



Issue 55  
April 2014

North London University of the Third Age

# Newsletter

## The way we were

North London U3A (NLU3A) celebrates its 20th birthday in June. Founding member **Jenny Clark** reflects on how things have changed

The world was a different place when NLU3A's inaugural meeting was held, in 1994 at Lauderdale House. Bill Clinton and John Major were in office; Nelson Mandela had just been inaugurated as president of South Africa; and the Winter Olympics had been held in Lillehammer in Norway.

Now the world has changed, and so has NLU3A.

In autumn 1993, Keith Richards, our co-founder and first chairperson, went to Cambridge to learn about the U3A movement from one of its UK founders, Peter Laslett. First established in France in 1972, the U3A was just over 10 years old in Britain. Keith returned to London fired with enthusiasm about starting a U3A in North London.

On 6 June 1994 (D-Day), the new NLU3A's inaugural meeting attracted 60 people, and the launch was on. A committee was

formed; the subscription was set at £10 (£15 for a couple); and six groups took shape – English Literature, International Affairs, Belief and Unbelief, German, The Shape of London, and Indoor Games. The first monthly meeting (then called a 'central event') was held in October that year; the topic was 'How to look at Chinese Painting'. The first AGM took

know, because I wrote it!).

By 1997 there were over 200 members and 31 groups. And from there, it grew, with more members and groups each year: now we have about 100 groups and a membership of roughly 650.

Gradual and steady growth meant new opportunities, and new members of the committee to deal with them; new groups needed

new venues, so we found those; the arrival of email meant that communicating with all the members became easier; we started going on NLU3A holidays, and on coach trips; and we became part of the London Region, as well as of the national organisation.

We have had six chairs in our 20 years – and all six still play a full part in everything that is going

on. That must be a happy indication!

And we all try to maintain the welcoming friendliness we had in the first place – long may we continue to do so!



place in May the following year, and the membership shot up to 85 from an initial 35. The first newsletter appeared in December 1995 – typed out and photocopied, and then posted to all the members (I

## North London U3A Committee 2013-14

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Newsletters and Updates are each published three times a year.  
The newsletter is edited by Helen Green with assistance from  
Judith Abbs, Helen Killick and Judith Litherland.

Update is edited by Jane Marsh.

Copy deadline for the next Update is 22 May.

Submissions to **Jane Marsh**,  
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**The editors may shorten or otherwise edit contributions  
to fit spacing and style requirements.**

For membership enquiries please contact  
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## Glasses raised to Barry

Many of you know Barry Davies, in particular for his work on our newsletter and Update over the years. He has now resigned from his NLU3A commitments and deserves a truly heartfelt thank you from all of us, and an extra one from me, for his constant support. We'll miss you, Barry!

Helen Green continues as editor of the newsletter, and we are happy to welcome Jane Marsh as the new editor of Update.

PATRICIA ISAACS  
CHAIR

# Time for a change

**Patricia Isaacs** is both chair and groups organiser of North London U3A – but not for long, as she informs us

**A**nn Elliot and I – the remaining two members of the original groups organiser team – are retiring this summer: after almost four years in post, it is almost time for us to go and for a new team to take over.

Almost, because we have jobs to finish: we will continue to work together while we prepare next year's interest groups booklet and look at proposals for new groups to start in the autumn. There are several suggestions in the pipeline, so the new team members are now approaching prospective leaders. We hope the overlap will make the changeover seamless.

Ann and I will miss being on the team; it has been thoroughly rewarding – hard work and great fun, too. Our warmest wishes go to the new team, which will be led by Sue Teller. I hope you will give them all the terrific support you have given to me.

At the March monthly meeting I asked members to join John Hajdu, who organises these meetings, and me in a round of applause for the volunteers who

work quietly in the background to make everything run smoothly. I would like to repeat those well-deserved thanks here. Frank Fisher and Keith Kirby put out the chairs and tables; Peter Rockwell and Ann and John Dugdale set up the loudspeaker system and cope with the occasional frustrations of sorting it out; Jim Sweeney passes the handheld microphone around during question time; Helene Davidian warmly welcomes people as they enter and sign the register. Last, but definitely not least, thanks to all the women who slave away in the kitchen to provide us with tea, coffee, biscuits and smiles! And a big thank you to John for the long list of truly interesting speakers he invites for our meetings. Many, many thanks to all of you.

Do you use our website? There is a wealth of information there, and web organiser Mike Christie regularly updates all the pages, including the one for groups with spaces.

