



Dorking & District U3A

Newsletter

July 2020

A Message from Chairman, Tony Parker and the U3A Committee

As lockdown restrictions begin to lift, some groups are reconvening in a small way either in open spaces or in people's homes and gardens, while observing social distancing guidelines. It's difficult to advise how best to get all group members meeting again as medical and government advice is always changing. It's clear that for the time being Monthly Meetings will continue on Zoom as these have attracted a good number of our members and positive feedback from those who have been able to attend.



Again we encourage anyone who would like to share a passion or expertise with others at a Monthly Meeting to approach Caroline Brown (meetings@dorkingu3a.org.uk). You will see that Barrie Friend from the Military History Group will be talking next month (August) about the work he does to trace the life and times of ancestors who took part in the Great War.

Larger groups who were meeting in halls or pubs have expressed concern about the suitability of these venues and we are compiling a list of possible places that they might consider using in the autumn or new year. Many involve fees and strict cleaning routines and are not likely to open for some months yet. However, we will keep Group Leaders informed and are happy to deal with individual enquiries. Contact Beryl Sinclair on 01306 711542 (jandbsinclairuk@gmail.com). In the meantime, please continue checking the D&D U3A website for up-to-date information and keeping safe.

Finally, on **12th August** the Committee will also be holding the **AGM** and papers will be circulated by email and by post. Please respond as this is an important part of our Constitution.

Connecting with People

Art Appreciation 2 have been meeting regularly via Zoom to discuss the impact and contributions made by Impressionists and modern artists such as Banksy to bring about change and rebel against social injustice and a world beset by wars.

In particular members explored the **Land Art** movement of the 60's and 70's reminiscent of the monumental art of the ancients where artworks are created in nature, using natural



materials such as rock, organic materials such as wood, and

water. The movement aimed to reject commercialisation and urbanisation of art by bringing it out of the galleries into the outside world, often in remote sites far from public view. Land art not only popularised rural contexts and environmental conservation, it also promoted spiritual aspirations as embodied by Stonehenge.

But it's the ephemeral and epic art projects of Christo who died in May that captures the imagination. By stepping beyond the canvas into the world he created transient art forms on Australian coasts, Californian hillsides and monumental buildings. His most recent project – the wrapping up of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris has been postponed until autumn 2021 and will be a testament to his monumental genius. (*illustrations: The Spiral Jetty in Utah, Robert Smithson, 1970; The Mastaba on the Serpentine in Hyde Park, Christo, 2018*)

With lockdown restrictions slowly easing, Pat Lucas and Rosemary Hobbs of **Art Appreciation group 1** have identified some opportunities to enjoy Art in the open air as well as online.

One consolation during lockdown has been the exceptionally good weather, and it is now possible to visit National Trust gardens, albeit by pre-booking. The *Sculpture at Wisley 2020* exhibition will remain in place for the rest of the year. There are two other locations for viewing sculpture, both now open with pre-booking required. The nearest is the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden in Ockley and slightly farther afield is The Sculpture Park at Churt, near Farnham.

- The Arts Society has made their lectures available free of charge on www.connected.theartsociety.org/
- The Art Fund has a page of links to exhibitions and virtual tours at British museums which are slowly opening up can be viewed online.
- The Woking Lightbox is reopening with a series of exhibitions including one from October showcasing Raphael's drawings to commemorate the 500th anniversary of his death.
- You can access many interesting programmes on BBC iPlayer on your TV, laptop or tablet. The BBC4 Art web page has links to dozens of previous programmes.

Natural World



Bee Orchid

(photographs by Robert Edmondson)



Trekking in the meadow, West of Dorking



The musk mallow

On June 24th, the hottest day of the year, three hardy U3A members, with me Robert Edmondson as leader, went on a (socially distanced) Natural History walk to the western edge of Dorking. Without going up to the hills we were able to see many wild flowers, including perforate St. John's Wort, dark mullein, Heath bedstraw, black medick, vervain (verbena), the elegant musk mallow and two species of wild orchid (Pyramidal and Bee Orchid).

We also spotted several species of butterfly - Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Marbled White and Small Skipper. Despite the uncomfortable heat it was a varied and successful outing, which may be repeated in July when new species appear.

