

Richmond upon Thames u3a

Newsletter – December 2025

Chairman's Ramblings – John Cardwell

I am writing this in mid-December so let me begin by wishing you all a very happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

I will spare you a journey through the significant events of our u3a's year; that can wait until nearer the AGM which is currently scheduled for 25th March 2026. But just to summarise our position as it stands today. David Wood has done a wonderful job in coaxing members to renew their u3a membership; to date over 1500 have renewed with no doubt more to come. If you haven't yet renewed, please take the time to send off a payment to David (or ask him about it); it is now very easy to pay either via a bank transfer or through Paypal via the Beacon portal. If you are uncomfortable with on-line payments, we still accept payment by cheque.

Richmond u3a now boasts around 140 groups in total. It is interesting to look at the nature of these groups. The most popular category is Social, followed by Languages and then Literature. Groups which involve some sort of physical activity (sports, cycling, walking) are also very popular. One is for ever reading articles about how to remain fit and healthy as one ages; socialising, mental and physical activities are always high on the list of recommendations, so I would suggest that our u3a is doing a great job of addressing these needs.

I know many of you are regular attendees at our monthly meetings. We have been fortunate this year insofar that no meetings had to be cancelled due to those pesky elections.

Our last meeting in November featured a lady, Eileen Mahoney, who spoke to us about the lessons she had learnt from clearing out her loft. In Sweden clearing out one's house in later life is considered very important – they even have a special word for it, **döstädning**, which literally translates as “**death cleaning**”. The process, popularized by the book *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* by Margareta Magnusson, is less about grim finality and more about thoughtful preparation and simplifying one's life. The core idea is to reduce the burden on family and friends who might otherwise face the miserable task of sorting through your life's possessions. Margareta Magnusson suggests starting the process at any age, but ideally when you are still physically and mentally capable. But perhaps wait until the Christmas festivities are over.

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Group News

1. Kew Gardens Visits - Important Notice from Geraldine Wear and Annie Keane

Dear Friends – I'm so sorry to bring some bad news for all those who have enjoyed visiting the gardens with our group.

Kew Gardens have decided to change their eligibility criteria for the Kew Access Scheme, which means that we no longer qualify, and are unable to rejoin the scheme for the year commencing 1st November 2025.

(Don't worry if you are a winner of Kew at Christmas tickets – they are unaffected!)

We will try and find any other reasonable route to continuing our visits in some shape or form, but they are unlikely to be free of charge in future.

I'm so sorry to bring bad news – it has been a great pleasure to meet all of you who have joined our visits over the past two years – and I know the visits have been a great source of pleasure and interest to many of you.

Hope to see some of you again at Kew before too long...

2. Pickleball update – from Lesley Leak

It may interest you to know that I received about 11 enquiries following the last news piece. About 6 members have signed up to learning the game at Sheen Sports and Leisure Centre on Monday evenings which is encouraging. However, as another 4 members said that Sheen was too far to travel to (ie from Hampton/Teddington) the sports manager at Sheen kindly persuaded the manager at Hampton Sports and Leisure centre to offer a weekly pickleball social from next January. I have let the members who are keen on learning pickleball in Hampton know this is to happen, but it would be helpful to get a wider reach of interest as the mention of Sheen in my last news piece may have put some members off joining in.

Going forward:

Ultimately, we can form a separate u3a Pickleball group either at Sheen Sports and Fitness centre or at one of the other institutions located in Twickenham, Hampton, and Teddington that have pickleball courts that are available for booking. Please contact me at lesleyleak21@outlook.com if you are interested in forming a core group to take this plan forward.

3. History of Art and Heritage – new course from John Moses

This course is divided into two parts, namely visits to major galleries and heritage visits and walks

Visits to Galleries

This part of the course will be dedicated to looking at particular artists or schools of artists in the National Gallery, The Wallace Collection and Tate Britain such as for example *Titian and the Venetian Renaissance painters* and *The Impressionists* in the National Gallery, *French 18th and 19th painters* in the Wallace collection and *Turner* in Tate Britain.

Heritage Visits and Walks

The second part of the course will be in the late spring and summer months looking at local places in the Richmond area, which are of historic and cultural interest such as Marble Hill, Chiswick and a heritage walk, looking at Georgian architecture in Richmond.

The course will run from January to December 2026. We shall meet about once a month and where possible on Wednesdays. The first visit will be in late January.

Members' participation is essential for this course so please only contact me if you propose to join the visits, which I am planning, when you are able to do so. I also hope that we meet after each visit to discuss what we have been looking at.

If you wish to join this course please email me on j.m.moses@btinternet.com and when you reply, please give me your e-mail.

Opportunity to be a Film Star

My name is Edward From Willowbridge Productions.

Willowbridge Productions are looking for audience members over 65 to take part in filming for a new show we're making called The Matinee Club (working title).

The show will feature music & variety acts performing in an intimate daytime cabaret club setting.

Audience members will be filmed and also be paid £100 plus travel costs for taking part and we aim to do this in mid-January.

We would love to hear from anyone who would be interested in coming to take part in one of our upcoming recordings.

Use this link to apply quickly online:

<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90976475/Survey-MC1> or

Please reply to Edward Jones (edward@willowbridgeproductions.co.uk).

December Monthly Meeting

The Monthly Meeting will be early this month and will be held on Wednesday 17th December in Clarendon Hall, York House at 2.30pm

Christmas – a Festive History by Andy Thomas

Andy Thomas is one of the UK's best-known authors and lecturers specialising in unexplained mysteries, global cover-ups and free expression.

In a fascinating, entertaining and uplifting presentation, Andy uncovers the long and intriguing background to the festive season. From the ancient midwinter celebration of light to the marking of the birth of a Messiah, mid-December has long been a time for rituals and rejoicing. Andy shows how, for all the commercialisation, we can still find meaning and enjoy Christmas today while keeping the flame of light alive in the winter darkness.

Join us afterwards for Prosecco and Christmas “nibbles” to welcome in the festive season. This is our thank you to you for your support during the year.

London Region Events

The London Region Events Team are pleased to announce that our **monthly Online Talks Programme** from **January-March 2026** is **BOOKING NOW!**

The talks will be delivered via Zoom on the **second** Monday of each month from 17.30-18.30 (log in from 17.00).

Monday 12th January 2026

Speaker: Jane Kershaw

Topic: Revealing the origins of the Viking Age through the scientific analysis of silver

Monday 9th February 2026

Speaker: Richard Westwood-Brookes:

Topic: Elgar - The composer you thought you knew

Monday 9th March 2026

Speaker: Alan Freeland

Topic: Catherine the Great - ruler of Russia 1762-1796

The full programme can be seen on the Events page of our website at

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