



Monthly Bulletin – September 2025

MONTHLY MEETING

Tues 9th September 2025

St. John's Church Meopham

2.00 pm

Chair's Introduction – *John Peters*

I hope you all enjoyed the summer break and none of you got too exhausted with grandparenting duties. We had a family holiday to Cornwall to celebrate a major birthday that I had recently; no grandchildren as yet but we did have the pleasure of the company of our daughter's labrador.

Please have a look at the website and see what Meopham u3a has to offer in the next 12 months. As I write this on 26 August, there are meetings of 14 different groups between now and the end of the current month and over 70 in September. Remember, new groups can be set up for any subject that you may be interested in, it just takes sufficient interest to get them off the ground. A friend in Essex is a member of his u3a's Real Ale Group; well, we have Wine Appreciation Groups so why not? Our Group Co-ordinators Roy and John are there to guide and help you but it is up to each group to run itself. Each group needs someone to act as Group Contact but this isn't an onerous role by any stretch of imagination, I've done it for several years.

Also, don't forget to send our Editor Graham Jansen any content to include in the Bulletin – such as a write up and photographs of a visit your Group has had recently.

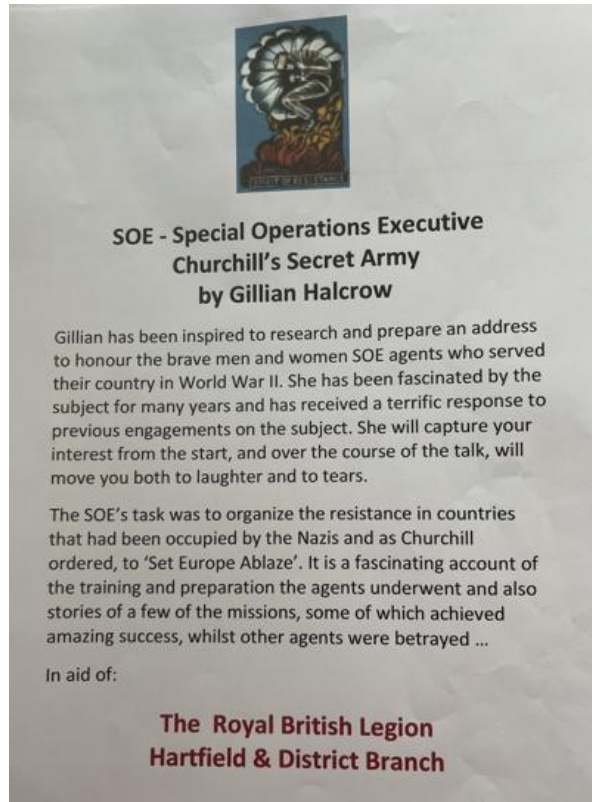
That's all for this month, I hope to see you at the monthly meetings, details of the September meeting are elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Regards, John Peters

Introduction to our Speaker from Pam Godden

Our speaker this month is Gilly Halcrow whose talk is titled:

SOE – Special Operations Executive – Churchill’s Secret Army



Membership Renewals

Ann MacEwan, our Membership Security, informs us that as of the 26th August, there are 425 members listed in Meopham U3A with 6 new members. However, not all members have renewed their membership in spite of a reminder in last month's newsletter. To those who have renewed a BIG "Thank You" and "Welcome Back" to a year of fun, learning and social activities with like-minded people. If you haven't renewed yet, please remember that you cannot attend monthly or group meetings until renewal is received.

10th Anniversary Tea

It is hard to believe it is 10 years since Meopham u3a started but in July 80 members celebrated this milestone with an afternoon tea at Stansted Village Hall.

Organised by Linda Hall, who was ably supported by Andrew Morgan, Beryl Connelly, Carole Dickenson, Hilary Blythe and Sheila Garner the afternoon was very successful.

Members were entertained by Miss Vintage, who sang songs old and new, and even got some members on their feet for a dance. Then they enjoyed an afternoon tea with soft drinks.

