



Dorking & District
University of the Third Age

newsletter





**Sissinghurst, visited by the Art Appreciation Group. Photos
by Millicent Lake**

Cover pictures:
Displays in Chichester Cathedral Flower Festival.

Letter from the Chairman

It is said that all good things must come to an end, though we may wish otherwise!

The trip to Berlin in October will be the last residential trip to be led by Jim Docking. Jim began to assist Angela Cooke with the organisation of these trips some years ago and then took over from her when she retired. This is only one of the many services Jim has undertaken for Dorking and District U3A, and we all thank him for the considerable effort he has put into this task. Ianthe Cox will be initiating residential trips in the future, but we shall be emphasising that the responsibility for these trips lies with the travel company and we shall be expecting that participants take turns to be the link between the group and the travel company once a trip starts.



The Singing for Pleasure group, which was formed several years ago by the late Anne Docking, has decided to withdraw from our U3A. Anne assembled a devoted and enthusiastic group of singers, and when she died the group felt very strongly that they wanted to continue in her memory. Many members of our U3A are very saddened by the decision to withdraw, and the Committee hopes to be able to reinstate the group when a new conductor can be found.

From time to time I remind everyone that Dorking & District U3A has a constitution that adheres to the principles of the Third Age Trust and its aim is to provide self-help learning. Above all, our constitution as a registered charity does not permit us to employ anyone. I am aware that there are some misconceptions about this and if anyone needs clarification of this aspect, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Once again I thank everyone who gives time and energy to keeping D&D U3A alive and well – in some cases never saying no to a request, and in many cases what they do for you is invisible. Our U3A would not survive without them.

However, while mentioning survival, we currently have no Vice-Chairman, which means that there is no-one preparing to take on the chairmanship next May.

No Chairman will mean no D&D U3A!

Think about this! Is your U3A sufficiently important to you for you to want it to survive? Please try to identify a member who would be prepared to guarantee its survival, and then let someone on the Committee know!

Doreen

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to the 18 new members, listed below, who have joined since the last issue.

Mr Anthony Bryant
Mrs Janet Carter
Mrs Betty Chase
Mr Chas Cowie
Mrs Anne Crooks
Mrs Mary Dennis
Mrs Frances Gordon
Mr Jonathan Gordon
Mr Geoffrey Harbinson

Mr Ray Lee
Mr Christopher Nicholson
Mr Keith Nielsen
Miss Muriel Passmore
Mr Anthony Pernet
Mr Richard Porter
Mrs Ann Power
Mrs Kim Roberts
Mrs Jennifer Tye

The fact that you have received this Newsletter means you have paid your subscription for 2018/19. Thank you. Your membership is now valid until 31st March 2019.

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

New Editorial Arrangements for the Newsletter

Following a recent meeting of the Editorial Team comprising Doreen Raine, (as Committee Representative) Jim Docking (as Editor), Beryl Sinclair (as Deputy Editor) Caroline Brown (as Events Coordinator) and Bob Brown (as Website Manager), the following was agreed:

- Beryl is responsible for What's On? and Jim for the Newsletter.
- All contributions should be sent to *both* Jim and Beryl who would sort out what should go in What's On? and what in the Newsletter.
- Beryl will email Caroline the What's On? details for the monthly meeting slides.
- Bob would be informed of anything needed to go on the website.
- Deadline dates for contributions would be 31 October (for the winter edition), 31 January (for the spring edition), 30 April (for the summer edition) and 31 July for the autumn edition.
- The Editorial Team would meet in mid-November, mid-February, mid-May and mid-August to approve final proofs.
- There would be three full Newsletters (autumn, winter, spring) with What's On? containing more details of group activities in the summer.

Group News

Philosophy with on-line input

Our group has recently completed a second module based on material from an on-line source and found the experience very well worthwhile.

We followed *The Conscious Mind: A Philosophical Road Trip*, a course from Trinity College, Hartford, CT, hosted by Prof Dan Lloyd. Through a series of video lectures and readings he guided us to explore Phenomenology, the branch of philosophy that explores our conscious living experiences and which underlies Existentialism.

