



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



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
Mary Sales, Newsletter Editor
Alison Liburd, Deputy Editor
maupminstereditors@gmail

Newsletter entries for next month must be
submitted to Mary and Alison by
Friday 31st July 2026.
Thank you.

The Editor reserves the right to amend or
omit content.

For your Diary

Our next meeting will be
Tuesday 21st July

Doors open at 1pm

Inside this Newsletter

Page	
2	Future Guest Speakers/View from the Chair
3	Editorial
3-4	Come Join Us! Groups & upcoming events with vacancies
5	Information: Wisdom of the Ages, AI: What is it good for?
6	July Trivia & Quiz
7	Moulin Rouge - Extra Curricular
8	They Saved Shakespeare For Us
9-10	Hog Roast
11	Photography
12	Poetry Appreciation Group
13	STEMM
14	Scarborough
15	Rummikub 4
16	Membership & Quiz Answers



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"



July 2026

Future Guest Speakers at Monthly Meetings, 2026

21 July	1. AGM 2. Andy Stewart, author, historian and public speaker. <i>'Tall Tales or Real History: Could those family myths be true?'</i> In researching his family 'tall tales', Andy proved many family myths.
18 August	1. Wendy Piccanini, Community Partnerships Manager of the <i>Leprosy Mission</i> contrasts the different attitudes to, and treatment of, this still-present disease across the world. 2. TBA
15 September	1. Bernard Lockett, author & accredited lecturer, speaks on the <i>Music & Satire of Gilbert & Sullivan</i>. 2. Sarah from <i>The Windmill Hall</i> talking about the past and their plans for the future.

View from the Chair

As this is my last month as chair of Upminster u3a, I have been remembering how it all started.

On Tuesday 19 July 2016 a meeting was held in the Methodist church hall to see whether there was any interest in starting a u3a here in Upminster. Having u3a had existed for over 25 years. So many people tried to attend that day, we had to close the doors because the hall was full to capacity. The representative from the u3a National Office said that he'd never seen so many people at an 'interest' meeting.

From that day, a dozen volunteers formed a steering committee to organise the new U3A, which officially signed its first members on 18 October 2016 - nearly 250 members signed up that day, and we haven't stopped growing since.

But what keeps us going and growing are the volunteers who organise things like meetings, coach trips, groups, social events, etc. We always need more volunteers to step up and help the committee. We are currently looking for someone (or more than one), to help find the speakers for the monthly meetings. This role doesn't need to be a trustee position. We are also seeking someone to help group leaders, and others, to update information on the website. This would be on an ad hoc basis.

Lastly, but by no means least, Chris Slade is looking to pass on his role as groups coordinator, something he has undertaken for the past decade.

Please help us continue to grow as a successful u3a, and thank you to all our volunteers.

Courtney Moita de Deus



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Editorial

Hello everyone,

Mary and I would like to thank all the members who took the time and trouble to send supportive emails to us after our first attempt at this editing malarkey. It is always nice to receive encouragement, even more so when taking on new ventures.

We would also like to send our appreciation to the regular contributors, without whom there would be no newsletter, you are the backbone of the publication.

However, can we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the members who have taken time to invite us into their worlds, sending articles about their individual interests and outings. It is always good to hear about things that are new to us, things that we may not have realised would be of interest to us. If there are others out there with hobbies or pursuits that you would like to share, please do, we would love to hear from you.

Warm wishes,

Alison

Please send any items of interest to: maupminstereditors@gmail.com

Mary and Alison

Come Join Us! Social Event:

Please note that the next social event, **Songs From The Musicals**, will be on **Tuesday 29 September from 6 to 9pm**.

It will be 'bring your own nibbles', however wine and juice will be provided. Tickets, one per member and one for another member who is unable to attend the monthly meeting, will be on sale at the August meeting - you will not believe the price when you see it in next month's Newsletter!

Social Committee

Coffee Mornings

Hurrah we are back at last.

Our venue, Roomies Cafe, has reopened and our next dates for Coffee and Chat are:
Tuesday July 14th/July 28th.

