

Kingston u3a Newsletter

**Volume 15 Issue 4
Winter 2025**



Contents

- 2 Reminder of Membership Renewals Due; Beware the Meter Reader!
- 3 Personnel Updates; Group News; Cycling Group Rides
- 5 Gardening Group Visits
- 6 Christmas Lunch; National Theatre Tour
- 7 Visit: Bank of England
- 8 Visit: Florence Nightingale Museum; Report: Chislehurst Caves
- 9 Report: Tour of the Globe Theatre
- 10 Talks and Study Days
- 11 November + December 2025 Meetings; Monthly Meetings 2026
- 12 Executive Committee Members

www.kingstonu3a.org.uk

It's a pleasure to address you all for the first time in the newsletter in my capacity as Chair of Kingston **u3a**. I'm settling into the role and getting my head round all my new responsibilities.

Luckily Kingston **u3a** has survived its recent problems and we have welcomed a lot of new members over recent months. But don't forget, if you're already a member, that it's the time of year to renew your membership. You'll find details on p2 of how to pay your subscription.

I've been impressed by the amount of effort by group leaders and the Visits team to organise not only their usual activities but also outings to such interesting places. On offer this quarter are tours round the National Theatre, the Bank of England and the Florence Nightingale Museum, as well as an invitation to join other members for Christmas lunch at Glenmore House. And it's so good to read of the Cycling group's recent rides and the Gardening group's visits.

Finally, as this is our last newsletter of 2025, I would like to wish you and your family a joyful festive season and all the best for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

Luanne Higgins
Chair

Subscriptions: a Reminder

Many thanks to those of you who have already paid your annual subscription. If you haven't already done so, please **renew your membership** as soon as possible. You'll find a membership renewal form in the centre of this newsletter.

The single annual membership fee is £15 and the joint fee £24 for two members living at the same address.

As renewals by cash or cheque require much more handling, we strongly encourage members to pay by bank transfer or standing order.

If you still prefer to renew by cash or cheque, you'll need to submit the membership renewal form mentioned above. Be sure to add £0.40 to your cheque to cover the additional bank charge incurred.

Renewal by bank transfer/ standing order

You do **not** need to submit a form if you renew by bank transfer or standing order.

Please note: Our bank account for membership payments changed in 2023. If you are still paying your subscription into the old account ending in 4165, change it to the account number below.

Account name: Kingston u3a

Sort code: 40 26 12

Account Number: 11441027

Reference: Your membership number, your surname and first initial, eg 9876 Smith J

If you haven't renewed by 31 December of this year, we'll conclude that you no longer wish to remain a member and will stop sending you emails and the newsletter.

You must be a paid-up member of Kingston **u3a** to join one of its groups. This is particularly important for insurance purposes.

Membership of another local **u3a** does **not** entitle you to membership of Kingston **u3a**.

We shall ask group leaders to check updated membership later in the year.

Beware the Meter Reader!

Many of us must now have smart meters for our gas, electricity and water and one of the benefits is that we no longer have to wait in for the meter reader to visit.

One of our members, whose power supplier is Octopus and who has a smart meter, was surprised to find a man knocking on her door asking to read the meter. He came in and spent twenty minutes looking at the meter, muttering to himself. It happened a second time and a call to Octopus confirmed that they had not sent out a meter reader.

Please be careful, especially if you live on your own, about allowing so-called meter readers into your home when you have a smart meter. If in doubt, ask to see identification and phone the company first to check that the 'meter reader' is genuine. You don't want anyone in your home who's sussing out your situation and 'casing the joint' under the guise of reading your meter.

Personnel Updates

This year has not been easy for Kingston **u3a**. The death of Joy Garvey and the retirement of Helen Brett and Francesca Cura from their respective roles as Treasurer and Secretary meant the loss of our senior administrators.

Thank goodness Luanne Higgins stepped forward to become our new Chair, while Liz Richardson took on the role of Secretary. Chris Cheek, our Database Manager, boldly agreed to become temporary Treasurer to ensure Kingston **u3a** could continue to exist. Then, enter Teresa Hall who kindly offered to take on Chris's usual database maintenance work in the meantime and is gaining in experience.

Every year Kingston **u3a** has to publish its accounts in the AGM/Annual Report Booklet. This was a huge challenge for Chris Cheek and he was both grateful and relieved when a new member, Anne Davies, wrote to say she was a retired bookkeeper and had the relevant skills to help him. Anne went on to prepare the accounts at short notice.

