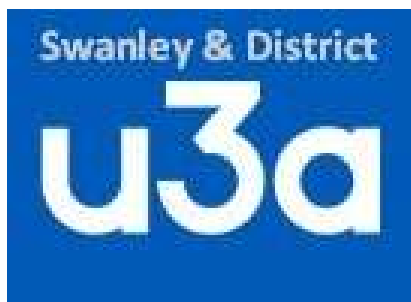




Charity No 1155593



Newsletter No 165

October 2026

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We have been fortunate to get plenty of warm weather in September making it harder to believe that summer has officially ended- and with it, of course, the cricket season! Presumably the temperature will start to drop during October but we do have the autumn colours to look forward to and admire. Welcome to the October newsletter.

As always, inside you will find news, reports and details of events and outings offered by our Swanley and District u3a. I hope you enjoy the read. I am pleased to report that we now have 290 members, getting close to our target of 300 and

from October to March we are able to offer half price membership of £10 for 6 months. We will also continue with our 'bring a friend' meaning that if you bring a friend to the monthly meeting, you will both receive a free raffle ticket, the friend will attend free of charge and will be able to join for £10 if they wish, to cover the rest of the membership year until April 2027.

I hope you all enjoyed Melanie Barton-Gibson's talk at last month's meeting. The Belgian Royal Family may only have been in existence since 1830, but it has certainly offered up plenty of mystery, intrigue and controversy- every bit as much as our own Royals! At the October meeting we are pleased to welcome Philip Caine, whose talk is entitled 'Barrow to Baghdad and Back Again', telling us about his eventful career travelling the world since leaving school in Barrow in Furness. He began by working the oil rigs in the North Sea, then operated projects in Algeria and Nigeria. He says his time in Kazakhstan and Russia was particularly exciting, not to mention the most dangerous place he spent time in... Baghdad. He finished his career in Dubai running an oil services company and since retiring in 2015 has become a novelist, raconteur and public speaker.

It should be an interesting morning and I look forward to welcoming you on Friday October 2nd at our usual start time of 10.30am.

Dave Collins Chairman

Reminder!

Please switch your mobile phone to silent mode during the meeting

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

Friday 2nd October Speaker: Phillip Caine

Talk: Barrow to Baghdad and Back Again (my career story)

Philip's work has taken him to many countries around the world, the last 10 years of which were spent in the Middle East. Since retiring in 2015, he has become a NOVELIST & GUEST SPEAKER and will tell us how a career that began in Barrow in Furness, ended in Baghdad.

Friday 6th November Speaker: Paul Barwick

Talk: The White Mouse Nancy Wake – A Truly Remarkable Story

This is the remarkable true story of a highly successful secret agent of the Special Operations Executive who lived with the daily threat of death at the hands of the Gestapo during World War 2. Her incredible courage and steely resolve provide an awe inspiring tale of one woman's fight against evil and injustice. We recall her life from humble beginnings to becoming the Nazi's most wanted female spy of the war.

The Gestapo named her 'The White Mouse' due to her amazing ability to escape their clutches. She became one of the most decorated Allied Secret agents of the war. We explore her life, lived to the full, and salute her tremendous bravery.

Nicola Teoh

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES – During the Coming Month(s)

Off the Beaten Track London Walk:

Around the Old Villages of Hammersmith and Chiswick (3 miles).

We are repeating the walk for a 3rd time on Wednesday 30th September.

A few places are still available on a first come bases. If you interested in joining us on the walk please sign up via the website at: https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/london-history-walks/

Alan Hayward / John Baker

Quiz Dates

There are **2 Quiz afternoons** this month.

Cost: £4 with any profits given to the RNLI.

Tuesday October 6th – 2pm

Thursday October 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

Walking Group

Wednesday 14th October 10.00 for 10.15

Meet **Clive** at "**The Villager**", **Erskine Road, Vigo Village DA13 0TD** for a fairly flat walk of between 3 - 4 miles. There's a drop out point part way round for those who want a shorter walk.

Directions: by car: From the roundabout at the bottom of Wrotham Hill on the A20, turn left onto the A227. Continue ahead for about 1.75 miles; go past what used to be the "Vigo Inn" and take the next turning right after it. After about 100 yards turn right into Waterlow Road and follow it for about one mile to the T-junction with Erskine Road. Turn left and "The Villager" is straight ahead on the left. Use the car park by the pub.

By public transport: Vigo is served by the 306/308 bus which runs between Gravesend/Meopham and Borough Green/Sevenoaks.

Please contact Clive via our website at https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking-group-as-notified/ to let her know you are coming and to say whether you will be staying for lunch.

Clive Rayner



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

For the November newsletter can you please send articles and photos by **Thursday 24th September**
Alan Hayward

Events and Outings

September

Those who are going to Rye and Winchelsea on September 29th, pick up times are:

Hextable Post Office- 9.15

Swanley ASDA Bus Stop- 9.25

Penny Collins

October

Thursday 22nd COBHAM HALL TOUR

Important information and reminders for those members who have booked a place on the tour!

