



Issue 52
April 2013

North London University of the Third Age

Newsletter

An education

Schools would achieve more success if they were run on U3A principles, said Eric Midwinter at the first ever Founders' Lecture on 9 April. To accompany this event, members nationally were invited to compare their own school and U3A experiences for a publication on this theme. Here we print two contributions from North London U3A members

Who fails?

While I did not suffer any physical brutality during my school days, there was plenty of it around. I have always considered any form of corporal punishment, still prevalent when I started teaching in the 1950s, as one of the worst forms of child abuse. How education got involved with it is a matter of continued astonishment and the same goes for the other horrors of my school days – competition, failure, so-called bright pupils, the 11 plus examination (which I failed), compulsory games and PE, detention, writing lines, being kept down for a year ... the list is endless.

Years later I read about AS Neill and Summerhill and got as far as applying to teach there, but this private enclave was never the whole answer. Dimly I began to envisage a system of education which would lead out, encourage the articulation of the developing

child's experience of the world. It would be an invitation to learn as in the purest Montessori model and, if made joyous enough, would be one that would be almost impossible to refuse. The few occasions in my school days when learning was joyous are not to be confused with easygoing, slapdash study. My secondary school had

'I have always considered any form of corporal punishment ... as one of the worst forms of child abuse.'

no sixth form. No-one we knew had gone on to post-school education. I can remember my mother looking at me and asking 'What are we going to do with him? It will have to be clerking.'

But one of my failures – maths in the School Certificate ex-

amination – was a lucky one. Younger teachers were coming back from war service and they persuaded six of

us to stay on to attempt Higher School Certificate. I was a problem as with no maths I could not matriculate, but someone came up with the idea of me starting Latin at that level. The history teacher took me on and we met in a store cupboard. Hard, hard work but what a joy!

It must have been during those years that the notion of our University of the Third Age took root. Learning Latin was offered – I accepted. The two of us in the cupboard were hardly the learning 'circle' which is the ideal of our university but sometimes the



Keith Richards

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contact was so alive a person looking in would have found it hard to distinguish teacher and learner. As I write, the present secretary of state for education seems intent on bringing back many aspects of

a system in which few can succeed and many fail. I look back upon all of us who were told officially that we were 'no good', 'dim', even 'backward' and give thanks that there is one element of the education system, larger than Summerhill, which has slung the whole

guilt thing out of the window. Whenever anyone kindly apologises for not attending a U3A session I hope others go, like me, to Jane Austen's Mansfield Park: 'Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery'. ❧

KEITH RICHARDS

Out of control

My junior high school maths teacher believed in rigid discipline. When doing our homework, we had to draw two straight horizontal lines under each problem. In between them we had to insert the answer, preceded by 'Ans.,' and a space. If any of these elements were missing – the full stop or the space, for example – we were punished with 'zero – no homework', no matter how brilliant our calculations were.

Teachers had varied methods of control – the primary school teacher who shouted at us if we ever placed anything on top of the Bible; the woman who shamed me so much for losing my 'good citizen' badge that when I lost it a second time, I didn't dare confess. Despite the virtues of democracy being constantly extolled to us, we were powerless to challenge any of this.

Such methods of control are not restricted to adults over children: I've been bullied at work by empire-building bosses and I once had an evening class instructor whose fury was apparent when anyone tried to question the

content of her lessons, which she hadn't updated for over 10 years.

It would be facile to say that this kind of thing never takes place in the U3A, but I have not experienced it. In contrast, I have found learning in U3A delightful. Far from considering themselves superior, group coordinators are dedicated to ensuring that the groups they facilitate function for the benefit of all. They work for the good of the group and not to boost their egos.

We resolve problems through discussion and suggestion. In our instrumental ensemble, we were unhappy with the choice of music and the seating arrangements, so we summoned the courage to ask if these could change – and with no fuss or hurt feelings, they were.

In a reading group, when the facilitator was becoming overwhelmed by having to constantly choose what to read, we sat down together and drew up a list. And when our singing group was confronted with the loss of an irreplaceable conductor, we reorganised into a collective in which everyone was free to select songs to sing (or not – that's another of the beauties of U3A) and anyone who felt able to

could conduct.

I attend U3A groups to im-



Helen Green

prove my skills, acquire new ones and, as a bonus, make friends in the process. I now play the violin, which I had abandoned as a child, to Grade 5 standard; I have learned to play the ukulele, and I satisfy my love of acting with play-reading. Two of my biggest fears when I retired were dealing with unstructured time and coping with loss of professional identity. I now fill the days with enlightening activities, and I contribute my former work skills to our newsletter. And I can honestly say that U3A is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. ❧

HELEN GREEN

Welcoming new members

New members' meetings, which take place in members' homes, are a chance for those who have recently joined to find out more about North London U3A, make new acquaintances and meet some committee members.

