

Kingsbridge Estuary U3A

Summer 2026 Newsletter



Summer on the River

Pretty young girls with shining hair
short shorts and skirts
and brown legs bare,
Brash young men with bluster and bluff
flex their muscles and strut their stuff.
And youth grabs life, makes it stand and deliver
for this is their time -
summer on the river.
Old folks sit in the shade of a tree
and smile at familiar memory
and the river flows and rolls along
down many a year
to the same old song.

Annette Reddy



A Word from Peter, the Editor

By the time this newsletter is published and distributed to you it will be the date of this year's Annual General Meeting which I hope you will attend and participate. Now, I know the Chairman is always encouraging you and others to become Committee members, and believe me it can be 'soul destroying' constantly trying to find new members to take part. It is not so long ago that our u3a faced closing down because there were not enough members coming forward to form a workable committee. So, with the AGM approaching please give serious thought to joining the committee. If you would like to know more why not have an informal chat with Liz Hext, the committee secretary.

So, what is in this newsletter that will fascinate and change your life? Well, nothing life changing I guess, but you never know. Dawne who jointly leads "Lets Find Out" group, had such an experience, as did Gill, who was very reluctant at first to join u3a and now enjoys lunches, Bridge and looking for more groups in future.

I am sure you will experience joy and interest in reading what our members are up to as individuals, or as part of their groups. Liz Had a fascinating visit to France, and visited the small Normandy town of Lisieux. Today, Lisieux is one of France's most important pilgrimage destinations, second only to Lourdes. Barbara continues to keep us in touch with the monthly speakers and their so very interesting talks, thank you Barbara. Our Spanish group led ably by Jane is justifiably proud of the progress being made learning to speak the language. Have you thought about joining the 'Bring your own book' group, another which is working so well, now in its third year, well done, Isobel!

There are many others who have sent in contributions including HORSE RACING? Yes, a group of members went off to Newton Abbott and had a great time so Linda reports! I have had reports from Peter of the Pétanque group which has re-started for the summer season and takes place in the Recreation Park. And indoors, the bowls group are having fun - see the account from David. You will also read accounts of the Shakespeare & German groups sent in by Neil, and who cannot but be amused by Michele's humorous, illustrated ditties which has become a regular feature, thank you, Michele. Now, do you understand what 'Beacon' is all about? Well, wonder no more, because Joan 'spills the beans' on it! Joan has also publicised a Friday Morning concert by the Singing for Pleasure Group look inside for the details. Last but not least, by any means, is an essay by Pauline about the history of London Bridge which she delivered as a talk earlier this year to the Transport & Technology group meeting, a fascinating story!

There are the usual features relating to information about future meetings and speakers and our mystery Poet of the Season – do you know her work? I have also introduced a new feature celebrating our own local u3a poets – have a look!

Well, that's all from me, I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter – if you don't then please let me know!

Peter





A Word from Neil Martin, Chairman:

As we move closer to summer and the warm weather is starting to pop its head over the horizon, I am happy to say that we are in a great position as a u3a. The KB Estuary u3a Groups continue to thrive thanks to wonderful Group Leaders and our Members keep on having fun and learning something new, in line with the raison d'être of the u3a. We keep evolving to stay fresh. Innovative ideas for groups keep coming up, some take root, and become a regular part of our list of groups, currently standing at 39.

Just as a reminder, over the past 6 months, we have had some fantastic speakers at our Friday 'Open Meetings' including: Matt Harvey - Totnes Poet and Humourist; Clive Charleton - Ernestine Edgcumbe and of course, Rebekah Pearson talking about her Devonshire Darlings – The Women's Land Army in Devon. As you are aware, we have now started a new Group to look at future speakers to ensure we continue to get a great spread of speakers for the 2026/7 u3a Calander. The slideshow we now have at the start of our Open Meetings seem to be a focus for many people who have commented about the usefulness of the information.

We were disappointed to have to call off the May Open Day, which meant we had to cancel the speakers, Ian Hiscock and Mark Bennett, The Greenwood Consort. This is because of the Hall having to unavoidably close their doors to have the floor renewed throughout May. Thankfully, we have managed to get them to come back next year in January for more baroque and renaissance fun and games with flute, recorder, viola da gamba and harpsichord.

Sad to say, because of the u3a constitution, we will have to change our Committee Chair and Secretary in 2027. Both Liz Hext and I have been members of your committee now for about 8 to 9 years and by the end of next year, we will have reached the constitutional limit of the time we can stand. Please think deeply as to who you want to replace us as we need to identify our replacements to maintain continuity of the Kingsbridge u3a.

As a last point, I am happy to say we have managed to keep all the current Committee members from last year (and even will increase the team by one). This fact is a testament to their commitment and to you as Members as it is you that keeps the Committee going. Below is a picture taken by Liz Hext of the committee gathered together & getting down to work.



U3A Monthly Meetings Forthcoming Speakers

**26th June Alex Leger
Tears Before Bedtime**

Back once more by request, author Alex Leger spent a record 36 years as a producer and director on Blue Peter before retiring last year to write the amazing story of his four decades on the renowned children's TV show. A former Army officer, he was hired by fabled Blue Peter editor Biddy Baxter and went on to become a stalwart of the show. Alex will let us know just how much can go wrong, or right, during the filming of the classic children's TV series.

**31st July Woody Fox
Willow Sculpturing and illustrating**

In the 80's Woody became a children's illustrator and went on to become an expert at willow sculpting. 'The flow and weave that only willow can achieve is just beautiful to me, enabling me to create muscle tone and textures in my sculptures.'
After many years of sculpting, he migrated into using colours and also occasionally using fabrics, glass eyes and recycled metals.

