

The Digest

Edition 123

Spring 2025

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Dacorum

u3a Dacorum Digest

To become a member, join u3a Dacorum or renew your membership:

Online: Use this link to access renewing or joining instructions or scan the QR codes opposite:

https://u3adacorum.org/?page_id=7925

By post: Request a membership form to be sent by post from the Membership Secretary (details on last page).



Berkhamsted Card Making Group



u3a Dacorum is supported by Dacorum Borough Council

PRESIDENT: The Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum

Registered Charity 1012612.

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Future Committee Meeting Dates

Tuesday 1 April
Tuesday 6 May
Tuesday 3 June
Tuesday 1 July
Tuesday 29 July

Tuesday 2 September
Tuesday 7 October
Tuesday 4 November
Tuesday 2 December

Venue: Boxmoor Trust Centre, London Road, Hemel Hempstead.
Members are always welcome to attend either in person or on Zoom. Please let the Secretary know in advance.

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u3a Dacorum

Web Site



Membership



From the Trustees

35th Anniversary of u3a Dacorum ("Coral Anniversary")

Did you know that the first meeting of u3a Dacorum took place in April 1990 so we are celebrating our 35th (Coral) Anniversary this year?

The idea of the u3a movement was introduced to this country in 1982 and by 1990 there were 100 branches – there are now over 1000. Within a year our u3a had 80 members, which has now grown to over 1200. We would like to mark this Anniversary in some way this year and would like to hear views and suggestions from members.

Do you have any early memories of our u3a which you would like to share, or thoughts on how we should mark this occasion? Please get in touch with me at chair@u3adacorum.org or any member of the Committee. We look forward to hearing from you.

Carolyn Wallis

Chair's Report

Welcome to the latest edition of the Digest.

I hope the cold weather has not stopped you enjoying your regular group meetings, but what better way is there to spend a cold winter's day than enjoying refreshments and discussing your favourite interests with those who share your enthusiasm? I have continued to visit groups that are new to me, and it has been lovely to meet more of our members at different events.

Our Monthly Meetings (first Monday of each month) have become increasingly popular with the last three meetings each attended by over 100 members. Our own Folk Singers and Ukulele players got us in the mood for Christmas with a very entertaining concert in December. In January we had an excellent introduction to AI and at our February meeting we enjoyed a talk on The Beatles, their heroes and their music. Thank you to Lee Pace who arranges our speakers, and you can see a list of our upcoming meetings on the following pages.

We continue to offer these as hybrid meetings via Zoom, but while John and Terry work tirelessly to get the equipment to deliver, unfortunately sometimes the added complication of the speaker's equipment has meant that some talks have not been broadcast successfully. Apologies to those who have been disappointed, but please be reassured that those involved will continue to do their best to deliver the talks to you.

Continued on page 5...

...continued from page 4

We have had a few new volunteers come forward recently to assist our u3a Committee with welcoming new members and taking the minutes at meetings; however we continue to need more help with the running of our u3a. Several members of the Committee have taken on more than one role to keep everything on track, but this is not desirable in the long term. Please consider if you could offer to volunteer your help – maybe you would like to team up with a friend and do a 'job-share'. Anyone who is interested would be very welcome to come to a Committee meeting to meet the team and see how it all works. Please contact me or any member of the Committee if you are interested.

With signs of Spring in the air maybe you feel like trying a new hobby or interest and you will find reports of many interesting activities in the following pages – as usual contact details for Group Coordinators are at the back of the Digest.

Carolyn Wallis

Vice Chair's Report

As a committee we have been working on several vital areas of the management of your u3a. As a registered charity we have to produce a number of policies which then need to be regularly updated by our Governance sub committee, once these are agreed at a full committee meeting they will be downloaded onto the website.

As promised in our last AGM we discussed a number of options for collecting subs at our meetings and all coordinators were able to submit their ideas, our Chair has now contacted them all with an agreeable solution.

These tasks are made more difficult by the small number of trustees, so as we are now looking forward to our AGM perhaps it is the right time for some of our members to consider standing for election. The old saying that 'many hands make light work' is very true as we are now at the absolute minimum allowed in the Constitution. **We will need a Secretary from August as Ellen cannot continue beyond her three year term.** If you would like to discuss it further please contact one of us either by email or in person.

I would like to thank the groups who have assisted with refreshments at the monthly meetings. With such a large number of groups your turn comes round every few years unless of course you are lucky enough to be part of several groups.

Rota for 2025

April 7	Out With Friends	Boxmoor Playhouse	
May 12	Folk Singing	Boxmoor Playhouse	
June 2	Art Club	Boxmoor Playhouse	
July 7	Jazz Appreciation	Boxmoor Playhouse	
August 4	Sewing Bee	Boxmoor Playhouse	(AGM)

Jane Campbell

Secretary's Report

At recent Committee meetings, we have discussed whether to change how meeting fees are paid after consulting group organisers. An article by Carolyn Wallis explains our conclusions. This is alongside our routine discussions about running u3a Dacorum as a thriving organisation that responds to the needs of all our members. Our trustees and other Committee members are essential to keep things running and more people are needed.

As I've been in post for three years, I must stand down as Secretary at the AGM. The Secretary, alongside Treasurer, has a key role in keeping u3a Dacorum running. It needs to be done by someone who is organised, for example able to plan Committee meetings, and the Annual General Meeting, ensure decisions are recorded in the minutes. Most of this can be done on-line and so you need to be comfortable working digitally. We already have two "Minute Secretaries", who prepare the draft minutes. The role of Secretary could be shared. I have prepared 'desk instructions' for my successor, so it is easier for them to pick up the role. If you are interested do get in touch with Carolyn Wallis, or me, to talk about it. Any member is welcome to attend the Committee meetings, either in person or on Zoom to see how they are run and whether they want to participate. We are a friendly collaborative group of people and our meetings finish on time

Ellen Duffy, secretary@u3adacorum.org

Treasurer's Report

In this month's committee meeting, we reviewed the detailed budget for the next year to March 2026. As mentioned in the last Digest we have already agreed that there will be no membership fee increases, no meeting fee holiday, and members who want u3a Matters magazine will have to pay for it. This budget anticipates a deficit of approx £4,000, reducing our reserves in 12 months' time of just under £11,000, which is in line with reducing our reserves to the agreed level of £9,000 over a number of years. I will be using this as a basis for the 26/27 budget, when we will have to be much closer to breaking even, to ensure our reserves do not fall below the agreed level.