The afternoon was completed with members of the original steering committee cutting the anniversary cake. Carole Dickenson



Monthly Meetings – Church Teas Rota – 2025-26

Carole Dickenson

Here is the tea rota for the next few months.

Please note if any of your groups are involved and please make it a priority to attend the monthly meeting when you are on the rota.

It has worked well over the past year and all groups have helped willingly when it was their turn.

Thank you to everyone who has welded a tea pot or coffee pot, plated up biscuits, put out chairs, collected cups and battled with the dishwasher. Members really appreciate a hot drink and a biscuit in the St John's Centre after the monthly meeting and there is no better example of the u3a mantra "by the members... for the members... than the church teas!

You do not need to bring anything with you but your smile.

Thank you.

Your Social Team

MONTHLY MEETING TEA ROTA 2025/6	
9 th September 2025	PATCHWORK AND QUILTING
14 th October 2025	PHOTOGRAPHY
11 th November 2025	PLAY READING
9 th December 2025	PUB QUIZ
13 th January 2026	SCIENCE
10 th February 2026	SIGN LANGUAGE
10 th March 2026	SINGING 1 AND 2
14 th April 2026	SPANISH
12 th May 2026	TABLE TENNIS
9 th June 2026	WALKING TENNIS
14 th July 2026	AGM
August 2026	NO MEETING
8 th September 2026	WEEKENDERS
13 th October 2026	WINDMILL VOLUNTEERS
10 th November 2026	WINE APPRECIATION 1
8 th December 2026	WINE APPRECIATION 2








Badminton Group



Join our U3A Badminton Group!



Looking for a fun way to stay active, meet new people, and enjoy a good laugh? Come and give badminton a try with the our U3A Badminton Group!

-  All abilities welcome – no experience needed!
-  Friendly, relaxed atmosphere – it's all about enjoyment
-  Great way to stay fit at your own pace
-  Make new friends and share the fun, playing doubles
-  We meet 2:00 every Wednesday at Cascades local sports centre
-  We have rackets to borrow 

Whether you're picking up a racket for the first time or just a bit rusty, our sessions are a great mix of exercise and socialising – no pressure, just play!

We are playing 2:00 - 4:00 every Wednesday at Cascades DA12 4LG - only £4 or free for full GCLL members.

Just turn up and *smash* your way to fun!

Alan Scott

Geography Group

A new Geography Group has been set up for anyone interested. Please contact **Jan Thompson** for more details.

VJ Day 80

Graham Jansen

There was no Monthly Meeting in August so I expect many of you were busy jetting off on holiday, visiting the coast or just relaxing in the garden. I was fortunate enough to be invited to the European film premiere of 'Dongji Rescue' at the Odeon Luxe, Leicester Square, to mark VJ Day 80. I attended in memory of one of my relatives who was a POW on board the Japanese ship 'Lisbon Maru.' The film is based on the real-life incident when the cargo ship transporting around 1,800 British POWs from Hong Kong was torpedoed by an American submarine, in October 1942. It was mistaken for a Japanese troop ship. It tells the story of the rescue made by Chinese fishermen to save over 300 POWs. Members of the Lisbon Maru Memorial Association (LiMMA), were in attendance along with the Chinese UK ambassador who provided a speech prior to the start of the film. Cast and crew were also present. It was a fitting way to mark VJ Day 80.

Whilst on the subject of military history the National Army Museum in Chelsea have some free exhibitions and expert talks during September (nam.ac.uk):

The Diary of a Gurkha Officer, 1942-1945

Military partners, their role, involvement, and impact - 12 September

National Army Museum at Open House Festival – 13 & 14 September (Register to book)

Beyond Burma: Forgotten Armies opens on 16 September

Cyber Squadron, an official history – 19 September

The Rise and Fall of the British Army, 1975-2025 – 26 September

Also, as a Trustee and library assistant with the North West Kent Family History Society I am happy to offer help and advice to anyone embarking on researching their family history (see details below).



