



Dorking & District
University of the Third Age

newsletter



Number 88

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The trip to North Wales



The group with the coach driver (right) on the last morning, and five of the group in the magnificent Bodnant Gardens (photos by Clive Richardson)

Cover picture: The Art Appreciation group by Eduardo Paolozzi's sculpture of Newton outside the British Library (photo by Robert Edmondson)

Editorial

Thank You

The Newsletter is only possible in its present form because so many people contribute to it. This issue contains items from 22 members. Apart from contributions to Group News and reports on monthly meetings, days out and holidays, you are welcome to contribute articles, poems, puzzles, photographs, art and drawings. Letters that suggest ways in which the U3A could be improved would also be appreciated.

For many years, Joy Parry has helped to proof-read the Newsletter, but she has decided now to resign. I would like to thank her for her very careful work – she always spotted mistakes that others had missed. Meike Laurenson has kindly agreed to take on this job. Meanwhile, my thanks, as always, to Michael Docker, the sub-editor, and Rosemary Harbridge for the proof-reading.

Jim Docking, Editor



The Luncheon Club at the Fox Revived (photo by a member of staff)

Letter from the Chairman

I have nothing to complain about, and everything to praise!

The AGM in May confirmed renewal of the Committee, all members being prepared to continue, and now we have two more members prepared to be co-opted: Ianthe Cox as Treasurer and Jean Williams to help with groups' co-ordination. This reflects the steady commitment and enthusiasm of this small group of people whose work keeps this thriving U3A going. Our membership is increasing steadily, and new interest groups are being formed on a frequent basis. It is encouraging that much of our recent recruitment for committee members and new group activities has come from newer members.



Our excursions into the land of Massive Open Online Courses, horribly abbreviated as MOOCs, have proved very encouraging. The leader of the group following 'Strategies for Successful Ageing', provided by Trinity College, Dublin, concluded that it would be worthwhile for every U3A member to be exposed to the course content, and those of us following 'Philosophy and Critical Thinking' (University of Queensland) are finding the material very stimulating – and we haven't finished yet!

If any member has suggestions about other online courses we might explore together, we shall be pleased to hear from you. These courses provide excellent sources of material to enlighten us and inform group discussions. You will find a suggestion for another Art Appreciation course under Group News.

The group leaders, our mainstay, will have the opportunity to meet and glean information from the manager of the Third Age Trust's Resource Centre at their business meeting in September. The Resource Centre has an extensive amount of information and resources on a wide range of subject areas, and this is constantly being updated and added to.

We have a new Days Out team (Sue Willis, Sheila Knight and Judith Kingsley) and a new team to prepare refreshments at Monthly Meetings (???). We wish them success in their ventures and repeat our thanks to the outgoing teams who have served us so well in recent years. We could do with some more members in the Really Useful Group to enable them to provide occasional support for some of our local and regional activities – tell Mike Thurner if you would like to join the group.

All of this contributes to our flourishing and successful U3A – and more social events are in the pipeline, following the August picnic!

Doreen

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to the 34 new members, listed below, who have joined since June. We now have 632 paid-up members.

Mrs Alison Albon	Mrs June Chapman	Mrs Lynne Patterson
Mrs Christine Baron	Mrs Valerie Rose Cole	Mrs Janice Read
Mr Adrian Bayes	Ms Heather Durham	Mrs Lin Roworth-Stokes
Mrs Shirley Bayes	Mrs Julia Forsyth	Mrs Susan Scrivener
Mr George Blundell-Pound	Dr Rosemary Glass	Mrs Mary Skinner
Mrs Elspeth Blundell-Pound	Mr Christopher Greenacre	Mr David Wells
Mrs Anne Bryan	Mrs Susan Greenacre	Ms Marianne Western
Mr Tony Bryan	Mr Tim Hartley	Mrs Gordon Wilcox
Mr Anthony Bullen	Mrs Belinda Hartley	
Mrs Joanna Cassidy	Mrs Pamela Joel	
Mr Graeme Cassidy	Mrs Angie Lifford	
Mr John Chapman	Mrs Sheila Morgan	
	Mrs Susan Olive	
	Mr John Patterson	

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Group News

Proposed online programme Art Appreciation 2: Ways of Seeing Art

Art doesn't exist in a vacuum. What makes paintings or sculptures come alive is the meaning and the inspiration behind them and the legacy they leave behind. The focus of this group is not so much about the artists and their achievements but how and why their works of art came about and how we respond to them. Do they intrigue or alienate? Why? And what do they tell us about the society that inspired them?

The meetings are not about what we know (no guest speakers or experts here!) but rather about what we see or feel. Some of the ideas this discussion group might look at include:

- Patronage and portraits
- Symbolism and hidden meanings
- Colour and composition
- Society and style
- Making history



Continued over →

Some home study will be involved using online commentaries followed up with bi-monthly discussion groups and museum visits as

videos/

appropriate. If this approach to art appreciation appeals to you, please contact me.
Beryl Sinclair (01306 711542; jandbsinclairuk@gmail.com)

Computing Workshops – We're here to help you!

