



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"



October 2025

**We meet at
The New Windmill Hall, Upminster,
RM14 2QH
on the third Tuesday of each month.**

Useful Links

**London Region Events
Events - London Region of u3as Network**

**Upminster u3a website
<https://upminster.u3asite.uk/>**

**Upminster u3a Committee Contact
<https://upminster.u3asite.uk/contact/>**

**For future news, articles, and feedback,
please email
Barbara Smith, Newsletter Editor
uu3abarbara489@btinternet.com**

**Newsletter entries must be received by
Barbara by 6pm on the 1st of each month.
Thank you.**

**The Editor reserves the right to amend or
omit content.**

For your Diary



**Our next meeting will be
Tuesday 21 October 2025
Doors open at 1pm**

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Future Guest Speakers at Monthly Meetings

21 October	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steve Scruton began his radio career in the mid-1970s with Hospital Radio, Chelmsford, where he volunteered for over 15 years. Steve joined BBC Essex in 1988 where he presented an afternoon weekday show for 22 years. His talk is about the highs and lows of life as a DJ. 2. William Rathouse, from Gateway and supported self-help, will talk about the project that aims to reduce isolation, promoting inclusion and well-being.
18 November	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Simon Keable Elliott, talking about 1920s Tahiti – Why it is popular with writers and authors. 2. Tony Philpot from the RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre.
16 December	<p>No speakers (Christmas Party)</p> 

View from the Chair



Autumn is suddenly upon us; after the equinox the nights start earlier and earlier. But what a season for fruits and nuts. It's uncomfortable to walk under the oaks since the ground is littered with so many acorns.

I try to hold off on the heating until November, but I've noticed that every year I feel the cold more and so the "heating on" date has crept closer to the end of summer! The colours of autumn and winter are very different to those of summer in my garden, and in the fields and woods. Spring has soft colours, which turn bright in midsummer. But autumn's gold is not the same as the daffodils' yellow of March.

The committee is delighted that we had a member step up to volunteer, following last month's departure of Susan Jiggins, as speaker secretary. We are pleased to welcome Sue Benjamins, who has taken over the role that Susan did for nearly 6 years. Thank you, Susan and Sue.

Courtney Moita de Deus



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Membership Information

Since our last newsletter we welcomed another 3 new members and one more lapsed member who returned. The new members are: Lynton Wakeham, Antonia Mangion and Gary Becraft. Unfortunately, we were informed of the death of another of our long-standing members.

Our current membership thus now stands at 666

Pamela Freer

Notices and Information

Christmas Party



Those of you who are avid readers of this monthly Newsletter will remember that the ticket price for last year's party was just £12.00.

Like just about everything over the past year, prices have increased. But, there is one exception, this year's ticket price is down to just **£10.00**.

The Party will be on **Tuesday 16 December**, in place, as usual, of the regular monthly meeting.

It will commence at **1.00 p.m.**, and there will be a live singer from **2.00 until 3.30 p.m.**, when the party will finish..

Food, wine and juice will be provided, and there will be a free raffle.

Tickets will be on sale at the October monthly meeting from 12.30 p.m. They will only be available to Uu3a members, and will be limited to one, plus one for another member who is unable to attend the meeting. Please do not ask the ticket ladies to sell you tickets for non Uu3a members.

Social Committee

* * * * *

London Region of u3as - Christmas Lights Walk for u3a Members in December and January, led by an accredited City of London and Camden tour guide.

December and January are the right time to see London at its most magical with a festive walk through Mayfair and St. James.

The walk commences at the towering Christmas tree (the gift of Norway) in Trafalgar Square and on to the quaint Georgian streets and elegant Victorian shopping arcades festooned with twinkling lights. Famous for its centuries-old shops, Jermyn Street sparkles with festive illuminations and its listed shop windows are a



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treat for the eyes. Mayfair gives us Bond Street's luxury boutiques, wrapped like gifts themselves and narrow alleys still full of the charm of old-world London. Nothing says a London Christmas like Fortnum & Mason, home to the original Christmas hamper, which dates back to Victorian times. With a host of historical titbits and Christmas stories you will surely be consumed with festive spirit.

To book : please click on the link for the event that you are interested in (links are located below the description for each event in this document). [2025.08-LRU3A-festive-season-25-programme.pdf](#)

October Trivia and Quiz

Trivia

- Halloween on 31 October is rooted in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. In olden times, people believed that the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred on this day, so they lit bonfires, and wore costumes, to ward off ghosts.
- With over 2,500 British apple varieties of the 7,000 or so that exist worldwide, National Apple Day on 21 October is surely well deserved.

