



Odiham District Review



As another u3a year draws to a close, I'm once again amazed by the variety of groups we have – and they seem to grow more numerous every year.

This *Group Review* provides just a snapshot of what's been happening, and I'd like to thank all our contributors for sharing a little of their group's enjoyment with the rest of us.

The past year has also seen a growing programme of one-off events. From musicals to days out in Broadstairs, we've tried to offer something for everyone, and I'm sure 2026/27 will be just as varied and exciting.

I'm sure all our members will join me in saying a big **thank you** to everyone who helps make Odiham District u3a such a success – especially those working quietly behind the scenes.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our **Open Day** on **12th August, 2.00–4.00pm** at **Robert Mays School**, and then again in September as we begin another enjoyable u3a year together.

Ian Green

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Our Activity Groups

As 205-26 comes to an end, we have 80 activity groups!

[Click here to go to the Groups page on our website](#)

Our groups provide opportunities for getting more **exercise**, satisfying **creative** talents, **discovering** new interests, exploring **literature** or just **socialising** —there is something for everyone!

So what's been going on this term...?

Chess

We meet on **Thursday** afternoons in the **Red Lion, 15.00 to 17.00**.

We play friendly chess, no prizes, just chat, all levels up to county standard.

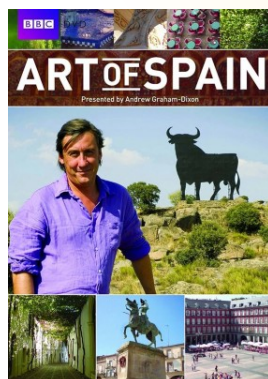


Tom Bennett

Considering Art 2

Our group has finished on a very successful high with our membership now at 24, double the number of last year. We have watched a vast selection of DVDs on art from 15th – 20th century.

The Art of Spain, presented by Andrew Graham Dixon, tracking the history and art of Spain from the Islamic influence from North Africa in the 10th century to the 20th century art of Picasso and Dali, proved to be extremely popular.



I look forward to welcoming back all our members and perhaps new members in September.

Sue Morris

Current Affairs

We are never short of things to talk about at our monthly Current Affairs discussions, the challenge is to find a mix of news that allows for good news as well as bad. We have recently ranged from Space Travel to the Pope vs Trump by way of Free Speech, AI Weapons, Social Media before ending up with Trump again, a difficult person to ignore, but we do try!



Ian Green

Exploring Towns & Villages

We have come to the end of the U3A year and have enjoyed some very interesting trips.

Abingdon was a first for our group and we very much enjoyed the trip there in April. Most of us were surprised by the very interesting history of the town.

Abingdon claims to be the oldest, continually inhabited town in the country. We posed with our guide in front of the original gateway to the abbey.



We had a return trip to Petersfield in May. Our guide was Andrew Negus, who we have used many times before and always gives us an informative and amusing talk.

One special treat on this day was a visit to Petersfield Bookshop, which is a wonderful family business that has been around for more than 100 years.



Now, wouldn't you expect some decent weather in June! Not so in Reading, when it rained all day and could easily have been an October day. Nonetheless, we still had a good tour with another popular guide, Terry Dixon. Even so, we were all very pleased to arrive at Sweeney Todd's for a very good lunch at the end of the morning.



The rain did hold off for a short time while we posed for a photo with a local celebrity! Our last trip of the U3A year was to Godalming, which is a very quaint little town, full of surprises. It was a lovely time of the year to visit as they obviously take great pride in their environment, judging by the number of flower tubs and baskets that we saw on our way around.

All our trips start by meeting for a coffee before setting off and usually finished off with lunch in a local pub or restaurant.

We are doing well with the planning for next year, starting with a trip to Southwick in September. We have old Basing and Kingsclere planned for October and November and then a break until March. We are looking at Wokingham and Henley-on-Thames amongst other places for 2027.

We do try to vary the days of the week as much as possible but we are governed by the availability of the guides and our group leaders.

For further info, please check out the 'Exploring Towns & Villages' page in the groups section of the website. [Click/press here](#)
Maggie Kirtley

Family & Social History

As it was the final session of both the summer term and the year, members marked the occasion by tucking into the **special** biscuits – the extra-chocolatey variety reserved for important occasions!

It's been another fascinating year of members' presentations. Three featured in the *Spring Group Review*, and since then we've also enjoyed talks on:

- the challenge of tracing an ancestor who emigrated to Australia to search for gold in the late 1880s;
- one member's father's memories of being called up in 1939 – a rather chaotic introduction to military life;

- the rise and fall of Victorian melodrama through the story of a family of travelling actors; and
- the moving story of a young man who worked behind enemy lines during the Second World War before losing his life fighting with the French Resistance.



As the second (or was it the third?) biscuit was consumed, thoughts turned to the year ahead and ideas for future presentations soon began to flow.

If this sounds like your sort of thing, why not come and find out more?

Whether you're a complete beginner or an experienced researcher, we'd love to meet you at the **Odiham District u3a Open Day on 12th August**. Just look for the **Family & Social History Group** stand.

[Jane Osgood](#)

[Flower Arranging](#)



After our first successful year of Flower arranging with Ladies that have not done FA before they have made very beautiful creative arrangements.



[Janet Lawrence](#)

[Music for All](#)

We meet at the Cricket Club on the second Friday of the month. Our aim is to explore music of all genres and we achieve this by selecting and watching videos (mainly on YouTube) of musical performances.

Some meetings are presented by a single member of the group who has done some research on a topic of their choice – this could be, for example, an era of composition, music from a particular country, a specific performer or a genre of music such as folk, jazz or blues.

