

Winter Newsletter 2023/24

Introduction by Chair Derek Hussey

With the Christmas period very much with us and the looming New Year we have had a busy 2023. Many new groups have been established, and following their announcement, they became full quite quickly. That shows the keen interest shown by members, but we do need more groups so if there are any ideas out there please come forward.



The October social was a great success and thanks must go to John Goodwin for organising the event. It was mentioned at the last committee meeting that perhaps more social events would be welcome, but of course we need someone to coordinate this activity.

That just leaves me to wish all our members a very merry Christmas and a happy and safe new year, from your committee and volunteers.

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Editorial

If you would like to contribute to our Newsletter, please contact the team with any articles and pictures of u3a activities, group information or events both recent and planned.

For inclusion in the Spring 2023/24 issue please send as an attachment by e-mail to newsletter.hru3a@gmail.com before the 30th of February

Best wishes from the Newsletter Team: John, Anne and Wendy.

Notes and Notices

35th Anniversary

Hastings and Rother u3a 1989-2024

Just seven years after the u3a movement was established in the UK, East Sussex was blessed with its own branch. Initiated by Charles Braybrook as Chair with Pat Bryant as secretary, the inaugural meeting of Hastings & Rother u3a was held on 31st May 1989 in Hastings Public Library. By September of that year H&Ru3a had 72 members enjoying groups such as Art, History, Life Sciences, Literature and Social Sciences.

We still have one early member, Shirley Carey, whose membership number comprises only two digits! Shirley who joined in 1995, served on the committee as our regional representative. Thank you, Shirley, for your on-going support and loyalty.

By the turn of the century, Membership had crept up to 247 and consideration was given to dividing Hastings and Rother into two separate u3as but its catchment remains the same to this day. New Sussex u3as were established in Rye and Crowborough and in 2002 some members left and formed a new u3a in Battle. However our membership continued to rise and by its 20th anniversary (2009) H&R had 350 members. The occasion was celebrated with a cake at the monthly meeting and a thank you lunch for convenors at the Wheatsheaf.



It was in 2011 that the familiar format with meetings alternatively at St. Peter's and the Azur began and names of current members start to appear on the committee.

Two years later our own website was inaugurated.

Our 25th anniversary

< Monthly speaker meeting from 2016

was Celebrated with a *Puttin' on the Ritz* tea party and musical entertainment at the Azur. Our 30th Anniversary was celebrated with guest speaker *Dame Stella Rimington* followed by a tea party. Membership rose close to 500.

Then in 2020 the world was hit by COVID with lockdowns disrupting live meetings. Ably led by our chair at the time we utilised Zoom and having survived continue to grow in strength. Coming out of the pandemic we continue to thrive.

*Convenors Tea at
St Peters Hall >*



We have recently established a collaboration with nearby u3as to form the East Sussex East cluster, with a potential for regional workshops and trips.

Over the years we have had many interest groups. Some have run continuously for decades: Dressmaking and Tailoring, Walking, Strollers to name but a few. Others more recently on the scene are: International Law, Play Reading and Women with Altitude (sic).

We must thank all our past and active convenors and in particular our previous Chairs who made it all possible: Charles Braybrook, George Phelps, Mike Williams, Ann Lowndes (twice), Norma Tree, Ruth Rose, Velma Krever, Trish Rowlinson, Sarah Loynes, Lorna Couldrick, Robert Hadland, George Webster, Richard Collisson, some sadly no longer with us, and of course our current chair Derek Hussey.

2024 sees our 35th Anniversary with 73 groups & over 600 members. How will we celebrate this momentous event? Suggestions welcome.

With thanks to Richard Collisson for preparing this article.

Anniversary Party

The committee will consider proposals both of venue and entertainment for a celebration of our 35th anniversary. Volunteers to serve on a social subcommittee to help with organisation will be most welcome.

Acknowledgements

Our Days Out: such as Dover Castle, The Globe, BBC continue to be popular. Thank you Robert, Heather, David and Deborah for all your hard work in organising these events.

