia', so he thought that must be it. He parked his car in the car park, collected the chocolates and flowers from the back seat, and walked towards the main building.

He was almost at the door when an elderly gentleman, with long grey hair, walked past him. John was startled to see that he wasn't wearing any clothes. The old man smiled at John and said hello. John, somewhat astonished, smiled back.

Oh, my word, he thought, one of the residents is walking around the grounds naked. I need to tell a member of the staff. I do hope Auntie Mabel doesn't bump into him. It might give her a heart attack. A sign indicated the direction of the reception, and he hurried towards it. There was no one at the reception, so John rang the bell on the desk.

As the door behind the counter opened, there was no hiding the stunned expression on John's face. The middle-aged lady with bright pink hair, was also naked. What sort of a nursing home is this?

'Can I help you?' said the lady as if nothing was amiss.

'Oh, ah, yes, well, I've come to visit my Aunt Mabel,' but as he spoke his eyes fell upon a poster on a notice board behind the reception desk. *Naturist News*. 'Is this a nursing home?' he spluttered.

'No, this is a naturist retreat,' said the lady, as she smiled politely, and proceeded to give him directions to the nursing home.

John thanked her profusely, his eyes steadfastly glued to her face. He could feel his own face glowing beetroot red. Then, half at a walk and half at a run, he made it back to the car.

Following her instructions he retraced his steps, and he found the church where he should have turned right, then, after an immediate left, the Sunshine Nursing Home came into view.

Aunt Mabel was delighted to see him. She loved the flowers, and they talked of old times as they shared the chocolates between them.

He decided not to mention to Aunt Mabel anything about his visit to Utopia – he thought that she might be a little shocked.

Jill Agates

Wine and Dine Group

We had our usual 4 meetings a year this year and we visited 3 familiar places and 1 new one.

The first outing this year is to what seems to have become almost a habit - Bartellas in Meopham. This is such a good value restaurant – lovely food and excellent service at a very reasonable price.

Our next trip, in May, was to a much loved Indian restaurant in Petts Wood – Indian Essence. This is part of a chain of restaurants set up by Atul Kochar, the first Indian Chef in Britain to be awarded a Michelin star for his restaurant Benares in Mayfair, He has since left Benares and concentrated on giving suburban Londoners very good quality food at amazingly low prices. 17 of us went along to the meal and had a wonderful time.

In August we visited The Samuel Palmer in Shoreham. This is a high quality gastropub and again, the food, service and value for money was excellent. What really stood out however, was that the waitress who took our orders did not have a notebook and memorised all our orders. She then proceeded to deliver all those orders completely accurately to all of us. Did she have a hidden tape recorder? I don't know, but it was pretty impressive!



Finally, we went to somewhere completely different in November. Not to a restaurant, not to a gastropub, but to a chain restaurant in Bluewater. No, not to Nando's, but to Pho, a Vietnamese street food restaurant. Those new to this cuisine found the experience worthwhile and discovered that Vietnamese food, whilst still noodle and rice based, is very different from Chinese food. It is actually much healthier (less fat) but very tasty in its own way. The new experience was much appreciated by all those who went.

We are always happy to have new members. We have a reasonably large membership at the moment, but of course not everyone can always make all the meetings, so there is usually space for all who want to go. So do join us if you like good quality food at sensible prices!

Santha Blankley

Word Magic Group

Every month in WORD MAGIC we set ourselves a theme and then share material based around it. This could be poems, prose, art or music. This month our theme was rivers which proved to be very inspiring. We listened to some of an orchestral piece of music by Smetana which describes the Moldau river and Pauline gave us an explanation of the music as it played. We had more modern music in the form of extracts of Moon River from Breakfast at Tiffany's and Old Man river sung by Paul Robeson, from Showboat. Several people had found moving poems which explored our theme further and Pat and Penny had written their own contributions which are printed below. All in all we spent a very enjoyable hour together on Zoom.

The Thames

On a personal level the Thames was a big presence in my younger years.

I commuted into London to work every day, crossing Tower Bridge to get to the city. This was when the ships still came right up to the pool of London - the area between London Bridge & Tower bridge. Very often Tower Bridge was up to let a ship in or out and it caused chaos to the rush hour traffic.

A lot of my family all worked on the river. As did some of my in laws. Unloading goods from all over the world. Sugar & rum arrived from the Caribbean into West India dock. Timber from Canada & the Baltic into Surrey docks. Bananas tomatoes & potatoes from the Canary Islands into Canary Wharf. Tea, spices silk & cotton from the east into east India dock.

Hays wharf, now Hays gallery was known as the larder of London especially in Victorian times. It was the main destination for tea clippers from China & India; besides tea there was coffee, cheese, meat, butter, eggs and much more.