The committee would be grateful if those of you who have

not provided email addresses, or who don't check their emails, could do so. It is much quicker and easier to keep in touch with you by email – and it saves NLU3A huge amounts of money that would otherwise go on stamps, paper and envelopes – and of time spent stuffing the envelopes. Emails cost nothing, and with one click they go to everyone.

And here is a puzzle: many of our members open the general email but don't then click on to Update, or Newsletter, or any other links – why is this? Answers with reasons would be helpful, please!

Remember that we are here to help you, to make NLU3A successful and pleasurable, so do get in touch if you need advice or have a point to raise.

Very best wishes for a great summer from the groups organiser team, and I'm looking forward to seeing many of you during the summer programme.

*Patricia*

## The new groups organiser team

Groups organiser	Sue Teller	8381 4480	ginpalace@mac.com
New groups	Candiss Waldram	8883 1395	scwaldram@yahoo.com
Waiting lists	Henrietta Cohen	8343 3088	henriettacohen@tiscali.co.uk
Venues	Fiamma Shani	8444 0548	fiammashani@hotmail.com



# As I see it

Keith Richards wonders whether our original ideals are being compromised



During the final year of the last Labour government, the then secretary of state for education, John Denham, undertook a major review of informal education. This was a heartening experience for those of us who were involved, and the culminating white paper was a snapshot of provision which, although largely ignored by the incoming government, remains an original and innovative document.

Colleagues in a surprisingly crowded field were sometimes surprised to hear about the growth and contribution of the U3As, and a small group of members inspiringly led by the then chairperson of the Third Age Trust, Ian Searle, produced a booklet which attempted to define our particular approach as well as assist fledgling and established U3As. It was called 'Time to Learn'.

Sceptical voices inside the movement and beyond have been silenced by its success and national office has reported that all copies have been distributed and a

second edition is necessary.

We resisted the temptation to just make a few corrections and tidy things up. Instead, I am participating in a complete re-write, with Ian playing a major role. Much has happened in recent years, particularly in the area of resources. A series of workshops aimed at assisting group leaders/coordinators has been held in the South West, the South East and in Yorkshire and Humberside. On the internet, new attempts to produce our own online courses have been paralleled by the development of in-depth studies, and many universities have established massive free resources following the lead of the Open University's free online learning programme, Future Learn.

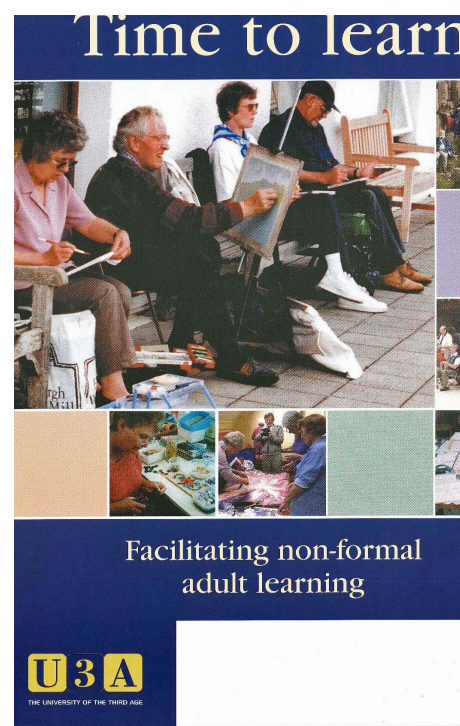
Sadly, the new booklet will have to forcefully reiterate the basic principles of the U3A movement: at the recent AGM in Nottingham there was growing concern that rapid growth has been at the expense of adherence to the self-help, participative model. There were disturbing reports of paid tutors who are not U3A members and individual groups setting up their own bank accounts with costs additional to the subscription fee possibly making membership too expensive for some. I have always argued that if a U3A does not have a member 'qualified' to lead a particular group, then that subject should not be offered.

At the moment the trust is discussing how to follow the suc-

cessful Founder's Lecture given by Eric Midwinter last May. One colleague feels that the lecture should be a biennial event, with a series of meetings held around the country in the intervening years inviting members to revisit the decisions made in the early 80s by the founders and to decide whether they are still valid. I certainly think they are and wonder whether North London U3A colleagues agree. The new booklet is to be called 'More Time to Learn' and I am wondering if we should add three more words – 'From Each Other'.

KEITH RICHARDS IS A  
FOUNDING MEMBER OF NLU3A

- Do you have any views on the opinions expressed here? Please send them to [helenjuni@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenjuni@ntlworld.com) for inclusion in the next issue.



