



Issue 47  
September 2011

North London University of the Third Age

# Newsletter

## Why growth is good

Chairman Janet Home on the benefits new members bring



Occasionally I hear members say that North London U3A is growing too big. I cannot agree; without growth our U3A would be in decline. New members are crucial to our vitality. This is certainly not to denigrate the members who have been contributing to NLU3A for many years.

We have them to thank that we have achieved so much. But we must always bear in mind that without new members, our U3A would gradually become moribund and wither away. Three of our committee and at least twelve of our group leaders are members who have joined NLU3A within the last two years. These new members bring a fresh approach and supply the new blood we must have. Without them we would have a stale committee and a diminishing number of interest groups. Instead, we now have nearly 90 such groups, many started by new members.

Not only do we have new interest groups – we now have a new website, which was launched early in August, and contains a great deal of information about

our U3A. I urge you to have a look at [www.nlu3a.org.uk](http://www.nlu3a.org.uk) and see for yourself. There will be a brief demonstration at the monthly meeting in October (before the speaker).

The more I look at it, the more delighted I am with our new site. A member who had joined in 2010, Richard Callanan, was already running a computer group and wanted to learn more about websites. His researches – plus a great deal of work and ingenuity, resulted in our new website. Richard is now on the committee and has recruited members to help with administering and contributing to the site.

I hope this innovation will be just the beginning of a good year of satisfying learning and friendship for us all. ✨

## Especially for new members

Three meetings are scheduled for the new term to welcome new members and offer them the opportunity of meeting some of our committee and finding out about our activities. If you would like to attend, please telephone the hosts a few days beforehand for further directions.

Postal area	Date	Time	Contact	Telephone
N6	Monday 12 September	3.00 to 4.30pm	Dorothy and Douglas Barnes	8341 3592
N3	Tuesday 20 September	10.30 to 12 noon	Jenny Clark	8346 3751
N6	Wednesday 19 October	10.30 to 12 noon	Ruth Mendick	7236 3950

- If you would like to host a meeting for new members, please get in touch with Dorothy Barnes (see above). It can be a very pleasant occasion.

## North London U3A Committee 2010–11

**Chairman:** Janet Home

7272 3414      janethome1@btinternet.com

**Vice-chairman:** Pat Taylor

8458 3468      patriciataylor847@btinternet.com

**Secretary:** Hilda Wilson

8442 0567      springacre.wilson@btinternet.com

**Treasurer:** Gerald Kushner

8346 5691      geraldkushner@gmail.com

**New members' liaison:** Dorothy Barnes

8341 3592      dorothy.barnes@blueyonder.co.uk

**Committee member:** Eve Haddow

07779 098111      evehaddow@aol.com

**Database adviser:** Barry Davies

7226 7658      julibar@blueyonder.co.uk

**Interest groups organizer:** Patricia Isaacs

8348 8782      patricia.highgate@yahoo.co.uk

**Website:** Richard Callanan

7226 4192      richard@richardcallanan.com

**Membership secretary:** Sue Ward

8450 5721      sueward58g@gmail.com

*Newsletters and announcements (previously known as the bulletin) are each published three times a year. They are co-edited by **Barry Davies** and **Helen Green**.*

*Copy deadline for the next **announcements** is **7 October**.*

*Please send contributions to the co-editor,  
**Barry Davies**.*

*Email: [julibar@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:julibar@blueyonder.co.uk)*

*Annual membership of North London U3A currently costs £27 or £47 for two members who live at the same address. People who require details of membership should contact the membership enquiries secretary:*

**Helene Davidian,**

*tel: 8444 3669*

*email: [helenedavidian@googlemail.com](mailto:helenedavidian@googlemail.com)*

*or the membership secretary:*

**Sue Ward,**

*email: [sueward58g@gmail.com](mailto:sueward58g@gmail.com).*

## Contents

Why growth is good	1
Especially for new members	1
As I see it	3

## Obituary

A life well lived	4
Remembering Martha	5

## Monthly meetings and visits

Who's afraid of Icelandic banks?	5
Since the Romans	6
From moats to mansions	7
Minority reports	7
Happy talk	8

## Group news

A puzzling afternoon?	9
Sunday and the cup that cheers	9
Positioning the white jack	10
French reading group – change of venue	10
Arts and crafts show	10

## Odds and Ends

Paper in the Wind	11
The wonderful delete key	11
The real Jack Straw	12
When Martin met Petula	12
The happiest days of your life – still to come!	13

## Away-day visits planned

Royal Observatory	14
Booking for both trips	14
The Tudor Rooms, National Portrait Gallery	15
Away days booking form	15
Monthly meetings in the autumn term	16

## As I see it

Many members are missing out on the wealth of activities of the wider U3A, says  
**Keith Richards**



Given the richness of the offerings detailed in the new 2011–12 interest groups booklet, members of our U3A could be forgiven for showing little interest in the recent Third Age Trust summer school at Cirencester, the coming national conference and annual general meeting at Nottingham and the establishment of the Greater London Region. In fact there has been heavy North London involvement in all three. For example, this year one of our members, Krishna Dutta, attracted a large group for her course on Tagore at Cirencester, and some people joined a U3A in order to enrol for this. It is always a pleasure to meet colleagues in the context of participants from all over the UK at the summer schools.