The royal Albert dock was revolutionary in its day - designed for secure storage as it handled expensive goods like brandy, ivory & silk.

Tobacco wharf is self-explanatory.

The pool of London handled a vast array of produce and goods, including tea, spices, tobacco, coffee & fish. In its prime, ships brought valuable commodities from across the globe, such as textiles, nuts, sugar, wool from Australia and whale oil. Billingsgate, located in the Pool, was a major center for various goods like corn, coal, iron, wine & pottery, before becoming specifically known for fish.

Many industries arose around the river to process and produce goods from the raw commodities brought in by boat up the river.

Bermondsey, where I lived was a hive of industry as were other London riverside areas.

Courage brewery where my husband & his family worked being one of them. My father-in-law delivered beer by dray horse & cart.

There were so many smells in the air, spices from around the world. Biscuits from Peek Freans factory, soup from Cross & Blackwell, Pearce & Duffs making custard, metal box factories making the tins for the biscuits & soup. Tanneries, sarsons vinegar and many more - you can imagine the smells in the air - spices, soup & biscuits were gorgeous, but some not so nice like vinegar & tanneries.

All of this trade & wealth pouring into London, the industry and activity. It gave work to thousands up and down both sides of the Thames; the river was the very reason we lived there.

The old community broke up and died years ago when industry was moved either up north or abroad, and cargo was now brought in by container ships that docked much further down near the mouth of the river. The wharves & warehouses were revived & re generated and became the beautiful but expensive buildings and area it is now.

My favourite walk is still to stroll along the now vibrant south bank where once was a hive of activity and cargo ships.

All this colourful history is due to the mighty river Thames.

Pat Robson

THE RIVER

RAIN,
 PATTERNING, POURING,
 RELENTLESS DROPS SPLASH,
 INTO THE RUSHING RIVER,
 SWIRLING AND FROTHING ROUND ROCKS,
 WATER CRASHING AND FALLING AND GUSHING,
 AS THE RIVER FALLS INTO THE ABYSS,
 LANDS AND RUSHES; IT CANNOT STOP,
 SWIRLS AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE,
 AS THE RAIN DISAPPEARS,
 THE RIVER RECEDES,
 WATER FLOWS,
 GENTLY.

Penny Collins

Bridgen Group

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:

The bidding sequence is: North 1S South 1NT North 2D South 2H

What has each player told their partner about their hand and what might happen next?

Answer next month.

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

♣ AKJ	♦ J84	♥ JT32	♠ K72	opening hand
♣ Q9	♦ A9632	♥ KQ	♠ Q985	responding hand

How would you open the bidding? What would you reply? How would the bidding continue?

Opening hand – with 13 points and a balanced even hand bid 1NT.

If you are using Stayman and transfers.

Responding hand – with 13 points and a 4 card major suit use Stayman, bid 2C.

Opening hand – with 4 hearts bid 2H.

Responding hand – bid 3NT (with 13 points you have enough combined points for a game contract and you have not found a major suit fit with your partner).

Natural bidding, not using Stayman or transfers.

Responding hand has 3 possible bids, jump to 3D, jump to 3S or jump to 3NT.

A bid of 3D leaves your partner with few options other than to bid 3NT needing 9 tricks rather than 5D needing 11 tricks.

A jump to 3S is misleading because it is not your longest suit, to make that bid I would prefer to have 5 spade cards. Again it makes life tricky for your partner to bid again and they might assume you have 5 spade cards and bid 4S rather than 3NT (possible disaster!).

A jump straight to 3NT is probably the best option with enough combined points for a game and a reasonably even spread of cards.

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

Geography Group

At our November meeting the Group looked at various aspects of Croatia:

- Croatia has a per capita GDP of USD 51,000 compared to the UK's USD 63,000.
- 20 million tourists visited Croatia in 2024 of whom about 1 million were nudists (mainly from Germany)!
- The European pine marten is one of the national symbols of Croatia and appears on the Croatian euro coins.
- Croatia has 1,185 islands
- The Green Lady of Krka is a white mulberry tree estimated to be about 400 years old and has a trunk circumference of 15' 7", whilst the Olive Tree on Brijuni is about 1600 years old and even today bears fruit which is used to produce olive oil.
- Under the communist system the people were guaranteed free healthcare, free dental care, and secure pensions, and provided free apartments.
- [In reality, the housing was inferior with poor heating and plumbing; the medical care often lacked the availability of medicines and antibiotics; and schools were propaganda machines].
- The Bura is a cold dry wind that occurs due to two different climatic types clashing and has been known to reach 125mph.
- Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia on 25 June 1991 and the five-year War of Independence began.
- Croatia joined the EU on 1 July 2013 and is now part of the Eurozone and Schengen area.



