



Dorking & District
University of the Third Age

newsletter



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December 2017

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The Dorking U3A Star Quilt, made by the Quilting 1 group to raise money for Cancer Research UK, at the Gildings Barn on 14 October. The Soft Winds Trio is playing in front.

Cover picture: On 29 September the Band of the Household Cavalry paraded through Dorking. It is rare for this band to play outside London, but it did so on this occasion in honour of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court, which is relocating to Loughborough at the end of 2018 (photo by Mike Thurner)

Letter from the Chairman

We are constantly repeating or hearing being repeated that we are a self-help education organisation, and the recent Surrey U3A Network Development Day was a true example of that principle at its best. We had gathered in East Horsley to explore and understand the issues that may impair or prevent participation in U3A activities, in keeping with a new U3A initiative (U3APlus – watch for an article about this in *Third Age Matters*). We were there to learn but, for the day to happen, we were all dependent on a great deal of help – and it was true self-help!



Our newly formed Really Useful Group (RUG) demonstrated this perfectly. The team had responded to a request made some months ago. They then arrived early at the venue and set about undertaking the tasks that needed doing, almost without a question being asked! A similar team of East Horsley volunteers coped with all the technical aspects of the day. The willingness shown by all these people made my own task much easier, and their effectiveness made all the preparatory work undertaken by others come to fruition.

This is U3A at its best – and there are many other examples in Dorking & District U3A. By the time you read this, the editors and others will have produced this newsletter, volunteers will have delivered it through your letterbox, group leaders will have once more gathered their groups for their regular meetings, and another monthly meeting and another day out will have been enjoyed. In the summer there was a very successful picnic in the grounds of Box Hill School, and in the next few months there will be another new members' coffee morning, another group leaders' lunch and another quiz night.

I have probably said this before, but it warrants repetition: Dorking & District U3A is alive and well. We have a full committee – though we shall be looking for more committee members in May when some members will stand down – and everything that happens is rewarded by smiling faces. Long may it last!

However, there is one thing that may not last if there is no response between now and December, and that is tea at future Monthly Meetings! Cynthia Williams has come forward to take over from Val Masters in organising the teas, but she needs one other person each month to help her. It would be best if two or three more people make up the team because this would allow for rotation and covering necessary absences. It is clear from the buzz in the cafeteria after each meeting that the tea and biscuits accompanying the chat are appreciated. They do not appear by magic. ►

- ◀ About one-sixth of our members keep everything running. Please tell us if you can help us in any way – never assume that we have enough help!
Best wishes as always,

Doreen

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to the 18 new members, listed below, who have joined since the last issue. We now have 655 paid-up members.

Mrs Jill Attfield	Mrs Angela Hedges	Mr Greyham Ross
Mr Alan Bergman	Mrs Rachel de la Hoyde	Mr Paul Smith
Mr Steve Brooks	Mrs Janet Lewin	Mr Peter Sturge
Mrs Wendy Butcher	Mrs Valerie Rayner	Mr Trevor Thompson
Mr Martin Clark	Mrs Elizabeth Roome	Lady Diana Unwin
Mrs Pom Hawkes	Mrs Christine Ross	Mr John Westley

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Group News

NEW GROUP: Art Appreciation 2 – Ways of Seeing Art

Our small group held an initial meeting on 23 October to discuss the format of future sessions. Initially, the brief was to set up an online programme and there are, indeed, a lot of resources available online, including OU free short courses, that make this a possible option for further study. However, the consensus was that the whole point of a U3A group is that people come together regularly and exchange ideas. The plan is to visit local exhibitions whenever possible and to have regular meetings to discuss and learn about the artists or works on show.

Members of this new group will be coming together on the first Friday afternoon



of every month, with a first meeting planned for Friday 5 January 2018 at 2pm (members will be informed of venue).

Our first proposed visit is to the Turner in Surrey exhibition at the Lightbox, Woking; this brings together over 50 oil paintings, watercolours and drawings and explores JMW Turner's work produced on his various travels in the county. Our first meeting will look at how Turner captured both the beauty and rustic elegance of the Surrey landscape.

Although our new group is a small one, members are enthusiastic and very knowledgeable. We hope a few other people will join us and that the group will gather momentum. Please register interest with me.

Beryl Sinclair (01306 711542; jandbsinclairuk@gmail.com)

Computing Workshops - we're here to help you!

These monthly workshops are for less experienced users who wish to expand their knowledge or are experiencing problems with their laptops, desktops, tablets or smartphones. The workshops are on the fourth Monday of each month from 10am to noon and 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)

Philosophy and Critical Thinking

Because the 'guinea pigs' enjoyed the online *Philosophy and Critical Thinking* course so much, they are looking for another online course to follow on. It might be a philosophical road trip into phenomenology (Trinity College, Connecticut) or it might be an introduction to bioethics (Georgetown University). For further information watch for an email or contact me.

Doreen Raine (chairman@dorking3a.org.uk)

Quilting

Our group has been working hard recently and completed a very special group project, a lovely star quilt which is currently being raffled in aid of Cancer Research UK. Making it has been a participative learning experience as we all gathered various scraps and remnants of cotton fabric that we agreed fitted together in a pleasing colour combination.

