



Senior Moments

*The quarterly newsletter
of Bookham & District
u3a*

*Issue 86 August
2025*

Chair Report

As I start to write this Report from the Chair I note that it is my eighth – and last as my two years in the Chair will come to an end at the AGM in October. I am very pleased that Angela Benny, our Vice Chair, has agreed to take on the role going forward. If elected, I will stay on the Committee as Vice Chair for at least a year whilst we look for another volunteer for that position. It is never too early to consider getting more involved in the running of your u3a – feel free to speak to me or Angela if you would like to know more. In particular, if you think you would enjoy finding and booking speakers for our monthly meetings we would be most interested to hear from you as our current Speaker Secretary is stepping down. I am happy to note that he has already booked speakers up to next summer, so you would have a period of grace to learn the ropes from him.

I trust that you had a good summer – whether you were off on your holidays, enjoying your garden or taking care of the grandchildren. As we move into Autumn we have hopefully seen the last of the heatwaves for this year.

Looking back over my two years I feel it has been a good period with attendances at the monthly meetings steadily increasing during the early part of this year, reaching pre-Covid numbers of about 125. Numbers have naturally dropped back as the nicer weather arrived – and we face competition from other Bookham groups who organised outings on the same day as our meeting!

Our Interest Groups continue to form the backbone of the u3a and it was a pleasure to jointly host a lunch for our Group Administrators as a small thank you for the hard work they all put in to ensuring the success of their groups.

I am happy to report that social events have returned to the u3a calendar with three enjoyable quiz nights at Ye Olde Windsor Castle. These will be returning later in the year – so sharpen your wits and your pencils. The Rat Pack evening at the Old Barn Hall was enjoyed by nearly one hundred people and we are looking to arrange another such event. Prime candidate at the moment is a murder mystery evening with a two course dinner included – please keep eyes and ears open for further details.

We will be holding another New Members' meeting in the Harrison Room on 24 September at 10:30 to which we would also welcome anyone interested in finding out what the u3a is all about. So, if you have friends or neighbours who might want to know more about us please tell them about this meeting.

Philip Brown



Bookham & District u3a

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The Committee 2025

<https://bookhamu3a.org.uk>



Phil Brown
Chair
chair@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Angela Benny
Vice-Chair



Pat Mander
Secretary
secretary@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Peter Osborne
Treasurer
treasurer@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Frank Cross
Speaker Secretary
speakers@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Liz Looney
Membership Secretary
membership@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Kay Angell
Social Secretary
social@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Chris Middleton
Groups Coordinator
groups@bookham
u3a.org.uk

This issue of Senior Moments is the first where a significant content has been provided through Artificial Intelligence, a much discussed computer innovation not welcomed by all, but for magazine editors in particular it has almost been almost a life saver. Any subject of interest can be keyed in and the feedback from the search presents a text grammatically correct so that it can be included as a finished article. My request in the last issue asking members to think up subjects that I could run through the system didn't produce a rush of responses but a few members in particular produced significant articles. Harold Reglar produced Life after Retirement and Kim Kitson in her AI and Genealogy explained how to use this new technology that anyone can follow. I certainly used her method, keying in ChatGPT in my search engine that produced the articles I have submitted in this issue. If you haven't tried AI it's worth giving it a go even if you don't want to submit an article for publication. Just use it to find out more about any subject that interests you and remember the more information you put in on any subject the more you will get back.

Maurice Baker



Maurice Baker
Editor Senior Moments
seniormoments@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Carol Stilwell
Webmaster
webmaster@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Viv Bignell
Publicity Officer
publicity@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Harold Reglar
Events Support
events@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Kim Kitson
Asst Membership Secretary
membership@bookham
u3a.org.uk



Cindy Fanger
Asst Webmaster
asstwebmaster@bookhamu3a.
org.uk

AI and Genealogy:

How Artificial Intelligence Can Save You Hours in Family History Research
By Steve Doyle, Wokingham u3a Family History Group

As someone who has pursued family history (FH) for many years, I've seen how digital tools have transformed the way we research. Since retiring two years ago, I've had the chance to dive deeper into both genealogy and the broader social history that surrounds our ancestors. And in the past year, I've begun exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can further revolutionise this fascinating hobby.

Let me start by saying: I'm not an AI expert. But since September last year, I've been using freely available tools like ChatGPT to assist my research. My aim is to give others the confidence to do the same. Just as the internet changed how we find information, I believe AI will become just as influential in the next decade.

