



August 2025 Magazine



The Third Age Trust

(Operating as the University of the Third Age)

Croydon u3a Registered Charity Number 1029466

www.croydonu3a.org.uk Face Book: Croydon u3a

Croydon u3a Management Committee 2024-2025

Chair	Jenny Wilson jenny.wilson@croydonu3a.org.uk
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Business / Minutes Secretary	Trisha Holmes
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Interest Groups and Publicity	Maggie Chan
IT and Comms	Steve May
Interest Group Assistant	Fenella Cardwell
Travel Team	Karen Hook

Croydon u3a has an army of volunteers apart from the members above, who have taken on various roles to make our u3a run well.

We must include our Group Leaders and their assistants, for without them we would literally fall apart.

We are always looking for volunteers to discuss starting a new group or offering a taster session or a short course. Please contact Maggie Chan if you would like to discuss this. The guiding principle of the u3a is:

Run by the Members for the Members

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Foreword

It's summer!

Phew, it's been a scorcher so far. I hope you are all keeping cool and using plenty of sunscreen. (Of course, since writing this, the heavens have opened.)

Have a great summer. I'm sure that many of you will be on grandparent duties during the school holidays, I do hope they don't wear you out.

Apologies for the late issue of this magazine, I was unable to issue in June, as expected, not least because I was away enjoying myself. I hope you have been able to also enjoy a break or two. The next issue will therefore be pushed back to December. Please send me your contributions for inclusion. Without these the magazine cannot happen.

All contributions for the next edition will be gratefully received. Please send to: tess.smith@croydonu3a.org.uk by 20th November.

Editor – Tess Smith

Letter from the Chair

Dear Member,

Croydon u3a goes from strength to strength. New members have volunteered to run new groups which diversifies our Interest Group offer and crucially involves more members running the ship. If you have an idea for a group, please get in touch.

20th – 28th September is u3a Week, when the 1,036 u3as in the UK will be celebrating our organisation.

The more I read about 'healthy ageing' the more I read (yes I did intend that repetition!) about the importance of SOCIAL interaction. It's top of the list in a number of recent studies, coming above physical activity (although that's very important too), weight and diet, not smoking and low or zero alcohol consumption.

Other aids to a good life refer to efficient breathing, cold showers, meditating and lots of laughter. Well, I think you can guess which one I have parked.

My late hero Michael Mosley's team have recently released a 6-part series The Secrets of Superagers. Episode 2 was The Body where trials compared walking to hopping for improving bone density in hips to prevent fractures. Walking is great for legs; hopping is for hips. Dark food (no not burnt toast) is good and balance exercises. I guess hopping while eating blueberries ticks all those boxes, as long as you don't choke!!!!!!!!!!!!

So, keep as well as you can. Take the advice in your stride or hop, cultivate old friends and make new ones and enjoy having time on your hands.

Very best wishes,

Jenny

Jenny Wilson, Chair of Croydon u3a and London Region Council Representative

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News from the Groups

Focus on Africa

The following was published in the national u3a blog and is reproduced here in case you didn't see it.

Croydon u3a's Focus on Africa group explores Africa and its rich culture through visiting museums, eating food and inviting guest speakers to talk to the group. Group leader Grace talks about why she first created the group and how it has developed.



It all started when I went to a Summer Fair in my area in 2022. While exploring the different stands, I found the Croydon u3a booth. There, I saw a list of various groups and their activities, along with when they meet. I was excited to see many interesting options, especially groups focused on different countries, like language learning. However, as I looked around, I noticed there wasn't anything about Africa. This absence sparked my interest, and I felt a strong desire to create a group that represents Africa and its rich cultures.

One of the ladies at the u3a stand noticed my interest and asked if I would like to join as a member. This nice lady introduced herself as Maggie. I replied yes, but I mentioned that there wasn't a group for Africa. She encouraged me by saying that if I became a member, I could start a group, and she would gladly help me if I wanted her support. This made me really excited, and I quickly filled out the registration form to join. After the fair, Maggie reached out to me, and we began discussing the group and what name I wanted for it. The rest is history!

Unfortunately, when the group first began, I faced some health challenges that made it difficult for me to participate fully. However, I am grateful for the incredible dedication of Maggie and several members who had been with us from the start—they kept the group thriving during that time. Their support meant the world to me, and I truly appreciate how flexible and understanding they were about my situation. Thank God, I am now on the road to full recovery, and I am looking forward to seeing even more people join this vibrant and amazing group!