At our fortnightly meetings we work well together as a team, as some members cut fabric into the exacting sized pieces for the various components of the stars, one to two members sew the seams according the careful measurements required, another presses the seams open with a hot iron, while remaining members arrange the stars in the most agreeable position to make a pleasing and attractive quilt.

We each managed to make at least six stars to hone our skills in selecting fabrics, using a rotary cutter and sewing them together on a machine. Once this was done all



- ◀ the stars were set within a contrasting fabric framework to show them off and a larger frame of simpler strips of complementary colours was set right around the completed arrangement. The quilt top was then backed with a cotton wadding bought from the quilt shop in Dorking, and backed with a larger piece of the same front framework fabric before being finally machine quilted. There were two more smaller group meetings to complete the hand sewing of the binding all round the edge of the quilt.

One member of Quilting 1 is on the committee for the local Cancer Research UK, and we all agreed it would be wonderful to donate the quilt to raise money through a raffle for this worthy cause as we all had put a lot of hard work into this project. We showcased the quilt for the first time at a charity hog roast on 14 October at the Gildings Barn in Newdigate. (See picture on inside cover.)

Please contact Sue Grant if you would like the chance to win this quilt. The tickets cost £1 each and the raffle will be drawn next March at a further fundraising coffee event.

Juliet Eberle (01306 884569; juliet.eberle@ntlworld.com)

Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

Having finished studying the 'Problem Comedies', we are now enjoying ourselves reading one of the two outright rollicking comedies that Shakespeare wrote – *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. This is the only one of his comedies located in England, reputedly at Queen Elizabeth I's request. She wanted Falstaff brought back to life. As a lot of the humour lies in the mangling use of English by a Welsh parson, a French doctor, a publican with his own personal dialect and Pistol, who talks in quotations, there is still a lot of 'translating' to do, but it is a lot of fun.

Charmian Corner (01306 883374; charmian.corner@care4free.net)



Singing for Pleasure – Come and join us

We were very sad to lose one of our members, Pam Stone, who unexpectedly died recently. She was a great supporter of our group and it was not easy to sing for our concert on the day after her funeral.

That concert at St Mary's Church, Buckland, entitled 'Summer into Autumn' raised £225 on the door plus a generous donation towards costs of repairing the church. The rector was well pleased with our performance and invited us to sing again next year.

We are now working on our programme for Christmas. Gina Eason, our accomplished pianist and conductor, has selected some songs that are not so well known. Residents of Broome Park Nursing Home will be our first audience on 4 December. We are getting to know some of them now and look forward to singing



to them again – and we will see you all at the December U3A meeting when we will sing to you.

Give me a call if you want to join us. Singing is good for your health, they say, and you don't have to be able to read music. We usually meet on the first and third Mondays from 10am to noon at Buckland Reading Room. Free trial session.

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

See picture on inside cover

Residential Trips

Yorkshire, 30 April to 4 May 2018

- Coach from Dorking
- Half board in lovely hotel in Harrogate
- Trips to Harewood House, Brontë Parsonage Museum, York, Merchant Adventurers' Hall, Fairfax House, Fountains Abbey, Studley Water Garden, Ripon, Newby Hall, Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- Blue Badge guide
- *Cost:* £489pp, single room supplement £89

Details and application form from Ianthe Cox (01737 843105; ianthecox72@gmail.com) or Jim Docking (01737 843260; annejim@docking.eclipse.co.uk)



Berlin, October 2018

- EasyJet flight from Gatwick
- Professional guide
- Coach for all transfers and excursions
- 4* hotel in Berlin with dinner on first night
- Guided tour of Berlin, Berlin museums, Reichstag, Charlottenburg Palace, Potsdam and the Sanssouci and Cecilienhof palaces, Allied Museum
- *Cost:* £829, single room supplement £119

(Note: all European holidays will be more expensive in 2018, largely due to the unfavourable exchange rate.)

Details and application form from Jim Docking (01737 843260; annejim@docking.eclipse.co.uk)



Ianthe Cox, our new Treasurer

Can you tell us about your early life?

I was born in Hastings and was educated to A Level, mainly in Sussex and North Devon. I met my husband in North Devon and moved to Surrey for work reasons in 1963.

What jobs did you have?

I worked for British Caledonian Airways as a planning manager, eventually responsible for negotiating contracts with other airlines. This involved world travel, mainly to Africa and South America. It also enabled leisure travel worldwide for me and my husband.

After British Caledonian, I joined Brelades Veterinary Surgeons (as it has become) as a part-time administrator, which eventually led to a full-time appointment as practice manager for over 20 years. I retired at the end of February this year – well past my ‘use-by date’!

Where do you live?

We purchased a run-down cottage in Buckland in 1975 and did the majority of the building work ourselves to make it into the house it is today. Sadly, my husband died of cancer in 2014.

We have always had animals – cats and dogs and a horse. Currently I have a black Labrador called Nelson and a black cat called Mandela. All our animals have always been rescues.

Why did you join the U3A?

I joined because I wanted to use my time to enjoy new experiences and meet new people. It is early days but I have not regretted joining. I joined the Committee



and have just started as Treasurer. I also help Jim to organise holidays and have joined Creative Writing and Dressmaking. I have plans to join Table Tennis, Line Dancing, Genealogy and anything that grabs my interest and I have time for.

