

Crawley u3a

Monthly Newsletter: May 2026



Where was I when I took this photo? (Answer on page 14)

Monthly meetings

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

- **Friday 8th May** – Tony Harris, Actor, as Maggie Thatcher (for more information, please see page 3)
- **Friday 12th June** – Andy Thomas, *Crop Circle Mystery*
- **Friday 10th July** – John Griffiths-Colby, *Doods Rd. Great Pigeon Loft*
- **Friday 11th September** – Ian Worley, *Racing through the southern ocean*
- **Friday 9th October** – Peter Griffiths, *45 Years in Aviation with a fear of heights – the second part of his flying experiences*
- **Friday 13th November** – Annual General Meeting

Report on monthly meeting talk on 10th April: A famous murder trial by retired barrister Peter Blood



Peter Blood

If you are anything like me, after the Easter Bank Holiday weekend you had trouble remembering what month it was, let alone what day, so it was good to look at my calendar and see it was April 10th, u3a monthly talk. Even better, the speaker was Peter Blood, whose last talk had been very fascinating and thought-provoking. It seems I was not alone in anticipating another good afternoon, as there were over 100 members in the hall, needing extra chairs before we could begin.

Peter began by warning us that there would be some explicit descriptions of sex and violence. So, just a typical u3a meeting then? He then asked us to imagine we were a jury (all male) in March 1925 at the Lewes Assizes considering the trial of Norman Thorne, and to consider: 1. What would your verdict be? 2. What really happened?

We had been handed a photograph of Norman Thorne, with his then fiancée Elsie Cameron, for whose murder he is to stand trial, together with a photograph of the hut on the poultry farm where the crime apparently took place, with diagrams of the location, in Crowborough. They look such a charming, elegant couple, but the story we were to hear painted a rather different picture.

(Continued on page 3)

The couple were brought to life by Peter's descriptions of their lives, including the important facts that Elsie had some serious mental health issues, and that Norman, struggling to make his poultry farm pay, had met another woman: Bessie Caldecott. He broke off his engagement to Elsie, but she then announced that she was pregnant, which in those days meant marriage of course. Norman, on his father's advice, delayed proposing marriage while waiting to see if the pregnancy was real, at which point Elsie left her home in Willesden to travel to Crowborough. She arrived there, but when her parents asked after her Norman lied, saying he had no knowledge of her whereabouts, although a witness had seen her entering the farm on 5th December 1924. The police later found enough evidence in the hut where he lived to charge Norman with Elsie's murder, but he alleged that he had found her hanging from a beam, already dead, and had disposed of her body by cutting it up and burying it in the farm yard, putting her head in a biscuit tin! Sir Bernard Spilsbury, conducting the post-mortem established that Elsie had not been pregnant. His evidence was to prove crucial in Norman's trial. Was it murder or suicide?

After 28 minutes' deliberation the jury found Norman Thorne guilty of murder, and he was sentenced to hang. An appeal was dismissed, and Norman was executed on 22nd April 1925. However, Peter had asked us what we thought had happened, hadn't he? Well, the room was divided roughly 50/50 on both questions: was he guilty, or was it suicide? My view, for what it's worth, is the one Peter himself suggested, that Elsie, in a fragile mental state, had attempted suicide, Norman had found her, assumed she was dead and had tried to conceal the body for fear of being charged with her murder. Well, that went well, didn't it? Definitely perverting the course of justice, but murder? The jury is still out...100 years later.

Jean Austin

Details of monthly meeting talk on Friday 8th May

Tony Harris, the speaker for our May monthly meeting, needs no introduction. We have seen his Henry VIII and his Winston Churchill. Now prepare yourselves for Tony as Margaret Thatcher! There will be a bookstall and a box for used stamps for the RNIB. Don't forget to bring a mug.

Italian Colloquial Group vacancies

There are several spaces available in our Colloquial Italian Group which meets from 10.00am-12.00pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month in a private home in Pound Hill.

To give you an idea of what to expect if you are interested in joining the group, I have set out below the group's aims which **David Devere**, the Group's Leader, kindly shared with me:

'At our time of life, nobody is trying to attain new language degrees, but we are mainly motivated by the health benefits of exercising the brain. Thus, by learning how to order the proverbial 'pizza in the piazza' with a little role-play, we have a few laughs to help us learn. We touch on current affairs sometimes without the heat of any debate.'

If you would like to know more you can contact David by following this link:

[Italian Colloquial - Crawley](#)

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

This year's Summer School will take place at the University of Chichester. The course overview is now available via this link: [2026 - South East u3a Forum](#). The online booking form will be available from 11.00am on Friday 8th May if you follow the link. For those members who are not online, I have included a poster with details of all the courses, prices, etc., on page 13.

