

# Bulletin

## for Interest Groups

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### NEW MEMBERS' MEETING 28th July

These events are held several times a year for new members to meet with others new to Orpington u3a. They are social events and also a chance to find out more about the various activities on offer.

Recently joining members, please check your emails from [noreply@u3abeacon.org.uk](mailto:noreply@u3abeacon.org.uk) for an invitation to the next informal new members' meeting:

**10.30-11.45 on Tuesday 28th July 2026**  
**St Paul's Church, Crofton Road, BR6 8JE**

Alternatively, to register your interest, please contact the New Members Coordinator

Tim Baker-Bartholomew at our entertaining May meeting



Learn new skills  
Laugh with friends  
Live for the moments

# Message from the Chairman



At this month's General Meeting I drew the attention of the members to the sterling work of our Events Committee and the leaders of the London Explorers group in providing such an extensive and varied selection of outings for the benefit of all our members. This work involves many hours of selfless work by those concerned as well as considerable organisational skill.

This reminded me of the debt of gratitude that we owe to the committee and its supporters that enables our General Meeting to take place seamlessly on a monthly basis as well as all the other background work that goes into running an organisation with over 1100 members.

This year the workload for the committee has sadly been increased by some unfortunate ill health involving several members and so I would like to thank (in no particular order):

**The Membership Secretary** who deals with all renewals and new membership applications with exemplary efficiency and attends every General Meeting to be available to those members who prefer to join or renew in person.

**The Treasurer** who maintains all the finances with accuracy, speed and efficiency - paying all our suppliers promptly and assisting with the financial accounts of numerous interest groups.

**The Secretary** who produces detailed minutes almost immediately after our committee meetings and deals with all our external correspondence.

**The IT Manager** who keeps us up to speed with IT and technical matters - **A vital need for most of us !!!**

**The Group Coordinator** who deals with numerous matters affecting our 100+ interest groups and deals with all enquiries with patience, friendliness and efficiency.

**The New Members Coordinator** who keeps contact with all our new members, dealing with many and varied enquiries and arranging regular and very successful new members' meetings.

**The Newsletter Editors** who edit and produce the attractive and informative newsletters and bulletins that you all receive. As you will imagine this job involves a great deal of hard work and expertise.

**The Groups Administrator** who works in the background producing and maintaining the large and complicated spreadsheets upon which the committee depends for accurate up to date information.

**Many thanks to you all !**

And last, but by no means least, **The Refreshments Manager**, her invaluable help in providing tea and coffee for all our General Meetings and many other events which she manages to do with great cheerfulness and patience.

# General Meetings 3.30-5.30pm

**Crofton Halls, BR6 8PR**

Doors open at 3.30pm for refreshments, until the main meeting starts at 4pm

Members who park at Crofton Halls when attending General Meetings will need to enter their car registration at reception to avoid a parking fine.

Click [HERE](#) for further details.

## 21st July - Jeff Evans - They think its all over

### A history of sport on TV

It's been nearly 90 years since a major sporting event was first shown on British television and, boy, has TV's coverage of sport changed since those early days.

Author and historian Jeff Evans tells you all about the history of sport on TV in this lively, fully-illustrated talk, offering lots of 'I never knew that' moments and bringing back many warm memories.



## 18th August - Tim Morrey

### The Amazing Dr Johnson

#### A lighthearted look



Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, sermonist, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. The Oxford Dictionary of 'National Biography' calls him;

*"arguably the most distinguished man  
of letters in English history"*



## Monthly u3a Coffee Morning

On the third Thursday of the month we have a  
Coffee Morning at 10.30am in the

BR6 Bakehouse Café

All members are welcome



# Events!

## Picnic in Greenwich Park

The events team is pleased to say we are planning a picnic in **Greenwich Park on 9th July**. This will be a lunchtime event from midday with everyone welcome. No commitment required, just turn up on the day.



We will meet at '**Nelson's Ship in a Bottle**' sculpture, located in the National Maritime Museum gardens, from midday. This is approximately a 10 minute walk from Greenwich station.