Even though our group is still relatively new, our members are wonderfully flexible and engaged. We work together to plan our programme, encouraging everyone to suggest activities they would like to see on the agenda.

Each member takes turns sharing their knowledge through talks, leading fun activities, or even inviting guest speakers to join us, either in person or via video conferencing.

The atmosphere is always warm and welcoming, with everyone showing respect and making sure each person feels included. So far, we've enjoyed a variety of activities, including discussions about different cultures, playing games, participating in quizzes, visiting museums, and tasting delicious African cuisines. It's been a fantastic journey of learning and sharing together. The group plan to expand our activities to include education, books, history, geography and stories - the list is endless.



Group leader, Grace Richardson

Wildflower group



A lovely painting by Shirley Shephard, leader of the Wildflower group, of Littleheath Woods, Selsdon, created for Green Croydon for All.

Environment and Climate Crisis Group

THE LAST FRIDAY IN JUNE WHEN THE HERDS CAME TO LONDON

The weather forecast for the weekend was too hot for comfort, possibly 35C on Sunday and Monday but there was also news of a touring art display that would arrive at 10.00am on Friday 27th June, with animals rampaging over Tower Bridge to be welcomed by school children. Naturally, we were intrigued and even decided to travel to London Bridge before our “freedom pass” was valid in order to be in good time. We also thought that early in the day would be the coolest temperature, certainly more so than Soho at 4.00pm when the animals would appear again.

There were quite a number of people already at “The Scoop” next to the former City Hall, but we were in plenty of time to find a good spot on the stone steps along with young mums with toddlers, grannies and many others keen to enjoy the experience.

As the children arrived there were waves to family spectators, then drumming and at last we saw a giraffe’s head peering down at us, then a donkey, gorilla and a horned beast. The children were called to action and piled onto the stage where the animals and their puppeteer companions helped them parade by and then up the steps. Quite a tricky operation as the life-sized animals were created from waste materials, wood and cardboard but with lovely forms, movements and life-like heads.



The display was created by the same group as Little Amal whom readers might have seen a few years back. She was a larger-than-life puppet child refugee, travelling across Europe to raise awareness of the plight of refugees. In a similar way, “The Herd” has a message about the effect of the climate disaster on animals and nature. Many animals have become extinct and others’ homelands have become uninhabitable. The display is designed to raise awareness and renew our bond with the natural world. The children sang enthusiastically about rewilding the land so creatures would be able to breathe clean air and roam freely.

The group have travelled from the Congo Basin and will finish in the Arctic Circle over 20,000km. They have already visited cities in Spain and France and will go on to Scandinavia after the UK.

The performance lasted only about 20 minutes although there must have been considerable effort rehearsing the youngsters by the Unicorn Theatre. I expect the children needed to get back to lessons. The later appearance in Soho would include performers from the West End show Matilda, and there are world class artists involved in the cities to be visited during the journey. I saw on the news that at Lancaster House King Charles III welcomed the beasts and shook hands with a gorilla in a very meaningful way.

The scorching temperatures and lack of rain have caused us disappointment and frustration in our garden as vegetables go to seed or fail to grow. It must be much more worrying for farmers, whose incomes depend on their crops. The climate crisis will certainly cause food shortages and higher prices as food production is affected in different ways: floods, hail and drought have upset former reliable growing patterns.

I am sure the children involved will remember their songs and the message from the migrating animals. We all need to make the lifestyle changes to curb greenhouse gasses heating our precious planet.

Sheila Kemble

u3a BADGE SAVES THE DAY: When you are a visitor at a care home and the staff think you are a resident!!

I went to visit my elderly aunt in quite a posh care home yesterday as she is in for a month's respite care. I signed in on arrival with the time and resident I was visiting. It is a lovely place, but many residents have mild dementia, who kept telling me they were waiting to be collected by someone to take them home.

I went to the Home in my car and took my mobility walker - which many residents also have to get around.



When it was time for me to leave, I asked one of the care assistants which way was the exit door. "You come with me dear in the lift to the first floor – that's the way out".

It actually took me at least 20 minutes and five different staff members to convince them I was a visitor - I thought "whatever I say, they are not going to believe me" as they thought I had dementia too and wanted to escape.

Eventually, I pointed to the registration book showing my name and, fortunately, I had in the seat of my walker my u3a name badge as Speaker Secretary - then they let me out!

I understand the staff must be vigilant about who comes in and out - but my family were very amused!

