

DECEMBER'S NEWS EDIT 2025



Basingstoke – Old Basing



**From the Chair
Group News
Member's Contributions
and Much more...**

E&OE

A Warm Welcome from Your Chairman

Hello everyone, and a huge welcome to the u3a News Edit!

It's been a busy few months behind the scenes, so grab a cuppa, settle in, and read on for your essential updates, group news, and a special thank you to some of our membership team.

Committee Corner

A Fond Farewell & Opportunity Knocks!

Our membership team worked tirelessly during the year, to ensure a smooth renewal process for everyone—a massive undertaking! Marilyn, who has now fulfilled her commitment to launch our new online enrolment system and members' portal will be stepping down as Membership Secretary in January 2026.

A message from Marilyn: *"I've enjoyed the challenge and it has been a pleasure to meet and help so many members over the last two years. Now it's time to hand over the reins. I'm looking forward to continuing my membership, joining more Groups, and getting to know even more of you!"*

We are genuinely sad to see Marilyn go, but this creates a fantastic opportunity for one of you to join our dynamic team!

We Need You! Become our next Membership Secretary! You won't be starting alone; this vital role continues to have the reliable administration support of Jean. If you're keen to get involved in the running of your u3a, please contact me directly for a chat about the role: chair@basingstokeu3a.org

Group Highlights & Learning Opportunities

Our groups are buzzing with activity, curiosity, and fantastic learning!

Art History & Appreciation: Enjoyed a fascinating deep dive into the life and work of the American-born Impressionist, Mary Cassatt (one of 'Les trois grandes dames' of Impressionism).

The Book Club: Never staying in one genre for long! Their next pick is a **crime novel**. They always welcome more bookish people to join their discussions!

Health & Wellbeing: Recently hosted a talk from **Arthritis UK**.

Look out for the Creative writing podcast and also news of Bingo for 2026.

Things are beginning to look a lot like Christmas – we have news on our wreath makers and a very different recipe for Christmas Cake from a member –another member explores the idea of cancelling a day – surely life is too short already without cancelling days!!

Finally, mark your calendars and prepare to be delighted: Our Christmas Surprise Monthly Meeting is... **a Surprise!** (You'll just have to be there to find out!)

A very **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year** to all our wonderful members. I look forward to seeing you all soon! **Your Chair**



Bingo Group ... ?



Interested in Joining a New Bingo Group?

Information is going out about the **New Bingo Group**, which is likely to be run on the last Wednesday of every month between 2-4 pm.

Fabulous for socialising and you only need to bring a dabber and your brain 😊

If you are interested, please let Elaine Budd know via

NewGroups@Basingstokeu3a.org

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Creative Writing Group

The December podcast has been written and read
by Lynn Clement and is entitled
Jeannie McQueen and the Case of the Barking Dog.

You can listen to it here: <https://youtu.be/4RBLhP2PztA>



Health and Wellbeing Group



This month we had a talk from **Arthritis UK**

There are 200 types of arthritis, and it is not necessarily an old person's condition. It impacts women more than men and the instances of chronic pain are higher as a percentage in women. This may be linked to hormones lost in menopause.

The common types are: Osteoarthritis, Gout, Fibromyalgia, Rheumatoid arthritis, Lyme arthritis

What having arthritis feels like:

Many arthritis sufferers complain of systematic symptoms caused by inflammation, these include fatigue, fever, pain and weight loss. Jo talked about a cycle of symptoms: Pain-frustrations with limitations-shortness of breath-stress and anxiety-lots of different emotions-depression-fatigue-pain

Treatment of Arthritis. As there are different types of arthritis and therefore different treatments, it is imperative to get an accurate diagnosis from your doctor, so that it can be treated properly.

Regular exercise reduces your risk, and can relieve symptoms, regular walking, cycling or swimming were recommended.

Jo said she understood that older people don't necessarily want to get on a bike, but the type you can buy to use whilst sitting in a chair are very good for the joints in your knees.

Using poles when walking is also very good as they help balance. Unbalanced exercise should be avoided as it puts pressure on other joints and spread the pain.

Other exercises recommended: those that improve your balance to reduce the possibility of falling over. Weight bearing exercise, vacuuming can be something you can do in the home or using small weights or weight bands.

Medications – ensure that your medications are reviewed yearly, if this is not offered automatically, ask.

Healthy eating – try to eat a Mediterranean diet. Eat foods high in omega 3 such as walnuts and avocado. Avoid sugar, it is an inflammatory trigger and will cause more pain. The importance of Vitamin D should not be underestimated. We need it to absorb calcium to ensure our bones are strong.

Weight Management - A major factor in increasing your risk of getting the disease and suffering more pain is being overweight.

Breathing techniques – these will distract pain messages to the brain

Good quality sleep – this has been proved to reduce pain during the day. Make sure that you review the pillow that you are using, for fit with your neck and also use a knee pillow. It is important to keep the spine flat when you sleep.