August Summer recess - No Open Meeting

As usual, there will be no meeting in this month due to our summer schedule

**18th September 2026
Open Day - Kingsbridge Estuary Open Meeting**

Come and bring your friends, relatives or anyone for a cup of coffee and discover all the pleasures of the various u3a groups and companionship the u3a offers.

**30th October - Jim Causley
Life and times of Charles Causley, Poet**

Jim Causley is a folk-singer, award winning songwriter, musician, proud Devonian and all-round entertainer. He grew up in a wassailing village not far from Sidmouth Folk Festival and found his voice singing with local choirs. He studied Performing Arts and Jazz & Popular Music at Exeter College where he cut his teeth performing in bands on the Exeter music scene before heading to the University of Newcastle upon Tyne to study on their degree course in Folk & Traditional Music. He rose to prominence singing with The Devil's Interval and Mawkin: Causley as well as touring with Waterson: Carthy and David Rotheray. In recent years his work has focused on his musical settings of poems by his relative Charles Causley, penning his own songs and reviving lost gems from his home county.

**27th November Emma Cunis
Mysteries of Dartmoor**

Discover the history, magic and mystery of Dartmoor - an extraordinary living, working landscape. Emma is an engaging and seasoned speaker, illustrating her talks with stunning photographs, meticulous research, and personal anecdotes.

**11th December 2026
Kingsbridge Estuary Christmas Lunch
The Cottage Hotel
Hope Cove, South Huish, Kingsbridge, TQ7 3HJ, England**

Summer Quotes: if you're not barefoot, then you're overdressed." –Unknown

KINGSBRIDGE ESTUARY u3a

"Learn, laugh, live"

**February 2026 Monthly meeting
Mount Edgcumbe a Talk by Clive Charleton
Barbara McLarty writes:**

Looking across the Tamar Estuary today one can still admire the imposing Mount Edgcumbe on the other side. Our guest speaker at the end of February, Clive Charleton, told us about the noble family whose home it was for many centuries and in particular Ernestine Edgcumbe who was born there in 1843. Her father was Earl of Mount Edgcumbe who was aide- de- camp both of King William IV and Queen Victoria.

Remaining unmarried, Ernestine had a lively interest in the world around her and the changes brought about by the industrial revolution and especially in any developments in the Royal Navy. When her brother became Earl she moved with her mother to their house at Cotehele which was enhanced with the addition of the east wing. From there, of course, transport was mainly by boat and she writes in her diary about the river traffic, being highly amused when boats got stuck on the mud.

Ernestine travelled widely, both westwards into Cornwall and north as far as Alnwick in Northumberland where she enjoyed galloping round the grounds of the castle with the Duke. She was obliged to enter into the social life in London during "the season" mixing in royal circles, but this she detested.

As railway travel developed it became easier to travel round Europe and she even made it across the Atlantic to St Vincent, later speaking of her sight of the Soufriere volcano before it erupted.

Back at home Ernestine was involved in local politics. Leading up to the 1st World War she was a moving light in the Primrose League, a grassroots association supporting traditional patriotic and conservative values. She was very active in her local area until her death in 1923.



**April Monthly meeting
An Account of a talk given by Rebeka Pearson
"My Devonshire Darlings"
Barbara McLarty writes:**

"My Devonshire Darlings" was the title of our monthly talk in April. Rebeka Pearson appeared in authentic dress from the time when the Land Army was formed to help out on farms during the first and second World Wars. She had slides from the era illustrating the tasks the volunteer girls were expected to perform from milking, looking after pigs and chickens to catching rats.

Some, known as "Lumber Jills", were sent into the forests and trained to cut down trees for the production of wood products. The girls, some as young as 17, mostly came out from the cities. The lucky ones were made welcome in the farmhouse while some had to make do with a bunk above the cowshed. They had special uniforms and wore black armbands. No smoking or visits to the pub for any of them and they were under strict instructions to get eight hours sleep at night, well needed one imagines.

There was training available at Great Bidlake and later at Seal Hayne and Bickton. The Land Army was set up originally by Dame Meriel Talbot in 1917 and disbanded in 1950 after playing a crucial role in keeping our country supplied with food in very difficult times.

Our talks are very varied. On June 26th we welcome back Alex Leger who will let us know how much can go right or wrong from his long experience of directing Blue Peter.

The next feature is the first of a series by the u3a Poetry Group
celebrating the talents of our local u3a poets

Kingsbridge Estuary u3a Poetry Group

Introducing Nicola Summerson

Hello Peter. I am sending you one of my own poems. If you want some blurb I have been a member of the poetry group for years and have written both funny and serious poems in my time. I was runner-up in a national competition some years ago. These days poetry doesn't come as easily as it used to. The group leader, Ann, says "Nicky is a very valued member of the Poetry group, and whenever she produces one of her own poems on our chosen subject its either very entertaining or poignant".

Evening Watering.

As merciless midday sun mellows towards the West,
like lady from a weather house predicting 'fair' she comes.
Lovingly she lifts the metal can,
places it beneath the butt's tap,
fills with pure rainwater, and revives her flowers.

The lawn, a tablecloth of ochre, she ignores,
but hauls the can an inch above the ground,
and staggeringly determined, brings back life.

The tiny glowing garden waits her step;
heads lift to watch her and her slow approach;
geraniums in the sun and fuchsias in the shade
anticipate her presence with a nod,
roses and honeysuckle greet her with their scent,
tomatoes and sweet peas against the fence
rely on her good offices to save their lives.

Hands that used to measure out the flour and sugar, now
marked with brown blotches, loving pour out the liquid feed;
where once her children waited for their meal,
now flowers and plants watch eagerly for food.



Let's Find Out Group

Dawne Harbord writes:



'I am a joint leader of the 'Let's Find Out' group. We meet at West Charleton village hall on the first Tuesday of the month.