I am puzzled by U3As, often with large funds in the bank, who are unwilling to subsidize delegates to the annual confer-

ence and AGM. North London is this year sending three subsidized members to what promises to be an exciting event in Nottingham.

The Third Age Trust decided at a meeting in Birmingham in 2008 to reorganize its affairs into the nine English regions plus the three devolved countries. This replaced a system that divided the UK into 'areas' which were, in effect, constituencies proposing representatives to serve for three years on the national executive committee. The Greater London U3As were already grouped into the Greater London Forum (GLF). Membership was in no way obligatory and some U3As decided to remain outside.

Now the region will be formally established in October; a new constitution is being prepared and nominations are sought for the posts of the principal officers. What looked originally like a series of unfortunate clashes has turned into a virtual festival of the arts and sciences which will inaugurate programmes of events drawing membership from all over the city.

In the week beginning 14 November it will be possible to attend the annual conference/study day, this year held at the BFI (British Film Institute) on

the South Bank on the Monday and, on the next day, to come to the Odeon, Covent Garden for a showing of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, which I am introducing. This and the afternoon at the National Institute for Medical Research in Mill Hill on Thursday the 17th have been organized by the trust but attendance is overwhelmingly from London U3As. Finally, on Saturday the 19th, the Wigmore Hall is hosting a study day on Russian music. I understand that repeats are being arranged to cope with the waiting lists for the musical events and that North London will be well represented on each of the four days.

This is a good start for a newly formed region that has interest groups attracting city-wide membership and plans for a summer school of our own. Some of us have already experienced the stimulation of working with our neighbours in the shared learning projects, which have thrived in London.

The future looks even more promising, especially as the trust is providing funding which previously had been reliant on a small capitation contribution from participating U3As.

*Keith Richards is the founder of North London U3A*





## Obituary

### A life well lived

Martha Blend 1930–2011



Martha and I were at school together in Dalston, Hackney, but it wasn't until she was in the sixth form that we became good friends. She lived nearby and would come to my house to talk about T S Eliot and sing Schumann. She was a little older than me and loved poetry – we were all into Eliot in a big way.

She had come to England in

1939 with the Kindertransport; her parents were killed in the concentration camps. She told me that staff at school were unaware of her background at first – her form teacher once asked the class to write about their wartime experiences and Martha made up an uneventful tale. The teacher believed it and wasn't at all curious.

She went to Queen Mary College, London to read English; she became head of English at Skinners' Company School in Stamford Hill and maintained an interest in the school long after she retired.

Her husband, David, was a doctor with a practice in Islington. Martha helped in the practice and later supported David when he studied psychiatry. She looked after him when he became disabled and was completely dedicated to his welfare.

Martha was a good citizen: she

wanted to bring about change for the better. She had been an active member of the Social Democratic Party and a governor of Highgate Wood School. She was on the committee of the Jewish Board of Guardians and an important member of the writers' group at the Holocaust Survivors' Centre. She was also an interested member of our school's old girls' association, which explains the presence of one or two people at her funeral whom I hadn't seen for over sixty years! She loved the U3A music groups; while waiting for the ambulance to take her to hospital she played her flute. Perhaps she thought she might not play it again.

She was a close friend and I will miss her, as will her two sons, Jon and Tony. Her name was Martha Immerdauer, which means 'everlasting'.

*Doreen Shafran*

Martha was a sensitive writer. Here we reproduce a poignant poem, previously published in this newsletter in April 2010, that she wrote about her husband, David, who had lost almost all his sight and hearing.

#### **Shelling Peas**

*I watch as his hands  
Fumble with the pod,  
Feeling for the opening  
And slowly discharging the contents,  
Hands that once lanced boils,  
Teased out splinters,  
Wielded syringes,  
Surgeon's hands,  
Now blighted by blindness and old age  
Into this trembling ineptitude.  
So few the tasks  
Still within his shrunk compass  
'I want to help with something!'  
I search my brain  
For an answer to that cry.*

## Remembering Martha

Martha Blend took part in a number of U3A groups but words and music seemed to mean the most to her.

Jo Pestel was a member of Keith Richards' Shakespeare class. She says: 'We read scenes and speeches with varying degrees of skill before discussing them. One morning Martha was asked to read a speech from *Henry IV*, where the king reproaches his son. It was her first time. She read with such power and emotion that when she stopped there was total silence. It was a revelation.'

Barbara Penney misses Martha as her 'other half' of the flute section in the U3A Playing Chamber Music group, and group leader Bernie Meadows comments that 'she never complained however difficult the music was!'

