



Issue 50
September 2012

North London University of the Third Age

Newsletter

University of the Third What??

The third age is not related to when a person was born. **Helen Green** summarises an article by Eric Midwinter

Puzzled looks often meet me when I tell people not in the know that I'm a member of the U3A. 'University of the Third Age,' I say in explanation. 'Oh,' they reply, none the wiser. I try again: 'You know – lifelong learning?' 'Ah,' they say.

So I was relieved when Eric Midwinter, co-founder of the U3A in the UK, clarified it in his article 'Time to end discrimination by age' in the spring 2012 issue of *Third Age Matters*. According to fellow co-founder Peter Laslett, 'the whole idea of deploying "ages" was to avoid the artificial designation of the birthday in favour of a realistic recognition of each individual's social determinants'. And Michael Young, the third co-founder, thought birthdays should be part of data protection legislation as he thought 'the use of birthdays as public events was as discriminatory as assessments by gender, religion or sexual orientation'.

Shakespeare divided life into

seven ages. Eric Midwinter defines just three. The first age is when we learn all the basic skills – personal, educational and social. The second is when our lives are filled with family and work. We arrive at the third age when we have moved on from these responsibilities and can choose how we fill our time according to our own interests and priorities. These three stages are not defined by any particular age group; individuals may move from one age to the next at different chronological ages.

The proportion of third agers in the UK population has risen from three per cent in 1900 to 21 per cent in 2000. One reason is that over the years more and more people have survived childbirth and childhood illnesses; in 1900, 156,000 people in a population of 41 million died before they reached their first birthday. Now only one in seven deaths occur before age 65.

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Midwinter concludes: 'So we



should stop describing ourselves as an "ageing society" ... we are a normal society in which, thankfully, most people enjoy the benefits of a normal lifespan. What we have done is emerge from a "pre-mature death society".

'The Third Age, a positive, challenging, life-enhancing concept, is the natural corollary of this magnificent human achievement. It means that older age has the distinct possibility of being a glorious closing paragraph to the letter of life and not a scrappy postscript.'

Death of an agnostic

Here lies one
Who never could make out
Whether the life to be
Is all illusion.
A 19 bus resolved his doubt,
And brought him
To a definite conclusion.

ANON

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As I see it

Keith Richards on the U3A's fundamental principle

On the afternoon before the annual general meeting of the Third Age Trust I am organising an exploratory seminar to assess the present 'health' of the fundamental self-help principle on which our movement is based: 'those who teach shall also learn, and those who learn shall also teach'. This suggests a radical approach to education, and the founders have always recognised its idealism.

Over the 30-year development of the U3As in the UK, we have sometimes seemed the only advocates of what, following the 1976 Plowden Report advocating child-centred education, became

known as 'the play way' as government after government encouraged a return to 'talk and chalk'.

U3A co-founding member Eric Midwinter, who spoke so inspiringly at our June meeting, has contributed a paper entitled 'Collective Exploration' to the seminar. Reports from around the country indicate that we are now a very broad church with methodology in interest groups extending from straight lectures (with questions allowed) to exchanges of 'chat' at luncheon groups. Delegates will be asked to speak about practice in their own U3As and to express their personal views.

Given that democratically or cooperatively-based learning is

not easy to organise, the question of some sort of preparation for group coordinators will come up. It would have to be voluntary and would be most effective if it was organised on self-help lines.

I am assuming that members still believe that learning is most effective when the groups are having 'fun' (acknowledging that 'fun' can be hard work), but we will conclude by asking whether our literature should now drop this well-known principle in the light of how things have developed.

KEITH RICHARDS IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF NORTH LONDON U3A

Welcome back!

I hope you have all had a good summer break despite the strange weather we have had this year and that you enjoyed holidays, taking part in the summer programme, and watching the Olympics and Paralympics.

As you will know from our impressive interest groups booklet, we have plenty of activity to look forward to in the coming months, with new interest groups as well as the old favourites. I'm sure you will like the cover photograph of St Pancras Station.

On 10 September we shall be holding a 'beginning of term' meeting at St Paul's Church, Finchley (our usual venue for monthly meetings). Most of our

coordinators will be there, so you will be able to meet them and talk about their groups. This is also an opportunity, if you have friends who might be interested in joining U3A, to bring them along to meet other members, coordinators and committee members.

If you know the groups you want to join, you will, I'm sure already have enrolled, but if you are uncertain, this will be an opportunity to find out more from the group leaders. Interest groups are the core of the U3A movement and we are fortunate to have so many members who give their time and effort voluntarily to run groups.

Although the summer will be drawing to a close by the time you

read this, at the time of writing I am looking forward to going to Cirencester to take part in one of the U3A summer schools. Although these are run by the national office, they are planned and all the courses taught by volunteer members of U3A from all over the UK. The standards are high and there is a great buzz of enthusiasm and enjoyment about the whole school. The atmosphere is so friendly because we are all part of the U3A 'family'.

I am so glad I discovered U3A after my retirement and am inspired to see what a lot volunteers can achieve.

JANET HOME
CHAIRMAN, NORTH LONDON U3A

Membership up but finances down

Good and bad news at the annual general meeting

A 12 per cent growth in North London U3A's membership last year has been tempered by a decrease of 11 per cent in its funds, said the chairman, Janet Home, at our annual general meeting in July. While we now have almost 650 members, and – for the first time in our history – 100 interest groups, our bank balance stands at £15,132 in contrast to £17,097 last year.

