

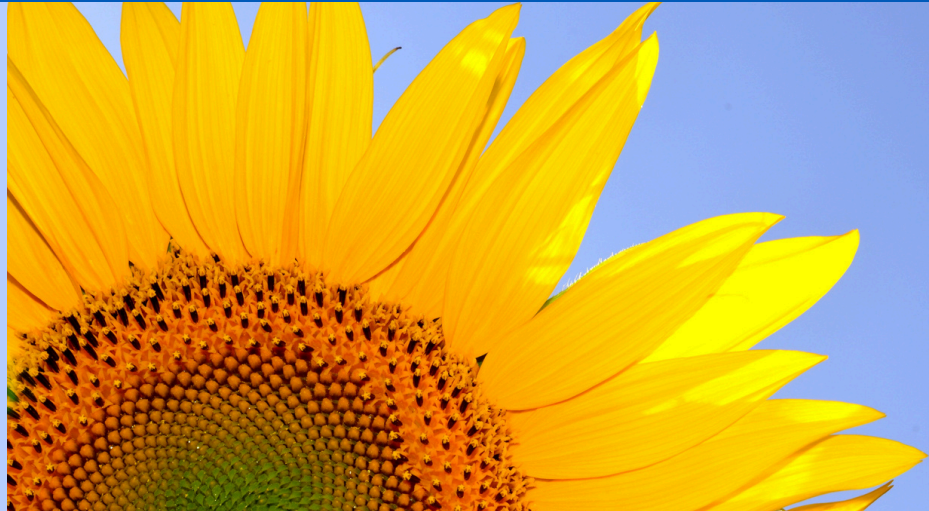
# Bulletin

## for Interest Groups

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## Message from the Chairman

I hope you are all enjoying the summer holidays; certainly, there appears to be a relaxed atmosphere and speaking personally it's wonderful not to have to do battle with the traffic of the three schools in the next road!

However, the Committee are still hard at work, discussing how to provide the best service and experience for our members. We are looking at Speakers for next year's General Meetings; reviewing the membership renewal process; talking about recruitment; arranging new members' meetings, as well as our regular monthly updates on finance, groups, membership numbers etc. I extend my thanks to these unsung heroes, without whom there would be no organisation.

If you have enjoyed attending something provided by Orpington u3a recently, then please let us know. Perhaps an outing, an interesting topic at one of the groups or a speaker at our General Meeting that you found particularly engaging – we would like to hear about it. If you would like to join our happy team of volunteers delivering these entertainments to our members, then you will be made very welcome!

I know some groups don't meet during August as members are away or on grandparent duty. Other groups take the opportunity to go out and about in the warmer weather (I carefully avoided the word 'sunshine'!). Whatever you are doing as a member of this fabulous organisation, have fun and remember to learn, laugh, live!

**Chairman**

# JOIN OUR TEAM!

## Dear Members,

Orpington u3a thrives because of the wonderful people who get involved and contribute to the smooth running of our group. As we continue to grow, we have several key positions that need filling. Your help will make a huge difference!

**We are looking for enthusiastic individuals to take on the following roles:**

### Vice Chair

Support the Chair in overseeing the day-to-day running of Orpington u3a and stand in for the Chair when needed. If you're organised, proactive, and passionate about supporting u3a's mission, this could be the perfect role for you!

### Secretary

Play a key role in keeping the group organised and efficient.

From keeping minutes of meetings to managing correspondence; we need a reliable individual to keep everything running smoothly.

### Meetings Secretary

Help coordinate and arrange guest speakers and be present at meetings to greet them and our members. If you're good at organising and enjoy talking to people, we'd love to hear from you.

### Coach Trip Organiser

This role involves organising and coordinating coach trips, ensuring our members have an enjoyable and well-planned experience.

Your input will help create fantastic outings that everyone can enjoy!