# All about London

The shape of London is a popular group which has been led by the much respected Wilson Briscoe since NLU3A was founded. He tells **Helen Green** what makes the group tick

**Q:** What is the shape of London?

**A:** The study of the city's natural and built environment from pre-history to the present day and of some of the people who made a contribution: Wren (his ideas for the re-planning of London), Lord Burlington (Georgian London), Bazalgette (The Great Stink and London Drainage), Lord Ashfield (Transport for London). Looks a little heavy, but it's fun.

**Q:** How does the group function?

**A:** Social chat and coffee, followed by a lecture with printed hand-outs. There's a whiteboard for drawing, open discussion during the lecture, and contributions by members. We go on visits during the summer term.

The sessions are informal, argumentative and friendly; it's the only way I can run a group of 40 to 45 people. Having spent all my life practising and teaching architecture, this course offers me, and the group, opportunities to have open-ended study without pre-determined objectives.

**Q:** What happened in your most recent session?

**A:** After hand-outs had been distributed and admin done for our forthcoming five-day group visit to Birmingham and the West Midlands, we heard an excellent paper from one member on the

development of multi-storied flats/tenements in London from the 19th century and followed it with a lengthy discussion. We then compared the government's proposal to build a garden city at Ebbsfleet, Kent with Ebenezer Howard's concept at Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

**Q:** Your group has been running for 20 years and you're still attracting more than 40 members. Why are you so successful?

**A:** The popularity of the group reflects the growing interest in the built environment, from Lord Clark's excellent 1969 TV series 'Civilisation', the 60s 'high-rise' revolt, Centrepont, the Prince of Wales's ideas, New Brutalism, the Tate Modern, the Shard, endless TV programmes and now the effects of climate change! You could add more.

To survive and develop, a city must constantly renew itself or it becomes a fossil, like Venice – beautiful but where only a few thousand live out of season. Oddly enough, that is what happens to all our groups! Mine changes by about 10 to 15 per cent annually but thankfully within the limits of the Lauderdale's workshop.

It is the changes in London which create so much interest. In the last 20 years so much has happened – the Docklands, skyscrapers, new underground railways,



Brutalist architecture – the Trellick Tower, London, 1966–72, designed by Ernő Goldfinger, is a Grade II\* listed building

bridges, the Globe, cabling, London government, and so on. Sit down and think about it. Some of our work is historical and repetitive for the sake of new members, but often offered in different circumstances, and no one minds.

The final comment on the 'success' of the group is the group itself. Members are committed, interested, supportive, always helpful. It has always been a privilege to be one of them.

**Q:** So what shape is London in?

**A:** To quote Steen Eiler Rasmussen, former professor of architecture at Copenhagen and author of the best book about London, *London, the Unique City* (1978, still applicable), I would add: messy, dynamic, unpredictable – and lovable.



# Northern delights

The most recent five-day study tour of the Shape of London group was to Leeds and the Yorkshire Dales. Participant **Sarah Harrison** describes the trip. Photography by **James Crawford**

Our leader, Wilson Briscoe, used the visits to several seemingly disparate sites a day to weave a coherent historical narrative in which the geography of the area and its economic and industrial past and present played their part.

Beginning with the 12th century, when the Catholic church was key in governing the country, we visited Bolton and Kirkstall Abbeys. Their power and wealth, which derived from their extensive land holdings, were abruptly ended by Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. We found Kirkstall an impressive ruin, and the conversion of the nave of Bolton into a parish church with 19th century elements was a particular delight.

The Halifax Piece Hall and Leeds Corn Exchange exemplified the pre-industrial days of the 18th and early 19th centuries: both buildings were created as marketplaces in the time of

fragmented, small-scale production. Their heydays were short-lived as industrialisation centralised production, but both found new roles. Leeds Corn Exchange flourishes with a 21st century mix of shops, restaurants, offices and workshops, and the Piece Hall's restoration is imminent.