Members of the Group take turns to choose a subject to investigate. The details of the subject are then distributed to the other members who then bring the results of their research back to share with the group at the following meeting. The subjects have been very varied ranging from Endangered Species to Famous Gardeners.

When 'Cognitive Biases' was suggested as a topic I felt rather intimidated. My individual sub-topic was 'Salience Bias'. I was sure I would be unable to have the understanding to do the subject justice. But - I was keen to give it a go and the result of my research has had a major impact on my life. For many years I have been frightened of flying but my research enabled me to see how futile this fear was. I was able to conquer it and in January I flew to France with my family. They were shocked at the change in me - no more large gins before the flight, no more grabbing their hands, no more upset stomachs, no more frantic calls to the flight attendant. I was over it! I have to thank Chris Mills for suggesting the subject. Not all topics can have this outcome of course but they are all fascinating. I'm now working on conquering my fear of moths!

If you would like to join us, come for a session and see what you think. Just let Gill or me know you will be coming (dawneharbord@gmail.com/GillM.13@googlegmail.com)

An Appreciation by a reluctant u3a 'joiner'.

Gill Martin writes:

Interestingly, I was a reluctant joiner to the u3a, as Neil and I decided years ago to do different things so we could chat about our experiences at the end of the day. Neil won out in the end and I joined the u3a about a year ago. Since then I have had great times and food with the Lunch Bunch Group.

I recently joined the Bridge Group. Bridge to me was something I saw on the Agatha Christie, Cards on the Table drama. I was interested to understand more, but until the Group started up, I had no idea how to go about it. I still don't understand Bridge fully, in fact only a little as it is quite complex. The Bridge starter group led by Lesley keeps my mind going and I look forward to the weekly sessions.

Next year I will almost certainly join more groups. Neil and I still do different things within the u3a and we love talking about our different experiences of an evening.

Joining was a great idea!

Summer Quotes

"Spring being a tough act to follow, God created June." –Al Bernstein

Summertime is always the best of what might be." –Charles Bowden

A date for your Diary!



u3a History Group
Stonehenge - how it happened
A history of Stonehenge over 10,000 years

Presenter Neil Martin

Date 21st October 26

Location Malborough Village Hall ,

Time 10:00 for 10:30am

Beacon? What's that?

If you have been associated with the U3A for some time you may well have heard the word 'Beacon' being bandied about at Monthly meetings and when you receive this newsletter. Beacon is an online facility for managing local U3As, particularly regarding Membership, Finance, and Interest Groups. It is accessed via an internet browser using a username and password allocated by each U3A Site Administrator, with strong security measures to isolate data for each U3A. I find it particularly helpful to be able to communicate with a number of members, or all of them in my role as both Groups Co-ordinator and as the Editor of this newsletter.

Joan Pincombe is our Beacon Administrator and she writes as follows to tell us more what Beacon can do for you **particularly if you are a group leader or Contact**.

Joan Pincombe writes:

One of the benefits your committee gets from our subscription to the Third Age Trust is the u3a computer system known as Beacon. The Membership Secretary enters everyone's details when a person joins, including contact details, on whether or not you want to receive the magazine, Third Age Matters, and serves as a Register of members who have paid their subscriptions, or not, which is in the province of the treasurer.

The Groups Co-ordinator enters all the groups (currently 40) with a note of the group leaders/contact persons and ensures that the registers are kept up to date to meet the requirements of our Insurance policy in terms of liability.

The group leader/contact can add current members to create and maintain a register for their group. The real benefit of Beacon comes at this point because a group leader can send an email to all group members with a couple of clicks, without anyone seeing everyone else's address. This ensures that we adhere to GDPR law and safeguards individual privacy.

The system is really straightforward to use, and your committee would urge all group leaders to sign up to it. In this way we are also able to see at a glance up-to-date records of who belongs to which group, and also ensure that all those attending group sessions are fully paid-up members of Kingsbridge Estuary u3a.

If you would like more information on how to register as a Beacon user, please contact our Beacon Administrator, Joan Pincombe (joanpincombe45@gmail.com)

The New South West Region Webmaster.

Simon Thomson

South West Region Webmaster

I am 68 and have been creating websites for numerous clients and as a hobby, over the past 35 years, since just 2 years before a British scientist, Tim Berners-Lee, invented the World Wide Web in April 1993. I have also been a salesman a farm labourer a driving instructor, a fisherman and skipper of my own 52' boat and a tanker driver, collecting milk from farms over the South of England. I traveled around Europe in a Caravan for 4 and a half years, with my first wife, then looked after her for 12 years as Alzheimer disease stole her away. I have since remarried and fill my days singing folk songs and going to Folk Festivals. I have an exciting vision for the South West Region which I hope you and your u3a will find fun, interesting and helpful. I am currently working on a new, more colourful and hopefully attractive design. I will be adding regular updates to the site, as, in my experience, a static website is a quiet site. We currently receive about 30 visits a day, which I think is a little bit sad, when it could be doing so much more to draw people in to this exciting u3a community that we are all part of.

I am a u3a SiteWorks volunteer and will be creating training videos for SiteWorks, I am Vice Chair and newsletter editor of Chard, Ilminster and District u3a, and also webmaster of the u3a Avalon Network in South West Somerset and I'm gaining a vast amount of knowledge about SiteWorks and the Beacon management system.

How can you help me?

Well, I really need your help to fulfil my vision and to take this project forward. If you could ask your newsletter editor or someone in the know, if they could send me an article or two or even an electronic copy of your newsletter, I could then extract information from this to create a news from the region section. I also need copyright free photographs, and to keep ahead of the tortuous GDPR hurdles, permissions from any people appearing in your photos. I will try not to bombard you all with emails, which would really annoy me, and will only contact you a maximum of once a month, this can be reduced still further if I receive too much information to cope with!

