

July 2026 Newsletter

Contents:

Committee

- 'From the Rockin' Chair'
- From the Committee:
Secretary, Membership, Groups etc
& any news from other u3as

Click on [heading](#) below to link to each article.

Groups Focus

- [Coordinators Update](#)
- [Groups Update](#)
- [Groups News](#): Making Music;
London Walks 2

[Last Month's Meeting](#): Russia & Putin

[And Finally](#): 21 July, Berlin

Contributions to Alan:

<https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

- By 22nd of month to ensure entry in next issue (or incl later issue)
- MS-Word Arial 12 preferred
- Max length 1 page please
- No surnames for privacy

NB Articles may be edited

Any **Photograph** submitted must have permission for its' use and publication from **all** those photographed.

u3a Contacts & Information

- B&D website
<https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/>
- B&D Committee Members
<https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>
- B&D Events
<https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/events/>
- B&D Groups
<https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/groups/>
- B&D FaceBook – to join:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1381609732656710>
- National u3a website
<https://www.u3a.org.uk>
- National u3a YouTube Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheU3a/playlists>
- u3a National Newsletter
<https://www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter>

Stop Press Spaces available for Amberley Museum coach trip 15 July. Contact Steve <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

Welcome to our Newsletter

Our Open Afternoon on 10 September approaches with increasing speed. You will have seen from Coordinators and Groups Updates in previous newsletters the format will be different this year. I trust coordinators and groups are working together to promote the subject they love and make it a fun afternoon. Alan (Editor)

Dates for your Diary: details on the website at <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/events/>

🔊 Thursday 9 July 2.00pm Monthly Meeting
"The Malta Story" Paul Whittle

🚌 Thursday 15 July 08.30 Coach Trip
Amberley Museum & Heritage Centre
Contact Steve <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

👥 Thursday 23 July 09.30 Committee Meeting*

🔊 Thursday 13 August 2.00pm Monthly Meeting
"Tales of a Film Prop Man" Peter Benson

👥 Thursday 27 August 09.30 Committee Meeting*

🔊 Thursday 10 September 2.00pm Monthly Meeting
"Open Afternoon" **NB** Doors will not open before 2.00 to allow for safe setting up of the room

👥 Thursday 24 September 09.30 Committee Meeting*

🏠 Tuesday 29 September 2.30-4.30
Coordinators & RUGS Volunteers Thank You Tea Party

Monthly & Committee meetings are held at [Detling Village Hall](#). Non-members are welcome to come to two monthly meetings before joining.

*NB If you would like to attend a committee meeting, please contact our Chair, Graham <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

Committee

- **'From the Rockin' Chair'**



I am writing this piece on what may prove to be the hottest day of the year so far (until next time) and now realise why members have found it so difficult to think about Xmas. I wrote to you all about a Xmas lunch and I get it; it was too soon, but venues get booked up so early these days. Anyhow, with limited response and only half of that in favour the committee has decided there will be no Xmas lunch this year. We will still of course have the Xmas party at Detling in December, so I hope to see many of you at that.

I want to welcome Claire, who is to understudy Rick as speaker's secretary with a view to taking over next year, subject to being elected to the committee at the AGM. It's great to see volunteers come forward to ensure our thriving U3a can move on. Now all we need is a treasurer or all else may fail. Please, it is no more daunting than doing your own online banking and Kevin will be around to pass on his wisdom, so get in touch if you would like to help.

Ok, enough, I'm too hot so off to the paddling pool which I luckily filled before the hosepipe ban. Not a pretty sight but.....

Learn, laugh, live

Graham Chair: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

- **From the Committee**



The committee meeting was held on Thursday 25 June in Detling.

Our treasurer reported no one has as yet stepped forward to fill the role for next year. Our finances are healthy, taking into account regular and future expenditure. The committee are thus pleased to announce the annual membership fee will remain at £20.

We also discussed our insurance cover and the corresponding requirement for risk assessments – please note only members can attend interest groups and events such as the coach trip.

Our u3a continues to grow, with 335 members and 55 interest groups, with potential new groups on the horizon. Our Open Afternoon in September is the opportunity to show our activities to each other and potential new members – we need volunteers to help publicise it digitally and with 'hard-copy'. Please contact our Chair if interested.

