



Here & Now

Reigate & Redhill u3a Magazine

**Celebrating
the 21st
Century!**

No. 96

Winter 2025



Editor's Welcome



Welcome to our 2025 Autumn/ Christmas edition. Can you believe it's been 25 years since the huge celebrations for the start of a new millennium? A quarter of a century! An image of the late Queen, looking aghast at the idea of holding hands with Tony Blair singing 'Auld Lang Syne' pops into my head!

So much has happened, good and bad. Leaders have come and gone, wars and famine still continue, but in amongst it all there have been so many changes and achievements to celebrate.

When we were planning this edition there was a lot of discussion over how fast things are changing and are they too fast for some of us? Unless you can master using a Smart phone and the computer life can be tough. We used to grumble that our parents were behind the times when they hated our music and fashion so will we move with the times and embrace the changes?

Thank you to those people who sent us articles, we love to receive them. Don't forget that it's your magazine and we love to celebrate the groups' achievements and talents. There are so many people in our u3a who have led interesting lives, I'd love to tell their stories.

It won't be long till it's Christmas and another year will be upon us so may I say 'Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year' to you all.

Tina Pankhurst

Away in a Spare Room

Away in a spare room, I have just gone ahead,
And stacked presents for Christmas, all laid out on the bed.
There's a keyring for Mary, that lights up in the dark
And a loo roll for Anne, that plays snippets from Bach!
A thermos for Betty, with decorative touch,
It's not all that festive, but I don't like her much!
A jumper for Sandy, that's right over the top
I got it last June in a charity shop.
A candle for Pam, in a dear little cup
And a tyre pump for Dave, but it's hard to wrap up!
I have reams of bright paper, the expense makes me gape
And I can't find the end of the damned Sellotape!
I am busy and broke, but I'm doing my best,
I'll retire to my room for some leisure and rest,
Be glad when it's over, the pleasure and pain,
All I want is my spare room back to normal again!

Pat King

From the Chair



A big question for u3a members is "Are we keeping up with technology?" On a personal level, I always said I would keep up with the younger generation but... I don't use Twitter or Instagram, Facebook is rarely visited, and in preparing to go "down under" I found my phone could not take an eSIM card. Not having the latest technology is a personal choice. I prefer face-to-face socialising and choose to spend money on things other than the latest gizmo. (Although I did treat myself to Bluetooth noise-cancelling headphones for my long flight!)

When I look back over the last 25 years, I realise how much change there has been. I didn't have a mobile phone until 2006 and didn't get a smart phone until 2012. I would be lost without them now! All my photos have been digital since 2008. Do you remember when you went on holiday and calculated how many rolls of film you would need? Have you sorted through photos and realised how many duplicate prints you acquired with two-for-one film developing offers? Much easier now to share digital photos with family. I ask Alexa to play music from Spotify and enjoy sound projected from speakers around the home, and listen to Spotify in the car via Bluetooth. I rarely look at road maps, now depending on Google SatNav both in the UK and abroad – although beware the low-height tunnels around the Paris périphérique as GPS doesn't yet have all the answers. And beware popping into Switzerland – I incurred large non-EU roaming charges! Remember the days when we used to go to Alders in Croydon and came back with carrier-bag-fulls of Christmas presents? Now, most of my shopping is done online – and sadly the shops reflect that trend with often a poor range of stock – not all good then!

What about our u3a in terms of technological change? Where would we have been during Covid lockdown without Zoom meetings? If you can't make a monthly meeting, watch it on YouTube. Our wonderful website tells you everything you need about what's going on. Our administration is underpinned by the Beacon data management system. This is a huge asset for administering around 120 groups and activities. In the last few years, we have introduced online forms for booking outings and events and card readers to facilitate payment when our members don't pay by bank transfer. Our portal for membership renewals was introduced last year. There is no more stuffing envelopes with bulletins and Here & Now – almost everyone receives a beautiful, user-friendly, electronic copy to view online. What a saving on postage and stationery costs, not to mention administration! Communication is easy via email – with bulletin@rru3a.org.uk or one of our other addresses like chair@rru3a.org.uk, all our members may reach us seamlessly if they have a question. All this doesn't make running our u3a a doddle, but I wouldn't like to be without the technology we have today.

Aside from technology, I hope you agree we've got the balance right with our social interaction – monthly meetings, coffee mornings, group activities, outings, holidays... What will the next 25 years bring in terms of change for the following generation?

Gill Haimes



TV Game Shows u3a style

Our evening at Reigate Manor in September proved hugely entertaining. It started with a humorous sketch (written by Michael Cockett) based on finding panellists from a group of old friends attending a u3a coffee morning. As Agnes (alias Jackie Lucas) rushed off to the loo, closely followed by Liz (alias Pat Cockett) with the forgotten walking stick, our compere David Fisher arrived to join the panellists who remained by default! – Kate, Ted and Jane (alias Maggie West, Martin Livesey and Ruth Simmons).