This drop is partly due to increases in the price of stamps and in rental costs for venues. As a result, groups are being asked

to find cheaper meeting places and all are being encouraged to consider reading newsletters and other communications online. Those at the meeting also agreed to an increase of £5 per year in membership subscriptions.

One mystery, said Janet, is the fact that despite the rise in membership, income from Gift Aid has gone down by three per cent. She explained that because we are a charity, the tax office treats membership subscriptions as a charitable donation. If taxpayers sign for Gift Aid, the government

gives us an extra 25p for each pound of subscriptions every year. But, as the treasurer at the time, Gerald Kushner, pointed out, instead of the £4,000 we would have had, we received only £3,000 because not all members opted for Gift Aid.

Pleading with members who pay income tax to tick the Gift Aid box, Janet said: 'Signing for Gift Aid costs taxpayers nothing. It does not represent an addition to your subscription nor to your tax bill, but it does bring income to North London U3A.'

Leon Levy is North London U3A's new treasurer, unanimously elected at July's AGM. Leon, who has a background in business and is experienced at setting up and running charities, replaces Gerald Kushner, who stood down at the AGM, having completed his three-year term.

In other committee changes, Eve Haddow was confirmed as monthly meetings organiser, and Pat Taylor stood down as vice-chairman after serving for many years. Read about Pat's career at the BBC on page 14.

Escape from New York

How Sara Roth exchanged gun power for flower power

Martin Luther King – assassinated. Bobby Kennedy – assassinated. It was time to leave Manhattan. Richard, my English boyfriend of two years, had a posting back to London. He asked me to go with him. Why not? So I did. On a one-way ticket with just a footlocker (a small trunk) extra in the hold. His company would pay for this. Made it easier – and cheaper.

It was June 1968 and I was two weeks away from my 25th birthday. He'd found a flat to rent in Cholmeley Crescent, not far from Highgate tube, and near my mum's twin sister off Swain's Lane. As long as I answered to Mrs Smith, the landlady would accept us as a couple. My bloke's surname was actually Smith. Living in sin was not yet widely accepted, even in London. Being sensible I'd

arranged a job with the help of my aunt. I would be a clinic worker training manager for the Family Planning Association, which was based in Margaret Street, W1.

London felt young and vibrant. Everything was happening, man. Richard was a quiet northerner and four years older than me. I knew no one and nor did he. But he was a good rugby player and soon found and joined the

Hampstead Rugby Club with its built-in social scene.

At a season opening party I met James, Richard's opposite winger. My age, slim, attractive and dressed in the widest of bell-bottoms – grey suiting material with a faint pink stripe. He'd finished Hornsey College of Art in silver the previous summer and was working as a designer for a long-established silversmithing firm in Covent Garden.

James knew the live music scene, even played the blues harp (harmonica). And he took us to clubs and pubs and introduced us to his art school mates, some fresh from the Hornsey 'revolution' that mirrored the Paris student *événements*. I had landed in the

middle of the Swinging Sixties, and I jumped right in.

But first I had to look the part. Off I went to Vidal Sassoon and had the rage bob with its deep upside down 'v' at the back and diametric angled sides. My shoulder-length hair and pinned-on 'fall' (a fake hairpiece I'd been very proud of in Manhattan) fell to the floor of the salon. Next stop Mr Blade, the man's tailor on a small side street off Carnaby Street for my first pair of bell-bottoms, guided in the choice of fabric by James.



Hipsters, of course.

Almost ready, I needed the finishing touches. Where else but Mary Quant? So off to her (original) shop on Kensington Church Street. Boots! I chose glove-soft, rusty orange suede ones, a side zip from ankle to knee, and a skirt up-together in green and yellow geometric print. Oh and the de-rigueur thin rayon scarf in rust with navy diamonds that you tied twice round your throat and let the ends fly in the wind while you were dancing, whirling, twirling at the Marquee Club. I had truly arrived!

And dear reader – I still have the scarf.

A passage from India

When **Krishna Dutta** arrived in London, she found it a far cry from the Victorian atmosphere she had envisioned

On a sunny and warm mid-April morning in the late 60s, I arrived at Victoria Station with a head full of literary descriptions about the place, garnered from books and old movies.

I was expecting a foggy dank mysterious city full of men in tailored suits and women wearing

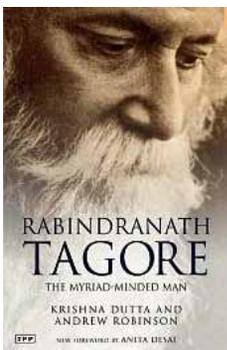
hats and gloves and speaking in hushed tones. I was surprised to find people in colourful attractive clothes, bandanas, mini-skirts and trendy shoes. Some of them even had long unkempt hair with flowers in it. I felt quite bemused – this was not what I had expected!

As the train came to halt, a fellow Bengali student greeted me with a simple bunch of delicate yellow flowers – my first introduction to daffodils. I felt a tad disappointed. I had expected daffodils to be more golden, ornate and gorgeous like chrysanthemums or dahlias. The flowers I had visualised through

my Wordsworthian 'inward eye' were nothing like the bunch I was presented with. Nevertheless I accepted the kind gift, saying to myself: 'It's the thought that matters' and not the papery limp yellow bunch in my hands.