My attention is now on starting to prepare the annual accounts to March 25 accounts and then getting them approved by our independent examiner, in time for the AGM in August. A whole new experience as previously I was on the other side of the table, checking the figures! I will be writing to all group coordinators at the start of next month to ask for your returns to help in compiling the accounts.

As well as being treasurer here, I am on the Third Age Trust (TAT) Finance Committee. As I write this, I am looking forward to our annual "in person" meeting next week, when I shall get the chance to meet TAT's new chief executive, Iain Cassidy. We will be reviewing the latest set of monthly accounts for TAT and the trading company and their budgets for next year, so I will see what lessons I can apply from what I am doing here (and see what more I can learn!!).

Henry Wallis

Cash collection for Hall Meetings

At our AGM last August, the committee agreed that we would look at possible alternative methods for collecting fees for hall meetings as some Group Coordinators were feeling that collecting and handling large amounts of cash was becoming onerous.

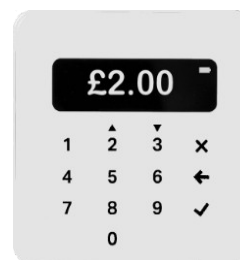


We reviewed other u3a's to see how they were collecting hall fees and found the main methods were:

- an all-inclusive membership fee removing the need for separate payments for group meetings
- using a card reader that links to an app on a mobile phone so members can pay by credit/debit card, Google or Apple pay
- paying in advance for a block of group meetings – for example three or six months
- our current system of cash payments

The Committee felt that an all-inclusive annual fee would not be suitable for our u3a as we have a high proportion of non-hall groups, and it would mean a very significant increase in the annual membership fee which would be unfair on those who do not attend hall groups.

In early December, I emailed the Group Coordinators of the hall groups setting out the advantages and disadvantages of the three alternatives – paying in cash, using a credit card machine, or paying in advance for a block of meetings. You may have been involved in discussions at some of your groups about these options.



When I had received replies from all the Group Coordinators, we found there was overwhelming support for our current system of collecting cash on the day, with 37 out of 40 groups opting for this method at the present time. One group is going to trial a credit card machine, and we will see how well this works in the coming months. However, that group will still accept cash if you do not wish to use a credit or debit card. One other group is trialling paying their Group Coordinator in advance for a block of meetings.

Please be reassured that whatever methods our groups may be trialling, you will still be able to pay in cash on the day.

Your Group Coordinators will update you if there are any changes for their group, however, if you have any further questions or thoughts on these issues, please contact me at chair@u3adacorum.org

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this review.

Carolyn Wallis

Membership Secretary's Report

Enclosed with this Digest is the membership renewal form for the year starting 1 April 2025. Many of you will already have renewed, prompted by my email sent via Beacon in February. If you have renewed, please do not renew again! Last year there were several duplicate renewals, resulting in a lot of extra work for the Treasurer.

One further plea – if paying online, please make your payments at the same time as your renewal application as it is easier to identify and process members' renewals the closer they are in time. If this means that you choose to wait until the end of March to renew, that is perfectly acceptable. I do send reminders, so you will not lose your membership easily should you forget to renew. We have a healthy membership of over 1200 members and I hope you will all choose to remain with us, enjoying the various groups that are available.

All the best for 2025

Jean Sniders, Membership Secretary

Monthly Meetings

7 April 2025: Boxmoor Playhouse

Kate Harwood: Prince Pickle

Kate Harwood lectures, writes, researches and campaigns on historic gardens. Formerly a lecturer in Garden History at Birkbeck College she is now Conservation Officer for Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and runs garden history courses for various local organisations.

Prince Pickle – or Furst Hermann von Puckler-Muskau to give him his full title was a Prussian nobleman whose great passion was gardening. He transformed his estate in Muskau and then another one at Branitz. He also laid out landscapes for the Prussian royal family and others. He travelled round Europe looking at parks and gardens and was very influenced by Humphry Repton, visiting many of his sites here. His influence spread across the Atlantic and Charles Eliot called him the greatest landscape designer of the 19th century. This talk looks at his gardens, his adventures in Europe and Africa and his surprising legacy.

12 May 2025: Boxmoor Playhouse

Gary Fisher: Bayeux Tapestry – A Play in Three Acts

Gary has a degree in Historical Geography. He splits his time between history and the entertainment industry. In addition to giving talks to groups like the u3a, he runs a company, Living History Hatfield, taking historical characters into schools.

Continued on page 9...

...continued from page 8

After considering the where, when, who and why of the Bayeux Tapestry, the talk then briefly looks at the events of the 10th & 11th centuries to set the scene for a detailed trip along the entire length of the tapestry.

2 June 2025: Boxmoor Playhouse

Helen Fry: A Very Secret War: Bugging the Nazis in WWII

Historian Dr Helen Fry has written numerous books on World War II, including about Germans who fought for Britain, British intelligence, espionage and the secret war. Her latest book is *Women in Intelligence: The Hidden History of Two World Wars*.

During World War II British intelligence bugged the conversations of thousands of German prisoners-of-war at three stately houses: Latimer House and Wilton Park in Buckinghamshire, and Trent Park in North London. Hitler's Generals, captured on the battlefields, were housed in luxurious conditions and lulled into a false sense of security. They relaxed and became unguarded in their conversations, little realising their quarters were 'wired for sound'. They inadvertently gave away some of Hitler's most closely guarded secrets, including the V1 ('doodlebug'), V2 and atomic bomb programme. For over 60 years the secret listeners never spoke about their work, not even to their families. They died, little knowing that they, alongside Bletchley Park, shortened the war and helped the Allied victory on VE Day.