We now have speakers for much of 2027, with a variety of topics and, if elected, a new speaker secretary for next year.

It has been decided that there will be no Christmas lunch this year due to insufficient interest.

Peter Secretary: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>



I would remind everyone that I have to step down from the role of Bearsted u3a Treasurer at the AGM in November. It is not an onerous role, but essential if our u3a is to continue functioning. I have enjoyed my time as treasurer but have completed my time on committee.

Please ask any of the committee for more information if you're interested.

Kevin Treasurer: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>



In July, we welcome back Paul Whittle. Paul, who has visited us twice before speaking about Eritrea and the life of Florence Nightingale, is very well informed and one of our best received speakers. This time the subject will be **"The Story of Malta"**.

Rick Speaker Secretary: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/> For last month's click: [Monthly Meeting](#)



When you email me with items for the newsletter, please could you not include full names. You can use someone's surname initial if you need to differentiate between people.

Many thanks to everyone who takes the effort to share their group's activities in our newsletter and inspire others to join or set up a similar group – it's what u3a is all about!

Alan Newsletter Ed.: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>



Just to remind members of this opportunity (Ed):

Would any of our members like to learn and help update the Bearsted & District website pages using WordPress?

Nearly 42% of the worlds site are built using this system. It's easy to get started and progress. I will train you every step of the way, using a special training site which is exactly the same as our current one (and the one I learnt on), plus full u3a training and user manual.

Dan Website Admin: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

Groups Focus

Coordinators Update



Lanyards & name badges have arrived for the first group who requested them at the January coordinators' meeting. If you haven't received yours yet, please let me know asap. It would be useful for all coordinators attending our September Open afternoon to have one. Also, if any former committee members etc still have lanyards they no longer require, please can they hand them in to any committee member.

There was a comprehensive update on the **open day** in the June newsletter, which is available on our website, so I won't repeat myself here. Just to say, thanks to everyone who has volunteered to help so far. The hall will be available

to set up from 12.15pm & we need to be cleared away by 4.00pm. Doors will open for visitors at 2.00pm – not before - & refreshments will be available from 2.15pm.

Maureen: Groups Coordinator: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

[Return to contents page](#)

Groups Update:

Potential new groups

As many of you know, a large proportion of our groups meet in members' homes, which obviously limits the size of the group. This is why we operate a waiting list system. **Art Appreciation & Read It Aloud** both currently have waiting lists. Some of the members from the existing groups have offered to help set up 2nd groups. So, if you're interested in finding out more about either of these topics, please let me know. With the open day fast approaching, it would be a good time to promote new groups before the winter period.

On the creative front, both **Art** and **Craft 1** have waiting lists and there's only one space free in **Craft 2**. Several people have enquired about a beginners' art or craft group. It would be good to set one up in the autumn. Any ideas, please get in touch.

Maureen: Groups Coordinator: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

[Return to contents page](#)

Groups News

Making Music Together



Back in May, as groups Coordinator, I had a lovely afternoon listening to the 'Making Music Together' group. They have just welcomed two new musicians, Elaine on recorder and David on ukulele.

It's a really supportive group, where all learn from each other. At each session they play three- or four-part arrangements, covering a whole variety of music and they enjoy trying new things.



They would love to have more members, so if you play acoustic guitar, ukulele, keyboard, violin, flute, recorder or any woodwind instrument why not give them a try! Maureen

[Return to contents page](#)

Hidden London Walks 2





[Return to contents page](#)

Fascinating walk with Hidden London Walks 2 around Temple Bar and the Inns of Court. Don't the Toffs know how to balance work/life with these tranquil retreats! Finished off with a well-deserved lunch at the 'Cittie of Yorke Inn'!

Joyce

Last Month's Meeting



Andrew Baker spoke at our June meeting on "Russia, Then and Now, and The Making of Putin". A first-class talk, loudly applauded, but certainly not the easiest to precis, so here goes!

Putin is all about regaining territorial losses, and absolute monarchy, using control of the people. With no ongoing foreign diplomacy with the West, this period is considered more dangerous than the cold war.

