Maidstone Invicta u3a

September 2026 Newsletter

Issue No 74

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Chair's Message

Dear Members,

I hope you have all enjoyed this prolonged season of blue skies and warm evenings. All too soon the days are shorter and there is a definite nip in the evening air.

Sadly, we recently lost a dear member, Pam Paszkowska who served on the committee as Secretary and Business Secretary for the past 18 months as well as compiling our newsletter. Pam was always cheerful and courageous throughout her illness. Our thoughts are with Mel and the family at this difficult time.

Please continue to support each other within your groups. Friendship, Fun and Support should be our motto. We are stronger when we stand together.

A big 'Thank You' to all who continue to lead and host the groups. If you have an idea for new groups, please speak to Anne or Sue who are always there to help at monthly meetings.

Best wishes
Carol Gupwell

Dates for your Diary

19th October 2pm – Monthly meeting at Beechwood Hall, Barming "Life in the age of Artificial Intelligence" with Dr Blay Whitby.
16th November 2pm – Monthly meeting at Beechwood Hall, Barming "A solo walk across Africa" with Fran Sandham.
21st December 2pm – Christmas Party and "Tis the season to be jolly" with Danielle Barnett.

(Further details can be found on our website www.miu3a.org.uk)

Previous meetings

Our speaker in August was Kim White OBE who gave us a fascinating insight into the culture and customs of the gypsy and traveller communities. Kim spent 30 years with the Kent Police and worked with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Team for much of that time. She took us through various customs from birth, through schooling, homelife, marriage and finally the culture and customs surrounding bereavement. Her talk was very entertaining, and we all came away with a much clearer understanding of the lives of these communities.

Interest Groups' Coordinators' Report

There are currently several groups who are looking for more members to join them. These are: **Art Appreciation**; **Music Appreciation**; **Local History**; **Creative Writing** and the **Photography for Fun** group. If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please email the relevant Group Coordinator via the links provided on the miu3a website. Alternatively come along to the next monthly meeting and see Anne or Sue at the back of the hall for further information.

There are a few people would be interested in a Latin for Beginners group, but we are struggling to find anyone who would be willing to coordinate this. There is a u3a Subject Adviser who may be able to help with starting up this group and there is an online Latin Group (however, this isn't suitable for beginners). If you think you could help, please let us know.

We are also looking to start a Medium Walking Group for those who would like to walk about 5 miles (or whatever the maximum the group chooses). It is anticipated that this group would meet on the third Thursday of the month and the Longer Walking Group would move to either the first or fourth Wednesday of the month. If anyone is interested in either of these groups, please email the Groups Coordinators (groups@maidstoneinvictau3a.org.uk) to express an interest.

Anne Wicken & Sue Wicks

Park & Ride

Don't forget there is a FREE Park & Ride service which runs to Maidstone Hospital from the old Park & Ride car park in Allington off Beaver Road (Postcode ME16 0XP - behind DFS). This is run using a Streamline minibus and runs every half hour. For further information see the Maidstone Hospital website.

u3a Getaways

Have you heard about u3a Getaways? Created in partnership with the UK Holiday Group, this exciting new collection of experiential holiday ideas has been thoughtfully designed with u3a members in mind. Every holiday is carefully built to combine discovery, comfort, companionship and enriching experiences. For further information visit: www.theukholidaygroup.com/u3agetaways or email: enquiries@u3agetaways.com call them on 01603 886773 or come and see Anne or Sue at the monthly meeting for further details.

News from your Interest Groups

Latin Group

Now the Bayeux tapestry has arrived in London, we were particularly interested in the Latin text that accompanies the illustration of this momentous event.

By the 11th century, what we know as Classical Latin had developed, meaning some of the grammar and vocabulary were altered in some way. Medieval Latin was used in the Bayeux Tapestry text. We studied this text, noting the differences, also looking at the English translation where necessary.

There is still a debate as to where this tapestry was created, and by whom. It is believed that it was made in Britain, possibly in Kent, and British women did the work. However, some of the grammar and vocabulary used suggests that the text might have been dictated to them by a French speaker.

The British Museum will be displaying the Bayeux Tapestry from early September till July 2027, and tickets have sold out for this year; however more tickets will be released in due course.

