

# the *northern* line

The newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

Issue 58

April 2015



## A stitch in time

Years ago women – and only women – darned, stitched and mended because they had to. Nowadays many do it for fun. **Leni Green** talks to Ann Dugdale, who leads the Freestyle Embroidery and Textile Art group

**The only thing I can do with a needle and thread is sew a button on. So could you explain to people like me what the attraction of embroidery is?**

If you can thread a needle you can learn embroidery! There are hundreds of different stitches, some simple, some more complicated and practice makes it easier. However, our group is 'textile art', which is more like painting with fabric and goes a long way beyond embroidery. If you have an interest in design and colour, you just get hooked!

**Textile art? Can you give some examples?**

Where shall I start? We do cut-work, weaving, fabric dyeing and painting, wood-block printing, mixed media, beading, work with found objects and various other techniques. All of these can be enhanced with the use of hand-stitched embroidery and embellishments such as beads, sequins and trimmings. You can also make three-dimensional objects, which I intend to introduce to our group in the next academic year.

**You'd need a lot of expertise to lead a group like that, wouldn't you?**

We operate a system of sharing learning and teaching each other what we know. As group leader, I attend formal courses for my own enjoyment and pass on what I learn to the others. At least one other member does the same so we share the workload.

**Do group members have to have a particular level of skill?**

Not at all. Some of us were quilters and cross-stitchers before joining and some were complete beginners.

**What do you do with your work?**

Each year the group produces a joint project and members are expected to work on this, and their own work, between meetings, which take place once a month. We show our work at the annual open day and are currently making a banner that we will exhibit at the 21st anniversary party. And we are planning a more formal 'show' in 2016.

**Where do you get your ideas from?**

Everyone feeds in ideas. Some of us attend courses and workshops, some of us take magazines such as *Stitch* or *Embroidery*, but inspiration can come from everyday life, holidays, or inspiring pictures from any source.



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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: John Hajdu**

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**Treasurer: Leon Levy**

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**Secretary: position vacant**

8348 8782\*                      chair@nlu3a.org.uk\*

**Groups organiser: Sue Teller**

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**Membership secretary: Sandra Nistri**

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\* Temporary contacts until a new secretary is appointed.

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# D-Day

Happy birthday to North London U3A, which celebrates its 21st anniversary in June, having been born on D-Day in 1994.

Turning 21 meant two things to me: I was finally entitled to vote and, more importantly, I could now drink legally in the state of Pennsylvania, where I'm from.

Long ago, 21 was the age at which a boy could attain knighthood. In Elizabethan times, it was when a man could marry. In many countries, 21 is the age at which one is considered mature enough to have a front-door key, so a key is given as a 21st birthday present.

NLU3A started in Lauderdale House, Highgate, with 35 members and six groups; we now have almost 700 of the former and over 100 of the latter. Five of the original groups are still going strong; some groups are so popular that they have waiting lists. So, for us, 21 is a reason to celebrate our growth and our success.

Happy birthday, North London U3A. And many more to come!

*Leni Green*

Editor

[helenjuni@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenjuni@ntlworld.com)



## Our publications

The Northern Line and Update are each published three times a year and edited by Leni Green and Jane Marsh respectively. Both are available to read or download from our website, [www.nlu3a.org.uk](http://www.nlu3a.org.uk)

The deadline for the next Update is 22 May. Please send submissions to **Jane Marsh**, [oriana.jane@btinternet.com](mailto:oriana.jane@btinternet.com), **by that date.**

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

## Membership

For membership enquiries, contact Helene Davidian, 8444 3669, [helenedavidian@googlemail.com](mailto:helenedavidian@googlemail.com) or Sandra Nistri (as on page 2).

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### Are you all women?

Currently, yes. There are eight of us and group size is limited by the room we meet in.

**William the Conqueror's half-brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux, commissioned Englishwomen to create a tapestry to commemorate the Battle of Hastings because they were the most talented embroiderers. It's good to think that the women in the NLU3A Freestyle Embroidery and Textile Art group are continuing a tradition that is at least 950 years old.**



## New members' meetings

**W**e are looking for volunteers to host meetings for new members. These are held in existing members' homes and are an opportunity for those new to NLU3A to learn about our activities and meet some of the committee members. If you are interested, please contact Hilda Wilson, 8442 0567, [h.m.wilson@icloud.com](mailto:h.m.wilson@icloud.com)

# As I see it

The Third Age Trust provides four pillars of support for group coordinators, but what are they? **Keith Richards** explains

Recently I attended a meeting of the Third Age Trust's standing committee for education (SCE). I was a member of the first of these committees, which was set up after delegates attending the annual conference complained that the term *education* had not been mentioned at all during the proceedings. Two years later it was established as the only 'standing' grouping in the structure of the trust.