Quiz

1. Winnie-the-Pooh was published on 14 October 1926. Who was the author?
2. What was the name of the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth that was launched on 4 October 1957?
3. Which four words, described as the official motto of the U.S.A. did not appear on its paper currency until 1 October 1957?
4. In October of which year did the Model T Ford motor car go into production - 1906, 1907, 1908, 1910?
5. Which English King was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 30 October 1485?
6. On 17 October 1814, 8 people were killed, and a building partially destroyed at Tottenham Court Road by what liquid?
7. On 8 October 1982, which labour union, famously led by Lech Walesa, was banned by the Polish government?
8. What, on 18 October 1867 did the U S purchase for \$7.2 million?
9. On 6 October 1927, which "talkie" (the first full-length feature film using spoken dialogue) opened in New York. What was it, and who was the star?
10. What, according to legend at least, started The Great Fire of Chicago on 8 October 1871 in which over 300 people died, and 90,000 were left homeless?

Chris Slade



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Groups: Recent Activities

Walking with Wildlife

A small group of us met at Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Discovery Park for the walk in September. The centre is set in mature woodland and offers superb views over the 870-acre Hanningfield Reservoir. There are 4 bird hides in the reserve, all of which offer different views over the reservoir. It was a little chilly at the start of the walk, however it turned into a lovely warm September day.

We walked through the woodland to the hides furthest from the visitor centre and we saw to our delight two goldcrests, which are Britain's smallest bird. As you can see from the image, the goldcrest is aptly named, having a yellow stripe on the top of its head.



While walking through the woods we saw and heard a number of birds including Jackdaw, Robin, Blue Tit, Crow, and Woodpigeon.

At each of the hides we saw differing water birds, and there must have been over 100 Cormorants gathered in one place on the reservoir, suggesting that there were plenty of fish for them to feed on. However, the most remarkable sight was that of about 100 Great Crested Grebes swimming in a large flock across the reservoir. I have never before seen such a large number of them in one place.

A total of 27 birds were recorded, including a Swallow and a House Martin, both of which were on their migration to Africa.

We ended the walk with refreshments in the Visitor centre

Details of future meeting dates and contact details are to be found on the Upminster u3a website at [Walking with Wildlife group](#)

Terry Smith

Breakfast Club

For our September meeting nine of us visited Sal's Brasserie in Corbets Tey Road, Upminster. Our group enjoyed a varied selection of breakfasts including a traditional 'fry up', porridge with seasonal fruit and honey, and poached or scrambled eggs with avocado, smoked salmon or bacon. The service was excellent with staff moving tables together so that we could enjoy a group chat. I do recommend you give Sal's a try!

Brian Makepeace



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STEMM

STEMM member, Richard Hunt, kicked off the new 'academic year', participating in the "In Conversation with ..." session. STEMMer Jean Sims shared that she had "enjoyed today's witty talk about working in engineering."

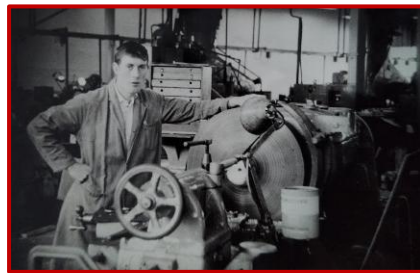
Richard's experience as a Scout, then active participation in Outward Bound and an apprenticeship in toolmaking led him into a short career in the merchant navy. He was on board the Queen Elizabeth.

Richard on board the Queen Elizabeth with the children of comedian and comic actor, Buddy Haskett



Most of his career was at Victor Engineering Works in Dagenham. He showed pictures of numerous types of lathes and regaled us with some of the interesting people-stories.

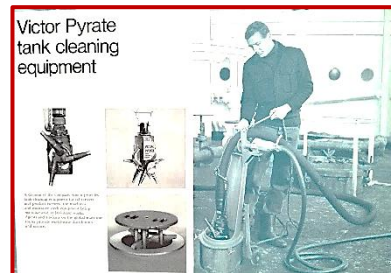
Richard at a lathe



Some of the more notable machines with which they worked were Kort nozzles. They are ducted marine propellers designed to improve the efficiency, eliminating reliance on tugs.

Another important machine was the Marconi wave guide. The Victor pirate tank cleaning equipment was so efficient.

The tank washing equipment



These high-pressure water-powered machines used a small quantity of detergent to thoroughly clean a ship's tank so that petroleum cargo one way could be replaced by food on the return trip. Richard explained that resin-bonded sand was used for making the moulds so that the castings would be accurate, to within 1/1000th of an inch!