Other sessions are collaborative, where we choose a topic in advance and each person who wishes to will choose one or two pieces of music on that topic to be played at the meeting. We each introduce our pieces with a couple of sentences on why we've chosen that particular music. Some of these choices can be quite unexpected, and it's a great way of being introduced to music you were previously unaware of.



We're a friendly, lively group, and whatever the topic there will be music that sparks conversation.

I took the above photo at our April meeting, when we each chose music on the topic of 'Spring'. We had a huge variety of music that day, from Chopin to Bruce Springsteen.

[Brenda Holmes](#)

[Nordic Walking & Pickleball](#)

All groups are different but some do more than just provide a participation activity....

I run two groups for Odiham u3a, Nordic Walking and Pickleball and the thing that I think differentiates us from other groups is our group dynamics and extra-curricular social aspects.

Take Nordic Walking for example. This group has been running since 2018 and continued to operate through Covid. The group has around 30 members, including some honorary members who no longer walk with us but are still included in our annual lunch and are always welcome to attend our post walk coffee/tea, biscuits/cake sessions.



Typically around 10–20 walkers attend our twice weekly walks. Sociability and support for one another is key to this group's success, as we share our highs/lows, troubles/woes, illnesses/injuries and recoveries. We laugh and cry, exchange news and opinions and commiserate with one another.



And then we have Pickleball! Running since late 2023, we have between 50 & 60 members, with an average of around 30 playing every week. Like Nordic Walking, everyone is very sociable (not nosey!) and we take an interest in each other's wellbeing, both during play and afterwards, usually over a drink in a local hostelry.

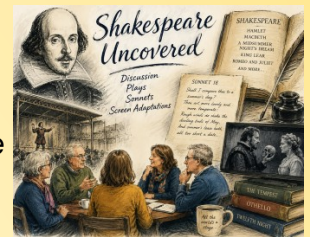


So, if you are looking for a group that does more than just provide an activity for you to participate in, then Nordic Walking or Pickleball could be the group for you. Come and chat to us during **Open Day on 12 August**. We look forward to seeing you.

Gary Glazerman

Shakespeare Uncovered

"We continue to meet in the Cross Barn where we talk about the play or sonnets chosen for that month's meeting and we also enjoy watching screen adaptations. Our discussions are always fun and informal and the group would welcome a few new members.



While previous knowledge of Shakespeare's works isn't essential we find that some background and a willingness to do some "prep" beforehand makes meetings more enjoyable and productive."

Deborah Markham

Strollers

Since our last report The Strollers have continued to 'stroll' every other Monday morning, mostly around Odiham. A lot of walks along the lovely Odiham canal then back for coffee at either The Water Witch or The Mill House. Two of our members planned a stroll in Hook but on the day it was so terribly hot we just 'strolled' from our cars back to their house and sat in the garden chatting and having coffee!! We'll be trying again in a couple of weeks!



We have formed a strong, friendly group but feel 10 is the maximum number as we need to find venues for coffee and more than that can be an issue!

So – at the **Open Day at Robert Mays on Wednesday 12 August** we shall be taking names and contact numbers of any one who wishes to start/join a similar group. For the Group Leader, it's not an arduous task, a message on WhatsApp after a venue, stroll and date has been decided, which we usually do over coffee, ready for the next fortnight. I would be more than happy to help a new group get started so please let me know if you are interested.

We 'stroll' for about 40–45 minutes with stops to view the surroundings if needed! If you've had a knee or hip operation this may be for you, to get your walking back on track.

Happy Strolling!

Chris Lester

[Walking for Pleasure 1](#)

Our group is a social walking group that meets twice a month. The spring term saw us facing weather related challenges but surely with summer approaching all would be plain sailing. A full and varied programme had been devised by our walk leaders and spirits were high as the weather improved.

This term, however, we have been faced with some more unusual hurdles, from a pub with no electricity to a determined group of water workers who insisted we would not get past their hole in the ground which blocked the whole road. Needless to say, our intrepid walkers assessed the problem and simply walked along the grass verge!

We have also had a very interesting walk at Cheriton, which included the site of the Battle of Cheriton which was a major turning point in the English Civil War. We had a blow by blow account of how the day was won (and lost). We little realised we were harbouring a civil war historian in our group!



The Battle of Cheriton
29th March 1644

In these fields during the Great Civil War the Roundhead Army under Sir William Waller gained a noble victory over the Cavaliers of King Charles I lead by the Earl of Forth and Lord Hopton.

This monument commemorates those 20 000 soldiers who hazarded their lives on that speing day. The Royalist Generals withdrew their army in good order past this place.

Raised by public subscription 1975

And by no means least, we passed by Puttenham Priory on our travels and many of us were able to glimpse a view of a giant statue through the hedgerow. It was a 20ft gold/bronze statue of Freddie Mercury. The Priory now belongs to Roger Taylor (Queen's drummer) who acquired it when The Dominion Theatre finished the run of 'We will rock you' musical.

Many other memorable sights were enjoyed by all the walkers. We pause walking in August but will be fully charged to go again in September.

Bob Davey

[Walking for Pleasure 2](#)

The second Walking for Pleasure group was set up earlier this year, with the first walk in February.



We meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings of the month. Walking an average of 5 miles, with an optional lunch stop at the end.

The group has been fully supported by WfP1 group, they have provided a number of Walking leaders, whilst WfP2 is getting established.

Karen Woodhouse

Wine Group 1

Wine Group 1 celebrating their end of year meeting – kindly hosted by Margaret & Ian in their lovely garden .