How to contact me?

My email address is swru3awebmaster@gmail.com and I try to reply to emails as soon as I see them. Thank you for your time and I hope that you enjoy watching my journey, the website and hopefully our relationship, flourish for the benefit of your and all of our u3as here in the South West Region.

Pétanque group Peter Bashford writes:

We have restarted now the weather is improving. 18 members at present of which over 10 normally attend. We play over 2 pitches in Kingsbridge recreation ground at 2pm every Wednesday between the months of April and October.

Teams are selected at random from a bag of boules so you never know who you're teamed with or playing against. We are close to our maximum numbers but if anybody wants to come and try boules please contact Peter Bashford, the group coordinator, via the contact form on the Pétanque [Boules] web page.



Summer Quote:

I believe in playing pétanque with a certain kind of panache—even if you're winning, you take a risk.
Morlay Safer

Short Mat Bowls Group

David Peace writes:

I moved to the South Hams area, to Hope Cove, last August 2025, and set about joining Kingsbridge Estuary U3A almost immediately. Luckily, there was very soon an Open Meeting, with exhibits for most of the large variety of local U3A groups and activities, which was very helpful in helping me to meet new people and also decide which groups I should join. Among the many which caught my interest was Short Mat Bowls! For the uninitiated, Short Mat Bowls is played indoors, at the stunning West Charleton Village Hall, usually on alternate Saturdays from 10am to 12 middays, organised very efficiently by Tony Westlake.



Having not rolled a bowl since I was a young lad (over 50 years ago!) and even then, only in my friend's parents' garden, I was quite nervous when first going along, worried that I would be awful at the game, and make a fool of myself! As well as drag down the standard! However, I needn't have been either nervous nor worried, as the welcome from Tony and all players there on the day were incredibly warm, welcoming and reassuring, immediately putting me at my ease! I was, nevertheless, correct about one thing; I was (and still am) awful at the game! But that aside, I enjoy every session very much indeed. As with when I used to play golf, I'm ever-hopeful for every tiny improvement in my

game, and for more of the very occasional bowl I play which manages to find itself somewhere close to the Jack! I must also point out though, that even when partnering with a player who is much more accomplished than me, any (most! 😊) of my very frequent bad shots are never a problem and all members' patience with each and every joiner is unending!

Some of us then retreat for a well-earned cuppa and either a teacake or a bacon butty (as we call them in Wales). I try to abstain from the goodies, but it's always lovely to go for a cuppa and a natter! I couldn't recommend Short Mat Bowls with U3A any higher, whether you are an accomplished player or a complete novice!

All will be welcome!



Shakespeare Appreciation Group.

Neil Martin writes:

"Shakespeare, much ado about a lot."



The Shakespeare group is doing really well. Having finished Macbeth who, sad to say, still died! We are now looking into Shylock and his Venetian business. Amazing play. I think that Shylock is sadly misunderstood, but I'm in a minority.

John, who leads the fantastic members of this group, reads the play, following which people take on characters and then discussing the play and the meaning of the words and relating it to other of Shakespearian plays. It is amazing just how much the Bard calls upon history and how themes are covered in other plays, and how he brings it to life even in this modern world. John has a lot to do with this as his understanding of the Bard is amazing and he brings in quotes from other plays to make the connections.

I look forward to reading more and understanding the plays better.

Summer Quotes:

Summertime is always the best of what might be." –Charles Bowden

German Language for Reading Group
Neil Martin writes:

We are starting another level of German study in the group. We have been ploughing through heavy books from German's classical writers, and are now moving to more light reading as we now need to relate our understanding of German language to modern, everyday German books and writers. It is surprising just how much we are able to understand now. The group stays small and friendly and has some excellent members taking part.

You might be interested to know that we are considering how we might be able to start a second German Language group for people who are interested in starting out on the route. If you are interested, let Neil Martin know by contacting him via the German Language Web Page so we can keep you in touch with any new group start-ups.



Talking of new Groups
NEW GROUP SUGGESTION: Music Appreciation Group
Peter Bolt, Groups Co-ordinator writes:

The Music Appreciation Group is currently not operating. I have received interest from a couple of members for the group to be re-instated in a different format. If you have any ideas about how a new group might operate, perhaps a small group no greater than 10 members to begin with, would you care to contact me on peter.bolt01@btinternet.com or call me on 07890934017.

Secondly, **NEW GROUP SUGGESTION: "Walkies"!! Woof, woof!"**

Do you enjoy walking your dog, or even somebody else's dog? Perhaps your dog likes taking YOU for a walk! If we can find someone to lead it would you be interested in being part of a u3a Dog Walking Group, particularly if you would be prepared to lead the group?



Email Peter with your response by email peter.bolt01@btinternet.com.

LOOK! Singing for Pleasure Concert
Joan Pincombe writes:

The Singing for Pleasure group has been meeting on Friday mornings under our new and very talented accompanist, Cherith Kingsley-Smith. We have enjoyed learning some of the finer musical points of a variety of pieces, both popular and classical choral.

