

Kingston u3a Newsletter

Volume 16 Issue 2
Summer 2026



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www.kingstonu3a.org.uk

Summer is nearly upon us and with the improved weather, it is easier to get out and about.

Kingston **u3a** runs both inside and outside activities that are worth investigating. Whether it's a physical activity you're looking for, learning a new language, or picking up a new hobby (or an old one), we have something for everyone. But just a friendly reminder – when undertaking any fitness activity, be aware that you're responsible for your own well being. If something is too much, slow down or take a rest.

As we're an inclusive group, we are constantly on the lookout for new meeting places throughout the borough that are fully accessible and, where possible, free to use. Good news! We now have access to a pub in Hampton Wick, which is available to use free of charge. It has large rooms and a projector and screen available for use. Beverages and snacks can be purchased at the bar. If you would like to start a new group but are worried about hosting it in your home, please speak to Anne Higgins and she'll advise you as to what venues we have access to.

Enjoy your activities and best wishes.

Luanne Higgins
Chair

Group News

The latest updates from our Groups Secretary, Anne Higgins.

New Groups

We are pleased to announce the following new group:

Feel Good Moves to Music

Marion Fentiman's new group has proved a great success and there are enough members on her waiting list to warrant a second group being set up.

Marion would be happy to arrange this but only if one of the members were willing to take on its administration: being the contact person, collecting the fees for the venue and arranging payment.

If you think you could help with this, please contact Marion at: marionf.u3a@gmail.com for further details.

Groups Closing Down

We are sad to announce the closure of the following groups:

- Classical Concerts – Joyce Hardy
- Drawing & Painting groups 3 & 4 – Sam Atfield
- MOTO Weekenders – Jacqui Hine
- Train group – Lionel Beer

We'd like to thank Joyce, Sam, Jacqui and Lionel for their work, enthusiasm and dedication in keeping these groups going over the years. They will be sadly missed.

Their departure underlines yet again our reliance on you as members to step

forward and become leaders if you want these groups to continue.

Sam Atfield hosted the Drawing & Painting groups at her house but we could try and make arrangements to hire a room at the Cass Art shop in Kingston as an alternative venue.

If you think you could help, please contact Anne Higgins at: groups@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Want to Lead a Group?

If you are interested in starting up any new group, please contact Groups Secretary, Anne Higgins: groups@kingstonu3a.org.uk. Anne will advise you as to what to do and provide any necessary information.

Quiz Time

My name is Jim Trimmer and on 11 March we held a quiz, which I compiled and ran in the dining room at Galsworthy House on Kingston Hill. It was a great success on the whole.

The next one will be at 2.30pm on Wednesday, 10 June at the same place.

There were a couple of lessons from the first quiz: one to do with numbers and the other with audibility. The latter will be solved with a microphone and a small PA speaker to ensure that everyone can hear the questions.

On the matter of numbers, rather than start a quiz group with a fixed membership, I will have to be stricter on the 'first come, first served' rule. We must keep the numbers to 24, so to anyone who applies after that number is

reached, I'm afraid it will have to be 'Sorry – not this time.'

Thank you to everyone who responded with feedback – there's a number of other tweaks that have been suggested that I will also incorporate into future quizzes.

If you'd like to come on 10 June, please email me at:

jimtrimmer2003@yahoo.co.uk

Jim Trimmer

Do You Need a Projector?

If any group leaders are interested in borrowing the Kingston **u3a** projector to use at their meetings, please contact Diane Wilson: 07944 333519 or website@kingstonu3a.org.uk

With the cables provided, you would be able to attach your own laptop to the projector and display an Internet page or a presentation on to a screen or wall. It's a good way to enhance your subject matter, talks and discussions.