As I came out of the din and bustle of the platform concourse, stepped on to the pavement and had a good look around the station at its architecture, it appeared to be almost identical to that of the Victoria terminus in Bombay (Mumbai). Later I learned that the colonial authorities had deliberately exported the style of the Victorian

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and Palladian architecture to the lands they ruled in order to make major Indian cities look distinctively British. The French had done the same to their colonies

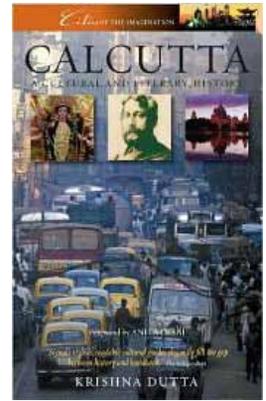
Riding in a taxi across London, I came across familiar street names including Park Lane, Russell Street and Wellesley Street. In my childhood spent in Calcutta (Kolkata), many streets had the same names commemorating yesterday's colonial notables.

The other surprise was the way people spoke. I had imagined most would talk in the manner of the BBC World Service, which I often listened to in preparation for my visit. The cab driver did not articulate like that and neither did the other acquaintances I was soon to meet, including my tutor, Dr Hamlyn. I felt daunted about how to decode all the different kinds of accents around me. So I decided to imitate the speakers as a way to cope with this dilemma.

During my first week I took a bus ride. When the ticket conductor of the old-fashioned Route-

master double decker asked for my destination, I timidly tried to get my mouth around the seemingly tongue-twisting sentence 'Great Portland Street tube station, please'. He obviously did not understand me. After several attempts when he finally worked out what I was trying to say, he almost barked back at me in a loud frustrating accented voice 'Great Portland Station?' I was relieved and nodded in agreement. Instantly I memorised how he had said those words and practised them at home to make it sound as close as possible.

The next day I was again on the same bus journey. Now more confident about how to pronounce my destination, I waited for my turn. When the time came, like a professional actor, I shouted it out exactly the same way as the bus conductor of the previous day had done. The result was mortifying! The entire busload of people stared agog at this demure young Indian lady with expressions of disapproval, shock or surprise. What had gone wrong? I felt sad and confused and wished the



ground would swallow me up. I decided not to imitate people any more and began to concentrate on how to improve speaking the English language properly so that I could get on with my new life.

In those days there were not many sari-clad young women in London, so I attracted some attention – mostly positive though there were one or two stares which were not.

I have lived in my adopted city, London, now for over 40 years and have made many friends, who have helped me to feel at home. They have enriched my life and enhanced my understanding of the place and its history, tradition and culture. I consider myself fortunate to have them around me.

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 come, please telephone your hosts a few days beforehand so that they know how many to expect.

Postal area	Date	Time	Contact	Telephone
NW2 Childs Hill	Tuesday 18 September	11.00am	Pat Taylor	8458 3468
N10 Muswell Hill	Friday 5 October	10.30am	Hilda Wilson	8442 0567
N6 Highgate	Thursday 1 November	3.00pm	Dorothy and Douglas Barnes	8341 3592
N7 Holloway	Tuesday 20 November	10.30am	Margaret Orrell	7607 7968

Education for all?

Have girls and women achieved parity in education? **Miriam E David** thinks not and that the UK government is further hindering their progress

We are living in contradictory times. On the one hand, educational opportunities are multiplying and people of all ages are taking advantage of these: my U3A group is testimony to how eager for knowledge older women, for example, are! But we are also witnessing a severe global economic downturn in which the UK coalition government is targeting education for cutbacks.

I start this article with new international evidence about the explosion of worldwide educational opportunities and move on to show that the government is ignoring these developments. What can we, as older learners, do about this, to create a better education for future generations?

In March 2012, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) (UNESCO) published its *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education* for the first time (<http://tinyurl.com/crqys2y>). This contains exciting and up-to-date information – in colour – about global educational opportunities. It signals how, as a result of women's campaigning for educational change over the last 30–40 years, gender equality in education is now firmly on the international public agenda. But national public policies do not always accord with this campaigning: the coalition government is impervious to gender equality in education.

The director-general of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, argues on the first page of the Atlas foreword:

‘... Girls and women remain deprived of full and equal opportunities for education. There has been progress towards parity at the primary level, but this tapers off at the secondary level in developing regions. The global economic crisis is deepening inequalities, made worse by cuts in education budgets and stagnating development support...’

UNESCO's commitment to educational equality dates back almost 25 years, to the UN's first world conference on education for all, which took place in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990.

To quote from the Atlas (page 8): ‘There, representatives from 155 countries launched the Education for All (EFA) movement by agreeing to make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade. They adopted a Framework for Action that defined targets and strategies aimed at meeting basic learning needs of all by the year 2000... Another important development was the signing in September 2000 of a United Nations Millennium Declaration by all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organisations that laid out a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to

be reached by 2015...’

A closely related theme ... has been that of gender equality in education. From the outset, the global community has recognised that educating girls and women is an imperative, not only as a matter of respecting a basic human right for half the population but as a powerful and necessary first step to achieving the broader goals of EFA.’

The overall pattern is clear:

‘...enormous growth in educational opportunities and literacy levels throughout the world over the last four decades... the capacity of the world's educational systems more than doubled – from 647 million students in 1970 to 1,397 million in 2009. Enrolments increased from 418 to 702 million pupils at the primary level, from 196 to 531 million at the secondary level, and from 33 to 164 million in higher education... An important theme is that although girls are still disadvantaged in terms of access to education in many countries and regions, they tend to persist and perform at higher rates than boys once they do make it into the education system...’ (Atlas, p9)

As I argued on the Gender and Education Association's website (<http://tinyurl.com/c63o8by>), the secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, is trying to go back 50 years and entrench social class distinctions rather than enhance

equality policies. His proposals for both the primary school curriculum and for re-introducing GCE O-levels exhibit an old-fashioned view of how children should be brought up. He has developed a new term, 'high-performing jurisdictions', as a code for elite educational systems, as opposed to what are regular school systems in different localities of the 'global north'. These approaches are based upon strictly traditional views of gender roles in the family and the wider society where 'boys will be boys!'

