

June News Edit 2026



Included in this month's edition

- **Creative Writing Group: new books published by members**
- **Book Club: meet the Author**
- **Golfing Club 2: drives off in beautiful sunshine**
- **Meditation and Energy Skills Group**
- **Coffee Afternoon: lively chat and laughter**
- **Health & Wellbeing Group: Cardiovascular Disease and CPR training**

PLUS MUCH MORE ...

Word from the Chair

It was an absolute pleasure meeting and catching up with so many of you at our last monthly meeting. It is always wonderful to see our community come together to catch up over our usual refreshments beforehand, and wasn't the guest talk on Charles Darwin that followed simply brilliant? It truly made for a thoroughly engaging afternoon.

Looking ahead, I hope to see many more of you at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday, 8th July at Queen Mary's College. I cannot stress enough how vital it is for our members to come along to the AGM. This is your organisation, and it relies entirely on your voice. The AGM is your opportunity to cast your vote on who will run the u3a on your behalf in the coming year. We are a community built by our members, for our members, so please do make every effort to attend and have your say.

Before we get to July, we have our upcoming Summer Picnic on 10th June at Sherfield Oaks Golf Club. I am sure it will be a wonderful afternoon, but I unfortunately won't be able to join you for the event this time. I am travelling to Barcelona to support my husband, Andy Shaw, who is competing for Team GB in the European Triathlon Championships! Many of you will know Andy as a fellow member and a regular at our Computer Club, so I am sure you will all join me in wishing him the very best of luck. I will certainly be cheering loudly for him on the day.

While I am away, you will find plenty of excellent reading in this month's edition to keep you inspired. We have updates from several of our wonderful groups that truly demonstrate the breadth of what our u3a offers. This includes a fascinating look at the newly formed Meditation and Energy Skills group, a lovely piece on the joys and trials of co-authoring a novel from our Creative Writing team, and a vitally important, life-saving summary of the recent CPR and Cardiovascular presentation hosted by the Health & Wellbeing group.

Thank you all for your continued support and for making our u3a such a wonderful, welcoming community to be a part of. Enjoy the newsletter, have a fantastic time at the picnic, and I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM in July!

Best Wishes

Toni Shaw

Chair, Basingstoke-Old Basing u3a

Group News the Creative Writing Group

More success for the Group with 2 new books being published:

1. Let me Go - by Diane Hope & Martin Simmons (Basingstoke and Bridport u3a)

Members article: Co-authoring a Novel - supplied by Diane Hope and Martin Simmons

We met at the Basingstoke U3A Creative Writing Group. Writing can be a lonely hobby, scribbling away in a void, so it seemed a good idea to write a novel together. "It will be fun", we said.

With experience in short stories, flash fiction, and previously published books, we followed the advice to "write what you know," and we both know about ageing! The result? A later-life romance featuring Ella and our unlikely hero, Alain, who meet in an A&E department, and form an unexpected—and inconvenient—connection.

Writing alternate chapters kept us on track (and spared our partners having to read endless drafts.) Then Martin moved to Bridport and soon after Diane also moved, although she stayed in the same county. This slowed us down but technology today enabled us to continue sharing our work, and making comments and suggestions, very politely at first becoming more forthright as we continued. After much editing and, rewriting we invested in a helpful structural edit that proved very encouraging, giving us the confidence to keep going until we got to the end.

Now we were ready to find an agent. Surely they would be queuing up? The reality was many agent rejections – or complete silence – so we chose to self-publish. Three years on, our novel is finally here. If you enjoyed 'Me Before You', you may enjoy 'Let Me Go'. A tender, thought-provoking romance exploring ageing and assisted dying, with warmth and touches of humour.

[Let Me Go by Mariane Ditin \(Martin + Diane\)](#)

available to buy on Amazon (free with Kindle Unlimited)



2. Deceit by Ross Thompson Cooley



Group News

..... the Book Club Group

When the u3a met an International Crime Author - April

April months Tuesday Book Club had author Louisa Scarr aka Sam Holland visit us along with members of the Creative Writing Group and Monday Book Club. Her book, Gallows Wood, is an intriguing crime novel centred around a police dog handler, Lucy Halliday and a very troubled DCI, Jack Ellis. It was universally liked and the book clubs scored it 8.1 on Monday and 7.8 on Tuesday, right up there with our best scores.