AI may sound intimidating—or even threatening—to some. But in reality, it's just a highly advanced computer program. It's not conscious, it doesn't seek world domination, and it certainly isn't out to replace human curiosity.

Used wisely, it can become an invaluable research assistant.

What Can AI Actually Do for Family Historians?

Many genealogy platforms already use AI behind the scenes. Ancestry, FindMyPast, and FamilySearch all apply AI to transcribe historical documents, suggest record hints, and even cluster DNA results. AI also enhances and colourises photos, builds timelines, infers relationships, and suggests possible ancestors.

In one of my first AI experiments, I gave ChatGPT 24 pages of research notes about an ancestor. It quickly generated a timeline and a compelling 300-word biography. The result wasn't perfect, but it helped me identify gaps and decide where to focus my next research steps. I repeated the process for my father, and ChatGPT not only summarised the story but even drafted a well-worded email to request information from Canadian archives.

AI also proved helpful when I uploaded scans of handwritten World War I letters from my grandfather. In seconds, I received a typed transcript—about 90% accurate. For more complex or older handwriting, I found that pairing AI tools like Transkribus

with ChatGPT yielded better results. Teaching ChatGPT by entering a few corrected lines helped improve its accuracy for the rest of the document.

Beyond documents, AI helped me interpret DNA results and clarify relationships that even Ancestry hadn't highlighted. It can also guide image generation, enhance old photos using Photoshop AI, or animate portraits through services like MyHeritage.

Limitations and Cautions

Of course, AI has its downsides. It can produce incorrect or misleading information, and free versions are limited. Sometimes it repeats itself, gives different answers on different days, or veers off-topic. But with clear prompts and careful checking, it can still save hours of manual work.

Ultimately, AI should be treated like any other research tool: useful, but not infallible. It won't replace careful historical verification—but it can absolutely uncover leads you never knew existed.

It took ChatGPT about 10 seconds to produce the above. It would have taken me much more time to precis my notes.

I will be using AI in my future research to save time, but as with all research facts will be checked.

Bookham & District u3a Family History group meets on the third Monday of the month at 9.30am in the Waterford Room in the Old Barn Hall. New members are welcome and can contact Roland Cunningham His10@bookhamu3a.org.uk

Further information on AI by u3a can be found at <https://u3acommunities.org/interest-groups/computing/ai-for-everyone/>

We had a speaker about using AI in at our Family History u3a group. I typed notes on my computer as he spoke which I made into an article using ChatGPT and converted in 20 seconds into this article. I'm submitting it for inclusion in Senior Moments.

Kim Kitson



Preparing for Life After Retirement: A Guide for Older Adults

Retirement marks a significant milestone in life. After decades of work, it's a time to slow down, pursue passions, and enjoy the rewards of years of dedication. However, successful retirement doesn't just happen — it requires thoughtful planning, not just financially, but also emotionally, socially, and physically. Preparing for life after retirement is one of the most important investments older adults can make for their long-term well-being and happiness.

Start with Financial Readiness

The foundation of any retirement plan is financial security. It's never too early — or too late — to assess your financial situation. Begin by reviewing your savings, pensions, social security benefits, and any other income sources. Consider meeting with a financial advisor who specialises in retirement planning. They can help you create a sustainable budget, suggest appropriate investment strategies, and advise on the best way to draw down your savings.

It's also wise to account for unexpected expenses, particularly healthcare. Medical costs often rise with age, and even with insurance, out-of-pocket expenses can be significant. Exploring supplemental health insurance or long-term care policies can offer peace of mind.

Define Your Purpose

One of the most overlooked aspects of retirement planning is figuring out how you will spend your time. Work often provides structure, purpose, and social connection. Without it, some retirees feel lost or isolated. To avoid this, think about what activities, hobbies, or causes will give your life meaning post-retirement.

Some find fulfillment through volunteering, mentoring, or part-time consulting. Others dive into hobbies they never had time for before — painting, writing, gardening, or even going back to school. It's important to remember that retirement is not an end, but the beginning of a new chapter filled with opportunity.

Maintain Social Connections

Isolation is a serious risk for older adults, and it can impact both mental and physical health. As you approach retirement, it's important to build and maintain a strong social network. Stay connected with friends and family, and seek out opportunities to meet new people. Community centres, hobby clubs, faith groups, and volunteering can be excellent ways to expand your circle.