Looking forward to seeing you all there at 11am.

Angela ☕🥐



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Coach Trip:

Stansted Park Coach Trip – Wednesday 29 July

The Stansted Park coach trip was sold out but an unprecedented 8 people have cancelled their bookings for various reasons so we now have a few places available if you would like to join us. Stansted Park is a massive estate in Hampshire centred on an Edwardian country house. We have organised a house tour then we will have time to explore the grounds on our own. The cost of the trip is £33.50 per person. This includes coach travel, admission to the site, guided tour and driver's tip. Please contact the organiser of this trip Lesley Elias lesleyuu3a@yahoo.com if you would like to book a place or if you want further information.

Bananagrams

If you enjoy quick-thinking wordplay and a good laugh, our monthly Bananagrams afternoon is a lovely way to spend a few hours. It's light-hearted, fast-paced, and wonderfully sociable; perfect, whether you're a seasoned player or just curious to give it a try.

We'll be gathering again on Friday 24th July, from 2pm to 4pm, in the back room of The Windmill Pub (just to the left of the bar). A few of us arrive a little earlier to take advantage of the pub's great-value lunch options, so feel free to join us for that as well. New players are always welcome. The rules are simple, and there's no pressure, someone is always on hand to explain things. You are also welcome to consult a dictionary or check on your phone if you're stumped with a particular word.

It's free to take part, with free parking available. We do ask that everyone buys at least one drink to support the venue, which kindly reserves tables for us each month. And if you happen to own a Bananagrams set, bringing it along would be much appreciated.

Come for the company, stay for the wordplay — we'd love to have you with us for another relaxed and friendly afternoon.

Pauline 07962213793





Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Information

WISDOM OF THE AGES

Upminster u3a has been approached by the creator of a new interview series to be released on YouTube.

The project celebrates the experiences and perspectives of people aged 70+, exploring life, love, loss and everything in between through relaxed conversations about their lives. Interviews would take place in London (near King's Cross) in July and August.

For more details please check the pilot programme:

<https://wisdomoftheages.co.uk>

AI: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

That's an interesting question! I'm sure many of us have thought, 'Do I really need to use AI?' We don't *need* to use it, but if you'd like to know more about AI and how it could be useful, the u3a 'AI For Everyone' team has put together a beginner's guide.

If you would like to learn more, and explore what chatbots are and how they can be useful, please follow the link [here](#)



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



July Trivia and Quiz

Trivia

- 31 July sees the start of the oyster season and it is said that if you eat oysters on this day, you will have plenty of money during the year to come - might be worth a try!
- The 'the dog days of summer' refers to the hottest, most sultry days of the year, usually lasting from early July to the end of August. The phrase comes not from panting dogs, but from Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, which is part of the constellation Canis Major (the Greater Dog).

Quiz Questions

Quiz Questions

1. What date in July is the midpoint of the year in a non-leap year?
2. What was the name of the world's first test-tube baby, born on 25 July 1978?
3. What social media site was officially launched on 15 July 2006?
4. On 6 July 1957, who became the first black person to win Wimbledon after being the first to win a lawn tennis Grand Slam event, the French Open, the year before?
5. Who, on 25 July 1909, became the first person to fly an aircraft from one country to another?
6. Who was executed on 6 July 1535 after refusing to recognise King Henry VIII as head of the Church?
7. What, which had not been rationed during World War II, was rationed on 22 July 1946, more than a year after the end of the war?
8. On 17 July in which year did the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act receive Royal Assent?
9. What was Operation Valkyrie on 20 July 1944?
10. Which, now ubiquitous, item of clothing named after a Pacific Ocean atoll, was introduced on 5 July 1946?

Chris Slade



Featured Articles

Extra curricular activity - Moulin Rouge

On Thursday 26th June, the majority of the PNH (pins, needles and hooks) group, spent an enjoyable afternoon together. As per the editorial request, posted in the May edition of this publication, I have decided to submit this article about our fantastic, unrelated to PNH, trip to the West End of London.