2 July 2025: Boxmoor Playhouse

Tony Tutton: Buddy Holly

Tony was born in Walthamstow in 1947 (a "Baby Boomer"). He gave his first performance on stage at the age of six for Queen Elizabeth II Coronation concert. He joined a skiffle group at the age of 10 and has continued to perform as a drummer, guitarist, and lead singer. In 2023 Tony performed at a street party to celebrate King Charles III Coronation, this celebrated his 70 years in the music business!

Tony will take you on a journey through the life of the legendary Buddy Holly from his birthplace in Lubbock Texas in 1936 to his untimely death in 1958. Tony's Talk features many of Buddy smash hits, That'll be the day, Oh Boy, Peggy Sue, Rave on, Heartbeat ...and lots more. You will also hear songs from many artists that influenced Buddy such as Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Elvis, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bill Haley & His Comets. You will learn about the stories behind the songs and from many well-known performers that were influenced by his music such as The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Bobby Vee, Brian May, Linda Ronstadt etc. The talk is a visual and audio feast of music & song that you are invited to join in and sing along to.

Louise (Lee) Pace

Groups

Local History

Over recent months the group has been exploring the history of Marlowes and the High Street, looking at people and places associated with these two important streets and the surrounding area. We have also looked at the history of people who have given their names to locations in the town such as William Randall and Arthur Jarman. William Randall was the first person from the town to serve as a County Councillor. In the late nineteenth century the County Council held their meetings in London as cross country travel to Hertford was very difficult.

If you would like to discover more about the history of Dacorum then you are most welcome to join us. We have monthly hall meetings and in between these, short walks and visits to places of interest in the area that we are exploring. The Spring Term will see the group continue to look at people and places mainly in the High Street area.

Bernard Lamb

Swimming

We usually swim at the EveryoneActive Pool at Berkhamsted. We like the warm, cosy interior, the water is nearly always a reasonable temperature, the ease of parking and the friendly staff, one of whom always gives a Polish welcome to the Bukovina rescue dog who accompanies one of our company at lunch after the swim!

But in December we decided to try a different venue so we went up to London to swim at another Everyone Active Pool, in Marshall Street not far from Oxford Circus on the edge of Soho. This is a Grade II-listed pool which originally served the local community with laundry facilities, bath tubs and maternity services in the days when Soho was a lot poorer than it is now and not many households had running water. In a renovation during the 1930s a swimming pool was installed and the original marble walls and floors and the wooden panelling and barrel-vaulted ceiling have been kept on over the years. The pool itself is 30 metres in length so gives us all a little bit of a challenge beyond the usual 25 metres, but it still has the original feet and inches measurements carved in the edges of the pool. One thing it has in common with the Berkhamsted pool is that there is no cafe but being in the West End we had no trouble finding a coffee bar nearby for a light lunch.

After lunch, some of us went straight home, but others went off to the shops or to look at the lights in Carnaby Street and Regent Street. We all felt the day had been a success and hope to visit that pool again, perhaps in the spring.

Moir Brook

Classical Music Appreciation [Group 035]

We are enjoying an interesting and varied spring term programme, with excellent numbers of members attending. The term concludes with:

March 20: Adrian Davis – I can't believe it's not the Planets: The other Holst

April 3: Mike Beevor – Classical clips, a video presentation

April 17: (Maundy Thursday) – Music for Eastertide

Our summer term programme is not yet arranged, but do make a note in your diaries of the dates, which are:

May 15 and 29.

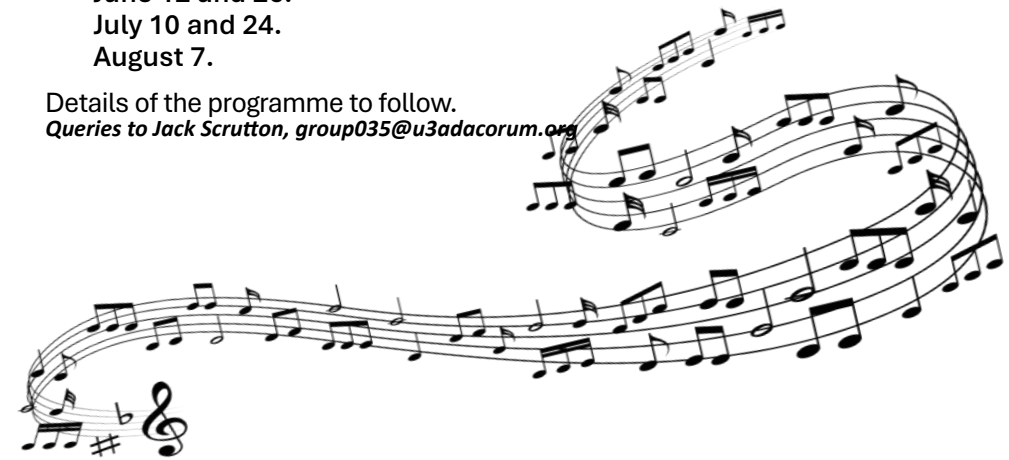
June 12 and 26.

July 10 and 24.

August 7.

Details of the programme to follow.

Queries to Jack Scrutton, group035@u3adacorum.org



Music Miscellany 089

An enjoyable year of music was rounded off in style with a wonderful Christmas celebration including a live, interactive carol concert by the *Sitting Room Singers* (SRS). We plan to repeat this next December. Meanwhile we are pleased to offer a full 4 weekly programme of music not covered by our Jazz and Classical colleagues and guaranteed to have you reminiscing and feeling uplifted. So look forward to:

March 13th Mike's video miscellany with a money theme

April 10th From James, 27 idiosyncratic offerings in a Misguided Tour of Hemel Hempstead

May 8th Music from our DVDs

June 5th Spring into Summer; Bob's CD offerings and a live SRS performance including nursery rhymes, sea shanties and other jolly songs.

July 3rd Another of Mike's historical outings

July 31st BYO (bring your own) with summer holiday emphasis

Bob Day

Literature A

We are, at the present time, reading *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell. The excellent grammar and lack of violence is a breath of fresh air. It is a relaxing and pleasant read taking us back to a more gentle age whilst allowing us to forget some of the horrors of this one and maybe considering where mankind went so terribly wrong.