Remembering to say Thank You

Our Conveners Cream Tea was held on 21 September at the Royal Victoria Hotel in St Leonard's to say 'thank you' to 60 convenors and volunteers who give so much of their time to Hastings & Rother u3a. Our last Tea was in 2021 following our release from Lockdown.

Our volunteers, all of whom are unpaid, organise interest groups, social events, monthly speakers' meetings, AGM and Christmas Parties. They also serve on committees to guide the day to day running of the organisation as well as liaising with The Third Age Trust and various government departments to ensure we are operating within the guidelines.

The new H&R chair Derek Hussey welcomed volunteers and thanked them for their support and hard work. He told everyone a bit about the committee's efforts working with other u3as in our area to share best practice and information. Convenors were also offered training on the use of our database to improve communications with members.



More pictures on [Photography page of the website](#).

Autumn Social

On Thursday 5th of October, we met at The Manor Barn for a social evening. More than fifty members and guests enjoyed a fun modern jive lesson followed by music for general dancing provided by Bill and Dot of Sussex Coast Jive.



An excellent finger buffet was provided by local caterers Mad for Food with drinks provided by the Manor Barn bar staff.

On the whole, the occasion was deemed a success with calls for more of the same in the future.

Flexibus

Useful Information from: Kate Man

Earlier this year a flexible, on-demand, ride-share bus service was introduced across 10 'zones' in East Sussex which are not served by regular bus routes. For example, Zone 7 covers Battle, Ninfield, Robertsbridge and Heathfield; Zone 9 covers Hawkhurst, Northiam, Hastings, Robertsbridge, and Zone 10 covers Hastings, Rye, Northiam.

Called "Flexibus", the services run Monday - Saturday 7am - 7pm. The buses are accessible for wheelchair users via a rear lift. Assistance dogs are welcome.

Bookings by phone or through an online app can be made up to 30 minutes before an intended ride and up to 7 days in advance. The cost is currently capped at £2 per ride. Seniors travel free with their bus passes on the same terms as on regular buses. The advantages I have found being:

- ❖ Could get to a location in half an hour which would have taken me one and a half hours on ordinary buses would have a great deal of uncertainty and stress in case connections did not work out, and I would have had to leave the venue at 3pm to get the last of 2 buses home! So it has been an incentive to get me going to places I would otherwise miss out on
- ❖ Always ring to book and the office staff have always been very friendly and helpful
- ❖ My pick up point is not at my house as we do have buses passing it, but it is a nearby point that I can walk or bus to. Drivers have told me about picking people up from remote lanes which have no other nearby access by public transport.
- ❖ They took me to my exact destination and picked me up from there.
- ❖ The buses have always been on time which, as a public transport user I appreciate greatly. The Flexibus team do say that this cannot be guaranteed (obviously) but that we can use the app to keep updated on the bus's arrival time.
- ❖ The drivers I've met are friendly and say they enjoy the job. Many are Stagecoach drivers who have opted to do this for a while.
- ❖ Out of 6 journeys I have only had one shared trip. It was good to talk to the passenger about how she could not have started a new job without the use of Flexibus as her driving test had been cancelled without notice.

The only problem I have had is that once one of the office staff did not easily manage to sort out my outgoing pick up point. It took some persistence and prior knowledge on my part. And if drivers don't know the area they are totally reliant on their SatNav, which, as we all know, is not infallible. These problems seem to be due to IT/software issues.

Flexibus: Telephone 01273 078203

Free online app: "Ride Pingo" can be downloaded from AppStore or Google Play using a smartphone or tablet.

I hope many people use the service and that somehow funding is found for it to continue.

Group News

H&R Scribes

We will continue to meet on the second and third Tuesdays of each month starting at **10:00 am** and an afternoon session on the first Friday of each month, starting at **3.00 pm** all at:

The Bull Inn Bexhill Rd TN38 8AY

Membership remains open and you can attend any or all of the meetings.