The daughter of one of our group is a member of the cast of Moulin Rouge, so it was decided to lay down our creative tools, to venture out into the scorching 34 degree heat and to travel to the West End on the Elizabeth Line.



Before the show, we ate a rather delicious meal at Bill's restaurant, a short, two minute walk away from the theatre.



With the arrival of the last of our group, we took our seats in the royal circle of the Piccadilly theatre. What an extraordinary experience, you feel completely immersed as soon as you take your seat. The theatre is decorated as a representation of the Moulin Rouge of the early 1900s, with all of the extravagances of that time and place. Whilst you wait for the show to begin, many of the ensemble can be seen strutting their stuff on and around the stage, nicely setting the scene in readiness for the big opening number 'Lady Marmalade'. From this point you are transported back to the bohemian district of Montmartre, where the cruel Duke uses his position, money and influence, to try to conquer the love between Satin and Christian.



It was a wonderful afternoon, full of many excesses – heat, food, entertainment and friendly fun. Hopefully there will be a repeat performance soon.

Janet Webb





THEY SAVED SHAKESPEARE FOR US

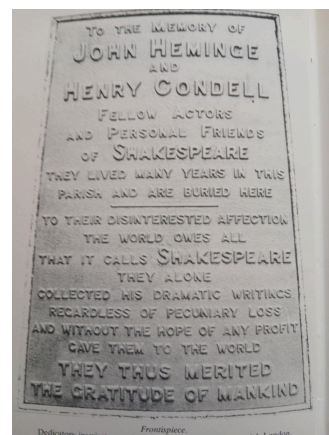
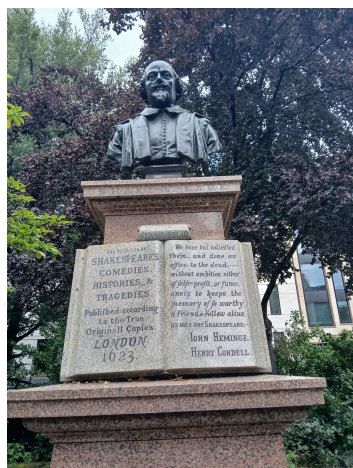
The year was 1623, seven years after the death of William Shakespeare and four since the demise of Richard Burbage. Shakespeare had written many great roles for Burbage including Hamlet, Lear, Othello and Macbeth. In this year the 'First Folio' was produced, so called because several reprints followed. They contained the majority of Shakespeare's plays, and appeared on the book stalls of St Pauls.

The Folio had been compiled with much difficulty by John Heminge and Henry Condell, fellow actors in the Lord Chamberlain's company and shareholders in The Globe Theatre. I say "with much difficulty", because once a play had been written and handed over to the playing company, it became their property and no longer that of the playwright. The company could do what they liked with it - perform, or sell it on to help with finances. Heminge and Condell had to search out who held the rights to the plays and negotiate for their return.

It's too long a tale to include here, as to the lengths they had to take to obtain the thirty six plays included in this Folio, plus the several plays that were added in subsequent reprints. If you're interested, there are two excellent books by Emma Smith, entitled The Making of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's First Folio. You might also have seen the excellent play performed at the Queens Theatre some time ago called The Book of Will.

There is a monument celebrating John Heminge and Henry Condell and their place in Shakespeare's legacy, which can be found in what remains of St Mary-the-Virgin Aldermanbury church grounds. This is despite the fact that most of this area was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and again in World War II. The Guildhall Library, which is close by, holds one of the remaining copies of the First Folio. I, for one, am very grateful to these men, having spent many happy hours seeing excellent productions of Shakespeare's work, and I must admit, some very unhappy hours in recent years!! I will also take this opportunity to mention the sad passing of my favourite actor, the excellent Michael Pennington, who spent the majority of his working life immersed in the works of Shakespeare.

Mary Hunwicks





Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Uu3a HOG ROAST



When we woke up on Tuesday, 2nd June it was raining the proverbial 'Cats and Dogs'. "Oh No!" was the thought going through our minds, "*the hog roast is being served **outside** the Windmill Hall.*"

However the Hog Roast Catering Company didn't let us down, they turned up nice and early Tuesday morning and set up a covering marquee close to the entrance to protect both food and people from the downpours.



