



Dorking & District University of the Third Age

newsletter



25

years of the Dorking &
District U3A

Number 83

March 2016

Letter from the Chair – Membership News – Group News – Summer School in Chichester – Articles and Verse – Reports on Monthly Meetings, Study Days and Days Out

Inset: What's On? – Your guide to study and interest groups, monthly meetings, study days, days out and theatre trips

Days Out to Look Forward To (further details in *What's On?*)



Exbury Gardens in full bloom. There is a day outing here on 14 April
(photo courtesy of VisitEngland/New Forest District Council)



The Day Out to Mottisfont, a National Trust property, on 17 June (photo by Phyllis Hughes)

Editorial

You may have seen a Rowan Atkinson episode in which Mr Bean fears his birthday will pass unacknowledged. So he sends a card and present to himself, and derives pleasure in opening them on his birthday. Well, it's a bit like that with our 25th anniversary, except that we are organising not one but a series of events to mark the occasion. In February we had a quiz night at the Rialto restaurant, and the committee is now inviting you to an afternoon tea on the same date that the Dorking U3A was founded, plus a dinner in June. Details are as follows:



Date and time	Event	Ticket price	Tickets from...
Sunday 13 March from 3-5pm	Afternoon tea at Denbies	£10	Judy Perry (01306 640388; judy Yates@btinternet.com)
Saturday 18 June at 7pm	Dinner at Betchworth Golf Club	£27	Jenny Ford (01306 882534; jennyaford@btinternet.com)

On Wednesday 26 October there will be an exhibition of our activities – group displays, exhibitions, demonstrations – about which more details will be announced in the September newsletter.

Our U3A has come a long way over the past 25 years. It began with a flourish on 13 March 1991, with some 250 third-agers attending an open meeting in the main hall of the Christian Centre and overflowing into the entrance hall with standing room only! Over the next few weeks 100 people joined, and a year later the figure had reached 250. Today we have 622 members, with numbers still rising. Of particular good news is the growing number of study and interest groups, now more than 50 in number – though, as Lionel Cartlidge points out on p4, we need more groups to cover more interests; we also need more parallel groups where there are waiting lists: so please let Lionel know if you have a group in mind.

Celebrate! We deserve it!

Jim Docking, Editor

Letter from the Chair

With spring round the corner it is the time of year to start new projects and try different things.

As sure as the clocks go forward in March so it falls to the chairman of Dorking U3A to appeal to members to consider volunteering for the committee.

In 2015 we were lucky to have a full committee of 12 for the first time in many years. Even so, three members were not able to serve their full term because of various other commitments.

And this is a situation that is not only normal, but increasingly common. No longer is it the case that retired people have too much time on their hands. These days we are busy travelling the world, taking up new hobbies, going to the cinema, the theatre and concerts, as well as spending days visiting all the attractions in London and the Home Counties that we never had time to investigate when we were working. And that's before we think about the grandchildren.

All our members are now 'time poor' because there are so many interesting things we can do.

However, helping the committee does not have to be onerous. A few hours a week, or a month, will make all the difference for our 600-plus members and gives you the opportunity to learn about the U3A and make new friends.

Don't worry if you have lots of other things in your life. We all do. That is the joy of being retired in 2016.

But if you can spare the occasional few hours, the help would be appreciated and I know you would enjoy it. Committee membership applications are available on the website at www.dorkingu3a.co.uk, or email chairman@dorkingu3a.org.uk.



Phyllis Hughes, Chairman

The AGM will be on 11 May at 2pm, followed by the monthly talk at 2.30pm. Minutes of last year's AGM are on our website (dorkingu3a.org.uk) and copies will also be available at the meeting.

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to the 32 new members who have joined since the December issue and who are listed below. We now have 622 paid-up members.

Mrs Gillian Andreotti	Mrs Gillian Hall	Ms Eliane Prigmore
Mrs Hilary Bailey	Mr Roger Hurst	Mr David Read
Mr Ken Cox	Mr Peter Jex	Mr Trevor Reddick
Mr Malcolm Creasy	Mrs Elizabeth Kicinski	Mrs Barbara Skilton
Mrs Jane Davis	Mrs Susie Kilbride	Mr Colin Skilton
Ms Janet Deane	Mrs Gladys Knapp	Mrs Deidre Smith
Mrs Janet Ellis	Mrs Mary Lawson	Mr Jon Weller
Mrs Vivienne Etherton	Mr Barry Makin	Mrs Patricia Weller
Mrs Gill French	Mrs Susan Palfreeman	Dr George White
Mrs Susan Greenacre	Mrs Nadine Parkinson	Mrs Carole White
Mr David Hall	Mr Roger Ponsford	

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Renewal of Membership

The membership year ends on 31 March 2016, so unless you joined in the last four months you will need to renew your membership from 1 April 2016.