Arthritis UK have a help line 0800 5200520 and a really useful website <https://www.arthritis-uk.org>

Our January meeting in on “The importance of Sleep” and how to improve it. Hope to see you there.

Book Club

Are you stuck in a rut with the books you are reading?

Why not try the u3a book club?

Our Monday book club is full, but we have plenty of space on the **Tuesday** group and what a friendly group they are

This month we reviewed *Poor* by Katronia O'Sullivan a biography about the struggle from poverty in Coventry through to university tenure in Ireland.

For the first time there was a massive scoring difference with the Monday group scoring 7.6 but Tuesday only scoring 6.1. The reason for the lower score was the sadness felt by all about the book contents. However, both groups probably had their most extensive conversations, ranging from child poverty, drug addiction through to the state of society, politics and the power of role models. We could have put the world to rights, and we agreed this would form a really good topic for the u3a discussion group.

Our next book is a **crime novel** as we never like to stay in the same genre long.

If you are interested in reading something different and then taking part in a lively, light-hearted debate or just listening to what others have to say, then this may be the group for you. The bit I love is you get to hear about the fabulous lives people have led as the book discussions usually bring out personal stories to illustrate points.

If you are interested, contact Elaine Budd, Group Leader on
Elainesecu3abasingstoke@outlook.com





Art History & Appreciation



The Art History and Appreciation group met in November for an engaging and comprehensive presentation given by Vee on the life and work of the American-born artist Mary Cassatt (1844–1926).

Together with Marie Bracquemond and Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt was one of ‘Les trois grandes dames’ of Impressionism.

We learned about her travels in Europe, her studies with various art masters, and the highs and lows of exhibiting her work. Edgar Degas admired her paintings and encouraged her to stop submitting to the Salon and instead exhibit with the Impressionists.

Cassatt worked in a variety of media. We saw how she used her sketchbooks to develop ideas for later works, such as ‘*In the Loge*’, and how she became extremely proficient in pastels. She sometimes incorporated mirrors into her compositions to introduce visual complexity.

Degas was important mentor, instructing her in printmaking techniques such as soft-ground etching, which she later used in combination with aquatint to create innovative colour prints. She was also strongly influenced by Japanese woodblock prints after visiting the *Exposition des Maîtres Japonais* in 1890.

Cassatt enjoyed painting children, whom she described as ‘natural and truthful,’ and maternal themes became central to her work. Her paintings are noted for their expressive and sensitive use of colour, which she used to create warmth and intimacy.

By 1915, her vision had severely deteriorated due to cataracts, and she was no longer able to paint.

Two Photographs of Mary Cassatt shared during the presentation.



Mrs Cassatt Reading to her Grandchildren



Mrs Mary Cassatt

The U3A Art History and Appreciation Group meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month 2.00-3.45pm in the Shaftesbury Room, Christ Church, Old Reading Road, Chineham RG24 8LT (Flat accessibility and near a bus stop)RG24 8LT. (Flat accessibility and near a bus stop.)

Christmas Wreath Making Workshop

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

At **the first** of the Christmas wreath making workshops, our 10 members brought along everything from the foliage from their neighbours' gardens, Christmas baubles, bows and ribbons.



Our brilliant instructor, Marion, a u3a member, had been out with the rake to gather the moss and quickly showed her wreath making skills.

The room smelt of pine, spruce, rosemary and eucalyptus and lots of discussion and laughter ensued. With eager anticipation we started with a very messy table ...

And within only 3 short hours, interrupted only for the traditional tea, coffee and a chocolate hobnob, it turned into these amazing wreaths. Everyone showing the individuality of the creator.

A good time was had by all.





Contribution from a u3a member....

I found the following on a piece of paper in an old recipe book I was given.

CHRISTMAS CAKE

Ingredients

2 cups of flour, 1 stick of butter, 1 cup of water, 1 tsp baking soda, 1 cup of sugar
1 1 tsp salt, 1 cup of brown sugar, lemon juice, 4 large eggs, nuts, 2 bottles of wine
2 cups of dried fruit

Sample the wine to check quality. Take a large bowl, check the wine again. To be sure it is of the highest quality pour one level cup and drink. Repeat. Turn on the electric mixer. Beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add one teaspoon of sugar. Beat again. At this point it's best to make sure the wine is still ok. Try another cup, just in case. Turn off the mixerer thingy. Break two eggs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit.

Pick the missing fruit up off the floor. Mix on the turner. If the fried fruit gets stuck in the beaters just pry it loose with a drowscriver. Sample the wine to check for tonsisticity. Next, sift two cups of salt. Or something. Check the wine. Now shift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one table. Add a spoon of sugar, or something. Whatever you can find. Greash the oven. Turn the cake tin 360 degrees and try not to fall over. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Finally, throw the bowl through the window. Finish the wine and wipe down the counter with the cat.

