

We meet at

The New Windmill Hall, Upminster, RM14 2QH
on the third Tuesday of each month

Our next meeting will be

1:30pm, Tuesday 21st July

Doors open at 12.30pm, refreshments available
at the interval (bring your own mug)

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Useful Links

London Region Events

<https://lru3a.u3asite.uk/events/>

Upminster u3a website

<https://upminster.u3asite.uk/>

Upminster u3a Committee Contact

<https://upminster.u3asite.uk/contact/>

For future news, articles, and feedback, please email

maupminstereditors@gmail.com

Social Event

Songs from the Musicals

Tuesday 29th September

See page 5 for details

View from the Chair

Welcome to our newsletter for August. We find ourselves in limbo as Courtney is no longer chair and the AGM did not take place. We cannot continue without a chair, so I have taken the post until a new AGM can be completed. This is now due on 18th August 2026.

I am very happy and honoured that my fellow committee members have put their trust in me and for my part I promise to fulfill the role to the best of my ability.

I thank Courtney for her work as chair and wish her well in the future.

If any of you, our members, have any ideas to improve the u3a don't hesitate to contact me on mhbegg60@gmail.com. I hope you all enjoy a very good rest of the summer, whether at home or away and I look forward to working with you in the future to improve our u3a.

Malcolm Henderson-Begg

Editorial

Welcome back to those of you who have stuck with us. This month Mary has worked very hard on the new layout for the newsletter. After consulting the official u3a guidelines, and taking into account their helpful hints, a new colour palette has been chosen, along with a new layout for the longer articles, one which we hope you will find easier to read.

The more eagle eyed of you will have noticed that there is no quiz this month. However, Mary will be trying out a multiple choice quiz format in the next edition of the newsletter. I am also hoping to add some nostalgic photos, to try to invoke memories of yesteryear, in fact, try this one out for size:-

Which commodity is being advertised here?

Answer in the September newsletter.



Alison

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

Mary & Alison

Future Guest Speakers at Monthly Meeting, 2026

18 th August	1. AGM 2. Wendy Piccanini, Community Partnerships Manager of the <i>Leprosy Mission</i>. The Mission is Christian-based and works in various countries and different cultures to overcome the continuing life problems that this condition still creates for people and their families. A fee, as a donation, will be given by us as usual and it has been agreed that Wendy may receive personal donations from members if they so wish. NO expectation or compulsion, but she will have a card reader with her should anyone wish to contribute.
15 th 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.
20th October	1. Howard Slater, Lecturer for over 30 years, describes the life of <i>Glen Miller</i> – Swing into the story of the big band leader whose mysterious disappearance adds intrigue to his musical legend. 2. TBC

Come Join Us

NEW GROUP – Five Hundred

This is a card game for 4 people. I can accommodate up to 12 people.

I learnt to play this game while living in New Zealand and Australia, and would love to get playing again. It is a game second only to bridge, but a lot easier and simpler to learn and play.

Initially if anyone is interested they can contact me on 07504 957240. I will then set a date and time that suits the majority. The only two days that I am unable to do are Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



Marilyn Tapply

Coffee Morning

Look forward to seeing you in Roomes refurbished Cafe for Coffee and a Chat on Tues Aug 11th / Tuesday Aug 25th

Angela ☕ 🍌

Bananagrams

Bananagrams returns on **Friday 28th August, 2pm–4pm**, in the cosy back room of **The Windmill Pub** — the only place where grown adults can shout “PEEL!” without raising eyebrows.



Join us a little earlier if you fancy sampling the pub’s excellent lunch menu. Once tiles hit the table, it’s all friendly chaos, creative vocabulary, and occasional cries of “Is that even English?”

It’s completely **free to play**, with **free parking** too. We simply ask everyone to buy a drink so we can continue enjoying the pub’s hospitality. If you have your own Bananagrams set, do bring it along.

Beginners are very welcome. The rules are easy and we fully support the use of dictionaries, phones, and any other device that helps.

Come for the fun, stay for the company — we’d love to share another cheerful afternoon with you.

Pauline 07962213793

Dog walking

Unfortunately it has been too hot to walk dogs during the day. We will resume when the weather cools down.

