

the *northern* line

The newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

Issue 57

January 2015

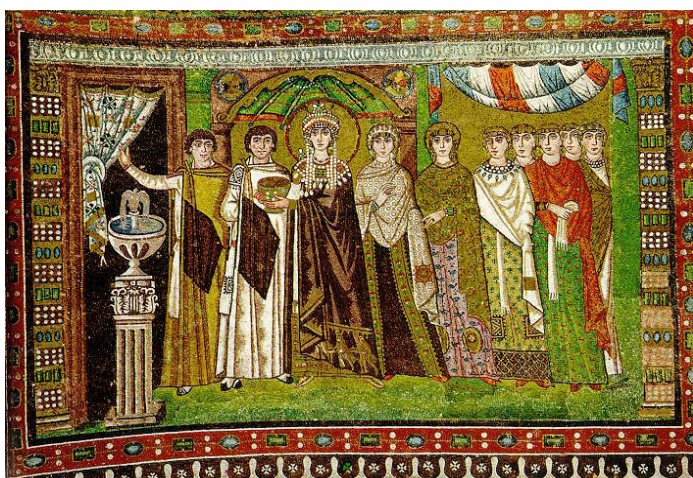


A different viewpoint

History is defined as 'a record of past events, chronological in approach', but nearly five years ago, a new U3A group decided on a completely different approach. About 15 members meet once a fortnight, taking turns to present a paper to the group. **Judith Abbs** talked to David Pashley, who took over as group coordinator just over a year ago

The group is called a 'Sideways Look at History'. Isn't that a contradiction in terms?

We tend to think of history in vertical slices through time between nearer and further. Instead, Jenny Clark, our group's founder, suggested a horizontal slicing across the world – looking at what was happening at a particular time in different places and cultures. So, when we studied 1066, as well as England and Normandy, we also looked at Central America, China and Africa, Arab science and the silk trade.



Theodora mosaic in Ravenna

What does the sideways look offer?

It takes us out of familiar and comfortable zones into exciting places and subjects of which we knew nothing.

How do you select the year or period to focus on?

We discuss all the suggestions until we arrive at a consensus. We seem to spend longer in a period as enthusiasm and experience grow.

What is the earliest and the most modern time the group has studied?

The earliest date so far is 476 AD – the end of the Western Roman Empire. The most modern has been 1789, the year of the French Revolution. We do tend to wander 100 years or more around the date and, of course, all over the globe.

Is it all about kings, emperors and dynasties and their wars and conquests?

I am surprised how little time we actually spend on wars and kings and so on. Even the invasions at the end of the Western Roman Empire were treated by our group more as issues about immigration and looking for jobs than as killing and looting. We

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North London U3A committee 2014–15

Chair: Patricia Isaacs

8348 8782 patricia.highgate@yahoo.co.uk

Vice-chair and monthly meetings organiser: John Hajdu

8883 8114 hajdu.clarion@talk21.com

Treasurer: Leon Levy

8349 3103 leon.levy@btinternet.com

Secretary: Sheri Waddell

8881 6724 sheriwaddell@btinternet.com

Groups organiser: Sue Teller

8381 4480 ginpalace@mac.com

Membership secretary: Sandra Nistri

8883 9380 ssandra_nistri@hotmail.com

Publicity organiser: Melvyn Rees

8446 3029 melvyn.tymel@gmail.com

Archivist: Anne Vaughan

07950 603206 oscar1947@hotmail.co.uk

Website manager: Mike Christie

8444 3317 info@nlu3a.org.uk

Our newsletters, The Northern Line and Update, are each published three times a year and edited by Leni Green and Jane Marsh respectively.

Copy deadline for the next Update is 4 February.

Please send submissions to **Jane Marsh**,
oriana.jane@btinternet.com

The editors may shorten contributions or otherwise edit them to fit spacing and style requirements

For membership enquiries, please contact Helene Davidian,
8444 3669

helenedavidian@googlemail.com
or Sandra Nistri, as above.

New year, new name

Happy New Year, and welcome to our new name – The Northern Line. The newsletter is our line, our viewpoint, and we, as North London U3A, are northern.



And some of us spend a lot of time on our namesake tube line.

