



## LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

December 2025

### FROM THE CHAIR

It seems like only a year ago that I wrote, 'and so another year draws to a close...', but here we are!

It has been another busy year for **BRu3a**, with two outdoor promotional activities: at West Park (in the wind and rain) for the Bognor Regis Carnival; and at the Middleton Fete. My thanks to all of you who helped on the day!

Our numbers remain steady at around 550, and I hope that the groups, the monthly talks, and other events are providing members with what they want. The important thing to remember is that if we are not doing that, then

you **MUST** let us know; otherwise, we cannot make changes. What is most encouraging is the emergence of new groups, showing that members are prepared to come forward and set these groups up for the benefit of others. This is what the **u3a** is all about! Thanks must go to Phillip for his efforts in facilitating these new groups.

We have a new Treasurer- well, not so new now, as Tony has been doing the job since February. In addition to getting to grips with the role and its complexities, he has also started to merge the accounts with the Beacon system, which allows greater access for group leaders to understand the state of their group's finances.

Sara Edwards is stepping back from her role as Secretary, although she has said she will continue to take the minutes of the committee meetings. I advertised the vacancy widely, and a number of you replied in the 'sort of affirmative', although the majority of replies cited age, infirmity, lack of technical knowledge and long holidays in far-flung places. Despite all of that, we have found a willing volunteer, Ani Moore, who will step into the breach early in the New Year. I thank her very much on your behalf.

#### Our Website:

<https://bognorregis.u3asite.uk/>

#### Beacon:

<https://u3abeacon.org.uk/u3aportal.php?>

#### Contact us:

<https://bognorregis.u3asite.uk/the-committee/>

*"Everyone in u3a should be an involved member, not a customer being served."*

**Eric Midwinter, u3a Founder**

Hartley has continued to promote the benefits of Beacon to the group leaders and to the membership in general. More and more of you are dipping your toes in the water; however, you must check the information we hold about you. This can be done through the members' portal. Details on how to do this are at the bottom of the bulletin, or on the website – or at the new Coffee morning starting on 6 January at Willowhale.

Trevor has done great things with the website, BUT he needs your input to keep it up to date. What is your group planning next year? What have you done this year? We are getting more and more people looking at the website, and this is our 'front door' for many new members, so don't let your group miss out!

Karen and Sara do a splendid job of producing the Bulletin every week; and I'm very grateful that Karen has also taken on the task of producing Pier Views each quarter. On the subject of Pier Views, thanks too to everyone who has volunteered to write up the monthly talks.

My final thanks go to Bill. Not just for organising the tea/coffee/biscuits rota, but for being prepared to do this for some of the groups as well (group members really need to step up here themselves!); not just for being the tallest person in the room, able to open and close the windows at St Mary's; but mainly for being a reassuring presence when difficult decisions have to be made. Thank you, Bill.

We also have several 'committee members' who support the Trustees in a number of complementary roles, the programme of monthly talks, the advertising at the monthly meetings, the Facebook pages, publicity, organising our "meeters and greeters" rota, and helping the Treasurer. Thanks to you all and to those of you who put your names for the various rotas.

All that remains for me is to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

See you on 22 January 2026, for 'Tax, Care and Toy Boys'.

*~ Iain Palot*

## **MONTHLY MEETING REPORT: OCTOBER**

**SPEAKER: ROB GOLDSMITH**

**JOURNEY TO TITANIC – ONE MAN'S JOURNEY**

Rob divided his presentation into two parts: the historical perspective, then his own story, which was an impressive tale of a childhood obsession culminating in a visit by submarine to the wreck of this iconic ship.

## The Tragedy

Titanic was built in the shipyard of Harland and Wolff in Belfast, and was one of three ships in her class. Commissioned by the White Star Line to take passengers and goods across the Atlantic Ocean, she was designed to carry 3,547 passengers and crew. She was designed with sixteen watertight compartments, but some of these extended only a few feet above the waterline. The designers did not think that this could ever be a problem.

Originally it was planned to have 48 lifeboats, but only twenty were legally required, so only twenty were fitted.

It was technically as advanced as an ocean liner could be in 1912, but although it was the biggest ship of its day at 46,329 gross tonnes, our ocean liners of today are approaching 250,000 gross tonnes.