We have previously read *The Autumn of the Ace* by Louis de Berniere (Captain Corelli's Mandolin) and surprisingly we all very much enjoyed this book. As we are a group of 'ladies of a certain age' (male members welcomed with open arms at any time) a book on the life of a First World War pilot now retired was a bit of a gamble. But we all loved it, can thoroughly recommend.

Both ladies and gentlemen are welcome to join us in our foray into the world of books. Meetings alternate Tuesdays 10:00 until 12:00, £1.00 charge for coffee/tea and biscuits.

Janet Goacher

Railway Group

We have a full programme for this year, the 200th Anniversary of the modern railway. Our speakers include members of the group as well as visitors from our local railway companies.

At our January meeting we heard a fascinating talk about the Railways around Stirling and in February enjoyed photographs and memories of a members travels in the USA. In March we will learn about the history of Network South East.

Our summer trips include a visit to the new stations on the East West Rail line and some of us are travelling north to visit Stockton and Darlington – birth-place of our railways.

New members are welcome but please email to ensure that we have room as this is a friendly and popular group.

Jane Campbell, viccamp@me.com

Calligraphy group

There are always new styles and equipment to keep our interest in the skill of calligraphy up to date, and we have benefited from members sharing their knowledge of these within the group recently. We cover traditional and modern scripts, as well as producing cards that enhance our work, and give joy to recipients. We always have a composite work on the go that hangs in our meeting room, and the current one is: *Short sayings that include the word 'Back'*. See examples on the right...

Diana Knapp

Walking Group



Preparing to go up the steps to Wards Hurst Farm near Ivinghoe Beacon on our Christmas walk

Peter Hamson



Bus Trippers

We continue to trip on the second Wednesday of each month. I send out an idea of where we are going and anyone interested replies asking for full details. We usually have a group of between 8-12 and make regular comfort stops as well as a break for lunch.



Late last year we visited the Museum of Brands in London in November and in December took a bus tour from Hemel to Wycombe then onto Thame for lunch returning via Aylesbury. In January we travelled to Hitchin using the 304 route from St Albans which took us through a number of pretty villages. The museum is fairly new, very well organised and has a coffee shop on site. We loved the seasonal Snowman exhibition. Our February trip to the small museum in Potters Bar was closer to home but still interesting.

In March we are booked into the Trenchard Museum at RAF Halton which will once again mean travelling on the X5 to Aylesbury to catch a connecting route.

We try to visit a range of venues and hope that summer weather will allow us to enjoy more outdoor activities.

Jane Campbell, group167@u3adacorum.org

Tea Dance



Our last Tea Dance of 2024 was very enjoyable. Peter Emery played a great selection of Christmassy tunes, and we devoured a feast of Stollen and Jamaican Rum Mince Pies. Many of the men wore festive attire, as can be seen in the photo, and the ladies were glamorous as always.

Mike Sapsard

Table Tennis

Here is a U3A success story:

A former U3A Table Tennis player, Dennis Lam, has hit the top of the tree. Dennis is a relative newcomer to Hemel Hempstead. He only moved here from Cardiff a few years ago. Looking for things to do, Dennis joined the U3A and started to come along to Table Tennis on a Wednesday afternoon. Whilst a bit rusty, his talent shone through and Dennis was encouraged to join the Leverstock Green Table Tennis Club in order to play at a higher standard.

Roll on a couple of years and Dennis is the star player for the Leverstock Green 1st team, playing league Table Tennis in the Hemel Hempstead league. Not only that, but at time of writing Dennis is unbeaten after 27 games and sitting snugly at the top of the player averages in Division 4. Thanks to Dennis's performances, the Leverstock Green 1st team are leading the table and are front runners for promotion at the end of the season. Well done Dennis, we're all very proud of you.

Can Dennis replicate the feat next year in Division 3? Updates next season.

If you fancy following in Dennis's footsteps, come and have a go on a Wednesday afternoon at Adeyfield Community Centre. See you there.



The picture shows Dennis with his trusty Table Tennis bat and Mark Chapman from Table Tennis group B.

Mark Chapman

Backgammon



The Backgammon Group is going from strength to strength with a continued interest by all of those who have come to the sessions.

All standards are catered for so if any of you would be interested in joining us please contact me.

Nick Ray, group364@u3adacorum.org



**Music Miscellany Christmas meeting,
The Sitting Room Singers**



Explore London: Soho Square Gardener's Hut



**Discussion Group enjoying their Annual
Meal in January**



**James Robertson playing a nostalgic selection of BBC
radio themes at Music Miscellany for World Radio Day**



**Lunch Clubs 1 and 2 enjoyed Christmas lunch at The Old
Mill Berkhamsted**



News Group/Have Your Say: Ben Habib (Left) and Captain James Morris (Right)



**French Book Club Celebrating their 10th
Anniversary**

085 Armchair Travellers

In November we set off for another US trip, this time to the Great Lakes with Ullly Jorimann. We travelled around the shores of lakes, Superior, Michigan and Huron and visited the cities of Chicago, Milwaukee and Detroit. A feature of the trip were visits to several Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, including the Charnley-Persky House in Chicago, the Johnson Wax HQ in Racine and the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Milwaukee. (*Right...*)

A visit to Mackinac Island, a small island, on Lake Huron proved to be one of the highlights of the trip. The island had many points of interest which is vehicle free, the only modes of transport being horse, bicycle or on foot. Finally, one of the features of the presentation were photos of lighthouses, around 50 in all, one of Ullly's passions.



In December we had our Christmas Quiz, titled "The Islands of the Mediterranean", a photo quiz for fun, covering all the major islands and island groups. We started the New Year with a trip to South America with Paul Burton. His presentation was titled "Holiday to Chile & Argentina with an emphasis on Patagonia." We flew into Santiago de Chile and had an interesting city tour then a day trip to Valparaiso, a colourful port city. Next we headed south, flying to Punta Arenas where we visited a replica of Darwin's HMS Beagle then on to Torres Del Paine NP, with its mountains, glaciers, lakes, and rivers.