If you would like to attend either of these, please telephone Sue Teller on 7609 5172 a few days beforehand so that the hosts know how many to expect.

Area	Date	Time	Host
East Finchley N2	Tuesday 21 May	10.30am	Peter Cox
Finchley N3	Tuesday 18 June	10.30am	Barbara Kushner

The learning age

Thanks to three visionary men over 25 years ago, we now benefit from an organisation that constantly presents us with innovative learning experiences, new friendships, and fun, says North London U3A's Chairman, **Janet Home**

How fortunate we are that back in the last century (1982!) three men decided to introduce to the UK an idea originating in France: people in their third age did not want to sit back and grow old, but hungered to learn, learn and learn. And they wanted to do it for enjoyment.

One of those men, Eric Midwinter, is very much alive and by the time you are reading this will have given the first U3A Founders' Lecture. Some of you will have heard him when he spoke to our monthly meeting in June last year.

Our founding triumvirate could not have foreseen with what variety our University of the Third Age has developed. At the time of writing this, I have just returned from a U3A London Region visit to Aix-en-Provence for a music festival. This typified the spirit of U3A as a learning experience which is also a great pleasure.

A group of third-agers, most of whom had not met each other before, spent a wonderful few days attending superb concerts, hearing lovely music – some familiar and some new to many of us – and at the same time dredging up what we could of the French we had learnt long ago and bravely trying it out on the natives. We also picked up – or revised – French history in our visits to Avignon and Arles, and visited museums and art galleries, as well as the nature reserve La Camargue.

The remarkable thing is that, because we are all members of this wonderful organisation, we can quickly be at ease with people we have only just met. It's rather like a school reunion, as we have plenty in common, but also plenty of differences in the way our individual U3As function, so there's always a lot to talk about.

By the time you are reading this, I very much hope that we

shall be seeing – and feeling – something of spring, and no longer wearing winter woollies and needing our central heating, as I am while writing. Our summer term is just starting and the summer weather will surely come soon, and with it the summer programme. This will go ahead again this year, with three members who have volunteered to take over the idea which Ruth Mendick had over five years ago and which she and the late Barbra Landes organised.

I am thrilled that my pessimism that no one would take over was completely unfounded and feel sure that you will give Kathy, Christine and Annie – the new summer programme organisers (picture on page 18) – your support during the summer programme. And look out for the summer programme brochure, which will be sent out in June. ☘

Monday mornings at St Paul's

Are women human?

In February, Janet Swinney, a volunteer with Womankind Worldwide, spoke at North London U3A's monthly meeting about the status and rights of women today. **Sarah Wrightson** describes this NGO (non-governmental organisation), which works in some of the poorest countries helping women improve their lives

When it was founded in 1989, Womankind Worldwide focused on poverty, but it now appreciates that women's issues are more complex. In no country in the world do women enjoy the same rights or opportunities as men. Every day women and girls face discrimination, poverty and violence just because they are female.

This charity, which works with individuals, communities and national governments, aims to promote equality, security, respect and pride for all women. Their starting point was the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 1:

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

Ms Swinney gave examples of discrimination. The lack of birth registration in some countries makes it impossible to prove a child's age, and this makes it difficult to prevent child brides. Her statistics showed that 70 per cent of women and children worldwide live in poverty, and 67 per cent of illiterate adults are female. Twice as many boys as girls attend school. Women are subject

to physical abuse at home, in their communities and in war zones. The United Nations has outlawed female genital mutilation, but some countries still turn a blind eye to its practice. In Iran, female education has been set back by a recent ruling that women can no longer attend many degree courses because they are now thought to be unsuitable for females.

As a result of working with 40 local partners in South America, Africa and Asia, Womankind Worldwide can report some progress. In the 2012 Olympics, for the first time, women were represented in all national teams. In Zimbabwe, women's groups persuaded their government to take account of their rights in their new constitution. However, rights are always in flux. In Ethiopia, child motherhood results in low life expectancies for both mother and infant. One programme encourages girls to resist family pressures and say 'no' to early marriage, and this has improved the children's health and literacy. In Bolivia, the indigenous people



In Zimbabwe Grace was helped to escape her violent husband by a Womankind Worldwide partner. Go to www.womankind.org.uk for the story.

are marginalised, mistreated and 86 per cent illiterate. Womankind Worldwide's local partner broadcasts programmes in their languages, thereby increasing their knowledge and understanding. In Afghanistan, an additional problem is lack of security. Women are being educated and trained to be counsellors or paralegals so that they may defend themselves within an ineffective judicial system.

Womankind Worldwide makes use of grassroots movements to disseminate good practice and research, and to network and lobby governments on behalf of the more vulnerable half of their populations.