It was interesting to hear of a number of human errors which contributed to the disaster.

- The reassigned Second Officer left the ship with the key to the locker which contained the binoculars
- There was a near collision in Southampton as 'SS New York' was "sucked" from her mooring, which delayed departure by over an hour; plus
- loading of passengers by tender in Cherbourg and Cobh (Ireland) was slow due to bad weather.

Other factors included the unusual cold, with icebergs being seen further south than normal.

A chronology of that fateful night on 13/14<sup>th</sup> April 1912 went something like this:

**11.40 pm.** Captain Smith not on watch. First Officer Murdoch advised of iceberg sighted, orders "hard a-starboard" and "full astern".

Titanic caught the iceberg a glancing blow. Watertight doors were ordered to be closed.

**Midnight.** Orders "Full Stop".

**00.12** CQD (used pre-SOS) sent out, but the nearest ship the California did not receive the distress calls as her telegraphist had gone to bed.

**00.40** The Chief Designer, who happened to be on board, realised the ship would sink. Radio room begins to send 'SOS' as well as 'CQD'

**00.46** lifeboats launched. Some were only half full and the crew was not properly trained.

**02.05** Last lifeboats launched.

**02.17** Last radio signal sent.

**02.18** Lights fail

**02.20** Ship broke in two between the third and fourth funnels. There were still over 1,500 passengers aboard the ship.

The Carpathia was the first rescue ship on the scene and took survivors to New York. Some bodies were recovered by SS Mackay-Bennet, and taken to Halifax, Nova Scotia



### **Rob's Journey**

The wreck of the Titanic was discovered on 1st September 1985. In 2005 the History Channel launched a competition for viewers to visit the wreck in a Russian MIR mini-sub.

Rob, who had always been fascinated by the iconic vessel and the events of its sinking, was lucky enough to win the competition, and took his Dad as his guest.

The wreck is 12,465 feet below the surface - very deep (it's pitch black at only 1,000 feet

down). The pressure on the wreck is three tons per square inch.

MIR mini-sub's have a maximum dive depth of 20,000 feet and carry a pilot and two passengers. Rob showed us some amazing pictures of the wreck, which showed surprising detail including the boiler, engines and even china from the First Class dining room.

The pictures also showed the bow section to be in reasonable condition and standing in a semi-upright condition; however the stern, which hit the ocean floor at some speed, showed significantly more damage. It was obvious from Rob's presentation that he was very moved by the experience and will remember it for the rest of his life

### **Footnote**

I found the presentation quite moving, and the presented detail extremely interesting.

On a personal note, I once stayed at a hotel in Alnwick, Northumberland called the White Swan. Its dining room is lined with the salvaged panelling, mirrors and ceiling from the First Class smoking-room of Titanic's sister ship 'Olympic'. This ship was scrapped in 1937. It is a special place to eat in.

*~ Mike Shawyer*

## MONTHLY MEETING REPORT: NOVEMBER

**SPEAKER: PAUL ULSON**

### **THE BRONZE AND IRON AGES**

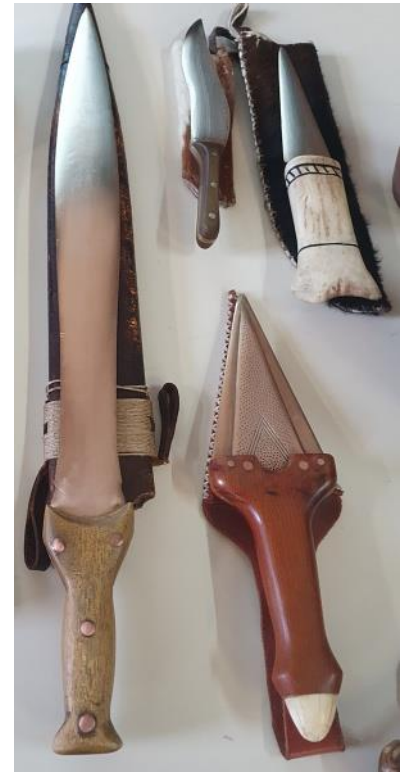
Paul Ulson joined us again; this time exploring the Bronze and Iron Ages, bringing with him an extraordinary array of artefacts which he passed round the audience (at risk of severe injury if anyone wished to test the sharpness of the blades !)