John Clarke

Garden Trips and Tours

Like spring bulbs the garden group has been rather dormant the last few months. Yet once February arrived we all began to emerge from the cold earth and send up a few shoots. These fine young shoots met on Thursday 20th February to plan our monthly gardening trips for 2025.



Already our diaries are filled for the year, including local gardens in Loudwater, Chesham Bois, Chalfont St Peter and St Albans. As well as carefully selected gardens we also choose local hostellers that can cater for groups, as having a good lunch adds to the enjoyment of our days out.

Sue Croucher

Garden Visiting

Here we are at the beginning of another year of watching gardens unfold with each season; so far in 2025 we have visited a winter garden, looking for snowdrops and snowdrops below our feet, and glorious camellia blossoms above.

We are a friendly group which goes out each month to see a notable garden in the area – some large, some small, some formal and some very informal, but all offering lots of interest and enjoyment. We share cars, where possible. We each pay the garden owner their entrance fee, plus the cost of a cup of tea and a bit of cake, over which we can enjoy a discussion of what we've seen, what is going on in our own gardens, or anything else that arises!



If this sounds like your sort of thing, do get in touch.

Lin Phillips, coordinator, Garden Visiting Group 018

A young lady gardener from Jarrow
Grew a pathetically undersized marrow.

But as a gherkin disguised

It won her first prize,

Which she proudly wheeled home in a barrow.

Ian Brading

Flower Arranging



The Flower Arranging Group's Valentine arrangements

Carol Cotton

Science and Technology

Following a very successful and busy year, we started 2025 with a cracker of a talk by Colin Watson on the science and technology of the Tudor times in which Holbein's famous painting "The Ambassadors" was created. This is one of the finest and most popular of all the pictures that hang in the National Gallery and as well as the two distinguished figures that stand in the centre, all round them are images of scientific instruments, such as navigational globes and sextants. There is also the famous skull, a memento mori, that can only be seen full face from a position near the floor. Colin explained how Holbein may have done this, using an optical grid through which he painted it in detail. The picture itself is also unusual for Holbein, in showing its subjects full length rather than just the head and shoulders.

The other interesting point about the painting is that the two men are standing on a reproduction of the Cosmati pavement in Westminster Abbey on which King Charles was recently crowned. This a 13th century Italian work of art in which brightly coloured pieces of tile (tesserae) are embedded in the flooring. The significance of this lies in the fact that the patterns of the pavement are arranged to show mathematical figures that had religious and scientific meanings for those who were aware of this. For example, the date of the end of the world is shown – not just yet you'll be glad to hear.

Altogether, Colin's talk was very impressive in the detailed research that must have gone into it.



This month, we are having the talk from Rothamsted that we had to postpone from November because of problems at the Hall, now happily resolved. Dr Stephen Pearce is coming to talk to us about the vitally important food substance, wheat, both from a historical perspective but also to tell us about the cutting-edge research they are doing at Rothamsted to improve it.

Norman Parkyns

NEWS GROUP/Have your say

In December we welcomed Ben Habib, he was unfailingly polite and interesting. Agree with him or not but everyone did agree what an excellent speaker he was. To get someone of his calibre to answer the groups questions was an undoubted coup! After the customary biscuits and drinks we had a "News Quiz" of the year. The next day Ben was being interviewed on "GB News"

In January we had a handsome British Airways 777 Captain in full uniform come to educate us on the art of flying an enormous jet to all parts of the world. The highlight was his account of an engine fire over Lithuania and an emergency landing in Helsinki. He also majored on sustainable fuel that British Airways are pioneering.

In February two of our stalwarts, gave talks about "Britishness" and Government. A full report in the next "Digest"

On March the 11th, during the second half David Allen, one of our founder members, will be giving his take on the "House of Lords" Before tea coffee and bog standard cheap German supermarket biscuits we have Keith Redway giving his views on Covid and his career as a University Lecturer, with a touch of "Desert Island Discs" provided by our Head of Security, Graham.

The meetings are undoubtedly far better than this dull account, with laughter, fun and people talking to one another. To join in you are more than welcome, I just ask that you email me to say you are coming, john.waller30@talk-talk.net

All our meetings so far have been conducted in a respectful safe way, promoting our ethos of "FREE SPEECH" Everybody's opinion is important.

We meet at the Clubhouse of Berkhamsted Football Club, free parking adjacent to the venue, on the second Tuesday of each month. Ladies/Females and Women are more than welcome, at the moment its about a 50/50 split. We welcome everyone.

John Waller

Wild Flower Study

The wildflower study group's meetings until Autumn are as follows:

Thurs Mar 27 (indoors)	Thurs 5 Jun	Weds 23 Jul
Weds 30 Apr	Weds 11 Jun	Thurs 31 Jul
Thurs 8 May	Thurs 19 Jun	Weds 13 Aug
Weds 14 May	Weds 25 Jun	Thurs 21 Aug
Thurs 22 May	Thurs 3 Jul	Weds 17 Sep
Weds 28 May	Weds 9 Jul	Weds 8 Oct
	Thurs 17 Jul	Weds 29 Oct

Jenny Dickson

Book Reading

I coordinate the Book Reading Group which generally meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays from 10-12 at St Johns Church Hall in Boxmoor. The way the group works is: a book is chosen (preferably a title that the library has several copies of). Each person reads the book in their own time. One member “does” the book i.e. identifies passages to be read aloud at the meeting and provides context if required.

It is interesting just how different the text is when read aloud. The book chosen by the group varies hugely from Dickens to Alan Bennet or PG Wodehouse. Currently we are reading “*The Secret Garden*” by Frances Hogson Burnett which was first published in 1911 This is a children’s book but not a book that I read as a child. The language is very old fashioned but the storyline is interesting. It is interesting just how different the text sounds when read aloud. Our next book may be “*The Uncommon Reader*” by Alan Bennet or “*The Wind knows my name*” by Isabel Allende – two very different books.

Jenny Thirlwell

Lunch Clubs 1 and 2

Lunch Clubs 1 and 2 enjoyed Christmas lunch at The Old Mill Berkhamsted. A good time was had by all, the food was excellent, as were the staff.