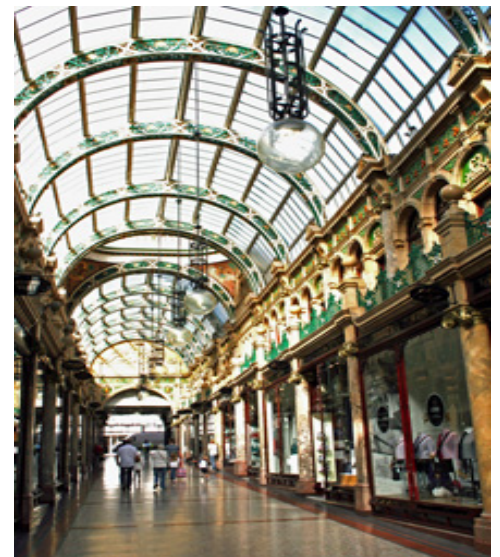
The canals, also created in this period, generated a network of cross-country trade routes. Today they are places of beauty for leisure and living. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal has a new millennium bridge, a refurbished waterfront and a well-maintained towpath. The Rochdale Canal boasts canal boats on the water and cyclists and walkers on the towpath.

The area's richest architectural legacy is Victorian. Leeds and its surrounds were key industrial centres then, initially for wool and later for flax, iron and printing. The city's fine Victorian heritage is



Leeds Corn Exchange

apparent in the Kirkgate Market, Victoria Quarter and the town hall. In Harrogate, once an important spa town, the Pump Room (with mineral waters still



Victoria Arcade

running), the Royal Baths and the theatre introduced us to the wealthy Victorians at leisure. Saltaire, an industrial town built by the philanthropic industrialist Titus Salt to provide his workforce with decent living conditions, reminded us of the grim lives led



Bolton Abbey



Hepworth Wakefield Museum

by the majority at the time.

One of our lasting impressions was that this part of England is

thriving again. Leeds has three universities and is a key financial centre. The Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle, with its Sculpture Park,

Hepworth Wakefield Museum and Henry Moore Institute is part of the area's cultural revival. The sight of the Hepworth building perched beside the River Calder is something I will always carry with me. On our last stop, we visited the workshop of David Mellor, one of the 20th century's major designers.

In just five days we had been immersed in the past and present of this part of England, and had seen outstandingly interesting and beautiful buildings.

## Talks and meetings

### Fair shares for all

Food wasn't all that was rationed in the UK during and after the second world war. **David Evans** summarises his exposition of how it worked at the January monthly meeting

Britons were jubilant when food rationing ended in July 1954 after 14 years of deprivation. The rationing scheme started in January 1940 and included the items rationed and average



allowances per person. Points rationing was introduced in late 1941. The Ministry of Food and its national network of

food offices were crucial to the scheme.

Petrol, soap and clothes rationing were covered with a rather complicated scheme administered by the Board of Trade. The government attempted to give the best possible coupon value to consumers with the introduction of 'utility' clothing.

Rationing was an international phenomenon during this period, and restrictions existed in the USA and France at this time of worldwide shortages.

UK rationing continued and became increasingly severe in



the post-war years. But controls were subsequently eased: clothes rationing was over by 1949 and petrol and soap restrictions vanished by 1950. Finally, there was general euphoria at the full winding-up of the scheme in the summer of 1954.



# Help for those with Parkinson's

Parkinson's UK provides support for those who live with Parkinson's – roughly one in five hundred people, we learned from Dr Katie LeBlond at the February monthly meeting. **Melvyn Rees** summarises her talk

Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition that usually strikes people over 50, but one in twenty of those affected are under 40. It was first described in 1817 by Dr James Parkinson. Cells in a small part of the brain, the *substantia nigra*, die off, leading to Parkinson's. Symptoms include shaking or tremor, stiffness and slowness of movement, and non-motor symptoms such as depression, sleep problems and pain.

Each sufferer experiences Parkinson's differently. Diagnosis is based purely on the symptoms; there is no blood test that confirms the condition. Approximately 130,000 people in the UK are living with the disease and probably another 127,000 remain

undiagnosed.

The causes of Parkinson's are not fully known, but genetic make-up is one consideration as are environmental factors such as industrial solvents and lifestyle.

There is no cure for Parkinson's today; many drugs are used but the neurological degeneration cannot be halted. Today's medications can only alleviate symptoms, and they can cause serious side-effects – like the disease, these are experienced on an individual basis.

Parkinson's UK provides help, information and training, particularly for Parkinson's nurses – specialist nurses for individual suffer-

ers in the UK.

In the past five years, Parkinson's UK has funded research to the tune of £5 million aimed at finding better treatments and a cure. There are 90 current research

**PARKINSON'S<sup>UK</sup>**

projects – 40 looking at the causes of Parkinson's; 30 trying to develop new treatments; and 20 aimed at improving the lives of sufferers.

Finally Dr LeBlond challenged us to 'do something amazing' – that is, to donate our brains, when we die, to the Parkinson's UK brain bank from which researchers around the world are supplied with the brain tissue they need.