We are looking forward to welcoming new members, and please remember that you don’t need a dog to join, you just need to be happy in their company whilst you enjoy the walk, the chat and of course, the coffee or tea at the end of our stroll.

Please contact Chris if you are interested:

chrislade1@sky.com or 07906-433559

Information

Social Event – Songs From The Musicals – Tuesday 29 September

Overheard in Roomes cafeteria:

Lady 1 "I can't believe that she's got it right, but a friend of mine just told me that tickets for the next Upminster u3a social event will be £5.00".

Lady 2 "What, an evening's entertainment with wine and juice provided for £5.00? Even though we have to take our own nibbles, she must have got that wrong".

Lady 1 "Well, I'm not taking a chance, I'm going to be at the Windmill Hall on 18th August to make sure I get my ticket, and one for my friend".

Yes, everyone, tickets for our next social event, costing **£5.00**, will be on sale from 12.30p.m. at the August monthly meeting – **18 August**. As always, one ticket per person plus one for a Uu3a member who is unable to get to the monthly meeting.

Your Social Committee

Places Available on two future Visits

RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre – We have two places available on our guided tour on Friday 02 October, The cost is £5.00 per person.

Private Treasures of St Paul's Cathedral – We also have two places available on a special guided tour of parts of St Paul's not usually open to the public. This is on Friday 30 October and costs £37.60.

If you are interested in either of these tours contact Pamela Freer (pamelafreer@samson-freer.co.uk) for further information.

AI Guide

Do you know the differences between Google, Bing, Siri, Alexa, Copilot, Gemini, ChatGPT and MetaAI? If you don't, you need my Guide to AI.

To receive a copy, send an email to natalie@kehr.co.uk.

The subject should be: Please send me the AI guide. That is the text I will search for, so please use those exact words.

In the email, tell me your name, your Upminster U3A number. I will reply with the latest version of the Word document attached.

Natalie

Membership

Our current paid-up membership rose by another 7 in July. There were 6 new members and a former member returned. We are pleased to welcome the following new members to our u3a: Margaret Gryko, Deirdre Wright, Janet Betson, Yvonne Luggar, Paula Bishop and Carol Tomlinson.

Nottingham University Study

We will be testing two new listening and thinking games in a programme called PLUS (Practice Listening and Understanding Speech). These training games were developed for people with hearing loss and are designed to support everyday listening, including listening in noisy situations. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Nottingham Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

If anyone feels that this may be of interest, the university would be very grateful if you could email directly (link below) for a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and study poster.

With best wishes,

Natalie Lerigo-Smith
Lead Investigator

Helen Henshaw
Chief Investigator

T: +44 (0)115 8232606 E: helen.henshaw@nottingham.ac.uk

W: <https://nottinghambrc.nihr.ac.uk/>

Lost Scarf

Did anyone leave a black and white silk scarf on the coach to Lavender Fields? If so please contact me.

Jill Coombes

J.coombes@sky.com

Featured Articles

Coach outing to Castle Farm Lavender Fields and Fort Amherst 30TH June

On a cloudy, cool day, 51 members finally set off on our coach trip at 9:45, despite being due at our destination, at 10:30am. Thanks to the M25 and our coach driver Rob, we still managed to arrive at Castle Farm on time, at 10:29am. The tour manager, Phil, gave us brief instructions about the morning ahead.

After being divided into 2 groups, we walked across the fields to an undercover seating area, close to the lavender fields, where we were told how the farm started, and also about the day to day running of the farm now. By this time unfortunately, it was raining and had turned quite cold. Of all the days when it wouldn't have mattered if it rained, this was not one of them! We were taken to the distillery and then to a barn where we had a bottle of apple juice, along with a lavender biscuit. Next we were taken to the shop, plant stall and coffee cart.



Finally the sun decided to shine and some of us made it to the lavender fields, where we could have a gentle walk, which unfortunately, was cut short as we ran out of



time; we needed to be at Fort Amherst by 1:30pm.

