

Charity No 1155593

## Newsletter No 157

February 2026

### In this Issue

Monthly Meeting	2
Summary of Activities and Outings in coming months	2 - 3
Membership Information	4
News from the Groups	5 - 10
Committee and Contacts	11
Groups Timetable	11

Welcome to our February newsletter. Inside you will find the latest news and information about our Swanley and District u3a and reports of recent meetings of some of our groups. It is always interesting to read about these so if any other group would like to share information about one of their meetings, please send your article to Alan Hayward for inclusion next month.

Penny's Social Committee met this month and have an excellent range of outings planned for 2026 which you can read about inside this

newsletter. She has even persuaded me to share my interest in cricket by offering a day at Lord's and another at the Oval for anyone who would like to join me!

Now for a reminder. We are reaching the time of year when membership renewals become due. It is still only £20 for the year and some of you have already rejoined. Speak to Gill Baker if you have any questions about this. She will be taking membership renewals at the February meeting.

119 of you attended our first meeting of the year in January. I hope you all enjoyed Tony Harris' talk on the Wild or not so Wild West. He is always one of our most popular speakers. This month we are pleased to welcome back prominent local historian Christoph Bull. He worked for Kent libraries for 35 years and is President of Dartford Historical and Antiquarian Society. I first met him when he was working at Gravesend Library and the title of his talk is Some Great Women of Gravesham. He plans to tell us about some famous and some interesting but not so famous women in Gravesham. It should be an interesting morning and I look forward to seeing you at the Alexandra Suite on Friday February 6th in time for our usual start at 10.30am.

**Dave Collins Chairman**

### **Reminder!**

**Please switch your mobile phone to silent mode during the meeting**

**Swanley and District U3A Monthly Meeting Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February at 10.30am  
At the Alexandra Suite, St Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU**

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Christoph Bull      Some Great Women of Gravesham**

A well-known local historian, Christoph Bull, has stepped in at short notice in a change to our original programme, to talk about 'Some Great Women of Gravesham'. The talk is about famous and not so famous women in Gravesham, some of whom you will have heard.

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March: We welcome back Andy Thomas for his talk:**

**'A Conspiracy History of the World'**

Why do so many people believe in conspiracies, despite all the denial, and what is the real evidence to support them? Andy Thomas tells the remarkable story of conspiracy theory, as seen through the eyes of those who challenge the establishment version of events, taking in everything from the Roman Empire, the Gunpowder Plot and the World Wars, to JFK, Watergate, the Moon landings, Princess Diana, 9/11, the 'New World Order' and other significant controversies in a fascinating journey which demonstrates why people question – whatever the truth.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> February, 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/](https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/bridge/).

**Carolyn & Colin Chapman**

**Bird Watching**

Our first meeting for 2026 will be at Oare Marshes, Faversham on **Weds 18<sup>th</sup> February at 10am**. See our website page for more information [https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_groups/bird-watching/](https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/bird-watching/)

**Bob Parker**

**QUIZ DATES**

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



**Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup> – 2pm**

**Thursday February 19<sup>th</sup> – 2pm.**

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

**David Collins**

**MARCH NEWSLETTER**

*For the March newsletter can you please send articles and photos by **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February***

**Alan Hayward**

## Events and Outings

### **21st March 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.

**Cost: £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 February meeting if you would like to attend this event or contact Penny via website: [https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_events/murder-mystery-evening/](https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/murder-mystery-evening/)

**Penny Collins**

### **The Social Committee are planning lots of events/outings for the rest of the year:**

#### **14<sup>th</sup> May The Holland Park Set – Politics & Painters**

In 1939, one of the last great pre-war London balls saw the King and Queen's car join a queue of grand cars that stretched from Hyde Park Corner to Kensington High Street and the gates of Holland House.

Within a year Holland House had been all but destroyed in the Blitz. Here had thrived one of London's most influential political salons and a circle of wealthy Victorian artists built studio houses as parcels of garden were sold off to fund the owner's lavish lifestyle.

We shall arrive at 10.30am and will have time to buy morning refreshments in the park cafe after which our guide will take us to explore Holland Park and the Kyoto Japanese Garden.

There will then be free time for lunch in Kensington High Street or in the park if you want to bring a packed lunch, after which we take a walking tour to see the beautiful studio houses of the Holland Park Set.