Interest groups are the backbone of U3As, so every issue of TNL (we've even got an abbreviation) focuses on one group through the eyes of its coordinator. On page 1 we introduce you to A Sideways Look at History, as Judith Abbs interrogates David Pashley. Also in this issue, Keith Richards asks whether we should refer to one U3A or to a multitude of U3As, and Jill Marston explains why a recent Shape of London group visit to the West Midlands proved much more illuminating than its members had expected it to be.

Happy reading!

Leni Green

Editor

helenjuni@ntlworld.com

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compared the pressures on Europe from poorer people outside its borders with EU immigration today. We also discussed images and puzzles in art; religion; roads; slavery; Theodora, the wife of the Emperor Justinian; and trade.

What are you studying at the moment?

We are looking at the 14th century. Topics include Tottenham manor, Robert the Bruce, Greenland, Zimbabwe Great Court, Italian cookery (we tasted panforte!), and famine.

How vital is the internet for the research?

The internet – especially Wikipedia – is a wonderful tool. You do have to be careful, as with all sources, to make your own judgement about the material presented. But the internet itself makes it easy to double-check. In the Aladdin's cave of history the new lamp is truly superior to the old.



Syria – a view of ruins at Serjilla

NLU3A's committee



Standing left to right: Mike Christie, Sue Teller, Sheri Waddell, Sandra Nistri, Melvyn Rees. Sitting: John Hajdu, Patricia Isaacs, Leon Levy, Anne Vaughan.

From the chair, Patricia Isaacs

New Year greetings to everyone! May this year be truly joyful.

Many new members joined our U3A in the autumn; welcome to all and I hope you have found new interests, new friends. Members of longer standing may have discovered previously untried challenges, as I have; it is never too late to gain new experiences.

Monthly meetings are always pleasing, and the marvellous November meeting on eccentric gadgets illustrated what we were there for: we listened, we learned, and we laughed. There is no better way to start the week; so look for the programme of speakers for each term on the back page of The Northern Line and on the website.

Study group trips always attract applications; they are an excellent way for newer members to meet like-minded people and explore delightful parts of the country. This year's study group will be based in Wells, Somerset, with visits to places of historic interest. Full details are on our website, using the link to 'events'.

Have you ever wondered how NLU3A publications reach you? Ann Elliott and her 'stuffing' team have been doggedly putting these into envelopes, labelling them and sending them out for 11 years. They are now retiring; many thanks to them. The committee and the editors have decided that

from now on publications will only be available by an email link to the website; please see page 5 for the letter

explaining this decision. If you can't receive publications online, don't worry – there will be a new stuffing team, who will work just as hard to get the information to you.

I hope 2015 will be a year full of learning and enjoyment of later life. Happy New Year to all.

Patricia



As I see it

Keith Richards asks: are we members of a U3A or of the U3A?

Technically there is no such body as 'the U3A' – only an amalgam of U3As affiliated to the Third Age Trust. The term is, however, in general use and I am referring to it in today's heading to raise a point of discussion.

During the long emergence of the London Region of U3As, I served as chair for a time and was very involved in all efforts to forge the U3As in Greater London into a cohesive and meaningful body. In one area, however, I met continued failure.

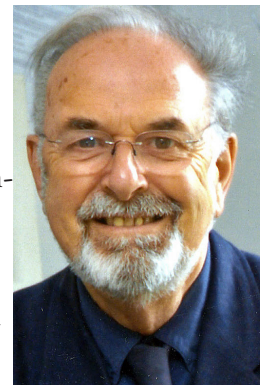
This was my proposal that individual members, if willing to travel, should be able to attend any group with a vacancy,

no matter where it was, on the understanding that they would leave (or join) the particular U3A group when it became full with a waiting list of 'home' members. No monies would change hands and the widely differing subscription rates was not an issue. It has always seemed to me very simple: interest groups with low numbers would benefit. But the central committee(s) did not agree.

Later, North London U3A established a working party, chaired by committee member Pat Taylor, to explore the possibility of a smaller 'network' involving neighbouring U3As (North London, U3A in London, Barnet,

Haringey, Enfield). Some progress was made but I have recently discovered that the fledgling arrangement faltered and the present situation is a muddle. EM Forster once wrote: 'I love a mystery but abhor a muddle.' I agree and am raising the issue to find out how current members feel. I think it should also be discussed at regional level and hope that the newly elected officers will do so.

