

Senior Moments

*The quarterly newsletter of the
Bookham & District u3a*

Issue 82

2024

August



This is my fourth introduction to Senior Moments and marks the completion of my first year as your Chair.

In a year of elections worldwide, the Chair of the Third Age Trust announced her decision not to seek re-election this year, having completed a three-year term. I am pleased to inform you that Allan Walmsley, currently Vice Chair, has been elected to take over from the AGM in October. Sam Mauger, the CEO of the Trust, has also announced her departure. Iain Cassidy, currently CEO of Open Age, has been appointed to succeed her.

Thinking of Annual General Meetings, the Bookham & District u3a AGM will also be in October – immediately before our monthly talk on Tuesday 1st. At the AGM last year you elected me for a two-year term so you will have to put up with me for another year. At this year's AGM, however, we will be looking to appoint a new Secretary; Gillian Arnold is stepping back having given many years' service to the charity. Another vacancy, which has not been filled during this year, is that of Vice Chair. The latter is not an onerous role but more a sounding board for me as Chair and deputising for me if I am not available. If you think you have skills, and just as importantly the enthusiasm, you would like to put to good use in either of these roles - or think you could help out in another capacity - please get in touch with me or Gillian for a chat. Our email addresses are shown on the Committee page.

Looking back on my year as Chair is a rewarding exercise for me. We have held regular monthly meetings in the Old Barn Hall with a wide variety of speakers and subjects. These have ranged from an interesting talk on the history of Monopoly, through an intriguing session discussing the evolution of passports, to the presentation on the Great Ormond Street Hospital. Not only was this fascinating but I am very proud of all those who contributed to the raising of over £300 for the charity.

In terms of our interest groups we have over 60 in total covering more than 50 different activities and interests – very creditable numbers when compared to other local u3a groups. I would like to repeat my thanks to all Group Administrators, for their hard work and support, that I gave at their meeting earlier this year. Without these dedicated volunteers your u3a would not look like it does. Not only have most of our groups continued to flourish but we have new ones – including those playing pickleball, those walking their dogs plus the revival of the u3a Singers. There is even talk of a second beer appreciation group as the original one is "full to the brim". If you have any idea for a new activity please do not hesitate to speak to Chris Middleton, Groups Coordinator. He can guide you through the steps of bringing this to fruition.

As a last thought I am pleased to say that Bookham & District u3a is continuing to grow. At the AGM last year we had 475 members – it now stands at around 525. New members hopefully bring new ideas, increased attendance at our monthly meetings and various interest groups, as well as a bigger pool of volunteers and a general uplift for the organisation. All those who have joined since February this year will be invited to a New Members' Open Event on Friday 27 September. If any of these newer members, or our more established ones, knows of someone who wants to find out more about the u3a please tell them about this meeting. They will be most welcome to join us for tea and cake from 2:30 in the Harrison Room where members of the Committee and a number of Group Administrators will be on hand to provide information about our activities and how they can get involved.

Phil Brown



Bookham & District u3a

Registered Charity No 1036386 u3a Membership No 254/239/93

The Committee 2024

<https://bookhamu3a.org.uk>

 Frank Cross Speaker Secretary speakers@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Phil Brown Chair chairman@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Gillian Arnold Secretary secretary@bookham u3a.org.uk	 Chris Pullen Treasurer treasurer@bookham u3a.org.uk	 Liz Looney Membership Secretary membership@bookham u3a.org.uk	 Carol Stilwell Webmaster webmaster@bookham u3a.org.uk
		 Peter Osborne Assistant Treasurer treasurer@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Pat Mander Minutes Secretary minutes@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Harold Reglar Events events@bookham u3a.org.uk	
 Chris Middleton Groups Coordinator groups@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Maurice Baker Editor Senior Moments seniormoments@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Kim Kitson Ass Membership Secretary membership@bookham u3a.org.uk			 Viv Bignal Publicity Officer publicity@bookham u3a.org.uk
 Phil Brown Chair chairman@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Gillian Arnold Secretary secretary@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Chris Pullen Treasurer treasurer@bookham u3a.org.uk		 Liz Looney Membership Secretary membership@bookham u3a.org.uk	

Editorial

There is plenty to see and read in this issue including Clock Faces painted 50 years ago by Patricia Stevens who worked with a case clock maker. She says she was inspired to write this piece for Senior Moments by seeing the article Myra Usher had written on silk painting in the last SM.