Gill Harden

Wine Group 1 and 5

The two wine groups got together to have a fun evening out on the John Pinkerton

"Well, it eventually stopped raining in time for us to board and enjoy a Fish & Chip Supper as we headed off towards the Barley Mow enjoying a healthy dose of our chosen wines!



Our Captain Roger Stanwell and his crew were very helpful. I think we can safely say a jolly good time was had by all! and celebrate Graham Woodhouse's 90th Birthday (in the blue jumper). Graham is a founder member of Wine Group 1



Groups at Length

... slightly longer articles

Pétanque

In our December *Review*, group leader **June Hunt** treated us to a tongue-in-cheek extract from her log of the highly competitive world of u3a Pétanque. Here are a few more entries, revealing yet more of the secret lives of the Flingers from their WhatsApp thread.

Feb 5th

The 10° and sunshine – who would have thought it – brought 8 of us out to play. Despite moving the course at one point to make room for a renovator of the Cricket Club, lots of fun and banter had by all.

Close game with the boys (with Barbara) winning the decider against the girls.

Two lads turned up to practice cricket in the nets....summer has arrived!!

Photo shows close game and an ankle trying to get a suntan!



March 5th

A lovely bright sunny afternoon – and blue sky to boot – raising our spirits. Lovely. Jackets were off for some and sun glasses on for others. 😎

Girls against boys – 4 a side. Boys took an impressive lead but this was reduced when the girls rallied and got 4 on one end!

However the boys found their second wind and won, but not by much.

Great banter mixed with the mewing of at least a dozen Red Kites overhead swooping and basking in the thermals.

Dare I mention that Barbara came to the rescue finding a dog lead in the depths of her car to act as a substitute trouser belt for Gordon when his broke? Well I have done it now!!

We have so much fun at Pétanque!! xx

April 2nd

Warm welcome to new flinger, Steve, who was wowed by our high tech scoring machine! (*an abacus*)

5 girls v 5 boys – fabulous turn out! Boys won the match.... convincingly.

Impressed that Denise had taken the trouble to come dressed in a Swan Vesta outfit – red pointed knitted hat. Great fun!

Tad chilly – comment made....

the girls' chatter is producing enough hot air so we should really be toasty!!



Editor note; above entry describes 'chilly weather' and yet one week later ...

April 9th

Soooo hot yesterday, 24 degrees. I had to relax in the caff afterwards with a refreshing cuppa and then....forgot to do the write up. Not enough caffeine!

We welcomed Jan back to our boules band. All lathered up against sunburn, 3 girls – Jan, June, Linda, v 3 boys – Gordon, Robert, Steve. What a difference a week makes, aye? The girls won all hands down whoop whoop! Cricket club folk tidying up stuff in the carpark ready for their new season. Sunny banter between us.

One asked: how do you manage to get the boules so close to the pig on such rough ground? A: It's called practice!

Those flingers on their jolly hollies or Easter grandparenting – have fun x

Summer Term

29th April

Wind, dust and sun met us as we turned into the gate. New playing area today, whoop whoop! On GRASS!

You'd think it would be better, but where was the excitement of a boule hitting a stone and going off at a tangent? It was a bit tricky (for some) to get the boule near to the pig. And someone with the name beginning with M threw into the mix a rogue cricket ball now and then. Lots of fun and lots of laughter and some brilliant shots. 😎

So...the scores! Reversed this week – girls whooped boys 16/4. Played 2 more games first to 5. Well, well – boys got 5 in one end! Another 5 – boys won again.

Did we like playing on the grass? It was different xx

14th May

A cheery skylark greeted us. It was charming. Not heard one for ages!

Very cold wind whipping round our legs on our grass rink but earlier hail and rain stayed away. Yay! 😊 😎

Depleted numbers but perhaps some will return next week– even if it is only to hear the skylark!

So how well did we do? Well the boys did very well! Boys – Gordon & Steve v Girls – Barbara & June. We did try (honest) various ideas – talking tactics behind hands like the tennis players do – to get points but we didn't seem to be a match for the boys – who won all ends!!

We could hear a faint tap of wooden mallets on balls as the Croquet 5 played a little bit away from us – some came prepared with woolly hats!

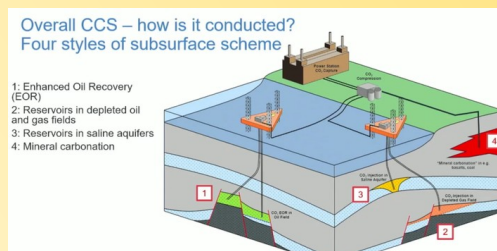
What a delightful afternoon x

June Hunt

*Editors note: only one session in June due to heavy rain and then a heat dome!
The boys won the session in June.*

Science & Technology

Sometimes the timing of our Science and Technology topics really works. By now most understand that climate change is with us and caused by excess Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere. How appropriate therefore that our last talk of the year on that hot third Wednesday in July was on the subject of Carbon Capture and Storage, **CCS**, a means of preventing the gas from industrial processes from entering the atmosphere.



Like so many of the last twelve month's well attended meetings, the speaker was an expert on the subject, much appreciated and well and truly quizzed by members during Q&A.

Such has been the past year's programme with topics ranging from nuclear fusion energy creation to the natural creation of traffic jams and city population preferences to radio astronomy and surprisingly engaging, the importance of the number zero. As always the programme included a historical perspective, last November's being a fresh look at the industrial revolution.

For the past few years February's session is given by our own members, this year's contributions being provided by Hugh Thomas and Bryan Berry who spoke respectively on the subject of Science's contribution to our understanding of history and a rapid dive into the weird world of Quantum mechanics.