He must have been exhausted after more than an hour sharing his wanderings down memory lane. Jean's overview was spot on. Thank you, Richard, for taking on the invitation to lead a STEMM session which many members said that they had enjoyed.

Lyn Haynes



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Coach Trips (2)

(1) Ightham Mote and Tunbridge Wells

Our trip to the magnificent Ightham Mote house and estate was on 30 September, too late for a full write-up for this edition of the newsletter. For now, just to say the weather was glorious and the house and gardens as splendid as ever, so a great day was had by all. Here are two pictures: one of the house and the other of one of the garden sculptures. Shirley will provide a full write-up next month.



Pamela Freer

(2) My **Wrest Park** Escapade - Noah's Ark, Cinnamon Buns and Capability Brown

There's a sound that now gives me palpitations. Not the fire alarm. Not even the faded beeps of a smoke detector on its last battery legs. No, for me, it's the dulcet wail of an ambulance siren, a setting I've chosen for Upminster u3a email notifications, the better to nab those coveted coach trip places. Sadly, my phone can't distinguish between "urgent day trip" and "unmissable midnight tiddlywinks update", so if you catch me looking sleep-deprived, blame progress.



Wrest Park, 29 August. It sounded delightfully unknown, so much so, not a single fellow member seemed to know where it was. Those Internet maps? They estimated an epic 4-hour public transport trudge; more voyage than day out. Thankfully, the magic word "coach" shaved that down to a mere 75 minutes. Take note, Google: sometimes it's not about the journey, but the vehicle.

Packing for Wrest Park proved tricky. After weeks of August swelter, I had set aside a 1984 Miami Vice-inspired Hawaiian shirt, beige chinos, aviator shades, and flip-flops. But oh no, Mother Nature called time on my Don Johnson cosplay: grey skies, drizzle, and a temperature drop left me suited up in boots, rainwear, and trusty umbrella, ready for anything but a photo shoot on South Beach.



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Catering at these events is inevitably a culinary lottery, so my trusty sandwich and flask of special tea (recipe available on request, delivery not guaranteed before Christmas) came along. I did, however, succumb to a Marks & Sparks cinnamon bun, because even the best-laid plans must bend to baked goods.

By 9:30 am, we queued for embarkation as Chris Slade ticked us off in pairs, evoking faint Noah's Ark vibes, though, if memory serves, they didn't have rainproof jackets or cinnamon buns aboard the Ark, more's the pity.

The journey was as smooth as promised, driven by a true professional, and, miracle of miracles, the rain ceased as we arrived. Deciding to make the most of potential dry patches, I set off solo to explore Wrest Park's 92-acre domain, determined to see every nook before our 2 pm tour (or before British weather reclaimed the land).

Wrest Park may be relatively unsung, but it's got all the aristocratic pedigree one could want. For over 600 years, it was the home of the de Grey family owners, politicians, earls, and generally the type you'd not want showing up during Monopoly night. The house itself a marvel of faux-French grandeur, built in the 1830s, presides over gardens spanning three centuries of taste. Capability Brown himself worked here in the late 1750s, blurring the lines between artful nature and the type of wild overrun usually found in my garden shed.

Those gardens? They are a botanist's fever dream: formal parterres, an orangerie, the delightfully named Archer Pavilion (a baroque banquet house, not a cricketing venue, so leave the pads at home), temples of all nations, and even a dog cemetery. You know an estate is grand when the family pets get their own tombstones. Most visitors speak reverently of The Long Water yes, really, that's its name. There's no Short Water or Medium Water. Capability Brown was, evidently, capable of many things, but inventing names wasn't his strong suit.

Lunch beckoned: by 1pm, my feet had mutinied, but my spirits (and sandwich) remained unbowed. Special mention to my tea recipe, possibly the only beverage on site guaranteed not to require a second mortgage.

Our guide for the afternoon was David, a retired headmaster turned English Heritage oracle, who met us at the rather marvellous wyvern statue. The De Grey family used the wyvern, a distinctly unphotogenic dragon-lizard hybrid, as their symbol. It would never make it to Love Island but apparently did a good job warding off both enemies and, one assumes, rival gardening enthusiasts.

David spun tales of Wrest's history, from its aristocratic heyday to its brief spell as a hospital in the First World War. After the family's fortunes ebbed away and Sun Life/Sun Alliance and the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering were previous residents, English Heritage took over stewardship in 2006.

One can't help but marvel at Capability Brown's legacy here: sweeping acres, enormous stretches of water, and a commemorative column that requires GPS, a packed lunch, and perhaps a flare gun to locate. He may have been the Michelangelo of mud, but clearly nobody in the 18th century believed in directions. Or signposts.