KEITH RICHARDS IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF NORTH LONDON U3A



Into the electronic age

We are always concerned about costs and looking at ways to save money, particularly with prices increasing all the time. One of our most significant costs is the postage, stationery and printing of The Northern Line and Update, each of which is distributed three times a year, making six postings in all. **Each copy costs over £2 to print and post.**

We are also concerned with the environment, and minimal printing reduces our negative impact. Digital versions of all our publications are available on our website, www.nlu3a.org.uk, and where relevant, informative flyers are attached. Their publication is announced by email to you.

We are changing our policy and by default will assume that if we have an email address for you, then you are happy not to have paper

copies posted to you. If you have an email address, you fall into this category and need take no action. Of course, you can print your own paper copy in full or in part of any publication if you so wish. Many of you have already opted to receive only the digital versions; however, members who have a reason for needing a paper copy, such as a visual impairment, will still be able to receive one. If you wish to continue to receive a paper copy of The Northern Line and Update, please write to the email address below, giving your reason. If you have a new email address, please give it to the membership secretary, whose details are on page 2.

We will monitor this change carefully and will be conducting a review in six months' time.

NLU3A committee

Email: chair@nlu3a.org.uk

In the middle of the island

Every year the Shape of London group, led by **Wilson Briscoe**, embarks on a five-day architectural study tour somewhere in England. Last September they visited the West Midlands, which surprised them with its wealth of history, as **Jill Marston** explains

It sounded rather dull when Wilson announced it, but we soon discovered that the West Midlands has medieval monasteries, Marcher castles and Roman baths. It's the birthplace of Dr Johnson, Charles Darwin, the Industrial Revolution and a forerunner of the modern Olympic Games, and its landscape inspired AE Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.

Our first stop was the Lichfield Cathedral – the only one in England with three spires. The west façade (right), with its ornate

carved figures of kings and saints, impressed us. The city, founded as the ecclesiastical centre of Mercia, retains the medieval street pattern laid out by Bishop de Clinton in the 12th century. The centre retains its charm and is popular with visitors.

Telford shopping centre was uninviting in comparison, with cramped corridors and low ceilings, but it started our



quest to learn why people form settlements, how they change, who congregates in them, and what

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Photo: James Crawford

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makes them succeed or decline. Telford, the newest settlement we visited, is a town built in zones, intended as overspill for Birmingham.

On Monday we visited the ruins of Viroconium (above), the fourth-largest city in Roman Britain. Excavations have unearthed second-century baths and the remains of a huge wall. With cold drizzle falling, it was easy to appreciate how chilly the Romans must have felt in this inhospitable place. The baths – built in the open air – were soon enclosed and heated!

Next we went to Shrewsbury, in the Welsh Marches, with its Norman castle and abbey built in 1083 by its earl, Roger of Montgomery. Welsh incursions were once a problem in this area, and any Welshman in the town after dark was hanged! We viewed Shrewsbury's 'shuts' (narrow medieval passageways), Tudor framed buildings and magnificent churches. Stokesay, built when

the Welsh threat was diminishing, is a fine example of a fortified manor house. Ludlow has an imposing castle, built at the height of the incursions, and retains its Norman-grid street plan and many medieval and Tudor houses. The town has recently become a thriving gastronomic centre.



Photo: James Crawford

Birmingham, in contrast, grew from a hamlet to an industrial metropolis. The civic pride of the Victorians is manifested in the imposing town hall and art gallery. The

1960s post-war re-development – the notorious Bullring Centre and ring roads that obliterated the original street pattern – was unpopular. A rebuilt shopping centre, a symphony hall and a new library (centre), resembling boxes wrapped in metal hoops, have revitalized the centre. Since the canal has been cleaned and restaurants opened, post-industrial Birmingham is a place to enjoy.

On a sunny September morning it was hard to believe that Ironbridge (below) was once a smoky, polluted valley ringing with the sounds of machinery and wagons trundling raw materials. The area is now a Unesco heritage

site, with museums replacing factories. We ended our visit in historic Much Wenlock, notable for its Cluniac Priory, Tudor Guildhall and Olympic Games founded by William Penny Brookes in 1850. The games inspired de Coubertin and the modern Olympic movement.