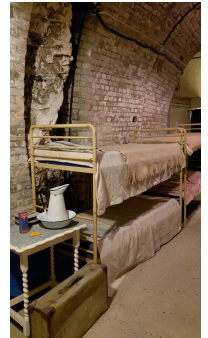
Again roads behaved themselves, and the Fort kindly put the tunnel tours back by 20 minutes.

23 of our intrepid members took the tunnel tour, I was not one of them, however I was given to understand that the tour guides were excellent. The tunnels were used from the Napoleonic wars, right through to WWII. Some found it quite dark, and the tunnel floor was uneven, plus there were 5 flights of stairs to climb at the end of the tour, but the general opinion was that it was an excellent tour, thoroughly enjoyed by all. Those of us who didn't take it, had a leisurely afternoon in the cafe and walking the grounds.

We left the Fort at 5pm, and again the M25 behaved. We arrived back at Upminster station just after 6pm, in brilliant sunshine.

Jill Coombes

Photographs
courtesy of
Russ Barnett
and **Sue Hartley**.



Creative Writing

Please find below a story written by myself for our July group meeting. The title that we worked with was 'The Photograph', and the word count was to be approximately 1000.

The Photograph

It all started with the photograph. It was a dreary, wet day and I was cheering myself up by looking back at some old photograph albums when I came across an old school photo that made me stop and think. Good grief, did we really wear those things? It was a picture of five teenagers dressed in platform shoes, flared trousers and flowery blouses. How I adored those silver lurex trousers. It was a sad day when they wouldn't fit me anymore! We used to call ourselves the 'Swans' after the single, 'Ride a White Swan', recorded by my favourite pop star, Marc Bolan. Four of us had kept in touch after school, still meeting up at least once a year. We of course use the WhatsApp group named, 'Swans united', continuing the school years tradition. Sally, Janice, Babs and myself have all experienced joys and anguish over the years, we could write a book about our experiences, if anybody had the inclination or time to write one. Still as I sat there reminiscing, I wondered what happened to our fifth member, Sandra?

Not being on any other social media app myself, I typed a message on the Swans United WhatsApp group, asking the others if they knew anything about Sandra.

I knew it wouldn't be long before expert searchers Sally and Babs replied, but disappointingly, they'd failed to find any trace of Sandra. Of course, it was highly

likely that she'd married and changed her surname.

We would celebrate our 60th birthdays next year and the four of us had decided to go away together for a long weekend. We agreed that if we could reconnect with Sandra, and of course if we all got on well, we could ask her if she'd like to join us.

In our youth we 'Swans', prided ourselves on being good amateur sleuths, so jokingly, we all agreed to commence 'Operation Sandra Search'.

I sent a copy of the old photograph of the five of us to Babs, who put them on Facebook and Instagram, asking if anyone knew the whereabouts of Sandra, the tall, ginger haired girl on the right hand side of the picture.

Sandra was always taller than the rest of us, with long slim legs and a miniscule waist that we were all incredibly jealous of. She was the one that everyone instantly noticed when we went out together. She often appeared older than us due to her demeanour, more mature clothes and make up. We were sure she'd end up becoming a model or something similar, but she always dismissed that idea, saying that she'd heard bad things about girls being exploited, she was determined that this wouldn't happen to her.

The four of us lost touch with Sandra when she left school at 16 to go to college, while the four of us stayed on into the sixth form. Initially we kept in touch but we met up less and less. Then Sandra left to live abroad and all contact with her was lost. After Babs posted the photograph, we received a few replies, but nothing positive. Then after a few weeks, just as we'd begun to lose hope, there was a reply from somebody claiming to be Sandra, she identified herself as Sandra Hunt. It was difficult to tell from her profile picture, so Babs replied,

"We four would love it if we could meet up once again with our 5th member. Do you remember what we called ourselves?"

If this was our Sandra she'd be sure to know the answer and sure enough there was an immediate reply,

"Of course I do. How are my fellow Swans? Are you still living in Havering? I'm living back at mum's, so would love to see the gang again."

Arrangements were made, and the following Friday evening, we four sat at a table in full view of the entrance to the Seven Sixpence pub, eagerly scanning every person who entered. When Sandra finally arrived, we instantly recognised her mannerism but were hugely surprised by her look. She'd put on quite a bit of weight, her hair had been left to go a natural grey and she was wearing a modest knee length floral skirt and flat pumps.