Meopham Windmill Update

Graham Jansen

Many of our members have been along to the windmill already but if you've yet to visit us you and your relatives and friends will be made very welcome by all the volunteer guides on hand. Entry inside the mill is free but donations are always kindly appreciated and souvenirs are available to be purchased including rats, which are proving popular with our young Rat Catchers. We now have rat droppings (chocolate raisins) available for purchase also). If you cannot manage to climb the steps fear not as we have video footage of the upper floors, which can be viewed from a monitor inside the chamber. You only have until the end of September to visit before the summer opening season ends. We have had over 500 visitors so far so Meopham Windmill is proving popular and is attracting media attention.

David Denman and Victoria Sheridan were recently invited to 'Made in Kent' radio and were interviewed at Bluewater studios by Eleanor Scannell on her Daytime Show about Meopham Windmill. David did really well with his Alan Freeman style introduction "Hi there, pop pickers!" Well done to you both for putting Meopham Windmill firmly on the map and raising more awareness.



Cobham Hall August 2025

Carole Dickenson

Two groups of members enjoyed a tour of Cobham Hall in early August.

The Hall is a beautiful red brick mansion dating from 1584 which is right on our door step.

We followed in the footsteps of many English monarchs from Elizabeth 1 to Edward V111 as we toured the hall and discovered that at one time it was home to Frances Stuart, who was the model for Britannia on our coins. Charles Dickens regularly walked through the grounds from his house in Higham to the Leather Bottle pub in Cobham village. In 1883 the Honourable Ivo Bligh, later the 8th Earl of Darnley, led the victorious English cricket team against Australia and brought home the ""Ashes"" to Cobham Hall. Our guide Celia made sure we did not miss the wonderfully decorated Gilt Hall, the silk wall paper, marble fireplaces and Snetzler organ.

After a cup of tea and some of the largest scones ever seen we enjoyed a stroll around the gardens which are undergoing renovation.

If you have never been to Cobham Hall, it is well worth a visit.



Classic Car Group – Hollywell Park and Penshurst Place 16/17th August

David Denman

A busy weekend for the Classic Car Group with both the Hollywell Park function and Penshurst Place events, a huge turnout, and selection of vehicles at Penshurst. Both events were enjoyed by all and definitely dates for the diary for next year.



Local Nature Appreciation Group trip to Stodmarsh

Steve Callum

On the 20th August the Local Nature and Appreciation Group visited the 241-hectare nature reserve in the Stour valley, near Canterbury, managed by Natural England and was created by mining subsidence, which formed the lakes, extensive reedbeds and wet meadows. August is usually quiet bird wise, however, this did not dampen their spirits and they set off towards the wooded area, where an elusive chiffchaff could be heard, with blue and great tits dashing about in the branches looking for their insectivorous lunch. Coots swam lazily through the green algae. On one of the smaller ponds a grass snake appeared briefly before hiding among the reeds. A robin sang from the undergrowth as they made their way along the track and moorhens were spotted along with mute swans in the canal. Numerous swallows and sand martins, were seen along with long-tailed tits and a kestrel hovering in the distance. A sedge warbler and a common whitethroat was also spotted in the bushes. Great-crested grebes, grey heron, cormorants, teal, tufted duck, gadwall, black-haired gulls and little grebe were also noted. Altogether the group saw 26 species. Steve and Hazel thank everyone who attended.



London Visits 1 visit to Hyde Park

Ann Macewan

On the 27th August members of LV1 met up for their monthly jaunt, this time to Hyde Park, organised by Karen Furlong and Liz Millard. Karen guided them carefully as they entered near the Elizabeth Gates and the Achilles Statue and gave them details of the history of the park as they moved through the grounds of the 350-acre site of the world-famous Royal Park. It is a Grade 1 listed urban park in Westminster and is easily accessible on foot or by public transport. It has been a Royal Park for hundreds of years since Henry VIII acquired it for hunting. James I used it for courtiers and socialites and then Charles I opened it to the general public in 1637.