You will need to make your own way to Cobham Hall.

The address is: Brewers Road, Cobham, DA12 3BL.

You should arrive by 1:45 p.m. to meet Christoph Bull and myself in the car park.

The tour will start at 2:00 p.m.

Cost: £13.20 which includes a cream tea and you can pay by cash on the day.

Please note that all places for this visit have been filled.

If you have any questions, speak to me at the next monthly meeting on the 2nd October or contact me by email at https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/cobham-hall-visit/

John Baker

Saturday December 5th

Murder evening with fish 'n chips supper

Venue: Five Wents Memorial Hall.

It is called:

Murder They Wrote and is set in the 1950s.

Cost: £22



Penny Collins

THEATRE TRIPS

Wednesday 7th October at 7:30pm: High Society Churchill Theatre

Running time approximately 2 hours 30 minutes including interval.

Wednesday 28th October at 7:30pm: Christmas Carol Goes Wrong Churchill Theatre

Running time approximately 2 hours 20 minutes including interval.

For both theatre trips

Meet at **Swanley Station** at **18:25** in order to catch the **18:35** train to Bromley South.

Please advise me if you intend to meet at the Churchill Theatre.

Elaine Nixon

January

23rd January Dinner Ladies at the Churchill Theatre

I have reserved some seats in the stalls at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley for Dinner Ladies on Saturday 23rd January at 2.30. It's one of three performances there before it goes on tour.

Les Dennis is playing the handyman's role.

Tickets: £54

We will need to meet in the theatre foyer at 2pm.

Please bring your cheque to the next meeting on 14th August.

If this is not possible and you would like a seat reserved, please let me know ASAP via our website at https://swanley.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/dinner-ladies-at-the-churchill-theatre/

Barbara Gorrod

CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT PEDHAM PLACE ON FRIDAY 11th DECEMBER

We will be taking names and money for the Christmas Lunch from the October meeting.

This year it will be on Friday 11th December which is the week after our monthly meeting.

You will need to pay in full by the November meeting. If you are not able to attend the October meeting but would like to put your name down, please contact me via the U3A website. <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/membership/>

The cost this year will be: £32 for three courses. Cash, or cheques made payable to Swanley and District U3A, or for bank transfer ask me at the meeting.

You can tell me who you would like to sit with, if you have a preference, and I will do my best to accommodate your wishes. You also need to tell me if you have any dietary needs.

I am including details of the menu so you can give me your choices when you book.

U3A CHRISTMAS LUNCH MENU

STARTERS

Sweet potato and carrot soup and a bread roll (v and gf)

Brussels pate wholemeal toast and caramelised red onion chutney

Crayfish and prawn cocktail and bread and butter

MAINS

Traditional Christmas roast turkey dinner and trimmings

Roast Vegetable Wellington, roast potatoes and vegetables (v)

DESSERTS

Steamed Christmas pudding and brandy sauce

Spiced rhubarb and custard tart, rhubarb compote and Chantilly cream

Chocolate orange semi-freddo, chocolate sauce and orange segments

Christmas Pudding with custard (v)

Chocolate Truffle Brownie Torte, chocolate sauce and orange segments (v & gf)

Tea and coffee

Please notify me in advance if you have any dietary requirements.

Many thanks

Gill Baker

MEMBERSHIP for 2026 - 2027 – **HALF PRICE FROM OCTOBER TO MARCH**

PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN!

Our membership year begins at the beginning of April 2026 and runs until March 2027. 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 just £10. Anyone who comes in September can have one meeting as a visitor and then sign up as a member from October onwards for £10.

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.

We have still got the **BRING A FRIEND** offer – free raffle ticket for the visitor and the U3A member who brings them.

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 Membership page on our website. <https://swanley.u3asite.uk/membership/>

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 – contact Gill for details.

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 – **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.

A form needs to be completed for each new member and returned to the Membership Secretary.

The membership card(s) will be available at the monthly meeting.

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

MOTO Group

At the September meeting we not only recruited a new member but also decided to have a Christmas lunch at the Bowls Club. This lunch will be on **17th December at 1pm**.

Cost: £29.50. A £10 deposit is payable when it is booked.

I am away for the MOTO October meeting; I would be grateful if I could collect deposits at the main U3A meeting on 2nd October.

I will have a copy of the 3 course lunch menu for members who are interested and were not at the September meeting.

Thank you

Madeline Opitz

Geography Group – Part 1

Portugal – Interesting Facts

Portugal was established as a country in 1139, making it **one of the oldest nation-states in Europe**, with borders largely unchanged since 1249.

Its capital, **Lisbon**, is over 400 years older than Rome, and the second oldest city in Europe after Athens. It was settled by the Phoenicians around 1200 BC.