Moving to a retirement-friendly community or exploring co-housing options with friends are other ways to stay socially active and engaged. Relationships are key

to a fulfilling retirement.

Prioritise Your Health

Good health is essential for enjoying retirement. Establish healthy habits now to ensure you can make the most of your golden years. Regular exercise, balanced nutrition, routine medical checkups, and adequate sleep are all critical components of a healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity not only improves strength and flexibility but also boosts mood and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. Aim for a mix of cardio, strength training, and balance exercises. Additionally, don't neglect mental health. Retirement brings many changes, and adjusting to a new routine can be stressful. Mindfulness practices, therapy, or simply staying mentally active with games, reading, or learning new skills can help maintain mental sharpness.

Plan for Your Living Arrangements

Where you live during retirement plays a huge role in your quality of life. Some older adults choose to downsize to a smaller home, move closer to family, or relocate to a warmer climate. Others prefer to stay in their current homes but may need to make modifications to improve safety and accessibility.

Evaluate your current living situation and think about your

future needs. Accessibility, proximity to healthcare services, and social opportunities are key factors to consider. Planning ahead can prevent the stress of having to make rushed decisions later.

Embrace Flexibility

No matter how well you plan, life can be unpredictable. Health changes, financial surprises, or shifts in family dynamics can happen. Cultivating flexibility and resilience will help you adapt to changes and maintain a positive outlook.

Keep an open mind about what retirement could look like. It may be different from what you originally envisioned — and that's okay. Many retirees discover new passions and directions they hadn't anticipated.

Conclusion

Preparing for life after retirement involves more than just saving money — it requires thoughtful planning across many aspects of life. By addressing financial security, finding new sources of purpose, maintaining social ties, prioritising health, planning your living arrangements, and embracing flexibility, you set the stage for a retirement that is not only secure but truly fulfilling. Retirement is not just the end of a career; it's the beginning of a new adventure. With preparation and a positive mindset, the best years can truly be ahead.

Harold Reglar



Woodlands Park Hotel

Last August I told the story about Frederick Bryant and the history of Bryant & May, the Matchmaking Company.

Frederick Bryant had commissioned Rowland Plumbe RA in 1884 to substantially rebuild Woodlands Park "with a free hand, unfettered in the slightest degree by economical



Mr M D Rucker has become a most enthusiastic motor cyclist. We show him with his favourite machine, a Bowden, fitted with F N engine. The whole of the driving and control is effected by means of the Bowden wire mechanism. Mr Rucker is one of the best all-round athletes that ever mounted a cycle, a fearless cross-country rider, a crack shot, and a fine swimmer and runner. He declares motor cycling is far finer sport than driving a motor car.

considerations in the Gothic style." Frederick died in December 1888 of Brights Disease, coincidentally the same year as the Matchgirls Strike. He is buried in St Mary's Churchyard in Stoke d'Abernon.

His widow Lilian is in the 1891 census with three of her children, three visitors and 12 servants. She married Charles Lushington Hickley, a London Stock Jobber in October 1891 at St George's Hanover Square. They had a son Tom Hickley born in 1894 in Leighton Buzzard. In 1901 they are living in Sevenoaks with eight servants. Lilian appears on the 1911 and 1921 census but not with Charles. He seems to be lodging elsewhere – whether for work or personal reasons I am unsure.

In 1895 Woodlands Park is sold to Martin Diederich Rucker of 'Humber' fame. There is a portrait of him at Woodlands Park and he was Master of the West Surrey Stag Hounds. He lost his money, as financier in

Dunlop Pneumatic Tyres, sold Woodlands Park in 1899 and moved to a small cottage in Earlswood.

The next owner is Mr James William Schindler Benson, a Bond Street jeweller – in fact



Jeweller to the Prince of Wales. The house now becomes a centre for Edwardian Society with regular weekend house parties and lavish dinners hosted by James Benson. Visitors include the then Prince of Wales, who becomes King Edward VII, along with his famous friend, the actress Lillie Langtry.

In the 1901 census James along with his wife Ada is living in the house with eight servants. He is still there in the 1911 census with his wife and seven servants. The present dining room Bensons Restaurant is named after him.