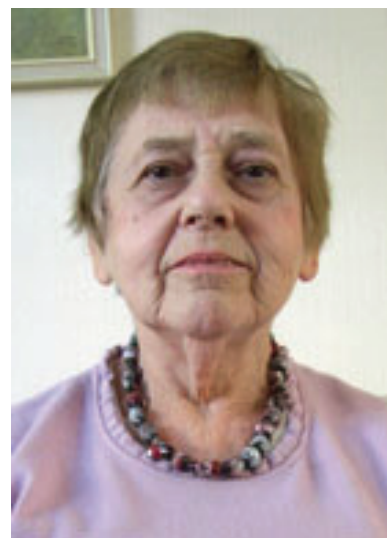
Barbra Landes describes Martha's contribution to the Singing for Pleasure group: 'She had such feelings for the dynamics of a

song. Her favourite was "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square". She cajoled us to make our voices sound like "the tap-dancing feet of Astaire" and to express real emotion "when we kissed and said goodnight". We will all remember Martha whenever we sing "her" song.'

It is Martha's personality that impressed people most. During recent years she had many challenging experiences to deal with but her sense of humour and wisdom seemed to triumph.

Barbara Penney recalls Martha as a kind, thoughtful person who always considered others before herself. She drove Barbara to and from the chamber group every week and, knowing that she couldn't drive, took her every summer to a pick-your-own farm to get 'the most wonderful strawberries and raspberries'.

Keith Richards coordinated the literature group in North



London and the summer school in Cirencester, both of which Martha joined, and they both took part in the chamber music sessions. Keith speaks of her remarkable absence of bitterness when she contributed to literary discussions that dealt with the Holocaust. He says: 'I miss her very much as a colleague and, I hope, a friend.'

*Judith Abbs*

## Monthly meetings and visits

### Who's afraid of Icelandic banks?

The marrying of ancient Viking mythology and the modern technological society that is Iceland today was heightened and interpreted inspirationally at the May monthly meeting by author Michael Ridpath, as **Shirley Meredeen** discovered

Michael Ridpath is a former banker who switched to writing fiction, initially using his financial expertise as a focus for crime-writing. However, after several business trips to Iceland, he identified a gap in the market. He became fascinated with this country, which has a highly literate, educated population of 300,000 almost two-thirds of whom are on Facebook. But deep within their historic and cultural roots many still have very real beliefs in trolls,

faeries, elves and the underworld. Similar to Wagner's operatic characters, these form a continuing background to modern Icelandic society. So deep is Icelanders' belief in these characters that roads and pipelines have been rerouted to avoid sites believed to be the homes of these mystical beings.

Also still popular today are the ancient Icelandic sagas, and like JRR Tolkien, Michael was influenced by these. Coupled with a barren landscape without trees



but with glaciers and volcanic landscapes where sheep farmers struggle in isolation, he creates a very different setting to most modern crime novels.

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 5*

Michael talked at length about how he built up characters and created a plot that combined Icelandic individuals with a storyline intelligible and credible to both Icelanders and mainland Europeans, despite being an outsider.

This required considerable research. As the basis of his characters, he modified people from his own lifetime experience by travelling widely throughout places in Iceland – which became settings for his stories – and getting to know farmers, rural priests and

gadget-driven youngsters. He described Icelanders as having a good sense of humour despite often being manically depressed, perhaps to do with the landscape. One particular difficulty he had was with their patronymic system of names by which every member of one family could have different surnames.

Michael's latest book is *66 Degrees North*. Highly topical, it uses the Iceland financial crash



as the backstory to a gripping thriller where 'revenge is best served at Arctic temperatures'.

## Since the Romans

Jerry White, visiting professor at Birkbeck College and prolific author, demonstrated at the June monthly meeting his extensive knowledge of the development of London since Roman times. **Noreen Nicholson** reports

**D**rawing on his research into the interrelation between the city as a physical, social, economic, cultural and political construct and the lives of its inhabitants, Professor White selected three key topics: commerce, pleasure and dramatic events. He enlivened these with a selection of maps, drawings, paintings, photographs and cartoons.

He stressed the great importance of the Thames to London's economic and commercial development – London being until the last half century predominant in Britain's overseas trade. The river's

banks were not, as in many cities, the site of magnificent mansions. Instead, they were lined with warehouses and industrial premises – brewing, dyeing and pottery-making, all reliant on a plentiful supply of water. Ship-building and its subsidiary manufactures also took place along the Thames. Pollution from both industry and sewage meant that Londoners preferred not to live near the river.

Until its embankment in the nineteenth century, the slow-moving Thames could freeze over in winter. Public frost fairs were held on the ice, offering food and entertainment; an illustration of one of these provided a contrast with an exclusive drawing-room scene of fashionably dressed men and women. Coffee and chop houses were

popular meeting places, while coaching inns were important as transport hubs. Professor White made the point that London has always been a cosmopolitan city, attracting foreign merchants, craftsmen and others.