Our final visit will be to Leighton House, owned by a founding member of the Holland Park Circle, Sir Frederick Leighton. In it you will find an astonishing room – an Islamic courtyard reimagined into a London drawing room - which has been used as a set in various TV programmes and films including Nicholas Nickleby and an episode of Spooks. On display in the house are works of art by members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood including Burne-Jones, Watts and Millais as well as 81 oil paintings by Leighton himself.

See website for more: [https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_events/the-holland-park-set-politics-painters/](https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/the-holland-park-set-politics-painters/)

A full day trip leaving Hextable at **8.30am** & Swanley at **8.45am**. Returning approx. **6.15pm**.

**Cost £58.**

**Veronica Brazier**

**16<sup>th</sup> May** Dave Collins will be watching Day 2 of the 4-day county cricket game- Middlesex v Derbyshire at Lord's. Travel to Lord's by public transport and tickets for the game will cost £10 for seniors (over 65). [https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_events/cricket-at-lords-cricket-ground/](https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/cricket-at-lords-cricket-ground/)

Pay as you go and please see Dave if you would like to join him on that day.

**Dave Collins**

### **Other proposed outings for later in the year:**

#### **Museum of Childhood and Spitalfields Hall**

#### **Tiptree Farm and Museum**

#### **William Morris Museum**

Which some of you were disappointed to miss when it had to be cancelled last year

#### **Day at the Oval to watch a 1-day game Surrey v Kent**

#### **Day trip to Lewes which some of you have requested**

#### **Theatre trip More details to follow.**

**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 now open!**

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 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. You can do this at any time.

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**

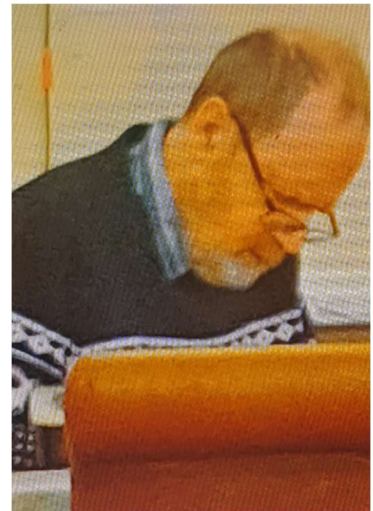
## GROUP / EVENTS NEWS

### Quizzes

A big thank you to Dave for organising the Quiz over the year at The Howard Venue.

Total money raised for The R N L I £1,000.50

Well done to everyone who attends.



**Rod Sharman**

### 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	♣ KQ853	♦ AK9	♥ QT73	♠ A
South	♣ T9	♦ QJ632	♥ KJ96	♠ K2

What will north open? What will south reply? On North's second bid how will he tell South he has lots of high card points, and what will he bid? How do you foresee the bidding progressing?

Answer next month

\*\* Reminder and answer to last 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?

**North** has 14 points, his longest suit is clubs. North opens 1 club.

**South** has 14 points (making at least 26 high card points between the two hands; plenty for a game bid which scores extra bonus points). South now knows his team will be looking for a game contract so they need to find their best suit. He can safely bid his longest suit, 1 diamond knowing that after a suit reply North must bid again.

**North** now bids his 4-card suit – 1 heart. (this tells his partner he has 12-15 points, 5 <or more> clubs and 4 <or more> hearts).

**South** adds this information to what he can see in his hand. With at least 8 heart cards between the two hands and enough points for a game contract (26+) South can now bid straight to the game contract of 4 hearts.

**Carolyn & Colin Chapman**

## Creative Writing Group

### DRIVING HOME TO CHRISTMAS

The recent cold weather reminded me of a freezing journey made at a time and place long ago!

Two boys, one girl and a Labrador puppy in a very old VW Beetle

University of East Anglia car park      118 miles to Eltham

"Here comes Sean now," she said.

"Good! At last. Now we can go," he replied.

It was December 1973. Term had finished. The campus was starting to empty. Jonathan and Jane were going home for Christmas. He was the proud owner of a 1956 black VW Beetle. It was a vehicle with considerable character which lacked some of the standard features to be found in most other cars. It had no functioning indicators, no heating, no radio, part of the back seat was missing and the petrol gauge was remarkably inaccurate. Top speed? Fifty mph. In addition, it should be understood that Jonathan had only a provisional driving licence and had received no formal driving lessons. In short, he had a car, but no full licence. Conversely, Sean had a full licence, but no car. It was a perfect combination.

