

Charity No 1155593

Newsletter No 156

January 2026

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Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026 and a happy new year to you all! Our u3a has been running for 13 years since we began in 2013 and continues to thrive. I am pleased to tell you we now have 297 members, tantalisingly close to our target of 300. As chairman I am supported by an enthusiastic, talented and hard-working committee registering you as members and maintaining the membership database, looking after our finances, organising outings and other events, running our monthly meeting and

organising speakers, producing our newsletter each month, maintaining our website, co-ordinating and supporting our interest groups, dealing with correspondence from the regional and national u3a and other local organisations and minuting our monthly committee meetings.

We do not have a Publicity Officer at the moment, however, and it would be wonderful if one of you felt able to fulfil that role. Please contact me or any other committee member if you are interested. It would not be an onerous task and would make it more likely that we reach our target of 300 members in 2026.

Our Christmas lunch in December was enjoyed by the 66 members who attended. Sincere thanks to Gill Baker who worked so hard organising the event and to the staff at Pedham Place Golf Centre who helped make the lunch such a success. My quiz on the day was more visual than usual so a bit different this year. Well done to the winning table. There were no prizes for the winners of this quiz but you did have the satisfaction of being our end of year champions!

Friday January 2nd is not a public holiday so we will have our first monthly meeting on the second day of the new year and it should be a highly entertaining morning.

I am delighted to announce the speaker will be the ever popular Tony Harris. This time his theme will be The Wild West. We think of the Wild West as it was created by Hollywood but characters like Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane were nothing like the way they were portrayed in the movies. Tony will dress up as always donning the boots and Stetson and give us the real story of the Not So Wild West.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Alexandra Suite on Friday January 2nd. We start as usual at 10.30 am.

Dave Collins Chairman

Reminder!

Please switch your mobile phone to silent mode during the meeting

**Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday 2nd January at 10.30am
At the Alexandra Suite, St Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU**

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.

Friday 6th February 2026: Imogen Corrigan

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 7th January, 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 is Monday 26th January 2026 at 2pm at the Howard Centre in Hextable BR8 7LG. We have a good selection of games and cards. Bring along any games that you would like to play. At the moment Scrabble is very popular so if you are interested in playing do come and join our players.

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 January 6th – 2pm

Thursday January 15th – 2pm.

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

David Collins

February NEWSLETTER

For the February newsletter can you please send articles and photos by **Tuesday 27th January** to ahayward530@gmail.com

Please Note the earlier cut-off date for this month

Alan Hayward

Events and Outings

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 If you would like someone to go with to this show, see me at the January meeting.

Penny Collins

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

Alternative Shadow Players who performed at our murder evening last year, will perform another play and we have to guess whodunnit. The cost is £22 including a fish 'n chips supper in the middle of the evening. We will meet from 7pm for a 7.30 start.

Please sign up and pay at the January or February meeting if you would like to attend this event.

Penny Collins

MEMBERSHIP for 2026 – 2027

WE STILL NEED NEW MEMBERS TO SIGN UP SO PLEASE HELP BY ENCOURAGING YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN! 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.

Renewals

The renewal process is open from January.

Our membership year begins at the beginning of April 2026 and runs until March 2027. The cost remains at **£20**. People can join at any time during the year.

We start to take renewals from January, to ease the burden for the Treasurer and f the Membership Secretary. For anyone renewing now, the membership is valid until the end of March 2027.

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

If possible, we like it if the £20 subscription is 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 and your membership number** so we know who made the payment! (For example – **BAKER33**).

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

Christmas Lunch at Pedham Place Golf Centre







A big thank goes to Gill Baker who worked hard organising the event
and
the staff at Pedham Place Golf Centre who made the lunch a such a success on the day.

Creative Writing Group

Found in the Gutter

The year is 1957, I am sixteen and later this year I will be taking my GCE 'O' Levels. Let me get this straight from the start. I hate revision. I hate learning. I hate school.

Hey-ho! No good me moaning. Has to be done. Might as well make the best of it.

I have an early morning newspaper round which pays me ten bob (shillings) a week. I have been doing this paper round since I was twelve and now that I am head paper boy, I also do three money collecting rounds per fortnight that pays six bob per round. My Dad only earns twelve quid a week so I'm doing alright for a sixteen year old schoolboy.

I love my paper round. It's the best one that old man Stubbs has at his newsagents shop. It's a bit of a cycle ride from collecting my papers at the shop but then I deliver in a real posh area. The houses are mostly detached and grand. Christmas time is great for me. Last year, I made more than fifteen quid in Christmas boxes.