We spent a peaceful afternoon in the priory ruins before returning home.



Photo: James Crawford

Inheritance tracks

In June our U3A comes of age. It's our 21st birthday, and we'd like you to join in the celebrations.

Do you ever listen to Saturday Live on Radio 4? There's a part in which guests talk about their 'inheritance tracks' – what each person has received from their family in the past and what they would like to pass on. They express it as music but we're inviting you to do the same thing in words. What have you gained from U3A membership and what do you hope will be there in the future? What makes NLU3A special?

Some of the paragraphs you write will go into a celebratory booklet we're producing; the rest will be displayed at our birthday party on 6 June.

Please send your contributions to Pat Taylor (patriciataylor847@btinternet.com; 103 Greenfield Gardens NW2 1HU) by 6 March.

Talks and meetings

Shining a light on Caravaggio

Although a lot of people may recognize the name Caravaggio, many do not know much about the man or his style of painting. At the September monthly meeting, art historian Colin Lomas filled us in

Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610) was born in Caravaggio near Milan and moved to Rome in the 1590s due to and as part of the Counter-Reformation. Huge numbers of churches were being built at that time, and they needed paintings to fill them. So he painted his own versions of many works of biblical art done in the previous 100 years. These included St Jerome Sitting Translating the Bible; David Kills Goliath; and Salome Presenting the Head of John the Baptist to

Herod – which was very gruesome, according to Colin.

All of Caravaggio's work had one innovation in common: by painting bright light in the centre of his pictures, he mastered the art of reproducing reflected and focused light.

Out of the 100 plus members present it would be hard to tell how many 'saw the light'; nevertheless the talk was informative, and the slides were a treat to look at.



Supper at Emmaus

Contraptions, gadgets and contrivances

Maurice Collins visited a Victorian rubbish dump in 1972 and discovered a treasure trove. Since then he has collected around 1,600 gadgets and contraptions, some of which he shared with us at the November monthly meeting. **Melvyn Rees** reports

You could see that the talk was going to be strange – the speaker's table was covered with what-do-you-call-its and doo-dahs. Maurice has two criteria for acquiring such items: they could have been sold in a shop and must date from between 1851 (the Great



Exhibition) and 1951 (the Festival of Britain). Each gadget reflects the social milieu of its time.

The contraptions we saw included a self-pouring teapot (based on Archimedes' buoyancy principle) created for the inventor's

arthritic mother; a ridged fork for eating peas; an early flushing toilet introduced at the Great Exhibition – the user had to pay a penny, hence the well-known phrase. The Victorian lady would have found her skirt-lifter useful on muddy streets, while a gentleman would have found the moustache-trainer a godsend.

After inviting us to imagine what the objects were for, Maurice presented the two audience members who had guessed the most accurately with Victorian Codd bottles (inventor: Hiram Codd), which had a marble lodged in their neck to stop the gas escaping and the carbonated drink from go-



ing flat. It is thought that the term 'codswallop' originates from the beer sold in these bottles.

Maurice loans part of his vast collection to museums and other organisations, and the money he raises goes to disability causes; he helped to set up the charity Kith and Kids for young adults with learning difficulties or autism – his daughter has learning difficulties.

Let's give a huge round of applause to Sue Collingridge, Diana Impey and their teams for a superb festive lunch last month. Sue worked their socks off to give us a really was imaginative and delicious, from soup coffee; the dining hall looked enticing and from the team members was quietly lunch has been enthusiastic and no doubt there will be a rush for tickets for next year's festive lunch. I'll be first in the queue!



organised the event and all her helpers good time. The food – indeed, the feast – to open sandwiches to sweet desserts and warmly welcoming; and the attentive service efficient. The praise for every part of the

Patricia Isaacs

London Region summer school 2015

After a successful event in 2014, the summer school is being held again at St Bride Foundation, off Fleet Street, EC4, from 28–30 July. There will be a range of subjects, talks and workshops; themes will be science, art, literature and history. Participants may attend for one, two or three days.

Application forms and full details will

be available on the London Region website: www.u3asites.org.uk/london-region and from individual U3As early in the new year.