Putin is a Czar following in the tradition of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, to Lenin and Stalin. Under Ivan's rule, serfs bore the burden of being conscripted for life into the army, being rewarded with small plots of land. With 1 in 3 harvests failing, collectivisation of land became necessary to survive, and industrially, Russia has become far behind the rest of Europe.

With a police state utilising violence and terror, a repressed legal system and endemic corruption lead by Putin, any dissenters (e.g. Navalny, Litvinenko, Skripal et al) are sent to the Gulags or become targets for assassination. State capitalism is in the hands of Putin's cronies who are richly rewarded for their obedience. Even the church is used as a prop to the regime. With control of foreign news, the people only hear what Putin wants them to hear.

The first Communist Government arose following the Bolshevik uprising in October 1917 lead by Lenin. In the first five years, around 250,000 citizens were executed, and anything that promoted the revolution (regardless of its legality) was condoned. Stalin came to power in 1930, eliminating the nobility and intelligentsia. Millions died of starvation, with terror used as the tool to suppress the population. In the 2nd World War, 26 million Russians died, many at the siege of Stalingrad (now Volgograd). Khrushchev, following Stalin's death, removed the threat of terror in Russia, admitting it was catastrophically wrong. But he was removed in 1964 and liberalism was finished. In 1968, the Czech uprising was crushed but new dissident movements outside Russia grew. By 1999, Poland, Hungary, East Germany (following the destruction of the Berlin Wall), and the Czech Republic had joined NATO. Ukraine had voted 92% in favour of independence in 1991. In 1990, Gorbachev had become President, introducing 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', meaning 'openness' and 'restructuring'. However, these changes, introducing discussion about the atrocities under Stalin and giving Russians a taste of Western civilisation, were short lived due to massive shortages, economic chaos and loss of control. Gorbachev resigned and Yeltsin took over. He was instrumental in the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Putin was in the wings, becoming President from 2000 to 2008 and then in 2012 up to the current day, removing the term-limited laws for being President. He had been planning to restore Russia to the original Soviet Union, employing the measures used by the early Czars. He became rich by a combination of state sanctioned extortion, corporate kickbacks and syphoning off the State Budget, then made his 'cronies', the oligarchs as they are known, wealthy by selling state assets to them for small sums of money to gain their total commitment. With control of the media, Russian citizens were unaware. He built his palace on the shores of the Red Sea, twice the size of Monaco, costing an estimated \$1Million.

Protests at Maidan Square, Kiev, resulted in the then President of Ukraine fleeing to Russia. This was too much for Putin, in 2014 he invaded the Crimea, taking control. In 2022 Ukraine achieved EU candidate status and was invaded by Russia.

Today, 3 out of 4 Russians believe the old Soviet Union was the best era.

Any opposition is quickly dealt with and eliminated. There are threadbare public services, with towns and villages in the hinterland in a state of decay. The state is now run on organised crime. It is estimated around 400,000 Russians have died in the Ukraine war, but the system that has a stranglehold on the population protects Putin.

Rick: Speaker Secretary: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

[Return to contents page](#)

And Finally



“Es lebe das heilige Deutschland” – “Long live sacred Germany”. These were, it seems, the last words of Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg before his execution on 21 July 1944 in the Bendlerblock courtyard, in Berlin, together with three other officers.

His crime? The attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler (Operation Valkyrie) on 20 July at the ‘Wolf’s Lair’, by placing a bomb under the conference table (there were meant to be two bombs, but no time to arm the second one). Stauffenberg returned to Berlin not knowing he had failed, and, with other conspirators, put the military coup into action. But later that evening the Fuhrer himself spoke on the radio. After a brief shoot-out in the offices of the Bendlerblock (Army HQ), the conspirators surrendered. After an impromptu court-martial they were condemned to death and shot – probably saving them from the fates of other conspirators over the following months. Buried with full military honours, the SS exhumed the bodies the next day, stripped of medals and cremated their resting place is unknown.



Over 200 conspirators were condemned and executed, including the brother Berthold von Stauffenberg, and there was a general purge, 20,000 Germans killed or sent to concentration camps, the Nazi salute replaced the military one and power increased for Himmler. But less than a year later the war was over.

Alan: Editor: <https://bearsted.u3asite.uk/contact/>

[Return to contents page](#)