At our meeting we were discussing what have been described as the four

pillars of support available

to the coordinators of interest groups:

- the resource centre 'library' (originally established with the help of a Lottery grant),
- the in-house educational journal *Sources* (similarly funded at first)
- the national network of subject advisers, who help people start new interest groups and advise on existing ones
- the touring programme of 'training' for coordinators who opt to attend.

No-one has ever assumed that the application of the unique self-help methodology is easy. It is often especially difficult for experienced teachers, tutors and lecturers, who have to make a radical adaptation of the methods they used at work, and the trust has always recognised that.

The SCE is now chaired by Marion Clements, vice-chair of the trust, and she has brought together a stimulating group of people from present and past.

There are current problems.

Tony Thornton, who has for many years edited *Sources*, is retiring and the future of that unique publication is under question. The team of subject advisers – always incomplete as U3As have an infinite curriculum! – needs a member to lead it and give it coherence. A national study day is planned later this year and is intended to give this vital resource a new kick-start.

Our meeting was mostly exciting and renewing but I was shocked to hear in a report from



our London National Executive Committee representative that a neighbouring U3A can only offer its almost 2,000 members the national magazines *Third Age Matters* and *Sources* by an intimidating opt-in method. A very small number of members (around 60) take it up and the others seem satisfied not to have the opportunity to see their activities in a national perspective. They know little about summer schools, study days, controversies, successes ... the whole excitement of membership of a radical educational movement.

Fortunately North London U3A has opted in for all of its members to personally receive – and benefit from – both.

## Internet anonymity

Are you concerned about staying safe on the internet? DuckDuckGo is a search engine that, unlike Google, does not track you. So why not try it? [www.duckduckgo.com](http://www.duckduckgo.com)

Ghostery ([www.ghostery.com](http://www.ghostery.com)) goes one step farther and allows you to block sites that are trying to track you. You just set each potential tracker to 'yes' or 'no'. Very easy to use.

- Send your internet tips to [helenjuni@ntlworld.com](mailto:helenjuni@ntlworld.com)



# From the chair, Patricia Isaacs

A springtime welcome to the 100 or so new members in our U3A this year! I hope you have discovered new challenges and new friends.

Inspirational speakers enthralled us at the monthly meetings in February and March, and there is an exciting line-up of talks until the end of 2016. Learning and laughter seem to go hand in hand in North London U3A, and the best speakers provide both. It would be good to see more new members attending; information can be found on the website and on page 3 of the interest groups booklet.

A very important event is coming up; please make a note of the date. On 6 June North

London U3A will be 21 years old and we will be celebrating with a party: jazz and singing, cakes and conversation – and it's free! A copy of our souvenir booklet including the results of the survey we asked you to fill out will be available to all members, and we will send out details of the event early in May. Every member will be invited, as well as guests.

By default, our publications are available as an email attachment or on the website; this was discussed at committee meetings and with the editors over several months. A letter explaining this decision is in the January issue of *The Northern Line*. If you haven't read it, please do so now; if you think you are entitled to a paper



copy, let me know.

I hope next term will delight you, and I hope to meet many new members during the summer programme.

*Patricia*

## Talks and meetings

# Out of the ashes



A last-minute gap in our January programme was superbly filled by **Ann Dugdale's** talk on the impact of volcanoes on climate change. Coming from her contribution to the Climate Change group, it showed how the U3A opens windows to a wider world for all of us. **Frank Kelsall** reports

The talk was packed with information about eruptions up to our own day. Who doesn't remember Mount St Helens or the Icelandic ash cloud? The Laki eruption of 1783 resulted in a loss of a quarter of Iceland's population, not so much from the direct

effects as from consequential climate change, famine and death of livestock, all of which vividly showed the human consequences of geological catastrophe.

The greatest eruptions, such as Yellowstone, are on record. The volcanic explosivity index (parallel

to the Richter earthquake scale) goes to 8, never reached in historic times, though Tambora (1815), Krakatoa (1883) and Pinatubo (1991) reached 7. The immediate effect on climate change is not

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global warming but the opposite: sulphur dioxide emissions lower temperature and also have other dire consequences (such as acid rain). After Tambora, 1816 was known worldwide as the year without a summer. Even historic times present mysteries; evidence from China, Europe, North America and New Zealand points to a major eruption in AD535–6. But where was it?

Volcanic hotspots (24 at the moment) move slowly as the earth's tectonic plates adjust. Modern monitoring techniques have improved our knowledge about volcanoes; Ann reassured us that there is no known immediate threat of catastrophe.