### Social Events Team Leader

If you have a flair for socialising and event planning, then this could be for you! Lead a team to arrange fun and engaging social events for our members. From larger gatherings to casual meet-ups, you'll help make Orpington u3a a lively and welcoming place to be!

If you are interested in any of these roles or would like more information, please contact the Chairman.

Your support will help us continue providing excellent opportunities for all our members! Thank you for your involvement, we look forward to hearing from you!

Your Committee



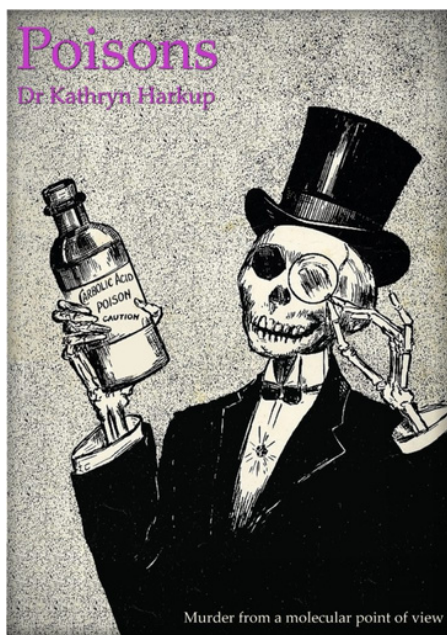
# General Meetings 3.30-5.30pm

**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.



## 16 September | Poisons | Dr Kathryn Harkup

Dr Kathryn Harkup is a British chemist and science communicator. She is known for writing books about science in popular culture and the history of science. This talk explores a potted history of classic poisons, poisoners and their victims. Expect fatal formulas, lethal umbrellas and deadly wallpaper.



## 21 October | The Pearlies | Chris Conlan

Chris is the Pearly King of Bromley and a member of the Pearly King's and Queen's Society, a hard working group of people who primarily raise funds to help London and Home Counties charities. Chris will give us an insight to these activities, the history of the Pearlies and their dress.



## 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

## Garden Museum

Tuesday 9 September

The Garden Museum is in the deconsecrated church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, next to Lambeth Palace, and our self guided visit will include the current Cecil Beaton exhibition 'Cecil Beaton's Garden Party'. This trip is strictly limited to 20 people. The cost is £13 for seniors.



# London Explorers

## Highgate Cemetery

Wednesday 29 October

London Explorers has arranged a visit to this historic Victorian Cemetery on 29 October 2025 at 12.15pm. The cost is £18 pp which includes access to both cemeteries together with a knowledgeable local guide.

We will catch the 9.42am train from Petts Wood to Charing Cross, second carriage from the front or meet under the clock at Charing Cross at 10.30 am, if you're coming from Orpington. We will then go on the northern line to Archway and will then meander slowly up Highgate hill (very steep, or take a bus) and then walk through Waterlow park which is adjacent to the cemetery.





# London Explorers

**Feedback** - London Explorers visited HMS Wellington on 23 July 2025, beginning with a walk from Charing Cross station via Victoria Embankment Gardens, a beautifully planted pocket park.

HMS Wellington, a Grimsby sloop built in 1935, was affectionately nicknamed “the white van of the fleet” due to its speed and versatility. 266ft in length and 36ft wide, the ship boasted a rust-resistant steel hull, dual engines, and twin propellers.

During World War II, Wellington was summoned to duty, chiefly escorting merchant convoys across the perilous North Atlantic. Her mission was defence, not direct combat, as she navigated the five-year Battle of the Atlantic — an epic campaign that involved 25 million men. Convoy travel was slow and frustrating, limited to the speed of the slowest vessel, around 10 knots.

A tour of the ship revealed fascinating details. The Wheelhouse required compass correction due to the steel hull, using Kelvin's Balls to offset polarity. Charts were essential and constantly updated. The Skipper, referred to as the 'old man', would often give up his cabin for dignitaries, sleeping instead on a settee in the chart room.