It was just another chilly but bright morning and I was half way through my round when I parked my cycle at the kerbside. I spotted a pinkish slip of paper sitting in the gutter. Strangely, it looked pristine and new despite the grubby contents in the gutter itself. The gutter was also wet from recent rain but the slip of paper was bone dry. Curious, I picked it up. I had never seen anything like this before.

It was headed lotto with a crossed fingers background and below it read: Good luck for your draw on Sat 18 Oct 25 followed by Your Numbers 06 09 21 24 41 42. Below that it read 1 draw = £2. Who on earth would pay two quid to buy some sort of a raffle ticket? That's four weeks of my paper round. You must be joking. Finally, between a load of meaningless numbers, it read: HUGE JACKPOTS ON EUROMILLIONS EVERY TUESDAY AND FRIDAY! On the back of this immaculate ticket, it simply stated 'The National Lottery UK'.

I sometimes glance at the newspapers that I deliver, particularly the football. I had never seen mention of a lotto or The National Lottery. What about the date? October 25? 1925 doesn't make any sense and nor does 2025! This is a complete mystery or somebody's having a sick joke. Anyway, I shoved it in my pocket and finished my round.

Back at home and getting ready for school, I placed the ticket under my pillow for safe keeping. The day continued as normal and I forgot all about it. In bed before nine o'clock as usual because I have to be up by five thirty.

As I awoke the next morning - something very strange. I'm not in my own bedroom. What the hell's going on? I look out the window and it's the same main road but where the heck have the trolley buses gone to? I seem to be alone in an apartment with lots of mod cons that I do not recognise. In the lounge, is that a TV? It's massive with a huge screen. I eventually find an on button and the screen is flooded with magnificent colour pictures. Colour TV? I must be dreaming. I sit and watch; completely mesmerised.

"Good morning. Here is the nine o'clock news on Sunday October 19th 2025. We begin with ex-President Trump who was forced to resign yesterday."

Did I hear that right? 2025? Is this some sort of a joke? I look in the mirror and I'm still sixteen. This cannot be 2025. I would be an old man in my eighties.

"Finally, we end the news with last night's National Lottery draw."

Suddenly, my ears prick up. National Lottery? That's the funny looking slip of paper that I found in the gutter yesterday or whenever. What the hell did I do with it? I rush to the bedroom and look under my pillow. Strewth - there it is. I rush back to the TV.

"We will repeat those winning numbers one more time. They are in numerical order 6 9 21 24 41 and 42. The lucky winner is expected to win in excess of seven and a half million pounds."

This must be a dream. I'll wake up in a minute. They match the numbers on my ticket. Is it really as easy as that? Seven and a half million quid? I'm worth about two quid at home. I've got about six bob in my pocket at the moment. I soon discover that there is no food in this apartment and I'm starving. At home, there are shops just up the road and yes, they are still there but looking very different. What's this? Over four quid for a sandwich? Three pounds fifty for some sort of a coffee? That's gotta be impossible.

"You alright mate? You look a bit lost. Can I help at all?"

This guy who was addressing me looked a similar age to me and appeared quite friendly. "Yeah, I'm a bit confused. The prices here are ridiculously expensive and I've only got about six bob on me. But I do have a winning lotto ticket on me. How do I collect my winnings?"

"Dunno what six bob means, pal. It all depends on how much you've won on the lotto. Some shops will cash your ticket."

I replied: "What about seven million quid?"

"How much? Go 'ome. You're having a laugh. Anyway, you're not old enough to claim. You have to be eighteen."

After I manage to convince him of my winning ticket, he phones his older brother on some weird contraption that has no wires.

"My twenty year old brother will drive us to Watford tomorrow and he can claim the winnings for you. However, we want half the jackpot - that's fair."

Didn't seem fair to me but did I have a choice? I'll still have well over three million quid but then I'll need to find some way to get home. I don't wanna stay in 2025.

"My name's Zack and you can stop at our place tonight and then, tomorrow, whoopee."

"OK - thanks," is my reply.

The next morning I wake up and it's still dark. My first thought is: 'Today I'm going to become a multi-millionaire!' I switch the light on. What!! I'm back in my own bedroom. My calendar says April 1957. In panic, I look under my pillow and my lottery ticket is still with me. How do I get my winnings?

Months have gone by. My GCE exams are all done. Every night I go to sleep expecting to wake up in 2025 the next morning. It's not happening. It's not going to happen.

I'll just have to wait until 2025 eventually comes along. By then I'll be eighty-five years old. That's if I live that long.

Terry Bennett

Bridge 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. New members welcome.