This thought-provoking lecture showed that such initiatives deserve much more publicity and support in the West. ❧

Plants and climate change

During its 4,500-million-year history, our planet has experienced many changes of climate, resulting in diversification in flora and fauna. Today, much climate change has been brought about by human activity, and scientists are struggling to mitigate some of its most devastating effects. **Margaret Kennedy** describes a lecture by Professor Jeff Duckett, emeritus professor of botany at Queen Mary, University of London, and North London U3A member

Climate changes are caused by such factors as alterations in the Earth's orbit round the sun, UV radiation and variations in the amount of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the atmosphere. For the first 3,500 million years, Earth had no oxygen. Then microbes began to form in the seas, followed by multicellular bacteria; these developed symbiotic relationships by which carbon dioxide was transformed into carbohydrates, and this released oxygen into the atmosphere. Plants evolved from simple stems to complex forms over millions of years.

Because plants need nutrients and a water supply to live on land, they developed water-conducting tissues called stomata. In the Carboniferous period, about 350 million years ago, the oxygen content of Earth was 30 per cent higher than today and a giant species of fernlike plants evolved. However, in the following Permian period, extreme volcanic activity destroyed the ozone layer and caused glaciers to extend towards the equator, so that the earth was frozen. But plants adapted. As the atmosphere warmed, grasslands developed in the drier climate of the Miocene period 125 million years ago. Trees were coniferous, with needle leaves. Only in the warm Cretaceous period, 70 million years ago, after the

extinction of the dinosaurs, did plants develop broad leaves and flowers, and insects evolved to pollinate them.

At the end of the last ice age, 10,000 years ago, Britain had a tundra climate, with much sphagnum

bog. This contains 6 per cent carbon and methane, and now its extraction as peat is contributing to global warming. Today in Britain there are signs of climate change; plants which 25 years ago were only to be found on the south coast are spreading all over the country.

Now, cutting down tropical rain forests will lead to a decrease in oxygen and an increase of CO₂ in the atmosphere. At the same time, increasing desertification of the savannah grasslands and subsequent crop failures is leading to worldwide food shortages. There is some hope, if crops can be genetically engineered to withstand drought. Scientists have discovered that certain crops, such as maize and millet, which origi-



A worker at the International Rice Research Institute prepares seedlings at a research centre south of Manila, in the Philippines.

Photograph: Darren Whiteside/Reuters

nated in the savannah grasslands eight million years ago, and can flourish in hot, dry conditions and poor soil, have developed a form of carbon compound known as C₄, as opposed to the more usual C₃. These are much more drought-resistant. Scientists are now trying to genetically engineer rice to be a C₄ plant. If they could increase its yield by 50 per cent and grow it in drier conditions, it would save much of the world's population from starvation.

Finally, ash dieback disease is not due to climate change. It may be wind blown, or imported on plants, animals or people. Research is needed to find disease-resistant trees, and a breeding programme established to regenerate our woodlands. ❧

Iris Murdoch and Zen Buddhism

Iris Murdoch, a philosopher as well as a distinguished novelist, found a transcendental meaning for her life by means that contrasted with those of Zen Buddhism. **Douglas Barnes** reports on a talk that explored the contrast

What is our place in an apparently purposeless universe? How can we find meaning in life without referring to a transcendent deity? These were the challenging questions posed by our March speaker, Anne Bancroft, author of *Women in Search of the Sacred*. She offered two ways of answering, as implied by the title of her address, 'Iris Murdoch and Zen Buddhism', though the two approaches had much in common.

Both sought sense and unity within human experience, but experience freed from anxiety, fabrication and self-deception. We must go beyond ourselves to accept the world in all its uncertainty. Iris Murdoch, as philosopher, not novelist, found that it was beauty – perhaps the beauty

of a hovering kestrel seen by chance through a window – that enabled her to transcend self and find meaning in acceptance of the world as it is.

Zen Buddhism has no creed or dogma but encourages us to leave the mind 'spaciously open'. We should be awestruck at the paradox that we who are no more than things – physical structures – are nevertheless able to be conscious. Zen urges us to see things for themselves and not for ourselves. Those who, freed from fantasy and illusion, are dumbstruck at the that-ness of the world are in a state of grace.

Abbreviated in this manner the ideas seem ethereal and hard to realise, but the relevance and edge of the questions asked by members showed that they had engaged se-

riously with them. Anne Bancroft's gentle calm, even in the face of



problems with audibility, was itself a recommendation for the Zen approach, which she preferred. We are fortunate to have her as a member of our U3A. 🌿

Monthly meetings organiser

The new organiser of monthly meetings is **John Hajdu**, who joined U3A in 2007 and the committee in 2012. He says: 'The members' meetings are an important part of what North London U3A is about. As well as providing an opportunity to hear interesting speakers on almost every subject imaginable, they are a fantastic forum for members to chat and get to know each other. I am therefore delighted, if a little daunted, to have been asked to take on this job, and I shall do my best to live up to the standards of those who have done it so admirably in the past.'