The Computer Group (renamed, as above) is now planning to run monthly workshops for less experienced users who wish to expand their knowledge or are experiencing problems with their laptops, tablets or smart phones. These workshops will be on the fourth Monday of each month, 10am-noon, starting in October, and will take place in members' homes or at the Lincoln Arms depending on numbers. Participants should bring their own devices.



If you would like to participate in these workshops please get in touch with me.
Bob Crooks (01306 740062; robertcrooks@rocketmail.com)

Dorking U3A Bells – Like to join?

The U3A handbells team rings merrily on every other Friday in the amazing Lincoln Arms – free car parking, free room-rent, just £2 for unlimited coffee.

In spite of the occasional 'this piece is too hard – even impossible', we always enjoy making a group effort, even if only to reach the end of a new piece before finally giving up! There's no doubt, though, that we all gain by improving our co-ordination skills, and go home having exercised our powers of concentration as well as having had a good laugh.

We've amassed quite a big repertoire now. In October we are entertaining the residents in a local care home. Fun!

You can't say it's difficult – reading just two notes shouldn't be a problem! Come and have a go – we could do with a couple of new recruits. Give me a ring and join us on 15 September for a trial run.

Jill Sorrell (01306 740732; jillsorrell@talktalk.net)



Exercise for Health – Thanks to Val, and welcome, Elly

Our members were very sad to say goodbye to their instructor, Val Cross (previously Lubbock), on 20 June. Val had led the group since it started 17 years ago in conjunction with Age Concern. She has been an inspiration to the many members who have attended her classes over the years. Her enthusiasm, encouragement and cheerfulness will be greatly missed. The class presented her with gifts and a bouquet of flowers and wished her every happiness for the future.

Fortunately, the classes are continuing. The new instructor is Elly Birch and the venue is still the Reading Room at Westcott at 10.15 every Tuesday morning.

Di Ivings (01306 879703; dianneivings@hotmail.co.uk)



U3A Luncheon Club – You're welcome to join!

Another successful outing (photo on front cover), this time to the revived Fox Revived, refurbished and with a very pleasant and comprehensive menu. If you would like to join us, you will be very welcome. We're currently meeting on the second Tuesday and final Monday of each month (not final Monday in August this year) at around 12.15pm. We attempt to have our meal served for 1pm in order that anyone with an afternoon commitment can get away in time. The venue is usually agreed in advance over lunch! Please call me if you are interested.

Tony Parker (01306 884050)

Opera Appreciation – Inaugural meeting

The inaugural meeting of this group will be on Monday 18 September at 2pm at the home of Dr Joyce Kingsley-Jones, Springfield Way, Westcott Street, Westcott RH4 3NX. Thereafter, meetings will be on the 3rd Monday at 2pm. Neither Lin nor John have run such a group before but they are enthusiasts about opera, if wholly amateur.



At the meeting we would wish to find out from those attending how they see subsequent meetings being run, eg, whole operas being shown (far too long for a two-hour afternoon) or just certain acts followed by discussion or any ideas. At the first meeting it is hoped to have a speaker and a short excerpt of an opera, really just to see how the technology works. Tea will be provided.

Please let Lin know if you are going to attend or not as the case may be.

Lin Roworth-Stokes (01306 712003; roworthstokes@talktalk.net)

John Ashwood (01306 713765; jashwood@gotadsl.co.uk)

Singing for Pleasure – Concert on 7 October

Our Singing for Pleasure group met at Broome Park Residential Care Home in early July to sing to the residents, a regular visit now twice a year, and we are getting to know them.

There was a proposal for us to be part of the Mole Valley Arts Alive Festival this year – all due to an invitation by the local vicar to present a programme of songs at Buckland Church.



We just missed the deadline for the festival brochure but preparations for a concert are going ahead nonetheless. Admission by programme and a free drink of wine in the interval. Look out for posters and publicity in September. The focus now is on a programme of songs recalling summer holidays and the enjoyment of gardens. A call has gone out to other performers to enrich our presentation of songs. Hoping to see lots of U3A members at Buckland Church on 7 October at 7.30pm.

You are invited to join our group at any time. We meet on the first and third Mondays from 10am to noon at Buckland Reading Room. £3 per session; one sample session free.

Meike Laurenson (01737 248909; mlaurenson@talktalk.net)

Strategies For Successful Ageing

This online course appeared to be well accepted for its practical 'hands on' approach. Preceding each passage, the speaker gave an introduction to the topic and some minor insights.

The three main components of the course were:

- Managing your health;
- Staying involved with your community; and
- Focusing on your personal development as you age.

The headings and sub-headings contributed to the ease of learning by allowing planning of how much to 'bite-off' at each encounter, and the practical examples explained how each topic could be integrated into one's life or explored at the individual level.

The summary at the end of each section included a 'reflection on the week' with some questioning to ensure the material had been fully encountered and accepted.

The arrangement of the course by week – Being Older, Being Well, Being Healthy, Being Socially Engaged, Being Creative – gave an engaging and encouraging perspective on the benefits and appeared to be well accepted by all participants.

My personal opinion would be that it would be worthwhile including this course as an investment to allow every U3A member to have the opportunity of exposure to this content.

Tony Parker



Table Tennis – Starting 1 September

Table Tennis originated in Victorian England, where it was played among the upper classes as an after-dinner parlour game. It can be competitive or a gentle form of exercise.