Some found Professor Dan's rather homely style a little disconcerting at first, but we all warmed to his wonderful explorations of the sometimes difficult subject. And the lectures provided ample input to the tutorial sessions we held in participants houses. Often involvement in these discussions was very enlightening and helped our understanding. This was particularly the case after reading some of the original material, written by Sartre and de Beauvoir amongst others.

A little gem I personally took from the course is that no two people ever see the same rainbow. If you find that thought intriguing and you would like to explore this idea, and many others, join us for our next module, on Medical Ethics, which will begin in September, probably lasting until Christmas. Contact details are in the 'What's On' pages.

Geoff Saunders

Our new Committee Members

Caroline Brown

I was born in Carshalton to an Irish father and Austrian mother. I have spent time in Austria so I am bilingual. I had a convent education and my career has been varied from office manager, estate agent and driving instructor. I have also been involved in volunteering over the last fifty years.

I was looking for a photography group and found an appropriate one on the Dorking U3A website. I have always thought the U3A was an excellent idea with the concept of self-learning with like-minded people and the opportunity of developing a new group if you want to.

I have experience of being on Committees. In my last job I was on about thirty and personally quite a few over the last fifty years (diabetes, WI, patient and doctors' panels).

I believe we should have a new members meeting more often than once a

year. At these meetings a slide show like at the monthly meetings would be useful.



Other than photography, my interests include sketching and painting, craftwork, theatre, writing, reading

Bob Brown

Deal in Kent is where I emerged into this world. At the tender age of six, we moved to Burgh Heath where I attended school before going on to Carshalton Technical College for a few 'O' levels.

My working life started in Cheam as an office junior at a structural engineering company. There they tried to educate me further by sending me to Ewell Technical College where I obtained a qualification as a Structural Engineering Technician. Some of the projects I worked on were the Humber Bridge and surveys of St Paul's Cathedral and Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted airports.

After my first wife passed away suddenly, I took up photography to take my mind off her loss. A big mistake: it has taken over my life in tandem with my wonderful second wife. Together we decided to find a photography club that all turned out to be too competitive for us. By chance we stumbled upon Dorking U3A. Shortly after we joined the photography group it grew too large, so we asked to form a second group and took on the role of joint leaders. We had found the perfect group of like-minded photographers.

After a couple of years we were asked if we would like to join the U3A Committee, and after much deliberation we accepted and were elected. With my background in drafting and re-training in computers, graphic design and a course in Photoshop I accepted the responsibility of looking after the U3A website.

When I am not looking after the website or taking photographs, I am a keyholder for Dorking Museum and chairman of the Steering Group for The Friends of Merstham. I also have a very keen interest cricket and rugby. Sometimes I even get a chance to relax with a glass of good beer and my family. Bottoms up!

Austra Harmon

My parents were Latvian refugees who came from Germany after the war. I and my twin sister were born and educated in West Sussex. After gaining A-levels in languages, I switched to Social Sciences and gained my degree at Southampton University. This led to my working for a professional qualification in housing management. For the next 15 years, I worked for a major London housing association in various inner boroughs.



Following the birth of my son, I moved to Brockham and took up a second career as a teaching assistant at the local school where I was also a governor.

I am a Cub Scout leader and Secretary and a Trustee for a local almshouse.

I joined the U3A after seeing how many interesting activities were available. Apart from attending the monthly talks, I have joined the Pilates and Spanish conversation groups.

New Groups

I would like to remind members that four new groups were established very recently and will be developed during the coming months. I would encourage any members who have not already recorded their interest to contact the following for further information:

Writing for Publication

Ken Kelsey (kelsey@talk21.com; 01306 88329)

Writing Family History

Kath Wells (kathleen.a.wells@gmail.com; 01306 884007)

German Conversation

Dorit Moody (doritmoody@outlook.com; 01372 450956)

Card Games

Mike Giles (mibridge@mac.com; 01306 884598)

We would also like to set up the following new groups provided that there is sufficient interest among the membership:

The Life and Works of WS Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan

This group would look at the collaborative relationship of Gilbert and Sullivan, their social milieu and, of course, the Savoy Operas and other music and writing by the pair. It should involve a little

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research by group members from time to time.