Items for sale in aid of St Catherine's Hospice

Jean Roberts tells me that she and her late husband Ron have raised more than £30,000 over the years in aid of St Catherine's Hospice, a very worthy cause. Jean has a number of wooden items such as lamps and clocks made by Ron as well as sown items such as bags and shopping bags which she would be happy to sell to members in aid of the Hospice. If you are interested then email me via: sueparker5@yahoo.co.uk and I will put you in touch with Jean.

Quiz Group 1 meeting on 7th April

I always look forward to **Gerry Law's** quizzes, not just because they are good fun, but also because I am intrigued to find out what his latest wig will be! April's wig was in honour of the first round on classical music. Who wrote *The Magic Flute*? What number was Dvorak's *New World Symphony*? (Answers on page 14). If you know the answers to these questions then you would have enjoyed the first round. After a teatime picture quiz spent trying to identify photographs of musical instruments, we got to grips with questions on famous Toms, Tommys and Thomases.



New Cryptic Crosswords Group

Do you enjoy solving cryptic crosswords ? Would you like to improve your skills or share them with other members in a small home-based group, led by **Peter Beckley**? If this is something which might interest you, then please contact Peter on peter.beckley@yahoo.co.uk

Out & About 8's trip to Goring-by-Sea on 8th April

Out & About 8 enjoyed a sunshine filled trip to Goring-by-Sea's English Martyrs Catholic Church to view the Sistine Chapel Ceiling before heading to the Sea Lane Café on the beach. To see more photos of their outing, including some of the Ceiling, head over to our Facebook page: [Crawley u3a | Facebook](#).

Alternatively, you can follow this link to find out more:

[Sistine Chapel Ceiling – English Martyrs Catholic Church](#)

Thanks to **Carol Allen** for the report and photo.



Out & About 4's visit to Walmer Castle on 16th April

I was delighted that several of our members posted photos of their visit to Walmer Castle on our Facebook page. Sadly, for reasons of space, I cannot share them with you in the newsletter. However, if you would like to see them all then follow this link: [Crawley u3a | Facebook](#)

Air Shooting Groups' meeting on 8th April

Pictured below are **Rob Denton**, who came first in the first group's knockdown competition, and **Brian Roberts**, who came first in the second group's knockdown competition.

Thanks to **Craig Edwards** for the photos.

If you would like to join one of the Groups, follow these links for more information: [Air Shooting 1 - Crawley](#) [Air Shooting 2 - Crawley](#)



Rob Denton (left) and Brian Roberts (right)

Crawley u3a website

In mentioning our website this month, I would like to focus on the Last Goodbyes page. There you will find the names of those members who have sadly passed away over the past year. To view the page, follow this link:

[Last Goodbyes - Crawley](#)

u3a Festival 26: 1st – 3rd July at the University of York

This has proved so popular with u3a members that tickets have sold out! However, a waiting list has been started so if you are still interested then follow this link to join the list: [Sold out – u3a Festival 26 – University of York](#)

Amblers Extra's Arundel walk on 10th April

Amblers Extra enjoyed a walk around Arundel before heading to the pub for lunch. Thanks to [Janet Newson](#) for the photo.



u3a online learning events

Here is the link to take you to the page where you can find out more about this month's free Zoom Online Learning Events: [u3a - Online learning events](#). As always, there is a wide range of events to choose from so it is hard to pick out just one to share with you. However, my pick this month is *The Call of the Wild: Stories from the Frontiers of Exploration*. This will take place on Tuesday 12th May at 2.00pm and will be given by Alex McNeil, polar explorer and expedition leader. To find out more and to book a ticket, follow this link: [The Call of the Wild: Stories from the Frontiers of Exploration Tickets, Tuesday, May 12 • Starts at 2 PM GMT+1 | Eventbrite](#)

Walkers One's Bluebell walk on 17th April

Walkers One enjoyed beautiful spring weather for their bluebell walk through Worth Forest.

Thanks to [Phil Light](#) for the photo.



History Study Day on The Development of Transport in Mid Sussex in Burgess Hill on 16th July

We have been sent details of the above event which is open to West Sussex u3as. The Study Day, which will be held at St Wilfrid's Hall in Station Road, Burgess Hill, runs from 10.30am-2.30pm and includes talks by Gordon Parry on 'Railway Developments' and Geoffrey Mead on the 'Development of Roads and Highways'. Hot drinks will be available but you will need to bring your own lunch. The cost is £5.00. If you would like more details, including how to book then contact me via sueparker5@yahoo.co.uk and I will pass on the necessary information.

Out & About 7's visit to the Royal Albert Hall on 21st April

23 intrepid members of O&A7 braved the planned tube strikes to visit the Royal Albert Hall. Half the group travelled, as originally planned, via Blackfriars, and walked onto the tube platform straight onto a waiting District Line train. The other half splashed out on travel via Victoria (this is getting more like Race Across the World) with a bus to the Albert Hall. The tube travellers arrived first and were well into elevenses when the second group arrived!