Sally, Speaker Secretary for Croydon u3a

The Big Mistake

It's hard to think with all those flashing lights, Pam screaming and lots of people shouting different things. I really wish they'd all calm down so that I could think.

You see after he moved in, I knew. He always parked his car in the exact same space and when I spoke to him about it, he just laughed. It was then that I knew. It got worse as time went on, every time I looked out, there he was, sitting in the car, washing it or 'working' on it.

I knew he was fitting more equipment and gradually it got worse. I knew he was putting the thoughts into my brain; they weren't my thoughts, they were his. Trying to make me do things, especially to Pam. Bad things.

I told Pam what he was doing, and she just told me not to be silly and that I was frightening her, asking if I was still taking my pills. They were supposed to keep me calm, reduce my anxiety but they didn't work. They just made me drowsy and unable to think. It's a good job I stopped taking them otherwise I'd never have cottoned on to what he was up to and then where would we have been? I didn't want to frighten Pam, as I knew I needed to protect her from him, so for a while I pretended that everything was fine and didn't mention him again.

I don't know what he had in the car but somehow, he could communicate with me in the house. I think Pam knew what was happening but was scared and just kept saying that I needed to get help. She was right I did need help. Dealing with him would have been easier if I had had someone to help but who? Deep down I knew that I had to deal with this myself, use my brains and outsmart him. I found that the back bedroom was the best place, the signals were much weaker there and when I put foil over the walls, they pretty much stopped the transmissions, not completely but at least I could think. That's when Pam got really excited, shouting and crying

and she called those people who took me somewhere out in the country.

I'm not sure how long it was before I realised that I was in a hospital. Pam said it was three months before I started to be myself again, but that part was very, very hazy. They were giving me some sort of medication and it seemed as if I had been asleep for a very long time before I gradually began to wake up. I had to sit in a group each day led by a doctor and people would talk about their lives and problems which was incredibly boring. Most of them had difficulty constructing a coherent sentence and to top it off, clearly had serious mental health issues. I found the meetings totally ridiculous and said as little as possible to begin with. I certainly didn't share anything I knew about him next door, by the way, that's what they called it, "sharing". I only 'shared' things that got a good reaction from the doctor, most of which I made up. I've got a good imagination you see, and I got very good at it, chatting away for ages. After a while Pam told me they thought I was much better and would be going home very soon.

I'd already worked out a plan before I got home. I'd learnt how to hide the tablets they gave me in the hospital at the back of my mouth because they stopped me thinking clearly and I knew I had to act quickly to protect Pam. I didn't want to think about what he'd been up to with her while I was away, getting into her brain and making her do things. She didn't have a chance without me around.

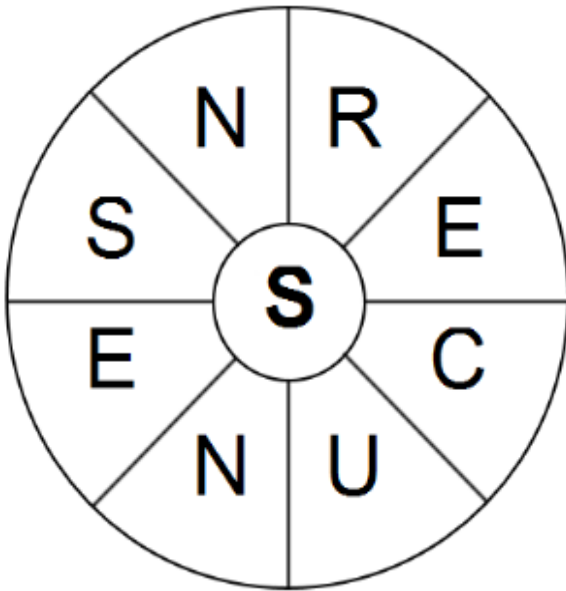
I'd only been home a few hours when he came out and went straight to his car, probably to start his equipment up again now I was back. He smiled at me, a picture of innocence as I walked across the lawn towards him.

I've never killed anyone, well, not until a few minutes ago, and it seems that this took everyone by surprise but I'm pretty sure Pam would have told him that I was coming back, and he just carried on as before, which was a BIG mistake.

Chris Smith

Puzzle Pages

Summer is the hottest season of the year. The Eiffel Tower grows in summer. On a hot day the iron from which it is constructed expands so much that the tower can rise by 17cm!!



This Summer themed word wheel is made from a 9 letter Summer themed word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter **S**.

