

Crawley u3a

Monthly Newsletter: March 2026



Where was I when I took this photo? (Answer on page 6)

Monthly meetings

Dates for your diaries below. All meetings are held at the Friary Hall, Haslett Avenue and, with the exception of the Coffee Morning, start at 2.30pm:

- **Friday 13th March 2026** – Steve Webster, *A day in the life of a ranger* (for more information please see page 8)
- **Wednesday 25th March 2026** – Coffee Morning, 10.30am-12.00 (for more information please see page 8)
- **Friday 10th April 2026** – Peter Blood, retired barrister
- **Friday 8th May 2026** – Tony Harris, Actor, as Maggie Thatcher
- **Friday 12th June 2026** – Andy Thomas, *Crop Circle Mystery*
- **Friday 10th July 2026** – John Griffiths-Colby, *Doods Rd. Great Pigeon Loft*
- **Friday 11th September 2026** – Ian Worley, *Racing through the southern ocean*
- **Friday 9th October 2026** – Peter Griffiths, *45 Years in Aviation with a fear of heights – the second part of his flying experiences*

Crawley u3a Seasonal Outing
Windsor and Windsor Castle
Monday 18th May 2026

W&H Coach departs Crawley Bus Station stand E/F at 9am
arriving Windsor Coach Park approx 10.30am
departs Windsor Coach Park 4pm
arriving Crawley approx 5.30pm

The cost of **£46** includes coach travel, driver's tip and self-guided tour of Windsor Castle. Please make your cheques payable to Crawley u3a and write 'Windsor 18.05.26' plus your 'membership number' on the back of the cheque and post with the booking form details to Liz Tennant, 1 Woodcot, High Street, Partridge Green RH13 8HX Tel. 01403 711468

If you can't print the booking form then write the details on a piece of paper and send with the cheque. Or bring your cheque book or cash to the meeting at the Friary on Friday 13th March 2026.

Confirmations will be sent by email or by phone.

Closing date for bookings is 10th April 2026.

When we arrive at the coach park by the river, there are toilets and cafes, then it's a 10-15 minute walk uphill to the castle. Or there is a lift which takes you to the Windsor Royal shopping centre and out to the High Street and towards the Castle. Tickets to the Castle will be given out on the coach and they allow entry between 11.00 and 11.30am. The ticket price includes a self-guided audio tour so everyone can take the tour at their own pace. The suggested tour time is 2-3 hours so that should give you time to spend in Windsor town too.

You can find the booking form on page 3.

Booking Form
Windsor & Windsor Castle
Monday 18th May 2026

Name and membership number:

Email address:

Landline number or
Mobile phone number:

Emergency contact name:
and phone number:

u3a Friends Extra trade only travel prices

u3a Friends Extra has partnered with [utc.travel](#), a members only travel club that unlocks trade only prices on hotels, flights and holidays. To find out more, follow this link: [u3a Friends Extra](#).

Message from the Trustees Team

We appreciate the time pressures on people's lives nowadays, but we are a members' organisation run by the members for the members, and we do not have the financial resources to employ third parties to provide services for us.

Constant messages have been circulated over the last year or more, seeking more volunteers to help. We are now starting to get to a point where the lack of volunteers will mean that the membership will begin to see the loss of activities and events which will have to cease to be provided. In other organisations this has shown to be the beginning of a spiral that leads to the closure of that organisation. This is something that we are sure all members would prefer not to happen.

One of the key philosophies of the u3a movement is sharing. Hence the more people that are willing to help run the organisation and its activities, the more the work can be shared around, the less the time commitment becomes. Also, volunteering has been evidenced as having a positive benefit to people's mental and physical wellbeing, through meeting other people and sharing common tasks. As Trustees we want to make this experience fun and enjoyable, something shared, and not a chore.

There are a few different ways you can help.

- **Become one of the Trustee Team**

The role of the Trustees is to look after the formal, outward looking tasks that all Voluntary Organisations need to undertake, which includes:

- ensuring that we are compliant with all relevant legislation
- ensuring effective financial stewardship of the money collected from members and that it is spent in a wise manner
- building the organisation's reputation and status within the wider Crawley community of voluntary organisations and nationally within the u3a movement

The role is not onerous or complicated, you do not need any professional background, but you will need enthusiasm and a good sense of humour. Professional support is provided by the Third Age Trust. *(Continued on page 5)*

The Trustees meet formally 4 times a year, and informally over a tea or coffee a further 4 to 5 times a year, so less than once a month. The time commitment is about 2 to 3 hours per meeting.

Our constitution allows us to have up to 12 Trustees; we currently have the minimum requirement of 5. However, we have a casual vacancy coming up which will take us below the minimum to keep the organisation running, so further volunteers are urgently required.