What contributions can you bring to the Committee?

Hopefully I can bring over 50 years’ working experience. I have always enjoyed challenges.

What are your main interests?

Animals, travel, sailing (I have two boats), my MG Midget, painting, gardening and staying healthy and young for as long as possible! I’m a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, always interested in learning something new.

Articles

Akhenaten Mysteries of Ancient Egypt

Jill Burberry relates a surprising coincidence

Many years ago a man who I no longer remember for a reason I do not know gave me a book, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt*, by Arthur Weigall, who supervised excavations in January 1907 in the Valley of the Kings on behalf of the Egyptian government. They brought to light the doorway of his tomb, which they entered.



In the 1950s, while in bed recovering from flu, I read a paperback book, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*. Finishing it, I laid it aside and switched on the radio. A voice boomed forth: 'The tomb of Tutenkhamoon!' And I listened to the story I had just read.

In August this year I was researching material to include in a session studying Egyptian myths for my U3A group. Myth and history of their gods and kings are closely interwoven. I decided to select passages from Weigall's book to read to the group. On finishing I put my pen aside and picked up the May edition of the *National Geographic* magazine, a subscription to which I had been given for Christmas. I opened it at random and was faced by the heading 'Akhenaten, Egypt's First Revolutionary' by Peter Hessler!

Thus I found myself with material first published in 1910 and with this year's most up-to-date research about this revolutionary king, founder of a city in the desert and of a new religion, the first religion to worship only one god, similar in many ways to Christianity.

Later the city was destroyed and Akhenaten's name erased from monuments throughout the country by the Egyptians who wanted to banish his memory entirely. He had been trying to 'make Egypt great again'! Not only is he still remembered, he is a constant subject of research. His life was turned into an opera by Philip Glass. And the tomb of Tutankhamen is currently attracting attention due to the possibility that the tomb of his mother, Akhenaten's wife, Nefertiti, may be behind the wall.

- Can any one else tell of surprising coincidences in their lives? – Ed

TED and the Ghost Hunters

Robert Edmondson records an eerie story that can be explained

There are hundreds of free apps available for your tablet or computer, but one of particular interest that I recommend to all U3A members is TED (technology, entertainment, design). This refers to a media organisation that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan 'Ideas worth spreading'. Founded in 1984, its early emphasis was on technology and design, but since then it has broadened its range to include scientific, political and academic topics. Each talk lasts between 10 and 18 minutes and is devised to be understood by the general public.



One talk by an American, Carrie Poppy, entitled 'A Scientific Approach to the Paranormal', was presented in March this year and seemed to me to be relevant to our social, cultural and even religious history. Carrie was staying in a house that had not been well maintained. One day she felt uncomfortable and unwell, with pressure in her chest and an inexplicable sense of dread. She heard whooshing noises and possible faint whispers. Convinced that the house was haunted, with encouragement from a friend, she tried burning sage to exorcise the ghost or spirit. Her efforts were in vain for the symptoms intensified.

In desperation she called Ghost Hunters, a sceptic organisation that believes that all paranormal events have a scientific explanation. They suggested that she might be suffering from poisoning by carbon monoxide. She then called in the gas inspectors who, indeed, found sublethal – but still dangerous – concentrations of carbon monoxide in the air of the house.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and poisonous gas formed during the incomplete combustion of coal, gas, wood, charcoal or oil. It can build up in conditions of poor ventilation or inadequate maintenance of buildings. At sublethal levels it causes a sensation of pressure in the chest. Its effect on the nervous system leads to both auditory and visual hallucinations and a strange unease – the phenomena experienced by many 'ghost hunters' in haunted pubs, castles and other buildings.

Perhaps we should remember this if we think that we have seen or heard a ghost. It might be wise to purchase a carbon monoxide monitor.

The Online Road to Enlightenment

Geoff Saunders recommends online courses

In response to many requests from members, an additional philosophy group was established in February with our chairman, Doreen, agreeing to act as leader. Though extremely busy with other U3A commitments, Doreen was particularly keen to join the new group because it was to pilot the use of online material from a so-called MOOC (massive open online course).



The challenge of online material and how best to benefit from it in a U3A context has been around for some time. There is a massive amount of study material freely available online. Some of the most prestigious universities in the world host courses. Mostly students follow the online lectures at home and share questions and discussion in online ‘chat rooms’. Indeed, many individual U3A members do exactly that.

But the committee, gingered along by the writer, was convinced that a valuable resource for sharing learning, and fun, was in our grasp. What was needed was an opportunity to try it out.

As our starting point, we chose a course *Philosophy and Critical Thinking*, hosted by the University of Queensland. The format we devised was to study the online material individually, which involved preparing the content of three or four lectures for a group discussion. Meeting twice a month in members’ houses, this provided a great stimulus for some lively interactions. Occasionally we reviewed a lecture together, but mostly we used the time together to help each other understand the concepts involved. The slightly quirky Aussie way of presenting some really deep ideas proved a winner; and some of the content challenged deeply held opinions, all the better for sharing learning.

Accessing the online material proved easier than some had anticipated. Not that there were no problems, but together we managed to overcome these little obstacles.