Armaments included two 4.7-inch guns, a 3-inch gun, anti-aircraft weaponry, depth charge throwers, radar and sonar equipment. The ship carried 120 depth charges and ‘hedgehogs’ — innovative spigot mortars that detonated on submarine impact, unlike traditional depth charges which were often imprecise.

Post-war, HMS Wellington was repurposed by the Honourable Company of Master Mariners into a floating livery hall. Wartime features were stripped, replaced with salvaged fittings like ferryboat stairs. Imagining the 102 crew living in cramped conditions under the ‘broadside messing’ system gave life to the vessel’s enduring legacy.

The vessel was transferred to the Wellington Trust in 2005. To raise funds, the function room can be hired for riverside events and the Captain’s cabin is available for overnight accommodation! For more information on the work of the Wellington Trust or the history of the vessel: - [Home - HMS Wellington](#)

The trip was completed with lunch in the Wardroom. A lovely way to spend a morning! Thanks to London Explorers’ organisers, for this trip.

# London Explorers

**Feedback** - Visit to the Royal College Hospital, Chelsea 13 August.

We arrived at the Hospital to be greeted by our inspiring guide, Sergeant John Gallagher. John had a genius for describing the history and also day to day life of Chelsea, with a few amusing tales along the way!

The idea for the Hospital, according to popular legend, came from Nell Gwyn suggesting it to Charles II after seeing army veterans living in poverty on the streets. The Hospital was designed by Christopher Wren, opening in 1692, and followed the arrangement of England's oldest universities. They each combine living quarters with a chapel and a dining room, arranged around quadrangles.

The central courtyard has a display of cannons captured in battle, including from the French at Waterloo. The imposing classical dining room displays replicas of flags captured on campaign and on the panelled walls are listed all the engagements of the British Army from the building of the Hospital onwards. In 1852 the Duke of Wellington lay in state here prior to his funeral.

Moving on we saw the glorious Wren chapel and then a couple of rooms displayed to illustrate how the first Chelsea Pensioners were accommodated.

In 2024 there were 274 Pensioners in residence and of those, 18 were women. The hospital has spaces for 300 Pensioners, and all army veterans are welcome to apply to the Hospital. They have an average age of 81 years and 11 months and between them have 731 medals!

The Pensioners have a busy social club and take part in a variety of activities such as gardening, bowls or quizzes, plus attending events outside the hospital - 256 military events last year and 108 non-military. Some have cars on the site, and we saw a row of mobility vehicles being charged.

The Chelsea Hospital is a real community, and we felt incredibly fortunate to visit and grateful for the service these men and women have given.







# 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 17 September Scadbury Reserve**

Meet in the (free) car park at St Peter & St Paul Catholic Primary School, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2SR for a walk of approx. 3 miles through the Reserve. There are a couple of inclines, one fairly steep and another quite gradual. There are no stiles.

Can be muddy in places if there's been any recent rain. Nearest toilets and refreshments at the end are in Petts Wood.



### **Wednesday 15 October Shipbourne**

Meet opposite the Chaser Inn at Upper Green Road, Shipbourne, for a 3 to 4 mile circular walk through part of the Fairlawne Estate and on to Ightham Mote.

The walk takes us through ancient woods and rolling Kentish countryside before returning to the village.

Be aware that the paths can be muddy after rain and there are several stiles to navigate. Toilets and refreshments after at the Chaser Inn.



# Philosophy

As is the norm within the Philosophy group, we are given a topic to talk on, and we then research it and prepare a talk as best we can. I was given **Shinto** as my topic for this month.

I freely confess that I knew absolutely nothing about Shinto, other than that it seemed to exist primarily in Japan, and that it was some kind of religion. What I have learned, although I've only scratched the surface, is that Shinto certainly fulfils many of the functions of religion, but it seems to be more than that. Its origins are complex and embody traditional folklore, elements of Confucianism and Buddhism, with a healthy mix of woodland and other natural and supernatural deities.