Whilst the Trustees are looking after the formal outward looking activities that provide the umbrella within which the organisation can safely function, activities that take place within our u3a are down to the Members.

The members organise and deliver the activities that take place, with all activities taking place in groups or teams to help share and spread any workload.

We have some key gaps within the current teams, which if not filled will mean that some activities will have to cease to be provided.

- **Events team**

This team plans and delivers the annual programme of events that take place, consisting of the Monthly meetings, Coffee Mornings, Seasonal Outings, and the Christmas Party. As some members of the current team are standing down, having done their stint, we need new volunteers to step forward to continue to provide these social activities.

- **Groups team**

General activities are run through the Group Leaders and activity groups. Each Group independently organise themselves. This central team helps and supports those Leaders with administrative issues, sorting out and booking venues, general guidance, and advice, plus helping with the development of the groups to make them flourish and sustainable.

- **Communications & Publicity**

Letting members and the public know what is going on is key to any flourishing organisation. This Team looks after our monthly newsletter, website, Facebook pages as well as creating any publicity material we need. (*Continued on page 6*)

If you are interested in joining any of above four teams and would like more information, then either contact one of the following, or have a chat with them at one of our member meetings.

Tricia Newell (chair@crawleryu3a.org.uk) 07873 315414

John Williams (jovwilliams@yahoo.co.uk) 07770 833771

Graham Friday (treasurer@crawleryu3a.org.uk), 07982 424533

Kim Robinson (kmdrobinson@hotmail.co.uk) 07941 844452

Message from the Chair

Twenty odd years ago, a lovely lady named Mary Smith told me about u3a. It sounded good – but I was occupied by work and thought no more about it.

Roll on a few years to when I had acquired some spare time, and I remembered that conversation with Mary. It prompted me to give it a go. I joined 'Out and About', the Theatre Group and Petanque and began attending the monthly speakers meeting.

I found it offered all that I had hoped for and now find myself the Chair of Crawley u3a!

A chance conversation with a member had led me to discovering new interests and making new friends. As Chair, I want us to spread the word and share the happiness and great camaraderie membership can bring, together with the enjoyment of new pursuits.

The best way I know to do this is by telling the people we meet about u3a and even taking them to taster sessions. Many retired people need to find a new path to friendship and shared interests.

For me, u3a has been a great way to find both.

Tricia Newell

Where was I? Answer to this month's front page photo

I was in Tilgate Park when I took this photo.

**Report on monthly meeting talk on 13th February: Dogs ... and Holidays
by performance poet Andy Smith**



Andy Smith (Photo credit: Jean Austin)

“Are you going to the talk this afternoon? I think I will, but I don’t really like dogs”, so said my friend on Friday morning. Well, she did go, and was one of many who thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon’s entertainment. To call it “a talk” doesn’t really do it justice.

Andy has been before, when he had us all laughing at his stories of living with two prosthetic limbs. This time, although dogs were mentioned, including his own whippet, the focus was more on making the most of what life deals you, as he suggested is how dogs live. He began with a philosophical question: “Are you a human being, or a human doing?” We tend to be driven by performance, instead of relaxing and taking a “holiday”, which could be just a short break for coffee in the middle of a busy day. He read a hilarious poem about a conversation he and his wife had with a German visitor to Café Nero in their home town of Harpenden, to illustrate this.

We laughed at Andy’s poems about barbershop banter, the future world; his wonderful blending of the steel works on the Gower with men doing barbecues and the divorce of two of his best friends (movingly illustrated with a little metal teapot). All too soon he finished his performance, with a hilarious poem on the well-remembered problems of the 2020 Covid lockdown.

(Continued on page 8)

This was a lovely way to end the week; I'm sure I was not the only one going home with a smile on my face. Many thanks Andy.

Jean Austin

Details of monthly meeting talk on 13th March: A day in the life of a ranger

Steve Webster's talk at this month's meeting describes his passage into conservation and explores the many different roles he has had during a 40 year career with local authorities, Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB. Illustrated with many of his own photographs and punctuated with anecdotes and humorous happenings, he explains just how varied being a Countryside Ranger and conservationist can be.

There will be a bookstall in aid of Crawley Hospital League of Friends, as well as a box for used postage stamps in aid of the RNIB. Don't forget to bring a mug!

Coffee Morning: Wednesday 25th March

There will be a coffee morning from 10.30am-12.00 on Wednesday 25th March at the Friary Hall, Haslett Avenue. There will be a bookstall as well as a jigsaw puzzle and DVD swap.