Anita Laycock, a regular contributor, has a most interesting piece on Bryant & May matchmaking and while I knew some of the story I had no idea there was a Leatherhead connection. I'm sure I read somewhere that Woodlands Park was the house in Jane Austen's Emma when they went to Box Hill.

The cover this time is by Derek Wisbey taken at the Bookham village day where he really captured the spirit of the day.

David Middleton's photos of the walk he did in Windsor with the Life guards even has a photo of him wearing a plumed helmet but if he faced an inspection he would have been told to stand a bit closer to his razor next time he shaved!

Cover photo—Bookham Village Day 2023 Derek Wisbey



*RHS Wisley
The Wellbeing Garden*



*New members meeting at the end of January.
How many here will be involved in running our u3a in the years to come?*



Everyone has a story

In a recent issue of "u3a matters", the u3a monthly magazine, there was an article "Everyone has a story to tell..." It is trying to encourage everyone to write down their memories throughout their lives. I did mine a few years ago at the persistent suggestion of my son who kept telling me I should write down as much as I could remember and it has certainly been appreciated by the members of my family who are the only ones to have received printed copies of my reminiscences.

I did hold back on writing for many years, not least because I was finding it difficult to get everything into chronological order, but in my general reading I came across the series of books Hunter Davies has written about his life story. Not only were they fascinating to read but he used a method that helped overcome the chronology problem by writing about different facets and times in his life, these included a chapter or more on his children, then various periods of his life when he was involved as a reporter and highlight events such as his extensive biography of the Beatles that took place over several years. In my case yes, the children of course have been very important to me and a

considerable amount was devoted to them. Then in my case I did two years National Service where I learnt so much about people and their complications. Once a group of complete strangers are forced to live together from many varied backgrounds you really do learn whom you can trust and who you want to be friends with. With everyone dressed the same in military uniform it was not easy to have preconceived ideas about anyone.

"It is trying to encourage everyone to write down their memories throughout their lives"

The article in the magazine "u3a matters" offered a help pack to get you started that can be obtained for £8.50 to cover the cost of printing and postage.

So if you want to write up something you remember, just have a go and I shall be ready to help and advise you. If you are lost for ideas, just write all you can remember about your siblings, school and friends there, where you have lived, the jobs you have had, holidays etc.

Maurice Baker



Bookham Village day 2024 looked to be a jolly event and the weather was kind for the photos.

Derek Wisbey photos



Up to 6 miles walking group

Our group is looking for new members after recently undergoing a

more strenuous than a flat 6 mile hike.

Our group has usually walked in Surrey – with walks led by



rebirth and rebrand. Formerly known as the Up to 12km group we found the length a little too much for aging knees !

In future the group have agreed to expect walk leaders to normally set a limit of no more than 6 miles. We expect some walks may be 4 to 5 miles – after all, a hilly 4 mile walk may be

Anne Parsons or Mike Roberts in recent years. Occasionally we have ventured out into Hampshire or Sussex – in 2023 we did a circular walk from Pulborough which included the RSPB reserve and an excellent lunch at the White Horse pub. All our walks offer the option of joining us for a pub lunch afterwards.

This year we are encouraging members who wish to lead a walk to contribute to our programme. In the coming months we have four members offering to lead walks. However, there is no pressure on members to lead unless they want to .

The group walks once a month on the first Friday. We usually meet at 9.15am in the Lower Rd Recreation ground car park – to agree car shares to our start point.

This is a friendly group with 13 relatively active members – though average turnout is currently in single figures. We are keen to attract new members and if you think you might be interested please join

us for a 'taster' session. A warm welcome awaits !