Mount St Helens

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## Toxic Wagner?

**Dr Margaret Brearley** describes her scholarly yet controversial February talk on Wagner, in which she asks how far his music embodies his toxic ideas and deep loathing of Jews

Wagner's influence on later writers, musicians and thinkers was vast, often life-changing. After participating in the Dresden uprising of 1849, he fled to exile in Switzerland. There his radical zeal was channelled into revolution through art – *his* art, which would embody the 'bloodiest hatred of our entire civilisation, contempt for everything that stems from it, and yearning for nature' (letter to Franz Liszt, 1851).

Wagner argued that western religions had enslaved the heroic

Greeks by making them worship an 'abstract god' and the Ten Commandments. According to him, modern Germans were divorced from nature, art, and themselves. Wagner would free them by restoring their natural instincts, of which the deepest was hatred of Jews. He would create a new musical religion – essentially pagan and anti-Judaic.

Wagner's music dramas, from the *Ring* onwards, em-





bodied his 'artwork of the future'; they were intended to combine all art forms including poetry (unusually, Wagner wrote all his own, highly subtle, libretti), dance and song. They were aimed at restoring man to oneness with nature

and himself; freed from conscience and 'self-loathing', man would once again become as God and the semi-divine German *Volk* – freed from Jewish influence – would be restored to predestined power.

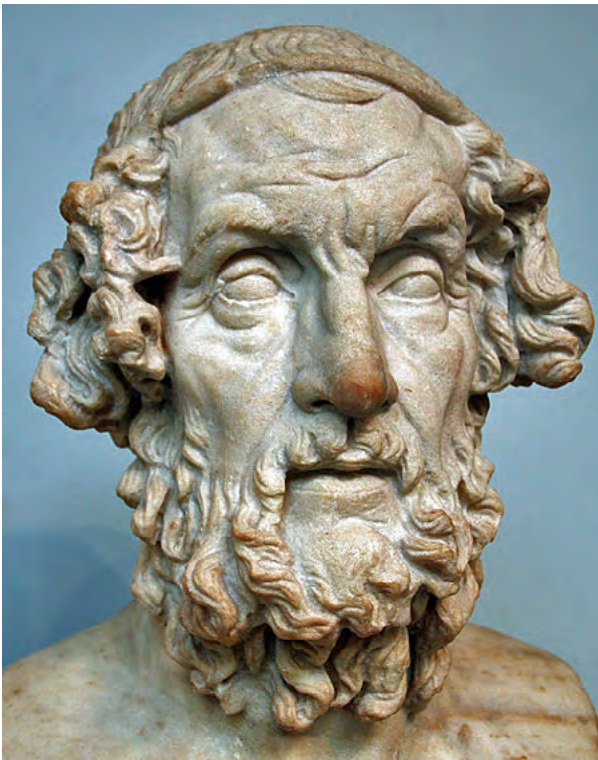
Wagner's intentions (which he

expressed in 10 volumes of essays) were fulfilled in his music dramas and eventually influenced Hitler. His music, hypnotic, innovative, can still intoxicate; the question remains – how far does it embody Wagner's toxic ideas?

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# Return to Ithaca

Do we really know the *Odyssey*? Not as well as we might, according to Isabel Raphael's wide-ranging talk about Homer's poem in March, as **Pat Taylor** reveals



The stories we remember of the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, Circe and Calypso, and Penelope unravelling her weaving every night are only part of the story of Odysseus, King of Ithaca, warrior and traveller. Homer portrays him as a man of outstanding wisdom,

shrewdness, courage and endurance but with a talent for deception. He is, after all, the brain behind the Trojan horse.

The poem, she believes, is about *nostos*, its Greek meaning wider and deeper than our nostalgia. It is about returning – some-

thing which takes Odysseus 10 years to achieve after the fall of Troy. Twenty-four books make up the *Odyssey*; by the twelfth book, Odysseus is back in Ithaca, where he is at first recognised only by his dog, Argos, and his old nurse.

What is the subject of the remaining half? In what ways does Odysseus settle down to rule his small kingdom after all those challenges and adventures – and after he disposes of the 108 suitors who have been wooing Penelope? What has he learnt? What values has he developed? What kind of man has he become? Homer explores the effect of Odysseus's experiences as he deals with feelings of rage and the desire for retribution and grows into a ruler affirming the eternal values of courage and magnanimity.

I think many of Isabel Raphael's listeners will be getting out their paperback editions to refresh their memories in the company of EV Rieu or Robert Fagles.