More information can be found at [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk).

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## A night at the movies

Cinematography emerged in the 1890s in North London, local film historian Gerry Turvey revealed at the monthly meeting in March. **Hilda Wilson** reports

North London became significant in the establishment and growth of the film industry as a result of the work of Robert Paul, a Highbury cinematographer. Paul had been asked to make replicas of Edison's kinoscope – a peepshow device for viewing 35 mm film – which had not been patented in England. With the help of photographer Birt Acres, he produced

a cinematograph camera (the Paul-Acres camera). By 1895 the first successful English film had been made. It showed Henry Short, a friend of Paul's, outside Acres' Barnet Home, Clovelly Cottage. Paul and Acres devised the first portable camera and during 1895 they filmed the Derby, the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, the first dramatic photo-play made in

England and several other events. Shortly afterwards the two fell out and went their separate ways.

In 1895 Acres opened the North Photography Works in Barnet and a year later showed his films at the New Barnet assembly rooms. Paul dominated cinema development, erecting a studio in Sydney Road, north London, in 1898, with professional actors





Phoenix Cinema auditorium

opened in 1912. The roller-skating rink at Alexandra Palace had been converted into a studio, and by 1913 Paul and Short had 31 hours of film. But when the Great War started, they had to abandon Alexandra Palace, as it was used to house prisoners of war. The portrait painter and actor Hubert von Herkomer developed an interest and helped to raise film to an art form. His home at Bushey became a studio.

Paul's film projectors were exported to the Continent, Australia and several British dependencies. He dominated home markets and became known as the father of the British film industry.

recruited from central London. In 1908 Paul and Henry Short formed a production company, the London Cinematographic Company, in Finchley and made topical films using trained

animals.

In 1910 they sold the company, which became the British and Colonial Company (B&C). B&C aspired to build a chain of cinemas, and Finchley's Phoenix

## Here comes summer!



The forthcoming summer programme will run from 28 July to 29 August. Last year's programme went really smoothly, thanks to all the group leaders and the wonderful events they organised and ran.

Now we need you and other members to give us offers and ideas for events for this year.

Please get in touch with us to discuss your ideas and offers.

Annie Hopewell, 7263 2806, [anniehopewell@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:anniehopewell@hotmail.co.uk);  
Christine Stammers, 7263 0090, [robertsonhome@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:robertsonhome@blueyonder.co.uk)  
Kathy Kyriakides, 7263 6885, [kathleenkyriakides@hotmail.com](mailto:kathleenkyriakides@hotmail.com)

## Interest groups

# How a group can evolve

Change can strengthen a group, says **Audrey Jancovich**

After two happy years as a member of the group Reading the Modern, the then coordinator, Keith Richards, suggested I should take it over; I renamed it 'Reading the World' and led it for nine years from 2001.

We spent nine sessions over three years finishing our reading of Proust, which we had started in Reading the World. However,

my idea for the group was for us to read novels, plays and poetry from the five continents – works written in English by writers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

As we were a cooperative group, other works, including some in translation, appeared; we have read literature from Asia, Australasia, the Middle East,

Europe, and different parts of Africa and the Americas.

Since 2010 the coordinator's role has been shared among three people. I am still a member and the group continues to flourish. Should there be an interest, I have a copy of the programmes for the past 12 years and would be happy to run off a few copies. Contact [audreyjancovich@btinternet.com](mailto:audreyjancovich@btinternet.com)

## Group updates

### Seeking new members

The Mahjong and Scrabble 1 groups would love to welcome new members. Mahjong meets on alternative Mondays from 2 to 4pm at 7 Fitzwarren Gardens, N6, and Scrabble 1 takes place fortnightly on alternate Thursdays, also from 2 to 4.

Please contact the coordinator, Jenny Wright, 7379 9747, [jowright@talktalk.net](mailto:jowright@talktalk.net)

### Victims of their own success

Two groups have been so successful that they have outgrown their original meeting places!

The iPad Learners group, which meets on Fridays at 10.30am, has moved to the Café Rouge, North Finchley; Knitting for Charity now meets at The Trees, Highgate, once a month on a Sunday.

For both groups, contact Miriam Silver, 8815 1254, [miriamsilver@btinternet.com](mailto:miriamsilver@btinternet.com)

### Practical Shakespeare

We are happy that Rina Ben-Ami is well enough to receive us again at Woodside Park Road. Our first meeting this term will be on Thursday 1 May from 2.30 to 4pm, and fortnightly thereafter. We have decided to read *Hamlet*. We'll give it a lively reading, not too serious, but one we shall enjoy. There's room for one or two more to join us in reading this fabulous play – and watch a DVD of what we read last time.