The guided tour was brilliant. We all had portable devices on which she showed us relevant pictures (once her faulty equipment had been fixed courtesy of a helpful suggestion of brute force from an ex IT consultant in the party; she dropped it on the floor and it rebooted successfully!). She ran through the history of the Hall while we stood in what was originally a covered carriage entrance. The Hall was built on land obtained in the 1850s under a 999 year lease at the princely sum of a shilling a year. This rent has never been increased! We then visited various floors and sat in one of the privately owned boxes and peeped into the Royal Box then visited the Royal Retiring Room. Our final stop was at the gallery on the top floor which accommodates the standing patrons. The tour was a full 75 minutes of non-stop facts and information and is thoroughly recommended!

Our return journeys necessitated bus trips to Charing Cross or Victoria. Gosh, buses are slow in the London Traffic!



Thanks for [Jan Morris](#) for the report and photo.

Ukulele Group's visit to St Mary's Church on 22nd April

The Cake and Company Group at St Mary's Church in Southgate were lucky enough to be entertained by our excellent Ukulele Group.

Thanks to [Jan Morris](#) for the photo.



Gardening Groups' visit to Pashley Manor Gardens on 24th April and Out & About 8's visit to Chichester on 28th April

Members of the Gardening Group recently enjoyed a visit to Pashley Manor Gardens and members of Out & About 8 enjoyed a trip to Chichester. Sadly, for reasons of space, I cannot bring you any of the lovely photographs posted by [Monique Tovey-Mansfield](#) but it is still possible for you to enjoy them if you head over to our Facebook page: [Crawley u3a | Facebook](#)

Walkers Extra's Warninglid walk on 23rd April

For the second month in a row, Walkers Extra enjoyed a sunshine-filled walk of 4.5 miles, starting and finishing in Warninglid. We climbed a few hills but also enjoyed several displays of bluebells, scenting the woods we walked through. At the end, we repaired to the Half Moon in Warninglid for an excellent lunch, highly recommended.



Welcome to new members

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

Maline Fernando, James Finnie, Sylvia Fulton, Jenny Harber, Gillian Meehan, Ilona Singer, Geoffrey & Julie Wilson

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

South East u3a Forum Summer School

Monday 7th – Thursday 10th September 2026

University of Chichester

South East u3a Forum Summer School 2026



The **dates** for 2026 are:

- The **Courses** are now available for you to peruse on the Summer School webpage. You can just select the word/phrase in **Blue** and voila ... the Course information will appear.
- **Friday 8th May 2026** - **Bookings** will go 'live' at **11.00am**

Courses – 13 available for September

AI – Beginners
Art History – The Male Gaze
Craft – English Paper Piecing - Beginners
Jazz Appreciation - Introduction
Life Story – Social History
Linguistics – Onomastics: What's in a name?
Mahjong – Beginners
Mathematics – for Life
MPT - Memory, Perception & Thinking
Poetry – Australian
Philosophy – Introduction
Spanish – Beginners
Yoga – Seated, Mat and Standing



Otter's Restaurant, Chapel Courtyard

Costs

The prices for 2026 summer school are as follows:

En-Suite Accommodation £390.00	Standard Accommodation £360.00
Non-Residential with dinner £220.00	Non-Residential no dinner £175.00

The residential prices include accommodation; all meals and refreshments offered at break times. A 'Welcome' drink on the first evening, with a 'Farewell' drink on the last evening, both prior to dinner. Also, the evening entertainment is included; available on campus each evening at 8.00pm.

Theatre - We have managed to secure a block of seats for, 'a small and quiet light' production at the Minerva Theatre for Tuesday 8th September, evening performance. The Minerva is the smaller sister theatre to the Festival Theatre and is situated opposite the main theatre. More information on the play will be available in April.

The next update – Will be a reminder about the **Bookings** going 'live' on **8th May at 11.00am**, see the Forum's website. No further information is available at present. Current information on 2026 Summer School can be found on the South East u3a Forum's website, here is the web link:
[2026 - South East u3a Forum](#)



The Summer School Team 2026, South East u3a Forum



Left - Mahjong
Centre - Latin
Right - Yoga
Summer
School
2025

LHV – Publicity – Region/Network flyer 4

Information updated: - 7th April 2026

Apr (2) 2026

Where was I (cover photo)?

An easy one this month. I was in Haslett Avenue East. To find out more about Dame Caroline Haslett follow this link: [Caroline Haslett - Wikipedia](#)

Quiz Group 1: answers to questions

The answers to the questions I posed on page 5 are as follows:

1. Who wrote *The Magic Flute*? Answer: Mozart
2. What number was Dvorak's *New World Symphony*? Answer: Ninth

June newsletter

The June newsletter will be emailed to members on Monday 1st June, and posted or hand delivered to those without email shortly thereafter.

Sue Parker

Newsletter Editor

Crawley u3a

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