Our thanks go to both Teresa and Anne for helping out at this critical time for Kingston **u3a**. We look forward to their taking on this work on a permanent basis in the near future.

Group News

New Group: Writing

This will be a support group for writing in any genre. You might want to write fact

Next Newsletter

Our next edition will be out at the beginning of **February 2026**.

The **deadline** for sending in copy and photographs will be **Friday, 9 January**.

Please send your contributions to:

communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk

or fiction, a novel or biography, for adults or children, or any other type of writing. Each month there will be ideas for topics and genres, prompts for your writing to bring to the group the following month for constructive criticism from the other members. Or you might prefer to focus on a personal project. Why not give it a try?

If you are interested in joining this new Writing group, please contact Jean Farrell: jeanvfarrell@hotmail.com

Cycling Group Rides

Kingston **u3a** Cycling group has maintained its fortnightly ride programme throughout the year, as it has done for more than 10 years – shorter rides of around 15 miles in the winter months and longer rides in summer. The rides tend to be mid-week, usually on a Wednesday. Regardless of the season, there's always a guaranteed coffee-break stop, an opportunity for a chat and something tasty to eat to fuel the remaining miles home.

On 6 August nine of us enjoyed a

memorable ride of 30 miles from Kingston, via Richmond, to Perivale, where we joined the Grand Union Canal towpath. Then on to Brentford and back home via Twickenham and Kingston.

The ride route was skilfully planned by group member Richard Radmore and consisted mainly of cycle paths and quiet suburban roads. The lunch stop was a café at Northala Fields, near Northolt, where we viewed the 'Pyramids'. These are four large conical mounds, built from the rubble of the old Wembley Stadium and the White City shopping centre. From the top there were grand views across to Central London and the Thames Valley.

On the final section of our canal-path ride towards Brentford we paused briefly at Isambard Kingdom Brunel's 1859 engineering creation – Three Bridges – where road, canal and railway line pass

over/under each other.

Other notable cycle rides in 2025 included making our way up to the Serpentine Café in Hyde Park and a train-assisted ride from Effingham Junction to the grand and historic West Horsley Place. Steve Davies led both rides. These were new routes and a welcome addition to our familiar rides to Osterley House, Morden Hall, the Windmill Café on Wimbledon Common, Strawberry Hill House, the Bishop's Palace in Fulham and more.

The Cycling group has room for more recruits who are confident cyclists, able to make their way to our usual meet-up points in Kingston and capable of gentle 15-20 mile rides or, occasionally, longer.

We are a friendly, non-competitive cycle group – and no one gets left behind!

Richard Post, Cycling group leader

At the Pyramids: l-r Bill Carnaby, John Ayles, Richard Radmore, Steve Davies, Lorna Gray, David Twaite, Ingrid Carnaby, Dee McDonald-James (guest)



Gardening Group

During the summer the Gardening group visited three different National Garden Scheme properties in Surrey, each with its own unique charm and features.

41 Shelters Way, Tadworth This garden, described as one of the most colourful in Surrey, features cobbles and shingle, supporting grasses and self-seeded plants, backed by a bubble fountain. Our visit included a talk by the owner, who has been tending the garden for about 70 years. The garden was easy to walk around and had a good combination of plants in excellent condition.

Molehill House This was a naturalistic garden, on the wild side, featuring many mature and interesting trees. It includes a short woodland path leading from a dovecote to a beehive, informal planting contrasting with formal topiary, and garden features – a colourful courtyard, a conservatory and a gipsy caravan garden. Our visit highlighted the naturalist aspect, with a lot of trees and woodlands around an old house. The garden also had a vegetable garden with

chickens and a pond with a fountain.

Heathside This terraced garden is designed for year-round interest, with gorgeous planting set off by harmonious landscaping. It features several water elements, stunning colour combinations and a beautiful Griffin Glasshouse housing exotic plants. During our visit we decided this was the best garden we'd



visited, with well-manicured ornamental features and welcoming owners who sold plants. The owners plan to change one of their lawns to a dry gravel garden next year because of the drought conditions, so we may revisit it in 2026.