David provoked hilarity by wearing old-fashioned glasses and a strange wig, which looked as though it was held in place with a plastic bath hat! Whilst intending to look like



David Fisher– Call My Bluff!

the host Robert Robinson of Call My Bluff (on which our first game was based), he actually resembled the host of Face the Music, Joseph Cooper!

For What's My Bluff, the panellists gave different convincing meanings for four words – *galligaskins*, *petrichor*, *adamantine* and *funambulist*. The audience voted whether these definitions were TRUE or BLUFF with a show of hands. They proved adept at discerning which meaning was correct, with the majority guessing TRUE for each of the four words.



Next was Bygone Puzzlers, impeccably introduced by Pat Cockett as Guiliana Hennessey was unfortunately unable to attend. Guiliana had sourced ten different items, which were circulated to the different tables for guessing their use. Our compere David (no longer in wig!) circulated with his microphone to test views. Items included a cup with an inset to prevent a gentleman's moustache from becoming wet whilst drinking, and an ancient machine for weighing eggs individually, to determine whether large, medium or small – what a laborious task! We found our audience included an unknown expert – Ed Stonard – who surprised everyone with his knowledge and had all the right answers!



Ed Stonard – Unknown Expert!

The finale was Catch that Tune created and hosted by Deb Chapman. The audience was challenged to listen to and name tunes from an introductory clip, or name the item advertised in a familiar jingle. Musical knowledge was also tested with a written quiz.

The whole evening was supported seamlessly by Powerpoint and sound from Lloyd Chapman and John Cousins in our Audio Visual team. Big thanks to all involved for such a fun evening

Gill Haimes

25 years of Innovation

New inventions making Headlines in the last 25 Years?

Huge strides in innovation, invention and discovery have been made in the last twenty-five years. We learnt about the Industrial Revolution in school, but I think future school children will wonder at what we have achieved, especially in this country in the last quarter of a century.

Three names you would call visionary inventors are: Steve Jobs the Apple co-founder, Sir Tim Berners-Lee for the World Wide Web and Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook co-founder but there are many more.

In one survey the three top inventions were: WIFI, smart phones and on-line banking. Many of us are still finding it hard to adopt these major innovations but we will have



Millenium Bug

The Y2K or Millennium Bug was a huge story leading up to 2000 but actually everything had been done in advance so that there was no major problem.

What actually happened was that Governments and businesses had spent years auditing, testing, and fixing software and hardware to make them Y2K compliant.

It mattered because banking, power grids, air traffic control, hospitals relied on their computers totally. A misinterpreted date could mean billing systems could fail and safety checks break down. So, all that panic was over nothing because it had been sorted, well in advance! Thank goodness.

Tina Pankhurst



to, as things progress. To find a bank along the High Street is near impossible. To find a parking meter that takes cash is getting harder.

The next major inventions are: Stem cell technology, GPS, Contactless payments, and Flat screen TVs. How useful to just tap our credit cards at the super markets and shops but does it help those who find it hard to budget and will actual money become obsolete; I hope not!

Technology is moving so fast and creating so many things that hopefully will enhance our lives.

On-line shopping, Amazon, 3D printers, Zoom. What would we have done, during Lockdown, without some of these innovations?

Tesla and other electric cars are becoming more popular as we try to be eco-friendly and help the planet but they are still expensive. Driverless cars will soon be on their way. Factories couldn't do without the technology to move products etc without robots and automated vehicles. Around the home many people use Alexa, Kindle eBooks, Facebook, Wireless headphones, Games consoles (well, the grandkids probably) Some of us got into Fitbit to help us stay active.

Great strides have been made in medicine. Robot assisted surgery, DNA kits, The human Genome Project and Cancer treatments have improved immensely. The list goes on. Where will we be in the next 25 years? Trips to the moon, flying cars, Time travel!

Tina Pankhurst

My Memory

My wife and I had travelled to Waterloo by train and walked to a point near the Thames behind a vast crowd to get a distant, partial view of the spectacular firework display. I have a strong memory of standing on a crowded platform waiting for the return train. The crowd was on a high; there seemed to be a collective air of optimism for the New Millennium. Little did we know that the next 25 years would bring financial crises, Brexit, a pandemic and renewed war in Europe! But we are still here smiling, so there's much to be grateful for.

Charles Symons

Did you know this about the Millennium Dome?

The twelve 100m yellow support towers holding up the Millennium dome were to signify the **twelve months of the year** and the **twelve hours** on a clock face. The link being that the Dome was built in Greenwich where GMT was started. It is 365m in diameter, one metre for **each day of the year**. The canopy is 52m high in the middle, one metre for **each week of the year**.



Coffee Mornings

Coffee Mornings are held in the lounge of The Light in Redhill meeting once month on alternate Tuesdays and Thursdays. They are a great way to meet with other members. Computer support is always on hand so bring your laptops, tablets or phones. Coffees and teas are available for purchase.

We will meet from 10.15 to 11.15 on the following dates: Thursday 4 December *[NB date change from that originally planned]*, Thursday 8 January, Tuesday 10 February and Thursday 12 March (followed by a meeting for new members). Do check our website **What's On** calendar and under **Coffee Mornings** for the latest information, as there could be a revision to date or venue.