Enquiries: john@jgoodwin.info Tel:07307878647

u3a Qigong group

movement classes to feel good, flexible and improve breathing.

The St Leonards Studio, Azur Pavilion, Marina, TN380BU

Mondays 3-4pm weekly

No equipment needed. Wear warm, comfortable clothing and footwear. £3 donation towards hire of the venue.

Do come and join us. No previous knowledge needed and you can drop in and out of the classes with ease.

Craft Group

Christmas projects. These are photos from our Craft Group relating to Christmas

projects We are a very active craft, knitting and Crocheting Group and we would love for the U3A members to see some of the work we do.



Events

2024 Speaker Programme

Venues: St Peter's Community Centre, Old Town, Bexhill, TN40 2HE

Or: White Rock Theatre, Hastings, TN34 1JX

10.00 Coffee 10.30 Notices 10.45 Speaker 12.00 Close

Monday 22nd January 2024 White Rock Theatre

The History of Punch & Judy & My Journey with Him - Ray Sparks Eastbourne's Punch & Judy man for the past 30 years, talks about the history & origins of Punch & Judy & his journey with them.

Monday 26th February 2024 St Peters Community Centre

A Sussex Farm During the 1950s - Ian Everest, a local historian who was brought up on a farm on the Sussex Downs talks about how tough life was on a Sussex Downs farm during the 1950s, including original cine film.

Monday 25th March 2024 White Rock Theatre

Tax, Care, & The New Guy - Gordon Stacey-Cook, of Silvertime Legal, gives a talk on Estate Planning, Inheritance Tax, Lasting Powers of Attorney. Serious subjects that affect us & our families, delivered in a relaxed manner with occasional laughter.

u3a Regular Coffee Mornings

You are cordially invited to come along and meet some of our members for a coffee and a chat. These coffee mornings are held between 10.30 am to 12 noon on the second Monday and Thursday of each month at two separate venues. Please choose the venue that suits you or come to both. Just make yourself known to the group. N.B. The venues below host our get-togethers at no charge so it is only a courtesy to purchase a beverage when attending.

Venue 1:

Second Monday
White Rock Hotel Hastings
Coffee Bar/Restaurant
Roadside parking meters nearby
(98 and 99 buses stop nearby)

Venue 2:

Second Thursday
De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill
Go to the cafe on the 1st floor.
Lift available if required.
Plenty of parking available
(99 bus stops nearby)

Light Reading

CHAMOR'S FIRST CHRISTMAS.

It was almost midnight when Chamor plodded wearily into the courtyard. It had been a long hot day but when the sun went down the temperature dropped considerably. However, they had continued in the cold darkness for quite some time. If it had not been for a particularly bright star, he could easily have stumbled into one of the many potholes that littered the route.

A young man from the inn brought Chamor a bucket of fresh water to drink and took hold of his halter while Joseph eased his wife from the saddle. Relieved of the load Chamor arched his back with relief, I'm sure she is getting heavier each day, he thought as he allowed himself to be led into the stables. The lad gave him a cursory rub with a bundle of straw and scattered a big armful of the stuff around his feet. At last a nice warm bed for the night. The boy tipped some oats into a trough at the back of the stall. Chamor started munching at his well-earned supper but found he was too tired to eat. He decided to save some for his breakfast and folding his legs under him settled down for the night.

The moment he closed his eyes the sound of raised voices carried across from the inn. His master was shouting.

'What do you mean you're full, we pre-booked last year . . . Yes, yes, I know we were late, but—'

'I'm sorry, Joe, this is my busiest time of the year. The stable's the best I can do.'

'But the baby is due any time now.'

'The lad'll make you comfortable . . . David, fetch more straw and move that animal out.'

The next thing Chamor knew he was being dragged into the cold night and hitched to a post.

No sooner had things settled down again than a cry rang out from the stables.

'Joseph, the baby's coming. Quick fetch a midwife . . . hurry.'