In 1755, Lisbon was struck by a **9.0 magnitude earthquake**, which was followed by a tsunami and fires that destroyed the city. Up to 100,000 residents were killed, and 85% of the buildings were destroyed!

Ferdinand Magellan became the first person to start circumnavigating the globe in 1519. Although Magellan himself was killed before completing the trip, the expedition successfully completed the circumnavigation in 1522.

Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India, **Alvares** discovered Brazil and parts of Africa, **Bartholomew Diaz** was the first person to sail around the Cape of Good Hope.

Portugal is the **westernmost country of mainland Europe**, at Cabo da Roca.

The city of **Porto** is famous for having **six bridges** crossing the Douro River, more than any other European city.

Port wines date back to the 1600s when Douro wine exporters started adding grape brandy to their wine to help it survive the long journey to England.

In 1756, Portugal's ruler marked the region with 335 stone pillars, making it **the world's first formally demarcated wine region**.

Madeira wine, a fortified wine from Portugal's Madeira islands, was a favourite among presidents George Washington, Tomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, and was famously **used to toast the signing of the Declaration of Independence**.

Portugal is the world's largest **cork producer**, accounting for over 50% of the global output. The leading importers of Portuguese cork are Germany, the U.K., and the U.S.

Portuguese is the official language in Brazil, Angola, Cabo Verde, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique, and Macau. With over 230 million native speakers, Portuguese is the **world's 6th most spoken first language**.

Fado music (Portuguese for fate) is characterized by mournful tunes and lyrics.

Portuguese Jesuit missionaries took **tempura** (battered, deep-fried vegetables and seafood) to Japan. The Portuguese invented **Piri-Piri sauce**. Portuguese introduced **chili pepper, potatoes, and tomatoes** to India and Thailand.

The Bertrand Bookshop in Lisbon is the **oldest operating bookstore in the world**, founded in 1732 it was brought down by the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, and reopened in 1773.

Portugal is a leader in **renewable energy**, having run for nearly five consecutive days entirely on wind, solar, and hydroelectric power in 2016.

Portugal's inventions include the **pre-paid mobile phone card** and **green lane toll system**.

The Portuguese language has a **colourful way of storytelling**, with expressions like "swallowing frogs" and "breaking the coconut laughing".

A German surfer **surfed the biggest wave ever** in Nazare, Portugal in 2024. The wave, calculated using drone technology, measured 93.73 feet (28.57 meters).

In 1846, Portugal started the process of **abolishing the Death Penalty**, and abolished capital punishment for civil crimes in 1867.

Portugal and Spain are the only EU countries to have **also abolished life imprisonment**.

Catharine of Braganca, a Portuguese princess and Queen of England, **introduced the habit of drinking tea in England**. Though she did not introduce Tea, she made it fashionable. She was also responsible for **the English using forks at dinnertime**.

The Portuguese were the **first Europeans to reach Japan** in 1492. The Japanese language has many words that originate from Portuguese.

A Portuguese consul **saved more Jews than Oskar Schindler in WWII**. He granted visas to Jews despite having orders not to. It is estimated that he helped save up to 10,000 people.

Vasco da Gama Bridge in Lisbon is 17 kilometres long, making it the **longest bridge in the EU** and the second-longest one in Europe, after the Crimean Bridge.

In December 2010 the **world's largest Santa Claus parade** took place in Porto, 14,963 people donned Santa outfits.

Portugal owned half of the "New World". In 1494, Portugal and Spain divided the world in two by signing the Treaty of Tordesillas which gave Portugal the eastern half of the "New World", including countries like Brazil, Africa and Asia.

The Portuguese Empire was **the first global empire in history!** and one of the longest-lived colonial powers, **lasting for almost six centuries** until Macau (now part of China) was handed over in 1999.

Portugal **played a leading role in the Slave Trade** and Lagos' slave market, built in 1444, was Europe's first slave market!

Though Portugal was the **first colonial power to abolish slavery**, in 1761 - half a century before England, France, Spain or the United States.

Colin Annetts

Bridge Group

This month's question:

East; ♣ KT764 ♦ AQ ♥ K973 ♠ KJ

How would you open the bidding with this hand? What do you know about your partner's hand and what would you bid next if West responds with any of the bids below

1D? 1H? 1S? 1NT? 2C?

Answer next month

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

North; ♣ A6 ♦ J74 ♥ KJT76 ♠ Q52

Your opponent (West) has opened the bidding 1D. It's North's turn to bid. What are his bidding options. North has 11 hcp and a 5-card suit.

Options are.

1. Pass – not great, you really should overcall if you have the right sort of hand, especially with a 5-card major suit.
2. Bid 1H – with 8-15 hcp and a 5-card major suit make a standard overcall.
3. Double – this would tell South that North has 12+ hcp. A bit misleading and can lead to trouble.