Later in 1911 the house is sold to Lieutenant Eustratio Ralli. He is an East India merchant born in New York. In the 1921 census he is living here with his wife Louise and eleven servants. Strangely their first two children born in London in 1918 and 1920 aren't with them. All these servants but no



THE PRESENTATION: Mrs. Spencer Follett hands her Cup to Sir **Strati Ralli**.

nursemaids. His family originated from Greece and were merchants dealing in grain, silk and wool from ports such as Marseilles and Constantinople.

The Woodlands Park history leaflet said that the Ralli family left the house after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 so one would presume he had lost his money, but by the 1939 Pre-War Register they had moved with their three children to Beaurepaire Park in Basingstoke. Now this is quite a grand house and estate. They have 13 servants.

Surprisingly I discovered that they had opened up their garden that year in aid of the National Gardens Scheme on Saturday 5 August from. They held many show jumping and hound meetings.

In 1941, the house caught fire under the ownership of Ralli and he was unable to restore or repair the house due to wartime restrictions and shortage of building materials.

He sold the house in 1959 and moved to Westminster in London. I found an interesting newspaper article about him in 1959.

"Strati Ralli, 81, a millionaire banker and baronet, told the High Court on 11th February 1959, that he gave \$112,000 to an ex-



model to keep secret the fact that she was his mistress for 16 years." After the Ralli family left, was turned into a luxury hotel with terms of four guineas per week. During the Second World War, Middlesex County Council purchased the house and converted it into a home for the elderly. This use continued until 1975, when the house was used as a residential educational centre.

"Woodlands Park is now part of the Hand Picked collection of 17 Country House Hotels located in Britain's most beautiful countryside"

Following extensive alterations, the house was re-opened as a hotel in April 1981. In 1988, the hotel closed for a short time for modernisation, which is when the Prince of Wales Suite and additional bedrooms were added.

Woodlands Park is now part of the Hand Picked collection of 17 Country House Hotels located in Britain's most beautiful countryside. Stretching from Jersey to Edinburgh, the hotels range in size from 28 to 196 bedrooms, and all were built for our pleasure! So the leaflet said!



Anita Laycock

AI search on Berthe Morisot

Berthe Morisot was highly significant to the Impressionist movement. As one of the few prominent female artists within the group, she played a crucial role both artistically and socially. Morisot was known for her delicate brushwork, light colour palette, and ability to capture intimate domestic scenes and landscapes, which aligned closely with the Impressionist emphasis on light and everyday life.



Portrait by Édouard Manet

She exhibited regularly with the Impressionists, participating in several of their exhibitions from the early 1870s onward. Morisot's work helped challenge traditional academic art norms and contributed to the broader acceptance of Impressionism. Additionally, her close relationships with other key

figures like Édouard Manet (who was her brother-in-law) and Claude Monet fostered artistic exchange and collaboration within the group.

Overall, Berthe Morisot's contributions were vital in shaping the style, themes, and social dynamics of Impressionism. Berthe Morisot became important in the Impressionist movement through a combination of her artistic talent, innovative style, and active participation in the group's activities. Here are some key factors that contributed to her significance:

1. Early Training and Talent: Morisot received formal art training and was skilled in drawing and painting from a young age. Her early works already showed a fresh approach to light and colour.

2. Connection with Prominent Artists: She developed close relationships with leading Impressionists like Édouard Manet (who became her brother-in-law), Claude Monet, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. These connections allowed her to exchange ideas and be deeply involved in the movement's development.

3. Participation in Impressionist Exhibitions: Morisot was one of the few women to regularly exhibit with the Impressionists, participating in several of their independent exhibitions starting in 1874. Her presence helped legitimise the group and broaden its appeal.

4. Challenging Gender Norms: As a successful female artist in a male-dominated art world,



Portrait of a young lady

Morisot's achievements challenged traditional gender

roles and opened doors for future women artists within and beyond Impressionism.

Through these contributions, Berthe Morisot became a central figure in the Impressionist movement, influencing its style and helping to shape its legacy.

She had a most supportive husband in Eugene Manet, brother of Édouard Manet who not only took on the task of having her paintings framed but also did most of the arrangements for the exhibition of her work.



Self portrait



Maurice Baker

An AI generated text.

Croquet New Starters



This season's new starters decided they would like to remain together and therefore it was arranged for them to join the 2024 beginners, making

season weatherwise; two of our group sessions have been cancelled so far, one rained off in June and one for heat in July.