The Natural World

This is a vast subject and the group will need to agree an initial focus and subsequent programme. Apart from the fascinating world of mammals, birds, plants and insects, the group might choose to look at the implications of global warming for all of us or the growing threat of plastic waste to wildlife {and all of us}.

We can only set up these new groups if there is sufficient support, so I would invite you to confirm your interest preferably emailing me at eljaysee@ljcartlidge.co.uk or alternatively telephoning 01306 898491. If enough members are interested in the subjects I will proceed with initial meetings to agree the details and formally establish the groups.

Line Dancing Group

Our group is now four years old - four years since our patient teacher Kate introduced us to jazz boxes, scissors, grapevines and coaster steps!

Line dancing benefits us in so many ways. It develops memory, concentration and spatial awareness. Also, according to a recent Public Health England review, dance contributes to muscle strengthening and balance, which are vital for health and future well-being.

So do think of coming to meet our friendly group. There's something for everyone; we learn both easy and more complex dances and there is an ebb and flow of members. Perhaps most importantly, it's great fun and I guarantee you'll leave the hall with your spirits lifted!

Gill Crooks (01306 740062; gukkcrooks1@gmail.com)

Celebrating Current Issues (and its Founding Father)

Artificial intelligence, the UK's north-south divide, space exploration, data and democracy, guns in America, a universal basic income, antibiotic resistance, private finance, the shortage of nurses, and government policy on almost anything. These are some of the topics covered recently in one or other of our Current Issues groups.

Current Issues is probably the oldest of our U3A groups, having been set up at the inception of Dorking U3A in 1990. It was founded by Jim Docking and has been led by him ever since. With a mixture of visiting speakers and 'in-house talent' (often Jim himself) we have enjoyed presentations and discussions on an extremely wide range of subjects – local, national and international, at all times benefitting greatly from Jim's quiet enthusiasm and a careful respect for divergent views.

Jim has consistently given fascinating and well-presented explanations of complex issues. His gift has been to share his joy of open-minded enquiry into new fields, and to promote and provoke amicable discussion to further our understanding – a key U3A objective.

After some 28 years of leading the group, Jim has now decided to step down. This may be in pursuit of a quieter life, or more likely to redirect his talents to his many other interests in Dorking, the U3A and beyond. We hope his knack of teasing clarity out of the unfamiliar will continue to benefit those who attend Current Issues in the future. Andrew Gibbons, previously the understudy, will take on the role of group leader, with Maria Marsh as deputy.

Current Issues 1 offers a friendly atmosphere in which someone presents a topic, often using Powerpoint, followed by (or interrupted by) questions and wider discussion among the group. We meet monthly in Canterbury Court.

For those with an inclination to delve deeper, Current Issues 2 was set up last year and offers round-the-table discussion based on prior reading from a suggested source list. This is an excuse for each session's leader (you?) to research a subject and set out key discussion questions and reading material from which other members can learn their way into the issue – and help the group formulate answers to those questions. Andrew Gibbons is the leader and the group meets monthly at his house.

Both groups welcome new members who are keen to help us learn more about how the world works.

Andrew Gibbons (01306 742650; andrew.gibbons@pobox.com)

As a postscript, since January 2012 our discussions have included: Ofsted inspection, what should be done with garden weeds?, social care of old people, academies, same-sex marriage, racism, obesity, the Olympic Games, climate change, the European Union, charities, food scandals and labelling, GCSE reforms, child poverty in the UK, poverty in Darfur, dairy farming, should Scotland be an independent nation?, overseas aid, garden cities, the law, narcotic drugs, Tanzania, Islamic State, immigration, should Scottish MPs be allowed to vote on English matters?, the Ukraine, the wealth gap, ethical considerations in consumerism, Laos, the European Space Agency, Sierra Leone, the Celtic language, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the EU referendum, Malawi, helping refugees in Dorking, Brexit, should the government revive grammar schools?, detoxing children, Cuba, the General Election, the Air Ambulance Service, the role of a government economist, Catalonia, Chile, the Universal Credit, is space exploration necessary?, vegetarianism, and using antibiotics on animals.