1H is the correct and best option.

Carolyn & Colin Chapman

Creative Writing

Words and Truths for my Mother

A dua for my mother "May every tear that has ever fallen from your tired eyes on my behalf become a river for you in paradise"

My darling mum, I have spoken to you in my head ever since I found out about you so many years ago. Today, as I near the end of my own long life, I want you to know what I have done. I did it for us. I have kept my secret for over 30 years. Now is the time for me to unburden myself to you.

I have lived with what I did and the reasons why for so many years. I am coming to the end of my life and, who knows, maybe then we will get to be together. Something I have dreamed of for so many years and the ache and longing in my heart and the feeling of emptiness will finally be assuaged. I believe in an afterlife, and I hope that we get to spend it together.

No one would suspect me, Carys Hillier, a retired special needs teacher, a kind and compassionate woman, of killing a 93 year old pillar of the community. Catherine Dogherty an elderly retired midwife who had delivered so many babies in the affluent, lush and leafy part of the English county of Surrey where she had lived for over fifty years, but I did. I did it for you, the beautiful mother I never met. I did it as retribution for the love we didn't get to share and the relationship we were never allowed to have.

I think you know, because I think you have always watched over and protected me, that I found your sister, Mary. Mary told me what happened to you when you became pregnant by a man you loved and trusted. The man who was your first and last love. She told me that your parents, who loved you very much, didn't want you to live with the stigma and believed the best they could do for you, to give you some chance of a good marriage and a happy life, was to send you to a mother and baby home for unmarried mothers run by the Salvation Army. Herbert House in Dalston, Hackney. Mary said that you returned home broken-hearted after a year spent in the home and refused to speak about what had happened there. You suffered from terrible nightmares when you would scream out "no nurse Catherine, you won't take my baby." She eventually coaxed you to tell her a little and you spoke about a particularly nasty, unkind midwife, who had seemed to take particular pleasure in taking your baby, me, away from you when it was time for me to go to my adoptive parents. Catherine had told you "go home and forget her you stupid, immoral girl. We are giving you a chance to live a decent life". Mary sobbed when she told me you took your own life two months after going home.

I say, it was by happy coincidence when I was around forty and working at a school for visually impaired children in Surrey that I met your tormentor, Catherine. She was an elderly volunteer who came into my class to help every Thursday when we took our students riding. At first, she seemed a very nice woman and we quickly formed a friendship. She was married to a psychiatrist, Phillip. My husband and I often went to visit them in their enormous but welcoming house on the Heath. We stayed friends even after I retired. Over time I realised that Catherine wasn't very kind, was arrogant, self-centred and a terrible snob. She was also judgemental and looked down on some of the mothers whose babies she had delivered. Especially if they were not married. I found this particularly galling and triggering. I am mostly a kind person and although I found her hard work, I kept up my friendship with her. I visited her and Phillip a lot when he became seriously ill and was bed bound in their dining room. Catherine "because of her nursing training" words she started many sentences with had opted to look after Phillip at home with the help of live-in carers who came, because it was cheaper, from an agency in Bulgaria. Catherine wasn't very kind to the women who came to help her and she had a very high turnover of staff. Some of whom left in the night without telling her. She was so indignant when this happened but I was never surprised having witnessed how demanding and nasty she could be.

One summer the Archbishop of Canterbury made an apology to mothers and children who had been forcibly adopted from their mother and baby homes over a long period of time. This was reported in the papers and on the news. Catherine and I were having tea on her patio the day the story broke. She said to me "when I was a young midwife, I worked for the Salvation Army in Dalston delivering

babies for unmarried mothers. They came to us secretly and we gave them a chance to give their babies and themselves a better life. Now they are calling us criminals. I used to tell them Go home and forget him or her you stupid, immoral girl. We are giving you a chance to live a decent life". I couldn't believe what I was hearing here was your tormentor admitting what she had done to you my beautiful mother. I knew I had to make her pay. A life for a life.

I remained friendly and kind to both Catherine and Phillip. I felt sure I could find a way to pay Catherine back for what she had done to you. I really don't know where it came from but I had the idea of suffocating her with a blow up pillow that I would then take and push out to sea in Brighton which is exactly what I did. I'm not going to bore you with the details but suffice to say it was very satisfying. I had been drip feeding the idea of doing a midnight flit to the young homesick Bulgarian woman who was caring for Phillip at this time. She took heed and the night I did the deed she left the country. I don't know where she went.

The Detective Inspector who came to investigate the suspicious death was a walking cliché in a deer stalker hat. I detect like Cleudo he said, "who did it, with what and where to paraphrase". Lucky for me he never worked it out.

Goodbye for now precious mum. I am sure we will be together soon.