For further information contact Anne Parsons or Mike Roberts on Wal02@bookhamu3a.org.uk

• Mike Roberts



The Bed-Stick



Some years ago I was nudged over by a car. As I hit the ground I felt my leg break; fractured head of my femur. They cut off my trousers and took me to St Peters Hospital at Chertsey.

The following morning, they saved

off the broken hip and gave me a new one. The first lesson the physiotherapists taught me was that, like a young lady with a short skirt, I should always keep my legs together! You lower yourself back-side first into a car and then swing in both legs together. And you use the same technique to get into and out of bed.

This is where the bed-stick comes in handy. 'Google' it and see a picture. It fits

under the mattress and appears at the side of the bed rather like an upside down stirrup. Mine is located on the right side of the bed about level with my tummy when I am lying with my head on the pillow. It provides a firm fulcrum for me to ease myself upright when I have been lying down. I can then slip my feet into my slippers and using the bedstick as a support I can stand upright, while adjusting my balance for a trip to the bathroom or to make the early morning cup of tea. If I sway for a moment, I can sit back down on the bed reassured by the steadying presence of the bedstick.

When lying in bed, I can use the firm fulcrum of the bedstick to lever myself into a more comfortable position and, of course, it provides reassurance about my previous concern about slipping out of bed onto the floor and lying there helpless on my back like an up-turned pill-beetle [woodlouse] or a knight in armour.

Bill Whitman



RHS Hyde Hall Essex



Restoration Clock Faces

It was in the 70's when I first started restoring grandfather clock dials. I had no idea as to how to go about it! There wasn't anything to refer to in the library, it was certainly before my time as regards laptops or mobile phones (Google etc) so it was more a case of feeling my way and hoping it was the right one.

I was introduced to a grandfather clock restorer in Farnham – he had a quaint little bow fronted shop in the main shopping street – it reminded me of Dickens! He repaired all manner of clocks including grandfather clocks, but he already had his own source of restorers so my name was then passed on to another restorer in Hartley Wintney. He and I then worked on many old clocks over the years.

Once the grandfather clocks had gone out of fashion or were no longer required they often found

themselves relegated to the outside sheds. This resulted in rust setting in underneath the paint which would become loose and eventually fall off. Hours of work then ensued filling and rubbing down. Paint on the corners of the dials was frequently missing and a bit of detective work was necessary in order to try and paint back something akin to the original design, having first rubbed down the bare areas and covered it with a filler.

It was so interesting seeing the different dials and designs, but so challenging! In order to create my own library when I might have to repaint the whole dial (not an uncommon occurrence - these were cleaned off and resprayed in a garage using Cellulose paint) I started to repaint the scenes onto tracing paper. The downside to painting the whole scene twice, once on the clock face, and then for my records, was time, hence my library is a somewhat small one!



On the front and centre of the dial, opposite to where the small legs were on the reverse, the legs would become wobbly and loosen the paint on the front of the dial. It was



particularly difficult to restore this area as these holes had to have a filler which had to be rubbed down and repainted time and again before the shine on the face in these spaces matched with the old shine on the rest of the dial. Similarly, where a dial might have been dropped, the paint on the bottom corners was invariably missing.



Often parts of the dial were worn away or damaged. This included the names, Roman

numerals, Arabic numbers, circles and artwork, and frequently the faces were in a very marked and dirty condition.



Patricia Stevens

A beam compass was necessary for the circles and the ends of the Roman numerals and the straight lines were drawn using a ruling pen which held the Cellulose paint. Fine watercolour brushes were used to fill in the centre of the numerals, to paint the Arabic numbers and to work on the artwork. I used Humbrol paints in those days with one exception when I was asked to work in watercolour.



dial was completed.

I have attached some of my library's artwork, plus one dial showing the time after the filler had been applied but before the





Vegetable Growing group

The Vegetable Growing group recently visited Hatchlands to look at the newly developing vegetable garden there. We met Phil and Andy who very kindly let us in to walk around and see what they were doing at the moment.



This garden is not fully open yet to the public but will be in the near future.

There are 15 volunteers tending to this two and a half acre plot of National Trust land within a walled garden.

