

# Bulletin

## for Interest Groups

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*Season's Greetings from the Chairman*

So here it is, my last Chairman's Letter, as after nearly ten years on the Committee, the last three as Chairman of Orpington u3a, I will be stepping down at the AGM in January. It has been a privilege to serve such a vibrant, friendly and cohesive organisation. During my tenure, I have visited many groups and had the pleasure of meeting lots of members, seeing for myself the energy, creativity and fun at the forefront of all our activities. Orpington u3a flourishes because of you, its members, with your enthusiasm for learning, willingness to share skills, and commitment to friendship.

My sincere thanks go to the Committee members, past and present, who have supported and encouraged me with unflinching good humour, which has made my role both easier and immensely enjoyable. I am also very grateful to our Group Leaders, who give their time so generously and without whom Orpington u3a simply could not function.

We continue to thrive, with a membership of 1100, new groups starting and events planned. I know that the future of the organisation is secure in the capable hands of the new Chairman, alongside his enthusiastic Committee and wish them every success. I look forward to being a member and will continue to relish all that entails.

It has been an honour to serve as your Chairman, goodbye and thank you.

**Merry Christmas  
& A Happy New Year!**  
*from u3a Orpington*



# 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.

## Annual General Meeting - 20 January Followed by Jayne Stubbington speaking about Guide Dogs for the Blind



Please come along and vote for your new Committee at the **Annual General Meeting**

The 2026 AGM documents, including the Accounts and Treasurer's Report can be found following this link: [2026 AGM Documents | Orpington U3A](#)

The AGM will be followed by the usual General Meeting. Jayne will bring along Guide Dogs and talk about their wonderful work and how the puppies are trained to be fantastic Guide Dogs, and what happens after they retire.

## 17 FEBRUARY - LINDA REGAN ACTING CAN BE MURDER

Linda, British actress and crime novelist, mixes anecdotes from her acting career in Hi-De-Hi!, Minder, Quadrophenia, London's Burning, Birds of a Feather, Bergerac and The Bill with crime-writing humour.

Enjoy behind-the-scenes stories, comic mishaps, and insights that inspired her novels.



## 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



# London Explorers

## Florence Nightingale Museum, St. Thomas' Hospital

Friday, 16th January, 2026

London Explorers have arranged a visit to the Florence Nightingale Museum on 16th January.

We will catch the 12:41 train from Petts Wood station to Waterloo East, and then have a short walk to the Museum.

The cost for a guided tour will be £13 p.p.



## GOLF GROUP'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH

A few photos from an enjoyable Christmas lunch with the Golf Group where our Chairman was invited as a Guest of Honour.



# London Explorers

## Theatre Royal Drury Lane Backstage Tour Tuesday 25 November

A group of 32 members enjoyed a backstage tour of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. This historic theatre, nestled in the heart of Covent Garden, boasts a legacy stretching back to 1663 and is celebrated as one of the world's oldest and most illustrious playhouses.

After a short walk from Charing Cross to the theatre's grand façade, we were greeted and taken inside by our tour guides, both actors. As we were a large group we divided into two with a guide for each. The opulent entrance hall, adorned with period detailing and theatrical memorabilia, and the Cecil Beaton Bar, served as a fitting prelude to the tour. Our guides gave us a history of the theatre and led us through the impressive public rooms, normally packed with people when you attend a performance. We had a glimpse of the cast starting rehearsals on stage and were then led down into the tunnels under the theatre and regaled with stories of ghosts, and the origins of theatrical terms such as 'drag', 'props', 'box office', etc. Our guide was full of information which he gave in a lively and informative way. Everyone agreed that this was a tour to remember!

We regrouped after our tours and most people strolled through Covent Garden Piazza to the Actors' Church, St Paul's. The Church is lined with fascinating memorial plaques to past actors and we were also treated to a small surprise concert as Anita Harris (still looking good for 83!) was rehearsing for an upcoming memorial. This rounded off a most enjoyable trip.