They then proceeded to cook the roast together with the vegetarian paella and prepare the various accompaniments.

Although it continued to rain on and off during the event, it didn't deter our members from arriving and taking their seats in anticipation. Promptly, at 1pm, they started to queue up for their meal, a table at a time, keeping nice and dry under the marquee. Our vegetarians led the way towards lovely vegetarian paella, before the meat eaters took their turn.



Unfortunately it took well over an hour for everyone to be served, but there was plenty of food for all, and whilst our D.J. Mick played quiet background music, people took the opportunity to mingle and catch-up.

Sturdy paper plates and wooden knives & forks had been provided, so it was no big chore to clear up, a black sack had been allocated to each table, everyone helped by clearing their own table **thank you** – and then it was time for Mick to turn up the volume, and the dancing began.

Of course there are always members who either cannot or do not like to dance, plus those who need to take a breather and sit out one or two songs, but that didn't seem to spoil their enjoyment.



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



They were able to listen to some great 'blasts from the past' such as The Drifters 'Up On the Roof', Chubby Checker's 'Let's Twist Again', Lionel Richie's 'All Night Long' and Abba's 'Dancing Queen'. Mick also played plenty of Tamla Motown hits, always good to get people up and on the dancefloor; alongside Wham's more recent 'Wake Me Up Before You Go Go'.

Then, of course, there was Billy Joel's 'Uptown Girl', where we ladies could mentally hark back to our clubbing days, wearing white stilettos and dancing round our handbags. The watchers were able to observe some of us doing the synchronised steps to this one, oh that brought back memories! Later, there was more synchronised stepping to the Maverick's 'Dance The Night Away' – not night-time, but members did dance the afternoon away!

What was particularly good to see this time around, was the number of men on the dance floor.



Eventually it was time to go and yes it was still raining but - looking on the bright side - at least we didn't have that stifling hot weather from the previous week. It would have made the Windmill Hall unbearable!

With thanks to Mick for the music, the Hog Roast people for the meal and, as ever, the volunteers who helped set up and clear away.

Your Social Committee



Photography

Geometric Reflections– Canary Wharf Photo Walk

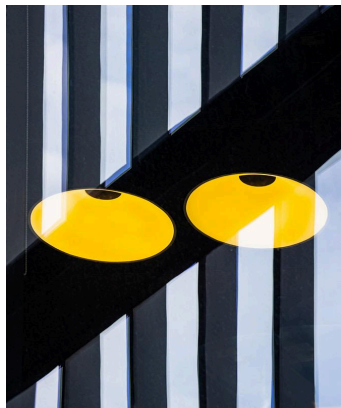
Last month our Photography Group met to explore Canary Wharf's sleek lines and mirrored surfaces under the theme of *Geometric Reflections*.

They started by photographing the glass towers, capturing the striking contrast between their sharp architectural angles and the rippling water. Each step revealed new perspectives of geometric walkways and high-rise façades, reflecting perfectly in each other's symmetry. The breezy conditions made water reflections tricky so they switched to the glass-clad buildings and polished surfaces. This allowed them to highlight repeated patterns and abstract shapes.

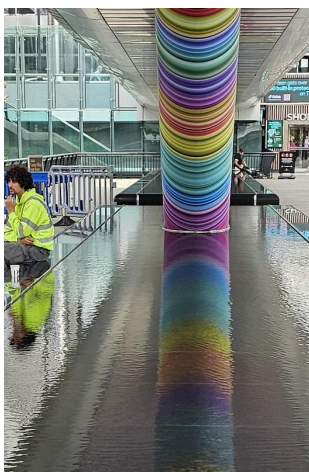
The walk ended at Canary Wharf Market Halls where they enjoyed a relaxed lunch. The lively atmosphere, with its diverse food and vibrant energy, provided a perfect contrast to the quiet focus of their photography.