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Geoff Saunders

Flying Club

I am a member of the U3A and Epsom Raddio Flying Club which flies model aircraft on Sundays near Horley and wonder if other members of the U3A would like to form a group. It is good fun and can get one into model building and other skills.

The club would offer three sessions free, and would provide aircraft and tutors to get people going. After three sessions there would have to be a charge to pay for the fuel and upkeep of the field.

David Watney (davidwatney@btinternet.com)

Jazz Appreciation

We have some vacancies and would welcome new members. We meet on the second Thursday of each month from 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

John Brown (01306 886819; vjbrown877@ntlworld.com)

China

Jim Docking describes a recent trip

The first thing to say about the People's Republic of China, which my sister and I visited last May, is that it is huge. It's the third largest country (almost 10 million square kilometres), with 22 provinces and 14 neighbouring countries. Since September 1949, it has been subjected to a Communist regime, originally ruled by Chairman Mao Zedong, whose huge statue in a Beijing park our Chinese guide jokingly invited us to wave to. The diverse landscape comprises deserts, mountain ranges and long rivers.

After an 11-hour flight, our group of 35 started the 17-day tour in Shanghai, a crowded city of skyscrapers each looking much the same. It's the most populous city in the world, with more than 24 million people. Surprisingly, we found that tap water was unsafe for drinking throughout the country, so in the modern and otherwise luxurious hotels in which we stayed (the bathroom toilets were fitted with heated seats!), free bottled water was supplied in every room. In the evening, we took a coach to the centre of the city on the bank of the River Li to see the buildings lit up, often with changing colour – much more interesting than in the daylight. The next day was spent visiting another part of the city by a floral wall on the bank of the river. We visited the Yu Garden, really a series of gardens with pagodas, ponds and rocks (one made of jade).

After two nights, we boarded the Victoria Anna for a four night cruise down the Yangtze, the longest river (3,964 miles) in Asia and the third-longest in the world. The boat had six decks, served by lifts, and two huge restaurants serving buffet meals with plenty of choice. My room was divided into bedroom, bathroom, lounge with TV and a balcony. We didn't sail until the second night. When we did, the hum of the engine lulled you to sleep, but then you woke up when the engine stopped, presumably because sailing conditions were not appropriate or we were waiting at a lock. The trip was frankly uneventful until we reached the impressive three gorges.



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I had been concerned about the food since I do not eat meat, but in the event it was no problem. Breakfast was self-service, with plenty of choice. For lunch and dinner, we sat at three round tables, each seating 12, with a 'lazy Susan' (a large glass turntable), on which staff placed bowls of food with plenty of choice and always a vegetarian option, usually tofu. Beer was always served free, and topped up as required, while water, though also free, had to be asked for!

An itinerary of events on the boat was provided. The first was a talk about the Yangtze River. We then watched a demonstration of painting inside snuff bottles, a skill that went back to the speaker's great-great grandfather. Talks on other days included the Chinese language and the fresh water pearls of China.

On Tuesday 22 May, we disembarked at Changqing (formerly the capital of China), an exercise involving walking across a wobbly platform to cross the river. At the other side, we were faced with a huge flight of steps. Two burly men (unnecessarily) took me by the arms to haul me up – and then demanded money! As I opened my wallet and they snatched a ten pound note – rather an expensive tip! A coach then took us to the ancient Dazu carvings, depicting religious and philosophical symbols dating from the 7th to 13th centuries. The carvings include a huge 31-metre reclining Buddha, a depiction of Buddhist hell and a beautifully gilded 1000-armed Guanyin, the goddess of compassion. Afterwards, we drove back to Changqing to stay overnight at a Hilton Hotel. We then took a bullet train to Chengdu, the capital city of the Sichuan province on the banks where the Jin and Fu Rivers intersect. It's central Tianfu Square still features a giant statue of Mao, to which we were humorously invited to wave.