# Interest groups

## Greetings from the groups organiser, Sue Teller

I trust you are all enjoying the improving weather and hope the sun stays out – even if we may have to put on coats and gloves for a walk. But surely the sight of swathes of daffodils improves our mood and delights the eye.

I am also hoping that some of you will be busy taking pictures of north London scenes and will enter these images in our photographic competition. The photos will be judged by two professional photographers and must be of a site, wood, street, garden, house – anything in our north London

area. Perhaps something unusual or less well known, but of a size that will wrap around the front and back of the booklet, as in previous years. First prize will be £25, with second and third prizes of £15 and £10 towards tickets for a concert. Please send me your pictures (high resolution jpegs) at [ginpalace@mac.com](mailto:ginpalace@mac.com). If you're a winner, we may need a print of the original image for the booklet.

Closing date is 30 June and all winning entries will be featured on our website. This competition is open to all NLU3A members – so just get out the camera and see what you can do.

**Ruth Mendick's Book Circle** is looking for new readers to swell their membership for next term. They meet on the first Thursday of the month at 2.30pm. If you're

interested in joining this friendly group, please phone Ruth on 7263 3960.

Do you fancy learning Polish or Persian? If you would like to have a go at either of these languages, Michael Elliott, one of our members, would enjoy the challenge of teaching them. Give him a ring on 8883 1396 and if there is enough interest in either or both of these languages, he will arrange a meeting to discuss where and when.

Group coordinators, please remember to contact Henrietta Cohen for your waiting lists – either to fill up your groups or to see if a new group can be started for members who can't get into yours.

Continue to enjoy your activities but if you need any help or advice, please feel free to contact any of the team – Sue Teller, Henrietta Cohen, Candiss Waldram and Fiamma Shani.

Best wishes

**Sue**



Cover of 2012–13 interest groups booklet

## Groups organiser team

Henrietta Cohen	<a href="mailto:henriettacohen@tiscali.co.uk">henriettacohen@tiscali.co.uk</a>	8343 3088
Fiamma Shani	<a href="mailto:fiammashani@hotmail.com">fiammashani@hotmail.com</a>	8444 0548
Sue Teller	<a href="mailto:ginpalace@mac.com">ginpalace@mac.com</a>	8381 4480
Candiss Waldram	<a href="mailto:scwaldram@yahoo.com">scwaldram@yahoo.com</a>	8883 1395



Moreton Hall in 2010



## Who will set up our next study tour?

This is an appeal to our newer and recently retired members to form a small team to take on the enjoyable task of planning, organising and administering our study tours in the future. Since 2009 there has been a tour each year, open to all members. We have visited places of historical, geo-

graphical and architectural importance, ranging from great houses, castles, cathedrals and Roman remains to industrial buildings such as cotton and water mills. We have visited Derbyshire, Norfolk, Cheshire, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and, this year, Somerset.

These popular tours have given members the experience of visiting and learning about places that they would otherwise have had little chance of seeing. They have also given a chance to get to know people and make new friends.

After seven years, I think it is time to hand over to younger people. The present team are happy to help and advise a new group. Some organising and administrative experience and computer skills are needed, as is the ability to negotiate for venues on the telephone. North London U3A now has almost 700 members, among whom there must be some who will enjoy planning tours as much as I have.

Please get in touch with me (Margaret Kennedy, 8883 7886) or Janet Home (7272 3414) if you would like to discuss what is involved in planning and organising a study tour. If nobody comes forward, there will not be a tour in 2016.

### Away days booking form

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

*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 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.

## Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney, John Hajdu and Sue Teller

### Highpoint ... and lunch

1 North Hill,  
London N6 4BA

**Friday 22 May**

**H**ighpoint has a unique position in the history of 20th century British architecture. Designed by Lubetkin and Tecton, it is an iconic example of international modernism, whose high priest, Le Corbusier, visited and approved it. Built in the late 1930s, it is now internationally celebrated and may be seen as a symbol of the hope and energy of the interwar period. We will have an introductory talk in Highpoint II, after which one of the residents has kindly allowed us to see the interior of her flat in Highpoint I (the one with the Caryatid entrance) and also the extensive communal landscaped gardens.

After our visit, we will walk a short distance down North Hill to the historic Bull pub and microbrewery for a superior haddock and chips lunch, accompanied by a specialty house brew or soft drink. The talented painter George Morland (1763–1804) used to stay here and sell some of his prolific output to passing coach passengers.



#### **Time**

We meet at 10.50am outside the entrance of Highpoint II for the 11am introductory talk in the interior lobby.

#### **Travel**

Highpoint is a 10-minute walk from Highgate village, or a 10-minute uphill walk from Highgate tube, up Southwood Lane and via Park Walk passageway on the right to North Hill. In addition, the 143 bus (Finchley to Archway) runs past.