A new group will be starting on Friday 1 September in the Christian Centre and meet every Friday thereafter from 12 noon until 2pm. All equipment necessary will be provided, and up to 12 people can play at one time. The cost is £4 per two-hour session.

Come along and join us. No need to book. All have a chance to play.

If you would like to know more, please give one of us a ring.

Jean Williams (01737 845907)

Jan Chapman (01306 877250)



Irene Pinner, our new Secretary

Irene was elected to the Committee at the AGM in May and has taken on the role of Secretary.

Can you tell us about your early life?

I was born in West Ham, where I spent my childhood. Although I left school unqualified, I completed A Levels at evening classes while engaged in a variety of jobs. I then went to Stockwell College of Education, where I qualified as a teacher in 1978, eventually becoming a primary school head.



Why did you join the U3A?

I joined the U3A because I think lifelong learning is important and I wanted the chance to meet new people. I enjoy the writing group and I'm looking forward to playing table tennis in the new group.

What contributions can you bring to the Committee?

My previous experience involved sitting on a variety of committees and I like to help people do what they want to do.

How do you think our U3A might be improved?

A Facebook page would be interesting and useful for communications. I know that some people are wary of Facebook but the website does allow for 'closed' groups where you have to request to be a member.

What do you do outside the U3A?

I'm an enthusiastic though not talented player of the mandolin and the ukulele. I also like to curl up with a good book and I love walking with my husband, Martin, and our dog in the Surrey Hills.

Articles

Cuba: Whither the Revolution?

*Andrew Gibbons spoke to the Current Issues group about his
February tour of Cuba*

The influence of history dominates life in Cuba, as I saw during a hectic 2,000km trip around the Caribbean country earlier this year. The tour operator warned us not to expect things to go entirely to plan, which turned out to be accurate.

On arrival, the city of Havana looks and feels like a typical Latin American capital: hot, a bit chaotic, an absence of the English language dominance we take for granted, and cheerful and exotic people. The tourist quarter revels in splendid Spanish colonial architecture, some dilapidated and some very smartly renovated as befits a city receiving Unesco World Heritage largesse. There are almost no shops, although plenty of sights to see and some excellent restaurants. Havana is enjoying an invasion of American tourists, who are making the most of an exciting and, for them, newly available port of call so close to home; the city is struggling to cope with the numbers, and available hotel beds are scarce. Whether the new US regime will change things much remains to be seen.

My railway trip covered much of the island from Havana eastwards as far as the second city of Santiago and beyond into the restricted zone and the town of Caimanera adjoining the disputed territory of the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Plenty of 'the real Cuba' was on display we traversed some unfrequented routes. The mainstay of the tour was a 60-year-old chartered diesel railcar, which carried our party along trunk lines and remarkably rustic branch lines, followed by our support bus to ferry us between urban hotels and the nearest railway access at the start and end of each day.

You soon notice that Cubans are desperate for dollars. All our restaurant meals featured groups of live musicians, followed by the hat coming round. Cuba's two-currency system distorts the economy and relations with tourists, as most wages are paid in local currency, which buys almost nothing beyond the ration of basic goods in state-owned shops and some other essentials. Everything else needs hard currency, which has produced a nation of entrepreneurial hustlers.

There is a serious shortage of motor vehicles and spare parts and, outside Havana, much of the country is still horse-drawn. This can be picturesque if you just need a horse- or bicycle-taxi, but mostly it looks downright

backward. Coupled with the largely agricultural economy outside urban areas it suggests a degree of rural poverty reminiscent of some African countries. Of course, many Westerners are quick to say that Cubans enjoy good access to education and health services, but if the poor standard of the state-owned hotels we shared with Cubans outside the capital is anything to go by, you have to wonder whether the schools and hospitals are any better.



Andrew enjoyed this ride on a heritage railway - with no health and safety inspector

The Cubans manage to be cheerful, extroverted, musical and, of necessity, ingenious. Vehicles are somehow kept running, damaged items are bodged back into use, and letting spare bedrooms to tourists is good business – and can be done on Airbnb. Revolutionary statues and slogans are prominent, but as most Cubans were born after 1959, the mood seems more of stagnation and resignation than revolution. In a recent independent opinion survey, about half the respondents said they wanted to leave the country.

Given the problems with road vehicles, the railway system has greater importance, perhaps more like that of Britain in the 1930s when much of the country's commerce went by train. Cuban railways boast a wide range of rolling stock which reflects the country's history, from pre-revolution American equipment to Soviet-era diesel locomotives and passenger cars. More recent acquisitions we saw have come from Russia, China and Iran, along with second-hand Trans Europ Express coaches on the principal inter-city service. The main line was refurbished by the Russians some decades ago and is still in good shape – we hurtled along at 80kpm – whereas some rural branch lines in poor condition had to be negotiated very carefully. The locomotive works we visited was a sad spectacle of decay and inactivity, due, the supervisor explained, to no money, no spare parts and no skilled workers. Sadly, our railcar expired on our final trip halfway back to Havana and we had to be rescued by the support bus.