The gulf between the wealthiest and poorest Londoners reached its peak in the late eighteenth century; in the nineteenth, Dickens highlighted social ills and injustice. Charles Booth's maps of the later nineteenth century, categorizing streets according to which of seven classes, from wealthy to semi-criminal, their inhabitants predominantly belonged, showed the extent of poverty. There was, however, no clear geographical separation by class, a situation which, despite the growth of suburbs and gentrification in inner London, still exists.

Several dramatic events and their effects were considered. Both the execution of Charles I in 1649



London Bridge 1616

*Continued on page 7*



*Continued from page 6*

and the Gordon Riots in 1780 threatened established authority; the latter began in opposition to a relaxation of penal laws against Catholics and turned into mob violence directed at the entire judicial system.

The Great Plague of 1665 resulted in considerable loss of life, while the Great Fire of the following year was responsible for massive destruction of property. Although the radical plans of Eve-

lyn and Wren for rebuilding the city were not carried out because of the rights of property owners, the city's appearance changed as brick replaced wood in the construction of houses.

IRA terrorism of the 1880s was bracketed with the Blitz as being directed against the ordinary citizens of London. The large-scale destruction of the 1940s hastened migration to the suburbs and resulted in the permanent loss of much small-scale manufacture.

Jerry White's reply to a question, that the 1970s had seen something of a crisis of confidence in London, gave rise to discussion of which decades could be seen as periods of optimism or pessimism in the city's recent history. While opinions differed as to the impact and value of the changes that had taken place, no-one questioned London's capacity to reinvent itself in response to altered circumstances.

## From moats to mansions

The sunny weather at the beginning of May accompanied a group of North London U3A members to the north Norfolk coast for a short holiday, as

**Elizabeth Bennett** writes

Our itinerary was varied – from medieval moated Ox-burgh Hall, to royal Sandringham House with its beautiful gardens, to grand Jacobean Blickling and Audley End mansions. Sir Robert Walpole's Houghton Hall was an eighteenth-century powerhouse, built for show. In contrast was the saved-from-demolition, restored and up-and-running Letheringsett Watermill, now a profitable business milling only spelt, a forerunner of wheat, and tolerable for people with wheat allergies. We enjoyed the Norfolk Lavender Farm and visited Ely with its

beautiful cathedral. Our lovely driver always chose to take us on the most scenic routes wherever possible, so that we could appreciate the glorious countryside.

We were fortunate with the weather – sun and blue sky every day, a real bonus. Caley Hall Hotel at Old Hunstanton looked after us very well. It had lots of ground floor rooms, which were much appreciated by those of us less mobile, and the excellent well-cooked fresh food was served by pleasant and helpful staff. All of this made for a truly



Seventeenth century Blickling Hall

enjoyable break.

Finally we owe thanks to Margaret Kennedy and Rosemarie Nixon who arranged it all.

## Minority reports

At the end of June, **Frank Fisher** participated in the South-east Forum U3A summer school in Chichester. He tells us why he enjoyed it

I was in a minority on two counts – of the 204 participants, I was one of only 34 men, and I was the only member from North London – though the forum covers Kent, Sussex and Surrey, it is open to all U3A members in the UK. But I

felt very welcome and included and had a delightful time.

There were twelve courses, of which three involved mainly walking and the rest covered various aspects of the arts and history. Accommodation, catering and

sedentary courses were all on the University of Chichester campus.

There was an imaginative programme of evening activities. On the first night there was a lively quiz, which proved to be an

*Continued on page 8*

*Continued from page 7*

effective ice-breaker. The second night saw two activities with a large number of people, myself included, attending a performance of *Singing in the Rain* at the Chichester Festival Theatre. U3Aers presented a pleasing spectacle ambling across the fields in their finery towards the nearby theatre. Those who didn't attend the theatre had the option of a film on campus. On the third and final evening there was an enjoyable and well-conceived musical presentation by the accomplished local Byron Duo. Entitled 'Musical Desserts', it originally had the less appetizing billing of 'A Musical Desert.'

The course in which I took part was entitled 'Walking and Watching: A brush with nature', ably coordinated by Ann Wickenden of Arun Valley U3A. It involved guided visits to three local nature reserves, with an emphasis on landscape and conservation.

Our first trip was to the splendid Kingley Vale nature reserve, which contains an ancient yew forest with some trees thought to be 2,500 years old. After a steep climb, we spotted a number of birds of prey, including buzzards and kestrels, and various different types of wild orchid. We then proceeded to the chalk

heath reserve at Levin Down, within sight of Goodwood race track. Here we were given an authoritative account of the history and management of the site as we explored the hillside. With the assistance of our knowledgeable guide, many of us were able to identify a lot of birds, plants and wildlife.