Merchant Venturers Group

This year is the 400th Anniversary of the sailing of the MAYFLOWER to North America. One of the PILGRIM FATHERS who sailed on her was William Mullins, a shoemaker from West Street, Dorking.

To commemorate this anniversary, the **Merchant Venturers**, have been researching into Dorking residents at the time of the sailing. We are trying to trace families who lived in Dorking at that time and whose descendants are still living in the area 400 years later.

Having looked at Parish and other records along with a visit to the Surrey History Centre in Guildford, the following families may have lived here continuously since the sailing - Collins, Hall, Rose, Simmonds (or Simmons) and Wood. If you think you might know one of these families, we would love to hear from you with any details you can provide, having of course first obtained permission from the family concerned. If you may be one of these families, especially if you have any family history that you would be willing to share with us, do please let us know.

Our intention is to mount a public display in Dorking to mark the anniversary later this year, Government restrictions permitting. Please send us a message – phone Hilda Burden, our Group Leader, on 01737 842516 or email: merchantventurers1620@gmail.com

What did grandfather really do in The Great War?



Recent Great War commemorations have made many turn again to view those sepia photos of grandfather, wonder again why he received those now tarnishing medals and listen in our minds to those retold family stories of war time actions and hardships.

Sadly, too few grandfathers talked about their war, and what was said has been diluted by time, the retelling subtly changing what happened.

Some didn't talk because they felt that withdrawing would block out the horrors experienced, chums lost, and the beastliness of what man does to man. Some thought that no one would be interested about their life in the trenches, others wanting to draw a line under it all and return to 'normality'.

Today many of us, now grandparents ourselves, are curious about what really happened to our grandfathers so that we can understand more fully why we are respecting their memory.

Newly released Great War records, coupled with numerous existing ones, means that for many soldiers a picture of life serving King and country can now be accurately retold. The facts are 'out there.' Finding them remains a challenge but when revealed, the stories are illuminating.

Piping troops over the top meant that the life of too many pipers in the war was tragically cut short. The granddaughter of Piper William of The Cameron Highlanders was confused about the conflicting family stories of her grandfather and wanted clarity about the actions he took part in. Research showed that William had volunteered at Fort George in August 1914, and then had piped his battalion into battle at Loos in 1915, on the Somme in 1916, at Arras in 1917 and later that year at Passchendaele where he was wounded returning to serve to the end of the war. So much of his unknown service has now been unveiled, and his sepia photos have a special place in the family home with accurate stories being told with pride.



The phone call request was clear: "My grandfather was killed in the war at Dunkirk, but I don't know really what happened or where he's buried." Solicitor Noel was 32 when he volunteered to go to war, choosing to serve as an ambulance driver at an officers' private hospital at Le Touquet. When more uniformed men were needed, he joined the newly formed RAF and became involved in the testing of recently developed air to ground radio communication. On one flight from south of Dunkirk, four minutes after taking off, his plane went into an uncontrollable spin killing him and his pilot within sight of The Channel. They are buried next to each other at Dunkirk Town Cemetery. All this was unknown to his grandsons who were able to visit his grave, the only family members to do so, and show their respects.

My **12th August Zoom talk** for our next U3A monthly meeting will give more examples of how newly uncovered facts have been of such comfort to family members and how I approached making these discoveries.

If you would like to learn about your relative's time serving King and country, then I may be able to help. As a military historian and family researcher I have been privileged to help many families fill a gap in their heritage and the response from a recent advertisement in Third Age Matters shows that families want to know where and when grandfather served and exactly what he went through.

Please contact me by phone or through my website which has full details of how I can help. Thank you.

Barrie Friend: 07796 633516 bf-battlefieldtours.co.uk/soldiersrecords.html

MBA MA (First World War Studies)

Member Western Front Association

Member Guild of Battlefield Guides

Leader Dorking U3A Military History Group

D&D Monthly Meeting – Time and Calendars

The date – 8th July; the time – 2.30pm. And again over 60 members Zoomed in to listen to the excellent if at times confusing presentation given by Stephen Tonkin.

Measuring time was impossible to do because it was not a physical concept and therefore in order to do this, humans had to devise methods of calculating the passage of time i.e. the movement of a shadow cast by a burning candle. There could be no agreement on what constant could be used to determine time. Hence days, months and years tended to be based on astrological patterns or rhythms of the moon or sun which would impact on terrestrial events. In the case of the Egyptians the flooding of the Nile meant that the alluvial swell made the land ready for planting and this could be determined at the time when Sirius rose before the sun.