Louisa talked about the seemingly chaotic way she writes books, why she has been intrigued with crime and pathology since her youth and what crimes still affect her. She covered how she has collected an extensive array of experts that help make the books authentic and why she writes under 3 names and has three publishers.

One of our members even asked how much she makes! It proved that writing books is only for those with a passion, as the money was poor and stays that way for many authors.

At the end, some of us stayed behind to get signings and buy the next episodes of what will be a 5 part series.

If you like a good crime novel, try Gallows Wood or if you like things a bit grimmer, Echo Man by Sam Holland is about a serial killer.

Supplied by Elaine Budd - Group Leader



Group News

..... the Golfing Group 2

We met for their first session on the first Wednesday of May with a 'drive off' in beautiful sunshine. We met over the provided tea and coffee in the Club house at Sherfield Oaks golf club to get to know each other, then we all went out to the driving range for the first half hour. Luke, the community coordinator, was on hand to give tips and advice.

For the second part of the session, we moved onto their immaculate putting greens. The weather was glorious and everyone had a good time, we all look forward to the next meet up on Wednesday 3rd June.

Author: David Berger - Joint Group Leader



Group News

..... the Meditation and Energy Skills Group

This is a small group that has begun to meet in Sherfield Park, to introduce its members to mindful meditation skills that are useful in daily life to reduce stress, anxiety, indecisiveness, uncertainty and tensions that keeps one from following their own truth.

This practical class teaches the participant how to connect to their energy and manage their personal space, to use meditation techniques to enhance awareness of themselves in relation to others and most of all to learn to trust themselves and their own perceptions by putting them into a context that relates to the present.

There is no one way to meditate and the group will be introduced to not only basic techniques, but also many types of approaches to meditation. They will discover that whichever way one meditates, there are definite noticeable benefits physically, emotionally and mentally.

After 3 sessions, the group members already report positive changes in their perceptions as they have applied the techniques taught.

Our personal development class is 'serious fun' !



As supplied by: Nina Ashby

Group News

..... Coffee Afternoon

Our first Coffee Afternoon group met on a drizzly afternoon at Sherfield Oaks Golf Course, however the conversation was anything but dull. Lots of lively chat and much laughter as people, most of whom never met each other before, shared a delightful couple of hours over a tea or coffee.

I met somebody I shared a room with at a sales conference in Nice over 35 years ago! What a small world.

Next month we are hoping that the sun comes out and we can all sit on the patio.

In the autumn, I am hoping to set up another Coffee group in the South part of town, if you are interested in being a group leader, I would love to hear from you.

Elaine Budd
New Group Development



Group News

..... the Health & Wellbeing Group

Cardiovascular Disease and CPR training

In May our group had a presentation on cardiovascular disease by Dr Charlotte Hutchins, GP and ICB lead on Community Health and Inequalities. This was followed by a CPR and defibrillator demonstration by Ken Taylor of Saint John Ambulance.

We learnt that if you look at all the things you can do to improve your risks with CVD, they are all very similar to reducing your risk of getting cancer and other illnesses we have already explored in the HWB group.

We were also taught a very useful, easy to remember process to use if confronted by a collapsed person. DR ABC. The demonstration and discussion on accessing the emergency services and defibrillators taught our members information, we felt everybody should know. Key facts on CVD.

Heart failure and heart attacks cause one in 6 deaths, every 3 minutes in the UK somebody dies from cardiovascular disease and in the UK alone there are 8 million people living with the disease. In fact, cardiovascular disease is the world's biggest killer. Cardiovascular disease not only effects the heart but causes strokes, vascular dementia and chronic kidney disease. We looked at symptoms that may indicate you have problems:

- ·Angina- symptoms include chest, throat or arm pain or tightness, difficulty breathing and palpitations.
- ·Heart attack chest pain, nausea, sweating
- ·Stroke - weakness, dizziness, speech issues, visual loss
- ·Peripheral vascular disease - leg pain and ulcers
- ·Erectile dysfunction
- ·In women a severe back pain can also be a symptom of an impending heart attack

There can be other atypical symptoms. 1 member of the audience outlined her husband's symptoms as being a very bad headache for a couple of days then severe jaw pain followed by indigestion.