With thanks to David Faldo for leading the group last month while I was on holiday.

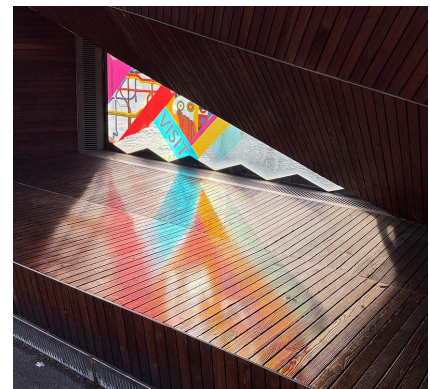
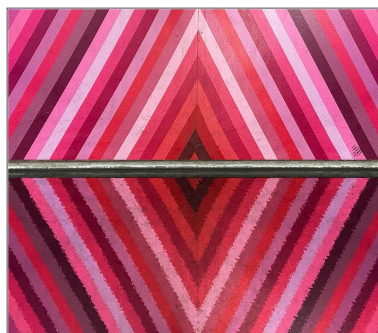
Right:
2 Yellow Eyes
Ornella



Below:
Reflecting Thoughts
Marilyn



Below
Colourful Reflections
David Faldo



Above:
Millbank Pier
Barry

Peter Knight



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



POETRY APPRECIATION GROUP

This meeting we looked at the works of Derek Mahon (1941 - 2020) in particular *The North Wind*. Derek Mahon was widely regarded as one of the most talented and innovative Irish poets of the late 20th century, often working in received forms. Mahon's lucid, sculpted lines incorporated both classical allusion and contemporary life. Critics have compared his poetry to that of such masters as W H Auden, Samuel Becket and classical scholar Louis MacNiece. As a voluntary exile from his native Belfast, Mahon explored themes of isolation, loneliness and alienation in his poetry. After studying French, English and Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, Mahon spent a year at the Sorbonne. He subsequently lived and worked in cities across the USA and Canada before moving to London to become a journalist.

During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, his work was widely praised for the intensity and grimness of its gaze. He continually seemed to question the role of art in a corrupt and modern world. However, some critics faulted his work for its tightly controlled poetry, suggesting that his adherence to a highly structured verse-form diminished the power of his words. Mahon published 4 collections of poetry in just 5 years in the 2000s. He was a Member of The Irish Artists Association and won many awards. He died aged 78 at home, in Kinsale, County Cork in 2020.

Our second choice was Stevie Smith (1903 - 1971) and in particular *The Forlorn Sea*, but she is probably best known for her poem *Not Waving But Drowning*.

Smith was born in Hull, however, when she was 3 years old she moved to live in her aunt's house in Palmers Green, along with her mother and sister, where she lived for the rest of her life. Her father was frequently absent, presumed sailing the high seas, sending occasional postcards from distant places. She didn't attend university and her one and only job was as private secretary to both Sir Neville Pearson and Sir George Newnes in a magazine publishing company. She submitted her first volume of poetry to Jonathan Cape, but was asked to write a novel instead. Her first book was published in 1936, followed by a volume of poetry in 1937. Both books were immediately recognised as being the product of unique talent. Smith wrote two more novels in 1938 and 1949 and had a further eight collections of poetry published, her reputation reaching its peak in the 1950s.

Smith appeared to be an interesting personality. With her almost sprite-like appearance and dressing with some care. In repose her features were fine boned and gave her an air of striking beauty. Smith was described by one of the London literary critics, Desmond MacCarthy, 'she has a little nugget of genius'. Since 1977 her work has become familiar to many thousands who might otherwise have missed it, due to the success of Hugh Whitmore's play *Stevie* in which Glenda Jackson starred and spoke the poetry so brilliantly. Her book of poems *Selected Poems - Stevie Smith* was dedicated to Glenda Jackson and Hugh Whitmore.

Our Guest poem was *If I Could Tell You* (1940) by W H Auden.