We will be giving a concert to our friends and families at our last meeting in July, when we will be joined by members of the poetry group and the Shakespeare group. KEu3a members are welcome to join us at West Charleton Village Hall at 10 am on Friday 24th July for a short concert and readings, followed by refreshments. **Please let Tony Westlake know if you are planning to come.**

☎ 01548 531562 📧 anthony.westlake297@btinternet.com

Our Poet of the Season

Léonie Adams



An educator, consultant, editor, and poet, Leonie Adams was best known for her lyric poetry reminiscent of both the Romantic and Metaphysical periods. Her poetry won her several awards, including the Harriet Monroe Poetry Award, the Shelley Memorial Award, and the Bollingen Prize. She served in editorial capacities for both Wilson Publishing and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City during the 1920s and later taught English or lectured at various colleges and universities, such as Sarah Lawrence College, Bennington College, and Columbia University. From 1948 to 1949 Adams worked as a poetry consultant for the U.S. Library of Congress

Country Summer by Léonie Adams

Now the rich cherry, whose sleek wood,
And top with silver petals traced
Like a strict box its gems encased,
Has spilt from out that cunning lid,
All in an innocent green round,
Those melting rubies which it hid;
With moss ripe-strawberry-encrusted,
So birds get half, and minds lapse merry
To taste that deep-red, lark's-bite berry,
And blackcap bloom is yellow-dusted.

The wren that thieved it in the eaves
A trailer of the rose could catch
To her poor droopy sloven thatch,
And side by side with the wren's brood—
O lovely time of beggar's luck—
Opens the quaint and hairy bud;
And full and golden is the yield
Of cows that never have to house,
But all night nibble under boughs,
Or cool their sides in the moist field.

Into the rooms flow meadow airs,
The warm farm baking smell's blown
round.
Inside and out, and sky and ground
Are much the same; the wishing star,
Hesperus, kind and early born,
Is risen only finger-far;
All stars stand close in summer air,
And tremble, and look mild as amber;
When wicks are lighted in the chamber,
They are like stars which settled there.

Now straightening from the flowery hay,
Down the still light the mowers look,
Or turn, because their dreaming shook,
And they waked half to other days,
When left alone in the yellow stubble
The rusty-coated mare would graze.
Yet thick the lazy dreams are born,
Another thought can come to mind,
But like the shivering of the wind,
Morning and evening in the corn.

Copyright Credit: Léonie Adams, "Country Summer" from Poems: A Selection (New York: The Noonday Press, 1959). Used by permission of Judith Farr, Literary Executrix of the Estate of Léonie Adams.

Editor writes: Do you have a favourite poet you would like to see featured in a future newsletter?
If so please send me the details.

Transport & Technology Group

The Bridge, a brief history of London Bridge

A report of a talk given by Pauline Mills



Dog walkers amongst you might recognise this. It is the path to Alvington Woods which for most of the year was impassable without wellies. That was before a thoughtful person placed this plank across the worst part.

That got me thinking about the history of bridges and how important they are as a communication link. I therefore suggested that the Transport and Technology group have a session on the subject. Ten people each did a short presentation about a bridge that interested them and they were all very different.

Meanwhile I had become interested in the history of London Bridge and this later turned into a longer talk because there has been a bridge on that site for

nearly 2000 years. Here are just a few of my favourite facts and legends.

There was no settlement when the Romans built the first bridge there. They chose this site so that they could link the Channel ports with major settlements to the North, including Colchester the new capital of the province of Britannia. They probably chose this site because it was the furthest downstream to make bridge building feasible while sufficiently tidal to be navigable for cargo ships. The first bridge was probably a pontoon bridge: a series of boats tied together and linked by planks. Around AD 50 this replaced by a permanent piled timber bridge. Settlements developed on either bank to guard and maintain this strategic crossing and harbour. These became Londinium on the northern bank and Southwark on the



Southern.



The nursery rhyme “London Bridge is Falling Down” is well known but its origins are obscure. A succession of wooden bridges was rebuilt to replace those destroyed by fire, storms battles and collapse. It may relate to a battle in 1014 when London was occupied by Vikings under Cnut. The Saxon King Ethelred made an alliance with King Olaf Haroldsson of Norway. They rowed up to heavily fortified bridge, attached ropes to the piles and then rowed hard downstream, pulling the bridge down.

“Build it up with sticks and stones” The first stone bridge was completed in 1209. This is the familiar Medieval bridge. It had 19 arches to support the weight of five storey buildings of shops and accommodation. It was intended that rents from these dwellings together with tolls would finance the maintenance of the bridge.



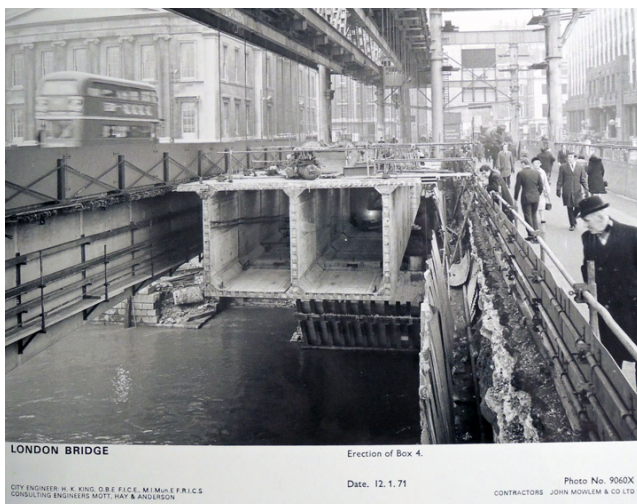
This 1616 engraving shows heads of traitors on stakes on the southern tower. Sir Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell both ended up here. This was the end of navigation for large cargo boats, but small boats could pass below. A couple can be seen raising their masts after passing upstream. Passing downstream was called “shooting the bridge” because the mass of the piers caused very fast, dangerous currents.

So, who was “My Fair Lady”? One suggestion is that it could have been the Virgin Mary, thought to be

protector of the bridge. Another suggestion is that it was Eleanor of Provence, Henry III’s Queen, who took all the bridge revenues for herself causing the bridge to fall into disrepair. However, the bridge survived until 1831. It was traffic congestion that led to its downfall despite a second bridge being opened at Westminster in 1750. The New London Bridge was built of granite from Haytor and the old bridge was demolished after 600 years of service.