I have found the journey into the fringes of Shinto interesting and enlightening, and plan to learn more. My talk only covered the bare bones of the subject, and there is a wealth of information to be found. My take on it, for what it's worth, is that Shinto probably can be classed as a religion, but it is more complicated than that. It seems to have absorbed many pagan, religious and folklore elements, and they all appear to coexist quite happily.

The main lesson I came away with, is that it seems to have been very flexible and has been modified over the centuries and adapted to changing times and culture. To its credit, it seems welcoming and not very prescriptive, so a belief system that seems to allow some freedom of thought, which I found refreshing.

If you want to join this vibrant group, please contact the Group Leader.



## Attention All Group Leaders: Interest Groups Grant Scheme

The Interest Groups Grant Scheme (IGGS-25) initiated in February, enables Group Leaders to bid for grants to buy goods or services. These purchases must help the Group, by either of the following:

1. Improving the members' experience.
2. Facilitating an increase in the number of u3a members that the Group can accommodate.
3. By reducing the cost of running and/or participating in the Group.

If you are interested in applying for a grant please contact the Treasurer for more details:





After the summer break, meetings will commence as usual on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 2 - 4pm in the Victor Childs Room, St. Paul's Church, BR6 8JE

For more information about the group please click [HERE](#)

If you are interested in attending any of our meetings please contact the Group Leader.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**9 September**

Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity

**14 October**

Art from Mathematics and Science

**11 November**

Hydraulics

**9 December**

Christmas Meeting

**13 January**

Anti-Submarine Warfare Technology

## Rummikub

Having run a small Rummikub Group for over 10 years I have recently been contacted by several members eager to play this strategic numbers game. As a result, I am starting a second small group on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 2pm.

Initially the group will be drawn from those who are on my reserve list, however I do need some reserve players who can come along at short notice both on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month. They will of course be first in line if people leave the group.

If you are interested in being a reserve player please contact the Group Leader.



# Industrial Heritage

Our September 3<sup>rd</sup> guided walk from Wapping to Dockland is now fully subscribed. Should we get any cancellations, a few places could come available. If that's of interest to you, please let me know and I'll open a reserve list for late availabilities.

Our September 17<sup>th</sup> (Sunday) trip to Mountnessing Post Mill in Essex has attracted a good level of interest, but there are still some places available.

Post mills are the oldest type of working windmill, going back to medieval times. The most distinctive feature of them is that the main body of the mill pivots on a massive post, allowing the mill itself, including the grindstones, to be rotated to face the wind. There might even be an opportunity for you to try rotating the mill yourself using nothing more than some 200 year old technology (and, perhaps, a little help from your friends)!

This will be an afternoon trip with a lunch option for those who would like to make a bit more of a day of it. Travel will be by car with the possibility of car sharing for those who cannot, or prefer not, to drive.

Members of the Friends of Mountnessing Mill will be on hand to show us round and explain how everything works.

And, one of their number will talk to us, not only about the mill and its history but also about its place in the local community and the people it served.

If you are interested in this trip and want to go onto the list, please let me know as soon as soon as you can as places are limited.

We are an 'open' group meaning that all members of Orpington u3a are welcome to participate in our activities as much or as little as they like.

If you'd like to be added to our mailing list, please contact the Group Leader.



## Gardening Made Easy



Early this month the three gardening groups met for a shared lunch and were shown round a member's lovely garden.

There were two other meetings hosted by members. The theme of these meetings was Container Gardening. Members swapped tips and exchanged plants, seeds, etc and enjoyed a happy social time together.

If you want to try out these friendly gardening groups, please contact the Group Leader.



# Step into the Rhythm



## Ballroom Dancing New Group

Put on your dancing shoes and join us as Orpington u3a glides onto the dance floor! We are delighted to announce a new Ballroom Dancing interest group led by one of our very own members, who is generously giving their time and expertise voluntarily. That means there are no tuition fees - just an opportunity to enjoy learning (or refreshing) those timeless steps on a friendly relaxed atmosphere.