Nearby is the panda breeding centre, a delightful spectacle of the lazy animals spending all the time eating bamboo shoots and no other food. Here, scientists study and breed both the popular black and white giant pandas and their raccoon-like red cousins. On Friday 25 May we arrived at the simply huge Waterfall Hotel. After a meal at the restaurant, we went on a river cruise; since it was dark, the lit-

up bridges, pagodas, and other buildings look magical. The next day we cruised again, this time for four hours (too long!) on the River Li to Yangzhou, which was crammed with people shopping.

The next day we visited Guilin Fubo Hill Park. This was more like an English park, pleasant by the River Li. This was followed by a visit to a tea plantation, where we were told that white organic tea was the purest and best tea. Subsequently I bought this from Waitrose, though it didn't come loose, as advised, but I find the taste difficult to get used to.

Next was a second internal flight, this time to Xi'an, where we stayed two nights in the 382-roomed Golden Flower Hotel, another luxurious abode. The next morning involved yet another early rise to walk to the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, built in AD 652. We then continued to a big highlight – the Terracotta Army, comprising 8,000 life-size statues of warriors, each with individual facial features and expressions, dating back to the tyrannical Ying Zheng, a thirteen-year-old prince who ascended the throne of Qin (Ch'in) in 247 BC. He had to contend with independent war lords unwilling to recognize one supreme ruler. To unify seven disparate states, Zheng had to use extraordinary force, making many enemies along the way.



For the first time the walls of the former independent states were linked together - and extended - to form the Great Wall. To commemorate his achievements, he took a new name, Qin Shi Huang-Di (pronounced "chin sher hwang- dee"), meaning the First Emperor, a title that lasted 2,000 years. As supreme feudal ruler, Shi Huangdi founded the Chinese imperial system and standardized Chinese writing, laws, coinage, weights and measures. He also imposed harsh laws and cruel punishment for those who disobeyed him.

In the evening, we went to the Tang Dynasty Show, a concert of traditional musical instruments and songs going back over 1,000 years in the Tang Dynasty. The next morning, we climbed up to the 14th century City Wall, dating back to the Ming Dynasty. After lunch in a local restaurant, we took another internal flight, this time to Beijing, where we stayed in the New Century Hotel for our final three nights. Next morning, we visited the simply huge Tuan'anmen Square and walked into the Forbidden City, home of the imperial palaces on the Ming and Qing dynasties for nearly 500 years. The tour included passing through the Gate of Supreme Harmony to the courtyard in front of the Hall of Supreme Harmony, built entirely of wood.

During the afternoon, we were treated to a ride in a cycle-rickshaw, a rather bumpy experience. We met a local lady, who kindly admitted us into her in her house, hung with her own paintings, some abstract, others of Chinese scenes.

Our last full day we visited the Great Wall, which we ascended through several flights of steps and walked a little on it, quite an experience. Most of the wall was built between 221 and 207 BC. Afterwards we travelled to the 18th-century Summer Palace, set in a large park just outside Beijing. It was built as a refuge from the summer heat, and so has cooling features such as Kunming Lake, where we took a trip on a dragon boat. The next morning, early as always, we set off for home and another 11-hour flight.

The Letter

The experts state without a doubt that everything is getting better.

But what about the almost total disappearance of the letter?

Letters to a wife or sweetheart, to a sailor out at sea -

From a soldier in the trenches, from a sad evacuee.

Letters from the anxious parents, to a daughter far away.

Working for a Corporation, so many things they have to say.

Letters from an Oxford student to a friend he knew at school.

Getting used to new surroundings, how his tutor is a fool.

Letters of congratulations, letters telling of a loss.

Problems with a greedy landlord, disagreements with a boss.

How the children won at Scrabble, how they all got lost in fog.

Dad's attempt to cook a pheasant, caught by Rex, the family dog.

Thoughts and feelings, random jottings may be present on the page.

And the sender may reveal his lack of sense, perhaps his age.

Now replaced by text or e-mail, some would say it's just the same.