The Golf Croquet tournament in June was a success as usual, David Snow ensured it was well organised.



David presenting the trophy

a group of fifteen, a healthy number for a croquet group. We've all had a good



Double Trouble....

The weather was kind and we played several games each with different partners. A picnic was enjoyed by all, it was a fun day.

Congratulations for the second year running go to Paul Warren, (aided by his partners throughout the day) for winning the smart new trophy.

Paul only started playing last year so well done! Andrew Parrott was an extremely close runner up.

Association croquet tournament will be held as usual in August.

We thank David for organising these enjoyable days, the gardeners at Polesden Lacey for looking after the lawns and our rota of u3a croquet players for white lining.

Now a request. There are some players who would love their own mallet and be happy to buy the right one second hand. Surely there must be retired players who might have a spare mallet which they'd be willing to sell on. This also applies to a good quality adult garden croquet set (I'm first in line for this 😊).

Please telephone me on 01372 450526 or email valcross@hotmail.co.uk and I can put you in touch with a potential recipient.



David & Averina Keeping Score

The picnic and a day of casual croquet play is in a few days as I write, to which family and friends are invited. The

Val Cross



The American Museum in Bath

What a treat I had when visiting my sister in Bath recently. She took me to the American Museum and Gardens,



where she volunteers as a room guide. We had coffee on the terrace overlooking the Limpley Stoke Valley. The gardens are planted with swathes of Salvia, Echinacea, Acanthus, seven varieties of Alliums and much, much more. There is a woodland walk, play area for children, beehives near the arboretum and a wonderfully restored Conestoga wagon from the 19th century.



The museum's home is Claverton Manor where there has been a



Manor house since the 14th century. The current house was built in the early 1800s. It was bought by the founders in 1958 to display American culture and history through the decorative arts. It is the only museum of its kind outside the USA and was the creation of Dallas Pratt, a wealthy American psychiatrist and his partner, John Judkyn, an English antique dealer.

The house museum is set out as furnished rooms and displays on



three floors. The rooms range from the 17th century Keeping Room of

a Puritan household, through the 18th century Conkey's Tavern where Daniel Shays and other radicals plotted a rebellion against the Massachusetts government in 1786, to the New Orleans Bedroom from a Louisiana plantation house in 1861.



The collection of objects is vast and includes the finest collection of American quilts outside the USA, a Folk Art gallery, a

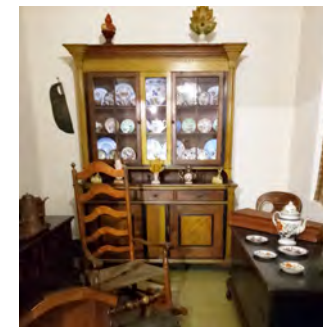


Renaissance map collection and displays of Shaker and Pennsylvania German items.

Having opened the museum in 1961, Dallas and John's relationship came to a tragic end in 1963 when John was killed in a car crash in the South of France. He was 50 years old and Dallas established an Education Trust in his memory. He survived John for another 31 years.

The American Museum and Gardens are a special haven just outside the city and is well worth a visit if you're treating yourself to a weekend in Bath. There's an excellent guide book, which has been invaluable whilst writing this review.

The legacy of Dallas and John lives on in Claverton for all to enjoy.



Hilary Fitzpatrick



Ways to cope with old age in

Leatherhead in 2025, spanning social support, mental wellbeing, physical health, and community engagement. Local Social & Support Services

* Leatherhead Community Hub (Surrey Downs Health & Care Partnership)
A welcoming space offering advice (Citizens Advice referrals), a community fridge, creative workshops, free meals, and companionship—about 3,000 monthly visitors Surrey.

* Age UK Surrey
Offers walking groups (“GO50 Walking”), men’s shed projects, tech support, coffee mornings, creative sessions, and “Tea and Chat” for older adults.

* The Silver Line
A nationwide 24/7 free phone helpline for older people feeling lonely or needing advice and companionship Wikipedia.

2. Physical & Leisure Activities

* Leatherhead Leisure Centre’s Senior/ Inclusive Programmes
Features low-impact exercise, aqua aerobics, fitness classes, walking sports (netball, badminton), gentle gym sessions, and mental-health badminton—all supported in a friendly group environment.