Chamor watched as his master ran to the inn returning moments later with the stable boy. There followed a period of frenzied activity with the boy scuttling to and fro bringing more straw, linen sheets and buckets of hot water.

From the stable came the sound of much panting and more cries from Mary.

'I'm so sorry Mary I shouldn't have made you come.' Joseph said, 'I don't think the Midwife's going to get here in time.'

'Don't worry, we'll manage, but send the boy out, he's too young for this.'

The lad came out into the yard and stood fondling Chamor's ears. The pair of them stared nervously at the stable door and listened to the goings-on inside.

Mary panting, her cries becoming louder, punctuating their words.

'Oh Mary, I'm sorry.'

'It's not your fault Joseph.' Mary gasped, 'You didn't cause any of this . . .'

'It's coming . . . Push . . .'

'Oh God . . . Oh God . . . Why did you do this to me . . . Eeeagh.'

Then a silence during which David gripped Chamor's ear so tight it hurt. A baby cried, quite briefly but strong and loud.

'It's a boy, Mary, a perfect baby boy.'

A few moments later Joseph appeared at the gate holding a white bundle in which a little pink face could just be discerned. He beckoned the lad over to take a look.

'We'll make a crib for him in this manger,' he said.

There goes my breakfast Chamor thought and made another attempt at sleeping standing up.

What now! Chamor watched as three men on camels rode into the yard. Judging by their clothes and trappings, these new arrivals were as rich as Kings.

David ran to take their reins. 'The inn is full I'm afraid, my Lords,'

I bet they'll find room for these rich folk, Chamor mused.

'Don't worry well just settle down in the barn.' said the second of the riders.

'I shouldn't go in there at the moment Sir. There is going to be one hell of a row in a minute.'

'Why is that Lad?'

'Well, a lady has had a baby in the stable and she's just told her husband it isn't his.'

'No . . . surely not.'

'It's true, I heard her say that God did it to her.'

'In that case we had better pay our respects . . .'

'Welcome my Lords.' The innkeeper was bustling across the yard. 'Take no notice of the lad, Sirs, he's a bit simple.' He glowered at David, 'Go and wake my missus up and tell her to remake our own bed for these fine gentlemen.' He took a swipe at David's head as the lad sprinted to obey. 'And don't you go spreading gossip like that, boy; you never know what might come of it.'



Chamor: Hebrew for First born Donkey.

Video-Conferencing

Some people might think that video-conferencing started with Skype. In fact, video links are almost as old as television. However, the number of people connecting remained tiny until the new millennium.

I became one of the few to use video-conferencing before 2000 thanks to working in BT and needing to co-ordinate a project with people around Great Britain and Northern Ireland. My boss approved the budget as the alternative would have been much travel. The meetings required up to eight dedicated studios and technicians to make the connections and booking usually days ahead.

Around the same time, the mid-1990s, I took part in a BT trial for remote working that meant I reduced my commuting to two or three days a week. I had access to audio-conferencing and remote files. I could even dictate to a typing service by phone. However, the ISDN line provided did not offer a video link.

1993 saw the first personal computer with a built-in webcam. And in 1999, the Kyocera VP-210 was the first mobile to incorporate video links. However, costs and bandwidth deterred expansion of such devices.

Skype (an Estonian creation later acquired by eBay and sold onto Microsoft) went from audio-only to video in 2011. Zoom started in 2011 and struggled to get finance from sceptical investors. It caught the wave prompted by Covid and lent its name to the act of video-conferencing. Zoom currently has about a 57% share of the market, followed by Microsoft Teams with 24.5%. None of the others have reached 10%.

I have run several groups by video-conferencing for U3A and The Stables Theatre, plus a fortnightly family get-together that links the UK, Australia and New Zealand. I sometimes smile at how easy the meetings are compared to booking studios and engineers and getting financial authority.