Group news

25 years ago, we cannot imagine how it would have been possible to co-ordinate the activity of all our groups. We now have over 1,000 members and 108 groups and it would prove virtually impossible to manage this without the widespread use of email and the Beacon database to record group members and waiting lists.

Since the last Here & Now magazine went out, four new groups have started up and we have another waiting in the wings but sadly one has closed. As ever, we welcome suggestions for more groups from members willing to lead them.

Let us know if you would like to join any of the groups, details of which can be found on the website, by filling in the Group Enquiry Form or emailing us at groups@rru3a.org.uk.

Nikki Stoddart & Jill Flower
Groups' Coordinators

News from the Handbell Group



"I only recently joined the Reigate and Redhill U3A Handbell group but over a few weeks I was beginning to get used to playing a variety of different sized bells. One week I was asked if I would like to take part in a handbell rally in Sanderstead. Of course I said yes and so we began to play the tunes that would be used in the festival.

The day came when my boot was filled with music stands and with another colleague we drove to the venue. I was amazed that the large hall was filled with so many other handbell groups from all around

the South-East. Our conductor and tutor for the day made me feel relaxed and she was also humorous but very informative.

The sound that rang out (excuse the pun) around the hall was amazing. The tunes we played were great and the help we received from our conductor was very useful which enhanced our technique. All in all it was a most enjoyable day meeting like-minded friendly people with bells. I can't wait for the next rally of handbells!"

Gaynor

Outings

Christmas Lunch at Haver Castle Tue 9 Dec
Fully booked at time of going to press.
March tba

Outings cannot be booked until a bookings form is published on our website. Updates and details will be given in our bulletin and at Friday monthly meetings. For bookings, please complete a form (help can be given for this at a Friday meeting), contact the Outings team email outings@rru3a.org.uk, or telephone Richard: 07929 715198. Advance payment must be made.

All details are available on the rru3a website What's On page <https://www.rru3a.org.uk/post/outings> including a link to the booking form and information about future outings.



Monthly Meetings 2-4pm

In person at Reigate Park Church, or watch live on YouTube with the link provided before the meeting.

Friday 12 Dec End of Year Show

An hour of musical and dramatic entertainment based on radio shows provided by MID8DLE with sketches from our narrative writing and play reading groups. This is followed by refreshments including mince pies in the hall. If you haven't registered online or at a monthly meeting to attend, please do so by telephoning our Enquiries line 01737 929001. (No visitors please for this event, unless assistance to attend is required.) <https://forms.gle/wDttoG4qfwuagj616>

Friday 9 January Neil Nixon – Top Ten Stories

An entertaining, surprising and occasionally funny talk looking at ten of the world's best known songs and sharing the amazing

back stories of their creators, their true meanings and the often accidental routes they found to becoming best-sellers. Including the kindergarten teachers who wrote the most valuable song in history, the wheelchair bound lyricist who wrote a classic song about dancing and the unique promotional campaign that turned Bohemian Rhapsody into chart gold.

Friday 6 February Simon Waterfield – A Medieval History of Rochester in 3 Hats

Rochester has a history going back many centuries with all sorts of stories and events. Simon presents his stories, which may include the first siege of the castle, the Black Death or the Peasants Revolt, as a monologue

in character in the first person which makes the event come alive for the audience.

Friday 6 March Malcolm Nelson – 40 Years of Catching Smugglers

Malcolm Nelson worked for 40 years for HM Customs and Excise. He worked on every aspect of catching smugglers. He was mainly based at Heathrow but he also spent time at London Port, Dover, St Petersburg (Russia), Malta, and at most major airports throughout the EU. He is credited with the largest quantity of drugs by weight ever found in a single suitcase. Forty two kilos of compressed herbal cannabis concealed inside plantains that had been scooped out and sewn back together again. Then left to rot.

Study Days



Surrey u3a Network Study days are open to all u3a members and guests are very welcome. They are held in the Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon; starting at 9.30am with registration and running from 10am to 4pm. The fees, including coffee/tea and biscuits, are £12 for members attending and £15 for guests. To watch online at home cost is £7. Attendees should bring a packed lunch. Prior booking is necessary. All details, including how to book, can be found on the Surrey Network website. Booking forms are also available in the hall after Friday meetings. Details of forthcoming study days are below. If details are missing at time of going to press, visit www.surreynetwork.u3asite.uk/events.

There are no meetings in December or January.

Friday 20 February – The National Gardens Scheme

Presented by Clare Bevan, Clare Waters, Georgina Waters, Sarah Wilson & Vicky Flynn
The National Garden Scheme funds projects which promote gardens and gardening as therapy, and in 2017, launched an annual Gardens and Health Week to raise awareness of the topic.

Friday 20 March – Global Warming & Your Grandchildren's World

Presented by Dr Colin Summerhayes & Prof Jan Zalasiewicz
This study day considers the current situation, the likely outcomes and the possible mitigation measures, commonly described as "Net Zero".