Colloquial Italian Group: vacancies

In addition to our Italian for Beginners Group, we have a Colloquial Italian Group for members who are non-beginners in Italian. The Group meet fortnightly on Thursday mornings from 10.30-12.00 in a private home. There are three vacancies. If you are interested then please contact the Group Leader, **David Devere**, via the link which can be found on the Group's page on our website: [Italian Colloquial - Crawley](#)

u3a free Online Learning Events

To discover more about this month's free Zoom Online Learning Events, follow this link: [u3a - Online learning events](#)

Air Rifles' Group January competition winners

Congratulations to Kay White & Derek Hall. Thanks to [Craig Edwards](#) for photos



Theatre Group's trip to Brighton on 4th February

The Theatre Group enjoyed a sunny trip to Brighton to see *Midsomer Murders: The Killing at Badger's Drift*, which was being performed at the Theatre Royal. Thanks to **Janet Newson** for the photo.



Crawley u3a website

This month I would like to draw your attention to the excellent work done by our Website Editor, **Janet Newson**, to improve the layout of the Wellbeing and Support page. Follow the link below to see what is available:

[Wellbeing & Support outside Crawley u3a - Crawley](#)

Walkers Extra's Saltdean to Brighton walk on 26th February

Walkers Extra enjoyed a bracing five mile walk from Saltdean Lido to Brighton. On reaching Brighton, we headed to the nearest Wetherspoons (where else?) for some well-deserved refreshment.



u3a Festival 26: 1st - 3rd July

In last month's newsletter I promised to bring you more details of u3a Festival 26, which will take place from 1st – 3rd July at the University of York. If you are interested in attending, follow this link which will give you more information about what will be happening as well as a link to buy tickets:

[Buy tickets – u3a Festival 26 – University of York](#)

Smartphone Photographic Group's 2025 winners

Thanks to **Monique Tovey-Mansfield** for sending me the photograph below, taken at Crawley Library, of the winners of the Group's 2025 photographic competitions. Congratulations to **Jane Hambling** (1st place), **Pauline Jewell** (2nd place) and **Michelle Mineau** (3rd place).



Pictured left to right: Michelle Mineau, Jane Hambling, Pauline Jewell

South East u3a Forum Summer School: 7th – 10th September

This year's South East u3a Forum Summer School will take place at the University of Chichester from Monday 7th – Thursday 10th September. The course overview will be available from Thursday 2nd April on this link: [2026 - South East u3a Forum](#). The online booking form will be available from 11.00am on Friday 8th May via the same link. I will post more details, reminders and the link in future newsletters.

Crawley Museum talk on 24th March: Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and his circle

The Crawley Museum talk on Tuesday 24th March will be given by Dr Paul Quinn who will speak about Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the Victorian poet, philanthropist and horse breeder of Crabbet Park, and his associates. Doors will be attended from 1.45pm for a 2.00pm start. Crawley Museum members free (but donations welcome), visitors and non-members £3.00.

Forthwrite Festival: Saturday 14th March

[Forthwrite Festival](#) is a celebration of women writers over 50, encouraging creative writing with, for and by women of all ages. It takes place in Crawley town centre, on Saturday 14th March (10am-5pm), at [Creative Crawley](#), in Unit 79/80 County Mall - and sits within the award winning month long [WORDfest Crawley Festival of Words](#) programme. The collaborative event promises a morning of inspiring workshops, thought-provoking panel discussions and author talks. The event is for readers and writers over 16 years, and for those of interested in creative expression.

Attached is an online link and a copy of the poster to view: <https://forthwrite.uk/forthwrite-festival-crawley-women-writers-over-50-workshop-panel-discussion-reading>

In addition, the organisers would like to offer our members a special 50% discount for tickets using code: FORTHWRITEFRIENDS50 to book online, should you be interested in attending.

Welcome to new members

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members:

Pat Andrews, Alan and Jeannine Burling, Barbara Cove, Maria Driver, Helen Forrest, Jane Fowler, Robert Fripp, Douglas Frost, Susan Stratton, Jane Sturgis, Leslie and Patricia Weaver.

Crawley Poetry Trail 2026

The theme of this year's Crawley Poetry Trail, which runs from 26th February to the end of April, is Peace and Reconciliation. One of our u3a members has written a poem for the trail and other members have provided some of the illustrations. Sadly, for reasons of time and space, I am unable to bring you the full schedule in this month's newsletter but if anyone would like to know where to see the poems and their illustrations, please email me at sueparker5@yahoo.co.uk and I will send you a copy of the schedule.

April newsletter

The April newsletter will be emailed to members on Monday 6th April, and posted or hand delivered to those without email shortly thereafter.

Sue Parker

Newsletter Editor

Crawley u3a

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