

September 2026 Newsletter

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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>

Welcome to our Newsletter

This month we have our Open Afternoon on Thursday 10 Sept, doors open 2.00pm There's important information about it for all members under Groups Focus, so do take the time to read it.

Our AGM is in November, and the post of treasurer will fall vacant. Please consider volunteering to enable our u3a to function.

Alan (Editor)

Dates for your Diary: details on the website at

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

 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 & regular RUGS Volunteers *Thank You Tea Party*

 Tuesday 6 October *Coach & Boat Trip to Windsor*

 Thursday 8 October 2.00pm Monthly Meeting
Speaker cancelled. Alternative arrangements to be made

 Thursday 22 October 09.30 Committee Meeting*

 Thursday 12 November 2.00pm - **AGM**
followed by *"Kentish Clerical Errors"* Ed Adams

 Thursday 26 November 09.30 Committee Meeting*

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'**



Our meeting at Detling this month is of course our Open Afternoon, which is an opportunity for our groups to display their wares and attract new members and ideas. I hope to see many of you there during the course of the afternoon, doors open at 2pm.

To advertise the Open Afternoon and, indeed, the u3a as a whole, we will have a **B&D u3a** stand at the next **Bearsted Farmers Market** on the Green (hopefully it will be back to green by then!) on **Sunday 6th September**. Please come along and say hello and bring or encourage non-members you may know to have a look.

Learn, laugh, live

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

- **From the Committee**



Notice of the 14th **Annual General Meeting** of Bearsted and District u3a to commence at **2pm on Thursday 12th November 2026** at Detling Village Hall, Pilgrims Way, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3EY.

The AGM is expected to be completed within 20 minutes, followed by the speaker.

There are a number of committee posts falling vacant this year and we remind members that we do require a treasurer.

The planning and organisation of the Open Afternoon is well advanced and we look forward to seeing members and potential members through-out the afternoon.

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



Wanted – not me, but a treasurer!

Having served the time allowed in post as treasurer I will be stepping down at the AGM. It is not an onerous role, but essential if our u3a is to continue functioning. I have enjoyed my time helping with the successful running of our u3a and would recommend getting involved. It's what u3a is all about!

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

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



Next September brings the **Open Afternoon** with doors opening at **2.00pm** Refreshments will be available as usual. There will be no speaker.

Unfortunately, our October speaker has cancelled. I am looking at alternatives and I will update you all in due course.

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

Groups Focus



Our next meeting at Detling Village Hall on **Thursday 10 September** will be in a very different format to our usual “speaker meeting”. It’s our annual **Open Afternoon**.

An opportunity for new and long-standing members to get together over a ‘cuppa’, make new friends and renew old acquaintances. Potential members are also

welcome. So, if you know anyone who might be interested in finding out more about what we do, please invite them.

There will be displays from most of our interest groups, focused in hubs based on categories, plus an Information Point with other details about u3a. We have several new groups in the pipeline, who will be recruiting members. Thanks to everyone who’s stepped up to help with the displays. I’m looking forward to seeing your creations.

It’s a “drop in” session with refreshments being served 2.15pm to 3.30pm. **Doors open at 2.00pm** Unless you are helping set up, you cannot enter the hall before that time, to enable our volunteers to complete setting up their areas safely. If you haven’t been to Detling before and arrive early, there are a pub and community café nearby where you can wait.

For those of you helping on the day, I will be sending a separate email with more details. The hall is available from 12.15pm for helpers to set up and we need to be cleared away by 5.00pm.

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

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Groups News

Local History 2

Mike, one of our u3a members, very kindly led our group on a guided walk of Hollingbourne village. It contains 76 listed buildings, as well as other listed features, such as the war memorial and, like many a village, has been home to interesting and influential people.



One of our first ports of call was Hollingbourne Manor, a late 16th century red brick building (in English bond). It’s an unfinished E-plan, the north wing only partly built and was for some time the home of a branch of the Culpeper family.

The family built a chapel in the 14th century All Saints Church in 1638, and includes an impressive monument to Elizabeth, Lady Culpeper who died in 1638. Her feet rest upon an interesting heraldic beast.





Another interesting monument within the church is to Grace Gethin, great-grand daughter of Sir Thomas Culpeper. After her death in 1697, aged 21, a collection of her essays was published, *Reliquiæ Gethinianæ*, a eulogy written by William Congreve and a memorial built in Westminster Abbey to honour her memory. There was also an annual Ash Wednesday sermon, but that has now lapsed.