Next Newsletter

Our next edition will be out at the beginning of **August 2026**. The **deadline** for sending in copy and photographs will be **Wednesday, 8 July**. Please send your contributions to: communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Destination Peace Pagoda



On Wednesday, 18 March six members of the Kingston **u3a** Cycling group met outside the newly restored Art Deco-styled Richmond Station, ready for the day's ride. Our destination was Battersea Park and most of the ride was to be on cycle ways and paths by the Thames. We crossed Kew Bridge, rode along Cycle Route 9, across Hammersmith Bridge, then along the Embankment towards Wandsworth Park and the Riverside Quarter, passing the Heliport, to the now closed Albert Bridge.

On entering Battersea Park, we

posed for the group photo at the Peace Pagoda and then stopped for coffee and cake at the Pear Tree Café, sitting outside by the boating lake.

Not having enough time left, we passed on the option to ride to Battersea Power Station, a 'destination' in itself after decades of disuse and refurbishment.

We had a choice of return routes – either cycle back along the same route or ride to Clapham Junction and take the train home. Most of us chose to ride all the way home to Kingston. The sun shone throughout our ride and it was a great springtime day out.

Richard Post & Richard Radmore

Visit to a Recycling Facility

On 16 March some members of the Climate Emergency group visited the Veolia Southwark Integrated Waste Management Facility. Veolia is the contracted operator for the South London Waste Partnership, which provides sustainable and cost-effective recycling.

The visit included a presentation, some discussion and a tour of the facility. It was hosted by Michaela Peters, the Local Education, Communications and Outreach Manager at Kingston Council, with her Veolia colleagues.

The talk provided some impressive statistics of the volume of waste dealt with in this large, well-hidden site so close to the centre of London. Michaela described the environmental care taken, with many onsite projects such as bat boxes. We discussed the challenges of

dealing with the waste, which is never perfectly disposed of by the general public.

We saw a vast array of conveyor belts dealing with the various categories of waste. The width of the belts, their speed and the volume of material made us realise how much waste we create. Some of the technology was impressive – for example, the 'Eddy Current Generator' throws aluminium cans from the belt into a hopper at lightning speed. A lot of waste still has to be separated by hand, especially soft plastics.

This was a most enjoyable, enlightening visit and we are grateful to Kingston Council and Veolia for making us so welcome and providing us with a real appreciation of their activities.

Rodney Brook

Singing for Fun Summer Concert

It's still a couple of months away but here's a date for your diary – the Singing for Fun group's summer sing:

11am, Friday, 10 July

It will be held in the Mayo Hall, United Reformed Church, Eden Street, Kingston KT1 1HZ. Entrance is free and we'll be performing songs we've been working on with our music director, Beth Williams. As always, it will be a varied programme of popular and folk songs and – in a first this year – well-known pieces from the world of opera.

Do come along and join us for this free event – and perhaps think about joining us when we begin our new programme after the summer break.

Irene Stephens

Visits

Behind the Scenes at the Royal Opera House: Guided Tour

The first theatre on the current site of the Royal Opera House (ROH), the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, was opened in 1732. The current building is the third theatre, following disastrous fires in 1808 and 1856. The facade, foyer and auditorium date from 1858 but almost every other element of the present complex dates from an extensive reconstruction in the 1990s. The main auditorium is a Grade I listed building.

Come and join us for a behind-the-scenes guided tour and take a look at the areas that are normally off limits to the public, including rehearsal studios, and costume and production workshops. Witness first hand the inner workings of one of the world's most renowned theatres.

The tour starts at 12.45pm (check in at 12.25pm) and lasts 75 minutes.

Please note: There is a maximum of 20 places.

Date: Monday, 22 June

Meeting time/place: 11am (note later time than usual) at Waterloo Station, opposite platform 4. We'll take the 139 or 176 bus to the first stop (Savoy Street) in the Strand, cross the Strand and walk the short distance to Covent Garden. There are several cafés in the area for refreshments (not included) and one inside the ROH itself. The group will



The Royal Opera House Bow Street frontage with the statue of Katie Pianoff, ex-Royal Ballet dancer, in the foreground. © Russ London at English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

assemble at the ROH tour entrance at 12.25pm. This entrance will be pointed out to members before they go for refreshments. There will be bag checks on entry.