- If you would like to help with any of the tasks involved in this, including administrative work and preparing the hall, please contact John: 8883 8114, hajdu.clarion@talk21.net



For art's sake

A dozen U3A members, three from North London, recently catalogued little-known art works for a shared learning project* with King's College London. Participant Richard Callanan describes the project

It's a thrill to hold in your own hands original drawings by Jean Cocteau, Duncan Grant, Feliks Topolski and Joan Miró. This was one of the perks of working on a recent shared learning project at King's College London, where we researched a small collection of art works that had accrued around a little arts magazine called *Adam International Review*. In the group of 12 researchers there were three of us from North London U3A, the other two being Mary Callaghan and John Wosner.

Adam International Review was edited by Miron Grindea, a Jewish Romanian who arrived in London at the outbreak of World War II. As soon as paper rationing permitted he revived the magazine, which he had previously edited in Bucharest. When he died in 1995 he was working on the 500th edition of the magazine – an extraordinary achievement that he accomplished by his own efforts and those of his family and volunteers, and without any paid staff.

Among the contributors were GB Shaw, Arthur Koestler, TS Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Graham Greene, HG Wells and Maureen Duffy. Grindea seems to have extracted articles from all of them without payment.

After Grindea's death, King's College bought his papers and correspondence, and among them was this miscellaneous collection

of 47 images. Over the years the forceful Grindea had collected many incidental works of art. Many had been created by prominent Slovenian and Romanian artists whose work is not well known here. Some were line drawings and cartoons submitted for publication; some were personal greetings; others were gifts from friends who appreciated his dedication to the arts. There are some whose presence in the collection remains a mystery. Our task was to identify as many as we could and add annotations to guide future researchers. The fruits of our work will become part of the King's College online catalogue and a small exhibition at the college next October.

Among the illustrations is a strange doodle, an elaborate pen drawing of an abstract maze and labelled a 'psychic drawing' It was by 'Beatrice Hastings', which, I discovered was, with 'Alice Morning', one of the pen names of Emily Alice Haigh, an English poet, novelist, feminist and critic. She had chosen to stay among the Left

Bank artists in Paris during the first World War and was, during 1916 and 1917, a mistress and model to Modigliani. He portrayed her in 14 major paintings. There were also several pen and ink drawings of her, two of which were first published in *Adam International Review*. They were published after Modigliani's early

death and may have been given to Grindea by Hastings herself, but we have no direct evidence for that. Her relationship with Modigliani had been tempestuous and fuelled

by alcohol and drugs. He described her as 'the English poetess who gets drunk on her own on whisky'. She described him after their breakup as 'a pig and a pearl'. They often came to blows. In one incident he threw her out of a window. On another occasion he hurried to a male friend for consolation gasping, 'Elle m'a mordu aux couilles!' (One of our French groups might like to set that as translation homework?)

Beatrice Hastings returned to England and lived and wrote in Brighton, where she died in 1943.

* Shared learning projects are research projects that are proposed by either an institution or U3A members and culminate in a published work.



Beatrice Hastings in Front of a Door, Amedeo Modigliani, 1915

Spring greetings from groups organiser Patricia Isaacs

Dear members,

A warm hello after the chilly months to all our members. I'm writing this on a murky March morning but, ever the optimist, my glass is half full, with hope for better days to come. Here is some current news on a few of our many thriving groups.

A few coordinators are looking for more members; if you are interested in any of these excellent groups please contact the group leader: details are on the website. The groups are: Chess (Daphne Berkovi), Dance (Sarah Crosby), and Reading in Translation (Miriam Mazower), and they would all be delighted to hear from you.

One of our long-standing members, experienced in leading groups, has suggested a great idea for an autumn group; the idea follows the monthly meeting talk in March by Anne Bancroft on Zen and Iris Murdoch (see article on page 7). Josephine Zara would like to lead a group discussing the writings of Iris Murdoch – her novels and her philosophical writing. If anyone is interested please let me know and I'll arrange a get-together with Josephine during the summer.

The European Union is an issue constantly in the news, and starting in September we will have a group where all relevant matters will be discussed. This will be based on fact-finding rather than opinions; information will be on the website and in Update nearer the time, and it will be listed in the interest groups booklet, which

all members will receive in August.

The website is updated regularly with new information on groups, so please make a regular check of the groups listings; it's the quickest and easiest way to find out what's going on in North London U3A. Queries should be directed to the group coordinator in the first instance, or to me or any of my team – all contact details can be found on the website or in the interest groups booklet.