So, the path to enlightenment seems to have run through Brisbane. This may be no surprise to some U3A members, but was perhaps a revelation to others. Whatever our background in philosophy, I think we were unanimous in the realisation of just how useful the online material is to our shared objectives of boosting our learning. Very enlightening indeed.

Going forward, can we as Dorking U3A incorporate more of this freely



- ◀ available material into our regular groups? This is something each group and each group leader should examine. There is help available from online course users to assist groups to get started. Just discuss the possibilities with any committee member, or ask Lionel, the groups co-ordinator, to put you in touch with the right people. Or are there subjects that members would like to explore using online material? We all know that learning together is rewarding and fun, and there is a vast amount of knowledge out there that wasn't available when most of us finished formal education.

While you ponder these questions, you might consider putting a toe in the water. A short course using online materials and group meetings will commence after Christmas. Entitled *A Philosophical Road Trip*, this short course will focus on the conscious mind and explore things we can take for granted in perception, action and interaction with others. Look out for an email invitation to a starter session, or contact any committee member.

What do Government Economists do?

*Andrew Gibbons describes his career of 24 years in the
Government economic service*

The best summary of what goes on is that economists help people with difficult decisions, often by using what's known as cost benefit analysis. Economists see the three main roles of government as: stabilising growth, employment and prices in the economy; redistributing income between people by means of taxes, benefits and pensions; and improving the allocation of productive resources by dealing with cases of market failure.

Looking at how the civil service has grown and declined over the past 120 years shows a peak of 1.2 million staff during the Second World War, which reduced quickly once peace returned, after which the number of civil servants followed a downward trend to today's figure of around 400,000. Of those, some 1,500 are professional economists.

Markets work well in co-ordinating the production of many goods and services, and market prices are useful in revealing collective preferences. But markets can fail when conditions are not right, so informed public policy can guide, correct and supplement the invisible hand of market forces. To work well, markets need a government authority to uphold the rule of law, property rights and the enforcement of contracts, and to prevent

the abuse of monopoly power. Asymmetric information between different parties harms the functioning of markets, exemplified by the principal-agent problem, which we often meet when trying to get a builder or decorator to do what we want.

The most important and interesting types of market failure are the cases of public goods and externalities. The private goods and services on which we mostly spend our own money are 'rival' and 'excludable' in use. The more of something that you buy, the

less there is for other people, and once you own something you can prevent other people using it. Public goods are different, because they are non-rival and/or non-excludable. National defence, lighthouses, law and order, uncongested facilities such as roads, parks and bridges, radio and television broadcasts (in pre-encryption times), and common resources such as ocean fisheries and the atmosphere are all examples of public goods. We can't easily exclude anyone from access to the benefits, and for most of these things the amount that you enjoy doesn't reduce the amount available to anyone else.

Public goods and services can't normally be provided by individual purchases because when they are available everyone can enjoy them anyway. So they are typically funded by taxation, and the amount supplied has to be arrived at through a political or bureaucratic process.

Markets also don't work well in the presence of externalities: the side-effects which some actions have on third parties. External costs are felt when we suffer from noisy neighbours (or inflict our own noise or bonfire smoke on our neighbours), when additional traffic causes congestion and slows down other vehicles, or when a factory process causes harmful environmental releases.

Similarly, positive impacts enjoyed by third parties are the external benefits of others' activity. Passers-by will enjoy seeing the flowers in your front garden; we all benefit from the education and socialisation of others, especially if they become broadcasters, writers and journalists; vaccination reduces the risk of disease to others as well as to the recipients; we can enjoy other people's fireworks; and bee-keepers inadvertently help farmers (or is it the other way round?).



◀ So externalities can justify government intervention either to reduce or prevent external costs by regulation or to promote activities generating external benefits. Large projects and programmes involving these kind of decisions – notably education, transport and health services – are decided by central government using cost benefit analysis, an appraisal which tries to compare all the likely impacts of all the feasible options in order to find which is best for general welfare. As James Hacker said, ‘But that’s an outrageous view,’ to which Sir Humphrey Appleby replied, ‘Yes, indeed, it’s known as Treasury Policy.’

Cost benefit analysis for projects with significant externalities (e.g. airports) aims to compare different options in terms of their value for money, often presented as the ratio of benefits to costs. This requires valuing the externalities in money terms, that is, the complex work of finding ‘shadow prices’ to enable different impacts to be assessed on a comparable basis. So money values which reflect collective preferences are effectively used as weights for unpriced effects because they express people’s willingness to pay for a benefit or willingness to accept compensation for a loss of wellbeing.

As an example, alternative speed limits on the road between Dorking and Reigate might have different annual impacts in terms of serious accidents, drivers’ time and vehicle operating costs. It might be known that higher speed limits would save drivers’ time, involve higher operating costs and increase accidents. If we know vehicle operating costs, the average value of drivers’ time and the full cost of accidents, we can then find which speed limit option gives the best outcome in terms of general welfare, as long as our money values reflect social preferences. When such decisions are wrong they represent government failure.

This raises the question of whether and when government ministers should be able to ignore the results of cost benefit analysis (and ‘experts’) and make their own decisions. But that is politics, which is beyond the remit of government economists.