Subscriptions again remain unchanged at £16 for one member or £28 for two members at the same address. If you do not wish to renew please let me know so that I don't send unnecessary reminders.

The simplest and most efficient method of renewal is to use GoCardless to make payments directly from your bank account. You can access GoCardless via the Membership page on our website (dorkingu3a.org.uk). This was used by over a hundred members for last year's renewals and it would be good to increase that number significantly this year. Please give it a try.

We will, of course, still accept payments by cheque at the monthly meetings or by post. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your membership card.

*Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary,
Deepdene, Longfield Road, Dorking RH4 3DE.*

Group News

From the Groups Co-ordinators

Some thoughts on new groups

Dorking & District U3A is a buoyant organisation with more than 600 members. We have almost 50 study and interest groups and these are the backbone of the organisation. In keeping with the principles of the U3A, the groups are organised and taught (where appropriate) by our own members with the exception of a very small number which need expertise not available from our membership.

In the last year or so we have encouraged and aided the establishment of groups for bridge, computing, archaeology, music theory, quilting, history, local history, military history and wine tasting. It is quite a successful picture, but it is important that we should continue the initiative and endeavour to develop new groups which reflect the wishes of our members.

Each new group has to appoint a leader (who may well be assisted by others) and will have to tackle practical issues of finance and venue. We will be pleased to hear from any members who would like to set up a new study or interest group with our support. This support will include publicising the proposal and setting up an initial meeting for those members who are interested. It will be essential to attract a viable number to join and support any new group.

A selection of ideas has been recorded in recent time which could be developed if there is enough backing for any of them. The list includes geography, debating, play reading, drama/pantomime, psychology, world religions, church history, watercolour painting and upholstery. There will undoubtedly be other possibilities. We would like you to let us know what groups you would like us to develop in the immediate future and we would be especially pleased to hear from anyone who would be willing to lead a new group.

Do please give us your views by email or telephone.

With thanks,

*Lionel Cartlidge, Groups Co-ordinator,
(01306 898491; jcartlidge@lineone.net)*

*Geoff Saunders, Assistant Groups Co-ordinator
(tallship@eircom.net)*

New or Planned Groups

Sunday Breakfast Club

I am considering a new group, meeting perhaps the first Sunday of each month, to have breakfast at Côte in St Martin's Walk, Dorking, near M&S. They charge £10 for breakfast. We would meet at 10am. Parking is free on Sundays and it is convenient for the weekly shop.

Please phone or email me so that I know how many to book for. If there are too many, then we would have a waiting list.

Jill Burberry (01306 880653; jburberry@talktalk.net)



Music Theory

Jill Sorrell, who has been running a music theory course, is planning to organise another one to start on 6 April. Would those interested please get in touch with Jill on 01306 740732.



Established Groups

Archaeology

A largish group of interested and excited members came to the first meeting in January. We are now in the process of trying to condense an enormous subject (even just UK archaeology) into a programme which will please everyone. All the members who attended have given us their comments, which are very helpful. If you do wish to join us please contact me, but there is already a waiting list.

We meet on the third Tuesday of the month from 2.30 to 4.30pm in the Lincoln Arms.

Val Arundel (01306 885730; val@valarundel.plus.com)



Bridge

Having tried a couple of locations and times, the group has now found a permanent home at the Christian Centre, Dorking, where we play every Monday afternoon 1.45-3.45pm. The group offers social bridge where members can play, learn and have fun in an informal environment. Members have mixed abilities and, in accord with the U3A ethos, the more experienced members help the less competent. However, the group cannot teach complete beginners. If you are a complete beginner, please get in touch with me since I may be able to advise on



Continued →

Bridge (continued)

courses being run locally. The group numbers are building steadily and anyone interested in joining should get in touch with me.

In January Douglas Wright, a member of the English Bridge Union, gave us two free 'taster' lessons at the Christian Centre. About a dozen people came to the first session for complete beginners and more than 30 to the afternoon period for improvers. Douglas is an excellent teacher, and both sessions were a resounding success as judged by comments from participants as they left. This will hopefully lead to more people taking up the game or improving their standards and having a great deal of enjoyment within our group.

Elizabeth Holmes (01306 884831; emh2010@hotmail.co.uk)

French Conversation – second group

A second French group has been started. The person to contact is Cheryl Neale (01737 842688; cherylneale@btinternet.com).



History

The group ended 2015 with some members getting together for a Christmas lunch at the Lincoln Arms, which was most enjoyable. This year kicked off with a talk and discussion about William and Mary (1689-1702). Connecting the family ties between the various Marys who were around at the time as well as sorting out/remembering that James II of England was also James VII of Scotland, and William III of England was also William II of Scotland led us a merry dance! In February we shall be learning about Richard III and the birthplaces of a variety of monarchs. Has Richard III been unjustly maligned? Were any of the monarchs born in surprising locations? We shall find out.