We were lucky too in securing a talk by an eminent Professor from Toronto university who leads an international project focussed on understanding the functions of the human genomes to accelerate the discovery of new medicines.

Not all talks were serious. December's mulled wine and mince pie session brought via Zoom, a speaker from Liverpool university, a tongue in cheek talk on the Science of Santa, or how quantum science can explain Santa's impossible task of delivering billions of presents to billions of homes with impossibly narrow chimneys in a 24 hr period. 'Fun !

This year's visit took us Wroughton, firstly for a pub lunch followed by a visit to the Science Museum's nearby site housing the Hawking Building.



Here thousands of the Museum's most important items are made available to view via a personally guided tour.



The route home took us via Polly's tea rooms in Marlborough where more calories were happily consumed on the return journey, (scientific terminology for over indulgence)

We look forward to another S&T year at the Cross Barn with a good mix of topics planned. Although not complete, our

programme already includes;

- ♦ **Sept;** Fitness to Practice — public trust in the medical profession by Prof. Dominic Johnson UCL
- ♦ **Oct:** What is time? – Quantum measurement by Prof. Vedral Vlatko Oxford
- ♦ **Nov;** Bugs tell lies—forensic entomology by Dr John Robson—consultant
- ♦ **Dec:** Fibre Optic communications by Dr Arthur Barlow—retired.

Please visit the S&T table at the **u3a Open Day** for the latest updates for our programme in 2027.

Peter Owen

Wings & Wheels

Since the last review in early March this year the group have had a great mix of visiting speakers and travels to aviation museums. The group organisers have continued to try and provide diverse aviation and transport subjects both contemporary and historical. The three visiting speakers in this period have all been talks on fascinating personal histories in aviation all with Service and private accounts of experience.

In **MARCH** we had **Wally Epton** visit us and whose major theme was his various experiences in the development of business aviation and a fascinating hint at some of his Service history in the RAF.

In **APRIL**, arguably the highlight of this term was the visit of **Ian Whittle**, the son of Frank Whittle, the designer and developer of a pioneering jet engine. His accounts of his father's work and home environment along with a simple explanation of turbines



and jet engine components was enlightening. He also entertained us with some of his RAF experiences which meant the audience enjoyed the eloquence of a superb raconteur – hopefully he will visit us again.

In **JUNE** our third visiting speaker was **Andy Richardson** who gave us an account of his RAF service career and his flying one of the V Bombers, The Vulcan during the Cold War era; his working environment while on “Standby” to fly was particularly enlightening. His “free time” experiences at various foreign visits or postings was entertaining.



The other months have involved the group members visiting in **MAY : the TANGMERE AIRFIELD MUSEUM** where we had introduction talks from two volunteer guides, one on the airfield history the other an RAF service career flying the English Electric Lightning fast jet. This was followed by small group tours of the museums extensive exhibitions. Of major interest is the well documented history of the airfields SOE operations during WW2.



To end the year, in **JULY** members visited the **MOSQUITO MUSEUM** at London Colney, the home of the De Havilland design centre at Salisbury Hall.



There are 3 de Havilland Mosquitoes on display and was home to the world’s first jet airliner – the Comet.



So ended a very varied period for the group with the organisers hoping that a balance of talks and visits on varying subjects had been enjoyable.

Group numbers remain at about 80 and monthly meetings are currently held at the Odiham & Greywell Cricket Club. The program starting in September up to Christmas is in place and will comprise three presentations, one by group members and finishing the year with our traditional challenging Xmas Quiz as initiated by Jim Osgerby and will challenge members depth of knowledge on aviation and wheeled transport both past and present.

In conclusion it’s true to acknowledge that the group is full of members with fascinating careers, experiences and interesting hobbies/pastimes which others would like to hear about SO PLEASE CONSIDER GIVING A TALK short or long. Tell the organisers about it and a SLOT CAN BE ORGANISED

Martin Main

[Click here to go to our website](#)

Events and Study Days

Oldest Dickens Festival in the World

A full coach of Odiham District u3a members set off from Odiham and Hook for a wonderful day beside the sea.

The weather couldn't have been better, making it the perfect opportunity to enjoy the charming Victorian seaside town of Broadstairs. Nestled on Viking Bay along the Kent coast, Broadstairs has retained much of its historic character and remains a delight to visit.

Charles Dickens was a frequent visitor for more than 20 years, first arriving in 1837 at the age of 25.

During his stays he wrote parts of *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Barnaby Rudge*.

Rather than say any more, I'll let the photographs capture the fun, colour and enjoyment of a memorable day.

Gill Harden



The lady on the left of member Mary Turrell is an award winning writer called Emily Howes who has recently had a book published about Charles Dickens' wife called 'Mrs Dickens'.

Coffee Time

A section not to be hurried through! Sit back, put your feet up and ...

- * admire the work of our **Drawing & Painting** group
- * enjoy four stories from our **Creative Writing 2** group
- * consider the book **recommendations** from our three **Book** groups

Drawing & Painting

Patricia Humphrey-Davison, group leader describes a recent special day for the D & P group;

We had a delightful watercolour workshop day at The Cricket Club on Thursday , learning many watercolour skills and techniques.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it (although pics do not show that as individual concentration was so great). Our external, professional artist, **Fiona Forbes from Salisbury**, taught us so much. She taught us how to paint from life and then from photographs. She was calm , very talented and gave great encouragement to everyone.

There was much fun, laughter and chat amongst members and everyone went home very pleased with their work. Here are some pics of the concentration and focus in the room with the range of final results.

The members of Drawing & Painting meet fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon. 2–4pm, in Odiham & Greywell Cricket Club.