Ruth Marriott

Invicta Art Group

The Invicta u3a Art Group continues to meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Numbers dropped off slightly during the holiday months but in August we were back to our usual numbers. We try to have a different theme every month, and our meetings are very chatty as well as artistic.

If anyone is interested in joining us, contact the Group Coordinator via the link provided on the miu3a website and come and give us a try.

Mo Clayton

Grumpy Old Men (GOM)

Grumpy Old Men continues to flourish as one of Maidstone's premier discussion forums. Last year we were honoured to be visited by miu3a's Interests Groups Monitoring Team, the first time in over 10 years that any representatives of the fairer sex or indeed any monitoring body have been admitted to one of our meetings.

Our impression at the time was that the inspection went very well, although impressions can sometimes be misleading. In fact, the meeting must have been a memorable one for the team as GOM have since been led to understand that no further visits will take place. In other words, we shall be self-monitoring (the first group in miu3a to achieve this status) which is another way of saying we can mark our own homework.

Needless to say, GOM will be taking this responsibility most seriously as we do in all matters.

Weather forecasting

The Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria and Benin:
These traditional weather watchers make forecasts based upon the study of plants and animals, the stars, and by studying the intestines of goats.
Their predictions are *sometimes* correct.



The UK Met Office:
Headed by CEO Penny Endersby and employing just under 2500 people. This organisation uses supercomputer modelling, ensemble systems (whatever) and visualisation software to produce weather and climate forecasts.
Their predictions are *rarely* correct.

KBO, David Holmes

Photography for Fun



The Photography group have had a busy summer with a couple of outings as well as our usual meetings to share photos at Church Cross House. In June we visited Monkton Nature Reserve and were given a guided tour of the reserve to photograph some of the ten species of orchid found there. Monkton is situated in an abandoned chalk quarry on the Isle of Thanet and our visit coincided with the orchids main flowering period. As well as taking some

incredible photos of the flowers, there were several shots of members of the group prostrate on the ground, camera in hand taking close-ups of the orchids.





Our second outing of the summer was to Riverside Country Park near Rainham where we had a chance to explore the various pathways looking for interesting subjects to photograph. We will be sharing our photos in our October meeting.

Anne Wicken

Members on their own (MOTO)



Throughout this long hot summer, we have continued to meet for lunch once a month and for coffee in a local cafe. However, in July because of the heat, I invited the whole group to meet in my garden. Twelve were able to come and we gathered in the shade of my magnolia tree and two umbrellas. Two members brought cherries, one made a delicious lemon drizzle cake, and I provided the iced drinks, strawberries and homemade shortbread biscuits.



The outings this year have been arranged through a local coach company. Although not strictly MOTO activities there are twenty in the group and members have been able to find company for various outings such as a Tulip festival in Arundel castle. Then four of our group went on holiday to Italy in May

In June we went to Walmer and Whitstable. Unfortunately, as we arrived in Whitstable, we had a torrential thunder and lightning storm so we ran to the Harbour garden restaurant where we had fish and chips and shared a bottle of wine.

It was so hot for our trip to Kew Gardens we used the little train for a very informative tour of the gardens.

At the end of July. I suggested we went to the Open Garden afternoon in Allington Castle which is not usually open to the public. It is a beautiful setting on the banks of the Medway which was open in aid of the Heart of Kent Hospice and this year raised £17,500.

Later that month five of the group enjoyed an outdoor performance of Much Ado About Nothing in the grounds of Allington castle.

In addition to the outings, we have a games morning once a month where those interested meet to play Scrabble or Rummikub .

Plans for the Autumn include the Maidstone Lit Fest, the sculpture trail at Leeds Castle and an exhibition at the Maidstone museum.

Patricia Grant

Longer Walking Group

In August we drove to the village of Oare, where we started our 10-mile walk. After all the lovely sunny days we've had this summer, the forecast wasn't good.



We started across fields and Villages stopping at The Ship in Conyer for a drink and to use the facilities. Continuing we walked through orchards until we reached the Swale. As we turned to the East the sky ahead was black, luckily it was going in the same direction as us.



The highlights of this stretch along the side of the swale, were seven little egrets, they used to be rare visitors to the UK! A harrier in the distance, most likely a marsh harrier. We sat and ate our lunch on the shore of the Swale watching the birds.