Under this government and its commitment to an age of austerity, there is no longer any semblance of a commitment to equality duties, despite the legislation enacted

in 2010 under the Equalities Act (<http://tinyurl.com/cf7dlk9>).

Traditional masculinities are on the ascendance, without even lip-service being paid to the questions of what has changed and their impacts. Gove argues that it is important to be ambitious about standards and reinforces this by expecting his programmes of study for English, maths and science to take precedence over all the other primary school topics (such as history or music). Similarly, the proposal to re-introduce O-levels after their amalgamation into General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) more than 20 years ago reveals a complete lack of understanding of the raft of education policy changes over this time

(<http://tinyurl.com/bq6wvov>).

Wanting to ensure that the elite remain the politically dominant class, Gove ignores all the evidence and transformations around gender and re-entrenches a bullish political culture. This is what we need to counter by arguing for gender-sensitive educational standards for all learners in the 21st century. We need to build on the global evidence for women's resilience in education to ensure collaborative resistance to both the austerity culture and encroachment of further forms of macho culture.

MIRIAM E DAVID IS PROFESSOR EMERITA OF EDUCATION AT THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, LONDON. SHE LEADS THE INTEREST GROUP WOMEN AND WISDOM.

Editorial note

The article above raises important issues. The views do not necessarily reflect those of North London U3A. We welcome letters from members who would like to comment on this and on anything else in the newsletter

Meetings and visits

Spedan's partnership

It is not often that we have one of our own members giving our monthly lecture, yet this was the case in May when Peter Cox talked on Spedan's Partnership – the story of John Lewis and Waitrose. **Dorothy Barnes** reports

Peter, who spent the whole of his working career with the John Lewis Partnership, began by recounting the early history of the business: how John Lewis, an orphaned draper's apprentice from Shepton Mallett, in 1864 opened a single-fronted draper's shop in Oxford Street. Hardworking and maintaining that the principles of successful retailing were 'value, as-

sortment, service and honesty', he prospered and gradually acquired the neighbouring small shops, so that by 1894 the store had the frontage we are now familiar with. In 1906, when he bought the ailing business of Peter Jones in Sloane Square, his two sons were working with him.

Four years later, Spedan, his elder son, shocked to discover that

the family income from the firm equalled that of all the employees, persuaded his reluctant father to let him take over the management of Peter Jones and run it according to his belief in co-ownership. In his business, profits would be shared and employees at all levels would be involved in management and policy-making. His first act was to raise wages by 20 per cent.

In the subsequent years the business developed into what we know today. Father and son disagreed violently during the industrial unrest that followed the Great War but eventually became reconciled. When John Lewis died in 1928 the two firms were joined together in a trust which embodied the partnership principles that Spedan espoused.

The grocer's shops of Waitrose, founded by Mr Waite and



What happened to Taylor?

Mr Rose, were added some years later. (I was delighted to have the explanation of a name which had

always puzzled me.) All three businesses were bound together and the John Lewis Partnership still endures as a trust.

Our speaker gave us not only the picture of the family, the practical details of the business, but also a flavour of the times. As we listened we could understand why Peter Cox had found his career at Waitrose so rewarding.

Eighteen glorious years!

On 6 June, North London U3A turned 18. This was celebrated at the June monthly meeting, when founding members recalled its beginnings in July 1994.

Pat Taylor reports

Keith Richards, our founder and first chair; Wilson Briscoe, the second chair; James Crawford, for many years the treasurer and joint membership secretary; and the first secretary, Jenny Clark, shared their memories of North London U3A's first days. They used phrases such as 'a great excitement' and the possibility of 'a different outlook on life' for those entering the third age.

Keith explained that he had viewed his imminent retirement as a bereavement and that the possibility of bringing the U3A movement to North London seemed the natural solution. He described how a working party he called in September 1993 led to a winter of planning meetings. Following an advert in the local press, launch day for the new U3A was set for 6 June 1994 – D-Day. Keith remembers standing at the door

of Lauderdale House in Highgate worrying that no one would come – but 60 did and 35 paid the subscription on the spot. Today we have 647 members and over 100 groups.

Eric Midwinter, one of the progenitors of the national movement, was the main speaker. He described how he, Peter Laslett and Michael Young had adapted the concept of the U3A, which began in France in 1973, to suit the UK. They established three principles: the U3A movement should be positive about the value to society and the opportunities for learning in later life; it should rely on self-help; and it should have a national element.

They were clear about the relevance of William Beveridge's belief in the 'potential of ordinary folk' and the importance of keeping local schemes at the centre of



the movement, though they also recognised from Day One the need for a national organisation.

Eric Midwinter felt that no other modern educational self-help group in the UK has been as successful – and could be the model for others – The U3A, he said, was really good for those it's really good for. He stressed that of the many retired people in the

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UK, the U3A could benefit at least 1 million.

Today there are more than 800 U3As with 370,000 members, and more than 40,000 different groups. The movement is sufficiently well known for Bath U3A to merit a mention in a detective story without the author feeling any need for more explanation.

Nevertheless, there is room for more banner-waving to explain more clearly what we are – a way for the members to share learning experiences not for qualifications but for fun. The role of enjoyment should not be ignored, he said, as enjoyment enhances learning.