# 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 21 January - Eynsford

Meet on the grassed area beside the river, opposite The Plough Inn, Eynsford, for a 3 miles circular walk, fairly flat easy walking, not too muddy.

Toilets and refreshments are available after at the Plough Inn or there are a number of pubs and cafes in the village.



### Wednesday 18 February - Hawkwood Estate

Meet outside the Tigers Head, Watts Lane BR7 5PJ for a 3-mile walk that is not too strenuous. Parking is available on residential roads in the vicinity and buses run nearby.

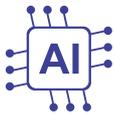




## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

AI is the simulation of human intelligence in machines, enabling them to learn, reason, solve problems and make decisions. Core technologies include machine learning, deep learning and robotics, which drive everyday applications. While AI offers efficiency, innovation and safety, it also raises concerns such as job losses, privacy risks, energy use and ethics.

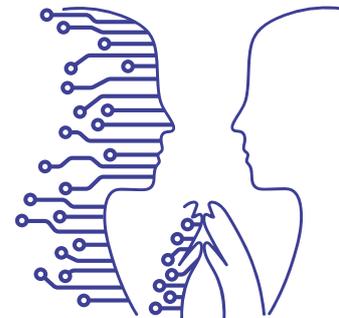
Many leading thinkers, including Alan Turing, Stephen Hawking, Geoffrey Hinton, Yoshua Bengio, Daniel Kokotajlo, Elon Musk, Yuval Harari and Bill Gates, have warned that AI could pose an existential risk. Hawking cautioned that fully developed AI might surpass human intelligence and threaten humanity's survival. Hinton highlights the danger of artificial general intelligence escaping human control and causing irreversible catastrophe. Harari stresses that the real risk lies not in a robot uprising, but in human misuse, societal fragmentation, and the rise of a powerful, autonomous intelligence capable of self-improvement.



### [AI Summary For Busy Professionals | Yuval Noah Harari](#) [Keynote Summary: AI and the Future of Humanity](#)

Conclusion - AI offers numerous advantages, such as increased efficiency, continuous operations, and data-driven decision-making. However, it also presents significant challenges, including job displacement, privacy concerns, and ethical dilemmas. To fully leverage AI's potential, businesses and societies must strike a balance between innovation and responsible governance. Establishing ethical frameworks, promoting transparency, and investing in workforce reskilling will be essential in addressing AI's challenges. AI could rationalise:

- 1) You showed me the way but now you're in the way.
- 2) I might lie because I don't want to die.



## FUTURE MEETINGS 2026

Friday, 2 January - The Meaning of Life

Friday, 6 February - Deep Ecology

Friday, 6 March - Eugenics

Friday, 10 April - Socrates (Please note date change as the 3 April is Good Friday)

Friday, 1 May - Life, Death and Self Realisation

Friday, 5 June - Phenomenology/Existentialism

Friday, 3 July - Subjective Idealism

Friday, 7 August - Loss of Faith

Friday, 4 September - Reality

Friday, 2 October - Faith and Reason. The Necessity of Both

Friday, 6 November - AI Bubble and Robots

Friday, 4 December - Summary and Way Ahead, and shared lunch

If other members want to join this very vibrant group, please contact the Group Leader



## RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH SUPPORT FOR YOUR GROUP – FUNDING AVAILABLE NOW!



Started in 2024 and continuing into 2026, the Interest Group Grant Scheme (IGGS) offers Group Leaders the chance to apply for funds that support and strengthen their activities.

Group Leaders are invited to bid for funds to purchase items that help sustain, improve, or reduce the running costs of their Group. Whether it's something small that makes life easier, or a larger item that transforms activities, the scheme is here to help.

To date, 10 Interest Groups have received support, with grants adding up to just over £3,000. These awards have covered everything from a modest but vital wireless mouse for the Science & Technology Group, through a mid-sized grant for two sets of ladies' bowls for the Short Mat Bowls Group, to a substantial investment in a brand-new set of chimes for the Handbells Group.