In the early 20th century, traffic became heavier both in number and weight. Surveys showed that the bridge was sinking at a rate of an inch every 8 years. It too would have to be replaced.



The current London Bridge was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1973. This had been a complicated engineering problem. The new bridge was built around the old bridge. Traffic across bridge and navigation under it had to continue. The solution was to build the bridge from 4 parallel sections of concrete box girders. These sections, each weighing 75 tons were constructed 3 miles downstream at Surrey Docks, brought upstream by barges and then lifted into place by huge gantries. When the two outer lanes were complete and able to take traffic, the old bridge could be demolished and the two inner lanes built. Meanwhile deeper foundations were dug around and below the existing piles. I was a student in London at the time and was annoyed that the routes for traffic and

pedestrians were constantly changing. If I’d known what a complex engineering project was underway, I would have taken more interest, like the gentleman in the picture.



The old bridge was purchased for 2.5 million dollars by Robert P McCulloch, an entrepreneur from Missouri. It cost a further 7 million dollars to dismantle, transport and reassemble. He had bought land in the desert and planned to build a new resort city. Everyone thought he was crazy. He dredged a canal and wanted a centre piece as a tourist attraction. For some years it was rumoured that he thought he had bought Tower Bridge. This he denied and seeing the elegant newly built bridge in place, I think he got the bridge he wanted.

So here is our current London Bridge, also clad in Devon granite. Not the prettiest bridge across the Thames but a favourite photo spot for tourists. From here you can take the best selfies with Tower Bridge in the background.



**The Transport and Technology group have a number of these very interesting talks which are usually publicised by Chris Mills using Beacon email.
So, look out for future information on talks.**



Samuel Scott's painting shows Old London Bridge in 1757, shortly before the houses were removed

Summer Quotes:

"A man says a lot of things in summer he doesn't mean in winter." –Patricia Briggs

Smell the sea, and feel the sky. Let your soul and spirit fly." –Van Morrison

INTERMEDIATE SPANISH GROUP

Jane Payne writes:

Spanish is the official language in 20 countries and one dependent territory (Puerto Rico), totalling 21 entities, predominantly in Latin America, with Spain in Europe and Equatorial Guinea in Africa. With over 490 million native speakers it is the world's second most-spoken language.

These are interesting statistics, but it doesn't explain the u3a Intermediate Spanish Group's reason for wanting to learn the language. Currently we have seven keen members, many of whom have family connections in Spain and, therefore, need to speak Spanish. Others just love the language and enjoy acquiring a new skill. Or maybe it is because we are a very happy group which, while learning a lot, also has a lot of fun for 2 hours once a fortnight.

Whatever the reason I am immensely proud of my group and value the friendships that have been forged. So.....

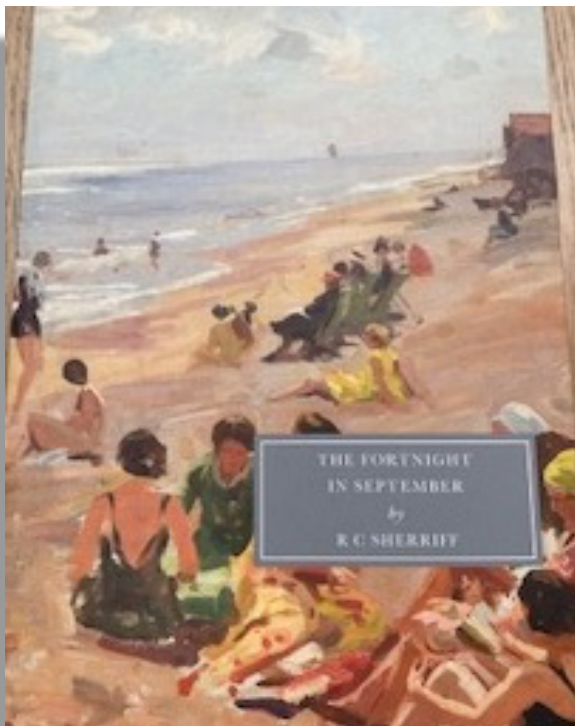
¡Bien hecho a todas y espero con ansia muchas más lecciones juntas!

(For those who do not understand Spanish)

Well done everyone and I look forward to many more lessons together!

BRING YOUR OWN BOOK. (BYOB) GROUP

Isobel Wilson writes:



Our group, now in its 3rd year, continues to flourish & we recently welcomed three new members. Our format of bringing along whatever we have been reading to share with the group is much enjoyed. We hear about so many different reads & recommendations.

Recently we decided to try a shared read, which happens to fit well with the season as it's the story of a family holiday. The book is called "The Fortnight in September" by R C Sheriff - published in 1931. This special edition available from the Harbour Book Shop is published by Persephone with a beautiful painting on the cover!

The story follows the Stevens family as they head off for their annual 2 weeks holiday in Bognor to stay at their usual Guest House and follow their traditional pursuits. The reader is carried along with all the careful details which give a wonderful picture of how things used to be. I think we can all relate as we recall our own seaside holidays.

How simple it all seems.

R C Sheriff had previously written a best seller "Journeys End" & was unsure how 'Fortnight' would measure up. It was very well received indeed with much praise for his straightforward writing style.

**The group meet on the first Thursday morning monthly in Kingsbridge
& new members are very welcome.**

An illustrated Summer poem from Michele Myers

Sounds

Kiddies in a paddle pool
What does that mean to you?
There is no sound like it
Has to be my favourite
Kids jumping round, having fun
In the brilliant summer sun.

Sounds can be creepy, militant
Or joyful and magnificent
They can give you quite a chill
Take grinding teeth or dentist's drill!

Better hear the pleasant ones
Like music for a gentle dance
Or birdsong coming from the trees,
In a gentle summer's breeze....