As far as waders go, we saw redshanks, oystercatchers and curlew. Also, a large flock of Canada and greylag geese. We also saw a lot of more common birds, including coot, moorhen, goldfinch, robin, pied wagtail, skylark, kestrel, blackbird, mute swan. The birds did take our minds off the thunderstorm that was to our right, it was pretty black behind us too.



We returned to Oare with a few raindrops falling on us for the last 50m, how lucky were we.

Anne Wicken

French Conversation Group

The French conversation group has continued to meet throughout the Summer until August. The very hot weather prompted us to talk about climate change and the environment. We have also discussed our careers and what we might want to have with us most of all if stranded on a desert island.



We had another meeting with a French national at the Blackthorn Trust and have also met for conversation with French friends of a couple of members. We have played various games in French.

We meet in each other's homes most of the time on a fortnightly basis. At the end of July, we shared a bring and share picnic in the garden. Bon appétit!





Glynis Carpenter

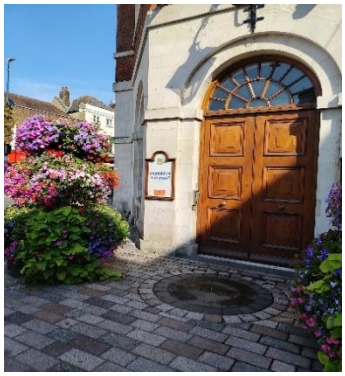
Village Visits 2 - July to September 26



July saw 10 of our members taking part in the Blue Plaque Walk in Wateringbury, organised by Molly and Tracey. It was an extremely hot day, however we managed to dodge the searing heat mostly, by sheltering under the many trees along the trail.

We learnt about the Pluto Pipeline and the Koh-i-Noor diamond, said to have been presented to Queen Victoria although what we think about the Koh-i-Noor diamond may well be no more than embellished gossip. Who's to say.

After visiting and seeing the various plaques and hearing the history behind them, we made our way to The Wateringbury where we all had a very enjoyable meal and the service was good too, which rounded off the day nicely.



In August, 7 of us visited The Town Hall in Maidstone for a tour provided by Ray; this visit having been organised by Pauline, with additional information about Bank Street being provided by David Holmes. Ray regaled us with several comical and not so comical anecdotes from his time as chauffeur, serving the various Mayors over the years. He provided an extremely informative tour of the Town Hall, including the prison cell on the upper floor which retains words scratched into the wooden floor and walls by prisoners from long ago. Following our tour, we learned about the Battle of Maidstone which took place on 1st June 1648, and how Jubilee Square used to be used. There are some very decorative buildings in Bank Street, if one takes the time to look upwards when walking along. On the whole a thoroughly enjoyable visit, topped off by a delicious lunch at Frederic's Bistro.













In September our visit, organised by David Walters, took place around Bearsted Green which served as the home ground for 19th century cricket legend Alfred Mynn. Twelve of us, including a u3a visitor from Australia, met on a warm sunny day to learn some of the history of Bearsted, which developed from several separate hamlets in the 1700s of Holy Cross, including Roundwell, Roseacre Street and Madginford.

We saw the School House, being the first National School erected in 1839; the Wheelwright's house; the row of cottages which used to be the Forge and the seven Oast houses bearing the Invicta horse on their cowls. The 1665 Oak Inn, now the Oak on the Green, used to be a coaching Inn and housed the village jail in its older quarters, which is now believed to be the kitchen. The adjacent Fish on the Green restaurant, was previously the stable block to the original Oak Inn.



16th century April Cottage has previously been a sweet shop, Rowlands Bakers in the 1940s and Souffles restaurant from the 1980s until 2010. Ivy Cottage is where the poet Edward Thomas lived in 1903/1904 and the old red telephone box is now a book exchange.



The White Horse, believed to be a 17th century coaching Inn had a Victorian expansion in the 1890s, and a large brick extension to the southwest wing.



The shelter, 1837-1897, formerly housed the village pump and was erected by public subscription to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The commemorative shelter was refurbished in 1998 with funds provided by Bearsted Parish Council and Bearsted and Thurnham History Society.

Following our visit, we took lunch at Newnham Court Inn where we enjoyed both very good service and food.







Linda Taylor