He told a story to illustrate the U3A ethos: a member left her Cumbria U3A at the end of one

week and joined Hitchin U3A the next and felt she picked up where she had left off.

At the end of his amusing and heartfelt talk Eric turned to Keith Richards, who has done so much for the U3A movement in London and nationally, to congratulate him on being added to the Third Age's Roll of Honour for his achievements.

The rhythms of life

Our lives are governed by an internal clock sensitive to changes in light. So said Russell Foster, professor of circadian neuroscience at a meeting in May jointly organised by DANA and U3A for London members. **Douglas Barnes** reveals some illuminating findings

Our internal clocks have special sensors that respond delicately to the changes of day and night. The genes associated with this process have been found in mice and flies, so it appears that many different creatures are governed by a similar clock.

Professor Foster explained that the clock not only controls our sleeping but impinges on our lives in many other ways. For instance, a driver on the road between 4 and 6am is as handicapped as if he has exceeded the legal amount of alcohol. Strokes are more likely between 6am and 12 noon, because of the clock.

Sleep, which is essential for the effective cognitive processing of information, also profoundly affects our physical well-being. Adolescents are less intellectu-

ally alert in the mornings than in afternoons, but their teachers are more alert in the mornings and set more challenging schoolwork at that time. Young people need about nine hours' sleep a night and adults about eight, though the demands decrease in later life. However, we were urged even during our third age to see to it that we had as much sleep as possible.

Professor Foster was concerned that drugs tested on nocturnal creatures such as mice were prescribed for humans. He also thought that doctors should take more account of the clock in prescribing the times for taking medicine.

Foster went on to talk about his other interest, the seasonal patterns that shape our yearly lives. He then responded to questions



Russell Foster

on a range of topics, including the functions of different parts of our sleep patterns and the incidence of mental illness across time. Two and a half hours had passed amazingly quickly, and several of us thought that it had been one of the best lectures we had ever heard.

The best of Sussex

*The Weald is good, the Downs are best
I'll give you the run of 'em East to West*
RUDYARD KIPLING

Veronica Hearn describes how she and her companions experienced a taste of this on a U3A excursion last spring

Despite its name, the Norfolk Arms is located in Arundel, west Sussex. It is an atmospheric former coaching inn and was home to a group from North London U3A when we visited the area in April.

Our trip had many high points, one of which was Arundel itself, with a skyline dominated by a Victorian castle, the tower of the mediaeval church of St Nicholas and a French style Roman Catholic cathedral. The latter is dedicated to St Philip Howard, who died in the Tower of London in 1595 for refusing to renounce Catholicism and was canonised, along with other English and Welsh martyrs, in 1970. The castle, a huge presence, appears visible from almost any point of the town below. It is linked, through the Fitzalan Chapel, to St Nicholas's church and houses two denominations (Anglican and Catholic) under one roof.

From Arundel we set out every day to see many of the sites for which the area is famed. We visited three superb houses: Elizabethan Parham, 17th-century Petworth and Georgian Uppark. Parham was sympathetically restored by its owners in the 20th century. It has a splendid collection of Elizabethan and Stuart

portraits and a striking long gallery with a floral ceiling painted in the 1960s. Petworth's park was designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the famous English landscape architect. It has fine collections of paintings and statuary, an impressive series of state rooms and an overpowering grand

buildings in south-east England. It now has 47 exhibits ranging from a toll house to a plumber's workshop to a watermill.

At Fishbourne we toured a Roman palace, which proved to be a revelation of varied mosaic floors and a restored Roman garden. We spent an afternoon in Chichester,



Uppark House

staircase. Uppark is best known for an excellent restoration to its fabric after severe damage by fire in 1989. The ground floor rooms provide an appropriate setting for the furniture and pictures collected by the then owner on his grand tour from 1749–51.

We interspersed visits to these majestic houses with excursions to the great outdoors. We spent a morning at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, launched in 1967 to rescue vernacular

where the sun shone brightly in the cathedral and the bishop's palace garden. Our final afternoon was in Wisley, where we dodged thunderstorms and rediscovered the advantages of a large, well-stocked greenhouse and an equally large, well-stocked café.

A big thank you is due to Krishna Dutta, Margaret Kennedy and Rosemarie Nixon, who collectively produced an imaginative and varied programme and carried it through to a satisfying end.

Group news

From Patricia Isaacs

Dear friends,
The really good news is that we have a number of new groups proposed by people who have recently joined North London U3A and who have also offered to lead them. It is indeed pleasing to see new members becoming involved so quickly. And still the ideas and suggestions are coming in! As far as possible, I hope to set up these groups in time for the autumn term, even if one or two make a late start. Some will be on a trial run, and if there is sufficient interest, they will be properly introduced in time for the January term.

One suggestion came from a member who would love to learn Arabic – a great idea, but of course it would need an Arabic speaker to lead the group. Can anyone help? And if we could find a tutor, are there any members who would be interested? If so, please let me know on both counts.

Local Short Walks in the Finsbury Park area needs a new coordinator, someone to keep in touch with anyone interested and arrange meeting places, let members know of any change or

cancellation of dates. This is not a difficult task, and as the walk would take place on a Saturday afternoon it's a pleasant way of spending part of the weekend with friends. Again, please let me know if you are interested.

Liz Hatt had a good response to her summer programme session for her new poetry group, and those who attended were enthusiastic. Liz would be happy to hear from you if you would like to join them at one of their meetings, once a month on Mondays (page 8 in the Interest Groups booklet).