London Architectural Study Group – Joanne and James Crawford have been leading this immensely successful group since 1998! They have arranged more than 140 visits and the group is still active and popular. Now Joanne and James are going to retire after their long and valuable service to North London U3A, and we owe them a massive vote of thanks. They are looking for someone, or, ideally, a small team, to take over from them before the end of the summer term. This group would be perfectly suited to two or three people coordinating it, and the Crawfords would be pleased to give advice and practical help to get new leaders started. Anyone interested in architecture and keen to keep the group on its feet should phone Joanne or James on 8348 6531 or email them at jjpcrawford@blueyonder.co.uk

One final word, and it's an important one. This is a special plea to all group coordinators. Please ensure that you actually see a membership card for every one of



your group members at the beginning of each term, showing that the current subscription has been paid. If a member joins you mid-term, please ask at once to see the membership card. All membership numbers should be noted on your register – and do please keep a register! This may sound a little bureaucratic but it's not too hard a task, and please believe that it is really essential. To use a cliché: 'Thank you for your cooperation!'

It's heartening to know that all of you get so much pleasure from the groups you join, as I do, and I feel confident that this will continue. We have over 100 groups, so make the most of them! There are some truly interesting monthly meetings planned for the months ahead, and I hope to meet more of you at some of these. Enjoy the weeks ahead: spring flowers, budding trees, birdsong and, we hope, some sunny weather.

Very best wishes from the groups organiser team.

Patricia✿

Group updates

Chess

Chess may have its serious side, but it can also be great fun, as members of the North London U3A chess group demonstrate by their comments:

‘Enjoyed the workshop yesterday, both the game and the time with the demo board, which helped tie together the theory with the practice – better for understanding and to remember.’

‘I liked the way Adam (Adam Raof, home chess director at the English Chess Federation) talked to us afterwards about our games.’

‘We all learned a lot more, and Adam was very easy to get on with.’

‘I enjoyed looking at the “mating nets” and working out what was happening. We had a good deal of discussion and I learned new things.’

‘We were set a couple of checkmate exercises to do, which I found fascinating (gave my brain a good workout too)! Adam is very enthusiastic and encouraging.’

We welcome new members, so whether you are



a complete beginner or have some experience, do come along and join our friendly group, which provides skilful guidance and an opportunity to meet new people.

We meet fortnightly at St Mary’s Church, Hendon Lane, Finchley N3 on Wednesday afternoons from 3.30 to 5.30pm.

Contact Daphne Berkovi, the group coordinator: 8455 7558 (after 6pm, please), or milly1915@btopenworld.com

Bridge

The **Beginners’ Bridge** group now meets in lovely premises in Trees, a sheltered housing block of flats in Highgate. We have beginners, improvers and quite competent players – up to five tables, and it is a very enjoyable afternoon. We meet on Wednesdays from 1.30 to 3.30pm, and I really need another confident player to help me run the group.

Contact Elsa Shamash: 8348 8965, elsa.shamash@gmail.com

Drama

Plans are going ahead to set up a North London U3A drama group. An exploratory meeting will be held in the summer on Wednesday 24 July from 10am to 12 noon, at Finchley Progressive Synagogue, 54 Hutton Grove, N12 8DR.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the format of the group and for ideas and suggestions to be shared. At this meeting we will have a guest who will share his experience of setting up and running a very successful ‘am dram’ society.

All those interested are invited to come to this meeting.

For more information or to book a place, contact Paul, 07810 128 254, angelapaulwharton@yahoo.co.uk

Poetry

Poetry Appreciation and Creative Writing has had an enjoyable taster session reading poems and writing haiku. If you would like to try this out there will be another taster meeting on Wednesday 17 April.

Contact Lis Vandyke: 8349 4705, lis.vandyke@sky.com

Understanding the EU

The preliminary meeting of this new group will be held in the second week of June, and all those who have expressed an interest in the group will be asked which of several dates would be convenient. The group will run from September until summer 2014 and the purpose of the preliminary meeting is to agree the method of working and frequency of meetings. Details are on the website (www.nlu3a.org.uk).

Contact Peter Rockwell: 8445 3574, email peter@rockwell.net if you have not yet expressed an interest and would like to.

Arts and crafts group Summer exhibition and sale

Thursday 27 June 10.00am – 3.30pm at
Cranley Dene Court, 152 Muswell Hill
Road, N10 3JH.
Easy access by bus routes 43 and 134, some
parking nearby in Cranley Gardens or
Woodland Rise.

Faraway days

Anglesey Abbey and Newmarket (use Booking Form 1)



Date: Thursday 9 May, 9.30am sharp
Pick-up point: East Finchley tube station forecourt
Coach fare: £19.50 – including tip to driver
Admission: £9.35 – non-National Trust members
Free – National Trust members (bring your NT card)

Booking opens: 28 March
Booking closes: 24 April

The house and gardens of Anglesey Abbey stand on the site of an early 12th century Augustinian Priory, last rebuilt in the early 20th century when the Broughton brothers purchased the estate. The Broughtons' wealth came from the American mining and railway industries as well as through inherit-

ance. This fortune allowed the elder brother, Huttlesstone Broughton, to create the extensive 18th-century-style landscape garden that surrounds the house today.