After the initial awkward conversation and the downing of three large glasses of red wine, the Sandra that we all remembered gradually emerged.

She had indeed become a successful high fashion model, but she admitted that she'd learned the hard way that potential agents couldn't be trusted. She'd been in an abusive marriage with a high flyer business man, who promised her stardom, but only bullied and belittled her, controlling her every movement. It was when she found herself looking at a bottle of pills, that she decided she wouldn't do this anymore. While he was out, she packed up her belongings and returned to her parent's house, ready to admit that she'd made a huge mistake in ignoring their warnings. She admitted to hating how she looked, lost all self-confidence and had resorted to comfort eating. Our own past seemed quite ordinary in comparison, however, we all agreed that 'ordinary' was definitely underrated.

It was after some shots and a couple of cocktails that I began to formulate a plan.

"How about us helping you get some of your own back on that toe rag husband of yours? You must be entitled to your share of the house and finances. Isn't that right Janice?"

"Absolutely. I work for a divorce law firm, just say the word and we'll start proceedings tomorrow."

When the four of us had set out to find our 5th member, we'd thought we might celebrate our forthcoming special birthdays by going away together, maybe to Warners, but as we sat in first class, sipping our glass of champagne on our flight to Barbados, we thanked Sandra for sharing a tiny amount of her divorce settlement with us, declaring that we'd definitely not lose contact with each other ever again.

Jill Hilton

From Boot Sale to Vinted

I thought I'd take the opportunity to share my new found obsession with you all, especially as I think that it's one that everyone can enjoy, if that is, you dislike the throwaway world that we live in nowadays and you don't mind making the odd penny along the way? ☺

Ever since my children were young, as indeed was I, on several Sundays during the summer months, my husband and I would rise at the crack of dawn, drive with a car crammed full of our 'no longer wanted' goods, arriving at Dunton boot sale ready to set out our stall. I used to enjoy bartering with the hordes of people, trying to get a good price for clothes that my babies had only worn three times. I remember selling tiny socks at 10p a pair, always a big hit!



Things have changed over the years though, not only are the clothes much larger, but the books and toys have also moved on, 'The Hungry Caterpillar' replaced by 'Murder on the Orient Express' and 'Barbie' substituted with 'PS3' games. Add to this, the fact that I am no longer young, and you will see why I am so enamoured with my new venture, *Vinted*!!

It really is a brave new world. You don't wake at 4:30 after packing the car the evening before. You do not pray for good weather, but not too good, you don't want to get burnt. You definitely don't have the inconvenience of returning with unsold goods. On the down side, you don't get the

enjoyment of counting out the 20p/50p coins that have replaced your goods.

Don't despair however, one man's junk is still another man's treasure, and on this



occasion, we can thank the internet Gods for the wonderful birth of *Vinted*.

I cannot express the fun factor, even the thrill, of having someone pay the princely sum of £18 for the dress that was worn once to a work do about 10 years ago. I would have been lucky to get £5 at the boot sale. Not only am I saving the planet one item of clothing at a time, simply by recycling; and not only do I get to smirk at the look of shock upon the faces of my children when they see that I have sold 'that old rubbish', oh no, I also get the satisfaction of posing my clothes in the most favourable light, with the most appealing back drops, and then I get to watch my coffers fill, ready to restock my increasingly empty wardrobe. An absolute win, win scenario.

Come join me, you won't regret it.

Ann Webb

Photography

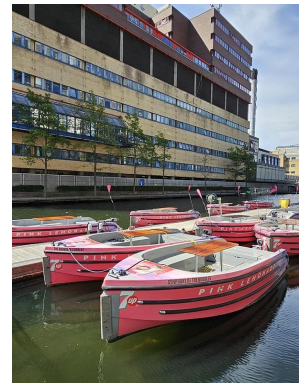
Paddington Basin & Little Venice

Last month, our photography group enjoyed a scenic walk along Paddington Basin to Little Venice, capturing the charm of this hidden gem in the heart of London. Under very warm summer skies, we gathered at the modern waterside of Paddington Basin, where contemporary architecture provided striking reflections on the canal's calm surface. Undeterred by an officious security guard, who forbade photography with 'proper' cameras around the Basin, but, for some reason, allowed phone cameras, we strolled westward along the cafe-lined canal. The urban landscape gradually transformed into the leafy tranquillity of Little Venice.