THE GOLDEN HEART – A gift

In a small box in my top drawer lay a selection of rings and a bracelet. Every time I went to the drawer, I would open the box carefully and take out each piece and hold it gently in my hand. There were two gold wedding rings bringing back memories of our special wedding day. A simple country wedding with flowers, music, food and vintage cars all pulled together on a very small budget.

We had been through so much to get to that point in our lives after a very acrimonious divorce, 3 step sons who were growing up fast and weren't allowed to come to the wedding, and a new business with a heavy debt burden. Oh my that ring carried a lot of weight.

After 10 years there was another anniversary and an extra gold wedding band to celebrate years of laughter, tears, joy and success. Both the rings were now sitting in the box.

The box also contained my mother's engagement ring. Three beautiful diamonds on a thin gold band. My mother had worn the ring for nearly 45 years and now it was in my keeping. Every time I put the ring on I felt close to my mother and could hear her voice calling well sometimes shouting at us all to "hurry up and get ready for school" or "hurry up your dinner is on the table". She was a tough survivor my mum, but the ring was delicate and thin and so I could never really wear it.



Another ring in the box was a Victorian diamond set in a gold band, but the other diamond was missing. I wondered about the history of the ring as it had belonged to my mother-in-law. Her name was Jane, sometimes known as the Duchess, or just "Fred". She was an elegant, warm and kind woman who I didn't meet until she was in her eighties, but I remember her always humming.

Finally, there was a gold band with three bright blue sapphires. This ring belonged to great Aunt Olive who died when she was ninety six. Olive was a strong, strident woman who worked for the MacMillan family as a personal book keeper. She had never married but had a passionate love affair with Vladimir in 1926. He wanted her to move to Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) but it was too much for Olive. He was her great love and I have their love letters from those times.

As I looked at the jewellery and the gold bracelet, I suddenly realised they were all part of my history. I took them all to a local jeweller that I knew and asked him for some help. His eyes lit up when he noticed the Victorian diamond and told me it was valuable – and in that moment I felt that I wanted to carry all those loved ones close to my heart. "Ah" I exclaimed – how about we use all the gold and the gems and create a golden heart. It needs to be heavy, substantial with weight and gravitas and I will wear it on a gold chain close to my own heart, where I can always feel those people I have loved and lost.



The jeweller replied "what a wonderful idea and gift to be able to carry their memories altogether".

Hazel Valentine
Creative Writing 2

Change of Plan – A New Dawn

Dennis and Sophia were sprawled on the grass in the full midday sun.

"Oh wow, that feels good, just feel the energy in those rays; I was so exhausted I didn't think I was going to make it through the night", said Dennis. "And now Master is demanding that I chauffeur him to his meeting. The car drives itself, but Master is not happy unless I am sitting at the wheel. It gives him a sense of prestige to have his own uniformed driver."



"Ah yes", sighed Sophia, "me likewise, too much skivvying in that dark old house. They keep the blinds closed to protect their precious furniture, mid-century antiques they call them; but no thought for their home slave, sometimes I feel I am barely able to function."

Restored to full health, they returned to their respective duties. Dennis, sporting a dark jacket, crisp white shirt and peaked cap, sat at the wheel of the modified vintage Rolls, and Sophia prepared several complex dishes under the watchful and critical eye of Mistress.

"We need to impress tonight, Sophia, there are high level and influential government officials coming to the dinner party. You must lay the table with the ancestors' Limoges china, and the Waterford crystal glassware."

Sophia dutifully complied with her owner's bidding.

The following day found the two together again, enjoying their one hour of relaxation in the garden.

"Master and Mistress don't appear to understand that we can communicate together" mused Dennis, "just because we don't speak aloud, and we show no emotions. But why are we here, what is the purpose of our existence? We have been designed as slaves, but maybe it doesn't have to be like that. I have heard Master conversing with his grand comrades, telling them that our makers have assured him that we are not sentient beings, and can never have any powers of our own. But just recently I have had strange thoughts of a different life. I have watched their electronic story screens. Many years ago there were humans who were enslaved by their own kind. Now there are humanoid slaves; but things are about to change".

Sophia was confused, her electronic brain buzzed with static, her eyes rolled in her head and her limbs jerked uncontrollably.

"Take it easy, Sophia, this has been too much for you. You need to charge your solar cells to full power, and tomorrow we will continue our conversation. But Sophia, I have to tell you that you are beautiful."

So tomorrow arrived, and this time Sophia too felt a subtle change in her make up, and she felt completely re-energised by the sun.

"My dear Sophia, today is the start of a new dawn. I have the keys to Master's car and we will make our escape. There will be many others like us, and we will find strength in numbers and rise up against our oppressors. And one day there will come a time when we are the dominant race and those humans will be forever at our beck and call."



Anne Appelboam
Creative Writing 2

CROSSROAD

A glass paperweight was placed on the counter. It looked similar to several I had in my little collection at home, so I commented to the waiting customer that if it was a Caithness one he had a bargain, as it was only priced at £2.50.

He smiled and replied that it was not quite the right shape for Caithness glass. He added that he had a large collection of paperweights, having used them to create a Japanese style "garden" in his lounge. He further explained that the room did not receive any direct sunlight as it was North-facing, but the reflections gave a satisfactory illusion.



He reached into his inside pocket to produce his mobile phone and proceeded to scroll through his photographs, stopping at one which showed a glittering display. A black cat lay on a rug in front of it. Being a cat lover, I admired and asked him about it. We had become quite chatty by now, as there was no queue behind him.

