

Crawley u3a

Monthly Newsletter: July 2026



Where was I in Crawley when I took this photo? (Answer on page 4)

Monthly meetings

Dates for your diaries below. All meetings are held at the Friary Hall, Haslett Avenue and start at 2.30pm, **with the exception of the 10th July meeting which starts at 2.00pm:**

- **Friday 10th July** – Andy Thomas, *Crop Circle Mystery* (originally scheduled for 12th June, for more details see page 4) **N.B. General Meeting to discuss the increase in the annual fee will start at 2.00pm** (for more details see page 4)
- **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
- **Friday 11th December** – Christmas Party

Crawley u3a Seasonal Outing

Hampton Court Palace: Wednesday 16th September 2026

W&H Coach departs Crawley Bus Station stand E/F at 9am

arriving at Hampton Court palace approx 10:30am

departs Hampton Court Palace at 4pm

arriving Crawley approx 5:30pm

The cost is **£42** and includes coach travel, driver's tip and a self-guided tour of the palace and gardens. Please make your cheques payable to Crawley u3a and write 'Hampton Court Palace 16.09.2026' plus your membership number on the back of the cheque and post with the booking form details to:

Carol Allen, Group Leader, 3 Rowfant Close, Worth, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 7QT. Tel: 0782 606 9625.

If you are unable to print the booking form, write your details on a piece of paper and send it with your cheque.

Confirmation will be sent by email or by phone when the payment has been received, on a first come first confirmed basis.

Closing date for bookings is Monday 10th August 2026, unless the coach is full before that date. The coach drop off and pick up point is Hampton Court Way which is located 200 metres from the palace entrance on level ground. Entry tickets will be given out on the coach, this will allow you to enjoy the palace and gardens at your leisure, the average time to view the palace and gardens is 3 hours. This will give you plenty of time for coffee and lunch.

Before booking please ensure that you have made yourself aware of any risk assessments associated with this trip. If you require caring support for the trip, please provide the contact details for the person who will be accompanying you on the form.

The historic building has many uneven surfaces and staircases, some areas outside have gravel, cobbles or flagstone paths. There is a staff operated lift to all state apartments on the first floor, a member of staff can assist you.

Hampton Court Palace
Wednesday 16th September 2026
Booking Form

Name and membership number:

Email address:

Landline number or

Mobile phone number:

Emergency contact name:

And phone number:

Welcome to new members

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

Simon Dacey, Beverley Killick, Marilyn Mansfield-Clark MBE,
Peter Mansfield-Clark MBE, Vivien Moore, John Nower, Tania Percy-Bell,
Graham Piper, Rita Tomlinson, Denise Upton

Monthly meeting on Friday 10th July: additional General Meeting at 2.00pm

This is to invite you to an additional General Meeting to consider a recommendation from the Trustee Team to increase the Membership Fee by £1 from £14 to £15 with effect from the 1st September 2026.

This meeting is being held directly before the normal monthly meeting on the 10th July, at the Friary Hall.

The General Meeting will commence at 2.00pm, with the normal monthly meeting following on from 2.30pm.

Trustee Team

Details of monthly meeting talk on Friday 10th July

The speaker for our July meeting is Andy Thomas, a leading unexplained mysteries researcher and author, who will explore the extraordinary phenomenon of crop circles, revealing the fascinating history and intriguing arguments around these controversial but stunningly entrancing patterns which appear in fields each year. This talk was originally due to take place on Friday 12th June but had to be postponed.

There will **NOT** be a bookstall. Don't forget to bring your used stamps for Isabel's RNIB box and a mug.

u3a Friends Extra: Complete Wellbeing Bundle for £75 per year

The Complete Wellbeing Bundle is an exclusive package built with u3a members in mind, combining five trusted health services under one simple annual price. For £75 a year, you get access to five established health and wellbeing services worth over £320 per year individually, covering your physical health, mental habits, finances and nutrition. To find out more follow this link:

[u3a Friends Extra](#)

Where was I?

I took the front page photo in the Peace Garden in Tilgate Park in May

The Doods Road Great Pigeon Loft: report on monthly meeting talk on 12th June



John Griffiths-Colby

First of all, a huge thank you to **John Griffiths-Colby** for stepping in to do the June talk at a day's notice, not the first time that he has come to our rescue!