Dr Hutchins said, "if you feel you are not right, call 111 or 999, the best person to know if something is wrong, is you".

Prevention

Know your BP (blood pressure) and cholesterol numbers. There is a big push from the NHS for us to know our numbers. Make sure you are getting your regular health checks that include blood works on a regular basis via your surgery. If you have low risk, then this is likely to be repeated every five years, if you're moderate risk it's more frequent. However, if you have had a CVD issue, the frequency should be less than two years.

To reduce the risk there are things we cannot change such as your age and your family genetics but the three things that doctors try to change are your blood pressure, your cholesterol and your lifestyle.

To change your lifestyle, you could:

- stop or avoid smoking
- Take regular exercise - this doesn't mean going to the gym, gardening and housework are good exercise. Do something you enjoy like going for a walk. Try to get your heart rate several times a week if possible. Our u3a offer many opportunities for exercise, with a second Pilates class, easy paced walking football and walking cricket all new groups starting in April and May.
- Think about: a healthy weight and diet, being sensible about alcohol, and improving sleep.

Group News

.... the Health & Wellbeing Group

Dr Hutchins ran through the many drugs used to manage cholesterol and blood pressure. There was discussion on the pro's and con's of statins. Dr Hutchins stated that it is personal choice to take them but of all the drugs she prescribes, she believes that statins have saved the most lives.

We then went onto have a presentation from Ken Taylor of St John Ambulance.

·80% of heart attacks happen at home, 15% happen in public 2/3rds of these are men, mostly over 65.

·Unfortunately, less than 40% resuscitations are attempted, and the defibrillator is used less than 10%.

·Survival over 30 days is 10% but could be 30% if people knew how to do CPR. This survival rate could be increased to 70% if the defibrillator was used within 3 minutes.

Early recognition will save people's lives

Ken outlined that a heart attack is where no blood is pumping, so don't bother to try and find a pulse, which can be difficult. To check if somebody is breathing, it should be done by putting your face very close to their mouth and seeing if you can smell or feel their breath. It's actually very difficult to spot if somebody is breathing by looking at their chest rising and falling, for example, if they're wearing their coat when they collapse.

What to do if somebody collapses near you?

You must call 999 as soon as possible.

Important information

If you don't have your phone but you can get hold of somebody else's phone but it's locked, how do you open it? If you squeeze buttons on both sides of the phone it will come up with a slider and give you the opportunity to dial the emergency number. The other way of getting access is to click on/ off buttons 5 times. Therefore, finding an unlocked phone should not be an obstacle for you getting hold of the emergency services.

Once you have phoned 999, it doesn't mean you can't phone again if the patient gets worse. This may change the priority. Ken gave the example that heart attack is a category 2 which means an ambulance could take 15 minutes but a "not breathing diagnosis" is a category one which is a lot shorter.

When calling 999, use your speakerphone so that you can continue to speak to the ambulance service whilst you're dealing with a patient. If you cannot confirm the patient is breathing, the call handler will stay on the line to coach you and tell you where a defibrillator is. This is why it's very important to get other people around you so they can either get the defibrillator and/or help you with CPR or have the conversation with 999.

If you are involved with a collapsed patient, try to stay calm and use the DR ABC routine:

- D** assess the area for danger, i.e. don't get run over whilst trying to help or trampled by a crowd
- R** check for response (voice and pain). Talk to the patient see if they respond to you, ask them to open their eyes and if they don't then squeeze their shoulder to see if they respond to pain
- A** clear their airway, tilt back the head and lift the chin with two
- B** listen for breathing, by being close to their mouth and look down to see if there is any evidence of breathing, you need to do this twice in 10 seconds
- C** circulation check they are not bleeding

Cont'd ...

Group News

.... the Health & Wellbeing Group

The most common cause of collapse is fainting, a loss of consciousness that is less than one minute. If this happens, you'll need to put people on the floor laid down, raise their legs and keep them there for about 10 minutes.

If the patient is breathing put them in the recovery position and call 999. We were given a demonstration on the recovery position. Getting somebody into this position is easy and everybody should know how to do it using the body's own leverage.