There are vegetable beds some surrounded by hay bales as borders which were left over from a children's play area and will rot down naturally. Peach trees, tomatoes growing up against the walls, lettuce, onions, carrots, radish and a herb

garden. Fruit trees have been kept from the original orchard there and there are areas for wild flowers and grasses growing to attract pollinators and wildlife. Sweet peas were being gathered into lovely scented bunches to be sold at reception and the chef came to collect some herbs for the Cafe.

Phil said that they are not using insecticides and are looking to nature to provide its own predators for insects of various kinds.



There has been a problem with snails after the mild and very wet winter. Also there is a very tidy

composting area with a poly greenhouse for propagation etc. There are plans to further develop this garden resources permitting and it is well worth visiting.

Lee Saunders

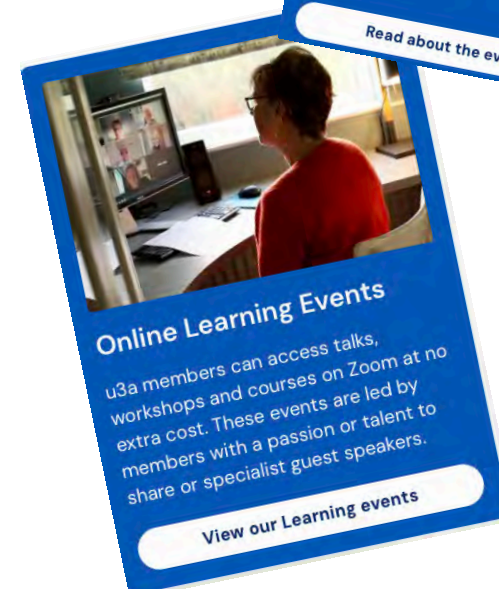


Are You Making Full use of your u3a Membership?

If you take a look at the u3a website it is surprising how many groups you will discover and many you can join on line without having to set one up within Bookham u3a.

Our Learn and Share activities cover a wide range of interests for all u3a members to get involved in - from challenges and projects to competitions. Some are one-off events and others run over an ongoing period of time. If you have any ideas for future activities, please email learning@u3a.org.uk. Get involved!

Please do share these opportunities with your u3a membership



New Golf Croquet Group

On 9th April eight u3a members met at Polesden for a taster session of croquet. It was cold, windy, and showery. On 16th April you can see the same members huddled under the trees sheltering from lashing rain and hailstones. Definitely a game for enthusiasts! We have shortened the introductory sessions so that the game can be enjoyed very soon after joining. Most golf croquet groups are nearly full so it's pleasing to have enough new members to form their own

group. Currently we have space for a few more.

June Update: We are now an established golf croquet group of twelve, albeit with a slightly different configuration of members to those in the first photo. Some have left due to other commitments but we've welcomed new members too. The photo on the right was taken on a scorching day, regular water breaks in the shade were a necessity. We play every Tuesday and like every group, attendance numbers fluctuate due to grandchildren duties, medical



From one weather extreme to another

appointments, and people will insist on taking holidays. They say you can't catch a cold from getting damp and you will sometimes need a plentiful supply of sunscreen, but as you can see from these photos, weather excuses aren't made by our hardy group.

As someone said, croquet can be a vicious game but it's played by very nice people.

Golf Croquet Tournament And Summer Picnic

There was a good turnout for the Golf tournament on 18th June. All lawns were played and one was double banked.

David was there early to organise and flags were flying on a thankfully dry day. The eventual worthy winner was Paul Warren who only joined our group this season, an inspiration! Well done to his partners throughout the day too.

14th July was the date of the annual Summer picnic at Polesden. I was unable to be there but am told it was a convivial day. Fifteen players came and went from 10.30am to 5pm, lots of two stroke golf croquet was played and fun was had by all. This is a relaxed social day with no competition or organised croquet. David took the photo below



Val Cross

Strike a light!

Anita and Hilary gave a talk to the Social History Group in June featuring the Matchstick Girls and Woodlands Park Hotel.