Both groups are full at the moment, will advise if someone has to drop out.

Jerri McCann

French Book Club

The French Book Club (Cercle de lecture), which meets every other month, celebrated its 10th Anniversary in 2024 with a superb lunch party, French food of course, at the home of one of the members.

There are 15 members, some of whom are French, who each choose a book to review at the meeting. We all read it, then discuss it at the meeting, in French of course. Over the years we have read 60 books, mainly contemporary novels, but also poems and literature as far back as the 18th century. Afterwards we have tea and a chat (not always in French!)

It is a very friendly group and we enjoy our meetings, but at present we have as many members as we can accommodate. I do, however, keep a waiting list of anybody who is interested.

Lyn Parkyns

Astronomy 190

Our astronomy group is strong and growing with new members always welcome. We meet on the second Thursday of every month at St. Marys and St. Josephs Church Hall.

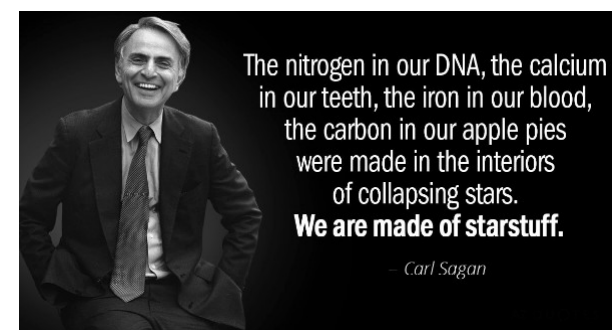
In December, we welcomed a guest speaker from the Southwest Herts Astronomical Society. He gave us a great historical account of the discovery of spectroscopy. Spectroscopy is a very important tool in astronomy as it detects wavelengths our eyes can’t see. After the talk, our Christmas tea was augmented with a little mulled wine and some great mince pies!

Most of our meetings start with a recap of the months Space News, and we always have a look at what we can see up in the night sky. The main body of the meeting is centred on a topic of interest. In January, we went Back to the Moon with a Royal Astronomical Society guest lecturer (online) explaining why we should send humans back to the Moon. The Moon offers a perfect laboratory to develop our expertise in interplanetary research and offers a “frozen in time” model of our Earth, with no atmosphere or plate tectonics to alter the structure. It also provides a base for observing the universe without light pollution or atmosphere to get in the way of telescopes.

February brought us down a new path for 2025, the “Search for Life”. An introductory video from an Oxford Professor kicked us off and the summer holds a more in depth look at the potential for life on our icy moons or on planets outside the solar system (exoplanets), with live online talks in the works.

We keep the level of discussion appropriate for the general public, so please do come and join us as we explore strange new worlds and seek out new life and new understanding of our amazing universe.

Patricia Rowe



Money Matters

The Money Matters group discusses money related topics from the news and personal experience that mostly affect individuals and their families. We can update others on companies or trades-people who have provided good service. Poor service and action taken to resolve issues can be highlighted. Topics can range from helping children and grandchildren, whilst minimising inheritance tax, to challenging unfair car parking penalties and securing the data on our phones. It's a useful forum to alert each other about scams and possible ways of avoiding them.

Recently a senior solicitor visited the group to lead a very helpful discussion and answer questions about wills, inheritance tax and powers of attorney

The group and its members do not provide financial advice and members should check and satisfy themselves that any suggestions made are suitable for them before taking them up.

If you're interested in joining or visiting to see what we do please email:

group025@u3adacorum.org

Tom Bloch

Exploring London

We ended 2024 with Hilary's walk in November; Tottenham Court Road to Trafalgar Square walking through Soho and Covent Garden discovering some hidden curiosities, such as a Nose of Soho and a policeman's coat hook.

In the middle of London's Soho Square, which dates back to 1681, stands a half-timbered gardener's hut. It looks like a Tudor construction, something that might have been built four or five hundred years ago, but was actually built in 1925 as an access point to the electricity substation beneath it.

The hut made it through WW2 unscathed and in 1992 was given a Grade II listing as a building of special architectural and historic interest

Our January 2025 Canary Wharf Festival Lights walk was cancelled by the organisers due to Storm Herminia's high winds, we will try again in 2026, if it is still operating.

Hoping to repeat our successful 2024 your six leaders have a full programme for 2025, an interesting mix of nine walks with, hopefully, an additional Lights walk. We plan to crisscross London from Hampstead in the North to Rotherhithe in the south, Bromley by Bow in the east to Ealing in the west plus discovering green spaces in the 'Square Mile'. Hilary Wood starts our programme with a stroll around elegant Belgravia in March, followed by Bernard Lamb exploring Primrose Hill in April and Tony Ford revisits Railway Lands in May. Details of each walk will be emailed to all members the 3rd or 4th week of each preceding month, this includes details of how to apply direct to the Walk Leader.

Sue Miller

Industrial History

Our friendly and welcoming group continues to thrive. Our talks programme covers a wide range of topics, and our visits maintain their popularity.

We closed 2024 with an informative and well researched talk by Derek Pullen on Robert Owen and his New Lanark Mills, and our traditional fun Christmas Quiz, led by Mike and Terry.

In January, Terry Smith regaled us with stories of his 80-mile canal journey from Barby in Northamptonshire to Rickmansworth. Amongst the rich industrial architecture through which he passed, it seems Terry was able to visit some refreshing hostelrys on the way.

Ian Petticrew's talk 'Wireless and the Titanic' in February proved to be extremely popular and informative and was one not to be missed! We also started to offer members the ability to pay their attendance fee by card, although we will continue to take cash as well.

Looking forward, Mike Stanyon's talk on 'Basildon Bond and the Roaring Lion' will take place on 19 March and in April Harvey Collier has organised our annual trip to 'a place of industrial significance'.



Our meeting on 21 May differs to our usual ones but is thought to be too interesting to miss; 'Eight Wings to the North' is an account of a flight by a Tiger Moth to the North Cape.