John began by showing us a photograph of armed soldiers standing outside a house in Doods Road, in Reigate. Why were they there throughout both World Wars? It turns out that No.18 Doods Road housed a loft for messenger pigeons.

I have to admit that I had no idea that pigeons had played such a pivotal role during both World Wars but John went on to tell us several extraordinary tales of homing/carrier pigeons who carried messages in times of conflict.

The first was a pigeon called Cher Ami (French for 'dear friend'). On 2nd October 1918, American soldiers from the 77th Infantry Division (known as the Lost Battalion) advanced too far into the Argonne Forest in France and became trapped behind German lines. On 4th October, American heavy artillery accidentally started to bombard the Lost Battalion, killing thirty men in the process. A number of pigeons, the only means of communication with HQ, were shot down by the Germans while trying to deliver messages from the Lost Battalion. Cher Ami was then despatched with a message and was hit in the chest by German fire. Against all odds, he got up and took flight again,

(Continued on page 6)

covering 25 miles in under half an hour. He arrived at base heavily wounded but alive. For the part he played in saving the Lost Battalion, Cher Ami was awarded the Croix de Guerre, one of France's highest military honours for his bravery. After his death in 1919, Cher Ami was stuffed and can be seen in the Smithsonian.

John then went on to tell us about Mary of Exeter, a pigeon who flew many military missions with the National Pigeon Service during WWII. During one mission Mary was attacked by German-kept hawks. Although injured, she made it home. On another occasion, Mary was caught by a piece of shrapnel but made it home again. On her final mission, Mary's neck muscles were damaged by shrapnel, at which point she was retired. Incredibly, the pigeon loft in which Mary was housed was bombed but, once again, she survived. Mary of Exeter received the PDSA Dickin medal for her endurance in war service.

The Duke of Normandy was another pigeon who received the Dickin medal for bravery in service during the Second World War for being the first bird to arrive with a message from Paratroops of the 21st Army Group behind enemy lines of D Day 6 June, 1944, the flight having taken twenty six hours into strong head winds from Normandy to the UK. His Dickin medal sold for £27,000 in 2020.

Moving on to 1982 and the renovation of a 17th century fireplace in a house in Bletchingley, a number of items turned up during the course of this renovation, one of them being the bones of a long deceased bird, one leg with an aluminium ring around it and the other with a red plastic capsule attached to it. Inside the capsule was a message written in code. The homeowners showed the message to a neighbour, Commander Wilfred Albert 'Biffy' Dunderdale, a British spy and intelligence officer, who told them to back off as nothing would ever be published. Although the message eventually made its way to Bletchley Park, it has yet to be deciphered. An interesting aside is that it has been suggested that Biffy Dunderdale was used by Ian Fleming as a basis for the character of James Bond.

As we have come to expect from John, another fascinating, fact-filled afternoon.

Sue Parker

Used postage stamps: note from Isabel Baker

As many of you will know, Crawley u3a has been collecting used postage stamps for some time now and these are sent off to RNIB as part of their funding programme.

Recently, one of our members, [Veronica Wilson](#), passed on to me a box that she had inherited from a previous colleague. The box contained a collection of interesting items relating to stamps, including first day covers, stamps from the time of Queen Victoria etc. As neither Veronica nor I had any knowledge regarding the value of stamps, I asked one of our Group Leaders, [David Devere](#), for his advice. David had previously specialised in GB stamps so was able to offer advice on what we might do with the collection. If we were to send the box to an auction house, then we would be likely to receive £40-£50 (minus a fee I suspect?)

Luckily, I was offered £50 for the collection from a u3a member and I have been in touch with RNIB and passed the donation on to the charity. I spoke to Catherine Donnelly who took the payment over the telephone and has posted a copy of the receipt.

Thank you to everyone who has donated over the years and I will continue to collect your used postage stamps and send them off to the RNIB. If you have any to donate, please bring them along to the monthly meetings.

If you need advice regarding sight loss, the RNIB Helpline is available from Monday – Friday between 09.00 – 17.00 – **0303 1239999**

[Isabel Baker](#)

Let's Write! Crawley Writers' Circle 70th Anniversary Exhibition

Why not visit the Exhibition at Crawley Museum celebrating 70 years of Crawley Writers' Circle and Community Groups in Crawley? The exhibition runs from 18th June to 1st August and entry is free. The Museum is open Thursday-Saturday from 10.30am to 4.00pm. There is a small feature included on Crawley u3a.