Cost: £18.40

Accessibility: The tour progresses through many areas, including corridors, stairs, escalators and lifts.

To join us, please complete the booking form in the centre of this newsletter and send it with your cheque, made payable to **Kingston u3a GAS**, to Hazel Burr.

hazelbee46@yahoo.co.uk
07950 687553

Please keep this page for reference.

Visit: Museum of Richmond

The Museum is a small, independent registered museum in the centre of Richmond, sharing a space in the Old Town Hall with the Reference Library.

It was opened in 1988 by Queen Elizabeth II and is supported by Richmond Borough Council. Within a small space we can learn the story of Richmond from prehistoric times, to the period of its rise as the site of a royal residence in medieval times, through to its modern-day support of arts and fashion.

There are limited spaces available for our booked tour of some of the exhibits.



Richmond Old Town Hall and Museum
© Ricardalovesmonuments, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

Date: Wednesday, 8 July

Time: 10.45am

Venue: Museum of Richmond, Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue

Meet just inside the main doors on the **ground floor**. Please do **not** go up to the Museum.

Cost: Free (donations welcome on the day)

Travel:

65 bus from Kingston. Get off at Hill Rise (stop V) just before Richmond Bridge.

Cross the roundabout and walk for three minutes to Whittaker Avenue on the left.

Train to Richmond Station. Cross the road and walk for 5-10 minutes along the high street to Whittaker Avenue on your right just before Richmond Bridge.

Accessibility: There are a few steps from pavement level to the main entrance. A lift is available to the Museum and toilets. The Museum itself is step free.

To join us, please complete the booking form in the centre of this newsletter and send it to Pamela Crisp (07846 722278).

Please keep this page for reference.

Do you have any suggestions for future **u3a** visits? Want to join the Visits team and help us organise our outings?

If so, please email Jacqui Hine at jacqui@hine.org.uk for more information about what is involved.

Reports on Last Quarter's Visits

Visit to the Charles Dickens Museum



Charles and Catherine Dickens, pictures on display at the Museum.

© Ijon, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) , via Wikimedia Commons

On 6 November last year a group of Kingston [u3a](#) members enjoyed a memorable visit to the Museum, the only surviving London house linked to Dickens, where he and his wife Catherine lived 1837-1839. Their first child was born here in 1837, the year Queen Victoria began her reign. It's where Dickens wrote the stories that made him an international superstar in the same year. Charles and Catherine had 10 children, nine of whom survived into adulthood but the couple separated in 1858, causing a scandal in Victorian society. By this time Dickens had written eleven novels and would go on to write a further four in the last decade of his life.

En route to the Museum we enjoyed coffee at Caffè Tropea, an Italian-run

family restaurant in Russell Square, which served wonderful coffee, and delicious cakes and pastries. Some of us returned later for lunch.

The Museum is presented as an early-Victorian family home arranged over five floors, reflecting the domestic layout Dickens would have known. It showcases over 100,000 objects, including Catherine's engagement ring and the handwritten drafts of Dickens's novels as well as his writing desk. I spotted a wonderful glass and silver decanter, the like of which featured recently on *Antiques Roadshow*.

An additional highlight to our visit was the *Showtime* exhibition, which formed part of the 100th birthday celebrations of the Museum. Dickens was very energetic

and loved to perform and act out the characters he created in his books. The exhibition explored Dickens's lifelong connection to theatre and performance, highlighting how he loved to have his books adapted and staged. There was a collection of original playbills, posters and props from various productions on display.

There were also additional insights via a video presentation from actors and writers, including Ollie Dickens, a great, great, great grandson and Mark Dickens, a great, great grandson of Charles Dickens, explaining why their ancestor's work is so adaptable.

It was wonderful to explore in depth the life of this author, who, from very humble beginnings, rose to become such a world renowned, respected and treasured writer.