One Friday morning last Spring Hilary, Betty, Margaret and I enjoyed a 'Posh Coffee &

Cake' at the Woodlands Park Hotel. After enjoying our refreshments, I went to the entrance hall and picked up a leaflet about the hotel's history. We were astounded by its owners and wanted to discover more.



Frederick Carkeet Bryant, the son of the founder of the match company Bryant & May, acquired

Woodlands Park as a country house in 1879 and in 1884 commissioned Rowland Plumbe, R.A. to substantially rebuild it "with a free hand, unfettered in the slightest degree by economic considerations" in the Gothic style.

The most modern innovations were incorporated, and Woodlands Park became one of the first country

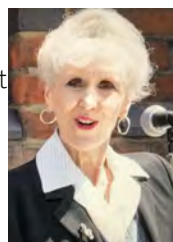
houses with electric light, renowned for the grandeur of its oak panelled Grand Hall.

The house became a centre for Edwardian Society in Surrey, with regular weekend house parties and lavish dinners. The then Prince of Wales, who became King Edward VII, was a regular visitor, with his famous friend, the actress Lillie Langtry.

How did Frederick Bryant have such an enormous amount of money to purchase and rebuild this opulent house? He was the son of William Bryant who together with Francis May created the famous matchmaking company. However, there is a much darker side to this story which Hilary and I uncovered.

William Bryant was born in 1804 in Tiverton and at the age of 15 joined the Plymouth Office of the Excise Service. Then in 1832 shortly before leaving the Excise Office he joined the Society of Friends remaining a faithful Quaker until he died. He married Annie Jago Carkeet at the Friends Meeting House in Falmouth in 1833.

He sets up in business with Edward James in 1835 as Bryant & James, general merchants. They



Anita Dobson East
Enders Star unveiled
plaque



were the inventors and patentees of "improvements in the Manufacture of Liquid and Paste Blacking by the introduction of India Rubber, Oil and other articles and things."

In 1838 they also went into partnership with Francis May born 1803, a fellow Quaker, who was a tea dealer and grocer in Bishopsgate, London. May became the London agent for Bryant & James' blacking candles, sugar and



lubricating grease.

Hilary then talked about what we did before matches. We

rubbed sticks together, used the heat of the sun through a magnifying glass or we used Tinder boxes. These came in all shapes and sizes again, cheaper with basic materials or more luxurious upmarket boxes or pouches to light fires and cigars.

Many primitive matches were employed but it was not until 1827 that an English chemist, John Walker of Stockton recorded his discovery of what he called "Friction Matches".

He was born in 1781 and grew up in Stockton to become apprenticed to a surgeon who was

physician to the Marquis of Londonderry. He was reported to have studied pharmacy and at the age of 38 opened his own chemist shop with a workshop at the rear.

He was working on some kind of combustible paste, perhaps to be used in the making of percussion caps for the gun trade. He was using antimony sulphide, phosphorus, potassium chloride, gum Arabic and water.

When he discarded some sticks dipped in the mixture onto his hearth at home in the evening, they spluttered and caught fire. He realised he could utilise this and started experimenting further to perfect his mixture.

He finally sold his first tin called "Friction Lights" for 1s and 2d for a tin of 100 matches.

Following protests about the cost, the sandpaper to scrape them against came free. Later these were sold in cardboard boxes.

Walker did not patent his ideas despite being advised to do so by Michael Faraday who was working on electromagnetism, as he felt it was not significant enough, although Faraday demonstrated Walkers



match at his meetings with the Royal Society.

In 1829, Samuel Jones copied Walker's idea and sold matches called "Lucifers".

Walker was able to buy himself a house in the fashionable part of Stockton. He never married and lived with his two sisters Jane and Mary until his death in 1859.

As with all things made in England at that time, the discovery of the match brought employment and prosperity for people and they wanted a more attractive way of carrying their matches around so small cases called Vesta cases started to be produced in gold, silver, brass etc. Some of these would have been attached to a gentleman's Albert chain or to a lady's Albertini chain.

