

Chair's Introduction



Having served as Vice Chair for just a couple of months, Derek Hussey managed to persuade me to take on the role of Chairman at this year's AGM which took place on 28 July. I have been asked to provide a few words to introduce myself for those of you who were not at the AGM (you missed a very good cream tea!)

I grew up in the Midlands, had a grammar school education, spent a gap year in Europe then joined the Royal Navy. After initial training courses, I attended the RN's engineering college, gained a BSc and served as an engineer at sea and ashore, both at home and abroad. I also gained two foreign language diplomas. In addition to engineering roles, I spent time as an instructor (engineering and language), an attaché and as an inspector (quality assurance and conventional arms). After 30 plus years in the Navy, I had a number of civilian jobs mainly based on experiences gained in the RN.

Since passing retirement age and moving to Bexhill, I first joined Probus and then H&R U3A which I joined in order to keep my languages ticking over – I am the convenor for two U3A language groups in Bexhill. I also chair an association for retired naval personnel based in Hove.

Over the past two years the H&R U3A membership has dwindled but it has been good to see a number of new groups being formed over the past few months and I would like to think that there are more of you who have a hobby or interest who might consider convening a group – do get in touch! In the same vein, we desperately need a vice chair (to keep me in check) and, as always, volunteers especially to help at our functions. I will try to attend as many of these as possible and will be wearing my name tally so do come up and introduce yourselves.

Richard Stanton, Chair

GENERAL

Groups, the lifeblood of our U3A.



I joined the U3A in approximately 2006 for several reasons including the want to make new friends as I had moved many miles to a new area and knew no-one. I was also interested in joining some of the groups but found, as so many new members do, that the groups I wanted to join were either full or didn't exist. I was disappointed to say the least and I

do think that this may have some bearing on why some of the new members don't renew at the end of their first year.

After some thought, I decided to open a group although to be honest I was concerned because it was to be a Knit and Natter group, both close to my heart! I worried it might not be "clever" enough, that no-one would come, that others might think I was a dullard. However, I ploughed ahead thinking that I didn't know anyone so what did it matter?

Whilst craft groups, especially knitting and now crochet have had a major resurgence in recent years, back then their image was more of short-sighted old ladies sitting in a circle dropping stitches while they grumbled about the price of peas. OK, that might be an exaggeration but... Now of course it's not only fashionable to be able to take a ball of yarn and create beautiful 3-dimensional items, but has proven, measurable benefits to better mental health (something I wrote an article about some 12 years ago for the newsletter).

The group filled and there was a waiting list. I started two more and they were taken on by the person whose house was the venue. Another three groups, all different followed. The point of this is not to show how many groups I started but to illustrate that you don't need in depth knowledge, you don't need to be an expert, you just need to be willing and there is a lot of support available. If your own knowledge is sketchy, someone might join who can share their expertise. If that doesn't happen, it doesn't matter because you do not have to be the fountain of all knowledge, no matter what the subject, you can learn together. A convenor's role is not arduous or difficult, but it is a way to make friends, learn, share skills, feel part of the community.

Please consider starting a group, maybe two of you could start one together. The Groups Coordinator will help and support you. Groups keep our U3A vibrant, lively and foster friendships, a sense of belonging, all essential to each and every one of us. And, every year you will be rewarded with a delicious cream tea, what more could you want?

Sheila Dyke, Newsletter Editor

Convenors' and Volunteers' Afternoon Tea 3 September, Royal Victoria Hotel



This afternoon (3rd September) I had the pleasure of attending our u3a Convenors and Volunteers Afternoon Tea at the Royal Victoria Hotel. A good time was had by all with delicious food and interesting conversation. This was just a small token of our gratitude for all the hard work that goes on throughout the year by our incredible convenors who give their time and enthusiasm to our members by running their groups and also by our

volunteers who put on all our other activities. They all work so hard for the u3a and let's face it, there would be no u3a without them. They are fantastic!