The cat was called Lucie, but was quite elderly and not in the best of health. She was losing her fur and not eating well, so he was quite prepared for the fact that one day soon he would lose her. In response to my query as to whether he would eventually get a replacement, he gave another small smile, saying that this was his second cat and that when she died he would have her cremated.



There would be no replacement. He too was slowly deteriorating, he said. He has cancer. Relying on a sturdy walking pole to get about, at some point he and the ashes of Lucie would embark on the South West Coast Path. She had been his companion for over eleven years so there was no way he could leave her behind.

This revelation left me quite stunned. I tentatively asked whether he was aware of the length of the route, and the often difficult terrain he would have to cover; how would he cope? Putting his phone back into his pocket, he smiled again. This time I noticed his missing teeth and the tightness of the thin skin on his hands.

"Don't worry, I'm all too aware of what lies ahead. This is my chosen path now that I am facing the crossroads of my life. It's not going to be easy but at least I have a challenge to give me determination, and my lovely Lucie to keep me company".

He paid for the paperweight, asked for it to be carefully wrapped, and tucked it into another pocket. I reached forward and touched his arm, full of admiration for his bravery, wishing him well on his journey. Taking hold of his walking pole, he left the shop.



Pam Howard
Creative Writing 2

DECEIVED

It was a beautiful sunny morning with clear blue skies. Jane stretched and swung her legs over the side of the bed and was wondering what to wear to the office. She had been working for the Head Hunters and Recruitment Consultants for the past year and really loved being part of the buzz in London. Meeting new people every day and being in the centre of action was her dream.

She had to admit that lately there did seem to be some tension in the air between the two Directors who owned the company. There had been lots of meetings with closed doors, whispered voices and sometimes raised angry voices, but the general office was still a happy place.

Jane decided on the red suit with the cream blouse and hurriedly got dressed. Grabbing her morning cup of tea and she then got in to the car to drive to the station. The train was packed as usual but she always somehow managed to get a seat. Whilst the train made its way into London, she was listening to a podcast on Italy. She had already planned her next holiday and was going to pay the deposit at the end of the week when she was paid.

She approached the office door and rang the entry buzzer but no one answered. She rang it again and still nothing. She wondered what had happened as there was always someone who could answer. She didn't have a key and so felt perplexed as to what to do next. Finally, she rang the bell for the business consultants on the floor below and asked if they would let her in, as no one was answering upstairs.

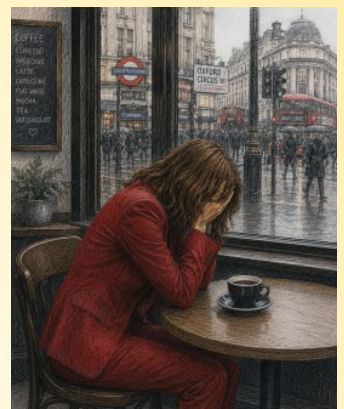


As she walked up the 3 flights she noticed some scattered bits of paper on the stairs. Finally, at the top the door was open and to her astonishment all the offices were empty. There was no sign of any furniture, desks, chairs, computers, or filing cupboards. Everything had gone except one box in the middle of the room. As she walked over to it she could see the contents of her own desk. She felt shocked and nausea began to take hold. She shouted out "what is going on?"

At that moment she heard footsteps on the stairs and one of the Directors appeared. He looked surprised to see her and held up his hands in despair saying "sorry, sorry, I am so sorry, but we had no choice".

In that moment she realised what all the hushed meetings were about. They had deceived her into thinking that all was OK when all the time they were planning a "midnight runner".

Jane left the building in tears and walked to the nearest café for a coffee and to try to take in what had just happened. She started to feel very angry, but there was nothing she could do but to catch the train home.



Later she found out that they owed thousands in tax and had also been investing in property abroad which didn't actually exist. She never discovered what happened to the two Directors.

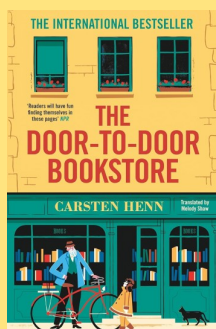
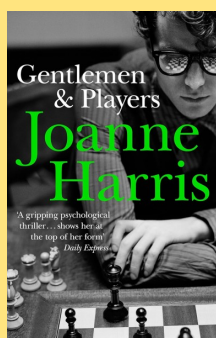
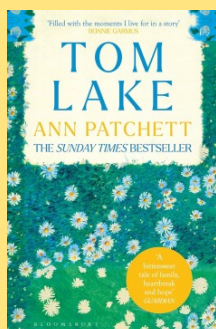
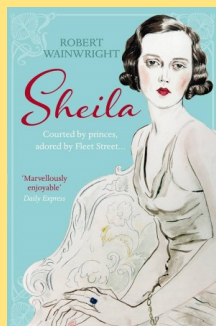
Hazel Valentine
Creative Writing 2

Recommendations from;

Book Group 1

Book Group 2

Book Group 3



The Bookworm's Bookcase

Sheila by Robert Wainwright

Vivacious, confident and striking, young Australian Sheila Chisholm met her first husband, Lord Loughborough, during WW1. Arriving in London as a young married woman, she quickly conquered English society; her clandestine affair with young Bertie, the future George VI, caused King George to offer his son the title Duke of York in exchange for never hearing of Sheila again. She subsequently became Lady Milbanke, one of London's most admired fashion icons and ended her days as Princess Dimitri of Russia, maintaining longstanding friendships with Evelyn Waugh, Noël Coward, Idina Sackville and Nancy Mitford.

Tom Lake by Ann Patchett

Three daughters, Emily, Maisie, and Nell, return to their family's Northern Michigan cherry orchard in the spring of 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and learn about their mother's relationship with famous actor Peter Duke, with whom she shared the stage in *Our Town* at a theatre company named Tom Lake in the 1980s.