Monthly Meetings

Photos of speakers were taken by Robert Edmondson

Nature's Marvels: David Boag, 13 September 2017

Peter Crook

Our September monthly meeting was a lecture by wildlife and natural history photographer David Boag, who presented his dynamic talk entitled *Nature's Marvels*.

Beginning with a picture of masses of Monarch butterflies congregating in Californian woodland, David explained how these small, frail creatures were able to undertake migrations over thousands of miles. This was followed by a discussion of the various forms of seed dispersal evolved by plants and trees using wind, birds and animals.

A series of amazing bird photographs followed, illustrating a range of avian behaviour concerned with nest building, and it was fascinating to learn that no two species of bird construct the same type of nest. It was of particular interest that both the kingfisher and the puffin, which nest deep within earthen burrows, produce precocious chicks which are immediately able to fly once they emerge into the light of the wide world. The eccentricities of some other birds' nesting behaviour included the excavation of tree trunks by woodpeckers and the intricate hanging basketwork structures of the appropriately named weaverbirds.

Further beautiful pictures showed marvellous features of bird diversity, including the tiny jewel-like hummingbird, which requires a very high energy diet in order to hover in still air, and the Arctic tern which, from the age of



four months, is able to fly from its breeding grounds in the Arctic all the way to the Antarctic.

Symbiotic relationships were illustrated by stunning images ranging from those of the Adonis Blue butterfly and its relationship with ants to the expanses of the African plains where zebra, giraffe and buffalo all receive the attentions of oxpeckers to remove their bloodsucking ticks.

David rounded off his presentation by discussing various forms of communication in the natural world. The structure of plants such as the bee orchid replicates the female bee in order to attract the male bee for pollination purposes, and animals such as the ground squirrel have evolved a range of alarm calls which indicate which predator is on the hunt.

Robert Edmondson's vote of thanks paid tribute to David's enthusiasm and his ability to share with us his broad spectrum of knowledge of some of the wonders of our natural world.

Why and How British Colonial Africa became Independent:

Peter Docking, 11 October 2017

Lionel Cartlidge

Peter Docking gave us a fluent and fascinating explanation of the reasons why, in a few short years in the 1960s, virtually all of Britain's colonies in Africa gained their independence. The speed of the change was remarkable and much of the impetus arose from the impact of the Second World War, to which Africa had made a significant contribution. The war encouraged the development of several confident and powerful African leaders, sometimes educated in and cultivated by Britain. Men like Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) were able to press the case for independence.

In a few cases Britain had been dragged into debilitating and costly conflicts, such as the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. The war had changed attitudes towards colonialism and there was little enthusiasm in Britain for retaining formal control over costly colonies where resentment was growing at their treatment, especially over the taxation levied after the war. African leaders also were encouraged by the examples of the independence of India and especially that of the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1957.

At the same time that domestic attitudes were changing similar post-war



views became prevalent internationally. The founding of the United Nations in 1945 led to a reassessment of colonialism and the growth of opposition on the world stage.

The philosophy of authoritarianism and dominance was in retreat. By 1970 the Empire was effectively gone and red had been washed from the world map.

Pragmatic imperialism had won the day, with the substitution of economic and political influence aided by the creation of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Although most of us had lived through the period of change, I think that few will have a clear and comprehensive recall of such important events, and we are grateful for the clear explanation of our recent history that Peter provided.

Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation towards the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.

I hate it when people use big words just to make themselves sound perspicacious.

Days Out

Crossrail – uncovering old London, 28 July 2017

Val Arundel

With our Blue Badge guide, Martin, we walked to the Mayflower inn, reputedly the oldest pub on the Thames (1620), for coffee. To me and my husband this was a surprise as it was our haunt when we were courting more than 50 years ago.

It hadn't changed much. It is situated in the middle of Rotherhithe which, as we learnt, means cattle (rother) port (hithe). The once busy East India Company warehouses are now expensive apartments. The Mayflower sits opposite a former granary, now a film studio and costume repository for Sands Films, and just across from St Mary's Church (1710), whose pews were reputed to be made from HMS *Temerare*, depicted in Turner's painting.

Our first visit was to the Brunel Museum. Marc Brunel, father of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, had the idea of a tunnel in the early 1800s. The nearest crossing point of the Thames for carts carrying cargo to the Wapping side of the river was London Bridge, which at that time was very narrow and horses and carts could wait up to a week or more to cross it. The river at Rotherhithe was at that time too wide to build a bridge.

By 1824, during the reign of George IV, Brunel was ready to begin. He had done his measurements and aimed to start tunnelling 40ft below ground level. He began by laying in place a 25-ton iron ring with a cutting edge, and constructed on top of it a shaft which was 60ft above ground level. He topped it with another iron hoop and a steam engine to move the spoil. Brunel reckoned that the combined



Outside the Mayflower inn, reputedly the oldest pub on the Thames

weight would sink down through the London clay. He was right. Just 20ft of shaft remains today above ground where Martin told us the story.

The tunnel was excavated by hand using a complicated shield, another of Marc's inventions, through which miners dug out the soil. His shield device has evolved over the years into the powered machines used today. After many mishaps, including floods, illness, and money problems, together with the need to build a shaft on the Wapping side, in November 1841 the tunnel was finished; and in 1843 it was opened to the public to visit on foot. However, by the 1850s the novelty had worn off and the tunnel was closed. In 1865 it was sold to East London Railway for £200,000. Today it takes Transport for London trains under the Thames; we heard them whilst sitting in the shaft listening to our guide.