"Okay, Sean. Put your bag in the back with Jane. Probably best you sit in the front with me. Let's go!"

Attleborough                              97 miles to Eltham

Jane studied the houses. "I think it's just along here. Yes! There it is."

The three passengers rang the door bell and smiled their advent smiles. The door opened. "You must be Jane. You've come to collect the puppy." After a pleasant conversation and the polite refusal of a cup of tea it was time to leave. The excited Labrador climbed onto the back seat with Jane. "Mum and dad will be delighted."

Near Walcott Green                      89 miles to Eltham

The car slowed down in the narrow country lane. A queue of cars was ahead. "Why are they parked here?" complained the driver. "I'll go round them."

A few seconds later Sean explained, "They were parked here because of the traffic lights we just drove through. You probably should have stopped."

Bramford (near Ipswich)                63 miles to Eltham

"The turning must be just along here somewhere. We can bypass the town if we find it. Not a good idea to drive through Ipswich on a Friday lunchtime."

"Not a good idea to drive through Ipswich at any time," laughed Sean. We had adopted the Norwich disdain for Suffolk's county town.

Colchester                                 42 miles to Eltham

"How much longer?" asked Jane.

"Not long now. We're on the last leg of the journey."

"I think a toilet stop might be necessary soon."

"The dog had a wee when we stopped half an hour ago."

"Not for the dog. For me," explained Jane.

Dartford                                     10 miles to Eltham

Jane's parents were happy to see their daughter home from university for the Christmas holidays. They exchanged greetings with Jonathan and Sean. "Time for a tea or coffee, a mince pie boys?"

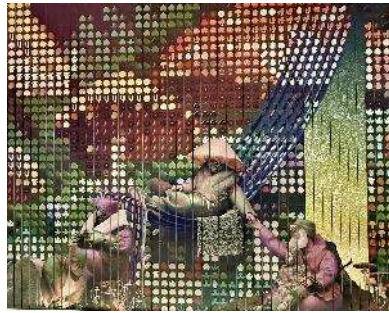
"That's very kind, but we should press on. Sean has to get a train to Portsmouth later."

Arrived in Eltham

Jonathan parked the car outside his parents' house in the late afternoon. It was almost dark and cold enough for snow. The journey had taken nearly six hours. The black beetle had done its job. Everybody would be home for Christmas.

**J D Baker**





On to the Post Office Museum. Quite a small building but the exhibits were well set out and lots of information from the first ways of letter delivery and the introduction of stamps and prepaid items.



On display were a couple of rather resplendent bright red coaches with uniformed armed mail guards. Did you know that a coach horse was attacked on Salisbury Plain by an escaped lion! There were many interactive activities for children in an age when the importance attached to letters and letter writing has all but gone from their experience.

Across the road from the museum was the Mail Rail, a little driverless train travelling under Mount Pleasant and Paddington Sorting Office, carrying the letters and parcels to be sorted. It opened in 1927 and ran for 76 years.



We saw the disused platforms collected the bags to be sent conveyor belts and there was a displays of the postal service history with the relevant sights and sounds.

where mail workers above ground on very good audio visual



The Night Mail Train – Collecting the Mail – Sorting it on the move – Postal Workers & Apprentices!

Thank you to Veronica Brazier for a really good well organized trip.