In the case of religious festivals, communities wanted to know on what day sacrifices or celebrations took place. The first calendars were lunar because the moon's phases seemed to tally with the fertility cycle of women and were easy to observe. Lunar calendars were approximately 11 months but were 11 days short of a solar year. The Islamic calendar is also lunar but gains some 3 years over a century. To compensate the Romans tried to add 'intercalary' months to ensure they tied in with the seasons.

The days of the week were based on the cycle of the planets and the moon, thus giving rise to the names we currently have (Monday – moon; Mars – mardi or Tuesday; etc)

The Roman calendar had 304 days invented by Romulus; his successor Numa Pompilius amended this to 354 days. The superstitious Romans disliked even numbers so changed this to 355 days. The Roman year started in March (Mars) and October was therefore the eighth month (hence 'octo') and months retained the numbering system we still have. Again, because the months did not tally with the seasons, the Romans resorted to introducing *intercalary* months, which led to all sorts of confusion.

It was Julius Caesar who realised that the Egyptian calendar based on the movement of the sun gave rise to 30 days in the months, adding 5 days to fill out the yearly cycle. They even had the mythology that tied the calendar cycles together. This led to a lot of confusion but the Greek Sosigenes devised the Julian Calendar which alternated the number of days in each month and looks much like our current calendar. The Gregorian Calendar introduced *centesimal* or leap years in years that are divisible by 400. It was introduced in Britain in 1752 and the start of the year was moved from Lady Day (March 25th) to January 1st, except where agricultural rents were concerned. The 'fiscal year' is also a hangover from when the year started on Lady Day.

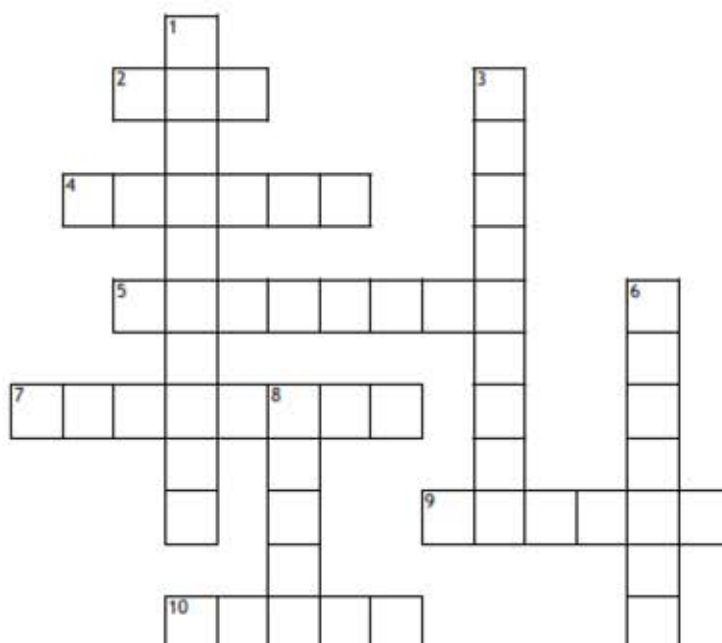
When it comes to defining time, the problem seems to be one of perception and points of view as there are many different ways of measuring time. Having reviewed the theories of **relativistic time** and the **twin paradox**, space and time are approximations that emerge from quantum gravitational fields at large scales that don't really exist.

The conclusion seems to be that without a clear definition of 'what is time' it is best defined by the poets such as Dylan Thomas in Under Milk Wood : "the hands of the



clock have stayed still at half past eleven for fifty years . It is always opening time in the Sailor's Arms." Or the German mystic Angelus Silesius "Time is of your own making, its clock lives in your head. The moment you stop thought, time stops dead".

Time and calendars crossword and quiz: Try your hand at the following quizzes. (solutions are at the end of the Newsletter).



Across

2. Animal of the Chinese New Year 2020.
4. Name given to the shadow-casting object on a sundial.
5. Type of clock invented by Christiaan Huygens in 1656.
7. Study of measuring time and time-keeping devices.
9. European city famous for its astronomical clock.
10. Number of days by which the solar year exceeds the lunar year.