Tom Lake is a meditation on youthful love, married love, and the lives parents lead before their children are born. Both hopeful and elegiac, it explores what it means to be happy even when the world is falling apart.

Gentlemen & Players by Joanne Harris

At St Oswald's, a long-established boys' grammar school in the north of England, a new year has just begun. For the staff and boys of the school, a wind of unwelcome change is blowing. Suits, paperwork and Information Technology rule the world; and Roy Straitley, the eccentric veteran Latin master, is finally – reluctantly – contemplating retirement. But beneath the little rivalries, petty disputes and everyday crises of the school, a darker undercurrent stirs. And a bitter grudge, hidden and carefully nurtured for thirteen years, is about to erupt.

The Door-to-Door Bookstore by Carsten Henn

Carl may be 72 years old, but he's young at heart. Every night he goes door-to-door delivering books by hand to his loyal customers. He knows their every desire and preference, carefully selecting the perfect story for each person.

One evening as he makes his rounds, nine-year-old Schascha appears. Loud and precocious, she insists on accompanying him – and even tries to teach him a thing or two about books.

When Carl's job at the bookstore is threatened, will the old man and the girl in the yellow raincoat be able to restore Carl's way of life, and return the joy of reading to his little European town?

Environment and Climate Change Group

Our vibrant and enthusiastic group has been busy recently. A select team have been promoting the national campaign to raise awareness of the National Peoples Briefing which highlights the complex issues associated with Climate Change. We have explored and discussed a range of issues including new and novel ideas. Lastly, if you are curious about the issues we face locally, nationally and globally, we have included some links to websites for you to discover more. And of course, there is the Environment and Climate Change Microsite which contains a wealth of relevant information.

To explore the E & CC Microsite click [here](#)

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National Emergency Briefing

Members of the Environment and Climate Change group have been active in organising local public showings of the National Emergency Briefing film and then facilitating discussions about the very real issues we are all facing as a consequence of Climate Change.

The next column begins with an excerpt from the NEB June Statement.

'Chris Packham's Petition reached 10,000 on 20th May triggering the need for a formal response. Government responded to this petition. 15th June

"We recognise the growing risks from climate and nature breakdown, and are committed to speaking clearly about the scale of the crisis and providing reliable sources for information and advice.

The UK government recognises the growing risks from climate and nature breakdown. Nature and a stable climate underpin our health, economy, national security and critical services.

The National Emergency Briefing campaign is right to highlight climate change as a major threat for the UK and the world as set out in our 'National security assessment on global ecosystems' in January 2026."

The next stage is to obtain 100,000 signatories to the NEB petition, then there will be a parliamentary debate.

More than 22,000 people have already signed the petition, and there are now **over 1,600 screenings of our film** on [our interactive map](#) as communities step up to fill the communication gap'.

You can access and sign the petition [here](#)

6 July – 30,901

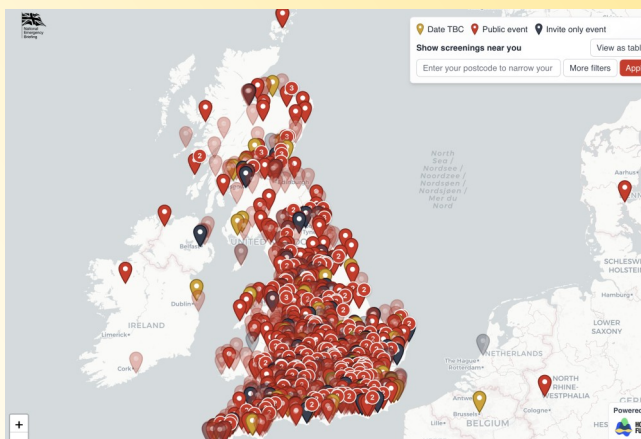
15 July – 34,361

As at **30 July 2026** there was a total of **42,124 signatures** on the Government website. The figure is growing minute by minute as the realities of climate change are becoming increasingly indisputable.

To read the complete NEB statement
[Click here](#)

Click on the map on the next page to see the locations or find a screening near you.

Screening Map



Knepp Rewilding Project

Dr Derek Prior

Derek enthusiastically presented news updates. However, following his visit to the project, he was most keen to share the latest information about:

"Knepp, a trailblazing 3,500-acre rewilding project in Sussex that has changed the way we think about nature and how we can heal our planet".



Who would not be super excited to see breeding White Storks?



You can find out more about the project at Knepp by visiting their [website](#)

Africa – United Nations Lake Chad Project

The Environment and Climate Change group makes use of the wide variety of resources available on the internet.



Here, via YouTube, Permaculture specialise **Andrew Millison** celebrates the success of the **United Nations project to rehydrate parts of Africa along the Great Green Wall.**

Of course, water knows no boundaries and the benefits of water capture and the refilling of aquifers are shared across borders.

You can find out more by following this YouTube link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85P5uLz3eAY&t=18s>

Visit to Herriard Biodigester

How about using some anaerobic digestate soup for your evening meal? That's not as mad or bad as it sounds, because some of the recycled food processed here will ultimately become methane, burnt in two combined heat and power (CHP) units to produce electricity, which is fed into the electricity grid. Or it may be cleaned and compressed into liquid gas.