Susan Foot

Off the Beaten Track Walks

Old Hammersmith and Chiswick Walk 17th September

20 of us boarded the train at Swanley to Victoria and then on the tube to Hammersmith. Hammersmith is the only London destination with two underground stations named 'Hammersmith' due to the rivalry of Victorian railway companies racing to capture west London commuters.

We passed the Art Deco Hammersmith Apollo (formerly Hammersmith Odeon) home to very many events. The Beatles played there and it was the venue for the David Bowie's final concert as Ziggy Stardust. Some of the group remembered going there in younger days. We walked on Queen Caroline Street and passed one of the early Peabody Estates, a charitable trust. These substantial group of houses and flats were built to house the poor of London. They were built around a central garden or square, were light and airy and to the lucky occupants, must have seemed like paradise from previous slum housing.

On to the Thames path and a view of Hammersmith Bridge a lovely and iconic suspension bridge, one of the oldest mechanical suspension bridges and currently undergoing repairs. One of the smallest public parks in London, has a view of the bridge and consists of two small patches of grass, two lampposts and three seats. Very pleasant though, elevated to enjoy a Thames view.



On to the old part of Hammersmith with its lanes and alleys and some original houses and pubs. The Black Lion was purported to house a ghost and indeed there had been many 'sightings' in the churchyard of a white clad figure who would spring out at unsuspecting women. One night in 1803, a customer, Francis Smith, had been drinking in the pub and decided in a fit of bravado to go into the graveyard to investigate and took a blunderbuss with him. He saw a white

figure coming towards him and in fright fired his gun. Unfortunately it was a builder covered in white dust. The unfortunate builder did not survive but the very fortunate customer was only sentenced to one year in prison, as the judge accepted his plea that he had mistaken the victim for a ghost and in fright had fired his gun!

We walked through alleys and lanes with very charming and varied listed 18th and 19th housing, all having changed very little since they were built and originally homes for the some of the wealthy and notable people of the time.



Many have blue plaques on this row of houses; Edward Johnston and Eric Gill typographers, engravers and illustrators, were part of the Arts and Crafts community. Johnston's typeface is used on London Underground fonts and designed in 1913. May Morris, embroiderer for William Morris and A P Herbert, author and MP also lived there.



Then up some steps and on to the Thames riverside and the borough of Chiswick. Hammersmith and Chiswick are the hub of rowing and sculling clubs and there are many along this lovely part of the river path. Latymer School has a very

successful rowing club and as we passed, we could see the rows of boats being stored.



We passed lovely houses of different design, size and character. Due to its slow development, probably due to the fact that the dukes of Devonshire owned almost all the land, the houses were individual and well-proportioned with room for gardens, all beautifully maintained and nowadays costing a fair few million! William Morris, Hogarth,

Walpole and Sir Beerbohm Tree, the actor /manager lived in this area and it must have been a bustling hub of the Arts scene. On this stretch

of Chiswick waterfront there were also 3 or 4 very attractive pubs as well as 3 breweries, the most notable being Fullers.



The whole area has a distinct village feel and as we strolled along in the pleasant temperature you could imagine what a very nice area to live in. It is now a conservation area, saved in the 1960's by the severance from the Great West Rd and consequently a peaceful and quiet area.



Our lunch break was in the grounds of Chiswick House, owned by the Dukes of Devonshire and now a charitable trust.

After our lunch stop, we went into what originally was Hogarth's country home where he lived from 1749 to his death in 1774. It is still very much as it was, a rambling elongated building of red brick with low sloping roofs and an oriel window, set within an orchard, with its original mulberry tree that Jane Hogarth used to make tarts for visiting children. It still felt quite peaceful, possibly due to the high brick wall protecting it from the noisy Great West Rd. It is now a museum.



Our walk continued towards Turnham Green Terrace, once a quiet rural lane, but developed to house workers to service the growing number of businesses growing up in the area. Built in the late 19th century these attractive terraced houses, mostly built of red brick and well looked after. Why haven't the architects and council learnt anything from the past? Witness the brutalist blocks of flats by Darenth Valley Hospital. Tenants can't take much pride in those!

We passed the site of the Battle of Turnham Green which resulted in a Parliamentary victory over Charles 1. On to a bustling, thriving high street with a variety of shops and restaurants and Turnham Green station for our trip home. "Tired but happy!"

Very many thanks to Alan Hayward and John Baker for a really good day out and for Alan's copious and thorough notes and maps after the walk. Appreciation goes to them both for the research, time and effort in making it such an enjoyable walk.

Sandy Treloar

Geography Group – Part 2

ZIMBABWE – INTERESTING FACTS

Zimbabwe Is Over 10,000 Years - Archaeological evidence of arrowheads and cave paintings in present-day Zimbabwe suggests there was human habitation for over 100,000 years. Zimbabwe is **one of the last African countries to gain independence**, it gained independence from the United Kingdom on April 18, 1980.