And how about a second group reading translations into English from literature written in other languages? We already have one meeting in Highgate, but a new member would like to start something similar in Finchley. Miriam Mazower would be delighted to hear from you, so please contact me and I'll put you in touch.

There is more: Leila Lessof would like to set up a new book group in the Islington area, with

a meeting on 24 September at 10.30 to test the waters. If that is successful, the group will continue. Leila's chosen book for that first meeting is *The Winged Falcon* by Jamil Ahmed. It's quite short, so a good choice to get things going. Contact Leila on 7226 0919 or mandl@lessof.plus.com.

There are other exciting ideas afoot. Keep an eye on the website and the next issue of Update for information. And remember, please, that our website is constantly revised so that details of new groups, changes to existing groups, and items of useful information are always being added to the groups pages.

Enjoy your groups, enjoy your involvement with North London U3A, and I look forward to meeting many of you at some of our Monthly Meetings.

Very best wishes to all of you from the groups organiser team.

PATRICIA ISAACS
GROUPS ORGANISER

Une petite madeleine

Recently our French literature group was reading Proust's description of himself as a young boy eating a madeleine cake. This is an iconic moment near the beginning of his novel, *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. One of our group

– Elsa Ramsey – brought her own home-made madeleine cakes, which we ate while reading. It was a



magic thing to do. If the young boy had had such tasty madeleine cakes, it isn't surprising he so vividly remembered the experience!

DOREEN SHAFRAN

How language works

Linguistics, now a well-established area of knowledge, offers ways of looking at how we use language which are often different from how 'the man in the street' sees it. **Douglas Barnes** explains how the course he leads, *How Language Works*, reveals interesting insights into language

Is English one language or many? How and why do people change their speech patterns? Why do so many people keep saying 'ain't' when teachers and others have told them it is 'bad English'? In what sense of 'bad'?

How Language Works is rather different from many U3A interest groups: it is a course taught through seminars and discussions – though it's nothing like school English lessons.

Consider: what about double negatives? Do two negatives make a positive? What is the difference between dialect and accent? Does meaning lie in the words themselves or in what we bring to them? For example, how do we know that babies are not for sale in a baby sale? The words themselves don't help. What does 'meaning' mean, anyway? How do young children learn to speak? When they say: 'I goed to the shop' how does that

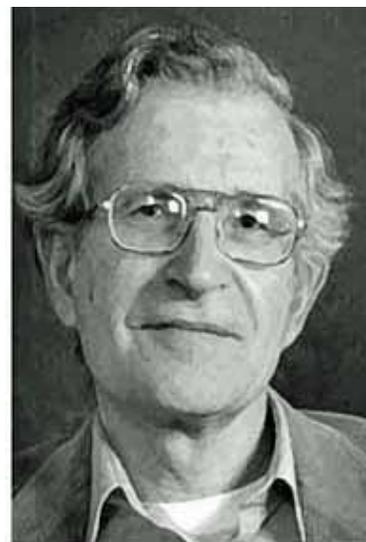
happen? They are not likely to be imitating an adult.

It's during the discussion of questions such as these that the members of the group are able to join in and contribute from their own experience and understanding.

As a basis for our discussions, we look closely at examples of language in use, so that we are 'doing linguistics', as it were. Work on grammar is kept to a minimum. Although in one session we discuss Chomsky's contention that the ability to learn a language is hard-wired in all of us from birth, we don't study Chomsky's analytical systems, or any others.

On the other hand, since the point of the course is to open up alternative ways of thinking about the use of language in speech and writing, at times we touch upon such profundities. That's what learning is about – finding new ways of

understanding the world about us. There are lighter moments too, with noise and laughter,



Noam Chomsky

when we remember things that we've said or heard.

Each year a new group begins, so there are normally places for new members at the beginning. We meet every Wednesday afternoon for two terms in my flat on a corner of Highgate High Street. If you might be interested, telephone me on 8341 3592.

British history on Wednesday morning

The Wednesday morning history group has for several years enjoyed exploring British history from the Roman invasions to the Napoleonic wars. Now we need new ideas and new faces to go with them: we could look at

people and places, at bills or battles, at the cultural background of a chosen period, or continue on into the 19th century.

If you are interested in history and would enjoy digging out some of the facts, then come along on

10 September to the open meeting at St Paul's, North Finchley and introduce yourself to us. We plan to restart our stimulating debates in January.

PAT TAYLOR

Spreading happiness

*What's the use of worrying and feeling blue?
When days are long, keep on smiling through
And spread a little happiness till dreams come true.*



‘Spread a little Shappiness’, from the Vivian Ellis musical *Mr Cinders*, epitomised the philosophy of life of Barbra Landes – a vivacious, dynamic member of North London U3A, who died unexpectedly but peacefully in the early hours of 9

August. It is not surprising, then, that it was one of her favourite songs.

A primary school teacher for 35 years, she combined admirable skills at organisation with a flair for invention in the U3A groups she adored.

Her husband, Richard, thinks of her as his ‘little hummingbird’: ‘Always humming, always busy, always happy’.

He adds: ‘She would not want people to be sad. So let everyone remember her enthusiasm, laugh at her jokes and concentrate on the gift of friendship she gave us.’

Pat and the Beeb

Pat Taylor retired from the committee in July after a number of years in which she was active as vice chairman, a group coordinator, monthly meetings organiser, promoter of links with neighbouring U3As and a leader of forum discussions. As the BBC World Service also retires – from Bush House – she remembers her early career there



After university, with no clear idea of what I wanted to do – except that I didn’t want to be a teacher and I couldn’t live at home for ever – I came to London from

the Home Counties and knocked on a few doors. I might have become an archivist but discovered I had just missed the last training place. Shell had no need of me either.