At our December meeting we will be uncovering a number of the Caribbean islands.

Colin Annetts

Antiques & Collectables Group

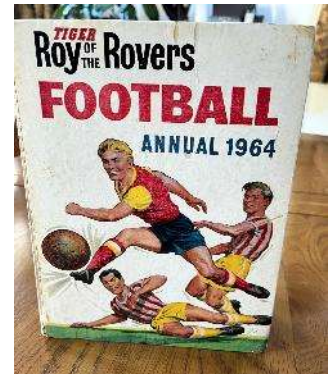
Our seasonal theme for our November meeting was Winter / Christmas. Everyone managed to find something appropriate for the subject.

Audrey thought of flowers we display at Christmas and brought along her collection of flower frogs. She had some handed down from her mother, and others were given to her by a friend. Apparently flower frogs originated in 14th century Japan and were made of iron. Flower arranging at this time was minimalist and very precise, so the frogs enabled the arrangements to be made with the perfect desired shape. In this country, made of glass, their popularity peaked in the 1930s, but are still collected today.



Judy's father was an artist and a photographer. Every year when Judy was a child, towards Christmas, he used his creativity and technical skills to produce a 'trick' photo to use as a Christmas card. This was very advanced for the time and Judy said he spent hours perfecting the shots he needed, and then creating the cards from them. They all featured Judy and are a lovely reminder of her childhood and of her clever father.

John found some favourite Christmas presents from his younger days – annuals. He has kept them since the 1960s – Roy of the Rovers 1963 and 1964. These featured stories about Roy Race who played for the fictitious Melchester Rovers. The annuals cost 8/6 (about 42p). From 1954 to 1993 Roy Race could also be found in the Tiger comic. A long career! Annuals were derived from the 19th century when periodicals were bound together as books for the Christmas market.



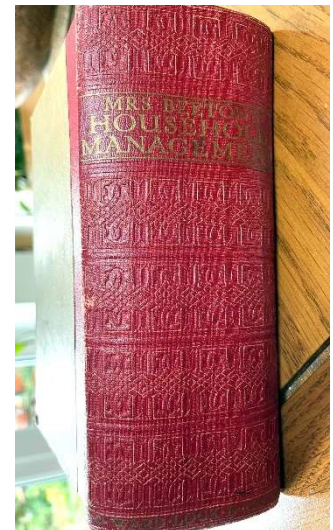
Tony brought along a lovely table croquet set in a wooden box. It was complete with 6 mallets, hoops and balls, and was designed to play on a table. The instructions suggested that adding a table cloth would make the game easier and prevent the balls from flying off the table.

We were fascinated by Wendy's Book of Household Management by the famous Mrs Beeton, first published in 1861. This edition, published in the 1920s – 1930s, has many references to the Upstairs/Downstairs world of a large well to do household. Wendy showed us some winter recipes with delights including Mock Turtle Soup, Roasted Quail, Braised Pigeons and Caviar on Toast. Scrummy! The book also provided advice on fashion, child care, animal husbandry, poisons, the management of servants, science, religion, and first aid. Despite her 'grandma' image, sadly, Isabella Beeton was only 28 when she died following childbirth in 1865.

MENU MAKING 1437

DINNERS FOR EIGHT PERSONS.—WINTER.

Platters	Quantities	Platters
3 plates.	3 plates.	3 plates.
2 plates.	2 plates.	2 plates.
10 cutlets.	10 cutlets.	10 cutlets.
1 hen.	1 hen.	1 hen.
8 birds.	8 birds.	8 birds.
1 dish.	1 dish.	1 dish.
1 pudding.	1 pudding.	1 pudding.
10 eggs.	10 eggs.	10 eggs.
10 scones.	10 scones.	10 scones.
2 dishes.	2 dishes.	2 dishes.
2 dishes.	2 dishes.	2 dishes.
3 plates.	3 plates.	3 plates.
2 plates.	2 plates.	2 plates.
8 herrings.	8 herrings.	8 herrings.
4 lbs.	4 lbs.	4 lbs.
2 birds.	2 birds.	2 birds.
1 fish.	1 fish.	1 fish.
10 pigs.	10 pigs.	10 pigs.
1 dish.	1 dish.	1 dish.
10 oysters.	10 oysters.	10 oysters.
3 lbs.	3 lbs.	3 lbs.
2 dishes.	2 dishes.	2 dishes.
3 plates.	3 plates.	3 plates.
4 lbs.	4 lbs.	4 lbs.
3 plates.	3 plates.	3 plates.
12 lb.	12 lb.	12 lb.
4 heads.	4 heads.	4 heads.
7 meats.	7 meats.	7 meats.
10 scones.	10 scones.	10 scones.
10 scones.	10 scones.	10 scones.
3 lbs.	3 lbs.	3 lbs.
2 dishes.	2 dishes.	2 dishes.