Cuba is nevertheless a fascinating destination, whether for a beach holiday (the luxury inclusive resorts are under foreign management), hiking, cycling, fishing, diving, birdwatching, or just travelling around, sightseeing

and wondering how long this living museum of the Cold War will continue unaltered. The experience is unique. Go there before it changes!

Road Passenger Transport in Dorking

*Hilda Burden describes another recent topic that the
Local History Group investigated*

In the 19th century there were two coaching inns in Dorking town – the White Horse and the Red Lion (where Specsavers and the Oxfam shops are now). The Stage Coach and the Mail Coach, which also took passengers, stopped at these inns to change horses and pick up passengers. Wealthy landowners who had their own horses and carriages also needed to change horses frequently and would send horses on in advance of their journey or hire horses from the inns.



**The White Horse Family Hotel in
1880, with open stagecoach in road**

The coachmen carried a book called the *Direct and Cross Roads of England, Wales, etc.* I have a copy dating from 1810. The Direct Roads were from London to major towns, the Cross roads were from one big town to another. Dorking was on the Direct road from Westminster Bridge to Brighton (60 miles) and the Cross road from Sevenoaks to Guildford (54 miles). The book lists the towns, villages and river crossings on the way, and, together with finger posts in the towns, it was used as we use a road atlas today. Also listed were the big houses that were passed on the way together with the names and titles their occupants.

With the advent of motorised transport Dorking was served by the East Surrey Traction Company and the London General Country Service. The bus garage was at the junction of South Street and Vincent Lane. In 1932 a new bus garage, designed by the modernist architects Wallis Gilbert, was built on this site. With its sweeping, curved shape, it was considered to be an important landmark in the design of bus and tube station architecture. What a

shame it was demolished in 1990 to make way for housing!

From the 1930s, long-distance road transport was by the London Transport Green Line coaches to London and the Royal Blue Service, which stopped at the White Horse on its way from Victoria Coach Station to Bournemouth.

In September we are looking at the development of the railways in Dorking. Why not come and join us?

Staying Sharp in Later Life

*Much can be done to reduce the risk of dementia,
as Jim Docking found out*

Wanting to stave off mental decline (as we all do), I attended a U3A lecture on this subject at the Royal Society last June. It was given by Professor Ian Deary, Director of the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh and a graduate of psychology and medicine. He is a relaxed and entertaining lecturer. Like you, no doubt, I find remembering names, dates and events increasingly difficult. But slips of the mind, so we were told, show up from the age of 20: they parallel changes in other body functions, such as physical strength and lung capacity. Forgetting where you've parked the car, as I recently did in Waitrose, is one thing; forgetting that you took the car is another.

Ian Deary has oversight of the Lothian Birth Control Cohort, which has two aims: to understand how and why some people's brains and thinking skills decline faster than others as they age; and to understand how social background in childhood contributes to physical and mental health in older age. In 1947 a total of 70,805 11-year-old school children in Scotland undertook the Moray House Test No 12, a comprehensive intelligence test consisting of 75 items covering following directions, word classification, analogies, practical items, reasoning, arithmetic and spatial items. The data was stored but then forgotten until Ian Deary rediscovered it in the late 1990s and decided to use it for research into the effects of ageing.

He arranged for those still living in Edinburgh and the surrounding area to be re-tested between 2004 and 2016 when they were aged 70, 73, 76 and 79. They will be tested again in their 80s. Brain scans were also carried out to test for genetic effects. Obviously the numbers involved declined as participants died, so that whereas 1,091 were tested at age 70, the sample had



fallen to 540 by last year – but still a sizeable number. Scotland is the only country to have completed such an exercise. So what were the findings? Some were hardly helpful to those of us in the Third Age! One was that intelligence is a remarkably stable trait:

if you're smart as a child, you're more likely to be smart in later life. Tough, if you had a hard time at school! Another factor was that having less damaged brain 'white matter' – the bundles of nerve fibres that carry signals between brain cells and are in the deepest part of the brain – was related to better mental ageing. The fact that we can't do anything about these matters might seem discouraging, but the study claims that your genes account for just 25% of the variation in our thinking skills as we get older.

The good news is that the study found there are many things you can do in later life to avoid mental decline. One factor is not to smoke, and it's never too late to give the habit up. Another is to keep as physically fit and active as possible: ensure you get physical exercise, maintain a healthy weight, eat a healthy diet, have regular check-ups and get enough sleep. Exercise, particularly walking and other aerobic activities, has a number of benefits: it enhances memory and learning; it improves mood and counteracts depression; it enlarges blood vessels so that more blood and oxygen flow into the brain; and it supports and nourishes brain cells. Also effective are stretching exercises with weights, flexibility exercises such as yoga, or stretching and balance exercises such as yoga, tai-chi and standing on one foot. Exercising just half an hour a day – it can be in 10-minute bouts, and includes gardening, walking the dog and household chores – helps a lot.

Taking up a new language or other challenging activity (not just doing crosswords!) is also important; this could be a new physical as well as mental activity. And this is where being a U3A member can play a valuable part, particularly if you join a study or interest group that is about something you don't know much about. Indeed, generally to keep on educating yourself is related to better ageing. Just to keep up friendships and social contacts is also important in maintaining our thinking skills.