Paul explained the Copper Age was the transitional era between the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. At around 4,000BC there was a general move away from the traditional hunter-gatherer nomadic way of life, as metallurgical skills were being learned. Heavy, copper-headed pickaxes facilitated deforestation, and the farming of goats, sheep and cows became established. This led to the planting of grain because of the need to grow food for the animals. Metal scythes made the harvesting easier; while pottery storage vessels, often decorated, were crafted to house grain and flour.

The period was characterised by a wave of migration from the European mainland, mainly from Portugal. These people are now called the 'Beaker People', after the characteristic bell-shaped beakers which were buried with them. They had a significant influence on the culture of the population, introducing the practice of separate burials instead of the former tradition of burials in mass graves.

At the same time, farmers were beginning to recognise the importance of the winter solstice in the development of their crops and the general awareness of a "calendar" was associated with the development of beliefs centred around the sun's cycles.

A further migration took place around 2,000BC, which saw the development of bronze from an amalgam of copper and tin. This period consolidated the farming culture, with larger settlements made possible by a more efficient system of agriculture and better tools. The weather played a significant part in the further development of farming, which became more reliant upon animals when the weather became wetter. This inevitably led to the need to fight for the smaller pool of resources and there was a corresponding increase in the development and use of weaponry. Short-handled daggers would be used for close combat,





while long heavy swords were used for slashing. A strong tribal system developed, with the establishment of hill forts and the evolution of an elite warrior class.

The following era, known as the Iron Age, is characterised by what has been described as “Celtic” though this no longer delineates a particular culture. Iron became the prominent metal, providing stronger tools which were easier to smelt. Clothes were gaudy, and ornaments such as torques and brooches denoted status and wealth. Everyday useful objects were also decorated. Trade systems had become firmly established around rivers, and coinage established as trade currency.

The Iron Age slowly came to an end with the gradual Romanisation of England. But that’s another talk!

~ Ann Cadey

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our next monthly meeting will be on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2026, when Abbie Mitchell will tell us about “Tax, Care and Toy Boys”.

In February, Joanna Bullis will be giving a talk on “Mental Wellbeing for Older People”.

Doors open at 10am for a 10.30am start. Please remember to bring your own mug for tea and coffee!

## THURSDAY GARDEN GROUP

On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October members of the BR U3A Garden Group visited Ramster Hall and Gardens near Chiddingfold. The house and gardens have been in existence since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when they were owned by a wealthy glass-maker. Chiddingfold was at the centre of the glass-making industry in England at that time.

In the 1900s it was converted into an Edwardian country house, and it was at this time that the foundations of the present garden were laid, creating them out of a great oak wood. Over the years various owners have added to the garden by creating ponds, building a Japanese garden complete with bridges, and planting the rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas for which it is famous today.



We were pleased that the day was dry, though the wind was quite keen. After a refreshing cup of coffee/tea in the cafe, we headed off into the gardens with a map.

The paths were covered in acorns, an indication that the oak trees were still thriving. After such a dry summer, all trees are producing more fruit than normal as they are quite stressed, but it's hoped that new saplings will grow to replace them.

But we had come to see the acers and we were not disappointed. They were beautiful and in full leaf. Red, orange, green – trees and bushes.

Around every corner were sculptures of stone or wood or metal. The pictures show the true beauty of this garden in the autumn.

We all said that we would return in the spring to view the rhododendrons and azaleas. You should be aware that as it is a woodland garden, some of the paths are unmade and steep in places. But there were lots of places to sit and just relax in the beautiful environment.

*~ Celia Janering*



## PLAY READING

More varied and enjoyable sessions of play reading this quarter. In December, omitting anything festive, we will reminisce over one of the most memorable 'Dad's Army' scripts: "Deadly Attachment" (*Don't tell him Pike!*). This will be followed by one Act from Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice', demonstrating the wide choice of material we seek to amuse our group.

Again, our numbers have been reduced by family commitments, so anyone interested in coming along for a look-see, just ask me. You might just enjoy it and previous 'Am 'Dram experience is definitely not a prerequisite for joining.