Sudoku

9					2			
5		6		9				
		7	3		1	5	8	9
		3	7					6
	6	2	1		9	3		8
		4	2					5
		5	6		3	8	9	4
3		9		2				
6					7			

						8		2
		5						
7			4	5	6	1	9	3
			6					
	6	4		3				1
			5					
6			1	8	3	7	4	5
		3						
						3		8

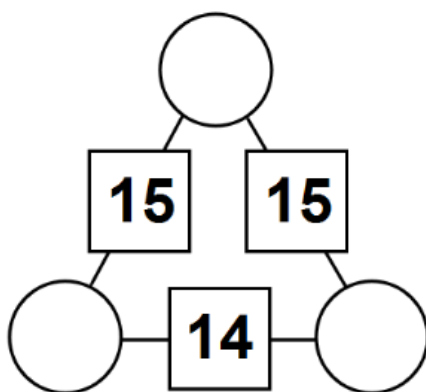
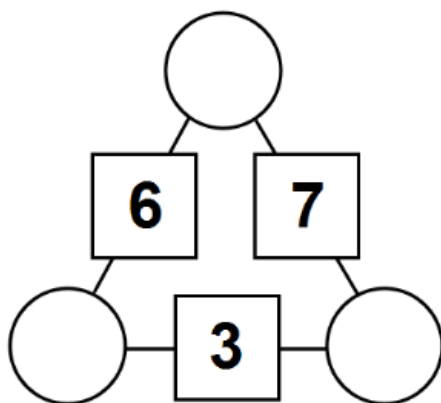
Word Sudoku

Continuing the Summer theme, here is a sunbather Sudoku.

h			u		a			n
	a					b	t	
s		b						
		h					n	
		a	r	t		u	h	
		r					e	
r		s						
	t					n	u	
b			n		t			e

Fill in the grid with the letters S<U<N<B<A<T<H<ER, making sure no letter is repeated in every row, every column and within each mini grid.

Triangle Arithmagons



The aim of an arithmagon is to work out which numbers go in the empty circles. The numbers in the square boxes are made by adding together the numbers in the circles either side. For example, if the number in the square box was 10 you could try 6 and 4, but the numbers must also add up on the other edges, making this more difficult than it first appears.

TV Programme ANAGRAMS

1. ANOTROONIC TRESTE
2. ARSST IN UYRO SYEE
3. IDNLB TEDA
4. FCTEPR TANCN
5. TALOANIN TRYEOTL
6. MEHO NAD AAYW
7. NIRFESD
8. AFRE CORTFA
9. IBG OERHTRB
10. OPP OLDI
11. LHLES HENIKCT
12. EFMA AADCYEM
13. TNERASEESD
14. YM MLYIAF
15. NUCOTWOND
16. ECPHCTASRAH
17. YMLIAF URNTSEOF
18. ERAMEMLD
19. NOIPST FO EVWI
20. UDNROG RFECO

Not all these programmes are currently on air, so this may be a test of memory as well!

Answers on last page.

The Andalucian Triangle

This April/May, my sister and I went on a trip to Spain, flying into Malaga and out of Seville. Our first stop was Granada, where of course the main attraction is the Alhambra. It is an hour and a half drive from Malaga to Granada, but our flight arrived too late in the day to get a train, so I had booked a transfer in a taxi. We arrived at our hotel in time to grab a quick pizza and then went to bed.

The Alhambra is an historic complex of palaces and fortress with gardens surrounding them. I had booked our visit to the palaces for the next afternoon, but it is usual to see the gardens first, so we arrived well before our allotted slot. It is a fair old walk around the gardens, about an hour and a half, and there are limited seating areas to rest.



There are fountains everywhere in the gardens and these help to cool the atmosphere. In a hot climate the use of water is both a necessity and a display of wealth.



Eating is not allowed in the gardens and by the time we finished we were desperate for a coffee and something to eat. We found a seat just outside the entrance to the Nasrid Palaces, ate the food we had brought with us and bought a (unexpectedly good) coffee from a machine.

Then into the main event... WOW.



One of the many amazing ceilings in the Nasrid Palaces.

You have probably read about the Alhambra and seen pictures, but the reality is stunning. It is huge, and nothing prepares you for the size and splendour of the palaces. Room after room with the most beautiful architecture.



The colours are faded now of course, but it is easy to see how wonderful it must have been when first built in the 13th century.

The intricate carvings and incredible workmanship just keep getting better as you journey through the rooms.