The next day was spent at the splendid and fascinating Arundel Wetland Centre, founded in 1946 by Sir Peter Scott. At this extensive reserve we viewed in a variety of habitats a wide range of wildfowl from around the world including some rare and endangered species. We spent our final morning walking along the Chichester Ship Canal viewing developments, passing anglers and spotting bird life. By the end of our course we had a quite cohesive group who had shared experiences, learned a lot and enjoyed each others' company. We had been graced with good weather throughout, despite there being heavy rain as the course started and just after it finished.



University of Chichester

The school ended at lunchtime on the Friday, but I decided to stay on till the evening to explore Chichester's pedestrianized town centre, farmers' market and majestic cathedral, which had the added bonus of a brood of peregrine falcons nesting on its spires.

I very much enjoyed this school and the opportunity to meet and exchange views with members of other U3As. Many participants had participated in shared learning projects or other activities with North London U3A members. Chichester is much nearer London than some of the other summer schools and while, as Keith Richards mentions in this newsletter, there is a future prospect of a London regional school, I hope North London members may consider participating in the SE Forum summer school in future years.

## Happy talk

Discussion forums allow the membership to hold the committee to account by sharing their views and suggestions about the running of North London U3A. The most recent one took place after the annual general meeting in July. **Pat Taylor** reports.

Starting on an upbeat note, we asked: 'What have been the high points of the U3A year?' This was met with congratulations for the organisers of the holiday in Norfolk and a welcome for the setting up of the Islington

Chapter. Further positive words came from Keith Richards, who drew attention to how well his group had coped during his recent operation. He was pleased to report that the absence of group leaders is not terminal; his

Contemporary Literature group had flourished when he was not able to be present.

Other contributors enthused about the value of joining the interest groups team, the excellence

*Continued on page 9*



*Continued from page 8*

of speakers at monthly meetings, and the quality of the interest groups. There was also praise for the South-east Summer School, the welcome extended at meetings, the successful management of the waiting lists for groups and the value and enjoyment in taking part in shared learning projects.

The question of communication was raised, with a suggestion that the termly bulletin (in future, announcements) be discontinued and replaced by emails. Those with internet access could act as buddies and pass on information to those without. In response, Richard Callanan described the

new website as a means of disseminating information and talked about other possible communication vehicles. A suggestion that to save postage, members without computers could provide a prepaid envelope would, it was felt, prove a nightmare for the envelope-stuffing team.

The suggestion was put forward that emails and other information could be displayed on the notice board at monthly meetings. However, this would still not reach everyone as only about one sixth of the membership come to monthly meetings. If many more came, though, we would need a

bigger venue. And in any case, there will be no more monthly meetings if no one steps forward to replace Shirley Meredeen, who resigned as meetings organizer at the AGM.

The forum ended with a discussion about publicity and the style and quality of posters and leaflets. A member asked about the possibility of providing a list of members with addresses to everyone, but it was pointed out that this would be contrary to the Data Protection Act.

The committee has noted all the points raised and in the new U3A year will discuss them fully.

## Group news

### A puzzling afternoon?

Barbra Landes relates how a jigsaw fell into place

For the first time in our summer programme, we had a jigsaw afternoon. Lilian Rubin invited a group to her house and we helped her work on a 1,000-piece puzzle – a reproduction of The Annunciation with Saint Emidius by Carlo Crivelli (fifteenth century) – which she had bought from the National gallery.

We all became friendly very quickly and it was great fun. A stranger passing by would have heard comments like ‘Have you got the Virgin’s eye?’ ‘What’s under the skirt?’ ‘Who’s hanging over the balcony?’ and ‘What on earth does this Latin mean?’

Let’s hope we can repeat this lovely way to spend an afternoon.



### Sunday and the cup that cheers

Would you enjoy meeting friends over Sunday afternoon tea? You know the sort of thing: cakes, pastries, biscuits, thin sandwiches, hot tea in a china pot. And the chatter of conversation, idle gossip, discussing yesterday's TV programmes and the ones to look out for in the coming week.

If you like the thought of

this – and perhaps you have some ideas that would add to the pleasure of it – we could start a Sunday tea party group, meeting in one another's homes, taking it in turns to be host or guest. Please contact me and as soon as there are enough interested members, I'll get everyone together to arrange ways and means. I can already taste that cuppa!

And while we are thinking of Sundays, is an idea for another kind of Sunday group simmering in your mind? If there is, please share it!

**Patricia Isaacs**  
groups organizer  
[patricia.highgate@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:patricia.highgate@yahoo.co.uk)  
8348 8782

## Positioning the white jack

Want to learn a game that gives you new physical skills, makes you think – and stretches your vocabulary? **James Crawford** urges you to give bowls a try



Debbie and Jack Seedburgh

Members of the Temple Fortune Club gave a warm welcome to North London U3A members who attended the summer Monday morning sessions run by Debbie and Jack Seedburgh.

After the rules of the game were explained to us, we were introduced to a whole new terminology. We were shown how to lay the mat, roll and position the white jack, make a correct delivery by adopting the correct stance and applying bias on the bowl for a forehand or backhand shot and finally the principles of scoring. Bowls is a skillful and

fascinating game in that having delivered the bowl, you feel yourself willing it to continue rolling further, curve in earlier or stop before it goes into the ditch.