They passed through the Rose Garden with more sculptural delights and stunning flower beds, stopping for drinks at the Serpentine Bar. The walk continued along the Serpentine (designed by Queen Charlotte, a keen gardener). The group then stopped at Princess Diana's Memorial where children and adults were enjoying the water before going onto Peter Pan's statue and lunch at the Italian Gardens, lovingly designed by Prince Albert for Queen Victoria. Here the group sat in the Queen Anne's Alcove to view the scenery and to enjoy each other's company. They then passed the statue of Edward Jenner and the last stunning sculpture was by Henry Moore with the view up to Kensington Palace. What a Royal landscape where hundreds of visitors were able to find pleasure in the wonderful space, experience beauty in the natural world and see creatures of all types, nurtured, and cared for by the Royal Parks.

What a delight! Thank you to Karen and Liz



Royal Ballet and Opera House: London Visits 3



On Thursday 28 August, ten of us from LV3 went on a fascinating backstage tour of The Royal Ballet and Opera House in the heart of London's Covent Garden. It is the third theatre on the site, with its historic beginning in 1788 when John Rich, actor/manager at Lincoln's Inn Fields (and a famous Harlequin) commissioned the Beggar's Opera from John Gay. Following the success of this venture, he decided to build the first Theatre Royal at Covent Garden. This opened in December 1732 but was destroyed by fire in 1808. Its replacement burnt down in 1856. The current building opened in 1858 as the Royal Italian Opera and became The Royal Opera House in 1892.

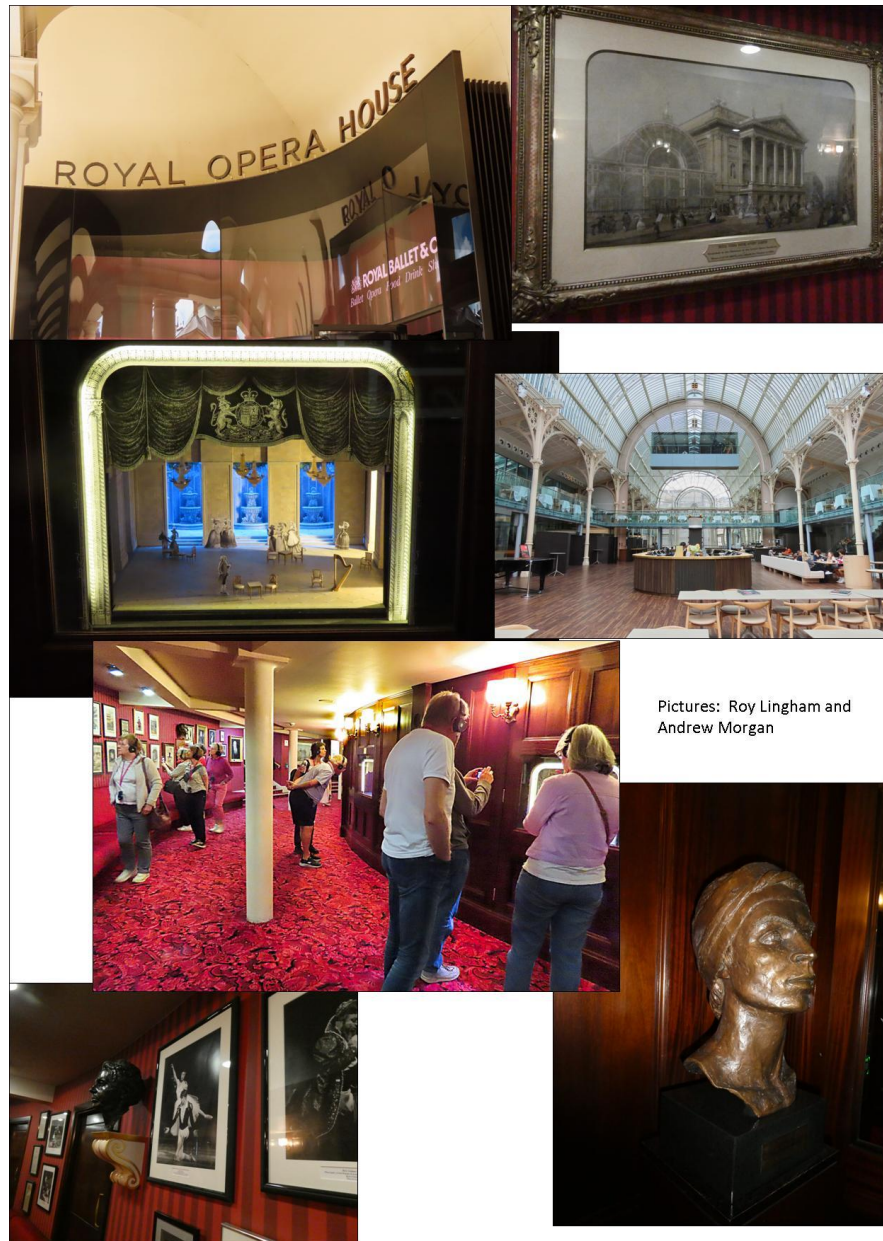
To start our tour, our guide led us through an area with photos and busts of famous opera and ballet stars through the ages as well as models of stage sets from various productions. From here we went to the front stalls, from which vantage point the stage looked enormous. We left the auditorium via a smoking room created especially for King Edward VII, with a door so narrow as to prevent ladies wearing the fashionable wide dresses of the time from joining him!