Down

1. SI unit of time equal to one billionth of a second.
3. Eleventh month of the French Republican calendar (1793-1805).
6. Solar system planet where a day is two years long.
8. Type of watch first worn on the Moon in July of 1969.

- 1) 'Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so!' is a line from which book?
- 2) In **Great Expectations** by Charles Dickens, Miss Havisham has all the clocks in her mansion frozen at precisely what time?
- 3) Often known as 'The first American' who is thought to have first said: 'Time is money'?
- 4) Who composed *The Symphony No. 101* known as 'The Clock' because of its ticking rhythm?
- 5) Who said: 'Time spent with cats is never wasted'?
- 6) The Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar in Great Britain in which year?
- 7) Which English carpenter and clockmaker invented the Maritime Clock in the early 18th century?
- 8) The ancient Babylonians, Greeks and Jews all used a variant of this calendar and it has been used in China since at least the Shang Dynasty, around the 14th century BC.
- 9) Which invention made it necessary for English towns and cities to introduce a nationwide standard time instead of local times?
- 10) How many years are there in a gigaannum?
- 11) Rounded to the nearest minute, how long does it take for sunlight to reach the earth?



During the happy times BC (Before COVID), I was quite the traveller. It had been my habit to spend one week in four travelling, often with my lady love, otherwise alone. It's now been fifteen weeks since I was last away from home. In this millennium, I have never spent anything like this amount of time at home! Am I feeling bereft? Absolutely. I spend far too many hours dreaming of travels, tentatively making plans only to see them crumble. Early on in lockdown I looked at what might be possible in the way of adventure, staying within the rules and staying safe.

Exercise once a day was the advice. But there seemed little compulsion to limit the time spent exercising. Could 'once a day' mean all day? On a bicycle there is little opportunity for close encounters with others. By the nature of the exercise, cycling alone, you are naturally socially distanced. Much more so than a visit to the supermarket. My electric bike beckoned; horizons widen as the hills flatten under the power of a full battery.

Feeling the call of the sea I worked out a route to the coast at Shoreham. Quiet roads led to and through Horsham from where the Downs Link, a disused railway, continued through a gap in the South Downs to the coast. The few people I passed posed no problem and I was delighted to eat my sandwiches virtually alone on the pebble beach, then head home. So here was a new option for adventure. But an adventure repeated quickly ceases to be an adventure, and as others took to their bikes and sought out the sea, the beach became less appealing. I needed new challenges.

There are several routes through the South Downs to the coast, but apart from the Downs Link, they are consumed by main roads. But electric powered legs on a mountain bike no longer need to follow the easy routes. There are many bridleways up to the crest of the Downs, allowing an almost gentle run down to the coast. The famous South Downs Way along the northern ridge provides a link between these hilly tracks and is itself a decent challenge. So, my adventures now consist of finding new, quiet routes to and over the Downs, sometimes loops that include parts of the South Downs Way, and sometimes fish and chips! With the help of a good cycle planning website (cycle.travel), there are a wealth of such journeys to make. It's quite a thrill to emerge from a wooded laneway in the Weald to the sight of the Downs soaring from the plain, an imagined Sussex Himalaya reaching for the clouds. No snow-capped peaks, unless you really let your mind play tricks, but a real challenge none the less. After a period of whirring legs, purring motor and alarmingly dropping battery levels, you emerge at the summit, breathless, but rewarded by the views, north to the wooded Weald, south over the sweeping fields to the sea, east and west inviting crests of the Downs. A challenge completed. Now it's just a question of getting home.



Geoff Saunders

Answers to crossword:

Across: (2) rat; (4) gnomon; (5) pendulum; (7) horology; (9) Prague; (10) epact (Latin: *epactae*, from Greek: *epaktai hēmerai* = added days).

Down: (1) nanosecond; (3) Thermidor; (6) Mercury; (8) Omega.

Answers to quiz:

(1) *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (by Douglas Adams); (2). Twenty minutes to nine (the time she received a letter of rejection on her wedding day); (3) Benjamin Franklin; (4) Joseph Haydn; (5) Sigmund Freud; (6) 1752; (7) John Harrison; (8) *A lunisolar calendar* - the date indicates both the Moon phase and the time of the solar year; (9) The invention of rail travel; (10) One billion; (11) 8 minutes (8 minutes 20 seconds).