Michelle Blythe



STEMM

Lyn Haynes - Photographs by Barb Curtis and Steve Braine

Barb Curtis has lived in Namibia since 1980, working as a biological researcher and teacher. In later years she switched from animals to botany, using her photographs to illustrate books on Namibian trees. Barb had spent many hours trying to filter through thousands of photos just to introduce us to her stunningly stark and beautiful home country.

How does one introduce an audience to a country 3.4 times the land mass, but only 4% the population of the UK, in one hour? It is a nation with 14 language groups and a median age of 21.5 years (UK ~ 40). Namibia is not just sand dune deserts, its highest mountain, Brandberg (fire mountain) is 2500m (Ben Nevis is 1345m). The international airport had to be sited 24 miles from the capital, Windhoek (windy corner), on account of the mountainous terrain. There are plains of scrub bush and stony flats; perennial rivers on the northern and southern borders are the life-blood of the parched country. There are many ephemeral rivers, meaning dry riverbeds until the rain happens, then the life cycle of dormant seeds occurs at speed. The entire western border is the Atlantic Ocean, where the cold Benguela Current and its upwelling currents enable the abundant and diverse marine life. Walvis Bay Lagoon is the winter home to millions of wading birds from the northern hemisphere, who join the resident flamingos. Fog from the ocean penetrates the land, enabling plant and animal existence and survival, because of the increased humidity and decreased temperature. Namibia is a paradise to faunal and floral enthusiasts, as well as geologists.

The climate is harsh with maximum average temperatures way above 36°C (98°F), while night temperatures in winter are frequently sub-zero! Heat on the bare earth generates the dust-devil storms, from the E/NE, though afterwards the best weather is experienced: calm, warm and lovely!

The stand-out flora were *Welwitschia mirabilis*, which is a living fossil, Elephant's Foot and stone plants (*Lithops*), which are targets of plant-poaching, as well as the enormous trees in the ephemeral riverbeds.



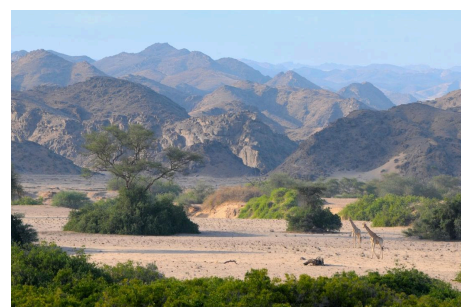
Namibia is a land of extreme contrasts, that's what makes it so fascinating. It has often been compared to Marmite[®]: either you love it, or not! The reaction from the STEMM members to Barb's fascinating and engaging talk would suggest we're converted Namibiophiles.

Welwitschia mirabilis

A phrase from Noel Mostert's *Frontiers* succinctly conceives the plethora and diversity of faunal inhabitants in the enormous open spaces. "The full congregation of the African wild is there, if one scans finely enough into the distance, or among the taller waving stems and grasses and the camouflaging thorn bushes"

Barb: Thank you! What a fantastic learning experience we had. Hopefully some of the STEMM members will consider exploring this very different part of the world.

Use the giraffes as a guide to ascertain the height of the trees in the dry riverbed. The root system is proportional to the height and spread of the aerial parts!





Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



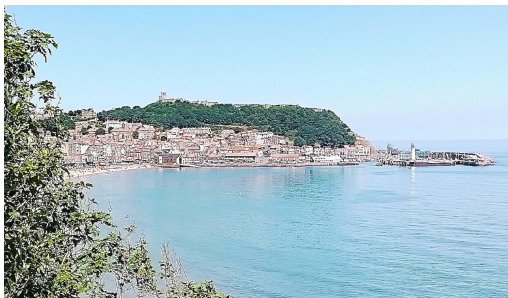
Scarborough Holiday

At the end of June 37 members were lucky to escape the boiling heat of London by being in Scarborough on another of our u3a short holidays. Our weather was excellent, blue skies every day, warm and summery, but never too hot.

We started the holiday with a visit en route to the Yorkshire market town of Beverley. There we had time to explore the magnificent Minster and St Mary's Church, some of the old buildings around the town centre, as well as having lunch, where some of us wondered at the much lower price of food and drink compared to London.