In the meantime, to register an interest, email ccrisafeldman@gmail.com giving your name and U3A, and details will be sent to you as soon as they are available.

Interest groups



The groups organiser team would like to wish all group coordinators a happy and healthy new year. Thank you for all your hard work in running the groups and making North London U3A successful and enjoyable.

SUE TELLER, CANDISS WALDRAM, FIAMMA SHANI AND HENRIETTA COHEN

Ring in the new

Message from groups organiser Sue Teller

It's been a busy, productive start for the groups organiser (GO) team: new groups have started; a few have ended; some formats have changed. For example, Self-publishing, coordinated by Paul Pengelly, now operates as a helpline. The coordinator of iPad Learners and Knitting for Charity left London, but members happily took over these roles, and both groups are flourishing. We have 104 groups to choose from, with a couple more in the pipeline.

We completed an audit of groups to find out where there are spaces and which groups are full, perhaps needing a parallel group. The Groups with Spaces section of the website is as accurate as it can be; to find this, click on 'Groups' on the black bar of the home page. If you're a coordinator and your group becomes full, please inform the GO team so that we can keep the website up to date.

To new members: if you can't find the group you want or it

is full, please contact Henrietta Cohen (details on page 2), who will put you on the waiting list so that we can determine whether a parallel group is needed.

Please remember also that we are here to help you, to make NLU3A successful and pleasurable, so do get in touch if you need advice or have anything to raise with us.

Finally, very best wishes for a happy and healthy new year from the groups organiser team.

New groups

Editing and improving digital photographs

Are you interested in learning to enhance the quality of your digital photographs through photo-editing software? Do you have the skills to help others, or are you an absolute beginner? All levels of experience are welcome: we aim to share learning through discussion and demonstration and enjoy our photos using a variety of techniques.

We plan an initial meeting in January to discover what participants expect from the group and to plan a way forward. We intend to use a venue with a digital projector so that editing processes can be demonstrated. However, the venue is yet to be decided, with the day, times and frequency of meetings to be agreed by those expressing an interest.

If you would like to find out more, please contact either Martin (mgoldman666@gmail.com, 8445 7128) or Ricci (ricci_achillini@hotmail.com, 8364 2804).

French conversation

A potential new French conversation group is afoot, with discussion of current affairs in France and Europe using articles from the French press. Newspapers will be supplied.

If you are interested, please contact New Groups Organiser Candiss Waldram scwaldram@yahoo.com, 8883 1395.

The word weavers

The fact that Weaving Words has been going for three years is testimony to the members' enthusiasm for writing. This passion is illustrated in an anthology, produced during the summer, of their work. Group leader Adrienne Baker describes how the words get woven



Our anthology contains one piece that each writer chose of their work. It's a lively collection – on sale for anyone wanting to see how we experiment with ideas and styles of writing.

What we do in the group is

and then pursue these ideas in class exercises and especially in the weekly homework. The writing may be autobiographical; sometimes it's factual; often it's humorous. Always, even with the factual, it draws on the imagination. Then,

varied. Members read out extracts from what they've enjoyed by published writers. We discuss technique and content and consider how a story works

in discussing each other's writing, we look at characterisation, imagery and context and consider how the narrative can capture our attention.

It may sound serious but it's not; there's lots of laughter and friendship. I'd say, 'Come and join us', but we're full – more evidence of the writers' enthusiasm! We squash around the table with chocolate biscuits and coffee. Maybe that's part of the secret of the group's success.

- If you would like a copy of the anthology, please contact Adrienne Baker, 8340 5970, adriennebaker@hotmail.co.uk

Shared learning project with the Royal Philatelic Society Ltd:

The Grover Archive February–April 2015

The firm Messrs Grover & Co created machines used to perforate postage and other types of stamps from all around the world. They also made embossing machines and gumming tables. They went out of business several years ago, and some of the machine parts and records are now deposited in the RPSL's museum and archive in central London.

In this project, based in Marylebone, we shall delve into the company's records, including order and pattern books, technical drawings, photos, and promotional literature, to better understand the collection. The deadline for applications is 21 January; if you are interested, please contact Robert Mott (mott@btinternet.com).