This month's question:

North; ♣ T9853 ♦ AKQ ♥ QT73 ♠ K
 South; ♣ KQ ♦ J9632 ♥ KJ96 ♠ A2

What will north open? After the opening bid by north what should be going through south's mind? What will south reply? How do you foresee the bidding progressing and what are the players telling each other?

Answer next month.

** Reminder and answer to last 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?

North 1S; 12-22 points and at least 4 spades (spades is my longest suit)

South 1NT; 6-9 points – I can't bid at the 2-level with low points so can't give you any suit information.

North 2D; this second bid narrows down the point range and also gives additional suit information. I have 12-15 points, 5 (or more) cards in my first bid suit - spades and 4 (or more) cards in my second bid - diamonds.

South 2H; The point range information remains at 6-9 points. South is telling his partner that he can't support either the spade or diamond suit and a NT contract doesn't look as if it would work. To bid a new suit when he has so few points, he must have a long suit of at least 6 cards in hearts and think this may be the best option.

North now makes a final best decision using the information he has about South's hand and what he can see in his own hand.

When the two hands have lowish points and don't appear to fit together always remember that whilst you are looking for the best suit to play in you also need to bear in mind that staying in a lower level with a less good suit can be better than playing at a higher level and needing more tricks.

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

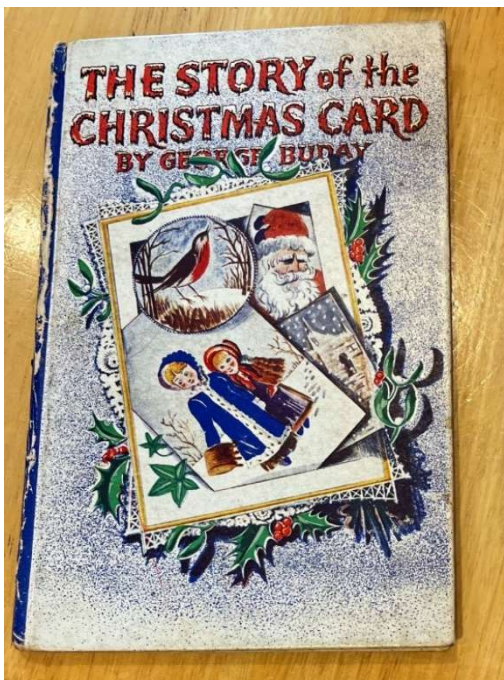
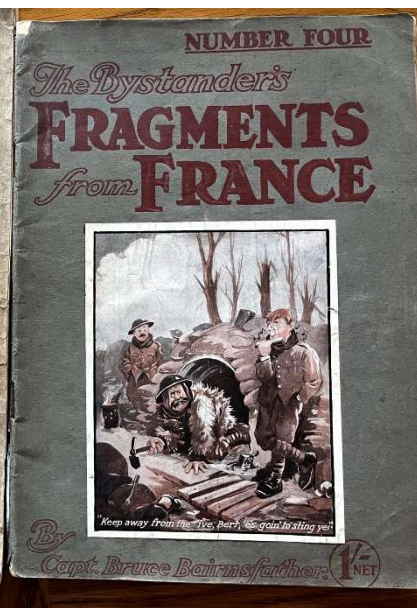
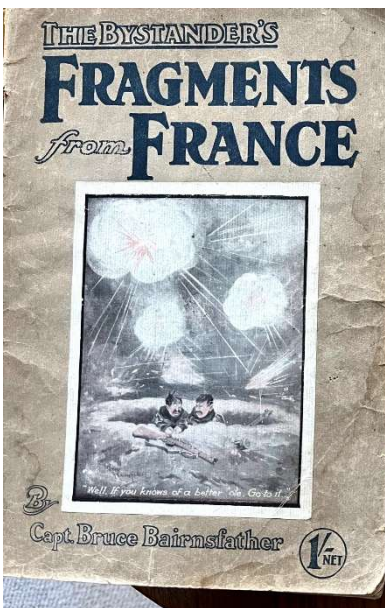
December Antiques & Collectables Group Outing

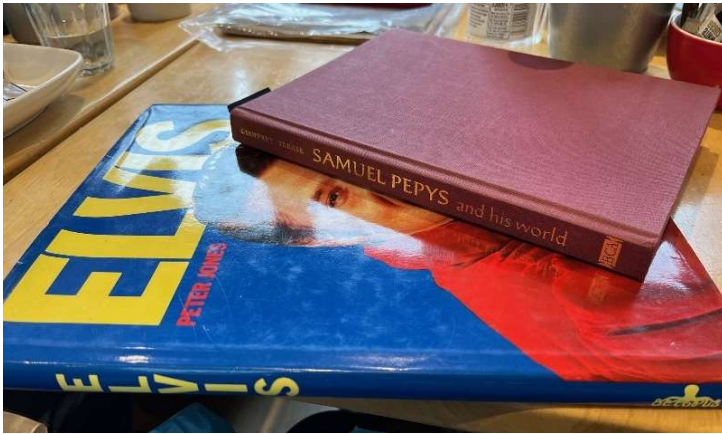
As has been the tradition for several years now, we had our annual outing to Otford, to rummage in the antique shops and then to meet for lunch in the lovely Hospices of Hope Café.