Zimbabwe is one of the world's **most lightning-prone countries** as lightning strikes kill up to 100 people during the rainy season. It is possible that lightning deaths might actually be under-reported by 20 to 30 percent and lightning injuries by more than 40 percent

After gaining independence in 1980, the country's first ceremonial president was **Caanan Banana who enacted a law that banned citizens from making fun of his name.**

Robert Gabriel Mugabe ruled the country for 36 years – 6 years (1980-1987) as the prime minister and 30 years (1987-2017) as the president. He was finally forced out of power during a coup in 2017 and died in 2019 at the age of 95.

In 1961, Zimbabwe became the second country in Africa to have a TV station. It is one of few countries in the world with only one TV station - the TV station is called ZBC or ZTV.

Zimbabwe houses "**Victoria Falls**" ("**The Smoke That Thunders**"). It is the world's largest sheet of falling water, spans the entire breadth of the Zambezi River, is more than 1.056 miles wide and drops approximately 590 feet.

The noise of the falls can be heard 40km away.

Victoria falls is almost double the height of Niagara Falls.



The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Great Zimbabwe – the capital city of the legendary Queen of Sheba – was built between 1100 and 1450 AD.

Great Zimbabwe inspired several books including H Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines and She, and Wilbur Smith's best-seller, The Sunbird.

The world's largest man-made lake by volume – Lake Kariba can hold up to 180 billion cubic meters of water, has a length of 175 miles and a width of 30 miles.

Binga beach on the shores of Lake Kariba is the only sand beach in Zimbabwe.



Having a six-pack is not important, men with potbellies are considered wealthy!

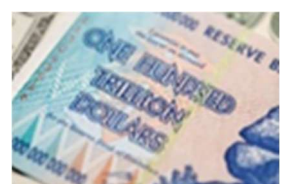
Every kind of toothpaste in Zimbabwe is called Colgate, washing powder is called Surf, while every drink is called coke. Drinks are branded by their fruit flavours. Fanta is referred to as the orange flavour coke.

Sadza, the staple food of Zimbabwe, is a thick, stiff porridge made from finely ground maize (cornmeal). Served as the main component of a meal it is typically eaten with the hands, and dipped into relishes, stews, or vegetable dishes.

There are 16 official languages in Zimbabwe – Shona, English, and Ndebele are the languages most commonly spoken.

Zimbabwe is at least **1.6 times larger than the UK**, and three times the size of England.

In the 2000s Zimbabwe experienced hyperinflation suffering **inflation that exceeded 1,000%**. In 2009, the country issued a banknote of 100 trillion Zimbabwean dollars, worth around £22 on the black market. The country was eventually forced to abandon its currency and has been using multiple currencies, including South African Rand, and the US Dollar.



Zimbabwe Had Different Names - 1898 it was called Southern Rhodesia after Cecil Rhodes. The name changed to Rhodesia in 1965, then in 1979, to Zimbabwe Rhodesia. In 1980, it was officially recognized as the Republic of Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe flag consists of seven horizontal stripes with a white triangle at the hoist. There is also a depiction of the Zimbabwe Bird that appeared on carvings in Great Zimbabwe.

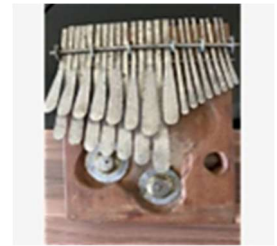
Green stands for agriculture, yellow represents mineral wealth, and red for the blood spilled in the struggle for independence. Black represents the ethnicity of most of the citizens.



Harare was formerly known as Salisbury, after the British prime minister at the time. The name Harare derives from the Shona Chief whose name meant 'He who does not sleep'.

More than 1.4 million people in the country are **living with AIDS**.

The 'mbira' is a small hand-held instrument, traditional to the Shona people, commonly referred to as a '**thumb piano**.'



In Zimbabwe, **only women are allowed to get divorced**, though it is very rare.

76% of the country's rural households live on **less than \$1.25 per day**.

Amazingly, Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, **86.5% of its population is literate**.

It is **illegal in Zimbabwe for the police to impound your vehicle on the road**. The only occasion when they can do so is when they ask you to produce your driver's license.

Colin Annetts

Games /Sports Group

Petanque

The U3A Croquet team had their annual Match with Swanley Town Council last week, and very enjoyable couple of hours despite the rainy conditions.



The Council won on a penalty shootout. Looking forward to the next match 😊

Rod Sharman

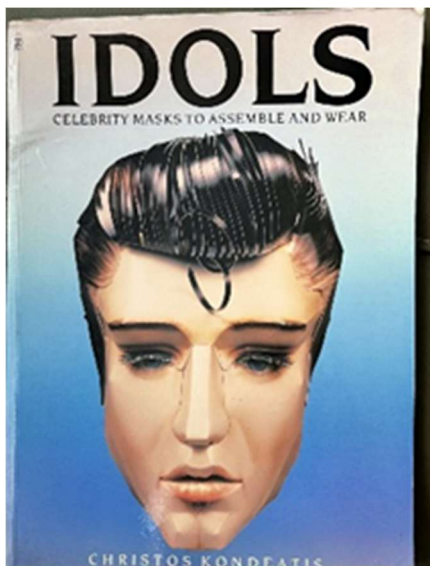
U3A Antiques and Collectables Group

We met this month to look at our various items under the theme 'Publications'.