Madeline has had her candlestick and Christmas jug for many years, and always brings them out at Christmas. The milk jug was made by Wedgwood and is part of a range called 'Sarah's Garden Christmas', which had fruit designs. The bone china candlestick is by Spode, with transfer printed decoration including mistletoe and holly. Spode is now part of the Portmeirion group in Stoke on Trent.

Penny had a similar item, brought out at Christmas – a Royal Albert plate, decorated with holly, mistletoe and poinsettia flowers. She bought this on one of our antique group visits to Faversham.



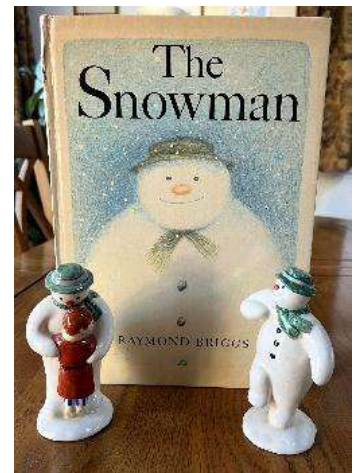
We liked Tom’s beautiful papier mache box, which he bought in St Petersburg on a visit to Russia in the 1980s. This is painted with lacquer and the style has become popular worldwide in more recent years. It is a replica of the original boxes which were made in only 4 places in Russia. It depicts a small Russian village, in a winter snow scene.

Sue brought along a stoneware vase which she brings out at Christmas to display a seasonal floral arrangement. Made by the Moira Pottery works in England, it is from their Hillstonia range. It has their typical rustic style, with a textured appearance of wood or stone, and two handles.



Dave purchased a framed collection of commemorative stamps from the antique shop in Otford. This has stamps of very diverse subjects, including JMW Turner, St John’s Ambulance service, Kensington Palace, Nelson, Robert Burns, 1966 World Cup, and Concorde.

My contribution was the first edition ‘Snowman’ book by Raymond Briggs, published in 1978, costing £2.95. It contained no words, just illustrations in comic book style, drawn with coloured pencils. I had been fond of Briggs work since I was at a talk by him in 1973 when I was a student. The book was famously developed into a cartoon, introduced by David Bowie, and shown every Christmas since 1982 except 1984. I have two Snowman ceramic figures, made by Royal Doulton in 1985, which are put out every Christmas in our house. We also have first editions from 1973 and 1975 of Briggs books ‘Father Christmas’ and the sequel ‘Father Christmas Goes on Holiday’.



Gill Baker

Wine Appreciation Group

The Wine Appreciation Group met on Tuesday 25th November 2025 and this month’s topic was Wines from Marks & Spencer. We meet at each other’s homes on a rota basis – unfortunately this means we cannot expand the size of the group! M&S were offering a 10% discount on wines and we tasted 3 white and 5 red wines as follows:

Whites:

- 1. Yarri-Karri, Margaret River, Australia, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon grapes, discount price £13.28 Decanter Gold medal winner. →
- 2. De Martino, Limari, Chile, Chardonnay grape, discount price £11.25
- 3. Juanico, Uruguay, Alberino grape, discount price £9.45
- 4. Fleurie Cru Beaujolais, France, Gamay grape, discount price £10.80
- 5. Boekenhoutskloof, Stellenbosch, South Africa, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot grapes, discount price £9.00



ARRI KARRI SEMILLON AUVIGNON BLANC

Reds:

- 6. Yarri-Karri, Margaret River, Australia, Cabernet Sauvignon grape, discount price £13.28 Decanter Gold medal winner. →
- 7. Norton, Mendoza, Argentina, Malbec grape, discount price £9.00
- 8. Susana Balbo, Mendoza, Argentina, Malbec grape, discount price £13.28



YARRI KARRI CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Decanter score wines as follows:

- Commended 83-85 points
- Bronze 86-89 points
- Silver 90-94 points
- Gold 95-100 points

As a group we would be disappointed with any wine achieving less than 85 points. We all felt that wines 1 and 6 deserved their Decanter Gold award and rated these two wines at 95 points. Very few wines achieve greater than 96 points as Gold medal winners.