I am always keen to hear from anyone who wants to start a new group. We can never have too many. If anyone has an idea, however odd it may sound, please contact me and we'll see if we can make it work. Even if there are already groups of the same subject, that doesn't matter. We can start another one. Just click this link to make contact and we can have an informal chat [Groups Co-ordinator](#).

At the end of October, I will be stepping down from my role as groups coordinator. If anyone would like to take it over or just find out a bit more about it, please contact me. You will not be under any pressure to do it just by asking me about it but I'd like to hear from someone!

Groups Coordinator Lynda Woods

You can save money on your purchases through the u3a.

Go to the membership page on the u3a website to sign up for this chance to save money on your supermarket shop and much more. Click this link:

<https://hastings-rother.u3asite.uk/member-centre>

Transfer money between accounts via ATMs:

For those of you who do not use BACS for payment, there are two alternative ways to pay for things such as the Social Evening or outings etc, as well as being able to pay at Coffee Mornings:

Many banks allow you to transfer money between accounts via ATMs:

1. Visit an ATM and insert your debit card.
2. Enter your PIN and select the option for money transfer.
3. Follow the prompts to enter the recipient's account details and the amount.
4. Confirm the transaction.

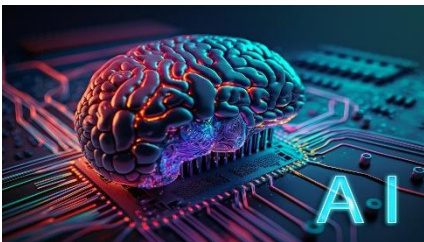
Some banks will also transfer the money for you too. Please ensure that for H&R u3a transfers you use your membership number as a reference.

Claire Williams, H&R U3A Business Secretary

AI – A Simple Explanation

I thought I'd take a belated look at the AI on my phone to see what the fuss is about and decided to use GBT Chat, for no reason other than someone recommended it. After all, this is the way we often choose trades people, products etc, so why not?

I've asked all manner of silly things to see what response I got and then graduated to asking for an explanation of medical test results. I have found it a very positive



experience, so I asked it to provide a simple explanation for non-technical people to help demystify it. The response I received is below, I hope it helps those of us who find themselves increasingly confused and perhaps a little scared of the all-enveloping digital world.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the field of computer science focused on creating systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence. These tasks include learning from data, reasoning, problem-solving, understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. AI is used in applications like virtual assistants, self-driving cars, medical diagnosis, fraud detection, and recommendation systems

Sheila Dyke, Newsletter Editor

Hastings & Rother U3A AGM 2025

Just under 20% of the membership attended the AGM and heard that over the past year member numbers had dropped to a little over 500 but groups' numbers have risen to over 80. The Treasurer reported the statement of accounts which are in good shape. Most U3A transactions are now taking place by BACS and payments at events can be taken by card machine. The delay in getting the Newsletter out was due to ill health but normal service would be resumed as soon as possible. Members also heard that the Groups Secretary would be standing down at the end of October.

The outgoing chair took the opportunity to thank the entire committee and all of the volunteers who helped with events particularly the cream tea for this AGM. The incoming chair, thanked the outgoing chair, gave a short introduction to himself (reproduced elsewhere in this newsletter) and finished by exhorting members to consider their past experiences and how they might benefit the U3A by starting up additional groups or offering their services to the committee.

Richard Stanton, Chair

U3A Business Secretary

As we welcome the new Business Secretary, Claire Williams, we also say goodbye to the role's former occupant, Ginny Edwards, who stepped down at this year's AGM. Not really goodbye but certainly thank you! Ginny served more years than I had weeks as Vice Chair but in my very short time as VC, it was obvious that she was the Committee's 'go-to' person for just about anything. I am still in the 'don't know what I don't know' phase and hoping that she will put up with me asking her questions until I achieve the same level of experience. Of course, she remains a u3a member and convenor (Garden Appreciation). On behalf of the Committee and the rest of the membership, we wish her well for the future and a happy 'retirement' from the Committee. I must also add a big thank you to Claire for volunteering to take on the role.