#### **Cost**

£15 to include lunch. Payable in advance.

#### **Booking is essential.**

Please use the booking form on page 9 or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque.

### Verse and Worse – a light-hearted literary walk in the City

**Friday, 26th June**

**I**n an early description of London from the 1170s, one William Fitzstephen, biographer of Thomas Beckett, describes a walk 'pleasant and merrie ... only spoilt by the immoderate drinking of fooles and the frequency of fires'. For many centuries thereafter, what we now call the City *was* London. Many a writer, poet or playwright had some association with its passageways, streets and pubs, from Milton and

TS Eliot to Agatha Christie. With the help of our esteemed Blue Badge guide, Eileen, we will visit the haunts of the diarist Samuel Pepys, encounter Scrooge and the three Christmas ghosts, Chaucer's riotous apprentices and William McGonagall's villainous verse. We'll see a tree that inspired Wordsworth, a letterbox designed by a Victorian novelist and a skull and crossbones that terrified Dickens.

### Times and travel

Meet at 10.50 for an 11am start, close to the busy exit of Tower Hill tube station. (District and Circle lines.) Turn left as you exit the station, immediately left again and we meet at the adjacent Roman wall. The walk will last around 90 minutes and finish at Saint Paul's Cathedral.

### Cost

£7, payable in advance

### Booking is essential.

Please use the booking form on page 9 or send a note with the requested details and your cheque.



An alley in the City

## Far away days

## Outing to Compton in Surrey

Thursday 28 May



We will be visiting Compton in Surrey (near Guildford) to see the George Frederic Watts (1817–1904) Gallery and the Watts Mortuary (known locally as the Cemetery) Chapel. Over 100 paintings are displayed in the gallery – portraits, landscapes and symbolic works. The gallery opened in 1904 and has recently been restored, so it is back to its original decorative schemes. We also have the opportunity to see the current exhibition, 'Liberating fashion: Aesthetic dress in Victorian portraits' (see above).

You may have lunch in the gallery's tea shop, or go to one of the village pubs. After lunch we will have a guided tour of the Grade I listed Arts and Crafts Mortuary Chapel. Please note that the chapel is 300

yards from the gallery – you will have to walk this distance, both there and back. An interesting point about the chapel is the material – the brick and tiles – from which it was built. Mary Watts (George's wife) held weekly terracotta art classes at Limnerslease, their home (which we are not visiting), so that the villagers could make some of the fine bricks and tiles used in the chapel. You will be drawn by the bright red terracotta and fascinated by the unusual decorative themes. George Watts provided paintings to adorn the chapel, but his wife, Mary, was the main artistic force behind its creation.

If there is time, you may enjoy a stroll around the village, which has been the home of many artists.

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#### Cost

NLU3A members: £33 (£26 coach fare; £7 admission to Watts Gallery).

Non-members (space permitting): £35 (£28 coach fare; £7 admission to Watts Gallery).

#### Pickup point

Meet at East Finchley tube station at 9.30 am.

#### Booking deadline

13 May.

#### Contact

Melvyn Rees: 8446 3029; 07903 456 385;  
[melvyn.tymel@gmail.com](mailto:melvyn.tymel@gmail.com)

### Far away days booking form

Compton in Surrey

28 May

How many people are you booking for? \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership no(1) \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Membership no(1) \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Membership no(1) \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Send booking form and cheque, payable to North London U3A, for £33.00 for each member or £35.00 for each non-member (space permitting), to **Melvyn Rees, 20 Hemingford Close, London N12 9HF**, by 13 May, please. Please remember to include your U3A membership number.

## Spring monthly meetings

All take place at 10.45am St Paul's church, 50 Long Lane, Finchley N3 2PU. Refreshments are served from 10.15.

### 11 May

#### *And When Did You Last See Your Father? Victorian narrative painting*

The title of one of the most famous paintings of the 19th century is the starting point for this lecture, about a period when story-pictures reflected and reinforced Victorian values in easy-to-understand paintings. Angela Cox, a lecturer who specialises in English painting, will look at the most popular themes and consider what those values were.

### 8 June

#### Isambard Kingdom Brunel

When Brunel built a bridge, he always opted for a radical design. None ever failed. Each ship he designed was revolutionary and the largest in the world at that time. His Great Western Railway was straight and level – and comfortable. These facts are well known. Dr Peter Maggs' talk will focus on lesser-known aspects of the life and work of this remarkable man whose family fled here to escape the excesses of the French Revolution.

**The summer term ends on 24 July**