But for those who love our language this is an outrageous claim.

No more the thrill of getting post addressed to you and you alone.

Confirm your guess, remove the letter, read to find what may be known.

Letters sometimes showed the writer had a strong artistic streak.

Calligraphy, a lost art now that letter writing is antique.

E-mails sent are soon forgotten, tend to be precise and curt.

Destined for a prompt deletion, form no part of History's skirt.

Form no part of family archives, no picture of the social scene.

How will we know in future years just how those normal lives have been?

Letters formed our social fabric, gave a network to our lives.

Mostly gone but not abandoned whilst the Luddite still survives!

Robert Edmondson

Monthly Meetings

The History of Cartoons Since the 17th Century: Ian Keable,, 11 June 2018

Lionel Cartlidge

Ian Keable gave us an expert walk through the history of cartoons and their political and social impact. There are hints of cartoons as far back as Henry VIII but the real beginning of the metier may be attributed to James Ward and a drawing called 'Double Deliverance' produced in 1621.

The precursors of the modern cartoon began with William Hogarth in the early 1700's. We are all familiar with 'A Rake's Progress' and 'Marriage a-la Mode' which illuminated familiar moral and social concerns of the time.

Ian gave us examples from two outstanding artists of the 18th/19th centuries who are still admired today for their sharp, witty political caricatures, namely James Gillray (1756-1815) and George Cruikshank (1792-1878).

Gillray's drawings were published and sold by Hannah Humphrey, his long-term companion, and were often aimed at George III who claimed not to understand them. Perhaps his most famous cartoon, however, is 'Plum Pudding in Danger' in which the world is being carved up into spheres of influence between Pitt and Napoleon.

George Cruikshank inherited the title of the nation's favourite cartoonist. His early work was social caricatures of



English life but he soon moved on to lambasting the Prince Regent (later George IV) and parodying Whigs and Tories alike.

The 1820's began the change from individual published prints to engraving and printing numerous copies giving cartoons wide and inexpensive circulation in magazines and books. It began the development of cartoons as we know them today. Punch Magazine was a major contributor of printed cartoons from 1841 and the line stretches to the present day through Sir John Tenniel, Max Beerbohm, Bruce Bairnsfather, H M Bateman, David Low, Ronald Searle and Giles to Private Eye. They have all cast a refreshingly satirical gaze on our society and our politicians. Long may it continue.

We are grateful to Ian Keable for an enjoyable introduction to a subject about which most of us knew very little.

The Criminal Justice System: John Bowers, 11 July 2018

Suzanne Willis

I was ready to hear about our criminal justice system — an extremely interesting and complex subject. I was therefore perplexed when John Bowers stood in front of us and talked about his life, never once touching on the criminal justice system except to say he had been in jail for 10 years and then an additional five years. He never actually stated what particular crime he had committed.

He reeled off the names of about eight or nine jails, asserting that Dartmoor was 'the hardest'. What had he done to get convicted? If this was the 'hardest' jail, he must have done something extremely serious. Also why was it solitary? He told us that he enjoyed solitary confinement, saying that the accommodation was a smallish room with just a 'wire' bed and a hatch through which his food was passed. The reason he liked solitary confinement was that it 'made his head think'. So we knew he had been to Dartmoor – but not what he had done to get convicted, and why his room was solitary.

Why was he caught again after the first ten years and then sent to the



hardest jail? There were lots of questions that remain unanswered.

However John is now repentant and making good use of his earlier life. He often talks to youngsters at school and tries to put them off the world of crime. He has made it his business to tell the youngsters that they must never start on drugs or crime. Because the talks come from a man who had been in jail and could associate his world with theirs, they take notice of him. I hope he has success and reaches out to even one youngster and turns their thoughts away from crime..

John spoke extremely well and knew where to pause for extra effect. You could hear a pin drop when he had finished.

A very good talk even if it wasn't on the criminal justice system.

Chichester Cathedral's Festival Of Flowers, 31 May 2018

Ann Heaps

On an inauspiciously damp and cloudy morning a coach load of U3A members set off excitedly to visit the Chichester Cathedral biennial Festival of Flowers. This year's was entitled *This Earthly Paradise*.