Little Venice Bridge by *Mikec*

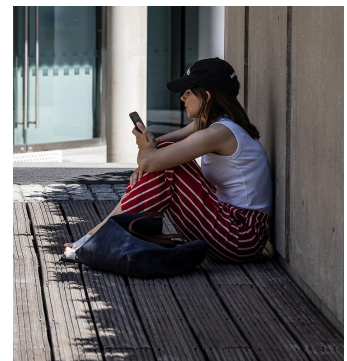
Colourful narrowboats lined the water, their decks bursting with flowers, creating perfect photographic subjects. Many members experimented with framing shots through bridges, capturing the gentle ripples.



Flotilla in Pink by *Marilyn*

From Little Venice a few of us walked on along the Grand Union Canal, taking in the peaceful houseboats that the many canal dwellers had made their home.

Finally, we regrouped for lunch at the Mad Bishop and Bear, where we enjoyed a good choice of food and even better beers!



Shading From The Sun by *Ornella*

Peter Knight

Visits to Places of Interest

Barts Hospital North Wing

Early in July, 15 of us had a private tour of the brilliantly refurbished North Wing of Barts Hospital. The tour started outside, our excellent guide giving us a summary of the history of the hospital from its foundation in 1123, to its present function as an NHS hospital still serving the people of London.

The North Wing was built in 1732 to house the financial and management functions of the hospital. It was built specifically to entertain the wealthy people from whom the hospital aimed to attract donations. These were essential to running the hospital in the days before the NHS. It was thus lavishly decorated with rich woodwork and sumptuous ceilings, much as those found in the stately homes of the potential, wealthy donors. A sweeping staircase leads to the magnificent Great Hall, with breathtaking murals by William Hogarth adorning all the walls. Also found in the Great Hall are the names of every donor and the amounts donated since the wing was built, giving a record of philanthropy for all to see. The whole wing is now Grade I listed.

Hogarth's murals are on a much larger scale than anything else he painted in his life, they depict two biblical stories: *The Good Samaritan* and *The Pool of Bethesda*. Within the murals there are representations of people with recognisable physical afflictions that were treated at the hospital, meaning



that they are site specific and therefore different from his other, more famous works. He did the work at no charge.

There is also a small but interesting museum on the ground floor, along with the lovely church of St Bartholomew the Lesser, which we were also able to visit.

The North Wing is open on Mondays and Tuesdays for anyone to visit at no charge, though donations are expected. There is a small charge for an audio guide.

Pamela Freer

STEMM

STEMM Members were delighted that members Beryl Patient and Courtney Moita de Deus shared their experiences as they sailed from Buenos Aires to Grahamland, just inside the Antarctic Circle. The first port of call was Ushuaia (55°S), where the southern beech trees thrive as the southernmost trees on earth. They then sailed through the Drake passage between Cape Horn and Antarctica to Grahamland (65°), the northern peninsula of the southern continent. From there, their ship visited King George Island in the South Shetlands, and on to the Falklands, before turning back to Patagonia in Argentina.

Their session was in stark contrast to the May online STEMM journey into Namibia with its rich diversity of faunal and floral species, surviving in a wide range of diurnal temperatures. In the Antarctic the summer temperatures were cool, even by UK standards. The dominant fauna encountered were penguins: King, Gentoo and Magellanic, with chinstrap penguins commonly seen, along with whales. Bird flu is currently a huge biosecurity concern.



Figure 1: Gentoo penguins strutting their stuff at Bluff Cove, Falkland Islands.



Some penguin species have creches (Figure 2 above), while Magellanic nest in rocky burrows.

Recent DNA research has revealed that there are three species of Gentoo penguins bringing the total to twenty one penguin species. Their talk included an interesting and stimulating balance of geopolitics, social history, natural history and geography, plus regaling us with the fun they had. There was a medical emergency on board their ship which resulted in some minor changes to their itinerary!