In 1843, William Bryant went into partnership with Francis May and established themselves as provision merchants in Tooley Street and Philpot Lane, London and began to manufacture matches at Bow in London.

In 1843 William's son Wilberforce joined the partnership as manager of the Bow factory. Francis May withdrew from the business around 1868 apparently objecting to the rigorous sales methods which were being employed in an increasingly competitive British market. He was

described as "mild mannered and kindly" but the same could not be said of Bryant.

Following the death of William Bryant in 1874 the merchandising side of the business was moved from Whitechapel to Bow, where new machinery was installed which resulted in a considerable increase in match production.

Arthur Bryant died in 1884 and when the remaining three sons took over, they registered the business as a limited company, meaning shareholders could now have huge dividends. All the sons lived in very grand houses.

The Matchgirls Strike took place in July 1888. In the beginning the

factory and employees seemed generally content with their work and environment, but when William's four sons joined the business, they cut off any control that May might have had that health problems arose, salaries declined, and the unfair treatment of the women began.

Bryant & May were very prominent at this time and created a monopoly over the entire East End of London.



Annie Bessant

They employed as many as 5,000 women and their public image was pristine. This was not the case, as the women endured horrific working conditions developing a condition called "Fosse Jaw" or "phossy jaw" when the phosphorus started to cause very painful swellings in the face and jaw. The white and yellow phosphorus made the matches easier to strike and was cheaper to make but some workers were subject to debridement and surgery, others to organ failure and death due to sepsis.

This disease could have been prevented if the women had been able to use red phosphorus, but they were denied because this would have had a serious impact on the profits.

The situation came to a head when one of the girls was dismissed for supposedly disobeying instructions given to her by the foreman. When this happened all the other girls walked out. Bryant & May thought the girls would return but despite going without wages for multiple weeks the women remained resolute in their fight for women's rights.

The public and press were fascinated by their story and got the socialists' attention. Annie Bessant, a socialist journalist, though not the mastermind behind the strike as many believed, published 'White Slavery in London' in her magazine

'The Link' which was about the matchgirls.

Finally with pressure from shareholders and the immense damage to their reputation, Bryant & May gave in. The women returned to work on these terms: abolition of all fines, abolition of all wage deductions for paint, brushes, stamps, etc, restitution of pennies, packers to have three pence, all grievances to be taken straight to the managing director not the foreman, a separate breakfast room so they didn't eat in the same place as the dangerous phosphorous, that all the women be taken back, even the leaders who initially Bryant & May refused to take back, and finally the formation of a Matchmakers' Union.

I discovered in Edwina Vardey's book "Leatherhead, A History" that the musical "The Matchgirls", based on the strike's story, was first performed in the Thorndike Theatre in 1965 before transferring to the West End for a successful tour.

There is a Blue Plaque Memorial to The Matchgirls' Strike on the site of the old Bryant & May factory in the East End which was unveiled by Anita Dobson in 2022

"The Matchgirls' Memorial Walk" taken by TMM Videos is a very moving tribute.

Visit www.matchgirls1888.org

Anita Laycock & Hilary Fitzpatrick



Bookham u3a future events

The table below shows upcoming meetings open to all members. For more information on these meetings please refer to the Bookham u3a website. You will need to be logged in to see the additional information.

The monthly meetings always start at 2.30pm

<i>03 Sept</i>	<i>Bees and Honey-tradition, myth, symptoms and magic</i>	<i>2.30pm</i>
<i>01 Oct</i>	<i>AGM followed by A Sussex Farm in the 1950's</i>	<i>2:30pm</i>
<i>05 Nov</i>	<i>Mother of the Brontes</i>	<i>2.30pm</i>

Study Days at Yehudi Menuhin School

Always on a Friday 10am to 4pm

Bring your own lunch

£12 u3a members

Fri Sep 20th	Artificial Intelligence Presented by Russell Whitworth & Dr Andrew Rogoyski, Surrey Institute for People- Centred Artificial Intelligence
Fri Oct 18th	The History of Photography Presented by Roger Mendham, President of Surrey Photographic Association

Places will be available in the hall or for on-line viewing.