We should particularly enjoy the spring garden, but the wildflower meadows and winter walk will also be worth a look. The house itself has reopened after a thorough clean and the Lode Mill is worth a visit to see an 11th-century water-mill in action. Anglesey Abbey is a National Trust property, so be sure to bring your membership card (if you

have one) to save the group admission cost of £9.35. There is a café/restaurant there. The land is essentially level.

Newmarket, on the way to Anglesey Abbey, has been linked with horse racing for centuries, and one of the attractions there is the National Horse Racing Museum; there are proposals that Newmarket should become a UN World Heritage Centre. The town also provided a centre for the painting of horses from the early 18th century. Newmarket is a market town and provides an early lunch stop.

Contact: Melvyn Rees: 8446 3029, 07903 456 385, melvyn.tymel@gmail.com

Waterperry Gardens and Abingdon (use Booking Form2)



who designed them. The gardens are not huge.

We should see the gardens at their seasonal best in June. Unfortunately, Waterperry House, which contains the UK's largest contemporary fresco, is not open to us. A teashop can provide refreshments or a light lunch. The gardens are mostly flat with easy access.

Abingdon, our morning stop, was already inhabited in the Iron Age. It used to be the county town of Berkshire but has been supplanted by Reading, partly

because it failed to fully embrace the railway in the 19th century.

Abingdon is a historic town with connections to William the Conqueror and Henry I. Main features are the 17th century county hall, now a museum, and the 15th century Abingdon Bridge over the River Thames. There are also ruins of the dissolved Abingdon Abbey. Abingdon provides an early lunch stop before we move onto Waterperry.

Contact: Melvyn Rees: 8446 3029, 07903 456 385, melvyn.tymel@gmail.com

Date: Thursday 13 June, 9.30am sharp
 Pick-up point: East Finchley tube station forecourt
 Coach fare: £19.50: includes tip to driver
 Admission: £5.00 per person
 Booking opens: 2 May
 Booking closes: 29 May

Waterperry Gardens, or Waterperry School of Horticulture (for Ladies), was founded in 1932 by the formidable Beatrix Havergal (1901–1980). About eight miles east of Oxford, the gardens show a great variety of different styles. Some of the individual gardens remain as laid out by the students

Anglesey Abbey & Newmarket Outing Booking Form 1

How many people are you booking for? Send £19.50 for each National Trust member and £28.85 for each non-National Trust member.

Return this form with your cheque made payable to **North London U3A** to:
Melvyn Rees, 20 Hemingford Close, London N12 9HF

Name	Telephone	Mobile	NLU3A membership no	Tick if NT member

Waterperry Gardens and Abingdon Outing Booking Form 2

How many people are you booking for? Send £24.50 for each person coming. Return this form with your cheque made payable to **North London U3A** to:

Melvyn Rees, 20 Hemingford Close, London N12 9HF

Name	Telephone	Mobile	NLU3A membership no	Tick if NT member

Note from Melvyn Rees

For both outings, we set out from East Finchley tube station forecourt, at 9.30am sharp.

U3A and Hill Homes Foundation

Hill Homes Foundation is a newly established small charity whose mission is to improve the lives of older people living in Haringey and surrounding boroughs. Our aim is to create a vibrant community hub at Trees, an award-winning extra care scheme for older people in Highgate.

We offer opportunities for local older people to take part in activities, classes and social events, including arts and crafts, gardening, exercise and discussion groups. Many of our activities are facilitated by volunteers and we are always looking for people to join our team.

Working with like-minded organisations is key to our success. We welcome other community groups and organisations to host classes, courses and events. We started hosting North London U3A groups at the beginning of the year and current groups include Women and Wisdom, Patchwork, History of America and Bridge.

Do you have skills or passions you would like to share with others? Could you be-



friend an older isolated person? We are looking for volunteers to help with gardening, arts and crafts, computer skills, archiving, music appreciation and games.

To volunteer or for more information, please contact Adie Cresswell, activities and development coordinator, 8347 3684, adie.cresswell@hillhomesfoundation.co.uk ☎

Call to the wild?



Foxes are such delightful, intelligent and interesting creatures. Once from my window

I saw a big adult fox about four feet away which held my regard in an almost hypnotic manner for several seconds. Its beautiful large yellow eyes seemed to say: 'I can see you also!' Then, almost as an afterthought, it rushed at the fence and climbed over it in a hectic manner.

On the radio one morning in February, it was announced that another child, a four-week old baby in Bromley, had been dragged from its cot by a fox. The child's mother arrived in time

to prevent it from being carried away. Evidently one of the baby's fingers had been severed, but fortunately, surgeons were able to sew it back.

Why do such wild creatures venture more and more into human habitation? Could it be the misplaced love of some adults who feed foxes, thus encouraging them to associate this feeding with an invitation to enter, at will, any human abode?