Friday April 17th 2026 – Current Threats to UK, NATO & European Security

Presented by Major Gordon Corrigan, Military Historian
This lecture will bring us up to date with the various current conflicts around the world: Ukraine; Israel with Gaza, Lebanon and Iran; Saudi Arabia with Yemen and the Houthis; civil war in Libya and any other wars or rebellions that occur in the meantime.



Holiday

12 April – 8 days from £2,099 (+ single room supplement £299)
Hidden Northern Greece

This trip, exploring Greek culture, includes 2 hotels, one in Thessaloniki (5-star) and one in Ioannina (4-star), with all evening meals included. An early 06:35 departure from Gatwick ensures that we have an entire afternoon in Greece to settle in to our hotel and recover. On the return leg, another plus point is that we are due to arrive home at a civilised 2.10 pm.

Contact Diana Cooper for details, email holidays@rru3a.co.uk, tel 07982 606943. All participants are expected to undertake the scheduled visits but please contact Michael English at Tailored Travel michael@tailored-travel.co.uk if you have any mobility concerns before booking.

Millenium Seed Bank

Marking Wakehurst's 25 years

as part of Kew, and working with the National Trust there has been much restoration to the exterior of Wakehurst and to the ground floor. Opening earlier this year, the Billiard room, Chapel and the Library have been available for the public to visit. These three exhibition rooms tell the story of Wakehurst's rich past and amazing future.

This Seed Bank is the world's largest underground seed bank

Recently I had the pleasure of a guided tour through the facilities at the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place, Sussex, by volunteer Peter Boys. He proved to be patient, knowledgeable and passionate about his role in this organisation. He gave us his undivided attention throughout and answered our many questions.

It's twenty-five years since the Millennium Seed Bank opened at Wakehurst Place. In 1973 the journey began for the germination of an idea to relocate a small seed bank from Kew to Wakehurst. The building was slowly transformed from a grand mansion into a pioneering seed laboratory. The bedrooms, billiard room and library all took on a new look. Even the chapel was transformed into a walk-in freezer!

With help from the UK government providing some of the funding, Roger Smith, who was head of the seed bank section at Kew, was able to instigate this huge expansion and pioneering work. The force behind this work was to use this collection to help to combat biodiversity loss and climate change through scientific research, while working with global partners to help restore habitats around the world.

The Millennium Seed Bank is the largest underground seed bank in the world. It is home to over 2.5 billion wild plant

seeds and over 40,000 different species of the world's storable seeds.

Part of the Millennium Project was to work with others so that by 2025 Wakehurst has over 275 partners in nearly 100 countries and territories, helping them to create their own seed banks and helping them to train staff in this vital work.

As well as looking back at how much the MSB has evolved over the

past twenty-five years, Wakehurst is looking to the future and how it can develop even further.

Today the MSB is more important than ever. Seeds are needed in regeneration projects where disasters, like wildfires have raged and where diseases have destroyed forests and other habitats.

Marking Wakehurst's 25 years as part of Kew, and working with the National Trust there has been much restoration to the exterior of Wakehurst and to the ground floor. Opening earlier this year, the Billiard room, Chapel and the Library have been available for the public to visit. These three exhibition rooms tell the story of Wakehurst's rich past and amazing future.

Angela Austin

Shiraaz Ali Art

"Perhaps the most significant conservation initiative ever..." - Sir David Attenborough

25 facts

1. Nearly 2.5 billion seeds have a home at the MSB. They are stored in a sub-zero state-of-the-art underground facility.
2. Over 279 global partnerships have participated in the largest ex situ plant conservation programme of its kind.
3. 45% of flowering plant species are estimated to be at risk of extinction. This alarming fact shows just how important the work of the MSB is, as an insurance policy in case species do go extinct.
4. Over 40,000 species are represented in the MSB seed collections. These range from the very familiar to some that are new to science and only found in remote corners of the planet.
5. There are just under 103,000 separate seed collections

banked in the MSB, with many of these containing hundreds, if not thousands, of individual seeds.

6. Over 98% of UK native bankable plant species' seeds are stored in the vaults of the MSB.

7. In the last five years alone, MSB provided seed banking training to over 850 professionals from 44 different countries.

8. Seeds of around 11,000 trees and shrub species are stored in the MSB. The Global Tree Seed programme added a further 3,500.

9. Kew scientists and international partners are currently focusing on five of the world's biodiversity hotspots, with a focus on banking rare, endangered and endemic species.

10. More than 70 staff, researchers and volunteers work at the MSB in Wakehurst.

11. Scientists at the MSB have published more than 520 research papers since 2000.

12. This is a remarkably international initiative, with 100 countries and territories working together to support this vast conservation ambition

13. The flora from 36 terrestrial biodiversity hotspots have their seeds frozen in time in these underground vaults.

14. -20°C is the temperature at which the seeds are stored.

15. Nine of the world's biogeographic regions and all seven continents have seeds conserved through the MSB partnership.

16. Every 10 years, seeds are removed from collections to test if they can still sprout into a healthy plant, to make sure they are still useful.