## Brighton Coach Trip

We are also organising a seaside coach trip to **Brighton** taking place on the **7th September**, leaving Orpington at 9:30 from Spur Road, War Memorial end. Departing from Brighton at 16:30.

**The cost will be £15 per person.** Tickets initially to be sold at the July monthly meeting, which is on the 21st. Then to go on general sale.



For more information about any of the events please contact the Events Manager.



On the balmy evening of 30th May a group of us attended "**Musicals in the Crypt**" at **St. Martins-in-the-field**. The Venue, a stones throw from Charing Cross, is quirky but lends itself beautifully with a bar, cafe and central stage, with good viewing all round.

The four talented west end performers gave us an amazing medley of songs from various musicals, with enthusiasm, humour and pathos. We ended up singing, dancing and laughing after a thoroughly enjoyable evening; with the added benefit of being back at the station in 5 minutes!

We are open to repeating this event if desired.



# London Explorers

## Friday 24th July - Dr Johnson's House

We will have a guided tour of the house lived in by Dr Johnson while he wrote his Dictionary. The house is preserved as a time capsule of the Age of Enlightenment and is in hidden alleyways off Fleet Street. It promises to be a fascinating insight into the life and times of this giant of English literature.

We will travel up to Charing Cross and get the bus to Fleet Street, from where it is a short walk. Our tour is at 11.15 and will last about an hour. The cost will be £14 per person.

For more information and to book on this tour please contact the Group Leader.



**“When a man is  
tired of London  
he is tired of  
life...”**

## London Explorers: Visit to Queen's House

On Thursday 11th June we visited Queen's House in Greenwich. This beautiful Grade I listed building was built around 1617 and was a former royal residence firstly for Anne of Denmark (wife of King James I) and later for Henrietta Maria (wife of King Charles I).



We were taken on a tour of the House by a very helpful guide called Theo who shared her extensive knowledge of the House. She explained it was designed by British architect Inigo Jones, who introduced the 'Palladian' style of design, shown clearly in the Great Hall with its symmetrical windows – additionally the Hall still features the original tiled flooring.

We were shown many famous paintings such as the 'Armada' painting of Queen Elizabeth I and JMW Turner's Battle of Trafalgar. The House is an art gallery as well as a historical building as there were many paintings in all the rooms that we viewed.

Near the Great Hall, we were shown the stunning 'Tulip Staircase' - a unique wrought-iron self-supporting staircase, with 'lily' floret designs on the balustrade. However, the lilies were mistaken by the blacksmith of the time as tulips, and the name stuck!

Overall, it was a very interesting and informative tour. The House has free admission so would highly recommend a visit as there is so much history to explore within its walls.





# Walks



Walks are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am unless stated otherwise.

**All walkers join the walks at their own risk.**

New walkers are welcome to join any of the walks - but please telephone us before coming on your first walk. Please ensure that you wear suitable footwear for the walks.

Note that the walk description is only a brief guide, not a complete breakdown of the walk.

## PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING MONTHS

### Wednesday 15th July - High Elms

A 3 mile walk around High Elms. There may be some rough ground and hills but no styles.

Meet at Farnborough village triangle junction with Church Road for a 3 mile walk around High Elms. Refreshments after in Farnborough village.

Public toilets available mid walk near the café in High Elms.



### Wednesday 19th August - Shoreham

A 3-4 mile circular walk around Shoreham, including one very long steep hill.

Meet in the free car park in Filston Lane, TN14 7SP.

There are a number of pubs for toilet and refreshments after. The RAF museum offers free entry.



## Gardening Month by Month



An enjoyable afternoon was spent visiting the allotment of the husband of one of our members.



He has 2 plots, growing mainly fruit and vegetables and explained his weekly tasks to us. Apart from the wonderful produce on display, we were impressed with his great patience when answering our questions! Many of us went home with some freshly harvested rhubarb, which was delicious.

# Philosophy **Loss of Faith**

Richard Holloway FRSE (1933–2025) was a Scottish writer, broadcaster and former Bishop of Edinburgh who became one of the most provocative religious voices of his generation. Sent to train for the priesthood at 14 and ordained in 1960, he served in England, the US, Ghana and Scotland, eventually becoming Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Yet by the late 1990s he had grown disillusioned with institutional religion, particularly its treatment of women and LGBT people, and resigned his posts in 2000.