BARBARA TUCKER
SZOMBA@BTINTERNET.COM

Gender irrelevant

I write to support strongly Helen Green's letter in the last newsletter (issue 51, January 2013, page 12) about the continuing use of the word 'chairman'. I had not realised that in the 21st century this issue would still be so keenly felt.

When I went to the University of Bristol as a new lecturer almost 40 years ago, this was one of the key issues that aspiring academic feminists raised passionately across the university, as part of our activities as the Bristol Women's Studies Group. A few years later, we published what became a key text entitled 'Half the Sky'. And we campaigned together with many other international feminists, such was

the strength of our feelings of marginality or exclusion from the mainstream, or what the late Professor Mary O'Brien of the University of Toronto called 'the malestream'. Hilary Rodham Clinton was one of these early campaigners.

In the USA, MS magazine was founded around this time, and the term Ms has eventually been accepted in public arenas so that women do not have to disclose whether or not they are married. French women and English men do not, so why must we? In most places with which I am familiar we refer to the chair of an organisation as 'chair' or 'chairperson' and not by the gender of the holder. It is

the post, not the person, that is



relevant.

Of course, some might object to using the term person and prefer hu-per-daughter being, as we used to joke!

MIRIAM DAVID
MIRIAM.DAVID@IOE.AC.UK

GoodSwap

PATRICIA HAVELL needs a piano stool, so if you have a spare one or know someone who does, please email patriciahavell@yahoo.co.uk 8920 0878

I have a small tatty pine stepladder which has been badly altered. Is there a carpenter/DIY person who would help me renovate it? Please contact CATRIONA STUART, 7239 1978

London Region Summer School



We are pleased to announce preliminary information for our first

London Region Summer School

(non-residential).

Dates: Tuesday 30 July – Thursday 1 August

Venue: St Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London EC4Y 8EQ

Theme: London through art, architecture, history, literature, music & science

Cost: In the region of £90 per person for the three days. Includes coffees or teas and sandwich lunches every day

Full details, including an application form, will be available soon by email and on the London Region website (link via our own North London website)

U3A Photography Competition 2013

What makes Britain great? Pageantry, people, places? It's your choice.

The 12 winning photographs will feature in the 2014 U3A calendar.

The winners, selected by independent judges, will receive a gift token and six calendars. Their photographs will be featured here and announced in the summer 2013 issue of *Third Age Matters*.

Entries must be sent to the national office before the closing date, 10 May.

Photographs must be in colour, and of landscape orientation. You may enter a maximum of three photographs each.

Your entry must include both of the following :

A CD containing a high resolution jpeg image of at least 300dpi.

A high quality colour print, at least 7" x 5", with the photograph's title and the entrant's name, U3A, address, telephone and email on the reverse.

Please also include a covering note to detail the photograph's title and the entrant's name, U3A, address, telephone and email.

Please send your entries by post only; email entries

will not be considered.

Neither the CD you send, nor the print, will be



returned so please ensure you have a copy saved.

Send entries to :

Photography Competition 2013

The Third Age Trust,

19 East Street,

Bromley BR1 1QE

Watch out – fraudsters about

A particular type of fraud targeting elderly people is on the increase across London.

The method involves a victim being telephoned (cold-called) by a fraudster, who alleges to be someone of authority (from the police, bank, Serious Fraud Office). The fraudster tells the victim there is a problem with their bank account and that their bank card must be collected.

This is the clever part. If the victim is unconvinced that the call is genuine, they are instructed to hang up and call a 'genuine' number – such as 999 or the telephone number on the rear of their bank card. However, the fraudster keeps the telephone line open and so the call goes straight back to them. The hoaxer then deals with any

subsequent call, convincing the victim of their authenticity.

The victim is then reassured that it's safe to reveal their bank details, namely the PIN.

An often unwitting courier or taxi driver is sent to collect the victim's card. The card is delivered to a second suspect, who then passes

it on to the fraudster, who then empties the bank account.

The message is: **never give anyone your PIN number or bank card to anyone** – the police and banks will never ask for them. If you get a call like this, hang up and call the police on 101 or in an emergency on 999.