My preferred platform is Jitsi - <https://meet.jit.si/> It is free, does not require downloading an app, has no time limit and can handle at least 50 participants. To connect, you create a meeting and send others the link provided by Jitsi and a time to start. Which? Magazine found Jitsi's quality better than Zoom's.

For those who have not tried video-conferencing, I ask you to give it a go, perhaps with help from someone experienced for the first meeting. Should you become isolated by an accident, illness or further pandemic, being able to see and talk with others may provide a major mental boost.

One of the groups that switched to video-conferencing during Covid restrictions has chosen to keep meeting in this way. The Short Fiction group finds it more convenient; we also have occasional face-to-face gatherings.

The Short Fiction Online Group has vacancies. If you would like to know more about the group and the short stories we read, email me at:

burns-paul@outlook.com

Looking Forward

Bookstall - Book Exchange

Our book stall is having a bit of a makeover. It is now a book exchange, so please continue to bring the books that you have read and exchange it for one of ours, but this is not compulsory!

We have also decided that all books taken are free. Also a reminder that we love books and your donations but no large hardbacks please. As usual, we will be at St Peter's meetings but not at the White Rock ones.

Marilyn and Lavina - The book people

Bookmark

We are pleased to announce that the White Rock Theatre issue is resolved. Production of our popular bookmark has resumed.

An agreement has been reached for the u3a to continue with the White Rock Theatre. It will be run by The Guildhall Trust, a charity and very involved in community matters. They have plans to develop the space for a wide range of activities, initially improving the PA system and Air circulation quickly to stop the deterioration of the spaces. With an investment strategy, over slightly longer 5 year term. They are also planning to empower the team on site and developing the staff - all of whom will remain employed.

Can You Help?

I am writing to you as I am the Growth and Partnership manager for Coram Beanstalk, a national charity with 50 years' experience of helping children to grow a love of reading.

We have recently had a number of new schools in Hastings and surrounding area partner with us and we are looking for a few people who we can train to become reading helps and support in this school. We provide all the training via Zoom as well as a DBS check.

If you are interested please contact Derek Hussey for more information.

Visit

As a follow-up to the fascinating September talk, **Gypsum and the Mountfield Mine**, I have been in touch with Jack Evans, the Mine Production Manager at Brightling Mine, and yes, a visit underground can be arranged. This would probably be in February or March. At this stage we do not have a date, details of cost, or required fitness level, etc.

If this is of interest contact Lorna at lorna.couldrick@gmail.com for information as and when the plan comes together.

Your Committee

Committee (elected trustees).

Trustees serve for 3 years and apart from Chair and Vice Chair, can then stand for re-election.

Position	Name	Email
Chair (Officer)	Derek Hussey	chair.hru3a@gmail.com
Vice Chair (Officer)	Vacant	
Treasurer: (Officer)	Josephine Noyce	treasurer.hru3a@gmail.com
Assistant Treasurer:	Ewa Goulding	treasurer.asst.hru3a@gmail.com
Business Secretary (Officer)	Ginny Edwards	secretary.hru3a@gmail.com
Minutes Secretary:	Jenny Meteyard	minutes.hru3a@gmail.com
Membership Secretary:	vacant	membership.hru3a@gmail.com
Groups Coordinator	Lynda Wood	groups.hru3a@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor:	John Goodwin	newsletter.hru3a@gmail.com
Beacon Administrator:	Tricia Jobling	database.hru3a@gmail.com
Member/ Trustee	Christine Evans	

In Addition the following have volunteered to help the committee and to take on supporting roles:

Non-committee roles

Position	Name	Email
Initial Enquiries	Sue Shilstone	initialenquiries.hru3a@gmail.com
Speakers Secretary	Pandora Bastian	speakers.hru3a@gmail.com
Website Administrator	Brian Gould	website.hru3a@gmail.com
Venues Coordinator:	April Yasamee	venues.hru3a@gmail.com
Regional Coordinator	Carole Benton	regional.hru3a@gmail.com
IT Administrator	Richard Collisson	