Holloway increasingly adopted an agnostic, “after-religionist” stance, arguing that humans are meaning-makers in a universe that may have no ultimate purpose. He questioned doctrines such as eternal life, which he saw as unappealing, and criticised the harm caused by religious certainty. Despite this, he continued attending Old St Paul’s in Edinburgh, valuing the community and ritual while rejecting dogma.

A prolific author of 34 books, Holloway explored difficult ethical questions around sexuality, drugs and bioethics. His 2021 book *The Heart of Things* blended memoir and poetry, urging compassion, humility and kindness in a world without certainty about God. In later life he reflected on mortality, time and gratitude, describing himself as having “a mellow, relaxed, compassionate, agnostic relationship with the big mystery of life.” He believed we should live well for its own sake, acting kindly “as if there were no God” - and that if a God does exist, such a life would fulfil the divine will.

“Now as my own life  
spools its last reel,  
I’m still not sure  
if Someone was behind it,  
like the projectionist  
in the old picture houses  
I went to and loved as a boy.  
Maybe at The End, somehow,  
I’ll know.  
But wasn’t it great,  
the show, I tell myself,  
as the lights come up  
and the curtains  
start to close?  
It was, it WAS!”

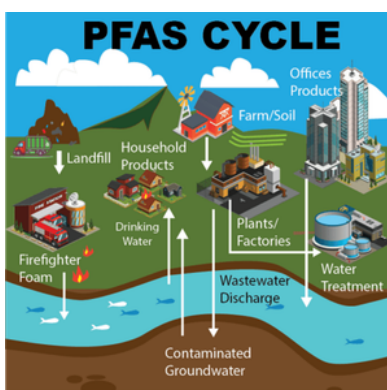
Richard Holloway

[On Leaving the Church](#)  
[Richard Holloway - YouTube](#)

To join our friendly group, please  
contact the Group Leader.

# Science & Technology **Forever Chemicals**

As the name suggests ‘forever chemicals’ (polyfluoroalkyl substances - PFAS) are a family of man-made substances that don’t break down; they accumulate in the environment and build up in people and wildlife. They’ve been used since the 1950s in non-stick pans, waterproof clothing, stain-resistant fabrics, food packaging, firefighting foams and many industrial processes because they repel water, oil and heat.



The implications are serious. PFAS persist for decades or centuries, spreading through rivers, soil, air and food chains. They’re now found in drinking-water sources, farmland, rainwater, and in the blood of almost everyone tested worldwide. Some PFAS are linked to increased risks of certain cancers, reduced fertility, immune suppression, thyroid disruption and developmental effects in children. Wildlife shows similar impacts, with contamination detected in otters, seabirds and fish.

Because PFAS don’t degrade, contamination accumulates year on year, making cleanup extremely difficult and extremely expensive.

Regulators in the UK, EU and US are now moving toward restricting PFAS, but legacy pollution will remain for generations. We were shown several videos explaining the situation and what organisations such as Watershed Investigations are doing to raise awareness. To find out more please follow the links:

- [TOXIC: Undertones frontman Feargal Sharkey on PFAS pollution](#)
- [How 'forever chemicals' have seeped into almost everything – video | Pfas | The Guardian](#)
- [BBC Radio 4 - Costing the Earth, Britain's Dark Waters](#)
- [Video: Investigation Into the X-Press Pearl Disaster | Pulitzer Center](#)
- [WATERSHED Investigations - in-depth coverage of the water crisis](#)

# Real Ale Appreciation

The latest outing of the Real Ale Appreciation Group in June was a trip to three of London's iconic East End Heritage Pubs in Wapping – The Captain Kidd, The Town of Ramsgate and the Prospect of Whitby. All three are linked to smuggling, piracy and grisly executions!