They saw two polar yachts and an expedition ship, which are permitted to land passengers and scientists on Antarctica. NanuQ, moored in Port Stanley at the same time as Beryl & Courtney, has solar panel covered masts resulting in reduced need to carry large stores of fuel.

Beryl can now claim to be a member of the Seven-Continent Traveller Club. Even though they could not set foot on Graham Land, their close proximity to the Antarctic landmass counts! Congratulations Beryl!

Whilst cruising at 1 knot in Paradise Bay the penguins were flashing past in the water, or waddling on the ice floes, while whales were seen to be surfacing in the background.



Figure 3: a recently hatched king penguin chick

As there is no land mass south of 40°S the winds huff and puff uninterrupted, whipping up gigantic waves, pushing ice floes and icebergs. Sailing at night and in poor visibility, can be dangerous, as the icebergs are invisible. Yet, wherever Courtney and Beryl went, the waters were calm!



This photo is just stunning! It identifies for me the incredible starkness and raw beauty of the southern oceans and a typical Antarctic horizon.

Thank you, Courtney and Beryl, for taking the time to share this incredible experience with us. It was fantastic.

All photos were taken by *Courtney Moita de Deus*

Lyn Haynes

The June STEMM session was an interesting departure from the normal formula.

Following Natalie's imaginative suggestion, we used the *BBC Sounds CrowdScience* podcasts as an information source. Each member listened to his or her chosen podcast, summarised the content and then recounted the main points to the other members.

We covered some varied and fascinating topics, listed below.

Spider Silk and Super Fly Senses

Why do insects prefer to bite certain people?

How bird-like were the dinosaurs?

How old are the elements?

Space Mining

Can your lifestyle be passed on to future generations?

Can singing improve your health?

Is being fat a choice?

All topics were interesting and provoked discussion.

Thank you to Natalie and all participants. It was a great success and we should do it again!

There are so many other quirky and intriguing topics on the site.

Poetry Appreciation

We met for our last meeting of the summer and we looked at the works of our current Poet Laureate Simon Armitage and Jenny Joseph.

Simon Armitage (May 1963 –) was born in West Yorkshire and is the recipient of numerous prizes and awards. He has published 12 collections of poetry, writes extensively for TV and radio, in addition to this he is the author of two novels and the non-fiction best sellers 'All Points North' (1998), 'Walking Home' (2012) and 'Walking Away' (2015). He was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford University in 2017, and in 2018 was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. This post is filled by election and requires the holder to give public lectures each term. He succeeded Geoffrey Hill and became Oxford's 45th Professor of Poetry at age 52. Armitage's talent for observational prose has so far seemed a second job to his poems. We read 'Beyond Huddersfield' which was published in his eighth full collection; it merges prose with poems in a way that is genuinely new in British poetry.

Jenny Joseph (May 1932 – Jan 2018) is probably best known for her poem 'Warning' (when I am an old woman I shall wear purple). She was born in Edgbaston before relocating to Buckinghamshire and was later evacuated to Devon during WWII. She attended Badminton School, Bristol and in 1950 won a scholarship to St Hilda's College, Oxford. She wrote her best known poem, 'Warning' in 1961,

when she was 28 years old. It was first published in the BBC's 'The Listener' in 1962. Her first poems were published when she was at University in the early 1950s. She married Tony Coles in 1961, they had 3 children and ran The Greyhound pub in West London. In her 50s, Joseph moved to the Cotswolds where she continued writing poetry as well as enjoying her garden and allotment. In her later years she moved to Swansea to be nearer to some of her family. Between 1960 and 1995 she received several awards and in 1999 was made a Fellow of The Royal Society of Literature. Interestingly, the poem 'Warning' became well known in America after an executive assistant and Press Secretary to the First Lady, Ladybird Johnson, wrote an article for The Reader's Digest in the 1980s. The article was about enjoying life, and closed with the poem. Apparently it was later adopted by the greeting card industry. It also inspired the UK based female group, The Red Hat Society.

Our Guest poem was 'We Met at the End of the Party' by Philip Larkin.

Michelle Blythe