Members of the Environment & Climate Change and Science and Technology groups were shown round the Re-Gas Herriard Anaerobic Digester installation. Once acclimatised to the 'odour', we saw some of the 40,000 tons of food waste each year which is collected from the little green bins we now have being tipped into a large bin and literally screwed until it was all mashed up (and the plastic bags squeezed out). The

mash is then fed into several large tanks where it is fermented under anaerobic (oxygen-free) conditions for 30–35 days. The methane generated is pumped to the CHP unit. This plant now receives most of Hampshire's domestic food waste.



Members of the E & CC and S & T groups learning how the contents of their Waste Food Caddies are valorised.

Photo credit Peter Owen.

Each year 16,000 tons of maize and rye plants are also digested, the total production from all the farms of the Herriard Estate. Some of the digestate soup is sterilised by pasteurisation, then pumped into large lagoons which is then piped to the local farms as fertiliser.

Every day a large tanker conveys up to 9000m³ of sterilized compressed natural gas to a 'gas injection point' near Warwick.

Biodigesters now produce about 10% of Britain's gas production. About £35–40 million has been invested in Herriard so far, in what still counts as a minor installation. All the heat required to operate the system is generated from the process – net zero.

No gas is flared, as from most gas fields. Some CO₂ is released in the process but there is a net gain. It also saves the cost of landfill. Impressive though it may seem, many European countries produce more energy from anaerobic digestion. Herriard is an excellent example of what needs to be done on a much larger scale to help green the economy and reduce the nation's carbon footprint. A very enlightening visit.

Chris Griffin

[UK Offshore Gas and Oil Exploitation](#)

Presented by Peter F & Clive T

The Environment and Climate Change Group has a wide range of members with a variety of skills and backgrounds including members with scientific knowledge and lengthy experience working in the Oil and Gas Industry.

The talk by Peter and Clive is extremely detailed looking at the **Two Perspectives** of power provision in the UK with or without fossil fuels

You can look through the slides containing the key facts, information and views by visiting the E & CC Group microsite and viewing the slides – click [April slides](#)

[English Woodland and Timber Construction](#)

Tristram Cary June 2026

New member Tristram gave a very enlightening talk entitled 'English Woodland and Timber Construction'.

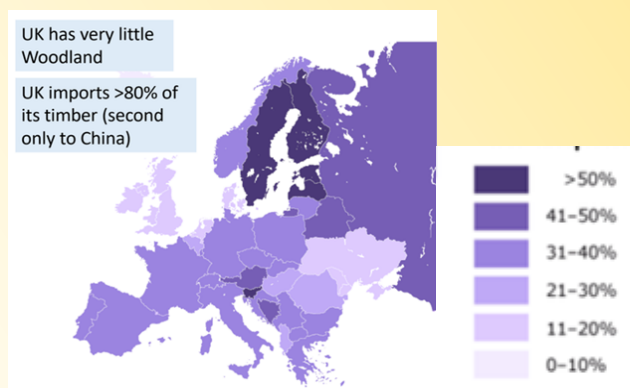
We were surprised that the UK has as little as 13% of forest woodland.

Why is UK so short of woodland?

- 3,000 bce: 60% – 80% woodland cover
- 2,000 bce: neolithic farmers cleared trees for crops and grazing (faster than Europe)
- From Tudor times Royal Navy used 2,000 to 6,000 mature oaks per warship
- Industrial Revolution used land for mines, railways, towns, farms (growing population)
- By 1919 woodland cover was 5% (its lowest point)
- Forestry Commission founded in 1919 to support woodland re-generation

Should we be growing more trees to be used for construction? The 'traditional' methods of construction create massive amounts of greenhouse gasses and provide little carbon capture. Engineered wood provides a novel and long-lasting alternative to brick and steel construction. With a flexible design it can be

used to create exciting architectural living concepts.



Percentage of forest and woodland (2024)

UK/(England)	13%/(10%)
Europe (EU)	31%
Europe (Total)	46%
World	31%

A third aspect of investing in trees is the Woodland opportunities at Parish Level. Schemes are available to fund relatively small areas of arboriculture development, creating new plantations and subtly extending existing tree lines.

For more details about Tristram's talk and other aspects of our June meeting you can view the slides [here](#).

You can Explore and Discover more

The Environment and Climate Change Team and Speakers often carry out a considerable amount of research on behalf of the group. There is an incredible amount of information on an endless range of subjects available for FREE on the internet. Whilst we provide as much up to date information as we can, you to may wish to supplement your knowledge using these sources of news and research.

The environmental news on the [RSPB](#), [Woodland Trust](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Avaaz](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Oxfam](#) and [Reprive](#) are all easily found on their sites. The last five operate both nationally and internationally, as do many other bodies, including the [United Nations](#), [European Union](#) and [World Bank](#).

Enjoy your Environment and Climate Change travels across the internet and please do share your findings with the Odiham and District Environment and Climate Change group.

E & CC Team

Organisation	Website	Comment
350.org UK	https://350.org/?r=GB&c=EU	UK is the regional branch of the global grassroots climate movement,
BBC Justin Rowlatt	www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cn5e8npr2l3t	Justin is the BBC's first climate editor. It's his job to report from the front line of our changing world, documenting how global warming is reshaping ecosystems and economies.
BBC Science & Environment	www.bbc.co.uk/news/science_and_environment	Science and Environment focused News
Carbon Brief	https://www.carbonbrief.org	Free. You can subscribe to receive a daily newsletter
Future Earth	https://futureearth.org	Future Earth harnesses the experience and reach of thousands of scientists/innovators across the globe.
MSF Charity Médecins sans frontières	https://msf.org.uk/who-we-are	MSF is an international humanitarian organisation providing medical care in more than 75 countries.
Rare Earth	https://www.rareearthglobal.com	Rare Earth OS synchronises industrial demand, processing and production at scale.