Robert Brickell

Off The Beaten Track Walks Military Woolwich ST. GEORGES GARRISON CHURCH



On our most recent “Off The Beaten Track” walk in Woolwich, we were fortunate to be invited in to the Garrison Church. One of the trustees made us very welcome and told us the story of this once magnificent building.

As a small boy, a trip to Woolwich was a much anticipated event. It was an exciting destination with its large stores and their exciting toy departments. There was also a vibrant market in Beresford Square. I always tried to sit upstairs at the front on the bus (a 161). Where else?



When it stopped by the parade ground before beginning the final stage of the journey along John Wilson Street, I was fascinated by the sight of a ruined church by the side of the road. This was St. Georges Garrison Church. It was built in 1862 on the orders of Lord Sidney Herbert, Secretary for War. The previous decade's Crimean War had revealed the poor condition and treatment of British soldiers. The construction of a new church adjacent to the barracks was part of the effort to provide for the moral well-being of the troops.



St George's Garrison Church, c 1900 Interior from the west, c.1910 Open-air service, c. 1960

It was a huge building and could accommodate a congregation of 1700 people. The exterior used patterned brickwork made possible by new advances in technology. The interior was richly decorated with Italian mosaics. Designs included St. George and the Dragon, a Peacock and a Phoenix. There were also five large stained glass windows and a rose window. Later additions included a Victoria Cross memorial and the names of all Royal Artillery soldiers decorated for gallantry.



First World War bomb damage was swiftly repaired and King George V visited in 1917. Sadly, more serious damage was sustained on the 13th July 1944. The church was hit by a V1 flying bomb. The explosion and subsequent fire destroyed most of the building. A rebuilding scheme was considered in the early 1950's but was never adopted. The ruins were abandoned and neglected for nearly seventy years. However, since 2011 it has been managed the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust. Funding has paid for a canopy roof and the conservation of the mosaics. It is now used for occasional outdoor events and is open to the public on Sunday mornings. It is well worth a visit.

As we continued our walk, we were able to watch The Royal Horse Artillery practising on the parade ground in advance of the Remembrance Sunday events. An impressive sight!



John Baker

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	Vacant 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 Tuesday /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 Weds 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

TABLE PLAN U3A CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT PEDHAM PLACE 12th DECEMBER 2025

- 1**
1. GILL BAKER
 2. JOHN BAKER
 3. CHRISTINA TYLER
 4. MADELINE OPITZ
 5. ROB MOY
 6. LORRAINE MOY
 7. SANDRA EVANS

- 2**
1. COLIN HARRIS
 2. LINDA HARRIS
 3. GILLIAN DRIDGE
 4. VAL WOLFF
 5. JOHN WOLFF
 6. JACQUELINE BARKER
 7. JOAN ROGERS
 8. LINDA COLLINS

- 3**
1. KATHY ONEILL
 2. BECHY CARTER
 3. BOB BRICKELL
 4. JUDY BRICKELL
 5. ALAN HAYWARD
 6. MARY HAYWARD
 7. HEATHER WELLBELOVE
 8. KEN SMY

- 4**
1. CAROL WILLINGHAM
 2. SANDRA GREENAWAY
 3. JANICE HIRSHFELD
 4. DENISE PARTRIDGE
 5. BARBARA SALTER
 6. KAY STEVENS
 7. ROD SHARMAN
 8. SUSAN SHARMAN

- 5**
1. GILL FITTOCK
 2. MARK FITTOCK
 3. VALERIE BURRELL
 4. FRANCES ATKINS
 5. BRENDA SHEPHERD
 6. JOHN ELLIS
 7. SUE ELLIS

- 6**
1. PENNY COLLINS
 2. DAVE COLLINS
 3. SANDY TRELOAR
 4. ROS CRAFTER
 5. LIZ DAVIES
 6. VERONICA BRAZIER

7

1. ROSALIE ALMOND
2. KATHERINE LINFIELD
3. RUTH WILKINSON
4. YVONNE SPURGEON
5. LEE MULLINS
6. SHEILA LYNES
7. SUE JOHNSON
8. GILLIAN MINTERN

8

1. SANDY ENGLISH
2. GILL AXFORD
3. MIKE AXFORD
4. ROGER NEVES
5. WENDY WORTHAM
6. SUE DARVILL
7. LORRAINE GASKIN
8. SUE NEVILLE

9

1. BARBARA RAMSEY
2. VIVIAN RAMSEY
3. SUE MECKIFF
4. TOM MECKIFF
5. GILL MORRIN
6. RICHARD MORRIN
7. MARGARET WILLIAMS
8. VIC WILLIAMS

- Please be at Pedham Place from 12.30 for 1.00.
- Alcohol and soft drinks will be available to purchase from the bar
You are not permitted to bring your own