The Lothian project at Edinburgh University is not the only research centre working on mental ageing. Such studies are going on all over the world, and the very recent Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention

reinforces Dear's conclusions. One recent review looked at a question that people often ask: does drinking alcohol help? As we all know, one problem here is that scientists keep changing their minds. But a summary of findings published in 2014 showed that drinking light to moderate amounts of alcohol is associated with better thinking skills in older people. But we must be cautious: the evidence on alcohol and thinking skills is somewhat speculative at the moment because the effect of alcohol on other aspects of health has also to be taken into account. For instance, keeping to moderate drinking also reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, which is also related to thinking skills. On the other hand, very heavy drinking increases the risk of dementia. The advice from researchers is to play safe by keeping to Government guidelines on alcohol consumption by not exceeding 14 units of alcohol a week. A standard pint of beer or a 175ml glass of wine have 2.3 units. So it's important to have a least one day a week free of alcohol to keep below 14 units.

What about coffee? A recent review of studies across the globe – including the Lothian study – concluded that there is some limited positive association with better cognitive function in older people who drink coffee. If you're female, you'll be delighted to know that the effect is more marked in women than men. All in all, the risk of cognitive decline and cognitive disorders such as dementia appears to be lowest for those people drinking one or two cups of coffee per day. But once more, caffeine intake is strongly related to other factors such as IQ, social class and healthier lifestyles. Coffee can also have harmful effects, such as disturbing sleep and making you anxious; also sensitivity and reaction to caffeine varies from person to person.

A study published last July by University College London revealed that the cost of dementia to the UK economy is £23 billion a year. Because we are living longer, numbers in England and Wales are likely to rise from 800,000 today to 1.2 million by 2040.

Much of all this advice will be familiar to you, and you may be saying, 'Well, it didn't take all that research to tell me these things.' But this is to miss the point: because the advice is based on extensive research findings and not just 'what people say', we can be confident that it is sound and, therefore, worth following.

A day at the dump

A moment's lapse in concentration gives Penny Tompkins the chance to enjoy the musings of a philosophical waste disposal operative

I think it must be the stifling weather this summer – but I leave you to draw your own conclusions!

I've been taking stuff to the local public dump over the past few weeks as we slowly clear out our two old sheds before demolishing them. All was going swimmingly until I chucked a dead broom into one of the monster skips along with the car keys... just like that!



'That'll be the third set today, madam. Must be something to do with the hot weather. Flying keys is one of the highlights of the job,' observed the orange-clad attendant as he climbed the steps and, peering over the top of the 10ft skip filled with everything including the kitchen sink, cautiously prodded the contents with his grabbing stick.

'Problem with keys is that they're very good at going straight to the bottom. Not like your broom sticking up over there.'

My car sat gleaming cheerfully in the summer sunshine with my handbag, phone and AA details safely locked inside.

'You can use our phone if you like. Nice car.'

I looked sorrowful. 'My husband won't be very pleased.'

'I expect not. They rarely are.' Such an understanding man.

'You can then wait in the shade over there,' he said, pointing to a battered wooden chair standing next to a pile of old newspapers and a little garden complete with bunches of fake white flowers. 'We keep them for visitors.'

My husband, Roger, finally arrived, spare key in hand and, you've guessed it: he was not pleased.

I later explained to the garage what had happened. I could sense incipient laughter as I said we'd need a new spare key.

'That'll be a whole new set then,' the man said and suggested I sat down. 'Two hundred and fifty pounds, but that does include VAT.'

Ah! The rich tapestry of life...

Monthly Meetings

(Photos of speakers were taken by Robert Edmondson)

The Making of War Horse: Andy Robertshaw, 10 May 2017

A good crowd turned out for our annual general meeting on Wednesday 10 May at the Christian Centre and almost everyone stayed on to hear Andy Robertshaw talk about his role as military adviser on Steven Spielberg's film of *War Horse*.

Andy started by introducing himself as a military historian, not a film-maker, who heard from a friend that Spielberg was filming *War Horse*, an adaptation of the stage play, itself adapted from Michael Morpurgo's book. After a very informal interview he was told to get himself an agent and was then sent a carefully secured copy of the screenplay. He was in!

As a historical consultant, his role was to advise on the historical accuracy of both German and British actions and dress, but with no veto. If the director wanted it, he got it, as when he insisted the Dorsets went into battle to the music of bagpipes, notwithstanding the historical facts. But sometimes Andy did prevent obvious blunders.

Part of the role of historical consultant is to train extras and to fill minor acting roles. Andy's starring role in the film was to lead his extras over the top, a short scene which needed many takes to get it right.

Of course, particular care had to be taken with the horses, though we were surprised to hear that the starring horse, Joey, was played by about 10 different animals. Equine make-up ensured the difference was never visible – though if you look carefully, Andy assured us, there were little giveaways. And the dead



horses on the battlefield? Foam rubber, presenting their own problems when the wind got up. Another scene, where horses were supposed to pull a gun up a hill, took days to shoot and resulted in about 90 seconds of the final film.