Then there is the aspect of being out in the fresh air, the physical exercise and of course the company of the other players who help to make the Monday sessions so enjoyable and worthwhile.

I encourage those who have never played this game to try it. Why not ring Debbie on 8203 9052 for more information. And thank you, Debbie and Jack, for your patience and tuition!

### French reading group – change of venue

The Tuesday morning French Reading Group will now meet in Danvers Road, N8, (instead of its previous venue in Finchley Central.)

Contact Sally Billott on 7272 7049 for more information.

### Arts and crafts show

What gets made in the Thursday morning arts and crafts group? Quilts, tapestries, drawings, watercolour paintings, embroideries and cards, to mention a few. We are having an exhibition in October to show you our hard work, some of which will be for sale. Refreshments will be available.

When? Thursday 6 October

Time? 10am to 4pm

Where? Cranley Dene Court, 152 Muswell Hill Road, N10 3JH

Enquiries to Shirley, 8444 9621

### *Paper in the Wind*

A review of Dennis Evans's new book of poetry

*Paper in the Wind* is such a good title for Dennis Evans' latest poetry collection. His poems are full of images, some of which give a moment's amusement: the wry tone of 'Dancer', about a young woman who is 'twenty-two and randy'; 'Health Warning', on health scares in the news; 'Prayer for Today', an

admonition to beware of priests, politicians, experts, consultants and other self-styled gurus.

Others – the evocative love poem 'Who'; the factory workers stumbling into daylight blinking like pit ponies in 'Factory days'; or the affectionate 'Countryman', which recalls his father who 'would get up early to watch the

world wake up', and who sang love songs to his wife and made toys for his children – such images do not blow away.

*Paper in the Wind* is published by Celebration Press and available for £10 from the publisher at 58 Helen Close, East Finchley, London N2 0UU

### The wonderful delete key

Helen Green recounts how she learned to love computers

There is an episode of the TV series *Downton Abbey*, set in 1912, where the household gets its first telephone. The aristocratic family and their servants are reluctant to use this new-fangled contraption, and when one day it rings, everyone is afraid to answer.

I can relate to this: in 1989, I started a job in which I was to produce written information. 'Where's the typewriter?' I asked. 'Oh, you won't need that,' I was told. 'You'll have a computer.' I was horrified. 'No way am I going to use that thing,' I thought. 'It's a typewriter or nothing.'

But I did use it, and what sold me on it was the delete key – when I made a mistake, a frequent occurrence with my inaccurate touch-typing, I could simply go back and change it by means of the wonderful delete key. No longer would I have to type the whole page over again! I discovered that I

could play around with sentences and paragraphs; if I didn't like what I had written, I could change it. Many times.

Later, I learned to use email, look things up on the internet, use a spreadsheet, download music – and use voice-recognition software when my shoulder hurt too much to type. I still have trepidations: despite numerous training sessions, I am hesitant about using desktop publishing (too fiddly), and though I have an account, I rarely use Facebook; I cannot see its purpose.

I suspect that the situation is similar for many of you who are disinclined to use computers and email. Why should you when you can scribble a note, put it in an envelope and post it?

The point is that email exists, as do DVD players, electric lights and telephones. It is easy to use; I can send one message to many



people at once, and I do not have to pay for increasingly expensive postage stamps. I can use it as much or as little as I want to, and it's almost instant. I can retain messages without having to take up valuable space in my tiny flat. And when I make a mistake – well, there's always the delete key.

So why not give it a try? With time, you may even like it and, like electricity, wonder how you could ever do without it.



## The real Jack Straw

**Richard Callanan** tells of his campaign to restore a supposed Hampstead landmark to its rightful home

Whenever I mentioned 'Jack Straw's Castle', people assumed I meant a pub on the edge of Hampstead Heath. In truth, it was situated right here where I live in Highbury; the house I live in was built over the moat around it.

So, with my prime aim being to wrestle the name back from Hampstead, I nominated the site for an Islington heritage plaque. On 11 June this year, after a public vote, the plaque was erected and unveiled by Tony Benn. Installed on the side of Highbury Barn pub, it reads: 'Near this site during the Peasants' Revolt 1381, Highbury Manor was burnt and destroyed.'

The manor had been the moated rural home of Sir Robert Hales, treasurer to boy king Richard II. Hales was chiefly responsible for introducing a poll tax that was widely seen as unfair. Peasants and others in Essex and Kent revolted and marched on the City of London. They were led by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw.

Hales had taken refuge with the king in the tower together with the king's chancellor, Simon Sudbury. The mob occupied the tower and dragged Sudbury and Hales (roughly equivalent to

Cameron and Osborne in today's world) to Tower Hill. There they hacked off their heads. Then a section of the mob, described as 20,000 in one contemporary account, marched on Highbury, set fire to Hales' Manor and dismantled it stone by stone. Only the moat remained and it was not removed for over 400 years, during which time the site became known, and named on maps, as Jack Straw's Castle.