Our base in Scarborough was the Crown Spa Hotel, which was in a lovely position on the Esplanade just above the Beach. We were told that it was the best hotel in Scarborough, but some of us had problems with the rooms, particularly with the water. However the problems were quickly rectified and the hotel lounge was a lovely evening venue.

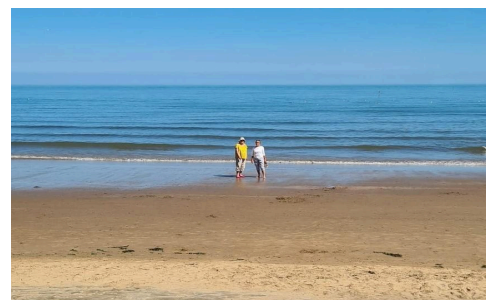


We started the second day with a guided tour of Scarborough in our coach. Our guide was a presenter on the local radio and he provided an excellent introduction to the town for those who had not been there before.

After a couple of hours of free time most of us visited Whitby in time for lunch, spending the afternoon doing our own thing. Some went to the Abbey, some to the Captain Cook museum, some took boat trips and others just

wandered around exploring the town.

The next day started for most people with a coach drive around the moors, stopping at Goathland (Aidensfield from Heartbeat) for morning tea. The glorious purple heather we expected was mainly absent thanks to terrible fires that engulfed the area last summer, but the great views were still enjoyable. On our way back to Scarborough we stopped at Robin Hood's Bay where about half of our number braved the steep descent to the Smugglers Beach and the remainder enjoyed the gorgeous sea views from the benches at the top of the cliff. We were back in Scarborough before lunch, with everyone then doing their own thing. For Pamela and Gill this included a paddle on the lovely sandy beach! See photo.



On our last full day quite a few people chose to do their own thing while the rest of us visited Hull for the day, many to be surprised at how attractive the town is now.

Our planned visit to Grantham on the way home was abandoned and replaced by a lunch stop because of the 36 degrees heat, so far too hot to wander around.



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Although it was only 5 days we fitted a lot in and it felt like a real holiday. From the feedback I have received it seems most people had a good time, despite the initial problems at the hotel.

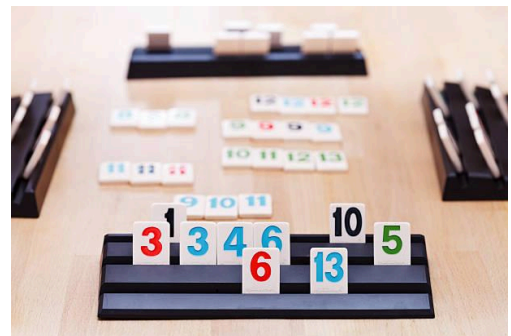


Pamela Freer

RUMMIKUB 4

Our new Rummikub 4 group got off to a flying start at the Golden Crane pub last month. Everyone said how much they enjoyed the afternoon.

Many had not played the game before, but being allocated a table with a 'seasoned' player, they quickly learned the basics. Thank you to all the 'teachers' who took time to help them.



We all purchased a tea/coffee/drink, to ensure our welcome in the reserved area.

We look forward to the next session, to be held on: 14th July.

Brenda Finnerty



Upminster u3a Newsletter

"Learn, Laugh, Live"

July 2026



Membership

Our current paid-up membership is now back up to 681, thanks to two new members joining and eight late renewals. We warmly welcome our new members, Kevin Longhurst and Linda Hammond to Uu3a.

Pamela Freer

Quiz Answers

1. 2 July, specifically at midday.
2. Louise Joy Brown.
3. Twitter.
4. Althea Gibson.
5. Louis Bleriot, who also designed the first practical headlight for cars.
6. Sir Thomas More.
7. Bread, which was rationed between July 1946 and July 1948 due to poor harvests, dock strikes, and the necessity to share supplies with war-torn Europe.
8. 2013.
9. A plot to kill Hitler.
10. Bikini.

Chris Slade