We meet on the second Thursday of the month at 2pm in the Lincoln Arms.

Sarah Wakeford (01306 883641; sarahwakeford@gmail.com)



Military History

Our second meeting was held on 2 February, with the group size into double figures. At the meeting, supported by a lively talk from Matt Martin, we continued the story of the Falklands War with an emphasis on its impact on the local inhabitants. We also discussed the researching of military history.

Our aim is to broaden our personal knowledge and understanding of warfare and its impact on people. We also want to have some fun whilst learning, researching and sharing our knowledge.

We welcome new members at our next meeting on Tuesday 8 March at



10.30am in the Lincoln Arms when we will hear a talk on the Battle of Waterloo, why it was fought and how it ensured peace in Europe. The talk will be supported by war game models.

If you are longing to hear the history of false teeth, then this is a meeting you must attend!

Barrie Friend (convenor) (07796 633516; barrieandmarilyn@gmail.com)

Photography

The group has progressed beyond camera controls and exposure settings to a more artistic phase, with emphasis on composition and interpretation of themes. The main function of the group now is the review of images each member has taken during the previous month on a photographic theme agreed at the previous meeting. The digital images are projected in turn on to a screen and all members are encouraged to critically evaluate each picture and make constructive comments.



Mike Thurner (01306 884381 and Graham Speed (01306 889448)

Pilates

Payment is £4.50 per week for 6-8 weeks. Please note that payment should be made *either* on the first week of the session for the total amount of lessons *or*, if you cannot attend the first lesson, please send a cheque to me. To avoid confusion, it is important that you should adhere to these arrangements.

We may have a couple of spare spaces: please phone me for details .

Mary Rowlatt (01306 883372)



Singing for Pleasure

We were invited again to sing at Broome Park and entertain the residents there at a Christmas concert on 21 December. The music included festive songs such as *Come and Join the Celebrations*, *Let There be Peace on Earth* and a lively rendition of *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree*. The residents and staff were able to join in some Christmas carols. Everyone seemed to like our music and there were happy faces and some tapping feet. The group enjoy singing at Broome Park and are always made to feel most welcome there. We hope to be able to hold another concert for them this year.



We now look forward to more singing for pleasure in 2016. We would particularly welcome more men. You don't have to read music – just enjoy singing.

Pam Stone (01306 887536; p.stone@sky.com)

Wine Appreciation

On the group's inaugural outing our team of hopeful U3A tipplers drifted into Majestic Wine on South Street for a first foray into the mysterious world of wine. Our host for the evening, deputy manager Charlotte, had already set out a selection of wines from Spain to introduce to us and some nibbles to accompany them.

Charlotte explained what to look for when tasting wine: the aroma, the colour and, of course, the taste, as you start to drink and after you swallow.

First up was a white wine from north-west Spain, made from a grape new to most of us, Albariño. It was delightful, light, refreshing with a hint of sweetness and a peachy aroma. Perhaps an interesting alternative to Chardonnay? Next a second white, from Rioja. Many of us were surprised to find there is such a wine, but found it interesting and rewarding to sample. It had a more complex taste than the Albariño, spicy and toasty from the new oak in which it is aged. A good accompaniment to strong-flavoured food like paella. Red Rioja contains a large proportion of Tempranillo grape but can be blended to achieve the desired result. In quality terms there are four grades, the highest being Gran Reserva and Reserva, so these were the grades we tried. First a Reserva specific to Majestic, from their new Definition range. It was delicious, soft fruit flavours with hints of vanilla and toasted wood.

You would expect the Gran Reserva to top the Reserva, and it did handsomely! The Gran Reserva is aged in oak for 30-36 months and has a darker colour, complex warm fruit flavours, earthy and leathery. Wonderful, if a little expensive for everyday drinking.

To sum up, we had a great introduction to a good variety of Spanish wines, a tempting start to our attempt to extend our knowledge of the ancient, interesting and worldwide art of winemaking (and drinking).

For details of future meetings, please email me.

Geoff Saunders (tallship@eircom.net).



PIPPBROOK HOUSE: A LOCAL TREASURE

by Jim Docking

Published by Dorking Local History Group

Price: £5

To obtain a copy, please get in touch with Jim:
01737 843260; annejim@docking.eclipse.co.uk

South East Forum Summer School at Chichester

27-30 June 2016

Courses, with brief indication of content:

- **History of Aviation on the South Coast** The role of people and places from the South Coast of England in the history of manned flight during the 20th century. We will visit museums specialising in aviation history and some walking and standing will be involved.
- **Jazz, Blues and Folk Music in the USA** The development of this music from early African and European roots up to the rise of popular music in the mid 1950s to give us music which has had an impact on all our lives.
- **Medieval and Georgian Chichester** The lives of ordinary people and the structure of their buildings with significant points in history affecting the area. Includes visit to the cathedral and its precincts conducted by cathedral staff.
- **Astronomy Then and Now** The development of our view of the universe from earliest understandings to the latest ideas about exoplanets, black holes and the Big Rip. Includes visit to the South Downs Planetarium.
- **Drawing with pen and enhancing with colour wash** Exploring various techniques in pen drawing and how work can be enhanced with the introduction of colour.
- **Psychology: Thinking, Feeling and Behaviour** What we think, how we feel, and what we do form the core of our human experience.
- **Mathematics explored** A wide range of mathematical topics, from abuses of statistics to the geometry of soap bubbles.
- **Sex, Crime and Deviance** Why are some actions perceived as wrong, then labelled and punished? Why is there a difference in the treatment of women? Who therefore is 'normal'?
- **The Golden Age of Dutch Art** 17th century Dutch painting of landscapes, marine views, portraits, genre subjects and still lives often reflected a well ordered, prosperous society. Why are certain subjects so popular? How accurate are the images?
- **Some Great Houses & Gardens of Sussex** Visits to some of the beautiful houses and gardens in the area – Uppark House and gardens (NT), Parham House and gardens and the gardens of West Dean.
- **Seventy Years of Changing Britain** Changes in the years from 1935 to 2005, including economic depression, the rise of fascism and the prelude to World War II, advent of penicillin and splitting the atom, Beveridge Report, 1944 Education Act, technological innovations in television, computers and how the digital revolution changed our work and leisure.
- **Some 20th Century Poets and their Poetry** Includes AE Houseman, TS Eliot and Ezra Pound, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Seamus Heaney, Carol Anne Duffy, Anton Chekhov, JB Priestley, Ibsen, Wesker and Miller. All texts will be provided.
- **Walking in and around Chichester** Walks in the South Downs to the north-east and north-west of Chichester.
- **Enjoy more Bridge, enjoy Bridge more** Join this group if you would like a few days playing rubber bridge morning, noon and afternoon! Come with a partner or on your own.

Enquiries:

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Articles and Verse

Observations On The Third Planet

Robert Edmondson conjectures the search for intelligent life in another part of the universe

We were nearly there. The picture on the screen showed our destination: the blue planet, over 80% covered with water. This time would we find what we had so fervently desired for so long – conclusive evidence that we were not the only sentient intelligent life in the universe?



There had been indications going back for many cycles of our twin suns that there had been some scientific knowledge and self-aware intelligence around here, at the third planet from its sun in a system in an obscure arm of this galaxy. For example, those electromagnetic and laser signals apparently originating from here, which had taken thousands of cycles to cross the abyss of space between the galaxies; those patterned signals, too structured and complex to be of natural origin, continued for a few cycles, slowly withered away and then stopped completely. Our scientists had tried to deduce some meaning and purpose behind the signals but had failed miserably. Now there were no longer any new signals to be studied.

Perhaps we would solve the mysteries surrounding the artefacts which our astronauts had found in space many cycles ago. They were labelled 'Pioneer 10' and 'Pioneer 11' (whatever that means!) and each bore a gold anodised aluminium plaque with engraved runes and art work, possibly portraying the intelligent aliens responsible for the artefacts and who may also have sent the signals. Shortly afterwards further artefacts called 'Voyager 1' and 'Voyager 2' were discovered in space. These contained a kind of disc with encoded data, possibly goodwill messages or scientific information or – as some of our elders have suggested – warnings and threats but as with the signals they were incomprehensible, too. Would their makers still be around?

Our hopes rose as we approached the planet now filling our screens – blue and beautiful with white clouds and with small snow and ice fields at the poles. There was no response to our signals as we drew nearer and

landed on a flat grassy area in the temperate zone. Extensive survey work had now to be done in all the climatic regions of this new world. First impressions were favourable. What colourful biodiversity existed and thrived here – plants and trees both flowering and non-flowering, ferns, fungi, mosses and lichens, birds of many colours and sizes, mammals and amphibians and reptiles and molluscs. Most groups of animals included herbivores, carnivores and parasites. The richness was overwhelming. Let us not forget the dominant life forms on the land of this planet – the insects, the six-legged ones creeping, crawling, burrowing and flying. Were the intelligent aliens to be found among these multitudes (possibly the bees or the ants)? The biodiversity included the seas, too, with their swarms of plankton, fishes, animals and arthropods. Our Homeworld was sterile and barren in comparison with this.

However, among all this exuberant life there were anomalies, there were mysteries. We found what appeared to be tracks of solidified tar products mixed with gravel which crossed most land masses from coast to coast and even continued for some distance under the seas. They could be straight or curved and many were found forming a network in most land areas. Decayed rusting machines with four wheels, now enveloped by vegetation were to be seen on most of them, especially at the intersections. There was no sign of their fabricators. In some places the tracks seemed to consist of two parallel lines of metal with decayed machines having more than four wheels found on these. These tracks could be evidence of a race with intelligence.