Even the doorways are stunning, with huge wooden doors six metres high.



A doorway, looking up.



A painted leather ceiling.



These stunning tiles would not look out of place in a modern home.

Despite the crowds we were able to see almost everything and even managed to get lost trying to find the exit.

We were there for a good three and a half hours and, feeling shattered, we decided to get a bus back to the centre of town. Somehow, we missed our stop and ended up back at the Alhambra. I hadn't realised it was a circular route!

So, after a restorative coffee and cake in one of the bars outside the complex, we got a taxi back to the hotel to rest our tired limbs. We only staggered about fifty yards from the hotel for dinner, as we couldn't face walking any further, but happily the meal was amazing and capped a wonderful day.

The next day we walked into the city centre, alongside a May Day parade, and visited the cathedral.



Granada Cathedral is the blingiest I have ever seen. The stained-glass windows are amazing and there is gold everywhere. It also has eight huge pipe organs!

Just one of the side chapels in the Cathedral of Granada.

The following day we caught a train from the station, which was walkable from our hotel, to Cordoba. A high-speed journey at a very reasonable price. Our hotel there had been unexpectedly changed so we jumped in a cab as we were unsure of the location – it was about a two-minute drive from the station! Easily walkable, had we known.



Cordoba is beautiful and we were lucky enough to be there when they had the patios open for an annual competition. Private houses open their, usually fairly small, courtyard gardens to the public. They are a joy to behold and provided much inspiration for my own garden.

A street in the Old Town.



A typical courtyard garden, or patio, with vertical gardening making the most of a small area.

The next day we visited the cathedral, but after the one in Granada it seemed rather dark and uninspiring. It was originally a mosque and I had expected much more in the way of Arabic decoration. It did contain an interesting museum, though.

We were cheered up by doing some shopping in the lovely old town (Jewish Quarter) and having some tasty tapas for our evening meal.

The next day we went to a “palace” with 14 patios, which provided even more inspiration for me (though I can’t say that I have implemented much yet).



Lush planting in a small courtyard.



*Typical
Andalusian
pebble designs
surround this
courtyard
fountain.*

After this, we caught an early evening train to Seville. Train travel in Spain is very reasonably priced, very quick and very comfortable. It is a great way to see the country.

I had been to Seville before, but it was new for my sister, and she was amazed by the fabulous architecture at every turn.



As well as visiting all the main sights, the Real Alcazar, the Cathedral and Giralda, the Plaza de Espana, etc, we also enjoyed just wandering the streets looking at the buildings and discovering lovely squares and restaurants.



Something wonderful around every corner, even Roman columns.



Las Setas de Seville

We also visited the “mushrooms”, a very modern construction in and above a square.



We took the lift to the roof where you can walk over the wavy roofline and enjoy the most amazing views. Then we watched an incredible short film about Seville. Unfortunately, the museum in the basement was closed, but this contains the Roman ruins discovered when the site was excavated.

Again, we had chosen our dates well, as it was the time of the Feria.



This is a huge fair where caballeros ride their horses around to see and be seen, some with señoritas on the back.

Others ride in fabulous carriages, dressed up to the nines in traditional Sevillian dress. The roads are lined with pop-up restaurants and bars.





The female horse-riders use side-saddle, while pedestrians wear traditional Sevillian dress.

At the same time there were flamenco displays all over the city and special exhibitions at many venues.

Seville combines stunning historical buildings with a modern, cosmopolitan vibe. There is something for everyone in this lovely city, where the streets are lined with orange trees. But if you want to visit, make sure to avoid the summer months when temperatures exceed 40c.

We spent four days in Seville, drank many cups of coffee, ate lots of tapas and did lots of shopping. We had a thoroughly wonderful time even though it was exhausting and we walked miles and miles.

Tess Smith

We arranged our trip independently but guided and package tours are available.

Answers to TV anagrams:

1. Coronation Street
2. Stars in Your Eyes
3. Blind Date
4. Perfect Match
5. National Lottery
6. Home and Away
7. Friends
8. Fear Factor
9. Big Brother
10. Pop Idol
11. Hell's Kitchen
12. Fame Academy
13. Eastenders
14. My Family
15. Countdown
16. Catchphrase
17. Family Fortunes
18. Emmerdale
19. Points of View
20. Groundforce

Would you like to see more of this type of puzzle?

Are there any puzzles you would like to see?

Do you have any or your own we could use?

Please let us know.

Ed.

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