Our thanks to Hazel Burr for organising this visit. If you haven't been to the Museum, I can thoroughly recommend a visit. For us the addition of a seasonal Christmas tree added to the atmosphere.

June Carter

Visit: Florence Nightingale Museum

This visit gave us a wonderful insight into the life and work of Florence and her legacy in relation to modern nursing. The superb presentation by our guide Rhinna told the story of a girl born into a very wealthy family but blessed with a father who, having been educated at Cambridge, was keen that his daughters



This Turkish lantern, or *fanoos*, was used in Scutari during the Crimean War. It is thought to have been carried by Florence on her nightly rounds of the wards. The image of her holding such a lamp gave rise to the legend of 'The Lady with the Lamp': a guardian angel of the troops. Artists often mistakenly showed her holding a Greek or genie lamp instead, which only added to the sentimental image.

should also receive a level of education way beyond that afforded to girls in the 1830s. He set about home-schooling his two daughters, Florence and Parthenope. Florence was the more academic of the two and had an extraordinary ability for analysing data which she used to great effect later in life.

She was, however, still expected to marry so, when she decided to take up nursing, her family was horrified. They sent her on a long world tour and, when in Rome, she met Sidney Herbert, who had been Secretary of War. The pair became life-long friends. She continued her travels and, while in Athens, she rescued a young owl, which she named Athena. She often carried the owl in her pocket until the pet died. The mummified owl is now in the Museum. Later she visited a religious community in

Germany, where she observed a Lutheran pastor working with the sick. She received four months' medical training in this community, which allowed her to take up the post of superintendent at the Institute for the Care of Sick Gentlewomen in Upper Harley Street.

In 1853 the Crimean War broke out. Sidney Herbert was Secretary of War again and reports got back to Britain about the horrific conditions suffered by the wounded at the military hospital. There were more deaths caused by infections and poor hygiene than actually sustained on the battlefield. Herbert sent a plea to the *Times* for a government solution and, as a result, a prefabricated hospital was shipped to the region. Florence was sent out to the Crimea with other nurses. The death rate from infections was said to be reduced from 42 to 2 per cent, something attributed to Florence's mantra of washing hands and opening windows to let in fresh air. (Where did we hear this again recently?)

During this war Florence gained the nickname 'The Lady with the Lamp'. The lamp in question was a Turkish lantern, a replica of which is in the Museum, and not a Greek or genie's lamp, which is often mistakenly shown in photos.

On her return to the UK and in recognition of her work in the Crimea, the Nightingale Fund was established for the training of nurses. She had £45,000 (equivalent to over £5 million in today's money) and she set up the first training school at St Thomas' Hospital in 1860. She wrote *Notes on Nursing*, which was

the first of its kind to be written. Florence persuaded her publishers to produce copies for the general public for six pence each. The usual price was £2.

Florence had a gift for mathematics and became a pioneer of the visual presentation of information, such as pie charts and polar area diagrams (similar to modern circular histograms), which can be seen on the floor of the Museum.

While in the Crimea Florence became critically ill and was bedridden for long periods of her life on her return. Despite this she lived to the age of 90.

Thanks to Rhinna and the excellent way in which the Museum was laid out. It felt as though we were walking in Florence's footsteps.

Pamela Townsend

Visit: Handel/Hendrix Museum

A group of 17 Kingston **u3a** members had an outing to the Handel/Hendrix Museum in Brook Street. It was well organised by Hazel Burr and the visit went smoothly. The weather was glorious – sunny and not too cold, which helped to make the day very enjoyable.

We arrived at the Museum in good time after a short coffee break in Bond Street. The Handel House (no 25), a Grade I listed building, has recently reopened after a refurbishment in keeping with the period 1723-59. We heard some beautiful period instruments being played, as well as recordings of Handel's music in other rooms, including *Messiah*.

The Museum staff and volunteers

were friendly, helpful and informative, always willing and able to answer our queries. We were able to look around without any time constraints.