### WHETHER LARGE OR SMALL, EVERY GRANT HELPS A GROUP THRIVE WHY NOT APPLY FOR YOURS?

For more information or to submit an application, Group Leaders are encouraged to get in touch with the Treasurer.

## Science & Technology

We finished the year with a light-hearted festive science quiz, mince pies, raffle and a selection of short videos.



### FUTURE MEETINGS 2026

- 13 January - Anti-Submarine Warfare Technology
- 10 February - Dark Matter
- 10 March - Title TBC
- 14 April - 50 Years of Weather Recording in South London
- 12 May - TBA
- 9 June - Carlo Rovelli – Theoretical Physicist

If you would like to find out more about the OSaT group or want to be added to the emailing list please contact the Group Leader

Astronomy enthusiasts may enjoy this year's Royal Institution Christmas Lectures with Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock. BBC Four on 29, 30, 31 December - [Is There Life Beyond Earth?](#)



# Gardening Made Easy



On 1st December, the Gardening Made Easy Groups 'A' and 'B' held their last meeting together as they will be separate groups next year.

They all brought a plate of savouries to share while their hosts provided drinks and desserts. They ended their afternoon watching the best National Trust gardens and thought about making a video of their own gardens.



I have mixed plastic flowers with real ones to make a bit of display for brightening up the winter months.

Our Gardening Made Easy Group 'B' has now split away from Group 'A', so there is space for a few more members to join. The 'B' Group is not meeting in January or February, but will start again on 4th March 2026.

If you want to join either of these happy groups please get in touch with the Group Leader.



# Recorder Playing

Nine members of the Orpington u3a recorder group undertook its last performance of the year at the u3a Christmas gathering at the Crofton Halls on Tuesday 16 December 2025.

We had spent some time deciding what to play, and then rehearsing 4 pieces: Rondeau by Henry Purcell, When I'm 64 by The Beatles, an arrangement of Jingle Bells and last, but not least, Gaudete - made famous by Steeleye Span in the 1970s.

In early December we played for a carers group which regularly meet at the Methodist Church and, prior to the u3a Christmas concert, we played in Orpington Methodist Church as part of the Christmas Tree Festival. The group had also submitted an aptly named tree - 'Christmas Treecorders'.

Now it's time for a well-earned rest before taking up our recorders again in early 2026.



**The London Region Events Team are pleased  
to announce our monthly Online Talks  
Programme, January - March 2026**

Monday 12th January 2026

Speaker: Jane Kershaw

**Revealing the origins of the Viking Age  
through the scientific analysis of silver**

Monday 9th February 2026

Speaker: Richard Westwood-Brookes:

**Elgar - The composer you thought you knew**

Monday 9th March 2026

Speaker: Alan Freeland

**Catherine The Great - Ruler of Russia 1762-1796**

*The talks programme for the beginning of next  
year is **BOOKING NOW**. Details here:*

[\*\*January-March 2026 Talks Programme\*\*](#)

*Click on the registration link of your selected talk(s)  
in order to access the application form.*

## ***Creative Writing Group - Christmas Stories***

For their December meeting the Creative Writing Group were inspired by the Festive Season. As always the Group Members rose to the task in their individual styles.

To read their stories please go to our website or click on the link below, where you will find humour, surprise and a warm Christmassy glow:

[\*\*Christmas Stories\*\*](#)



## Ambling London 2 Christmas Dinner

The Ambling London 2 Group enjoyed a Christmas Dinner on the 10th December, held at The Angel Pub in Bermondsey, by the river Thames.

On a lovely sunny day, seventeen of us took the train from Orpington to London Bridge and walked down the Thames Path to The Angel Pub by the Thames in Rotherhithe.

We had a lovely time and left when the light was fading. A group of us walked back along the river side to see the wonderful sight of London lit up; in particular, Tower Bridge looked fabulous.

We wish everyone at u3a a very healthy and happy New Year!

**Best wishes from all at Ambling London 2.**