Eleven people made the journey this year, and everyone found something to purchase in the shops (including half price jams and chutney in the cafe). We all had a good lunch and passed round our treasures for everyone to admire.

Here is a selection of some of the purchases:







Gill Baker

The 2025 Mince Pie Challenge

This year John and I thought we would take this more seriously and try and complete the challenge of eating 12 mince pies in different location having failed for the last few years.

We started with our 1st mince pie at the Swanley History Group meeting in the Alexandria suite on the 3rd Dec.

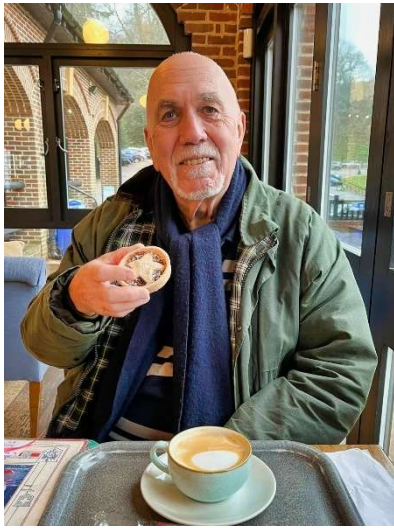
(photo courtesy of Tracy of SHG)

Some of you may remember that John mention at the u3a main mttg in Dec that he had a mince pie at the Old Vic, not to be outdone by a such a location I then had one at the Royal Opera House!



Our quest continued by consuming a mince pie in various luxurious locations such as shopping and gardening centres, Wilmington Village Hall, Chequers Pub (Crockenhill), Otford and JARA mttg.

On the 14th Dec we had our 9th mince together at a rugby match – The Stoop (home of Harlequins Rugby club).



John then had his next mince pie at Chartwell, while I had mind in the home of rugby at Twickenham stadium.

By now we were both up to 9 each and on track to complete the challenge this year.

John had his 10th mince pie at a relations house while I had mind at outdoor living in Knockholt



We had pies no 11 on the 18th Dec.

Mind at Dave's Christmas quiz at the Howard centre while John had his at the Wine Group meeting which was hosted by Mary at home (although it looks like his putting it in his eye!).



We completed the challenge on the 23rd Dec when we met at the Next-door café in Hextable for the 12th and final Mince Pie.

Photographed by Gill Baker and witnessed by Sandy English (she was behind us – oh yes, she was).

So roll on Dec 2026 and we can start it all over again!!!

Or maybe we will do sausage rolls instead?



Alan / John

Looking at Art Group

TURNER AND CONSTABLE – RIVALS AND ORIGINALS

Members of the Looking at Art Group recently visited the Tate Britain to see the Turner and Constable exhibition. The morning began with a lecture which introduced the artists, their work and their lives. Some little known details were shared with us. As a young boy, JMW Turner exhibited pictures in his father's barber shop in Covent Garden. Some of his later paintings contain errors in their titles. Turner was notoriously poor at spelling! John Constable was born into a financially comfortable family in Suffolk. His parents were initially reluctant to support his desire to become an artist. He eventually found fame and fortune when he took his paintings to France.



JWM Turner



John Constable

The sub-title of the exhibition is Rivals and Originals. They were certainly contemporary artists working in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. Indeed, they were original and their styles differed greatly. The exhibition managed to successfully compare and contrast the works of arguably Britain's two finest artists. A huge selection of their paintings was displayed. It also contained interesting note books, letters, sketches, brushes, palettes and even Constable's sketching chair. At the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1831, the two artists were described as "fire and water". The visitor to Tate Britain is invited to decide which one is which. I would recommend this exhibition to anyone with an interest in British art. It runs until April 2026.



J Turner The Burning of the Houses of Parliament



John Constable The Hay Wain

John Baker

Sports Groups

The Indoor Kurling, Table Tennis, Petanque & Croquet groups Christmas Lunch at The Bull Swanley.



Big thank you to Bill for all his hard work organising all these events over the year.

Rod Sharman

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