~ Geoff Erbes

## WALKING WITH DOGS IS NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS!

At Bognor Regis u3a we take our dog walking seriously - but not too seriously!! Since January, when our Walking With Dogs group was formed, we have been meeting most Tuesdays (weather permitting) - usually in West Park where the dogs enjoy a run around while their owners take a stroll round the field. Afterwards we gather in West Park Café, the dog owners putting the world to rights over a well-earned coffee, while the cafe staff and other patrons spoil the dogs with lots of fuss and treats.

The group is open to all dog owners, but anyone who loves dogs and doesn't currently have one is welcome to join us. Our pack now consists of five dogs and nine humans. Everyone gets on well and we have a lot of fun: chasing after the dogs, and watching Buddy the labrador retrieving balls lost by the rest of the pack.



Recently we held the pack's Christmas 'do' at West Park Café.

A little early you might say, but the dogs love any excuse for a party. The owners quite like it too!

We would just like to say a Big Thank You to the staff at West Park Café for being dog friendly all year round - not just for Christmas!!

If you would like more information on this or any of Bognor Regis u3a's groups, please go to our website: <https://bognorregis.u3asite.uk>

~ Val Henke

## WALKING GROUP

The weather forecasters have not made life easy for the Walking Group lately – “It might rain”; “it’ll be windy”; “scattered heavy showers moving in”; or “rain clearing, but we’re not sure when”.

It all left our walk leaders in a quandary as to whether to cancel the planned walks or not.

In the end, most of the Autumn walks (led in turn by Mike, Gordon, Karen, Jenny and Eric) went ahead – though Mike was disappointed that no-one else joined him; and the October 6th walk had to be cancelled in advance as no-one volunteered to lead. We hope to get more walkers offering to take a turn at leading in 2026!

Some of our routes were a bit soggy underfoot, but with sturdy boots and cold/wet weather gear, those who made the effort were rewarded: very little rain, lovely autumn colours, and even an occasional sunny interval!

If you’d like to join us next year, we meet on the first Monday and third Wednesday of every month, starting at 10 a.m. and finishing around 1 p.m. – always with a snack break, and often with a lunch option at the end of the walk.

~ Karen McCreedy



## IT'S NOT JUST A BOOK GROUP AT BOGNOR REGIS U3A

What do the words ‘book group’ mean to you? A cosy chat amongst people enthusiastically sharing their love of the written word? Perhaps a dull meeting reminiscent of a school English class, dissecting the entrails of a story. So what makes a ‘good’ book group? Essentially, it’s a group of friends who love to read.

At Bognor Regis u3a we are lucky enough to have three good book groups: Blake’s Book Group, Readers’ Delight and Regis Readers. Each one is a small, close-knit group of less than eleven members, all of whom have become friends. Meeting in each others’ homes they share

a safe space where they are encouraged to freely discuss often differing viewpoints without fear of recrimination.

The groups find that inhabiting the pages of the same book, and discussing them with a group of friends reveals much more about the book or author and lots about the readers themselves. Their love of literature has cemented these friendships, in some cases for over ten years. During this time the groups have evolved into support networks, which have seen some of the friends through difficult times in their lives.

One of the first things you notice about these three groups is that all the current members are women. Men have been (and are!) encouraged to join, but none have done so yet.

Our longest running group, Readers' Delight was formed in 2013 by Tessa Eley. It has a structured form with a group leader, but all members help with every aspect of running the group. Books are ordered from the library, or Kindle downloads are used. When a member used an audio book it was noticed that slight differences in the nuances of the text were influenced by the narrator.

However, it's not all tea and biscuits in the parlour for Readers' Delight. This group does occasionally venture beyond the hearth and home. It has an annual outing, visiting places relevant to a particular book they're currently reading. For instance, they visited the Charlotte Gray exhibit at Tangmere Museum, which brought life to their reading of her experiences as a Special Operations Executive (SOE) agent during WW2.



They also enjoyed a recent talk by Karen McCree, a local science fiction author who also happens to be a Bognor Regis u3a member. She enthralled the group by detailing the journey which led to her becoming a published author. The group also have a Christmas Lunch and a Secret Santa where they exchange pre-loved books.

Most of us enjoy a good read. So what could be better than sharing your next literary discovery with a group of friends?