"The Tiger Moth is one of the world's most famous aircraft, and more pilots have learned to fly in the Moth than in any other machine." ...ANON

More details will be sent to members in the Industrial History group nearer the time. If you'd like to join our group please email:

group024@u3adacorum.org

Alan Olive

Group Listings

If you wish to attend a group for the first time, or if anything is unclear, please contact the person listed to express your interest, to find out how it works, and whether there is space. This list is correct at February 2025.

085 Armchair Traveller St John's Church Large Hall	John Clarke group085@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Tuesday 14:00 - 16:00
039 Art Club Gadebridge Community Centre	Patricia Angell group039@u3adacorum.org	Alt Fridays 10:00 - 12:00
223 Arts, Crafts, Skills Kings Arms, Berkhamsted	Susan Woodhams group223@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Monday 10:00 - 12:00
190 Astronomy Practical St Mary & St Joseph Church Hall	Patricia Rowe group190@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Thursday 14:00 - 16:00
364 Backgammon Leverstock Green Village Hall	Nick Ray group364@u3adacorum.org	First Thursday 15:30 - 17:30
360 Badminton Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre	John Larkin group360@u3adacorum.org	Thursdays 10:00 - 12:00
363 Book Group Bridge Street, Berkhamsted	Margaret Elwick group363@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Thursdays 14:00 - 16:00
029 Book Reading HH St Johns Church Small Hall	Jenny Thirlwell group029@u3adacorum.org	2 nd /4 th Mon 10:00 - 12:00
183 Bus Trippers Various Locations	Jane Campbell group183@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Wed Various Times
007 Calligraphy Leverstock Green Village Hall	Diana Knapp group007@u3adacorum.org	Mon 2 weekly 13:00 - 15:00
048 Card Making A (HH) Sundew Road	Catherine Lindsay group048@u3adacorum.org	1 st Tuesday 10:00 - 12:00
177 Card Making B (BK) Open Door, Berkhamsted	Lesley Drake group177@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Friday 13:30 - 15:30
011 Circle Dance Carey Baptist Church	James Robertson group011@u3adacorum.org	1 st , 3 rd Tues 11:00 - 12:30
080 Creative Writing B Wrensfield	Kay Reid group080@u3adacorum.org	Thu 3 weekly, 14:00 - 16:00
082 Creative Writing C Gravel Lane, Boxmoor	Janet Goacher group082@u3adacorum.org	1 st Thursday 14:00 - 16:00
046 Cribbage and Scrabble Adeyfield Community Centre	Althea Jones group046@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Mon 14:00 - 16:00
064 Cycling Various Locations	Sue Potiuk group064@u3adacorum.org	1 st Thursday 10:00 Start
090 Discussion B BK Sacred Heart Berkhamsted	Tim Thompson group090@u3adacorum.org	4 th Tuesday 14:00 - 16:00

081 Exploring London Various Locations	Sue Miller group081@u3adacorum.org	Last week of Month
197 Exploring Towns, Villages Visits by Car Share	Laura Rouse group197@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Thursday Various Times
073 Flower Arranging Highfield Community Centre	Carol Cotton Valerie Norris group073@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Thu, Not July/August 14:00 - 16:00
159 Folk Singing Adeyfield Free Church	Brian Jackson group159@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Wed 10:00 - 12:00
202 French Book Club Highclere Drive	Lyn Parkyns group202@u3adacorum.org	Last Tue 2 - monthly 15:00 - 17:00
214 French Conv - Adv Member's Home	Bernadette Streater group214@u3adacorum.org	1 st & 3 rd Tues 10:15 - 12:00
018 Garden Visiting Various Locations	Lin Phillips group018@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Wed, Mar to Oct, 14:00 Start
017 Garden Trips and Tours Various Locations	Sue Croucher group017@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Thursday 10:00 Start
019 Genealogy A BK Zoom	Kath Jones group019@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Monday 14:00 - 16:00
051 Genealogy B HH St Pauls Highfield & Zoom	Margaret Fairburn group051@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Monday 10:00 - 12:00
059 German Improvers St Johns Church Large Hall	Heather Al-Jawad group059@u3adacorum.org	Mon 2 weekly 14:30 - 16:30
024 Industrial History St Johns Church Large Hall	Alan Olive group024@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00
095 Italian (Lang and Culture) St Johns Church Large Hall	Lorna & Jim Grimes group095@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Thur 10:00 - 12:00
092 Italian Conversation (Int) Member's Home	Marie McHale Anette Corbach group092@u3adacorum.org	1 st & 3 rd Thur 14:30 - 16:30
156 Italian (Step 2) Adeyfield Community Centre	Tina Leach group156@u3adacorum.org	Every Friday 14:00 - 16:00
188 Japanese Various Locations	Christine Watson group188@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Thu 10:00 - 11:30
026 Jazz Appreciation St Francis Hall, Boxmoor	Bernard Newton group026@u3adacorum.org	Thu 4 weekly 10:00 - 12:00
175 Knit and Natter Tile Kiln Lane Leverstock Green	Lana Linden Group175@u3adacorum.org	Wed 2 Weekly 14:00 - 16:00