17. 71% of the MSB's requested seed samples have been used in scientific research and 14% in conservation. Some are grown and displayed in botanical gardens or even used in education.

18. The smallest seeds banked in the MSB measure just 0.07mm across and belong to the Chinese ground orchid.

19. The American Prairie landscape at Wakehurst features 15 species grown from wild-collected seeds from North America.

20. Conditions of the drying room are 18°C and 15% relative

humidity.

Seeds need to be dried to improve their longevity whilst in storage and need to be stored at sub-zero temperatures.

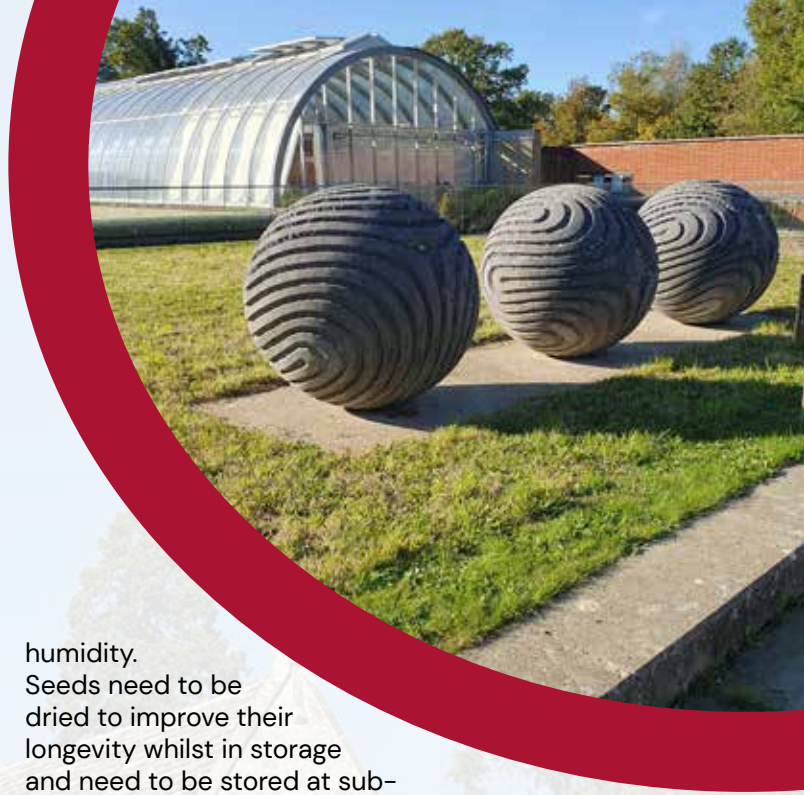
21. An estimated 8% of all seed plants produce recalcitrant seeds, which can't be stored using the traditional drying techniques.

22. That's why they're exploring new cryopreservation techniques that store seeds at -180°C to ensure that as many species as possible are represented in their collections.

23. It took 2.5 years to build the MSB glass building, complete with flood, radiation and bomb-proof chambers, solar panels and laboratory equipment.

24. Half the work in the Wakehurst nurseries is conducted for science, including 40,000 plants grown in the last 20 years from seeds at the MSB.

25. Working with all partners across the globe, at least 16% of the world's bankable plant species are stored for long term conservation.



Inside the Arboretum



A fat quarter of fabric usually measures around 18"x22". It's made by cutting a standard half yard of fabric in half across its width. Normally a quarter of a yard is long and skinny about 9"x44" which is not what quilters want. They want a usable size to work with!

Quarter Days

The four quarter days are dates used to mark the start of each quarter of the year. They were historically used for settling debts, especially rent.

These dates are based on significant religious festivals:

- **March 25:** Lady Day (Feast of the Annunciation). Notable birthdays on this day include Sir Elton John, born in 1947 and Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, born in 1867. In 1807 slavery was abolished in Great Britain & Ireland.
- **June 24:** Midsummer Day (Feast of St. John the Baptist). Notable birthdays on this day include footballer Lionel Messi born 1987 and Horatio Kitchener, British General, born 1850. In 1901 Pablo Picasso had his first exhibition in Paris, at the age of 19.
- **September 29:** Michaelmas (Feast of St. Michael and All Angels). Notable birthdays on this day include Jerry Lee Lewis born in 1935 and Lord Sebastian Coe, born in 1956. In 1829 the first officers of the London Metropolitan Police appear on the streets of London.
- **December 25:** Christmas Day (Feast of the Nativity). Notable birthdays on this day include Kenny Everett, DJ with Capital Radio, in 1944 and Alastair Cook, cricketer, born in 1984. In 1914 the Christmas Truce took place on the battlefields of WW1. Soldiers exchanged gifts and played football, the score has not been recorded!

Do you remember.....

Going into a sweetie shop and buying a quarter of your favourite sweets from a big glass jar? My favourites were fruit salad and spearmint chews for about 6d. I looked up spearmint chews on line – they are still available, but now cost about £1.50 a quarter!