Our biological surveys continued for many cycles. Some creatures were afraid of us, some tried unsuccessfully to attack us, but most ignored us. Here and there among the primates and the birds there were signs of the use of tools, logical reasoning, an awareness of the near future and a primitive language for communication. We even found indications of various emotions such as joy, grief, envy, sadness and compassion, but there was nothing to suggest intelligence or culture in our meaning of the words.

Our surveys continued for a long time. Wondrous biological discoveries were made, thousands of new species were described, and the interactions between them, but the coveted prize had eluded us yet again.

We were still the only intelligent life in the entire universe.

WE WERE STILL ALONE.

I Have a Little List

To celebrate our 25th anniversary, the committee has decided to appoint a 'Lord High Executioner' to administer penalties (maybe a fine) to negligent U3A members. You can sing this to Ko-Ko's tune in The Mikado. Apologies to Gilbert and Sullivan.

It's time we had some discipline in this our U3A,
I've noted those offences that in future will not pay.
I've noted too the victims and where they can be found,
Though some I note have gone away or else are underground.
I've got a little list, I've got a little list
Of those who won't be missed, they surely won't be missed.

There are those who come to meetings but their subs have not been paid,
They don't respond to emails urging payment must be made.
And those who book for outings but turn up rather late,
And others who have said they'll come but muddle up the date.
I've got them on my list, I've got them on my list,
They surely won't be missed, they surely won't be missed.

And those at monthly meetings who do not stack their chair
But leave the job to others of whom they're unaware.
And those who say 'I'd like to help but haven't time to spare,'
Or those who claim 'I've paid my subs so helping is unfair.'
I've got them on my list, I've got them on my list,
They surely won't be missed, they surely won't be missed.

And members of group sessions who dominate the floor
Or don't pay for their tea and bic, but make fast for the door.
And those that tell group leaders that they'd like to come along
But don't turn up and seem to think that they've done nothing wrong.
And there are those who come along but later disappear
Without as much as by your leave or whisper in your ear.
I've got them on my list, I've got them on my list,
They surely won't be missed, they surely won't be missed.

And distributors of newsletters who deliver very late
Or cannot find the letter box so leave it by the gate.
And those not on the internet who say they never know
Just what's going on and then go on to blame that so-and-so.
I've got them on my list, I've got them on my list,
They surely won't be missed, they surely won't be missed.

But maybe I'm a little harsh. Our chairman says, 'Calm down!
You do not want to seem unfair, the laughing stock of town.
A working party you'll appoint and say "Just take your time,
But in due course please recommend a view that is sublime."'

In the event the working group cannot make up its mind,
And wish they never had agreed to what had been assigned.
That's fine by me, I'll just ignore what I'm supposed to do
And say, 'I think the post I have lacks proper thinking through.'
I'm sure that no one will object, there'll be loud sighs all round,
'How brilliant,' I can hear them say, 'A way out has been found.'
So there's no need for a list, there's no need for a list.
A welcome little twist, a welcome little twist.

JD

Have you thought about being a volunteer in the local community?

Volunteering is a great way to have new experiences, meet new people, make friends and have fun whilst supporting your local community. Opportunities for volunteering are as diverse as the people that volunteer and can often be flexible, with hours and days to suit the volunteer, allowing them to use existing skills and develop new ones. The types of volunteering opportunities are as varied as the organisations, community volunteering **such as mediation, children's charities, outdoor volunteering in the areas of conservation** and gardening, animals, catering support, driving for local charities and mentoring roles supporting people with disabilities or mental ill health are just a few of the many roles we have registered with us.

We try to ensure that our volunteers will enjoy their roles, have fun and make new friends whilst gaining satisfaction from knowing they are supporting such deserving local charitable organisations who truly value their help. If you would like to embark on a new venture with great rewards, please contact our friendly team of advisors who would be delighted to help. The Volunteer centre is based in Dorking and covers the whole of Mole Valley. Please contact us on 01306 640369 or email clare@vamidsurrey.org.

We look forward to meeting you and helping you discover a rewarding volunteering opportunity.

Monthly Meetings

A Solo Walk Across Africa: Fran Sandham, 11 November 2015

So what makes a man decide he wants to walk 3,000 miles across Africa? Well, Fran's not entirely convincing reason was a New Year resolution. But it also transpired that he had had a fascination with Africa since reading Tarzan books as a child. I have to say many of us have had similar fascinations but without the inspiration to plan and execute a year-long walk from one coast to the other.

As a former editor with *Rough Guides* Fran must have seen many a story from Africa cross his desk. And like many a traveller, when he spoke of his proposed walk he was given lots of advice and many, many warnings. Perhaps a little self-deprecating, he made light of these warnings. He was told that Africa was full of dangerous snakes, dangerous people and, of course, dangerous animals. But on the route he followed after leaving the Skeleton Coast in Namibia he was rarely far from people and he found the Africans full of kindness. He must have looked a strange sight as he entered villages that rarely saw strangers. Equipped with his huge rucksack, walking poles and bandanna, he attracted many nicknames along the way. Everywhere, children greeted him, waited to have their photos taken and often accompanied him to the next village.