If you stand outside Highbury Barn pub and look across at the butcher's shop, that is the site of the drawbridge that led into the fortified house behind.

Tony Benn stood on a bench and spoke without a microphone and without notes, reminding the



audience of the numerous radical thinkers and politicians who had lived or been active in the area. He then unveiled the plaque. So at last there is an indication at this site of a remarkable incident in our local history. Sadly, the plaque doesn't mention the traditional name of 'Jack Straw's Castle', so I still have to argue that the name is misplaced in Hampstead.



Tony Benn at the unveiling of the Peasants' Revolt plaque

### When Martin met Petula

Martin Golstein, who was the singing group's pianist, died earlier this year. His composer son, Jonathon, tells a story about his father when he was asked by the BBC to accompany Petula Clark on a live show.

They met beforehand and she told him she would be singing 'Downtown', which as we all remember was the tremendous popular hit

of the time. The whole world knew it – well, almost the whole world. 'What's that?' asked Martin. So, five minutes before going on air, she had to sing it to him. Jonathon feels there must be a recording of that performance still in existence. He would love to hear it, because it would be a unique interpretation – he can imagine it sounding classical, like Schubert.

## The happiest days of your life – still to come!

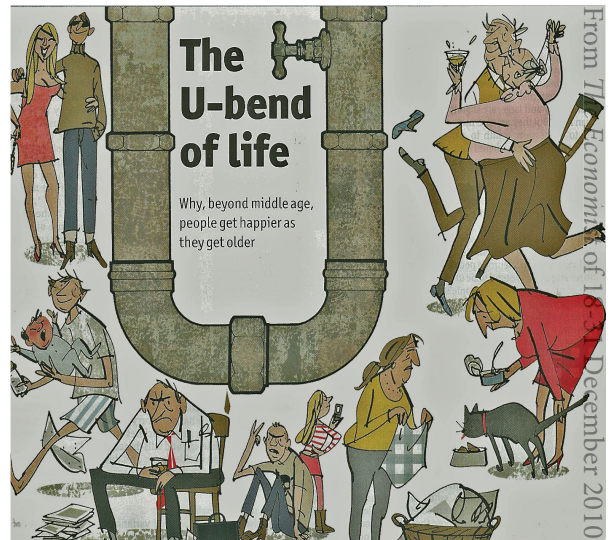
Recently I read an article in *The Economist* on age and happiness. It cheered me.

‘The U-bend of life’ explains why, beyond middle age, people get happier as they get older. Intuitively we feel that people are happiest when they are young and that they grow less and less happy as they age. However, according to recent academic studies which asked interviewees in different countries around the globe to rate their own well-being, it is high in early twenties. As stress levels increase it falls until the happiness nadir is reached at 46. After that age the index of well-being begins to rise and it is still rising in the 80s. The article discusses possible reasons why this may be so.

Education does make people happier but it seems to be because it makes them richer.

Different countries have different happiness levels. Denmark is the happiest nation and Bulgaria is the most miserable. Britain is a happy place but it is misery in China.

Interestingly, the leading article in the same newspaper quotes work by the Pew Research Centre which shows that 87 per cent of Chinese think their country is going in the right direction whereas only 31 per cent of Britons and Americans do. I suppose



it's wrong to draw the conclusion from this that the more dissatisfied citizens are with their government, the happier they are.

*Barry Davies*



The joy of singing: Helen Green (top right) and Lorraine Wadsworth (top left) lead the June summer singalong in a round, accompanied by their new pianist, Caroline.



## Away-day visits planned

### Royal Observatory

Flamsteed House and Courtyard, Blackheath Avenue, London SE10 8XJ

Wednesday 26 October



John Harrison's marine chronometer

The Greenwich Royal Observatory was founded by order of King Charles II to study astronomy and to fix longitude. The oldest in the group of buildings comprising the observatory is Flamsteed House. It was built in 1675, with Sir Christopher Wren as the architect, as a home for the first astronomer royal, John Flamsteed. He lived in the four rooms of the ground floor and worked in the octagon room above until his death in 1719. His successor in the office was Edmund Halley, famous for the comet that bears his name.

We have arranged a guided visit of the main building of the Royal Observatory, Flamsteed House, and the Meridian Courtyard. The tour will include the founding and history of the observatory and why it and the Prime Meridian Line are in Greenwich. We will see the John Harrison Clocks and hear about the search for the accurate way of determine longitude.

#### Facilities and access

The walk from the Cutty Sark Docklands Light Railway (DLR) station takes about 15 minutes. It is uphill but the main avenue is reasonably gentle. There are toilets about three-quarters of the way up the hill. There are also toilets and a café in the nearby large Greenwich visitors' centre as well as many eateries in Greenwich itself. To do the complete tour inside Flamsteed House, there are a few steps, both up and down. There is a lift from the outside to the floor where the Harrison Clocks are housed.