Rob's grandkids came the other day
And what a joy, I say!
In the pool they fool around
With tons of laughter, what a sound!
Even with my hearing aid
Those sounds must never fade

Joy, exhalation, happiness
I do enjoy them... to excess!



*Thank you, Michele, your poems
always seem to hit the right spot!*



A U3A Day at the Races!

Linda Coton writes:

On a glorious sunny day a group of Kingsbridge U3a members joined 40 other U3a members for a day of racing at Newton Abbot racecourse. The day was organised by Dee McVey chairman of Okehampton U3a. There were members there from thirteen U3a groups in the South West as far afield as Penzance and Burnham on Sea.

We had a private room with a balcony giving us views over the racecourse and the all-important finish post! A buffet lunch was served before the first race and afternoon tea at a suitable break later in the afternoon. We had plenty of opportunity to see the horses in the parade ring before each race and to place bets if we wished.

Iain Cassidy, CEO of the Third Age Trust, came down from London to join us and took the opportunity to talk briefly about the results of the recent survey conducted by the Trust about the benefits of belonging to the U3a. Some 10,000 members responded and results showed that the vast number all felt that belonging to the organisation was hugely beneficial to their general well-being. Iain was very enthusiastic and encouraging and keen for us all to promote the U3a so that more people can enjoy all that it has to offer.

We all had a thoroughly enjoyable and fun afternoon and some of us even came home slightly better off than we started!

The race goes - spot the Kingsbridge members!



Summer Quotes:

"Summertime, and the living is easy." –Ella Fitzgerald

Liz Hext writes about her visit to Normandy

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Her Home, and the Basilica



On a recent visit to France, we visited the small Normandy town of Lisieux. Today, Lisieux is one of France's most important pilgrimage destinations, second only to Lourdes.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, often known as "*The Little Flower*," is one of the most loved saints in the Catholic Church. Born Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin on 2 January 1873 in Alençon, France, she became famous for her simple but powerful spiritual teaching called "*The Little Way*." This was the belief that holiness could be found in small acts of love, kindness, and trust in God, rather than through great heroic deeds.

Thérèse moved with her devout Catholic family to Lisieux in Normandy when she was four years old, after the death of her mother. The family home in Lisieux, called Les Buissonnets, became the centre of her childhood. It was here that Thérèse was raised by her father, Louis Martin, and her four older sisters, all of whom later entered convents. The house was filled with warmth, faith, and prayer, and it was here that Thérèse developed her deep religious devotion. She was a somewhat fragile child, both physically and mentally. At one point, very ill and bed-ridden, a statue of the Virgin Mary was placed in her bedroom (it remains there today); believing that the statue smiled at her, she made a complete recovery – hailed as a miracle.

Les Buissonnets, which we visited, remains one of the most important pilgrimage sites connected to her life. Visitors can walk through the carefully preserved rooms, including Thérèse's bedroom, and imagine her life there. The house gives a touching insight into her ordinary family life and reminds visitors that sainthood can grow from everyday experiences.

At the age of just fifteen, Thérèse entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux after obtaining special permission from Pope Leo XIII. She spent the rest of her short life there in prayer, simplicity, and devotion. Though she never travelled far or performed dramatic acts, her writings revealed profound spiritual wisdom. Her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, became world famous after her death.

Thérèse died of tuberculosis on 30 September 1897 at only twenty-four years old. Her final words were, "My God, I love you." She was canonised as a saint in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, and in 1997 Pope John Paul II declared her a Doctor of the Church, recognising the importance of her spiritual teaching. To honour her memory, the magnificent Basilica of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was built between 1929 and 1954. It is one of the largest pilgrimage churches in France and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.



The basilica is built on a hill overlooking Lisieux and can be seen from miles around. Inside, the basilica is breathtaking, with beautiful mosaics, colourful stained glass windows, and a vast dome. The mosaics illustrate scenes from Thérèse's life and her message of love and trust in God. Beneath the basilica is a crypt decorated with rich mosaics that create a peaceful and prayerful atmosphere.

Together, Les Buissonnets and the basilica tell the story of a young woman whose quiet faith changed millions of lives. Saint Thérèse's message remains timeless:

'even the smallest actions, done with great love, can lead to holiness.'

See Liz's pictures below.



Basilica of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was built between 1929 and 1954.

NEW GROUP SUGGESTION - Have you ever played Table Tennis?

Table Tennis continues to be played globally, particularly in this country, and more particularly in this area. The Methodist Church table tennis group have been playing for years. If we are able to identify a leader/contact person to organise it would you be interested in taking part?

It is proposed that it will take place at the West Charleton Village Hall which, I understand now has a new table tennis table.

If you are interested please let me know [peter.bolt01@btinternet.com]



Summer Quotes:

"In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explodes, and every sunset is different." —
John Steinbeck,

In summer, the song sings itself." —William Carlos Williams

The Summer of 'Last Times'

A Short Story

The asphalt of Elm Street was still radiating heat at 7:00 pm, a shimmering reminder of the August day, but Maya didn't mind. She pedalled her rusted bicycle faster, the cool air of dusk finally beginning to overtake the humid afternoon. Her basket clinked with the glass bottles of lemon & lime she'd just bought, a ritual of the season.

She was headed to the dock behind the old library, the spot where the river curved and the town grew quiet. When she arrived, Leo was already there, throwing pebbles into the water, watching the ripples distort the reflection of the orange and pink sky. He didn't turn around, but he smiled. "Took you long enough," he said, the teasing tone in his voice making the silence that followed comfortable.

They sat on the edge of the wooden dock, feet dangling just above the water, sharing the cold drinks. A few fireflies were beginning to pulse in the tall grass behind them. The air was thick with the scent of pine and coming rain, a combination that smelled exactly like childhood in the middle of summer.