Fully laden with kit and water, Fran started his walk from the Atlantic coast but quickly decided that he needed assistance. However, his attempts to enlist a donkey and then a mule met with

no success and delayed his journey.

His route took him to many of the places that Dr Livingstone visited on his famous travels through Africa in the 19th century.

In particular Fran enjoyed his visit to the Victoria Falls, so named by Livingstone. Though now a must-see destination for adventure tourists, bungee jumping, white water rafting and kayaking, its size and the sheer volume of water flowing down the Zambezi clearly impressed the speaker, as it must every visitor.

From Namibia, Fran walked through Zambia and on to Malawi. When Livingstone arrived in this area he found it ruined by Arab slave traders. As part of his missionary work he took on the role of campaigning against this cruel trade. He is still honoured for this in Malawi. Today its beautiful lake draws visitors, but not many. Fran's walk took him north along the lake and into Tanzania, the final country on his trans-Africa route. He reached the Indian Ocean coast at Bagamoya, close to Zanzibar, and the port from which slaves were taken to the Arab lands.

Reaching the end of his quest was far from euphoric for Fran. In fact it was with something of a heavy heart that he



Photo courtesy of Fran Sandham

realised his travels were over and that he must return to London, with no work, no money and nowhere to live. But his slightly downbeat ending may have been due in part to his impending bout of malaria. Having escaped the dangers he had been warned of, it turned out that, for him, as for most Africans, the real danger is from a tiny insect carrying a nasty parasite.

Did he have a highlight on the journey? Yes, for him starting the journey with the wild South Atlantic on one side and the Namib Desert on the other had been his moment of euphoria. Though he had little money, he had the luxury of time: time to enjoy the moment, time to contemplate the journey ahead and time to savour each footstep along the way.

Geoff Saunders

The Amazing World Of Magic: John Field, 9 December 2015

John Field, solicitor and member of the Magic Circle, took us on a magical mystery tour, starting with the first known magician, Dedi, in 2700BC. He was famous for cutting the head off a bird then attaching another one so the bird could fly away. The secret? It's all to do with the way a bird will tuck its head under a wing. And a second, less fortunate bird. Rumour has it that he tried the same trick with a cow...

John spent some time on the famous 'cup and ball' trick, which is 2,500 years old. There are many variants of the same idea, such as the card trick 'Find the lady', but they have one thing in common: **you can never win**. He lost \$14 in less than a minute in Times Square, New York.

In early years magicians could be hanged or burnt for witchcraft, but later ones made fortunes. William Ellsworth Robinson shaved his head, grew a pigtail and called himself Chun Ling Su. His speciality was catching bullets in his teeth, and it paid very well indeed – in 1912 he was earning £31,500 per week – until the day when the trick went wrong and he was killed.

Another famous magician spent much

of his childhood trying to do a genuine disappearing act as his family was chased around America by creditors. He became one of the most famous magicians and escape artistes ever, Houdini. Ironically, he didn't die hanging wrapped in chains 100ft above a street, or struggling free from a water-filled tank; he died of peritonitis on Hallowe'en, 1926.

After all this talk, it was time for some action. John demonstrated his ability to mind-read random numbers, getting four out of five right, then called on his assistant for the day, Jenny Ford. She helped to demonstrate another version of the 'cup and ball' trick, playing her part with skill and style – could this be the start of another career?

He also told us the perfect magic trick to perform at a Christmas party – an infallible way to discover which plate hides a coin. The secret? Ah, that would be telling...



Pat Smith

Pippbrook House: Dorking's Treasure: Jim Docking,

13 January 2016

The evocative title of the first monthly meeting of 2016 was presented by *Newsletter* editor Jim Docking, founder member of Dorking & District U3A and its first chairman.

As it stands today, on the eastern side of Dorking, tucked away behind modern buildings close to the 'Cockerel' roundabout, Pippbrook House, a Grade II* listed building, though in disrepair, retains some of its magnificent architectural detail, especially within its well-proportioned interior.

Jim's meticulously researched lecture described its fascinating history, which started during the 14th century when Walter atte Pyppe and his wife, Alicia, acquired the estate. However, it was not until the mid-18th century that the name Pippbrook was first used.

Two dwellings were built on the estate before the present house, commissioned in 1856 by William Henry Forman, a wealthy ironmaster, who employed the architect George Gilbert Scott (later knighted), renowned mainly for his ecclesiastical works, who designed the house in Gothic Renaissance style.

Forman acquired a treasury of art works and antiquities which he kept in his closely guarded private museum. Only after his death, despite a restraining clause in his will, did his widow allow access to members of the Surrey Archaeological Society.