Rain fell on our downward journey as we were driven over the South Downs but, by the time we were deposited just a short walk through the beautiful bishop's garden from the cathedral itself, it was dry and remained so until just before we picked up our coach for the return journey.

I cannot think of enough superlative adjectives to describe the sights – and sounds – which greeted us in the cathedral. No wonder the festival is held every two years, as the planning and execution showed stupendous effort. The entire cathedral was filled with beautiful blooms in myriad colours with designs planned by four women: Jose Morum-Pound, the chief designer, and her assistants Jane Brickell, Kay Mowlam and Anthea Martin-Jenkins. Many flower arrangers, not to mention those who take the tickets and supply food to the hordes of visitors, all take part. There is even music played to accompany visitors

round: while we were there a delightfully named ensemble called Flooti-Tooti entertained us.

Flower arrangements hung from the ceiling on extremely long cables and all the continents were portrayed in flowers. The *Water of Life* was surrounded with flowers. Three others which particularly caught my eye were entitled *Mistress of Malmaison*, *Vita's Iconic White Garden* and the floral interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. There were arrangements of roses, herbs and vegetables, a tableau dedicated to the early plant hunters entitled *A Dangerous Occupation*, and another made up entirely of plants from the thistle family from all over the world. The Royal Air Force's centenary was marked in another arrangement, and such mundane items as beer, bread, cotton, rubber, spices, sugar, tea, coffee and cocoa all had their commemorative arrangements. Every niche was filled with flowers.

We came away all marvelling at the talented arrangements and the sheer scale of the exhibition. And, of course, the luggage compartment of our coach had a fair number of plants purchased by keen gardeners to adorn their own gardens.

Pictures on cover

Sissinghurst Castle Garden, 3 July 2018

Jenny Ford

Sissinghurst Castle Garden was a perfect choice for a July Day Out and the weather favoured us. Owned now by the National Trust, the property has an interesting history, beginning as a Saxon pig farm and then a moated manor house of which only a small part of the moat remains. A Renaissance courtyard house was subsequently constructed, but after occupation by French prisoners during the Seven Years War (1756-63) much of this was destroyed. Later the tower and some of the buildings were repaired and eventually Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson bought the romantic site and set about creating a garden.

My only previous visit to Sissinghurst was in the springtime when daffodils dominated but on this occasion the garden was at the height of its summer glory. The understandably well-known and beautiful White Garden was a bridal mass of white and cream flowers. However, there are so many other colours and plant combinations on display that there was something to please everyone. We particularly liked the pink and plum flowers and the clematis in full bloom everywhere.



After seeing the lovely old library and almost a surfeit of flowers we walked along the moat to the lakes and returned by way of the kitchen garden. This was a real delight with its rows of healthy vegetables, herbs and sweet peas.

We then had lunch in the restaurant where much of the produce grown in the garden is used. A salad of vegetables was followed by panna cotta with fresh flowers – but we did not eat the marigolds!

There was time for another walk around the flower gardens and, as a bee-keeper's mother, I was pleased to see so many bees at work and know that the National Trust uses no pesticides. We could not leave without buying a plant, and I am now the owner of two unusual penstemons. This was a happy and successful day out.



Dorking & District U3A publishes Newsletter and *What's On?* four times a year in March (spring issue) June (summer), September (autumn) and December (winter).

Contributions for the September newsletter should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **30 July 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.

<i>Editor</i>	Jim Docking Winding Bromley, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey RH3 7DU (01737 843260; newsletter@dorkingu3a.org.uk)
<i>Deputy Editor</i>	Beryl Sinclair (01306 711542; jandbsinclairuk@gmail.com)
<i>Sub-Editor</i>	Michael Docker (01306 501640)
<i>Editorial Assistants</i>	Rosemary Harbridge Meike Laurenson
<i>Distribution</i>	Elizabeth Holmes (01306 884831)
<i>Printer</i>	Eyes Wide Digital, Dorking (01306 875150)