As always, it was a fascinating glimpse into our own archives of treasured bits and pieces. These included old newspapers, old books from childhood, memories of holiday adventures, publications from experiences in past employment, and recently acquired old stuff!



My favourites are the newspaper and photo of Tony and Wendy's trip to the US in 1979 when they experienced an earthquake whilst driving to Phoenix in a rather nice Pontiac Firebird!



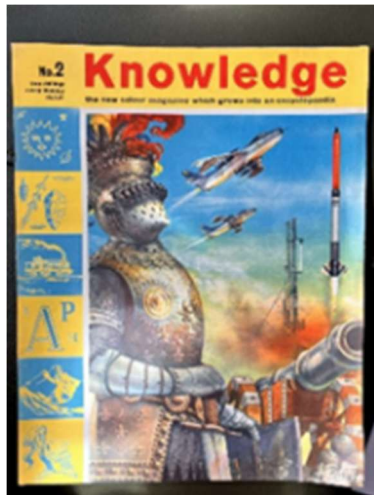
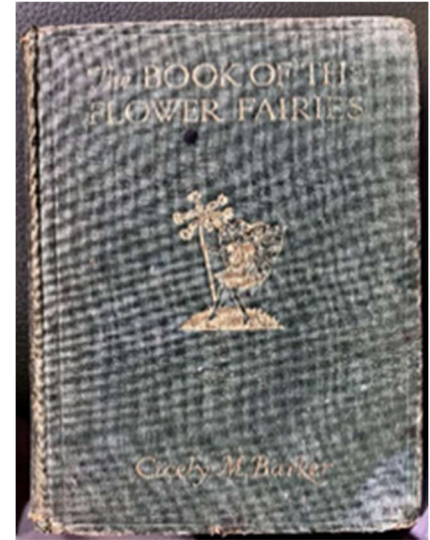
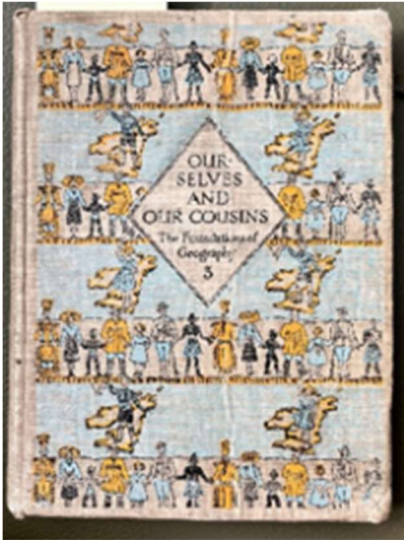
I was also interested in Shelagh's book of cut out masks, from 1988, by Christos Kondeatis. The title is 'Idols' and the book is described as containing 'Celebrity Masks to cut out and wear'. It features the faces of Mick Jagger, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, and John Lennon. Remarkably, the masks are still untouched in the book.



Tony showed us his booklet about Peak Frean's Biscuit company, where he worked for many years.

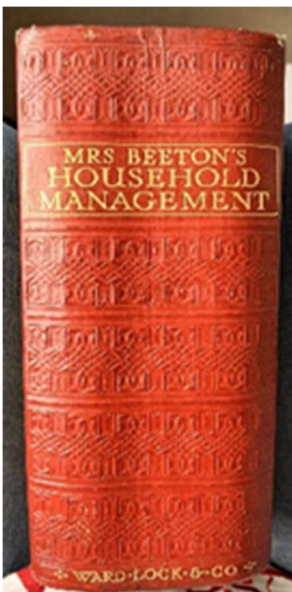
Madeline found an old newspaper from 1945.



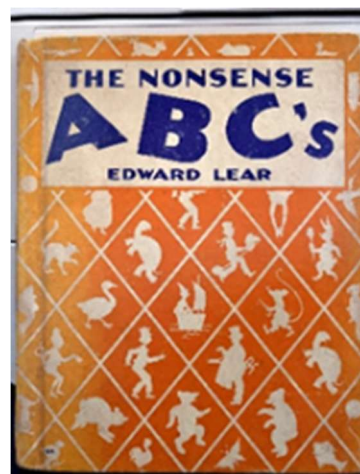


Judy, Jenny and John all brought along favourite books and magazines from their childhood.

(Obviously John's is the 'Knowledge').