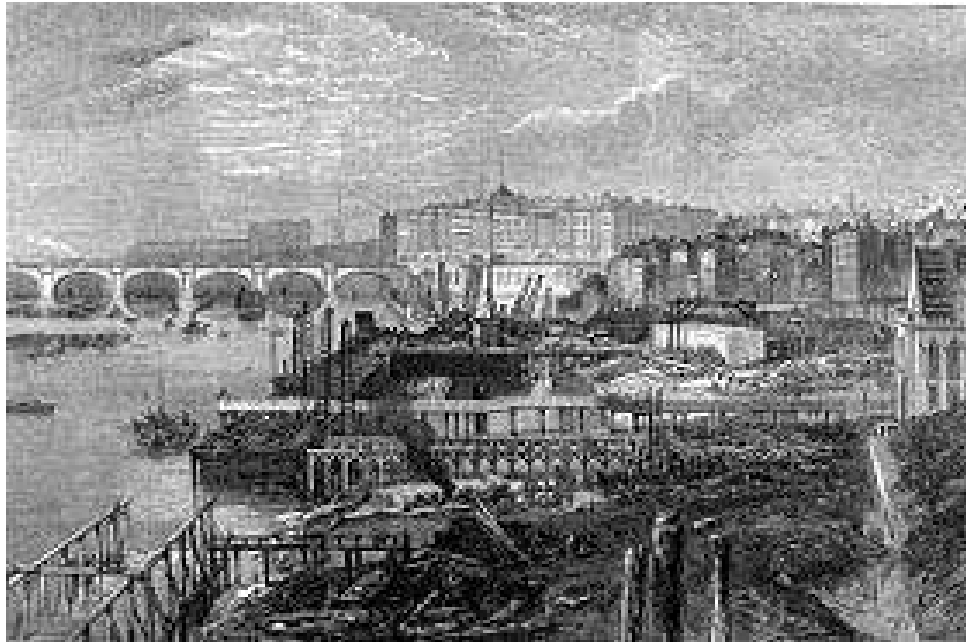


Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney,
John Hajdu and Sue Teller

The Thames Embankment. A conducted walk

Friday 21 June



Many do not realise that much of London's central river-front was under the Thames till the 1860s. We have arranged a Blue Badge guided walk that focuses on a most extraordinary feat of Victorian engineering – how and why the Embankment was built – and how it changed the capital. We will hear of the generations of political battles involved in creating it, taking in figures from Wren to Gladstone and WH Smith. We will also encounter a buried secret which has saved tens of thousands of lives, and have an informed account of the many interesting buildings and monuments that adorn the Embankment today, including one dating back over 3,000 years.

Times and Facilities

We meet at 10.50am at the Embankment tube station exit closest to the river for an 11am start. The tour lasts about an hour and three-quarters.

Cost

£6, payable with application.

Travel

Embankment tube station is on the Northern, District, Circle and Bakerloo lines.

Booking is essential.

Please use the booking form on the next page.



In the 18th century, before the construction of the Thames Embankment

Away days booking form

Name(s) _____ Membership number(s) _____

Block letters please. No more than two application names per form.

Phone number _____

Date	Name of visit

- Cheques payable to NLU3A
- Send booking form and cheque to Sue Teller at 4 The Gin Palace, 36 Market Road, London N7 9PW. A separate booking form and cheque is required for each visit.
- You will be notified **by phone if you have a place (or not)** on the visit and your cheque will be banked or destroyed accordingly.
- If you are unable to attend the visit, please phone Sue Teller on 7609 5172 so that your place can be offered to another member.

Summer programme



The new organisers of the summer programme; from the left: Annie Hopewell, Christine Stammers and Kathy Kyriakides. Look out for the details in the leaflet, which will be posted in June.

What matters

This is what matters:

Watching the World wake up,
in early morning light;
and late night silence.

Looking, unobserved, at a blackbird in the garden;
a friend at my table sharing a meal.

Questions from my grandchildren,
and being shown a special box containing their treasures.

Singing with friends.
Listening to the sick and bewildered.

Gardening in the depth of Winter,
wrapped against the cold.
(I used to think that neighbours thought me silly)

Weeping; moved by the plight
of the dispossessed and suffering.

Sitting in my favourite café drinking coffee,
watching the World go by.

Talking to babies.
Sharing my experience with young people.
Joking with friends.

Being taken to a place that words cannot describe
when listening to the Egmont overture.

And hearing a poem in my head that wants to be written.

© DENNIS EVANS

Monthly meetings in the summer term



All take place at St Paul's Church,
50 Long Lane, Finchley N3 2PU
Refreshments from 10.15



Monday 13 May Peter Maggs

Peter Maggs spent 31 years working in the engineering industry. Following early retirement in 2008, he has researched 19th century social history and written two books and several magazine articles.

In 1859 Thomas Smethurst, the Richmond Poisoner, was sentenced to death for the murder of his bigamous pregnant wife. The medical evidence was severely flawed and the judge was heavily biased against the prisoner and misdirected the jury. Smethurst was reprieved but immediately charged with bigamy. Having served a prison sentence for the bigamy charge, he proceeded to claim probate of the woman he was supposed to have murdered.

Monday 10 June Matthew Jackson talks about Korea

Less well known in the West than its neighbours China and Japan, Korea has a past with extraordinary wonders. Recently South Korea has experienced an economic transformation from one of the world's poorest countries to one of the world's leading names in IT, construction, shipping and steel.



Monday 8 July Annual General Meeting With wine and nibbles



**Term
dates**

Term	Start	Finish
Summer	29 April 2013	19 July 2013