Overall, these visits highlighted the gardens' unique characteristics, each offering a different yet delightful experience for garden enthusiasts – as well as tea and cake! **Denise Dobbs**



Visits

Christmas Lunch

Join us for our Christmas lunch, open to all members of Kingston **u3a** and a chance to get together again at Glenmore House and renew friendships in a friendly environment with delicious cuisine.

This year children from the local St Andrew's and St Mark's Primary School choir will welcome us with cheerful festive songs before we sit down to lunch.

Menu

- **Starter:** Cured salmon and beetroot terrine with French bread
- Glenmore sorbet
- **Main Course:** Roast turkey with all the trimmings
- **Dessert:** Cream profiteroles with chocolate sauce

Please note: The chef will cater for you if you have a food intolerance. Make sure you explain this on the reverse of the booking form.

Date/Time: Thursday, 4 December

Arrive from 12 noon. Please be seated by 12.30pm.

Place: Glenmore House, 6 The Crescent, Surbiton KT6 4BN. Free car parking is available on site.

Cost: £38.40 per person (includes meal and gratuities). Drinks are **not** included in the price but will be available to buy from the bar.

To join us, please fill in the form (with details on the reverse of special dietary requirements) in the centre of this newsletter and send it to Jacqui Hine.

Closing date for bookings: 20 November

jacqui@hine.org.uk, 07817 264959 (for cancellations on the day only, please)

Please keep this page for reference.

National Theatre: Guided Tour



Come along for a backstage tour of the National Theatre. Founded by Sir Laurence Olivier in 1963, it is adjacent to the South Bank Centre at Waterloo. The building, designed by Sir Denys Lasdun and Peter Softley, contains three theatres, which were opened individually between 1976 and 1977. It has been a Grade II listed building since 1994.

Our tour starts at 11.15am and lasts 75 minutes. There is a limit of 20 places,

so please book early.

Date: Wednesday, 14 January

Meeting Time/Place: 10.15am Waterloo Station. It's a 10-minute walk to the Theatre and we'll stop for coffee on the way.

Price: £15

Accessibility: Only a few steps to negotiate during the tour

To join us, please fill in the form in the centre of this newsletter and send it with your cheque, made payable to **Kingston u3a GAS**, to Pamela Crisp.

pamelacrisp50@hotmail.com

07846 722278

Please keep this page for reference.

Visit to the Bank of England

If you weren't lucky enough to get a place on one of our **free** visits to the Bank last year, then here's a chance to join our next visit early in 2026. In the morning we visit the museum and return in the afternoon for a presentation.

The Bank of England in the City of London was founded in 1694. Its museum has a large collection of items relating to the history of the Bank and the UK economy. You may even get a chance to pick up a gold bar if you are strong enough. The museum has two free audio guides – one for the Highlights tour, the other for Slavery and the Bank. You can access these guides through your mobile phone but please bring along your own headphones.

Date: Tuesday, 20 January

Meeting Time/Place: 10.15am at Waterloo Station, opposite platforms 1-4

Travel: We'll take the Underground to Bank Station, taking Exit 2 on to Threadneedle Street. It's a short walk past the museum entrance in Bartholomew Lane to a coffee bar for refreshments before we head back at 11.45am for security checks and entry to the museum.

There'll then be a lunch break and a chance to explore the area. (The Mithraeum Museum EC4N 8AA, with its underground Roman ruins, is only 10 minutes' walk from Bank Station and may be of interest to you. Entry is free but you must book in advance. See: www.londonmithraeum.com)

We reassemble at the museum entrance at 2.15pm to go through security again before the presentation on the History of the Bank at 2.30pm. It lasts for approximately one hour, after which we will retrace our steps to Waterloo Station.

To join us, please complete the booking form (no cheque required) in the centre of this newsletter and send it to Nanette Gray.

nanette.gray.ng@gmail.com

Tel: 07747 088395

Please keep this page for reference.

Florence Nightingale Museum: Tour

Florence Nightingale was named after the Italian city in which she was born. She laid the foundation of professional nursing when she established her nursing school in St Thomas' Hospital, where the Museum is now situated.

Her most famous contribution came during the Crimean War, where she gained her nickname, 'the Lady with the Lamp'.

Our guided tour starts at 12.30pm and lasts about 30 minutes. Afterwards you'll have the opportunity to look round the exhibits on your own, which, it is suggested, should take another 30 minutes.

There are a couple of places nearby to stop for coffee – Gail's Bakery and the Slug & Lettuce (they are happy to serve coffee only), located on the corner of York Road and Chicheley Street.