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In the end, the day that began under clouds finished in unexpected golden sunshine. Whether David, our headmaster-guide, had a quiet word with the weather gods, or whether Wrest Park just wanted to show off, who can say? Either way, it was a day of laughter, camaraderie, stately oaks, and a cinnamon bun so delicious it deserves a blue plaque.

Many thanks go to Chris Slade for his seamless management of headcounts both two-by-two and one-by-one. I'll keep my phone prepped for the next adventure, ambulance siren notwithstanding. Wrest Park proved a hidden treasure: a stately escape into English eccentricity, and dry socks too.

Giorgio Federico Bugnatelli

Bananagrams



Bananagrams is an addictively simple — and simply addictive — word game that's easy to learn and hard to put down!

We meet on the 4th Friday of each month, from 2pm to 4pm at The Windmill Pub and our next get-together is on Friday 24th October - a perfect chance to connect with others and enjoy a few lively rounds of this fast-paced game.

Tables are reserved in the back room (to the left of the bar), and we can spread out into the bar area if needed. Several of us arrive early to enjoy the pub's excellent-value lunch menu, so feel free to join us beforehand.

If you're new to Bananagrams, there are plenty of tutorials on YouTube — but don't worry, we help each other out! Unsure about a spelling? Google and our trusty dictionaries are always nearby.

There's no charge to play, and free parking is available. We do suggest buying a drink to support the venue to ensure we remain welcome. Come along for a fun and friendly afternoon — we'd love to see you there - or feel free to contact me if you'd like more information. **07962 213793**.

Pauline Ashton

Coffee Mornings



Tuesdays Oct 7th and 21st are the next dates for coffee and chat, at the same place and same time - Roomes Cafe at 11am.

Hope to see you there.

Angela McDonald



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Poetry Appreciation

We returned from summer holidays for our September meeting to explore the works of two American poets, namely **Henry Longfellow** and **Mary Oliver**.

Firstly, we looked at Longfellow's ***Rain in Summer***. He was born in Portland, Ohio in February 1807 and was reputed to be the most popular American poet of the 19th century for such works as ***The Song of Hiawatha (1855)*** and ***Paul Revere's Ride (1863)***. He was the first American to complete Dante's *Divine Comedy* and was described as one of the 'fireside poets' from New England. He graduated from Bowdoin College, Maine and later became a Professor there, and also at Harvard, after studying in Europe. He retired from teaching in 1854 to focus on his writing and lived the remainder of his life in Cambridge, Mass. His first major poetry collections were published in 1839 and 1841.

Longfellow's life was marked with tragedy. His first wife died in 1835, after a miscarriage, and his second wife died in 1861, after sustaining burns when her dress caught fire. After her death he understandably found difficulty in writing poetry and turned to translating other works into English.

He wrote many poems for their musicality and often presented stories of mythology and legend. However, he was criticised for imitating European styles and being too sentimental. The rapidity at which American readers embraced Longfellow was a first in publishing history in the US, and by 1874 his earnings were considerable. His popularity spread throughout Europe and his works were translated into French, German and Italian. Edgar Allan Poe was a serious admirer, but then later accused him of plagiarism, specifically of Tennyson. Towards the end of his life his contemporaries considered him more of a children's poet and of course many of his readers were children.

After his death in 1882 his popularity declined and this shifted towards Walt Whitman and Robert Frost. A public monument to his memory was erected in Maine in 1888 in Washington DC, and in 1884 Longfellow became the first non-British writer for whom a commemorative bust was placed in ***Poets' Corner*** in Westminster Abbey.

Our second choice was ***Wild Geese*** by Mary Oliver, who was an American poet and won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and, in 1992, the National Book Award. She found inspiration for her work in nature and had a lifelong habit of solitary walks in the wild. Her poetry is characterised by wonderment of the natural environment, vivid imagery and unadorned language. In 2007 she was declared the best-selling poet in the US.

She was born in 1935 in Maple Heights, Ohio, a semi-rural suburb of Cleveland. In 2011 she described her family as dysfunctional and her childhood was hard, but her writing helped her create her own world. She began writing poetry aged 14. Oliver studied at Ohio State University and Vassar College in the mid-1950s. However, she did not receive a degree from either college. It was in Austerlitz NY that Oliver met Molly Malone Cook, who became her partner for over 40 years, she was also her literary agent and they mostly made their home in Princetown, Mass., where they lived until Cook's death in 2005.