076 Latin Beginners Various Locations BK	Christine Watson group076@u3adacorum.org	2 nd and 4 th Wed 14:15 - 15:45
076 Latin Intermediate Various Locations BK	Christine Watson group076@u3adacorum.org	1 st and 3 rd Wed 14:30 - 16:00
027 literature A BK Various Locations	Cherry Stainforth group027@u3adacorum.org	Tue 2 - weekly 10:00 - 12:00
028 Literature B Various Locations Berkhamsted	Judy Roythorne Group028@u3adacorum.org	Mon 3 - weekly 10:00 - 12:00
031 Local History St Johns Church Large Hall	Bernard Lamb group031@u3adacorum.org	4 th or last Tues 14:00 - 16:00
157 Lunch Club A Various Locations	Jerri McCann group0157@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Tuesday Ring for Times
203 Lunch Club B Various Locations	Jerri McCann group203@u3adacorum.org	4 th Tuesday Ring for Times
215 Magic Introduction Leverstock Green Village Hall	Mike Sapsard group215@u3adacorum.org	Fri 2 - Weekly 14:00 - 16:00
060 MahJong St Pauls Church Parish Room	Jenny Thirlwell group060@u3adacorum.org	1 st , 3 rd Wed 10:00 - 12:00
361 Maths and Puzzles St Johns Church Large Hall	Roger Witt Keith Holmes group361@u3adacorum.org	Third Monday 14:00 - 16:00
065 Military History St Johns Church Large Hall	Graham Kendall group065@u3adacorum.org	1 st Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00
025 Money Matters St Johns Church Large Hall	Tom Bloch Janet Wheeler group025@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Monday 10:00 - 12:00
035 Music Apprec (Classical) St Francis Hall, Boxmoor	Sue Frost Jack Scrutton group035@u3adacorum.org	Thu 2 weekly 10:00 - 12:00
089 Musical Miscellany St Francis Hall, Boxmoor	Robert Day group089@u3adacorum.org	Thu 4 weekly 10:00 - 12:00
037 Nature Study Various Locations outdoors	Christopher Lindsay group037@u3adacorum.org	Every Tuesday 10:00 - 13:30
038 Needlework Ivy House Lane BK	Lesley Drake group038@u3adacorum.org	Tue 2 weekly 10:00 - 12:00
362 News Group Berkhamsted Football Club	John Waller Tim Thompson Group362@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Tuesdays 10:00 - 12:00
067 Opera - Introduction Rider Close Bovingdon	Maggie Moore group067@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Friday 14:00 - 16:00

075 Out with Friends St Johns Church Full Hall	Deborah Sargeant group075@u3adacorum.org	1 st Friday 10:00 - 12:00
036 Painting for Pleasure Northchurch Social Centre, Outside in Summer	Sue Bloch Linda Tomkinson group036@u3adacorum.org	1 st Thursday 10:00 - 12:00
040 Patchwork Adeyfield Community Centre	Jenny Burton group040@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Wed 13:00 - 15:00
045 Pencil Drawing Adeyfield Community Centre	Jean Houston group045@u3adacorum.org	1 st Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00
061 Philosophy Quaker Meeting House, HH	Denis Maclure group061@u3adacorum.org	Tue 2 weekly 14:30 - 16:30
151 Photography Club St Johns Church Large Hall	John Larkin Terry Thirlwell group151@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Wednesday 14:00 - 16:00
041 Play Reading A Smoke House, Middle Road BK	Catherine Ayling group041@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Tuesday 09:30 - 12:00
042 Play Reading B Bk Various Homes, Zoom Personal Account	Ruth Treves Brown Gillian Southgate group042@u3adacorum.org	1 st Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00
071 Poetry Appreciation Chalfont Close, HH	Margaret Ainsworth group071@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Wednesday 14:15 - 16:15
088 Poetry Writing Gravel Lane, Boxmoor	Audrey Naylor group088@u3adacorum.org	Mon 3 weekly 14:00 - 16:00
167 Railways Summer Rail Visits, otherwise Adeyfield Community Centre	Jane Campbell Victor Campbell group167@u3adacorum.org	Last Thursday, (not Dec) 10:00 - 12:00
182 Reading BK Cedar Road Berkhamsted	Denis Maclure group182@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Friday 10:00 - 12:30
213 Rug Makers Windmill Road HH	Jane Campbell group213@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Tuesday 14:00 - 16:00
084 Russian Beechwood Park	Chris Hayward group084@u3adacorum.org	Thursday 10:00 - 11:30
165 Science and Technology St Johns Church Full Hall	David Eastham John Coe Group165@u3adacorum.org	Last Wed 14:15 - 16:00
185 Sewing Bee Adeyfield Community Centre	Jenny Barnfield group0185@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Tuesday 10:00 - 12:00
187 Spanish Lang and Cult Potten End	Shirley King group187@u3adacorum.org	2 nd and 4 th Wed 14:30 - 16:30
221 Swimming (Berkhamsted) Berkhamsted Leisure centre	Moir Brook group221@u3adacorum.org	3 rd Friday 12:00 - 14:30

217 Table tennis A Adeyfield Community Centre	Sarah Glennie Group217@u3adacorum.org	1 st , 3 rd Wed 14:00 - 16:00
224 Table tennis B Adeyfield Community Centre	Mark Chapman group224@u3adacorum.org	2 nd , 4 th Wed 13:00 - 16:00
005 Tea Dance Apsley Community Centre	Mike Sapsard group005@u3adacorum.org	Tues 2 weekly 14:00 - 16:00
181 Ukulele Grove Hill Community Centre	Anne Twiggs Sue Parsons group181@u3adacorum.org	1 st Wed 09:30 - 12:00 3 rd Wed 10:00 - 12:00
220 Urban Sketchers Various Locations	Althea Jones group220@u3adacorum.org	2 nd & 4 th Tue, Oct - Apr 4 th Tue 10:00 - 12:00
099 Walking Various Locations	Peter Hamson group099@u3adacorum.org	Usually 4 th Tue 09:30 start
204 Wild Flower Study Various Locations	Jennifer Dickson group204@u3adacorum.org	2 nd Wed or Thu 10:00 - 12:00
078 wine appreciation St Johns Small Hall	Kay Hobday group078@u3adacorum.org	First Friday 14:30 - 16:30

u3a Dacorum Committee Members

Members of u3a Dacorum may contact any Committee Member with suggestions, ideas, and complaints, or for advice on matters relating to u3a activities.

Trustees:

Chair: **Carolyn Wallis**
Vice Chair: **Jane Campbell**
Treasurer: **Henry Wallis**
Secretary: **Ellen Duffy**
Groups: **Louise (Lee) Pace**
Digest Editor: **John Dodkins**
Speakers: **Louise (Lee) Pace**
Beacon: **John Dodkins**
Trustee: **John Coe**

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Committee Associates:

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Web Admin: **Mike Sapsard**
Beacon & web: **Anne Menzies**
Hall Bookings: **Margaret Taylor**
Equipment: **Terry Thirlwell**
Group News: **Alan Osborn**
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Minutes: **Deborah Porter**
Minutes: **Lesley Drake**

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