Term dates

Term	Start date	Finish date
Spring	5 January	27 March
Summer	13 April	24 July

Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney, John Hajdu and Sue Teller

The Baring Archive art collection

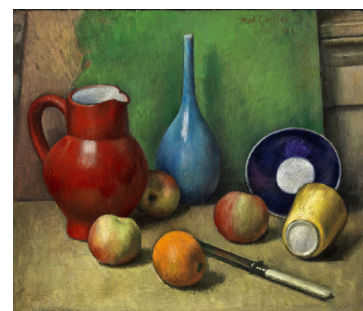
60 London Wall

London EC2M 5TQ

7767 6021

Thursday 19 February

The Baring Archive art collection – a large assemblage of impressive art works as well as clocks, barometers, medals, ceramics, ship models and silverware – originated with formal portraits of the Baring brothers (founders of Barings Bank) and their associates by renowned artists of the day. This gradually expanded over the years and by the late 1970s the collection policy of the firm – now acquired by the Dutch ING Group – was clearly defined. Two distinct collections were created – one of 18th and 19th century English watercolours and another of figurative works by early modern British artists. In recent years, the collection has grown to include the work of contemporary British artists including the winners of the annual ING Purchase Prize. It is not normally open to the public but we have arranged a private tour.



Time and travel

We will meet at the Northern Line ticket office (left of the ticket barrier) at Moorgate tube station at 5.45pm and leave at 5.50 to walk to our destination for a 6pm start. **Please note evening start time.** We will have complimentary refreshments on arrival, followed by an hour's tour and additional private time. (Note for the benefit of latecomers: 60 London Wall is roughly equidistant from Moorgate and Liverpool tube stations, close to the junction of London Wall with Throgmorton Avenue).

Cost

£5, payable with application.

Booking is essential. Please use the form below.

Away days booking form

Name(s) _____ Membership number _____

BLOCK LETTERS *please. No more than two application names per form.*

Phone number _____

Date	Name of visit

- Cheques payable to NLU3A
- Send booking form and cheque to Sue Teller, 27 Midholm, London NW11 6LL. A separate booking form and cheque are required for each visit.
- You will be notified **by phone if you have a place (or not)**. Your cheque will be banked or destroyed accordingly.
- If you are unable to attend the visit, please phone Sue Teller on 8381 4480 so that your place can be offered to another member, or mobile 07748 478 428 for last-minute cancellations.

Laban building

School of Music and Dance
Creekside, Greenwich
London SE8 3DZ
8305 9452
Friday 20 March



The Laban Centre is a school of contemporary dance housed in a spectacular, colourful and transparent building. Designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron, it won the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stirling Prize in 2003. The artist Michael Craig-Martin helped to select the colours used for highly distinctive panels, which are energy-efficient protective sun shields and objects of beauty in their own right. We have arranged an architectural tour to explore spaces filled with vivid colour and dynamic form. These include dance studios, interlocking corridors, interior courtyards and a dance health department, all centred around the main theatre space – the heart of the building.

Time

10.50am at the main entrance for an 11.00 start. The

tour lasts about an hour.

Travel

Cuttly Sark station on the DLR is five minutes away. Walk westwards away from the Cuttly Sark itself, along Creek Road; Creekside is on your left.

Cost

£8.00 payable in advance .

Booking is essential. Use the booking form on the previous page or send a form-free written application with the requested details and your cheque.

Spring monthly meetings

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

12 January

The sharing of great things

David Davidson, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust's architectural adviser, will show how the Suburb was developed as a series of planned housing groups consciously placed in a garden and landscape setting.

9 February

Richard Wagner's music: paganism in disguise?

Richard Wagner's music, embodied in the *Ring Cycle*, *Tristan* and *Parsifal*, is powerful, seductive and fascinating – and notoriously controversial. In addition, Wagner's anti-Semitism was well known. But did his works herald a new musical religion and a new god? Dr Margaret Brearley, who has written many articles on Wagner, on genocide and on the Roma, will consider this question.

9 March

Do you really know your Odysseus?

Many people think they know *The Odyssey* from reading the adventures of Odysseus in childhood. Homer specialist Isabel Raphael will show there is a great deal more to this dramatic epic of magic, mystery and revenge, and that it still rings true to us in the 21st century.