Afterwards a stroll around the Jubilee Gardens near the London Eye may be in

order, weather permitting, or a visit to Tate Modern, about a 15-minute walk along the South Bank, or you can take the bus.

Date: Tuesday, 24 February

Meeting Time/Place: 11.15am (note later time than usual), Waterloo Station opposite Platform 4

Travel: From Waterloo Station it's approximately a 15-minute walk to the Museum in Lambeth Palace Road.

Cost: £13.40 (includes entry fee and tour)

Accessibility: The exhibition is all on the ground floor.

To join us, please fill in the form in the centre of this newsletter and send it with your cheque, made payable to **Kingston u3a GAS**, to Pam Townsend.

pamandgil@icloud.com, 07789 397635

Please keep this page for reference.

Reports on Last Quarter's Visits

Visit to Chislehurst Caves

Our visit on 10 September coincided with an Underground strike but, thanks to the very efficient preplanning by Jacqui Hine and Hazel Burr, we had no transport problems. We transferred from Waterloo Station to Waterloo East and caught a quiet train to Chislehurst.

The visitors centre for the Caves was a short walk from the station and gave

the impression of being in a bit of a time warp, back to the 50s/60s with no hi-tech graphics but interesting photos, films and old adverts relating to the Caves.

Our guide led us along a steadily descending tunnel and, on the way, handed out old oil lamps to light our paths inside the Caves. We didn't have a canary!

The Caves themselves have been dug

into the chalk sediments. Reputedly they date from the time of the Druids, and the Romans were involved in extending the cave system. Commercial interest related to lime production and flint extraction.

The first stop was at a larger intersection of tunnels which had been expanded to create a small chapel, once used for Christian ceremonies including marriages. Nearby was a cavern which had been converted into a nightclub with a stage where artistes like Lonnie Donegan, Jimi Hendrix and David Bowie had performed.

We were led through a series of interlinking tunnels, stopping occasionally for explanations. We were asked to go onward with our guide following at the rear, when he would 'miraculously' suddenly reappear (with the assistance of side tunnels) ahead of us, when we arrived at the next stopping place.

Towards the end of the visit we came to the complex used as air-raid shelters during World War II. The tunnels accommodated 15,000 people at a time. Families, displaced from Central London because their homes had been bombed, had their own 'pitches'. In addition to toilets there were everyday facilities like a Post Office and even a Citizens Advice Bureau.

A highly recommendable visit!

Chris Johns

Visit to Shakespeare's Globe

We met our guide Chris outside the Globe and were taken very quickly into the auditorium and installed on benches



around the stalls to listen to his very amusing talk on the theatre itself, William Shakespeare – one of the original owners – and the strange mixture of people who attended the plays.

The current Globe is the third iteration. The original was built in 1599 by a 'playing company' (a company of actors), the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with whom Shakespeare acted and wrote. This was destroyed by a fire, caused when a gun went off during a performance in 1613. The second theatre was built and stayed open until the Puritan London Theatre Closures in 1642, when it was demolished. Plays by Ben Johnson as well as Shakespeare and other playwrights were first performed there.

The current reconstruction, named Shakespeare's Globe, is actually 230 metres from its original site, now a car park under the modern Blackfriars Bridge. As far as possible, it was built to the original design and 1,000 oak trees were used in its construction. You get a wonderful feeling of what it must have

been like in Shakespeare's time. The stage, and bench seating in the galleries are under cover but there is an area for 700 spectators standing in front of the stage, which is open to the elements. Members of the audience standing to watch the performance here were known as the groundlings. There were no toilet facilities in the first two theatres, which caused a few smelly problems.

Modern productions take around five weeks to stage but in Shakespeare's time, because players were not paid for time spent rehearsing, actors used to learn their parts in five days. During our visit actors were on stage warming up for the next performance an hour later.

The Globe is the only thatched building in London because of fire regulations but it has been given a special exemption and the roof has an inbuilt sprinkler system.

Charlie finished his talk by taking us into the box office area where they have an original First Folio of *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, compiled by his colleagues seven years after his death. It is one of around 750 copies, printed in 1623 and containing 36 of Shakespeare's plays. About a third of the copies survive today in varying conditions and completeness.

We really enjoyed our visit and were aware right from the start that our guide Chris was an actor.