My last port of call was the BBC. They gave me a job in Portland Place, where after no training, one promotion and six weeks’ service I was moved to Bush House as a bookings clerk for the External Services.

What were we booking? All the facilities that kept the European and World Service ticking. Did

you want a studio? What about recording your piece? Talks studio or something bigger? A line from Paris?

The list was endless and the facilities never enough, so I was constantly jiggling and negotiating with the section staff and their secretaries. There was a sheet about ten feet long for each day, listing all the studios and recording channels on which we tried to match requirements and note who was using them: ‘Who are you interviewing? The Sardauna of Sokoto? How do you spell that

and who is he?’

The regular transmissions all had to be in place before bookings for the day or the rest of the week could be added. And, of course, we had to learn all the facilities each studio or recording channel contained and what each bit of equipment actually did.

No proper training, though: we had to learn by asking and by making mistakes. It was some time, however, before I fully twigged how a transmission managed to get on air. When we had created a space to record a last-minute request by negotiating and moving other bookings around, we had a real sense of achievement – that was what we got for all our hard work!

The phones rang incessantly – and I do mean rang. Flashing lights came later. Producers and

their clerks would queue up to speak to us in the hope that they would get an answer more quickly than by hanging on a phone line. We longed for the peace of the futures office where the booking sheets for the next month or so were kept. The other peaceful spot – which had its own stresses – was where each bookings clerk in turn spent a week typing up all these reservations onto a stencil from which the control room worked.

Margaret ruled over the futures office and Elizabeth over the current week. There wasn't much love lost between them. The two sets of staff did not easily gel and I had to walk carefully. But it was a fascinating and eye-opening place to work – despite the headaches from the noise of the phones ringing.

In 1958 the atmosphere and attitudes of the war years could still be felt. To me, still rather young

and from a redbrick university and a small school, it all seemed very cosmopolitan. I felt near to world events. On my first solo Saturday I was reduced to a state of terror by the arrival in the office of Anatol Goldberg of the Russian Section, demanding Radio Moscow on the internal network by the time he came back from the canteen after a cup of tea. Panic! How to achieve that? Answer: phone the control room and ask for help.

Bush Bookings was a good place to learn about broadcasting and a stepping-off point for the next stage of my BBC life as I became a studio manager and then went on into production. But in the end I did become a teacher, first as an instructor at the Radio Training School and finally as its head – all of 37½ years later. You never know where knocking on a door may lead.

Victim Support

Would you consider volunteering to help crime victims put their lives in order?

Patricia Isaacs explains how you can do this through Victim Support

Have you ever been the victim of a crime? For most people, especially those of us no longer young, the experience causes distress and acute anxiety. Whether the crime was comparatively minor or something serious, for victims it can be a violent invasion of their homes or, far worse, a violation of themselves. This can apply, too, to witnesses of crimes, where shock may take some time to diminish. Frequently, the anxiety includes feelings of despair and hopelessness as well as the misery of not knowing what to do, where

to go for help, where to find someone who can take over the burden of practical matters, such

as dealings with the police and lawyers. Victim Support volunteers are professionally trained to attend to victims' needs and answer



as dealings with the police and lawyers.

Help and understanding are available through the charity Victim Support, whatever kind of crime or criminal one has had to

face. Victim Support volunteers are professionally trained to attend to victims' needs and answer their questions; where necessary, they will know where to find legal, psychological and other professional help of all kinds. How do I know this? I worked as a volunteer for Victim Support

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for some years and although there were occasions when the tasks overwhelmed me, most of the experience was rewarding and gave me the satisfaction of knowing that my empathy and assistance had alleviated someone's misery.

Victim Support in Islington has approached North London U3A, looking for willing members to be trained as volunteers in the witness service attached to Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court.

As their information states, the role description is 'to enable victims/witnesses and their associates to deal with the experience of being a victim/witness of antisocial behaviour, reporting, gathering evidence, attending court, supporting them and advocating on their behalf as required'.

If you think you could give this support, please let me know (patricia.highgate@yahoo.co.uk). I will forward information given to

me by the Victim Support witness service and put you in touch with someone who will be happy to answer your queries. Alternatively, you can contact Jeanne Conry directly.

Jeanne Conry, Camden ASB coordinator (Victim Support) 7506 3224 or jeanne.conry@victimsupport.org.uk

This is a truly worthwhile thing to do, so please consider it.

All that Jazz

In-jokes,
and out-jokes.
We're in the palm of their hands.

Jokes about pay and wrong notes,
Pros behaving like kids!

Old standards, busy music.
They're dancing!

Mainstream, Be-bop, Trad!
'Playing around the tune', you said.

The toe-tapping syncopation
of 'Honeysuckle Rose'.
The slide and rasp of the trombone
driving, inventive; tender.

A fugue, Bach-like,
from clarinet and trombone.
'If I had you...'
takes me inside myself.

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Letters

Stamping out postage spending

Inote the concern of the North London U3A committee regarding the recent huge increase in postage. I do not need a paper copy of Update or Newsletter – the email copy you sent me is fine!

BARBARA CANTOR

Editor's note

Thank you for your help and concern. We need to explain though that the publications are not sent out by email but posted on our website www.nlu3a.org.uk where they can be read (pictures in original colour) or downloaded.