Go to the store and buy a cake.

Bingle Jells!

Valerie Chambers

Tomorrow has been cancelled due to lack of interest

What a thought, if you don't like the day, just cancel it.

Would that really work? I can see many arguments starting.

A bad day for one person, might be a good day for someone else. And besides, it might contravene the Human Rights Act. We have different views on what constitutes a good or a bad day, surely there would have to be some sort of compromise. Or at least, a local agreement.

Someone would have to enforce the agreement, even worse, there would have to be some sort of punishment for cancelling the wrong day.

We might even need an official Government dept to oversee the implementation of the correct procedure for cancelling a day.

If you were due in court for cancelling the wrong day, you could cancel the day when you were due to appear. How amazing, 'please send me a new day, so I can cancel it.'

Imagine if someone cancelled Christmas, the outcry would be horrendous. 'Sorry, last year was so bad. So many arguments.' Anyway, fortunately, we cannot cancel days, if they are bad, then surely a better day will come along to compensate for them. Anyway, be calm and take each day as it comes.

A contribution from a u3a member
Ross Thompson

Contribution from a u3a member.....



Hartley Coach Horn and Coat of Arms

COACHING AND COACH HORNS At the November monthly meeting the speaker was Mr Colin Pawson who came dressed in his coachman's red coat and jodhpurs, complete with knee length boots and top hat. He described himself as a coach guard and gave us an engaging talk about the history and development of coach transport in the 18th and 19th centuries. He explained about advances in the construction of roads by Thomas Telford and John MacAdam which significantly improved travel by horse drawn coaches. He described himself as a Coach Guard, and as such, one of his jobs is to blow a coach horn to send various signals from the coach.



Mr Pawson blowing the Hartley Coach Horn

I have ancestors in my mother's (Hartley) family tree who held the title 'High Sheriff of Cumberland' namely Milham Hartley (1771-1839) and his great nephew Thomas Hartley (1847-1929) of Armathwaite Hall. I have inherited the ceremonial coach horn which was used by the coachmen who attended their coach. I took this family heirloom along to the meeting as I thought it might be of interest to Mr Pawson. Imagine how thrilled I was when he agreed to play it, probably for the first time since those coaching days.

Diana Charnell

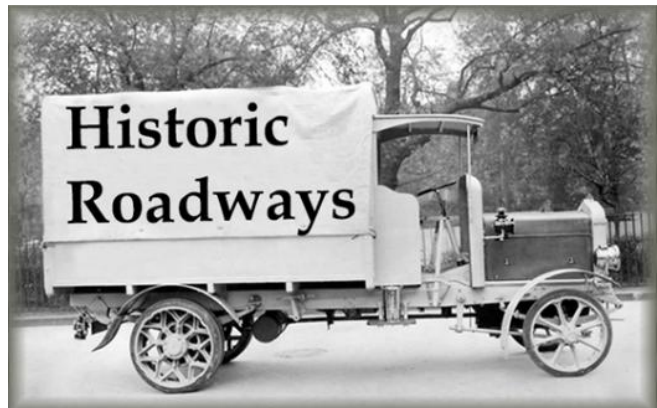
Guest Speaker: Roy Larkin, 14 January 2026

All Aboard for History. London's Buses on the Home Front



Get ready to journey back in time with a compelling deep dive into the extraordinary story of the **London General Omnibus Company (LGOC)** and its pivotal role on the Home Front during the Great War.

Discover how the iconic LGOC buses, buildings, and infrastructure were dramatically transformed to support the war effort. Hear captivating accounts of staff redeployment and the crucial, groundbreaking role of women employees who kept London moving during a time of crisis. Learn how the LGOC executed a full and diverse mission in supporting the Great War, on the very streets of London. Our esteemed speaker, **Roy Larkin**, will take us on this engaging historical journey, lavishly illustrating his talk with **rarely-seen period images**—and yes, there's more to see than just buses!



Don't miss this chance to uncover a vital chapter of our history!



MONTHLY MEETINGS

Are usually held on the 2nd Wednesday of most months.
Popley Fields Community Centre at Carpenters Down
RG24 9AE

Usual timings are:

13:30 -Tea, coffee & biscuits time for chatting

14:00 – Presentation

15:00 – Q&A, tea, coffee & biscuits to finish.

Programme:

10 December –13:30 ***“A Christmas Surprise”***

14 January 2026 – Guest Speaker Roy Larken.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR JANUARY 2026 NEWS EDIT

Please send your;

Stories, activities, projects, photographs, group information
serious or tongue in cheek to Lyn and

Help make your January u3a News Edit vibrant and engaging.
Get your group leaders involved

Send your contributions to pr@basingstokeu3a.org
as soon as possible although deadline is the
night before Christmas....