A great deal of attention was paid to getting the real feel of trenches and trench warfare. This involved freeze-dried rats and artificial mud (real mud dried out too quickly for the filming). And to ensure a night sequence with gunfire was realistic, casting had found a stone-deaf horse, then told all the extras how vicious he was. If they looked scared, it's because they were.

Andy gave a very engaging and amusing account of the film-making process, explaining that the sequence of shooting is very different from the sequence of the film. When the director eventually called 'Wrap' to finish shooting, everyone involved was delighted and somewhat proud of their achievements. All were hopeful of future assignments.

Some questions afterwards touched on the historical facts. Andy explained

that very few horses were returned to the UK after the war: contrary to popular belief, they were not sold for meat, but as working horses on the Continent. The War Office, ever careful of its budget, could get a much better price for a working horse than for one destined for slaughter.

Geoff Saunders

London Oddities and Curiosities: Sally Botwright, 14 June 2017

In a fluent and well illustrated talk, Sally Botwright, a Blue Badge and City of London guide, described many places and buildings of interest in and around central London. Her talk included many anecdotes to keep the large audience amused and interested throughout the monthly meeting.

Starting with Hyde Park, Sally spoke about the graveyard for pets which was established in Victorian times (1880) and was so popular with owners of dogs and cats that it was full in 20 years.

Horse riding in and around Hyde Park is popular today, and riding lessons are available locally, such as those provided by Bathurst Mews – but at a price of £90 per hour.

The Rotten Row riding route was established by William III in the 1600s to enable him to travel from Kensington Palace to Westminster. The name is derived from the original name of ‘La Route de Roi’.

Marble Arch, well known today as marooned on a traffic roundabout, was moved to Hyde Park to create a grand entrance. It contained a police station and police cell above the arch. Convenient for keeping an eye on Speakers’ Corner.

Located to the south of Hyde Park, Wellington Arch was originally built as an entrance to Buckingham Palace, later becoming a victory arch proclaiming Wellington’s defeat of Napoleon. It is crowned by one of the largest bronze



sculptures in Europe and depicts the Angel of Peace descending on a quadriga, a four-horse chariot of war. It also contains a police station.

Kensington Gardens contains the Albert Memorial, designed by George Gilbert Scott. It has been restored and particularly through binoculars many details can be appreciated today. These include Albert wearing robes of the Order of the Garter and holding a book representing the catalogue of the exhibits for the Great Exhibition. Lower down, 169 figures of noted writers, poets and painters including Hogarth are portrayed in a frieze, with just one woman represented. Albert is looking out over land purchased with the proceeds of the Great Exhibition on which the Albert Hall, Imperial College and the Victoria

& Albert Museum, among others, now stand.

Looking up near the roofline of buildings can often reveal items of interest. Three examples of this are: in the City the pediment of the Royal Exchange, revealing Commerce with her hand on a tiller; in Cornhill, the building next to St Peter's church, revealing the five devils of Cornhill; and in Oxford Street, a store, previously a furrier, still showing statues of beavers.

The name Ely Place (near Holborn Circus) recalls the time when the Bishop of Ely's palace stood on this land from 1290-1772. Visitors included Henry III and Catherine of Aragon, who took part in a five-day banquet, the menu for which included 4,000 larks, 168 swans and many sheep.

In Southwark, a ruined part of the great hall of the Bishops of Winchester's London residence (1140-1626) remains. At one time the diocese of Winchester stretched as far as Southwark and the bishop was a great landowner in the area.

His lands on the south side of the Thames were free of the strict jurisdiction of the City of London, so many entertainments and activities including theatres, gaming houses and brothels flourished. The bishop's prison was called the Clink.

Sally mentioned many other places of interest and their stories – including the old operating theatre above the church of St Thomas's, Leadenhall Market, and the Mitre Tavern, where Queen Elizabeth I danced with Sir Robert Hatton – before finishing with a picture of Liberty's store, where timbers from HMS *Hindustan* and HMS *Impregnable* were used to create the well known black-and-white shop front.

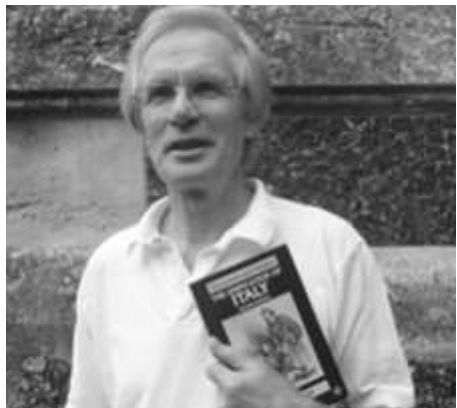
Peter Shelley

The Unification Of Italy: Michael Morrogh, 12 July 2017

Although I studied history at university, it was a long time ago and I had quite forgotten how complex the process of unifying a disparate collection of states, kingdoms and interests proved to be.

A few names emerged from my mental fog: Garibaldi, Cavour, Mazzini and King Victor Emmanuel. Luckily we had Dr Mike Morrogh to cast light in the darkness. I would not describe his presentation as the simplification of Italy but his exposition helped to clarify the roles of the competing interests.

Garibaldi was the determined and exotic character who, with his thousand redshirts, took control of the southern half of the country. The Austrians and



the French had a stake in affairs, and local Italian players were represented by the Pope, Rome and the kingdom of

Piedmont.