* Leatherhead Swans Club
Supports adults with disabilities but welcomes seniors too—offering swimming (with hoist), gym instruction, boccia, indoor bowls, social craft, bingo, dance, and karaoke.

* Leatherhead Community Association (Leatherhead Institute)
Over 20 regular clubs: Flexercise (retired), art, orchestra, Pilates, local history, meditation, bridge, and sewing—great for staying sharp and social.

* Leatherhead Library
Hosts “Stories for grown-ups,” reading clubs, digital support, “Knit & Natter,” and more—calls for social connection and mental stimulation.

3. Culture & Recreation

* Leatherhead Theatre
A historic Grade II venue offering plays, concerts, and community theatre events—ideal for arts and social outings .

* Nower Wood & River Mole Reserve
Wonderful local spots for easy walks, enjoying nature, and light exercise—all within the Surrey Hills AONB.

* Bocketts Farm
A family-friendly day out—great for volunteering or visiting grandchildren, featuring animals and outdoor play.

4. Daily Connection & Nutrition

* Fairfield Centre (above Swan Centre)
A weekday lunch club serving hot two-course meals and monthly special events—helpful for both nutrition and reducing loneliness.

5. Community Engagement & Mental Health

* Faith-based and community groups
Leatherhead Methodist Church runs the Fairfield Day Centre with Tai Chi, singing, art, knitting, monthly lunches and more.
Plus, monthly services at Hartfield House Care Home and social activities like “Time for Tea” and “Crafternoon” promote companionship.

Practical Tips for Staying Connected

* Regular routine: Join 1–2 groups or weekly sessions to build familiarity and social ties.

* Physical + mental health: Balance gentle exercise (like Flexercise or walking) with creative or culture events (choirs, music, art).

* Use support lines: If feeling isolated, call The Silver Line any time—24/7 free listening and advice.

* Keep learning: Attend library digital-support sessions to stay connected online and try new hobbies.

* Explore the outdoors: Regular, easy walks in Nower Wood, along River Mole, and weekend farm visits combine exercise with fresh air.

* Intergenerational connection: Volunteer at activities in the Hub, farm, or community association for meaningful purpose.

Quick Plan Summary

Area	Example Activities
Social support:	Community Hub, Age UK groups
Fitness:	Leisure Centre, Flexercise
Culture:	Theatre, orchestra, library
Meals/socialising:	Fairfield lunch club
Mental health:	Silver Line calls
Mind stimulation:	History club, reading groups, digital learning
Nature & light exercise	Nower Wood walks, farm visits

* Leatherhead offers a rich tapestry of supportive, accessible, and fulfilling options to stay active, connected, and purposeful as you age. Would you like help finding contact details, booking info, or matching specific activities to your preferences?

An AI generated text.



Jill Perryman

*Pictures from the Painting
Workshop summer group*



Chris Edwards

*Pictures from the Painting
Workshop summer group*



IMG_8765.jpg



Jenny Gaskell



Jenny King



Kate Broad

*Pictures from the Painting
Workshop summer group*



Myra Usher



Patricia Stevens

Bookham u3a future events

The table below shows upcoming meetings open to all members. For more information on these meetings please refer to the Bookham u3a website. You will need to be logged in to see the additional information.

The monthly meetings always start at 2.30pm

Old Barn Hall

02 Sept Dr. David Jones a research biologist at the Natural History Museum. He speaks regularly about his research to organisations such as U3A, natural history societies, Women's Institute and Rotary Clubs. This is an illustrated talk on the way in which rainforests function.

07 Oct Christine Green was a graphic designer at the BBC for 13 years and worked on shows as diverse as the Queen's Christmas Speech, 'Our Friends in the North' and 'Foyles War'. She has numerous show reels, story boards and art works to show. She received several international awards for her work including a BAFTA nomination for her work on 'Cambridge Spies'.

Study Days at Yehudi Menuhin School

Always on a Friday 10am to 4pm

Bring your own lunch

£12 u3a members

Friday September 19th - [Vulcan & Concorde: Iconic Aircraft](#)
Presented by Guy Bartlett, Aviation Historian

Friday October 17th - [Guiding, Ghosts & Gossip at Royal Palaces](#)
Presented by Sarah Slater, White Badge Guide
Lecturer, Hampton Court Palace & Blue Badge
Tourist Guide, Windsor Castle

Places will be available in the hall or for on-line viewing.