People going into cardiac arrest can often start gasping this is how the brain reacts to the lack of oxygen if this happens start CPR immediately. You often see people giving CPR doing rescue breaths. The recommendation is it should only be done by trained people or if you have two people at the scene, as there should not be a delay in the compressions whilst somebody adjusts themselves for the breaths. If you do have two people, it is 2 breaths after 30 compressions on an adult.

CPR was demonstrated and is shown then it needs to be faster and is more tiring than people thought. The staying alive advert shows the beat CPR should be undertaken. Swap people who are doing CPR often, to ensure the speed does not decrease.

When you phone 999 they will tell you where the nearest defibrillator is and Ken demonstrated how easy it is to use, as it talks you through exactly what you need to do. The machine is so sophisticated that should it register a heart beat, it will not shock; you are not in danger of killing somebody that is alive.

Unfortunately, the machines are used less on women because people are embarrassed to remove their bras and apply the pads on naked skin. As Ken said, at this point the person is clinically dead, so they won't be embarrassed by you cutting off their clothes.

My conclusion from the talk was, I need to go and tell other people to learn how to do CPR, the benefits of getting access to a defibrillator which are easy to use and prevention of CVD is much better than the alternative.

Our next talk is about Bowels and Bowel Cancer on June 11th, you can see the full calendar of upcoming talks on the u3a website on the Health and Wellbeing page.

Elaine Budd
Health and Wellbeing Group

10 June - Monthly Meeting will be our Summer Picnic

Time: 14:00 - 16:00

**Venue: The Sherfield Oaks Golf Club,
Wildmoor Lane, Sherfield on Loddon, Basingstoke, RG27 0HB**

**We will of course be offering free tea, coffee, soft drinks etc.,
and you will also receive a 'goodie bag' upon arrival.**

There is a bar on site but regrettably that won't be free!

8 July 2026 - Annual General Meeting

Time: 13:30 - 16:00

Venue: Queen Mary's College, Cliddesden Rd., Basingstoke, RG21 3HF

Guest Speaker: Tony Harris entertains as Donald Trump

12 August 2025 - There will not be a monthly meeting

9 September 2026 - To be announced

NOTICE BOARD

Vacancy: Events Manager (2026/2027)

Outstanding position for the coming year is the Events Manager.
Please contact chair@basingstokeu3a.org for more information.

Volunteering Opportunities:

If you're interested in supporting your u3a during your free time - whether by helping with administrative tasks, arranging chairs, or preparing tea/coffee.
Please contact volunteer@basingstokeu3a.org to learn more.

Recycling:

Bring your empty foil blister packs to the monthly meetings for collection.

July News Edit:

Got a story? email Lyn at pr@basingstokeu3a.org by mid June (Max 500 words).

New Group starting in June:

Rose Growers Group: for those who have a passion for these stunning flowers

If you would like to lead a new group, please contact newgroups@basingstokeu3a.org

Third Age Trust Basingstoke-Old Basing u3a is a member of the Third Age Trust, which provides information and help for all u3a members.

You can find more information about these by following the links below:

[National u3a Website:](#) The website of the national u3a movement - offering online learning, online interest groups, a blog, monthly podcast and more

[u3a Radio Podcast:](#) The u3a radio podcast, set up in 2020, showcases the amazing things happening across the movement. It's created by a team of u3a members who all have radio experience and features interviews with members, interest group leaders, Trustees, national volunteers and Subject Advisers.

[National u3a Friends Newsletter:](#) The u3a Friends newsletter shares news, learning opportunities and member stories from across the u3a movement. Signing up to the newsletter means you are up to date and in touch with all that's happening across the movement as it happens. You'll also gain exclusive access to our Friends Extra website - a range of offers, discounts and services. Each issue of the Friends Newsletter includes a link to the Friends Extra benefits website.

[Interest Groups Online:](#) Interest Groups Online (abbreviated as IGO) is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home. Note that this has a separate joining fee (currently £12).

[National u3a Learning:](#) A schedule of activities complimenting what is provided locally and connecting members across the UK.

[World u3a:](#) Links to other u3a's worldwide.