Richard Stanton, Chair

U3A Newsletter Editor

I have been asked to give a vote of thanks to John Goodwin, the retiring Newsletter Editor. It has been said that women like the last word, so on that note I would like to say thank you to John Goodwin, the previous newsletter editor who has stepped down. He has been very generous with his time in showing me the ropes. As a published author, he has been kind enough to share some literary secrets and convinced me I could take on the newsletter editor role. I hope he is right in that!

John, thank you for your help, confidence boosting and on behalf of the committee and members, for all your previous efforts as Newsletter Editor for the Hastings and Rother U3A.

Sheila Dyke, Newsletter Editor

Events

2025 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

22 September 2025

Ken Brooks

The White Rock Story

The White Rock Theatre

27 October 2025

Robert Slater

Bizarre Sussex an A-Z

St Peter's Community Centre

24 November 2025

Mike Scott Rumble

A Walk in the Park

The White Rock Theatre

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)

SOCIAL EVENT

We still have tickets available for our Social Evening, "Stevie B" who will be performing 60's/70's/80's Motown and Reggae on 26 September, 7.15.-9.45 at St Peters Community Centre, Church Street, Bexhill, TN40 2HE. Please come along, bring your own nibbles and drink (alcohol is allowed), have a dance, and join us to celebrate u3a week. We need to support our lovely Social Team in all their hard work and effort to make this a really successful event.

Payment, £5.00, can be made to Lloyds Bank

Account Name: Hastings and Rother u3a



Sort Code 30-90-89

Account No 55086960

Please use your membership number and SOCIAL as the reference.

A card machine will be available at Coffee Meetings should you wish to pay for the Social Evening there.

Group News

History Group Trip to Robertsbridge

You could say that history is what mankind has done to time, to make it less boring. Time just goes on forever, always in the same direction, always at exactly the same speed – boring. History, on the other hand, can be made to jump, stop or even go round and start again. On our annual Field Day, the U3A History group saw examples of all three in Robertsbridge this August.



Robertsbridge is probably best known, and rightly, as a village with a remarkable number of seriously old houses in its main street. As we walked up from the station, the row of houses opposite all date from the 15th century (think Henry V and the Wars of the Roses). Apart from the odd filler of gaps, the rest of the High Street is almost as ancient. Every house we can see is as

old as it looks, between 1400 and 1700. Some of them are beginning to show signs of droop and lean and bend over, a bit like some of us, but generally the level of upkeep is remarkable.

Robertsbridge was born in the 13th century, when a Cistercian abbey was founded, and an abbot called Robert built a bridge. There is a sign near the George Inn which was erected in 1975 to mark the 750th anniversary of the abbey's founding. The networking skills of the various abbots managed to keep the village prosperous for centuries. One of the curiosities of the place is that Salehurst, just a mile away, is much older, and was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086). So, the parish is Salehurst and there is no parish church in Robertsbridge.



History is well-preserved in the village itself, but between the station and the village is an institution where history is in active production. This is the home of Gray-Nicholls, makers of cricket bats and suppliers to batting greats, from WG Grace to Ollie Pope. The factory here, appropriately sited opposite Willow Bank, recently celebrated its 150 th anniversary.

At Robertsbridge station, we witnessed the actual manipulation of history – where it has been given a new lease of life, by being switched off and on again. Our party was fortunate enough to be given a guided tour of the work being done to restore the Robertsbridge end of a new heritage railway, connecting the main line to Tenterden. The original Rother Valley Railway opened in 1900 but closed in 1954. Part of that line, now the Kent and East Sussex Railway, running from Tenterden to Bodiam, was reopened in 1974, but could not be reconnected to the main line at Robertsbridge because the A21 bypass was now in the way. Nothing daunted, volunteers have spent decades, and millions of pounds, working to restore the connection.

