

NOTE OF 7TH MEETING OF THE RUBY CELEBRATION WORKING GROUP (POST EVENT) HELD AT 3.00PM ON THURSDAY 7TH AUGUST 2025 AT THE CHARIS CENTRE

Present:

Graham Friday (Treasurer)

Sue Parker (Communications Coordinator)

John Williams (General Trustee)

Isabel Baker

Gloria Dallas-Devere

Marion Graham

Jackie McKenzie

Helen Strangeway

Apologies received:

Jan Morris

What went well:

- The venue – the Charis Centre was ideal. The luxury of being able to spread groups' displays over several rooms, rather than the usual crush at the Friary Hall, gave everyone a chance to see the displays properly as they were not all crammed together
 - The date – late July makes more sense than early September as it is at the end of the membership year, rather than the beginning. Although it was schools' summer holidays, this did not seem to impact attendance levels
 - Longer running time than in previous years – five and a half hours rather than an hour and a half made for a more relaxed occasion and avoided the overcrowding which plagued Open Afternoons at the Friary Hall
 - Setting up as much as we could the night before meant that Wednesday morning was busy but not manic. Graham, Jan, Gloria and Sue spent two hours at the Charis Centre late on Tuesday afternoon. More people there and we might have got in each other's way but there were enough of us to give us a head start for Wednesday morning
 - Free refreshments and lunch for those taking part was well received by participants
 - The performances in the hall were well attended and enjoyed by the audiences
 - The displays and the performances were first class, showcasing the best of Crawley u3a
 - All of the special guests stayed longer than we had anticipated, viewing the displays, asking questions about them and staying on for lunch
 - Thanks to the Ruby Celebration, the Charis Centre café had its busiest day since they opened
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- Attendance exceeded expectations, not only u3a but also non-u3a members, some of them as a result of publicity done via word of mouth, Facebook Neighbourhood Groups

and other groups on social media, local publications and leafletting (two sessions in Crawley town centre)

- Most of the groups had expressions of interest from members and non-members alike, with one group receiving 16 expressions of interest. It will be interesting to see how many new members result from the Ruby Celebration
- Graham gave two people from Age UK a tour of our displays. They came away with a better understanding of what the u3a is about, which will hopefully feed into the Age UK talk at our monthly meeting in September

What did not go as well/lessons for the next time

- Due to a misunderstanding, one group had no display boards until spare display boards were found
Note for next time: ensure that we have a few spare display boards, as we did on this occasion, thus averting a potential problem
- A minor point but a few people struggled to put the pins in the display boards
- There were not enough chairs and tables in the Ashurst Hall which resulted in the History of Crawley u3a table being removed from the front entrance and taken into the Hall. Two members of the Working Group replaced it with a spare table from Barnham
Note for next time: Even if people do not ask for a table and chairs, give them both regardless. GLs need to be specific about their requirements
- The expression of interest forms which had been placed on the tables in the Ashurst Hall on Tuesday night were not there on Wednesday morning
Note for next time: double check the tables the following morning and, if necessary, replace any missing forms with spare ones
- The noise in the hall when performances were on. The only Group not to have problems were the Ukulele Group. There was not a lot that we could have done about this. We discussed whether we could have rigged up a curtain but there was nothing to hang it from, not to mention the time and cost involved in doing this
Note for next time: Hire at least one more room and move some of the stands in the hall into that room, for example, Painting and Drawing, Smartphone Photographic and Urban Sketching
- A couple of performers struggled to get up on to the stage
Note for next time: consider placing a step by the stage
- French and Italian did not work well in the corridor
Note for next time: French and Italian to be fitted into one of the indoor activity rooms. Consider whether a group such as Smartphone Photographic or Urban Sketching would work better in the corridor
- Expression of interest forms – the ones Sue prepared should have had an extra column asking whether the person was an existing u3a member. It would have saved the Membership Team time when going through them the next day
- Maps for RUGs of the layout and contents of the rooms – one map was handed to the RUG at the back entrance but the other copy did not make it to the front entrance

Note for next time: make sure that tables at both the front and back entrances have maps

- At least one more laptop was needed as it would have been helpful to run a film featuring sports and other outdoor activities in the outdoor activity room

Note for next time: however, bear in mind the security aspect of leaving a laptop in plain view in one of the rooms

- Difficulty in finding Working Group members. Most of the Working Group were in their assigned rooms. Graham and Sue were floating around and available nearly all of the time
- Better signs for toilets. The Ladies, in particular, is easy to find. French and Italian had added their own signs to the wall in the corridor
- A few people without lanyards had to be turned away from the Kingsfold Room when lunch was being served. There were signs on the door saying that the room was private, no access

Note for next time: station a RUG on the door to make sure only those eligible for a free lunch can enter? Another suggestion was to have the food on the first floor but that would mean a few members, who are unable to access the first floor as there is no lift, would have to rely on others to bring them lunch, not an altogether satisfactory solution