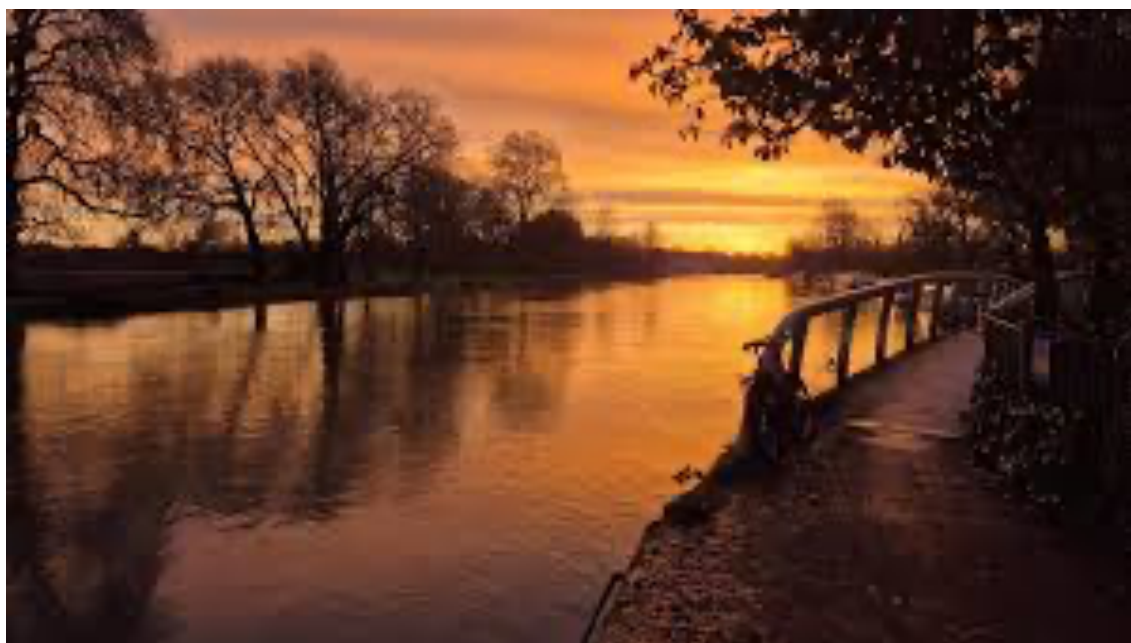
They didn't talk much. There was no need to. This was a summer of "last times" —the last summer before college, the last summer before everything changed. But for now, they were simply content to watch the sun sink below the treeline, letting the long, golden evening stretch out forever.

"Do you think," Maya started, then paused, watching a firefly land on her knee. "Do you think we'll remember this? The smell of the river? The heat?"

Leo looked at her, his expression serious for just a moment before he smiled again. "Always."

She believed him. In that moment, with the day ending and the warm night beginning, it felt like they could trap this moment in a jar, just like the fireflies, and keep it with them forever.

Ed Blog: Summertime Books And Movies



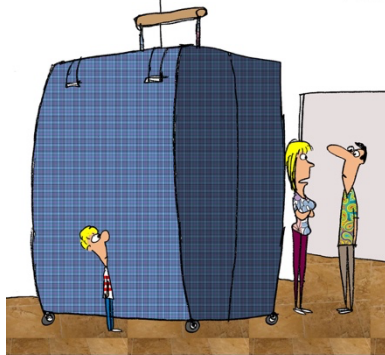
Summer Fun! Some cartoons to make you smile.



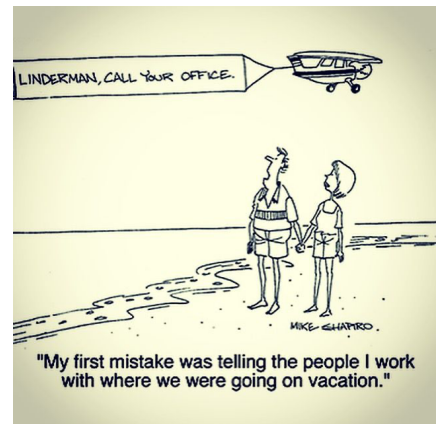
"At Survival Camp, I learned how to make an iPod from mud and twigs!"
KING



"I'm depressed that summer is over. Let's go to the mall and look at Christmas stuff."



"I see you elected to go with one big suitcase, instead of going with a bunch of smaller ones."



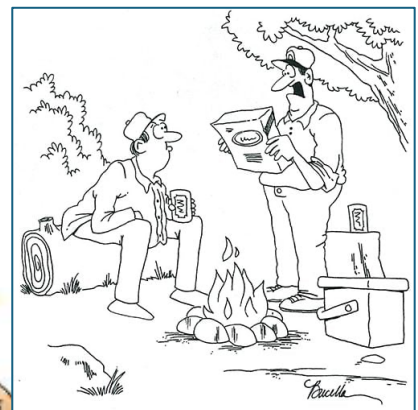
"My first mistake was telling the people I work with where we were going on vacation."



"Hello, Jim? It's Carl. I just called to tell you how good it feels to get away from it all!"



"You're just the kind of person we're looking for to test our airline seats."



It says here place in microwave for five minutes!

So, Finally.....

I do hope you enjoyed this Summer's newsletter. If you did, then it is due to the members who contributed their news and views and stories – a big thank you to you all!

Finally, as I am about to despatch this edition to you, we are in the midst of heat wave which has profound effects on people old and young. If you are aware of a member who lives alone and has limited physical or mental ability please give them a call to see if they are well and effectively dealing with the heat.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your Summer.

Peter Bolt,
Newsletter Editor