To me, the amazing thing was that with so many competing interests the country was unified at all. Success was achieved only by a combination of military force and compromise. Garibaldi saw off 25,000 Bourbon troops, and Napoleon III defeated the Austrians at Magenta and Solferino in 1859.

However, the real achievement was the ditching of ambitious localism and the aim of many players for a unitary or federal state in favour of a traditional

monarchy, with Victor Emanuel of Piedmont crowned king of Italy in 1861.

All of these complexities were explained with clarity, grace and humour by Mike Morrogh, leaving his audience at least a little more knowledgeable than when he began.

Lionel Cartlidge

Days Out

Art Appreciation group visit to the British Library, 26 April 2017

Our party was split into two groups for afternoon tours of the building, giving us ample time beforehand to visit the permanent exhibition 'Treasures of the British Library' and enjoy some refreshments.

Around 200 of the world's most important and beautifully illustrated books and manuscripts are on display in the Treasures Gallery. They range from Leonardo da Vinci's notebook, the Lindisfarne Gospels and Europe's earliest printed book, the Gutenberg Bible, to drafts of works by Thomas More, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens; from Handel's handwritten music for his *Messiah* and scores by Mozart and Beethoven to lyrics written by The Beatles.

Although this gallery does not seem very large, it merits a lengthy visit to appreciate the contents. There is a side room housing a copy of the Magna Carta, and there are wonderfully decorated texts from all the world's main religions as

well as historical documents written by Marie Antoinette, George III and Churchill.

Our afternoon tour focused on the history of the British Library, the architecture and the collections. The British Library was created as our national library in 1973 from the collection housed in the British Museum; as well as the Euston building, it has a site in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. The Modernist building in London, designed by architect Sir Colin St John Wilson and his collaborator M.J. Long, was the largest UK public building constructed in the 20th century and took 37 years from initial plans to its opening in 1998.

Highly controversial, subject to political policy changes and massively over budget, it is now Grade 1 listed. The building in plan looks like a ship sailing into London. It has four double-height levels of basement with 300km of shelves housing over 150 million items.

On entry, the central feature is the six-storey bronze and glass tower containing the King's Library, the 65,000 books acquired by King George III and given to the nation. There are many important works of art housed in the Library and its piazza, such as the monumental sculpture of Newton by Eduardo Paolozzi shown inside the back cover.

We learnt that a copy of every item published in the UK and Ireland – books, newspapers and magazines, catalogues – is sent to the Library, which also holds material in most world languages as well as sound recordings, music scores, stamps and maps.

Anyone with proof of address can apply for a Reader's Pass, and we were shown the retrieval system for requested

items from the priceless collections. We saw visitors accessing online resources inside the library; images from many historic items, as well as articles and videos about them, are held digitally and easily accessed from the library website at <https://www.bl.uk/learning/online-resources>, and I recommend a browse.

Unfortunately, our journey home was very slow in heavy traffic, but it could not spoil what had been a fascinating visit.

Rosemary Hobbs

(Picture on front cover)

Frogmore House, 7 June 2017

The first trip arranged by the new Days Out Committee was a great success. The storm of the day before had blown itself out leaving a gentle wind which added life and movement to the garden. The early start gave us plenty of time for coffee and to orientate ourselves. We then gathered under an Indian bean tree for a guided walk around the grounds, which are in the picturesque style – a sort of halfway house between Capability Brown's grand landscapes and enclosed formal parterre gardens.

There were few flower beds but magnificent trees and shrubs, including two tulip trees with their charming cup-and-saucer flowers, all set around a beautiful lake. Our guide, Glenda, battling against the twin evils of aeroplanes and a motor mower, explained

that the house, which came into the Royal Family in 1792, has been mainly used by them for relaxation and entertaining. Indeed, the Queen walks in the gardens with her dogs most weekends when she is at Windsor Castle.

The Victoria and Albert Mausoleum was closed for refurbishment but we were shown pictures of the highly decorated interior. The other mausoleum in the grounds was erected by Queen Victoria in memory of her mother, the Duchess of Kent, who also lived in the house for the last 20 years of her life.

After lunch we were free to wander through the house, where there was plenty of information. Each room had been furnished and decorated in the prevailing fashion of the day of each queen who owned it. Queen Charlotte,

consort of George III, was the first owner and her rooms reflected the light, uncluttered Georgian style. The Duchess of Kent's rooms were beautifully arranged with pretty colours and interesting artefacts, but the rooms reflecting Queen Victoria's taste mainly centred on family portraits and marble busts of her numerous children. By the time we reached Queen Mary, who favoured black papier-mâché and lacquer and had a curious passion for boxes, we were beginning to feel pity for the poor maids who had to dust all this. There were, however, some wonderful examples of flower paintings by talented artists and also by various princesses in the family.

Although this is a female house, the surprise at the end was a room devised and arranged by the Duke of Edinburgh



to commemorate the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. The Queen is known to have loved the ship, so it was a nice touch for him to have done this for her.

We were sorry that Sue Willis was unable to accompany us, but Sheila Knight was an admirable leader and we all enjoyed the day.