#### Meeting time

10.50 for 11.00 start at the exit from Cutty Sark (not Greenwich) stop on the (DLR), where we will be met by our guide. Allow up to two hours.

#### Cost

£5 to £7, depending on numbers and payable on the day. (Please note that this is quite a bargain as unguided entry alone is now £5.)

#### Travel

DLR to Cutty Sark stop. (NB Not Greenwich.)

### Booking for both trips

Use either the booking form below or download a copy from the website, [www.nlu3a.org.uk](http://www.nlu3a.org.uk), and send it with a stamped addressed envelope to Jim Sweeney, 22 Cholmeley Park, London N6 5EU, or email your application to [jimsweeney@waitrose.com](mailto:jimsweeney@waitrose.com) giving your name, phone number and trip title. **Please also ensure that any cancellations are notified by email or phone – 8340 9282 or 07930 974752.**



# The Tudor Rooms, National Portrait Gallery

St Martin's Place, London WC2H 0HE

Thursday 17 November

The National Portrait Gallery holds a remarkable collection of portraits of the main characters who influenced English history during the Tudor period. We will have a conducted tour by an excellent Blue Badge guide and follow events from the reign of Henry VII to Elizabeth I as illustrated by the portraits of Sir Thomas More, Henry VIII, Ann Boleyn, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I, William Shakespeare, and many others.

## Facilities and Access

The main toilets are in the basement, as is the café. There is a third-floor restaurant and lifts to all levels.

## Times

We meet at 10.30am in the onsite basement café or 10.50 for 11.00am start inside the main St Martin's Lane entrance. Our tour will last around 90 minutes, plus a five-minute break in the middle.



Mary Tudor

## Cost

£6 or £7, depending on numbers and payable on the day.

## Travel

Leicester Square and Charing Cross tube stations are nearby. Numerous buses serve St Martins Place and Trafalgar Square.

---

## Away days booking form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Block Letters please. No more than two application names per form. Open only to North London U3A members.*

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Name of visit	Accepted/ Not accepted
		Leave blank

Send this booking form and a **stamped addressed envelope** to  
Jim Sweeney, 22 Cholmeley Park, London, N6 5EU

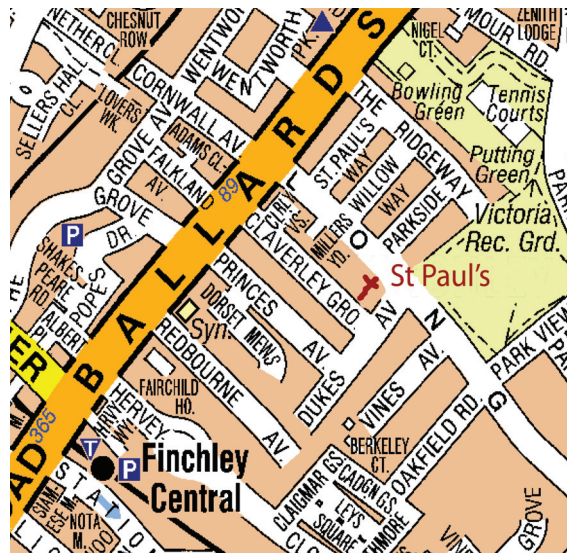
If you are unable to attend a visit, please phone Jim on 8340 9282 or 07930 974752.

**Kindly note that failure to do so often causes needless problems.**

## Monthly meetings in the autumn term

All take place at St Paul's Church, Long Lane, Finchley. Refreshments from 10.30.

There is no monthly meeting in September



### Monday 10 October

#### *Music Therapy*

**P**rofessor Mercédès Pavlicevic is a musician, music therapist, artist, writer and director of research at Nordoff Robbins, the UK's largest music therapy/ music and health charity that helps transform people's lives through music. Mercédès believes passionately that

art-making is essential to meaningful living in these 'cluttered' times. She will talk around some filmed excerpts of music therapy work with young and old people, to consider how and why music connects us to ourselves, to others, and to time and place.

### Monday 14 November

*Dante: How a teenage poet grew up to invent the novel and how Beatrice became part of it.*

**J**ames Burge is a maker of factual television programmes and a writer. His latest book, *Dante's Invention*, is a narrative biography which explores the life of the poet and how it

relates to his great work of fantasy-fiction, *The Divine Comedy*. It is designed to appeal to those who are not familiar with Dante's work as much as to those who are.

### Monday 12 December

#### *The Prison Reform Trust*

**K**aty Williams is head of outreach at the Prison Reform Trust, which is an independent UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective penal system. It does

this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing parliament, government and officials.

### Term dates

Term	Start date	Finish date
Autumn	19 September 2011	16 December 2011
Spring	9 January 2012	30 March 2012
Summer	23 April 2012	13 July 2012

### Feedback

Please tell us what you like to read about in this newsletter. Helen Green's and Barry Davies's contact details are on page 2.