Freedom

As I set out every Friday morning to join our walking group, I reflect on the Freedom Pass and what it means for North London U3A. All of our walks are accessible by public transport and so by Freedom Pass. Many other groups make use of the freedom to roam that this pass gives us. I know plenty of members who regularly buzz around to various activities in different locations in the greater London area: we can travel at no cost to the edge of Zone 6.

Get on the tube or bus with younger people and you quickly discover the price of fares on TFL. So we must appreciate our luck. Perhaps it's not luck, though, as most of us are retired professional peo-

ple who have worked for many years, paid our taxes and so earned this valuable benefit.

Where would we be without our pass? Some of us would be stuck at home, isolated and lacking the mental, physical and social stimulus that North London U3A gives us. Others might be driving here, there and everywhere and polluting our beautiful city.

This is a benefit which we must all fight to retain for as long as we need it. We who have the power of the grey vote must keep a careful eye on Boris.

GILLIAN DOYLE
COORDINATOR, LOCAL SHORT WALKS

Gift aid

Over the years I have had a few queries about the Gift Aid scheme administered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

It increases the value of donations to charities, by allowing them to reclaim the basic rate tax. Donations by individuals who pay UK tax are regarded as having basic rate tax deducted.

Say, for example, the subscription is £32. If you pay tax at the basic rate of 20 per cent it means that the gross equivalent is £40. It is the 20 per

cent of £40, or 25 per cent of £32, which we are able to claim back.

By ticking the box on the subscription renewal form you enable us to do this.

You can use Gift Aid if the income tax or capital gains tax you've paid for the tax year (6 April to 5 April) in which you make your donation is at least equal to the amount of basic rate tax we and other charities you donate to, will reclaim on your gift.

BARRY DAVIES

GOODSWAP

The column where members can swap goods or skills with each other free of charge. It was the brainchild of Barbra Landes

JAMES CRAWFORD has a number of items, all in working order:

- video camera tapes of North London activities which could be of interest after editing.
- A 14-inch Proview cream computer monitor.
- Two 20-inch Dell black computer monitors.

Contact James Crawford, jjpcrawford@blueyonder.co.uk or 8348 6531 or. 27-inch monitor has gone, thanks to Goodswap.

VIVIEN PRESTON has a six-year-old PictureMate Epson machine for printing photos. Contact vivienpreston18@waitrose.com

Clerkenwell walk

Friday 12 October



Following on from our successful visit to the Museum of the Order of St John, we have arranged an excellent Clerkenwell and Islington guide to cover the rich history of Clerkenwell more generally, instructing us in the 3 Rs of the area – Religion, Radicals and Rivers – with additional topographical titbits along the way.

Times

We meet at 10.50am at Farringdon tube station

exit for an 11am start. The tour lasts about 1¾ hours, and will finish around Smithfield, where there are cafes and toilets.

Cost

£6 each, **payable on the day**

Travel

Farringdon (tube and Thameslink)

Booking for both trips

Use either the booking form below or download a copy from the website, 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 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

Friday 16 November

This is the visit we had to cancel last year

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.

Cost
£5 or £6, depending on numbers and **payable on the day.**

Travel
Leicester Square and Charing Cross tube stations are nearby. Numerous buses serve St Martin's Place and Trafalgar Square.

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

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 No _____

Date	Name of visit	Accepted/ Not accepted

Leave blank

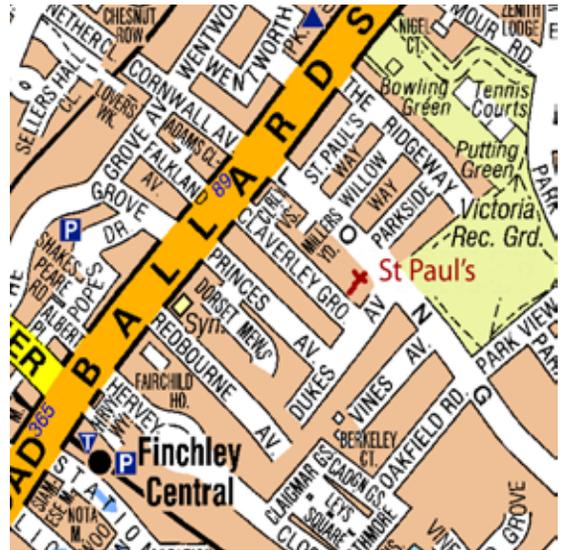
Send this booking form and a **stamped addressed envelope** to Jim Sweeney, 22 Cholmeley Park, London, N6 5EU

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 summer term

All take place at St Paul's Church, Long Lane, Finchley.
Refreshments from 10.15 except as specially indicated below



Monday 10 September *Beginning of term event*

This is not the usual monthly meeting. All group coordinators have been invited, and each will have a stall at which they can explain their group's activities. **Non-members are welcome, so tell your friends.**

It is a walk-in event, so come any time between 11am and 1pm. Refreshments from 10.45.

Monday 8 October *The musical theatre of Gilbert & Sullivan*

Bernard Lockett, author, speaker and broadcaster, will share the world of Gilbert and Sullivan. A trustee of the international G&S Society, Bernard has broadcast on Radios 3 and 4 and has appeared on the Andrew Marr show on BBC1.

Monday 12 November *'Half medical knowledge is untrue'*

Dr. Stephen Bourne, a local GP will share with us the background and scientific rationale of alternative medical solutions

Monday 10 December *A concert of music and variety*

Coffee will be served from 10am. Come early because this could be popular

Term dates

Term	Start	Finish
Autumn	17 September 2012	7 December 2012
Spring	7 January 2013	28 March 2013
Summer	29 April 2013	19 July 2013