Captain Kidd was a notorious 17th century pirate who made an unwise raid on an East India Company vessel. He was captured, found guilty and sentenced to death. His execution by hanging took place in the Eastern reaches of the Thames near to the current pub's location. Apart from also being a place of execution, The Town of Ramsgate has witnessed many exotic comings and goings including Captain Bligh and HMS Bounty. Miscreants due for execution here were tied to a post at low tide and slowly drowned as the tide came in!

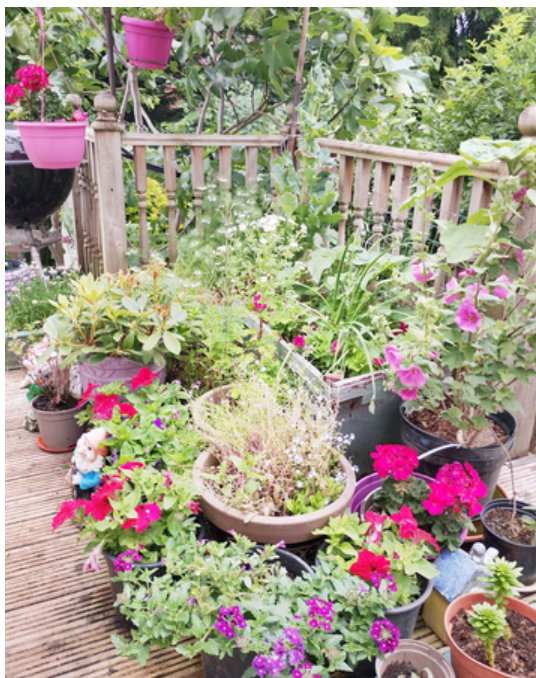
The link to Ramsgate refers to the period when fishermen would unload their catches here rather than incurring the heftier landing taxes further up the river at Billingsgate.

The Prospect of Whitby was rebuilt after a fire in the 19th Century and renamed after the ship that used to bring coal from Newcastle and berth nearby. Only the original stone floor remains but there is a noose hanging close to the riverside balcony which offers a reminder of rough justice for over 400 years. Nowadays, it is very much on the London Tourist Trail.

On the way we did, of course, enjoy a number of both traditional and unusual Real Ales!

Our next trip in July is much more local when we will be visiting The Cockpit in Chislehurst, many times winner of Kent CAMRA pub of the year.

We are a very friendly (mixed) group and if you would like to join us for this or any of our other adventures or just want more information, please contact the Group Leader.



## Gardening Made Easy

A small group of Gardening Made Easy members met at my house. It was a wet afternoon at the beginning of June, so we only went outside briefly to see just how I give summer colour to a small part of the garden, on the patio.

The main part of the garden is sunken with established shrubs and raised beds. These were made by carrying flint stones from the fields nearby and cementing them to form long raised beds with 'no trouble' flowers, such as spring bulbs, wallflowers, aquilegia and lavender together with a variety of plants from other scattered seeds.

We sat around and passed on tips, plants, seeds and friendship! All relieved that our friend who had had a serious head injury, is now improving, and has been transferred from Kings College to the PRUH.

If you would like to join this small band of friendly gardeners, please contact the Group Leader.

# German Conversation 2 - BOB Group

This is a BOB group as it is open to Bromley, Orpington and Beckenham u3as.

It offers spontaneous conversation on a range of topics beyond basic level. Reading matter is available which is used as homework and inspiration for the next meeting. Members take turns to host the meeting. It is a friendly sociable group.

Meetings are on alternate Tuesdays, 2-4pm. If you would like more details please contact the Group Leader.

## New Group VISUAL ARTS

The term 'Visual Arts' includes painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics and textiles. The group will visit venues in London, or beyond, such as the Henry Moore sculptures at Kew Gardens or the William Morris Gallery, usually on a Wednesday. There is no limit to the number of members who can join.

Once you receive the programme, choose what you want to go to, buy your ticket and meet us at Orpington station to travel together.

For more information about this group, please contact the Group Leader.

## CRAFT

The Craft Group enjoy meeting up on the last Thursday of every month and here are a few photos of May's projects - needle felting, paper lanterns and macramé key fobs.