Penny has a reprinted book of Mrs Beeton's Household Management, with chapters on Carving and Trussing, Servant's Duties, and Etiquette.



I recently purchased a small ABC book by Edward Lear, with rather odd examples for children to enjoy.

Gill Baker

Looking at Art – visit to Frida Kahlo lecture and Exhibition at Tate Modern

The exhibition showcased over 30 of Kahlo's paintings, mainly self-portraits, plus more than 200 works by her contemporaries and artists that have been inspired by her throughout the generations since her death. This was the focus of the exhibition – 'Frida, the making of an icon'.



1938 FK Self-portrait on metal

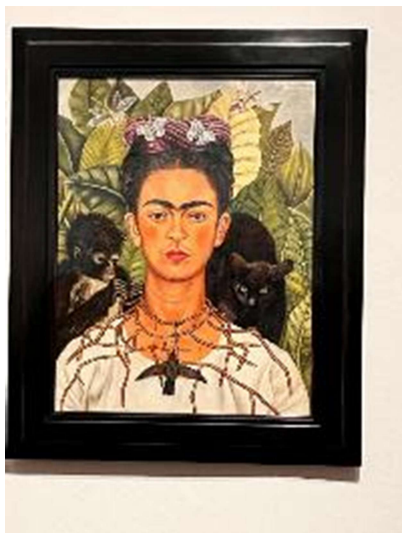


FK 1938 The Frame



Frida Kahlo 1928 Two Women

Frida was born in 1907 in Mexico and contracted polio as a child, which left her disabled. At 18 she was badly injured in a bus accident and was hospitalised for a long period. During this time she took up painting. She drew inspiration from Mexican folk culture and later married the artist, Diego Rivera.



FK 1940 Self-portrait with thorn necklace and hummingbird



2000 Mary McCartney - Being Frida - photo of Tracy Emin

Frida achieved considerable success in the 1930s and 40s, but sadly she always suffered from poor health and died in 1954 at the age of 47. Largely forgotten for many years, she was recognised for her depiction of women by the feminist movement in the 1970s, and then later by the LGBTQ+ community.

The exhibition celebrated her influence on later artists and designers and included many examples of their work alongside her own. I enjoyed this interesting and very colourful exhibition but felt that I would have preferred to see more of Frida's work and perhaps a few less of the other images.

The exhibition at Tate Modern continues until 3rd January 2027

Gill Baker

Digging4cake Gardening Group

September Visit to Long Barn Gardens - Sevenoaks Weald

Our meeting this month had been postponed from June, when the temperature soared to 37°C.



The weather had now cooled and it was a lovely 23 degrees!

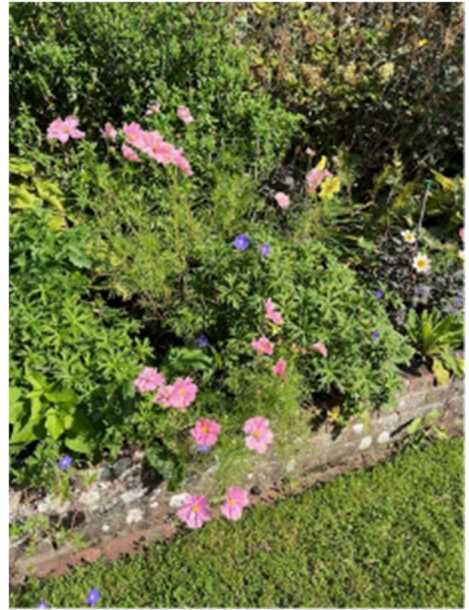
Long Barn dates back to 1360 and was thought to have belonged to William Caxton. Over the years it has been adapted structurally and has a very interesting history.



In 1915 Vita Sackville West moved from The Knowle with her husband Howard Nicholson, when she was expecting their first child. They set about renovating the house and started to design the garden. This was Vita Sackville's first garden design before moving to Sissinghurst in 1932 and starting all over again.



We were each given a map of the gardens to explore at our own pace.



The garden had been laid out into rooms, each having a different atmosphere and planting scheme. They continue to follow the original design, with lots of cottage garden plants with self-seeding encouraged.

We all gathered back on the terrace where we had our compulsory tea and cake.



The owner who has studied hard to become the head gardener, gave us a very informative talk about the interesting history of the house, garden and former residents.

A great afternoon was had by all.

Sue Saunders

Swanley and District u3a Committee Members 2025/2026

			
Dave Collins Chair	John Baker Vice-Chair	Carol Willingham Business Secretary	Clive Rayner Treasurer
			
Gill Baker Membership Secretary	Gill Morrin Minutes Secretary	Penny Collins Social Secretary	Alan Hayward Newsletter/Website
			
Nicola Teoh Speaker Organizer	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		Not meeting at Present
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		Inactive
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)	Madeline Opitz	3 rd Thursday at 11.55 White Oaks Centre 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