Jenny Ford

Visit to North Wales

The Castles, Historic Houses & Gardens of North Wales,
September 2017

Some 30 members set off on 23 April to explore North Wales and to sample some of its beautiful historic houses and gardens and a few of Wales's 600 castles.

En route to Llandudno we explored Powys Castle and its gardens, complete with resident peacocks, laid out in the Italian and French styles. Our destination for the duration of the tour was the comfortable St Kilda hotel, conveniently

situated on the promenade, providing opportunities for leisurely strolls in our spare time.

Our first full day saw us at the stunning Bodnant Gardens, where the vibrant reds, pinks and oranges of the azaleas and rhododendrons assailed our senses. We continued to Powys Castle.

The next outing was to the very interesting National Slate Museum,

located in the Victorian workshops of the Dinorwig Quarry. Most of the group then joined a scenic excursion on the narrow gauge railway from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadog. Later there was the opportunity of seeing the enchanting Italianate village of Portmeirion, renowned for its splendid micro-climate and its pottery.



The longest name? Fortunately, it's usually abbreviated to Llanfair PG

We could not come to North Wales without visiting Caernarfon Castle, where Prince Charles was invested as the Prince of Wales in 1969, and then take the opportunity to take a ride on the magnificent Snowdon Mountain Railway, Britain's only rack-and-pinion line, built in 1896.

On our penultimate day we set off for the much anticipated tour of Anglesey, where we were treated to a home-made lunch by the members of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogogoch (or Llanfair PG for short!) WI. This branch was the first in the UK and was set up in 1915. Suitably fortified, we returned via Plas Newydd Country House and Gardens, which provided us with spectacular views across the Menai Strait to Snowdonia.

As a final thrill, we took a ride on a

motorised canal boat through the beautiful Vale of Llangollen and across the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, built by Thomas Telford and towering some 126ft above the River Dee.

In all, an exciting and very picturesque holiday enjoyed by all. Thank you very much, Jim!

Austra Harmon

(More pictures on inside covers)

Book Review

King Kong: Our Knot of Time and Music, by Pat Williams
(Portobello Books, price £9.99)

No, this book is not about King Kong, the ape. It is about *King Kong*, the musical, and tells the life story of heavyweight boxing star Ezekiel Dhlamini, who was known as King Kong. It was the subject of the first musical ever to come out of South Africa. It was performed in 1959 in Johannesburg to an audience that included Nelson Mandela, and subsequently came to London with much acclaim. The book is also about the experiences of Pat Williams, who wrote the lyrics, while living both in South Africa and the UK.

The musical was the product of collaboration between black and white people, an extraordinary and rare happening in a world hostile to the black community. Pat's mother threatened to ask her employer, editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg, to fire her if she continued her work with *King Kong*. The creator of the music, Todd Matshikiza, was not allowed in the room with white people when an important

discussion about it was in progress.

Pat follows the musical's conception, realisation, success, welcome in the UK and experiences of its cast to the present day. The performers, like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, are now jazz legends.

Athol Fugard, of the Athol Fugard Theatre in Johannesburg, describes Pat's book as 'an extraordinary memoir of the first ever South African musical, which has since acquired mythical proportions. Essential reading for anyone who loves our country – and of course its music.'

At £9.99 in paperback, it makes an unusual present for friends interested in musicals, South Africa and our multicultural world; an interesting read for book groups too.

Jill Burberry

Diversions & Delights





Things You Do on Holiday But At No Other Time

- Get up at 2am to go to the airport
- Wear a swimming costume while shopping
- Spend an hour looking for window lock keys which you haven't seen since last year and why aren't they in THEIR SPECIAL PLACE?
- Have a purse or pocket full of foreign coins which you try to spend on your last day
- Go to a quarry museum and try to convince yourself it is interesting, as you never knew there was so much to know about slate and that it comes in many colours (grey, mainly)
- Get on a bus and hope it's heading back to your hotel, whose name now escapes you.

From Buckland Parish Magazine, August 2017

Lost In Translation

- In a Paris hotel elevator: Please leave your values at the front desk
- On the walls of a Baltimore estate: Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law – Sisters of Mercy
- On a long-established New Mexico dry cleaning store: 38 years on the same spot
- In a Baltimore clothing store: Wonderful bargains for men with 16 or 17 necks

From Buckland Parish Magazine, July 2017

Dorking & District U3A now publishes a Newsletter and *What's On?* four times a year in March, June, September and December.

Contributions for December should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **the end of October 2017**

Articles, poems, puzzles and drawings are all welcome, as well as reports on U3A activities.

Please try to limit reports on monthly meetings, days out and holidays to not more than 300 words.

If possible, please type your contribution and, if you have the facilities, send it by email, either as an attachment in Microsoft Word or in the main body of the email. If you send a handwritten contribution, please write names of places and people in CAPITAL LETTERS.

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Caernarvon, visited by the group during its week in Wales, is architecturally one of the most impressive of all of the castles in Wales (photo by Clive Richardson)



These smart Cuban school children wear the national primary uniform of deep red (photo by Andrew Gibbons – see his article on p8)

Photos by Photography Group 1



‘BeeEater Landing’ by Mike Thurner and ‘Reflections’ by Millicent Lake