Deb Chapman

RRu3a Singing for pleasure group



In January 2012, I sent out a message to our u3a members to anyone who might like to come and sing. I had found a pianist – the most important factor – and I was delighted/terrified to find I was suddenly in charge of a new group of keen singers, ranging from beginners to highly experienced.

I am not a trained musician, but as a drama teacher I have a fair knowledge of musical theatre and a collection of several piles of sheet music.

So our group was born and now, nearly fourteen years later we still enjoy our fortnightly sing. My plan has always been to create new programmes four times a year – something to work on – good to have a challenge. We have sung these programmes to groups, those in sheltered accommodation and care homes in Kingswood, Banstead, Horley, Redhill and Reigate.

Quite recently I gave the programme creating job over to a small group who work together so well to make the choices of music. We use songs from the shows, songs from films and popular songs from various decades. We soon find out the favourites in our audiences – they start to sing along with us, much to our delight. There is a magical moment when someone in the audience starts to mouth the words with us. Then we know they like our programme.

We have become close friends through our time together. We have coffee after singing with chatter and laughter top of the bill. There are thirty of us in the group, five men and twenty-five 'girls' as I call them. Singing is wonderful for the spirits, not just for the vocal cords. And to blend singing with socialising seems to be the perfect recipe. 'Singing for Pleasure' certainly is the perfect name.

Geraldine Horn



Celebrating the 21st Century - Anthony Rangecroft

One of the quieter revolutions of the 21st century is the acceptance of how good it feels to keep active, something we've known since forever.

It's easy to forget that electric cars, first demonstrated in the mid 1830's and sold from 1890, took off en masse as recently as 2012 with Tesla's Model S and Nissan's Leaf. Today's cars don't just carry you from A to B, motors power the steering, doors and door handles, seats, mirrors, even the fuel filler flap, while Full Self Driving rests drivers' weary eyeballs. Yet while driving feels safer than cycling on the roads, in terms of all cause mortality modern drivers are "sitting themselves to an early grave".



Nazca Paseo recumbent bike with canine assist c. 2012

Around the same time (2012) electric bicycle sales took off and recumbent bicycles peaked in popularity, only to be displaced by sport trikes and velomobiles. Mobility scooters became capable and comfortable, and alone in the field VanRaam introduced a combined bicycle and mobility scooter for people with fluctuating energy levels.

WAW velomobile c. 2012



L: Raymar Amigo mobility scooter c. 1978



R: Shoprider Sovereign 2012



L: VanRaam EasyGo pedal/assist/drive scooter 2014



R: Easylife Eco cabin scooter 2025

Now a fusion is under way, enabled by technology and driven by regard for health and the enjoyment to be had without sporting fitness. Many electric bicycles set off under their own power and turning the pedals gently keeps them going. Cycles of all kinds are getting more practical, giving a smoother ride and becoming easier to get on or into, and active travel has been creeping up the policy agenda.



Scorpion Plus: when you pedal the motor assists up to 15mph. Armrests, high seat, similar trikes fold up.

Wisper 705 full throttle bicycle c. 2022. Electric drive, pedal when the fancy takes you, road legal in the UK



Semi-recumbent electric tandem: Hase Pino Steps

HP Delta TX trike 2025. Electric assist, high seat, automatic gears, fits in a car boot



R+M Load 75 cargo bike. Electric assist, full suspension, ABS, from £8000

Electrom all-season bicycle: electric drive assisted by pedals, 130 miles range



Bulk 4More velomobile: pedals with electric assist, wide entry + warm dry cover

Sinclair Iris eTrike 2026? Pedals with electric assist, climate control, 180 litres boot



Cixi Vigoz active vehicle 2027? Electric drive up to 75mph with pedals for activity, motorway legal.

Traditionally, mobility scooters have offered simple controls, comfortable access and foldability for transport, but as scooters increasingly resemble micro-cars, lifestyle vehicles are gaining the assistive features of scooters. As is often the case regulation lags behind the technology and ambition, restricting innovation and keeping some great products off the market. Nearly all the vehicles above can be used on UK roads although some would need adaptation or onerous paperwork. When the time comes a few could take to the footways as mobility scooters if restricted to 8mph.

The larger vehicles don't need pedals and would perform better without them, they're there to meet demand for both the health benefits and the great feel of keeping moving. In fact cars with pedals may turn out to be our 'safest' cars of all, and little by little ageing is promising to be more fun than it used to be.



Reigate Priory is a familiar local landmark but how much do you know about its origins, why it is a grade one listed building and who lived there?

Built in the 13 century it was founded by William Warrene as a religious community of Augustinian monks. Situated on the pilgrim route to Canterbury it provided hospitality not only to the pilgrims but also to the local residents, with a hospital, a school for local boys as well as a place of contemplation and worship. Its medieval walls still lie hidden behind its Georgian facade and are a designated ancient monument.



Fireplace, Holbein Hall, Reigate Priory
The fireplace in the Holbein Hall of Reigate Priory.