Sandy Treloar

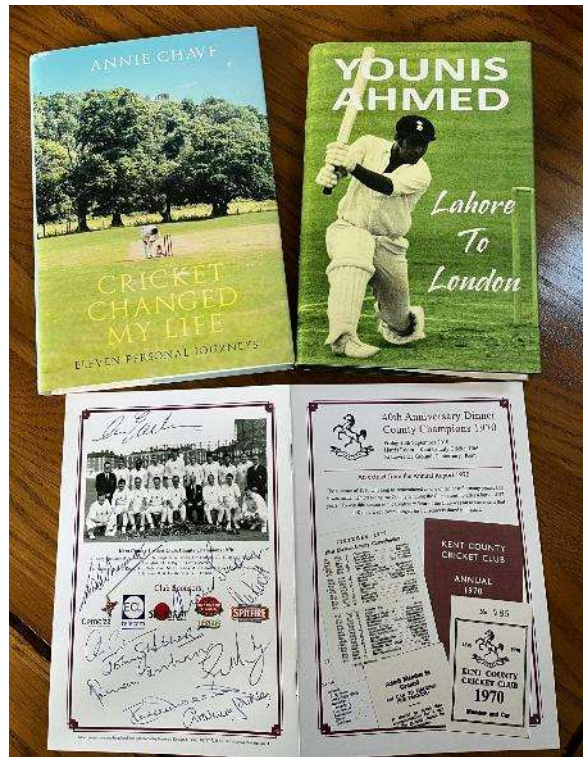
**Antiques Group**

This month we mainly focussed on planning our topics and outings for the year ahead. A few people had brought along items of interest, which we were glad to pass round and discuss.



Audrey showed us her collection of harmonicas, which belonged to her husband's father who was a musician. While we looked at them, we listened to a recording of Larry Adler who famously played a harmonica in the 1930s. The collection included a tiny version made in Germany, no longer than 2 inches. Other examples were made between 1930 and 1950, and were from Japan, China and Poland.

Dave, as we know, is passionate about cricket. He has a large collection of books about the subject, and a number of them were autographed when he met the authors. One of these was Annie Chave, who is a cricket writer and commentator. Dave was keen to meet her as he knew she had written a good review about Dave's own book 'Iconic Elevens'. He has her book 'Cricket changed my life'. Dave also attended a dinner held to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Kent County Cricket Club winning the county championship in 1970. Many of the players from that team were present, and Dave showed us the programme for the dinner, which was signed by many of them, such as Alan Knott, Derek Underwood, and Chris Cowdrey.



Penny has a really delicate, tiny tea set which was passed down to her from her mother. It is made of glass and is probably Victorian. It looks like it belongs in a doll's house, but Penny is not aware that her mother had one.

**Gill Baker**

## **Sports Groups**

Hi, I hope you all had a good Christmas.

I am taking names now for **Croquet** and **Petanque** to start in March/April.

I now have dates for the Bowling and Dinogolf Bowling

Bowling        **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February**        **Cost: £8.40** (For two games)

Dinogolf        **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February**        **Cost: £11.75.**

I will be at the back of the hall before & after the meeting if you are interested in any of the above

**Bill Hammond**

**Swanley and District u3a Committee Members 2025/2026**

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

**Contact Details**

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

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/>

*The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are of a general nature and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Swanley and District u3a or any part of The Third Age unless specifically stated. All rights reserved, any reproduction without permission is prohibited.*

**Swanley u3a Groups Timetable**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Meeting Day</b>
Antiques and Collectables	Gill and John Baker	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday Morning
Art and Craft	Penny Collins	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday Afternoon
Art Appreciation	Margaret Austin	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday Morning
Art/Painting & Drawing Art Outdoors	Gill Baker	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday Evening
Art – Looking at Art	Gill & John Baker	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
Bird Watching	Bob Parker	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday /Wednesday as notified in Newsletter / Website
Board & Card Games	Joyce Wood	2 <sup>nd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon pm Howard Cen Hex
Book Group	Sue Scott & Wendy Keable	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday pm Swanley Library
Bowls (Indoors)	Bob Mellor	4 <sup>th</sup> Thurs pm at the Whiteoak's
Bridge	Carolyn & Colin Chapman	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday Morning
Chess	Terry Bennet	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday Morning
Creative Writing	Penny Collins	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday Morning
Croquet	Bill Hammond	Every Weds at 2pm Swanley Rec Gardens
Gardening	Sandy English	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday Afternoon
Geography	Penny and Dave Collins	3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday Morning
History Modern	Jackie Griffiths	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday Afternoon
History of London 1	John Baker	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday Morning
History of London 2	John Baker	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday Morning
Kurling	Bill Hammond	Every Mon 10—12. White Oak
Let's Speak French	Barbara Ramsey	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Morning
London History Walks	Alan Hayward/John Baker	As Notified in Newsletter/Website
MOTO (Members on their own)	Madeleine Opitz	3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> Friday Afternoon
Play Reading	Penny Collins	4 <sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday 2-3.30pm White Oak
Outings and Theatre Trips	As Notified by the Social Committee	
Word Magic on Zoom	Gill Heath	2 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday Evening