The Rotherhithe shaft was capped during the 1940s. It now sits by the engine house museum which originally ►

◀ housed the steam engine used in the tunnel's construction.

After visiting the museum we looked out from a viewing area over the Thames and Martin pointed out the Prospect of Whitby, another old pub completely dwarfed by surrounding buildings 40-plus stories high.

Returning to the coach, our guided tour continued past the Rotherhithe tunnel, built in 1904 for horses and carts and actually used for them at the time but now a road tunnel. Then on through Bermondsey, home at one time of Peak Frean and Twiglets, and past the London Bridge to Greenwich Railway, the first built on arches for its full length. Then over Tower Bridge and past the Tower of London and the Mint (now moved to Llantrisant, although the security wall is still there).

We also passed Cable Street where the battle took place between anti-fascist protesters, police and Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts in 1936. Then yet another tunnel, the Limehouse link, which brought us to Canary Wharf, which reminded me of a porcupine with its small base covered with many tall buildings.

Martin pointed out a sausage-shaped building covered with what looked like white plastic near the base of some of the buildings. This was the top of the new Crossrail station. Some of us went there to see the lovely gardens covered by an Eden Project-type plastic roof with a walkway leading at both ends to eateries. As it was lunchtime, we joined the

hundreds of young office workers to eat. Below the gardens were four floor levels, the bottom one of which in 2018 would be the Crossrail station at Canary Wharf.

Our final visit was to the Museum of London to see the exhibition of some of the thousands of archaeological finds that had been made during the construction of Crossrail. The railway itself will be at a depth far below any archaeology finds which only occur in the top nine metres. However, at certain points where stations were being built or where the line crossed existing routes, many fascinating items were discovered.

The easternmost area turned up the oldest man-made finds, prehistoric flint flakes, whilst reindeer and bison bones pointed to a more rural landscape in the west. The finds included pottery, industrial items, wood, leather, coins and jewellery. One fascinating item was a pair of animal bones polished for use as ice skates from the 15th or 16th century.

In many areas, particularly near Liverpool Street station, many skeletons and skulls were found. The arguments are already raging as to why so many skulls. All in all, many years of work lies ahead for the archaeologists to interpret what these finds can tell us about early London. The exhibition also showed videos of how the tunnel was cut through modern-day London together with excavations and initial interpretation of finds.

After a cup of tea we boarded the coach, said goodbye to Martin and London, returning through another tunnel, the Blackwall Tunnel.

Art Appreciation group visit to the Giacometti exhibition, 5 September 2017

Rosemary Hobbs

A small group of us made an informal arrangement to travel by train to view the Giacometti exhibition at Tate Modern. The walk from Waterloo to Bankside along the Thames is always a pleasure, and the terrace at the top of the new Blavatnik Building gives a 360° panoramic view of the London skyline.

The Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901-66) is best known for his stick figures, but this exhibition puts his work in context, from early busts in a range of borrowed styles to the Surrealism of the 1920-30s and existentialism during and after the war.

Most of his working life was spent in a studio in Paris, except for a few years of exile in Geneva. It is said that he returned to Paris with all the sculptures he had made through the Second World War contained in six matchboxes, and some of these minute figures were on display. Giacometti explained that the smallest of his sculptures was 'born of the desire to represent a memory of a friend seen from afar in Paris'.



Personally, I felt repulsed by the misogyny and fetishism implied in some of the early Surrealist work, such as *Woman With Her Throat Cut* (1932). However, later sculptures such as the loping dog and striding man perfectly capture the animation of their subjects.

In later life Giacometti became entirely obsessed with his 'stick figure' sculptures, endlessly reproducing the features of his brother Diego and his wife, Annette, in an attempt to capture their inner personality – and always being unsatisfied that he had succeeded.

This gave the end of the exhibition a rather depressing feel, but overall it was a fascinating overview of the artist's working life.

Portsmouth and the *Mary Rose*, 20 September 2017

Henry Willis

Once again Hardings' Matt served us well. Having collected the last passengers in Dorking and despite fairly heavy traffic he got us there in just over two hours.

On arrival at the outskirts of Portsmouth we were met by Jackie, a Blue Badge guide and a Royal Navy

wife. She suggested that instead of the proposed walking tour of the town we should stay in the coach and cover a much greater area, all of which she could explain in much greater detail. Thus, from the hills overlooking the town and harbour we could see the entire panorama and, from a closer point of view around and along the seafront and areas near by, we could see 'old' ►

◀ Portsmouth. All this accompanied by an endless stream of information. Most of us chose to have lunch in the well converted Hot Walls (old barracks and stores). They are now mostly art galleries and restaurants but retain their original features. After lunch we made our way to join the queue for the free boat trip around the harbour. Lots to look at: warships and much else and then the high point of the boat trip – HMS *Queen Elizabeth*. What a ship! Absolutely magnificent! Lack of space precludes my going on about her but I'm sure that she will prove well worth the huge cost. I would dearly love a guided tour around her.