One interesting piece of information I picked up was that castrati were employed to perform in his works because sopranos weren't allowed to sing in Italian churches – something I

hadn't realised before.

At 23 Brook Street, in the Jimi Hendrix flat, there was a lot of 60s memorabilia which invoked memories of that time. It was sad that such an accomplished guitarist died at a young age.

The Museum is small but interesting and I would definitely recommend a visit.

Sheila Cheek

Talks and Study Days

Third Age Trust

Online talks in May include: Saving Buildings at Risk; Enormous Numbers and Where to Find Them; Exploring World Faiths: Faith and the Media; Call of the Wild; Laughter Yoga; Suffering and Hope in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*; Drones, huh? What are they good for?

See full details at:

www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events

Surrey Region Study Days

A study day is planned almost every month. These cover a range of subjects: Global Warming; 300 Years of English Theatre: From the Rise of the Elizabethan Theatre to the Fall of Oscar Wilde; Bayeux Tapestry: Its Creation and Interpretation; World Affairs in the Middle East and Africa: Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa & Nigeria; and the Music and Satire of Gilbert and Sullivan.

See full details at:

surreynetwork.u3asite.uk/events/

London Region

Walks and Online Talks

Each walk/visit is organised and led by a qualified guide and lasts one and a half to two hours.

The events listed below are bookable separately and cost £10 each, with a maximum of 15-20 participants.

5 May: Visit – Tour of Tate Britain: 500 Years of British Art; **7 May:** Walk – Parks and Palaces; **12 May am:** Walk – Exploring Albertopolis; **12 May pm:** Visit – V&A: The Art of Burial; **15 May:** Walk – Chelsea Literature Tour: Surprising Tales from the Royal Borough; **19 May am:** Walk – Discover Pimlico; **19 May pm:** Visit – Women in Art at Tate Britain; **22 May:** Walk – Across the Pond: The London Haunts of Some Famous Americans

For further information and to apply and to pay to attend a walk or visit, please see the London Region website at:

<https://lru3a.u3asite.uk/events/>

Monthly Meetings 2026

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. Entrance fee is £1. Tea/Coffee and biscuits are available at the end of the meeting.

Please note: The May meeting will take place on the second Monday of the month, the 11th, as 4 May is a bank holiday.

Date	Topics/Speakers
11 May	Historical Houses in London – Colin Lomas Colin talks about some of the houses with a long history, all in or near London. You can visit them all. We'll also learn about the characters associated with them.
1 Jun	Walking with Polar Bears – Gillian Lloyd This presentation transfers the audience miles away from any human habitation to the middle of nowhere – where Gillian has 'encountered a spectacular and truly unique experience of walking with polar bears'. Gillian will show us her photographs of the landscape and wildlife and share with us some memories of the polar bears.
6 Jul	Protecting Our Pollinators – Peter Smith Peter is a beekeeper, amateur entomologist and writer. We are living through 'an insect apocalypse' with the numbers of insects, including the pollinators on which we depend for 75 per cent of everything we eat, plummeting. Peter looks at the causes of this decline, what is being done to help and what we as individuals can do.
3 Aug	From Victim to Victory – Andy Smith In an age when victimhood has become fashionable, blame is endemic and personal responsibility the whim of a bygone era, how does one rise above the traumas and trials of life and above public gloom, doom and despair? Andy offers a cheerful yet challenging poetic response to a contemporary topic.
7 Sep	A Bare Chronicle of Existence: Stories and Letters from Internment in Norway in WW1 – Rebecca Clarke
5 Oct	Kingston and the River Thames – Julian McCarthy
2 Nov	Partition and My British Raj Family – Jenny Mallin
7 Dec	Music, Musicals and Stories behind our Beloved Christmas Music – Frances Fry

Kingston u3a Executive Committee 2025/2026
Registered Charity No. 1011295

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Change of Address

Please email updates to:
Teresa Hall, 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.