If you fancy joining us, contact Ken Carter, 8442 0919, [depedale@gmail.com](mailto:depedale@gmail.com)

### Friday Morning Dance

Every Friday morning a group of enthusiastic members meet to move to the music of our youth. We exercise our bodies – and our brains See this link: <http://socialdance.stanford.edu/syllabi/smarter.htm>

We dance singly at our own pace for an hour of fun and relaxation. Here are a few comments from members:

- 'I just let my inhibitions go – jiggle about and have fun. Lovely!'
- 'My two left feet actually work in tandem.'
- 'I've a severe disability and find my balance, flexibility and self-confidence have improved since coming regularly.'
- 'We have a weekly party.'

Do come and join us at 11.45am on Fridays at the Friends Meeting House, 58 Alexandra Grove, Finchley N12 8HG. We resume for the summer term on 2 May.

Contact the coordinator, Margaret Sutton, 8886 5007, [msutton@onetel.com](mailto:msutton@onetel.com)

## New groups

New groups starting in the autumn term are: Beginners' French, Beginners' German, Humour (the title of this may change), Madrigals, Philosophy, Science, Tennis – and Helene Davidian will be starting her Art group again.

Details are not yet finalised, but we'll keep you updated on the website and in the general email – and of course they will be in the interest groups booklet sent to all members in early August.

We need group leaders and hosts for some of these, so if you are able to offer help, please let us know. We also need to know how much interest there would be in any of these groups; if you would like to attend an initial meeting to test the waters, let us know that, too. Contact Sue Teller or Candiss Waldrum; see page 3 for their details.

## Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney, John Hajdu and Sue Teller

### 'London Bridge is falling down'... or was it pushed?

A guided nursery rhyme walk through the City of London, starting at the Monument and finishing at Borough Market.

Friday 27 June

Many nursery rhymes started life as drinking songs, ballads and political satire. Georgie Porgie was a notorious rake; Goosey Gander spread venereal disease upstairs and downstairs; and so on. Eventually their origins were forgotten and today they survive as songs taught to children.

We're going to walk through the 2,000-year-old story of the City of London, from the site of the Poultry Market and the story of the real Mother Goose, to London Bridge and the battle which ended when the bridge was pulled into the Thames. Aided by our excellent Blue Badge and City Guide, we will use some of these nursery rhymes to help us on our way; audience participation will be welcome! And Borough Market will be in full swing by the time we finish.



#### Times and facilities

10.50am for 11.00 start at the Monument. Public toilets nearby on Eastcheap and also many coffee shops. We should finish by 12.45.

#### Cost

£7, payable with application.

**Travel.** Nearest tube station is Bank. Alight from the front end of the south bound Northern Line train and turn right. Follow the signs for Monument and District & Circle Line. Emerge via the Monument exit and turn right. The Monument is immediately on your right.

**Booking** is essential. Please use the form **overleaf**.



## Away days booking form (See previous page)

Name(s)\_\_\_\_\_ Membership number\_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone No\_\_\_\_\_

Date	Name of visit

- Cheques payable to NLU3A
- Send booking form and cheque to Sue Teller, 27 Midholm, London NW11 6LL. A separate booking form and cheque is required for each visit.
- You will be notified **by phone if you have a place (or not)** on the visit and your cheque will be banked or destroyed accordingly.
- If you are unable to attend the visit, please phone Sue Teller on 8381 4800 so that your place can be offered to another member.

## Monthly meetings

From 10.15am, St Paul's Church, Long Lane, London N3 2PU

### Monday 12 May

#### Europe, current issues and future prospects.

**D**r Martyn Bond is well placed to speak about European issues. He has been a press officer at the EU's Council of Ministers, has served in the Council Secretariat and has headed the UK's European Parliament Office. He lectures widely and has published two books – *The Council of Europe and Human Rights* and *The Council of Europe; Structure, history and issues in European politics*.

### Monday 9 June

#### My love of orchids

**M**ichael de Swiet, emeritus professor of obstetric medicine at Imperial College and garden fellow at the Royal College of Physicians, has been passionate about orchids since school biology. Since retirement he has been working as a horticultural volunteer at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. De Swiet will discuss how orchids are defined, describe the huge diversity of orchids and talk about his experience of orchids around the world.