To find out more about Bognor Regis u3a groups or if you would like some help forming a new group please go to our website: <https://bognorregis.u3asite.uk>

~ Val Henke

## BRIGHTON THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

Despite the weather forecast, a small but elite group made their way to Brighton where we met Dr Nick McGlynn from the University of Brighton. Nick would, in the next two hours, walk around the 'history' of the town relating to its association with the LGBTQ community.

The story really begins with the Prince Regent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was a known hedonist and womaniser, keeping several mistresses; and his patronage of Brighton encouraged members of the gentry to come to Brighton, which became a 'pleasure' resort.

As well as the obvious attractions, there was the opportunity to acquire smuggled goods, particularly alcohol and pornography from the continent.



The coming of the railway also meant that the 'ladies of the night' could also come to Brighton, take the sea air, earn their fare and rents. It isn't until the 1870s that things take an uglier turn when a London solicitor who is known to make regular trips from the family home is accused of making improper advances to a groom at the hotel at which he is staying. In the ensuing struggle, the man dies in the first reported case of a homophobic attack in the town.

Brighton had by this time acquired a seedy, sleazy reputation - have you read 'Brighton Rock'?

We learned that 'queer' was a pre-WWII term and that 'gay' did not enter common usage for the same thing until the 1950s. We learned that 'cottaging' was often safer than living together and being recognised as consenting criminals, and that more often than not it was queer men servicing straight men!



*Opposite the Black Lion, on top of a now closed public toilet used by the queer community having 'cottaging' explained to us*

The development of safer areas led to the rise of the gay bar. The Greyhound had a reputation largely spread by word of mouth but attracted busloads of men; it was still largely men, from as far away as London. The pub was hetero downstairs but a gay pub upstairs, and after all the money paid the rent. Gay bars were very transitional, one moment open and then constantly being closed down; they were not 'fancy' places but no more than working-class pubs.

There was a limited provision for women and many places were openly hostile to their presence. Although there were a few, by 2022 there were no women's bars – fewer gay women, and lower earnings being two of the factors affecting this decline. Those places that did exist had also become sites of activism and political debate such as *The Marlborough*, now *The Actors*

Since the 2010s there has been a merging of LGBTQ areas in Brighton around St James Street and up into Kemptown, not just as 'gay' areas but as spaces where everyone and anyone is welcome. These areas are no longer seen as sleazy but areas where anyone can go and enjoy themselves. The C4 programme 'Queer as Folk' had a great deal to do with showing people that you could, as a gay person, have fun and your future was not one of doom and gloom. Manchester advertises the Canal Street area as a fun place to go, and Brighton too has capitalised on this fun aspect as a selling point for this part of the city.



*The Aids memorial in Kemptown*

But pure LGBTQ spaces are closing for a variety of reasons, including economics, safety, the fact that usage of these spaces is being diluted, giving rise to an anxiety among the LGBTQ community.

We said our goodbyes and a thank you to Nick before diving in for tea and cake, not a moment too soon, as the heavens opened. We paddled back to the station reflecting on what we had learned and appreciating that there is a very different picture to be seen if you know where to look.

*~ Iain Palot*

## FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

### VISIT TO SOUTHWICK HOUSE

In November, members of the Family History group were able to visit Southwick House, the historic manor house near Cosham which is famous as the headquarters for the D-Day invasion planning. Today, it is still part of an active military base, and we were therefore required to apply in advance and to submit our identity details in order to gain admission.

After checking in at the guardroom, our guide escorted us to Southwick House, explaining along the way how the site differed now from how it would have looked 81 years ago. The manor house itself now serves as the Officers' Mess, but still contains the D-Day map room, including the large original map, covering a whole wall of the room, and detailing the assembly and convoy routes to the invasion beaches.



We were given an extremely interesting talk about the history of the house and the planning and preparation leading up to the events of June 1944, along with the subterfuges to disguise the timing and locations of the landings.

The next-door room, now the bar, was actually where Eisenhower, as Supreme Commander, made the final decision to 'Go' on 6th June – a day later than planned, due to the weather, but still within the window of favourable tides and maximum daylight hours

Though none of our current members had direct relatives involved in the D-Day Landings, it was nevertheless a fascinating visit.

~ Colin McCulloch