Another of the listed houses is Godfrey House, built in 1587 and restored in 1859. Set behind a hedge and on an awkward part of the road (should that be 'more awkward'), it's easily missed but a fine example of an Elizabethan house.



The 'Dirty Habit' was our final port of call for a welcome lunch. The pub and adjacent building started as a resting place in the 11th Century for those on their way to the shrine of St Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Originally the 'Pilgrims Rest', its name was changed to the 'Dirty Habit' in the 1990s. Given a fashionable face lift in brick in the 18th Century, it suffered a devastating fire in 2022 but has now been rebuilt.



Our thanks to Mike for a really enjoyable morning.

Alan

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Last Month's Meeting



In August, we welcomed Pete Benson with his talk "Tales of a Film Props Man".

Having worked in finance, which he found boring, Pete wanted something more interesting and exciting, and a relation suggested he might like to get involved in the film industry.

Everything was unionized, which meant applying for a union card. Without it you could not work in the industry. After a successful interview in front of a committee, a new career began. Generally, everyone working in the making of a film is a freelance worker, so there was never a guarantee of work.

The first job was on "The Thief of Baghdad", where he found himself in charge of props. With no previous experience, he was asked what he was going to fill 'the egg' with. Improvising, he suggested wallpaper paste, which was agreed. Having found some at the studios, he then discovered that the egg was 4 feet tall!

Scouring the studios, he found enough despite ten takes being required. Cleaning up the floor afterwards took four hours.

Meeting a Props Master while filming “The Stud” (starring Joan Collins), led to a steady stream of work. Working on the TV show ‘The Professionals’ was another step. With little information, it required working out what props were required each day to achieve over forty shoots a day on a miniscule budget. This was a serious training ground for Pete.

Whilst filming “The Cracked Mirror”, he asked Elizabeth Taylor if she was enjoying her time in England. She was so protected that she replied “You’re talking to me!”. She added she had to go to a dinner that evening, which she did not want to go to and asked Pete what he was doing that evening. Pete replied he was going to the pub down the road. Later, to his amazement, who should walk into the pub but Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, who stayed for two hours before leaving very late for the dinner!

When filming “Water”, Pete met Michael Caine on location in St. Lucia. They met again in Devon for another film, where Michael deposited a large bonus in Pete’s back pocket. A very generous man.

Subsequently, Pete set up his own successful props business, starting with commercials and then full time in films.

An entertaining talk with a good attendance despite the 35⁰ heat outside.

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

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And Finally



On a recent visit to Cobham Hall, reference was made to Henry Brooke, 11th Lord Cobham, and a plot to place Lady Arbella Stuart on the throne in place of James I of England & VI of Scotland. I was intrigued! Who was she?

Lady Arbella Stuart (sometimes called Arabella), born 1575, was the granddaughter of Lady Margaret Douglas and Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick) and thereby great-great granddaughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. She was of royal blood, with claims to the thrones of England and Scotland.

Elizabeth I used Arbella’s potential as ‘heir presumptive’ in the international marriage market, commenting once “Look to her well: she will one day be even as I am”. However, developing “very exalted ideas” and flirting with Robert Devereux, the Queen’s favourite, she fell out of favour and was sent from court. But Arbella became the focus of plots to unseat Elizabeth and was kept a virtual prisoner at Hardwick Hall for 10 years.

In order to escape, she came up with a scheme to marry Edward Seymour, grandson of Lady Katherine Grey – she had been a favourite to succeed Elizabeth

until her death in 1568. Then in 1603 Arbella claimed a secret betrothal to the already married King of Scots.

When Queen Elizabeth died the crown, largely due to Robert Cecil, passed to James VI of Scotland. Arbella stated her loyalty to the new King, her cousin, but perhaps he was not convinced, even though it seems she told the authorities of a plot (known as the Main Plot) to place her on the throne, involving Lord Cobham and Sir Walter Raleigh. Both men were imprisoned in the Tower, and Cobham's estates forfeit to the Crown. She was, however, allowed her freedom.



Then, in 1610 she married William Seymour, grandson of Lady Katherine Grey, who, at 22, was 13 years her junior. But they did not have the King's permission. Seymour was sent to the Tower, for life, and she confined to a house in Lambeth, awaiting exile to Durham (never been, but I hear it's not that bad!). Both managed to escape, but Arbella was recaptured and placed in the Tower. Kept in the Bell tower, she pined away, dying in 1615. She was buried in Westminster Abbey, her coffin being directly on top of that for Mary, Queen of Scots.

In death it was safe to acknowledge her royal blood.

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

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