The fortunes of other families involved throughout the history of the estate were carefully covered. The estate was sometimes opened for grand affairs, such as fêtes in aid of charities, mainly the Red



A sketch of Pippbrook House as it was in 1890 (courtesy of Dorking Museum Archives)

Cross, most notably in 1917 when more than 3,000 visitors attended.

It was in 1930, two years after owner John Alexander Lloyd wanted to demolish Pippbrook House, that it was finally purchased by the Dorking Council for the sum of £9,000.

Jim outlined the use of the building as council offices from 1930 to 1984, then as Dorking's Public Library until 2011. Eventually, in December 2012, the Dorking Area Action Plan was formulated with the intention of safeguarding the estate for 'civic, entertainment, cultural, recreational and community purposes'. However, today the future of Pippbrook House remains uncertain.

Jim's captivating and well illustrated presentation was interspersed with many amusing anecdotes, ranging from the eccentricities of various owners to stories of recent phantom footsteps, and the talk proved successful in holding the rapt attention of the large audience.

Angela Rixon and Peter Crook

Study Day – Cosmology: Big Bang to Big Rip? Dr Roger Luther

Dr Roger Luther, Teaching Fellow (Mathematics) at the University of Sussex, divided the day into ‘What we know’, ‘What we think we know’, ‘What we’re not at all sure of’ and a ‘Conclusion’.

It started with an indication of the age and size of the universe, a timeline of events following the assumed Big Bang start of space and time, and the life cycle of a star (including our sun). The universe is unimaginably large and the time scales for early events unimaginably short.

It is thought that from the time of the Big Bang, when only elementary particles of high energy existed, a brief period of inflation was followed by the four natural forces (gravity, electromagnetism and the two nuclear forces) unravelling from an initial combined super-force. It is thought that there was almost as much anti-matter as matter, and much mutual annihilation took place, leaving only a small residue of normal matter.

Elementary particles (quarks) combined to form protons and neutrons (the nuclei of hydrogen and helium atoms) in a hot plasma. As the universe cooled, these nuclei captured electrons to form atoms. Gravity acted on irregularities in the distribution of the early matter, forming clusters, leading to galaxies and, as the atoms heated up on



compression, nuclear fusion started and the early stars were born.

The life cycle of a star involves its conversion, by nuclear fusion, of hydrogen into helium, with the release of much energy. When all the helium is used up fusion continues to create higher elements, up to iron; but eventually a star of sufficient size collapses and then explodes as a supernova, releasing huge amounts of energy sufficient to create the full range of elements above iron.

The planet we live on today, and we ourselves, include these elements, and it is sobering to realise that they were created in a cosmic explosion. We are made of star dust!

The future of our planet and solar system depends on the life of the sun, which will probably swell into a ‘red giant’, boiling our water and melting our rock before engulfing us. In the far distant future it is thought that our galaxy will pass through another galaxy (Andromeda). In the end the universe will run out of hydrogen and the last star will go out.

Mike Thurner

The women’s page in the Southwark Diocesan leaflet for February 1962 contained the following tips, still useful today:

- To hammer a nail in an awkward corner, hold the nail in position in the loop of a hairpin. Slip the grip away before driving the nail in firmly.
- When taking hardboiled eggs to eat on a picnic, shell them first and wrap them in a lettuce leaf. They will keep perfectly fresh that way.

Days Out

Salisbury Christmas Market, 27 November 2015

As the coach left Dorking on a damp November morning we were filled with anticipation about our U3A trip to Salisbury Christmas Market. The drizzle didn't dampen our spirits even after a two-hour coach journey.

To start with we were lost for choice and couldn't decide between the various chocolates, coconut ice, flavoured cheeses and great variety of beverages. Jewellery and Christmas decorations were to be found around every corner, along with numerous scarves, hats and gloves.

Some of our party made their way to Britain's finest 13th-century Gothic cathedral, which boasts the tallest spire in the kingdom and was built between 1220 and 1258. Its over 750 years of history make it a fitting place to exhibit one of the four original copies of the Magna Carta, which some of our intrepid group stood and read.

We decided that we had shopped enough, so sought a restaurant for lunch. Near by we found one called Wildwood, and what a joy: it was clean, and



Courtesy of VisitEngland/Visit Wiltshire/Chris Lock

bubbling with conversation and ambience. The staff were friendly and efficient, plus the food was hot and just superb.

Refreshed, we made our way back to the market to enjoy the aura and carols and onward to explore the town's shops. We thoroughly enjoyed walking around the main and side streets and completed half our shopping.