Eventually, their efforts bore fruit. A public enquiry found in their favour, and, in 2023, Transport Secretary Mark Harper signed the necessary legislation. That included compulsory purchase orders for the land they have not yet been able to buy, as well as permission to build three level crossings, including one over the A21. Truly, history has been bent round in a loop, back to where it was in 1900.

That Transport Secretary was a Tory. Novelist Evelyn Waugh once criticised the Conservatives, then famously resistant to change, for “never having put the clock back a single second”. Well, they have now. To be fair, the new Labour government could have reversed the decision but have chosen not to. Hastings’ residents can now look forward to several months of roadworks on the A21 which will probably make the Queensway/Sainsburys debacle look like a nice little stroll in the park.

Bruce Henderson, History

Looking Forward

At this time of the year the gardeners amongst us plan for the following year and a quick checklist is listed below. It is always a welcoming experience to walk past pretty well-kept gardens and well stocked allotments, not forgetting well stocked pots on balconies, so just reading the suggestions makes me even more appreciative. Our U3A has no less than 4 gardening groups and one garden appreciation group!

September Tasks

In the flower garden:

Deadhead roses, dahlias, and other late bloomers to extend flowering.
Divide and replant perennials such as hostas, day lilies, and irises.
Sow hardy annuals (like sweet peas or cornflowers) for early spring colour.
Plant autumn bulbs such as crocuses, cyclamen, and early daffodils.

In the vegetable patch:

Harvest apples, pears, beans, and late courgettes.
Plant overwintering crops: garlic, onions, and broad beans.
Clear out spent crops and add them to the compost heap.
Net brassicas to protect them from pigeons and caterpillars.

General jobs:

Keep weeding and watering — early autumn can still be dry.
Collect seeds from annuals and perennials for next year.
Check hedges and shrubs before bird-nesting season ends.

October Tasks

In the flower garden:

Plant spring bulbs: tulips, hyacinths, and alliums.
Lift and store tender bulbs like gladiolus and dahlias.
Cut back faded perennials and add clippings to compost.
Rake up fallen leaves to make leaf mould.

In the vegetable patch:

Harvest pumpkins and squash before frost arrives.
Start forcing rhubarb for an early crop.
Cover late-season crops with cloches or fleece for frost protection.
Turn compost heaps to aerate before winter.

General jobs:

Clean and store garden tools for winter.
Insulate outdoor taps and greenhouses.
Plant trees, shrubs, and hedges while the soil is still warm.
Feed lawns with autumn fertilizer and repair bare patches.

If you managed to get this far, a heartfelt thank you! I would be very pleased to receive contributions from any of our members for the next newsletter, due in the New Year. I am happy to help if I can, just email or phone me on 07401 814 024 and feel free to leave a message and your phone number if I cannot answer. The newsletter is for the members so your help in filling the pages is essential.

Email contributions to newsletter@hru3a.org

Sheila Dyke, Newsletter Editor

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
Committee		
Chair	Richard Stanton	chair@hru3a.org
Business Secretary	Claire Williams	business.secretary@hru3a.org
Beacon Administrator	Dave Benton	database@hru3a.org
Groups Co-ordinator	Lynda Wood	groups@hru3a.org
Membership Secretary	Sue Shilstone	membership@hru3a.org
Minutes Secretary	Janet Smith	minutes@hru3a.org
Newsletter Editor	Sheila Dyke	newsletter@hru3a.org
Equipment Officer	Vacant	
Vice Chairman	John Stefanowski	vicechair@hru3a.org
Treasurer	Josephine Noyce	treasurer@hru3a.org
Assistant Treasurer	Ewa Goulding	treasurer.asst@hru3a.org
Non-committee roles		
Volunteers helping the committee in supporting roles:		
Speakers Secretary	Terri Griffiths	speakers@hru3a.org
Website Administrator	Tony Hudson	website@hru3a.org
Venues Coordinator	April Yasamee	venues@hru3a.org
Regional Coordinator	Carole Benton	regional@hru3a.org
IT Administrator	Richard Collisson	administrator@hru3a.org
Social Team	Caroline Brewer	socialteam@hru3a.org