Whether you are an experienced dancer or someone who has always wanted to give it a go, this is about fun, fitness and friendship. Singles and couples are equally welcome. So come along, take your first steps with us and discover the joy of ballroom.

The group will be run by an experienced teacher who hopes to cover waltz, cha-cha, jive, quickstep etc.

Please register your interest by contacting the Group Coordinator.

## Will laughter help you live longer?

To answer this question listen to **What's Up Docs?**, the BBC Radio podcast where doctors and identical twins Chris and Xand van Tulleken cut through the confusion around health and wellbeing. In this episode, the doctors turn their attention to laughter. You've probably heard the phrase

### 'laughter is the best medicine'

but have you ever wondered if there's actually any science behind that?

Can a good belly laugh really help with stress, pain, or even your immune system? How does it help to improve our relationships? And why do we laugh at all - even when nothing's particularly funny?

To find out, Chris and Xand sit down with Professor Sophie Scott CBE, a leading expert in the neuroscience of laughter from University College London.

**BBC Sounds Podcast**



# Kent u3a Network at Kent County's Biggest Event!

**4–6 July 2025 | Kent Showground**

**The Kent County Show excelled once again this summer** — and the Kent u3a Network was right at the heart of it! Across three thrilling days, over 60,000 visitors flocked to the county's premier celebration of farming, countryside, and community — and many made their way to our vibrant u3a stand.

## **Months of Planning, Powered by Volunteers**

Our journey began in January, driven by the energy of our amazing volunteers. With a Third Age Trust grant, we proudly purchased a bright new gazebo, printed 10,000 flyers, and displayed three striking banners. Support came in from u3as across Kent — providing tables, roller posters, flag banners, bunting, and even balloons to help create a standout presence. Volunteers worked tirelessly to set up the stand, staff it for 10-hour days, and pack it all away with impressive teamwork.

## **A Stand to Remember**

Surrounded by over 400 trade stalls, our stand drew the attention from curious passers-by to lifelong learners. Visitors explored the depth of u3a activities — from history, languages to walking groups and ukulele ensembles — and left inspired by what u3a can offer in retirement.

## **Part of a County Celebration**

The Show sparkled with horse dressage, sheepdog displays, show-jumping, music gigs, vintage tractors, food stalls, and more. Amidst the festivities, our team championed the joy of learning, the power of community, and the vibrancy of later life.

## **Sparkling Interest Across Kent**

We didn't just hand out flyers — we sparked conversations, inspired ideas, and connected with potential members and future group leaders. The enthusiasm was catching.



## ***Thank You!***

*To everyone who gave time, energy, and ideas — you made it happen. The Kent County Show 2025 was a milestone for the Kent u3a Network.*



# Interest Groups Update

A new version of the Interest Group List (30.07.25) has been sent to members with this Bulletin. It includes a new group **Scrabble 2** and a change of leader for **Art Appreciation 2**.

An additional group for **Rummikub** will be starting soon - see page 9. We are also announcing a new group for **Ballroom Dancing** - see page 11.

## Do you have an idea?

Then why not consider starting your own group? It's a lot easier than you think!

We will advertise it for you, offer help and advice, and arrange discussions with other members who have a similar interest. The best groups are those where everyone shares the responsibilities of running the group.

For a full list of the Interest Groups timetable, please click here:

[Interest Groups Timetable](#)



Click on the category to find out more

### Interest Group Categories

[Card and Board Games](#)

[Culture](#)

[Exercise and Outdoor](#)

[History](#)

[Language](#)

[Leisure](#)

[Music](#)

[Science & Technology](#)



Data Protection!

The Bulletin and Interest Groups List contain personal information  
If you print them, please DO NOT leave them in a public place  
and dispose by shredding  
THANK YOU