After the boat trip, the *Mary Rose*. Most of us had seen the 1982 TV footage of the recovery of a large part of the starboard side and many had seen her when she was on her side being treated against 437 years of salt water and mud.

The whole of the recovered section, nearly three-quarters of the original starboard side, is now upright with only the bow section and the forr'd and aft castles missing. What an incredible piece of engineering! A lot of the wreck is still buried, providing a great challenge for the future.

She now presents an incredible sight in her new home, and it is almost impossible to reconcile what we saw of life 437 years ago with life today. Viewing the ship from the three galleries allowed a detailed inspection, and the projected holograms of the crew going about their various duties really brought it home. In addition to the ship herself, the side galleries held an amazing assortment of finds brought up during the



rescue: huge and smaller guns, stone and iron shot, longbows, arrows, axes, hammers, carpenters' tools, shipwrights' tools, medical instruments (which played havoc with my imagination) and the huge lead-lined cooking pot. There were also personal items, such as leather shoes, wooden bowls, musical instruments, cooking and serving bowls and a lesser amount of pewterware – too many to mention them all. It was all there – Navy life in 1545. In all, some 19,000 items were recovered, of which many of the best are displayed but many are still in store.

It has long puzzled me as to why the boat sank. Gun ports should be well above the waterline, but one of the experts explained that she was grossly overloaded with extra guns, soldiers and general equipment, so that the ship became much lower in the water and immersed the gun ports when she heeled over due to a change of direction.

After a welcome cup of tea in the museum restaurant we set off for home. In all, a very enjoyable and informative visit.

Art Appreciation trip to Petworth House, 27 September 2017

Jenny Ford

Petworth House was chosen by the Art Appreciation group for its autumn trip and the day proved to be fine and dry, which was fortunate as the house can be cold and gloomy.

Built and extended by three different owners, it is a rather ugly building, although the west front has a certain classical grandeur. However, the real beauty of Petworth lies in the treasures that it contains as it holds the National Trust's finest collection of art. The extensive artefacts include pictures, furniture, sculptures and the superb wood carvings of Grinling Gibbons.

We had time to examine the recently reopened old kitchens before meeting our guide for a tour of the house. A National Trust volunteer, he explained the history of the house and pointed out some of the most valuable pictures, including a superb Titian and an early Nativity scene by Bosch as well as works by Lely and Turner. Turner stayed in the house on various occasions as a guest.

After the tour we walked in the woodland through carpets of sweet chestnuts and admired the Doric temple.

Petworth is a charming, old-fashioned town with a teashop on every corner and a great number of antique shops. We found a little courtyard with tables and chairs set out and had lunch in the sunshine.



A detail from the Grinling Gibbons wood carvings at Petworth (photo by Mike Docker)

There was then time to visit the church next to Petworth House and admire the beautiful stained-glass windows.

Two flower ladies told us that a bomb had dropped on a school in the town in 1942 killing 28 children and two teachers. The ladies were creating floral displays for a service of remembrance in the church to mark 75 years since the disaster.

Petworth House is primarily a museum rather than a home but for art lovers it is immensely rewarding.

Trip to Austria

The Austrian Lakes, 24-30 September 2017

John Ashwood

On Sunday 24 September 29 members set off from Heathrow bound for Austria. We arrived in Munich and then had a three-hour coach journey to our destination at the delightful Schützenhof hotel, situated on the shore of Fuschl am See.

The next day we were driven to Salzburg. Our guide took us past the Mozart Music University and then into the gardens of the Mirabelle palace built in 1606 by the Archbishop Prince Wolf Raitenau for his mistress Salome, who he wanted to marry. Mozart dominated our tour of the city; the house where he was born and the old streets with which he was associated, through the old market place towards the cathedral. Some of us then proceeded up the funicular to the Hohensalzburg Castle, which dominated the city and afforded spectacular views.

Tuesday was a full-day tour to the three nearest lakes. First a stop at St Gilgen, a village on the Wolfgangsee, where Mozart's mother had a house. We then drove round the lake, which is 12km long, having been formed in the ice age 20,000 years ago. The lake was named after a saint who had lived in a cave above it.

We called into the town of Wolfgang, where the inn of the 1930 operetta *The White Horse Inn* was located. We drove on to Attersee, which lies under the Hochlecken mountain. Here Mahler had a house and was inspired to write his second symphony.

Then on to Mondsee (Moon Lake). The main attraction here was the church, part of a former Benedictine monastery

dating from 748, where the wedding ceremony in *The Sound Of Music* had been filmed.

Wednesday was a free day. The majority took a boat trip to the Schloss Fuschl resort at the top of our lake where there was a fishery and a luxury hotel. In various groups we walked back to our hotel, passing through meadows and woodland. A gala dinner was held that night.

On Thursday we set off for Hallstatt, a medieval village famed for its salt mines going back to 1200BC on the slopes of the Dachstein mountains. We wandered around the town seeing the charming houses, church and museum. We returned to Fuschl for a relaxing afternoon.