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Oliver loved the marvellous convergence of land and water, Mediterranean light, fishermen, artists, writers etc. Her work presented a new kind of Romanticism that refuses to acknowledge boundaries between nature and the observing self. Nature stirred her creativity. Oliver received many awards and honours throughout her lifetime; in 1980 she received the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and, in 1998, an Honorary Doctorate from the Art Institute, Boston. In 2012 she was diagnosed with lung cancer and died in Florida in January 2019 aged 83.

The Guest Poem was **Plums** by Gillian Clarke, a contemporary Welsh poet who was the third poet to take up the post of National Poet of Wales.

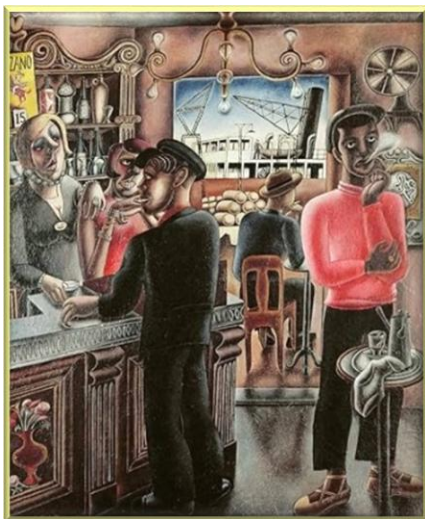
We meet again in October.

Michelle Blythe

Art History and Appreciation

In September we visited Tate Britain for a retrospective exhibition of the artist Edward Burra (1905-1976). We discovered the full scope of his work, which surpassed our expectations.

A relatively unknown British artist, Edward Burra has been somewhat neglected by histories of modern art. Possibly because he could not easily be categorised. An utterly unique artist always at odds with the mainstream, he stood outside stylistic groupings. From his early works in France, and the New York Harlem pictures through to his late landscapes, Burra's view of the world was quite unlike any of his contemporaries.



Dockside Café, Marseille, 1929



Harlem Scene, 1934



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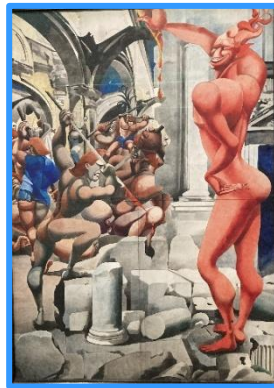
His early works from the 1920s and 30s verge on both satire and caricature. Burra was fascinated by modern urban life and in particular the seedy underworlds. He painted social scenes in dockside bars and cafés, Harlem dance halls and striptease clubs.

The Straw Man, 1963

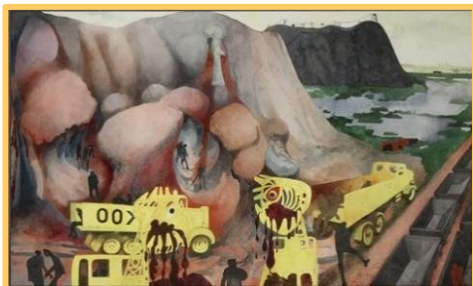


Despite suffering from lifelong debilitating ill health, Burra travelled extensively. The exhibition demonstrates how these trips to exotic places influenced both his style and subject matter. For example, while visiting Madrid he witnessed the violent unrest preceding the Spanish Civil War. This resulted in his work entering a 'dark period' which continued throughout World War 2. His paintings depict frightening nightmarish visions peopled by macabre, imaginative otherworldly demons.

Beelzebub, 1938



Burra's declining health in later years prevented him from travelling abroad. Instead, he embarked on driving tours around Britain with his sister. He turned to painting rural scenes and landscapes.



Picking a Quarrel, 1968



Near Whitby, Yorkshire, 1972



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Some paintings are pure landscapes while others reflect the impact of modern society on the British countryside.

Edward Burra was not expected to live to any great age but survived until the age of 71. He had lived a life full of incidents and experiences. These he recorded with razor-sharp wit in his highly amusing illustrated letters to friends. All on display in the exhibition.

Chris Mecham

Quiz Answers

1. A.A.Milne.
2. Sputnik 1.
3. In God We Trust. Often seen in shops and pubs with the addition of "Everybody Else Pays Cash".
4. 1908.
5. Henry VII.
6. Porter (a style of beer). Between 580,00 and 1,470,00 litres were released when wooden vats burst/were destroyed at Meux & Co's Horse Shoe Brewery.
7. Solidarity.
8. The state of Alaska, the price equated to about 2 cents an acre. In today's money \$7.2 million equates to about \$157 million.
9. The Jazz Singer, Al Jolson.
10. Mrs O'Leary's cow, that was said to have kicked over a lantern.

Chris Slade

Autumn has arrived