We followed our guide through a maze of corridors (colour coded to aid navigation) and looked down on the huge lifts which raise such enormous items of scenery as the 'Nutcracker' Christmas tree. We continued to a ballet rehearsal studio where we could examine pointe shoes (they get through 6000 pairs a season apparently!) and tutus, stored on a tutu tree.

From there we visited a large craft studio featuring items from productions past and future and then on to the backstage area which was quite simply enormous. They were busy laying a floor made to look like marble for the forthcoming new production of Tosca.

In traditional fashion, we exited via the gift shop and reluctantly rejoined the real world.

Text and visit organized by Sue Lewis.



Pictures: Roy Lingham and Andrew Morgan

STANSTED VILLAGE FETE
In aid of Village Hall Funds

Saturday 6th September
On the Village Green, by the Village Hall

Horse Show & Gymkhana 9:00am
Fete, Village Market & Dog Show 1:00pm
Dog Show Registration from 1:00. Show at 2:00.

DOG SHOW

Local Entertainment

Bottle Tombola	Egg Jarring	No Card - Coins & Cash Please.
Licensed Bar & Food	Village Market	
Tea & Cakes	Raffle	
Coconut Shy	... and so much more !	

We look forward to seeing you !
All contributions of bottles & cakes are gratefully received. We will call to collect.
All helpers & stall holders are very welcome.

STANSTED CLASSICS
Car Show

Journey Through Time at Our Vintage and Sports Car Show

06 September 2025 13:00 to 17:00 Free Entry

Stansted Village Green, Malthouse Road, TN15 7PJ

Register to Attend
stanstedclassics@gmail.com

Part of the Stansted Fete, raising money for the Village Hall Charity

Members of Meopham U3A Classic Car group will be entering their vehicles.
Come along and support them ... There is a lot else to see.



What does **your** family tree look like?



**Do you know how to get started?
Where to get the information you need?
We can help.**

North West Kent Family History Society

**Do you know how to get started?
Where to get the information, you need?
We can help.**

North West Kent Family History Society

Just £10 buys membership until 31 December annually

www.nwkfhs.org.uk

We regularly host Zoom talks and workshops, and our Dartford and Sevenoaks branches feature monthly guest speakers.

On Wednesdays Summerhouse Drive Library, Bexley is exclusively for our members' use to carry out research, enjoy a cuppa and take part in the workshops and discussion groups held there.

We have volunteers on hand to offer help and guidance.

If you're interested in exploring your roots, feel free to drop by on any Wednesday between 10am and 4pm for a friendly chat and help getting started.

Visit our website for full details of upcoming talks and workshops.

To stay informed about all our events, email **enews@nwkfhs.org.uk** to receive our free monthly e-newsletter.

The NWKFHS Library is located at 80 Summerhouse Drive, Bexley DA5 2EE

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