The Priory survived the Reformation because of the abundant roe deer in the adjoining parkland and forests. The Howard family used it as a hunting lodge and when Sir Charles Howard became First Lord of the Admiralty it is said that he and Sir Francis Drake planned the defeat of the Spanish Armada in its great hall. His granddaughter, Elizabeth, Countess of Peterborough, installed the Tudor fireplace, originally built by the Holbein workshop for Henry Tudor and rescued from Nonsuch Palace.

The Priory survived the Reformation because of the abundant roe deer in the adjoining parkland and forests.

Many families used the Priory to escape the squalor and disease of London, turning the Priory into a family home. The Parsons family, commissioned Italian specialists to build the staircase to the upper floors and the magnificent frescoes depicting Greek myths. Sir John Parson and his son Humphrey were both Lord Mayors of London and entertained business men and politicians at the Priory.

In the following century it became the home of Richard Ireland, a prosperous cheese monger, who commissioned the Georgian facade that we see today, following a disastrous fire in one of the wings. His sister Ann was a friend of John Wesley who was a frequent visitor to the Priory.

In 1807 it became the country home of John, Lord Somers, most famous for ordering the construction of the road tunnel in Reigate which allowed for easier access to the road to London. In 1883 his granddaughter, Isabel Somers married Lord Henry Somerset, second son of the Duke of Bedford and again the Priory became their country retreat close to London. She donated the land for

Reigate Priory

Reigate Heath Golf Club and established Duxhurst Village for the education of 'fallen women' and their children. After their divorce Isabel lived at the Priory with her son Henry.

In the early 1900's the building was rented out to Ronnie and Margaret Greville while their home Polesdon Lacy was being refurbished. They entertained the leading writers, entrepreneurs and politicians of the day like Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and Winston Churchill, as well as royalty, most notably Edward VII who visited on many occasions to meet his mistress Mrs Keppel.

After the Great War, the Priory was bought by Earl Beatty, first Lord of the Admiralty who also entertained writers, artists and politicians including the Churchills, Ivor Novello and the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

At the outbreak of the second world war the building was leased to Joseph Rank and most of his staff were evacuated to the safety of Reigate away from the bombing in London. When peace came the building lay empty until 1948 when it became a secondary school. In 1952, the Priory was given Grade 1 status

because of the age of its walls, the Tudor fireplace, the Italian staircase and the classical frescoes.

Today it is a state junior school for almost 600 pupils.

Sally Baker



Home made Cards



Making a handmade Christmas card can be fun for you and a special treat for the recipient. I've been making either handsewn cards or machine embroidered cards for quite some time. Part of the reason is that it's cheaper! I've got the fabrics and the threads, all I need are the cut-out blanks and the envelopes. I enjoy the planning, designing and the making and I love seeing the faces of the people I have made them for. Most friends say 'I can't possibly throw it away, it will come out next year too' What a compliment!

Joan Apps teaches people in her Craft & Chat group how to make cards which aren't too difficult but the finished results are really good. Carol uses her photographic skills to create personalised cards which bring her joy to create and appreciation on the part of the participant when they receive them.

Why not have a go, once you have got the first card made, it gets easier and the fun begins.

Tina Pankhurst



8 members at The Pheasant at Buckland in September

Sunday Lunch Group

Bored with having Sunday lunch at home on my own, I thought in U3A there may well be people who are now living alone who would also prefer to eat with friends Sunday lunchtime. I talked to our Group Co-ordinators and we agreed to give the idea some publicity in our bulletin and see if anyone was interested. In February this year we held our first lunch with 16 members and 3 on the waiting list.

We meet on the first and third Sundays each month and we take it in turns to choose a venue and arrange the table reservation. The venue can be a restaurant, pub, clubhouse or whatever, as long as they have a good reputation for food.

Our first meeting was held at the Donyngs Indoor Bowls Club when 13 of us enjoyed their roast joints. Since then we have dined in 15 different venues - normally local Pubs, from The Fox Revived in the south at Horley to Botley Hill Farmhouse in Warlingham and Bletchingley Arms in the east to The Pheasant in the west. We never travel very far and we arrange to give each other car lifts whenever required.

With so many lunches now under our belts we are getting to know each other well and we thoroughly enjoy each other's company. Attendance is only when convenient so we usually have between 6 and 13 eating together. This group has added a valuable extra interest to all our lives.

Phillip Capstick

25 Christmases

2000 – The world anticipates the new Millenium with excitement and fear about a potential 'Bug'.

2001 – The Queen reflects on a year of disasters after foot & mouth and the 9/11 attacks.