Our thanks go to Pam Townsend for organising this interesting outing.

Bill Carnaby

Talks and Study Days

Third Age Trust

Online talks in November and December include a wide range of topics: The Talking Drums of Africa; The US and the UK Constitutions; Catherine the Great; How Pop Songs Work; Tiny Algae with Big Impact; and many other topics. See full details at: www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events

Surrey Region Study Days

A study day is planned almost every month. The next one, on Friday, 21 November, is:

The History of British Industry: Iron and Rivets, to Electronics and Jets, to Robots and AI – Dr Richard Marks

For details of topics, dates and booking for all study days, see:

surreynetwork.u3asite.uk/events/

London Region

Online Talk

Mavericks: Empire, Oil, Revolution and the Forgotten Battle of World War One – 10 Nov

Study days

A series of six digital training sessions in Nov/Dec, run by AbilityNet at the BT Offices at 1 Braham Street E1 8EE.

These cover: Synchronising Storage, Using Common Apps, and Authentication (passwords etc). For more information and booking, see:

lru3a.u3asite.uk/events

Monthly Meetings in November and December 2025

Meetings are held at the United Reformed Church in Kingston on the first Monday of each month unless it is a bank holiday. Doors open at 1.30pm for a prompt 2pm start.

Date	Topics/Speakers
3 Nov	Annual General Meeting (1.30pm) Royal National Lifeboat Institution: It's Not All at Sea – Colin Brown Colin explains how the modern RNLI provides the world's finest marine rescue service, entirely funded by voluntary contribution. Video clips, pictures and sound will help you to understand the RNLI's operations, equipment and training, and tell some real rescue stories.
1 Dec	A Surprising Celebration of Christmas Movies – Pete Allen Lights, Camera and Ho! Ho! Ho! Jimmy Stewart in <i>It's A Wonderful Life</i> , Macauley Culkin in <i>Home Alone</i> , Michael Caine and the Muppets in <i>A Christmas Carol</i> but what makes a great festive film? There's always room for a little surprise. I like John Wayne on the run from the law. What could be more Christmassy than that?

Monthly Meetings 2026

Please note: The April and May meetings will take place on the second Monday of the month. Easter falls on the first weekend in April and 4 May is the first bank holiday in the month.

Date	Topics/Speakers
5 Jan	Annual Quiz: Come along and pit your wits against other members.
2 Feb	A is for Arsenic: Agatha Christie's use of poisons in her books – Kathryn Harkup
2 Mar	Being a Global Pharmacist: Setting up pharmacy services in war-torn areas – Trudi Hilton
13 Apr	Archaeological Frauds, Hoaxes and Silly Things – Scott McCracken
11 May	TBA
1 Jun	Walking with Polar Bears: A photographer, her travels abroad with her photographs – Gillian Lloyd

We will advertise the remaining meeting dates, topics and speakers for 2026 as soon as they have been arranged.

Kingston u3a Executive Committee 2024/2025

Registered Charity No. 1011295

Chair	Luanne Higgins	07359 970165 (Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm) chair@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Secretary	Liz Richardson	07931 819849 secretary@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Database Manager & temporary Acting Treasurer	Chris Cheek	07770 830083 database@kingstonu3a.org.uk treasurer@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Marcia Mayeda	07380 735866 membership@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Groups Coordinator	Anne Higgins	groups@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Visits	Jacqui Hine	generalactivities@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Web Coordinator	Diane Wilson	07944 333519 website@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Speaker Secretary	Lili Cook	020 8949 1819 speakers@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Newsletter	Susan Hinchsliffe	07814 487727 newsletter@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Diversity & Inclusion (co-opted)	Lorraine Hellen	07986 851959 diversity@kingstonu3a.org.uk
Climate Emergency Coordinator (co-opted)	Christine Thompson	020 3583 0638 climatecontact@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Change of Address

Please email updates to:
Chris Cheek, database manager at
database@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Contributions

We welcome reports on your group's activities, **u3a** outings or on your personal interests and experiences. Contributions should be about 250-500 words but there's room for smaller items, too.

Photos (in .JPG format, please) help illustrate your contribution but please

include the names of any people shown. Send photos as separate files and not embedded in an email or a Word document to:
communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Distribution

Newsletters are posted out in early February, May, August and November.

Please contact Susan Hinchsliffe at:
communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk
if you have any problems in receiving these publications.

Thank you.