Many thanks to Judith and Judy for getting us in the Christmas spirit.
Laurie and Betty von Weber

More tips from the women's page of Southwark Diocesan leaflets over 50 years ago:

- When cooking liver, always dip each piece into a saucer of milk. Fry very slowly. This makes the meat very tender and improves the flavour.
- For nettle stings, forget about dock leaves: it's more effective to use salt and water.
- To hands stained with gardening or housework, apply some olive oil and a little sugar. Massage well into hands and wash off in warm soapy water to leave hands soft.

These extracts and the ones on the previous page were sourced by Richard Wheen

Churchill War Rooms, 20 January 2016

The day dawned bright but bitterly cold for our comfortable coach journey to London's bustling Whitehall, and after almost two hours' driving through heavy traffic our party was pleased to descend the steps into the warmth and quiet of the Churchill War Rooms. This intriguing underground complex housed the command centre and Cabinet war rooms of the Government throughout the Second World War.



Photo by Peter Crook

The historic site was eventually opened to the public in 1984. In 2005 a museum was added, dedicated to the life of Winston Churchill. Central in this space is an interactive table some 15m long allowing visitors to explore events on specific dates from his birth in 1874 until his death in 1965.

Today more than 300,000 enthusiasts visit each year and are steered through the maze of rooms with state-of-the-art audio guides. Our party was fortunate in having chosen a relatively quiet day with few other visitors.

The conversion of the old basement storerooms beneath a government building known as New Public Offices, near Parliament Square, began in 1938, constructing a soundproof and bombproof self-contained centre with sophisticated communications and broadcasting equipment. At the outbreak of war in 1939 the Cabinet first met here with Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. By 1940 Churchill was prime minister and decided that all future War Cabinet meetings should be held in this secure venue.

Central to our tour was the Map Room, preserved exactly as it was in August 1945. During the war this room was manned around the clock by officers of the three armed forces who supplied daily intelligence summaries to the king, the prime minister and chiefs of staff responsible for planning military actions.

During the Blitz in the autumn of 1940 the roof, already protected by steel girders 1m thick, sections of which can still be seen today, was further reinforced with a huge concrete slab 1.5m thick. Staff slept on site in very basic conditions, known as the Dock, and many decided it was better above ground, taking their chances with the bombs. Senior staff had individual rooms, as did Churchill, although he preferred to sleep in his own bed at 10 Downing Street.

The museum with its multitude of well displayed artefacts and panoramas on video screens depicting actions and battles, complete with sound effects, ensured a compelling experience for our members on this outing, well organised as usual by Jean Williams and her team.

Peter Crook and Angela Rixon

Diversions & Delights

Yes!! I can Yes!!! I can...

Another trick of Doctor Dementia to test your skills...

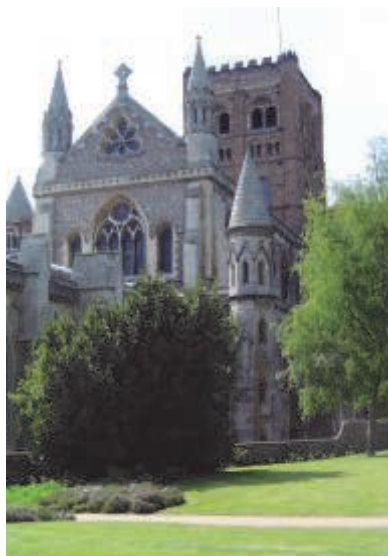
Can you meet this challenge? We've seen this with the *letters* out of order, but this is the first time we've seen it with *numbers*. If you can read this OUT LOUD you **have a strong mind. And better than that: Alzheimer's is a long, long way down the road before it ever gets anywhere near you.**

7H15 M3554G3
53RV35 7O PROV3
HOW OUR M1ND5 C4N
DO 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5!
1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5!
1N 7H3 B3G1NN1NG
17 WA5 H4RD BU7
NOW, ON 7H15 LIN3
YOUR M1ND 1S
R34D1NG 17 4U70M471C4LLY
W17H0U7 3V3N
7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17,
B3 PROUD! ONLY
C3R741N P30PL3 C4N
R3AD 7H15!
PL3453 FORW4RD 1F
U C4N R34D 7H15.

Can you read this? Only 55 people out of 100 can:

I cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd what I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in what oerdr the ltteres in a word are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is that the frsit and last ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

Days Out to Look Forward To (further details in *What's On?*)



St Albans (clockwise from top left): the Cathedral, Market Day, Clock Tower and Verulamium Park. There is a visit to St Albans on 16 May
(photos courtesy of St Albans City & District Council)

Monthly Meetings



Between 1840 and 1860, 500,000 pioneers/migrants walked from Independence, Missouri, to Portland, Oregon, suffering 50,000 deaths through cholera. The speaker at the Monthly Meeting on 13 April has driven along this trail. He will also talk about Wild West legends Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill and George Armstrong Custer and his death at the battle of the Little Bighorn (picture courtesy of Roger Shaw)



The Monthly Meeting on 11 May is about the making of *War Horse*
(photo courtesy of the National Theatre)