- Did the displays come down too early? The displays started being dismantled at around 3.30pm. There was a report of one couple turning up at about 3.45pm with little left to see

Note for next time: by the time the displays were dismantled, footfall had dwindled to almost nothing. It might be worth considering a slightly shorter running time, with the event finishing at 3.00pm

- Information about the event on the website

Note for next time: increased communication with the Web Editor to make sure that she has all of the information needed for the website

- The timing of the Globe Theatre trip was unfortunate. We received apologies from the three Group Leaders. We lost up to 25 members who went on the trip and some would have helped out on the day

Actions going forward

- The Ruby Celebration can be considered a success but should we do it again on the same scale next year? There is a risk of burnout as a considerable amount of time and effort went in to organising this year's event, plus there may be the difficulty of finding enough volunteers to run a similar event. Would it be better to make it a biennial event instead?
- In the intervening year should we consider a smaller event, with performances in the Ashurst Hall but no displays? When it comes to Group displays, in the interests of fairness it has to be all or nothing

Sue Parker, Ruby Celebration Working Group, 14th August 2025.

Approved by the Trustees at the 27th August 2025 Quarterly Meeting

Advertising for Ruby Celebration held on 30th July 2025

(Annex added 27th November 2025)

- RH Uncovered – Jamie@mantramagazines.co.uk – advertised in What's On
- Streetwise - sales@localstreetwise.co.uk – couldn't see my advert in there
- Crawley Observer letters page – article and photo submitted 20th July, article and photo appeared online on 21st July, letter in 23rd July Observer. Article and photos of the event appeared online on 4th August and a half page spread in the Observer on 13th August
- Crawley North & Crawley South – no longer distribute in Crawley
- Crawley Live – deadline had passed. Not sure whether they do free advertising for a registered charity. If you have to pay, a quarter page is £327! The deadline between closing date and publication is eight weeks
- Crawley Community Action newsletter and website: Sohini.ghosh@crawleycommunityaction.org link to the Ruby Celebration web page appeared in 21st July fortnightly newsletter
- Two leafletting sessions held in the Town Centre on Thursday 24th July (Sue Parker & Jim McGough) and Saturday 26th July (Sue Parker & Christine Willows). By Saturday 26th July it was apparent that the Facebook Neighbourhood Group advertisements had paid off as several people mentioned them plus one person mentioned RH Uncovered
- 350 copies of the A5 flyer and 150 copies of the A4 flyer ordered. 50 copies of the A4 flyer would have been sufficient and 250-300 copies of the A5 flyer (300 if we had been able to do a third leafletting session)
- Crawley Library – handed in updated leaflet and A5 flyers
- Crawley Museum – put up A4 flyer
- St Paul's – put up A4 flyer
- Broadfield Community Centre – leaflets and flyers left there
- Bewbush Community Centre – leaflets and flyers left there

Facebook

- Spotted Crawley (Facebook)
- spotted crawley (Facebook)
- What's on in Crawley Today (posted voluntarily by Maureen Dawkins)
- Crawley Community Group (posted voluntarily by Maureen Dawkins)
- *Crawley Talks (Facebook) – two attempts to post which were not approved*

- Facebook Neighbourhood Groups:
 - Broadfield & Bewbush Residents (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Forge Wood Residents Group (no rules) (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Furnace Green (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Gossops Green Residents (posted by Graham Friday)
 - Ifield, Ifield Green & Ifield West Community (posted by Wendy Townend)
 - *Kilnwood Vale Residents – applied to join, nothing heard*
 - Langley Green Residents Group (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Maidenbower Residents Uncensored (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Pound Hill Residents (posted by Margaret Lloyd)
 - Southgate Residents Group (posted voluntarily by Maureen Dawkins)
 - Three Bridges Neighbours (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Three Bridges Residents (posted by Sue Parker)
 - Three Bridges/Crawley/Horley & East Grinstead Residents (Sue)
 - *Tilgate Residents (Sue) – tried to post twice but posts not approved*
 - West Green Neighbourhood (posted voluntarily by Maureen Dawkins)
 - West Green Residents (posted voluntarily by Maureen Dawkins)

- Other u3as:
 - East Grinstead (contacted via their website) – received reply asking if this is a u3a event, which I confirmed to them and then asked for details of the event, which I sent to them
 - Haywards Heath (contacted via their website) – replied asking for more details but then looked at our website and decided it was mainly aimed at Crawley u3a members. I replied saying not at all, it's an event for everyone but no reply and it was not worth continuing the correspondence
 - Horley (contacted via their website and Messenger)
 - Horsham (messed Shiel Campbell and Mike Harrod) plus placed the advert on their Facebook page, having sought their permission first
 - Reigate & Redhill (contacted via their website) – too late for their July newsletter but offered to put in a short piece and photo in the August edition, space permitting – not followed up due to lack of time