Air Shooting meeting on 10th June

This month's Air Shooting competition featured pistols. Congratulations to **Kay White**, the winner of Session 1 and to **Cliff Tate**, the winner of Session 2. Thanks to **Craig Edwards** for the photos.



Kay White



Cliff Tate

Unwanted bras

Pound Hill W.I. are asking their members to donate their old or unwanted bras. One of their members (who is also a u3a member) has asked me if I would mention this appeal in the July newsletter. The bras will be sent to women and girls in Africa in need of such items. If you have any bras you no longer need, please drop me an email via sueparker5@yahoo.co.uk and I will make arrangements to pass them on to Pound Hill W.I.

Smartphone Photographic Group's Photo Greetings Cards launch on 10th July

The Smartphone Photographic Group will be launching their project of "Photo greetings cards" at the monthly meeting on Friday 10th July. These have been produced by the group. These cards can be used for any occasion and the proceeds of the sale will be going to St Catherine's Hospice.

Walkers One's Barns Green and Itchenfield Walk on 19th June

Walkers One enjoyed a warm, sunny countryside walk around the Barns Green and Itchenfield area.

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



Walkers Extra's Outwood walk

Sadly, I am unable to share with you a photo of Walkers Extra's Outwood walk, scheduled to take place on 25th June. Very wisely, the decision was taken to cancel this walk due to the very high temperatures and the fact that the Met Office had issued a red weather warning. Several other outdoor activities planned for that week were also cancelled as it was felt that the temperatures were too extreme for outdoor activities to be safely undertaken.

Air Shooting meeting on 1st July

This month's Air Shooting competition winners are **Deborah Wilkinson** from Group 1 and **Derek Hall** from Group 2 who came first in their respective groups for highest score from one card sitting and one card standing.

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

Craig tells me that there is one spare place in Group 1 and three spare places in Group 2. If you would like to know more about the group or how to join then follow these links below:

[Air Shooting 1 - Crawley](#) [Air Shooting 2 - Crawley](#)



Deborah Wilkinson



Derek Hall

Family Fun Day in aid of St Catherine's Hospice: Sunday 26th July

Crawley Community Group, in aid of St Catherine's Hospice, are holding a Family Fun Day on Sunday 26th July from 11.00-am-5.00pm at Goffs Park. There will be a raffle, tombola, lucky dip, arts and crafts, a second hand book sale, adopt a teddy, arena games with prizes and children's funfair rides. Bring a picnic or grab a burger. Free entry.

Invitation from Crawley Town Bowls Club in Langley Green

We have received an invitation from Crawley Town Bowls Club in Langley Green for u3a members to go along and have a “free” go. Whether you’ve never played before or you’re just a bit rusty here’s an opportunity to try the game out.



Equipment will be provided. All you will need to bring is yourself and a pair of flat soled shoes or trainers.

Interested? Then give **Rod Saward** on 01293 538785 (the Club’s coach) a call for more information.

If you are unsure about wanting to go on your own, then contact our Treasurer Graham Friday, by emailing using treasurer@crawleyu3a.org.uk or texting him on 07982424533 contact, with name and contact number and he will try and organise people into small groups.

u3a Online Learning events

To see what free online learning opportunities there are to explore this month, follow this link: [u3a - Online learning events](#)

Crawley u3a Facebook page

No newsletter would be complete without me plugging our Crawley u3a Facebook page! This month is no exception and if you head over to the page there are some treats in store. You can view sketches done by our Urban Sketching Group when they visited Ewhurst Place, Kingscote Station and St John's Church in Crawley. You can also see **Terry Davey's** excellent photos of Walkers One's walk around the Barns Green area, as well as the photos taken by **Monique Tovey-Mansfield** of the Gardening Groups' visit to Mottisfont Abbey. To see more, follow this link: [Crawley u3a | Facebook](#)

Crawley u3a website

This month I thought that I would point members in the direction of the website page which features Other Recreational and Learning Opportunities. Links on this page will take you to u3a Matters magazine, Learning in the u3a Movement, u3a Summer Schools, other local u3as and Local Clubs and Societies in West Sussex. To find out more, follow this link: [Other Recreational & Learning Opportunities - Crawley](#)

September newsletter

There will not be a newsletter in August. The September newsletter will be emailed to members on Monday 7th September, and posted or hand delivered to those without email shortly thereafter.

Sue Parker

Newsletter Editor

Crawley u3a

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