2002 – The Lion King was released by Disney Studios

2003 – US President George W. Bush announces the capture of Saddam Hussein

2004 – The Indian Ocean tsunami

2005 – David Cameron became the leader of the Conservative Party

2006 – The UK settles its Anglo-American post-WWII loan

2007 – Michael Parkinson and Kylie Minogue in New Year's Honours List

2008 – Woolworths announced its 807 UK stores would close

2009 – Parts of Britain experienced a white Christmas

2010 – A total lunar eclipse coincided with the December Solstice on 21 December

2011 – 'Wherever You Are' Military Wives/Gareth Malone reaches Number 1 in the charts

2012 – The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge announced they were expecting their first child

2013 – The Queen led mourners in St Paul's Cathedral at the funeral of Baroness Thatcher

2014 – The Ford Fiesta was Britain's best selling car for the sixth successive year

2015 – 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement on climate change

2016 – The Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) became fully operational for New Year's Eve after restoration work

2017 – The EU announces that the UK's Brexit transition period will end no later than 31 December 2020

2018 – Tens of thousands of passengers at Gatwick Airport experience flight disruption due to reported drone sightings over the airfield.

2019 – The Dutch government announces it will officially stop using the moniker "Holland", so the country will only be referred to by its official name, the Netherlands

2020 – Many spent Christmas alone due to the covid lockdown

2021 – Queen Elizabeth cancelled her traditional Christmas at Sandringham due to concerns over rising Omicron infections and instead stayed in Windsor

2022 – Leah Williamson among Lionesses recognised in New Year honours list

2023 – RRu3a London outing saw Christmas lights & Covent Garden market (photo p6)

2024 – Two NASA astronauts spent Christmas 2024 in space

2025 – Hyde Park Winter Wonderland is back!



Suffolk Holiday



In October we enjoyed an excellent holiday exploring the many historical and cultural attractions of this delightful part of the country.

We were greeted at our usual pick-up points by our friendly driver Dave, and set off by coach in glorious sunshine. After a comfort break on the M11 we arrived in Sudbury for a tour of Gainsborough's House. This impressive site incorporates galleries with an outstanding collection of his

paintings, the original Gainsbrough family home dating back to the sixteenth century, and at its heart a beautiful garden, crinkle crinkle wall and ancient mulberry tree older than Gainsborough himself. We learnt about his early life, his family, his career, his friendship then falling out with Joshua Reynolds, his special ability to paint fabrics, and his enduring love of painting landscapes. One highlight was the iconic portrait of Mary, Countess Howe, on loan from Kenwood House.

We stayed at the Holiday Inn outside Ipswich which was a good base for the holiday. Our lovely Blue Badge Guide Claire met us on day 2. Her extensive local knowledge and Dave's expert driving skills helped us to see so much more of the area. We drove past the timber framed wool merchants' houses of Lavenham, one of England's finest medieval villages on our way to Bury St Edmunds. Here our guided tour took in the stunning Abbey Gardens, St Mary's Church, final resting place of Mary Tudor, and St Edmundsbury Cathedral, a place of worship for nearly 1,000 years. In the afternoon we visited Ickworth House, with its massive stone rotunda and astonishing collection of paintings, furniture and silverware.

On our third day we drove through Woodbridge to Sutton Hoo. This Anglo-Saxon royal burial site is where the priceless Sutton Hoo treasure was discovered in a huge ship grave in 1939. This is an extraordinary site and the interpretation of the archaeologists' painstaking excavations as well as of their finds was exceptional. Lottery money well spent!

We went on to the picturesque 16th century fishing village of Aldeburgh for lunch, with time to enjoy fish and chips, to walk along the beach and to admire the Moot Hall, and Maggi Hambling's Scallop memorial to Benjamin Britten. We made a brief stop at Thorpeness en route to Snape Maltings where we saw the concert hall, Barbara Hepworth sculpture, art studios and shops. Our evening was enlivened by Sally's tricky and entertaining quiz.

The next morning was spent exploring the Dedham Vale National Landscape, home to John Constable. At East Bergholt we saw the bell ringers in the cage beside the towerless church. At Flatford we were able to enjoy the same views captured by Constable in his most famous paintings. It is a wonderfully timeless and tranquil hamlet. Lunchtime was spent in Dedham, with its famous church tower that features in so many of his painting. Later we visited Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich, an important Tudor building with historic room settings, outstanding paintings and furniture and surrounded by glorious gardens and parkland.

On our way home we stopped at Audley End House and Gardens near Saffron Walden to discover the sumptuous splendour enjoyed by royalty and the aristocracy in one of England's grandest stately homes. The traffic was kind and we arrived home safely and ahead of schedule after a packed and fascinating five days. Thanks are due to Diana for devising this excellent itinerary.

Gail Sperrin



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The Christmas Rose

The Christmas Rose blooms all through the darkest days of Winter. This evergreen, hardy plant can withstand the coldest of times.

The Christmas Rose isn't really a rose but a hellebore – Helleborus Niger, a clump forming perennial that thrives in partial shade.

A lovely story about the Christmas Rose is about a young shepherdess called Madelon who was looking after her sheep one night when she saw the Three Wise Men of the Nativity. As they passed by, she saw they were carrying gifts for the baby Jesus. Madelon cried because she had no gift, but as her tears fell, an angel parted the snow to reveal a plant with beautiful white flowers, A Christmas Rose, a perfect gift.





Millenium Fireworks - Embroidery
Carol Hicks