Another 9am start on Friday took us to the ice caves at Werfen. The Eisriesenwelt cave is the largest in the world, extending more than 42km, of which 1,000 metres are open to the public. The way up to the cave was daunting and only 10 of the group entered. Belatedly we then set off for the Hohenwerfen Fortress, which had been used for the filming of *Where Eagles Dare*. We took the funicular up to the castle and were able to wander around the courtyard and have a late lunch. On our journey back to Fuschl we said goodbye to our excellent guide, Hans, who had been a great source of information, amusing and not always PC, which was very refreshing.

Saturday came and we set off for our return journey, arriving at Heathrow at 5.30pm. A Hardings coach that Jean had so efficiently organised sped us back to Dorking.



The dramatic location of Hohenwerfen Fortress, which was used for the filming of *Where Eagles Dare* (photo by Laurie von Weber)

Diversions & Delights

- Hello! Gordon's Pizza?
- No sir, it is Google Pizza.
- So, I have the wrong number?
- No sir, Google bought Gordon's Pizza.
- OK. Take my order please.
- Well sir, you want the usual?
- The usual? How do you know me?
- According to your caller ID, the last 12 times, you ordered pizza with cheese, sausage, thick crust ...

- ◀ - OK! OK! That's it.
 - Sir, may I suggest to you this time ricotta cheese, arugula with sun-dried tomatoes?
 - No, I hate vegetables.
 - But your cholesterol is high!
 - How do you know?
 - We have the results of your blood tests for the last seven years.
 - OK, but I want my regular pizza, I already take medicine.
 - But sir, you have not taken your medicine regularly. It was four months ago when you last collected your prescription.
 - I later just bought more from another chemist.
 - It is not showing on your credit card.
 - I paid in cash.
 - But you did not withdraw that much cash according to your bank statement.
 - I have other sources of cash.
 - This is not showing on your last income tax return, unless you got it from an undeclared source.
 - Enough! I'm sick of Google, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp. I'm going to an island without Wi-Fi or internet, where there are no mobile phones or satellites to spy on me.
 - I understand sir, but you need to renew your passport, as it expired five weeks ago!
-

A Message from the Queen

To the citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II:

In light of your failure to nominate competent candidates for President of the USA, and thus to govern yourselves, we hereby give notice of the revocation of your independence, effective immediately.

Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will resume monarchical duties over all states, commonwealths and territories (except North Dakota, which she does not fancy). Our Prime Minister, Theresa May, will appoint a Governor for America without the need for further elections. Congress and the Senate will be disbanded. A questionnaire may be circulated next year to determine whether any of you noticed.

To aid in the transition to a British Crown dependency, the following rules are introduced with immediate effect:

1. The letter 'U' will be reinstated in words such as 'colour,' 'favour,' 'labour' and 'neighbour.' Likewise, you will learn to spell 'doughnut' without skipping half the letters, and the suffix '-ize' will be replaced by the suffix '-ise.' Generally, you will be expected to raise your vocabulary to acceptable levels.

2. Using the same 27 words interspersed with filler noises such as 'like' and 'you know' is an unacceptable and inefficient form of communication. There is no such thing as US English. We will let Microsoft know on your behalf. The Microsoft spell-checker will be adjusted to take into account the reinstated letter 'u' and the elimination of '-ize.'

3. July 4th will no longer be celebrated as a holiday.

4. You will learn to resolve personal issues without using guns, lawyers or therapists. The fact that you need so many lawyers and therapists shows that you're not quite ready to be independent. Guns should only be used for shooting grouse. If you can't sort things out without suing someone or speaking to a therapist, then you're not ready to shoot grouse.

5. Therefore, you will no longer be allowed to own or carry anything more dangerous than a vegetable peeler. Although a permit will be required if you wish to carry a vegetable peeler in public.

6. All intersections will be replaced with roundabouts, and you will start driving on the left side with immediate effect. At the same time, you will go metric with immediate effect and without the benefit of conversion tables. Both roundabouts and metrication will help you understand the British sense of humour.

7. The former USA will adopt UK prices on petrol (which you have been calling gasoline) of roughly \$10 per US gallon. Get used to it.

8. You will learn to make real chips. Those things you call French fries are not real chips, and those things you insist on calling potato chips are properly called crisps. Real chips are thick-cut, fried in animal fat and dressed not with catsup but with vinegar.

9. The cold, tasteless stuff you insist on calling beer is not actually beer at all. Henceforth, only proper British bitter will be referred to as beer, and European brews of known and accepted provenance will be referred to as lager. South African beer is also acceptable, as they are pound-for-pound the greatest sporting nation on earth and it can only be due to the beer. American brands will be referred to as Near-Frozen Gnat's Urine, so that all can be sold without risk of further confusion.

10. Hollywood will be required occasionally to cast English actors as good guys. Hollywood will also be required to cast English actors to play English characters. Watching Andie MacDowell attempt English dialect in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was an experience akin to having one's ears removed with a cheese grater.

God Save the Queen!

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

Contributions for the March newsletter should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **the end of January 2018**.

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

Please try to limit reports 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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The Singing for Pleasure group performing in a recent concert in Buckland Church (photo by Meike Laurenson's sister, Ute Stumpenhause)



Members of the Art Appreciation group who went to see the Giacometti exhibition at Tate Modern in October (photo by Janet Deane)



The eerie light that followed in the wake of Hurricane Ophelia in October
(photo by Mike Thurner)



The Austria trip group on the last day, outside the hotel (photo by coach driver)