

the northern line

the newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

issue 59

september 2015



Strictly come country

The popular TV show demonstrates dances from the waltz to the tango and paso doble. But it overlooks the dances with the longest tradition. Fortunately, the NLU3A Country Dancing group has filled the gap, as **Kathy Kyriakides** explains to **Judith Abbs**. Photos by **Terry Stoten**

What are the origins of country dancing?

On village greens, in places of worship, halls, taverns and houses, dance has always been part of ceremonies and celebrations.

Was country dancing only for peasants?

Stately homes had 'The Long Room' for that purpose and a dance master would come to teach the gentry. In 1651, the dance master John Playford published a book of around 100 country

dances. Although waltzes and quadrilles were still popular in the 18th century, the evening often finished with the livelier country dances. These could be square, circular or longways sets and were taught by a caller.

What sort of music did they dance to?

Sometimes classical – Handel with Care was one dance. For jigs and reels it was folksy, often using popular ballads such as 'The Grand Old Duke of York'

and accompanied by a fiddle, drum, flute or concertina.

How do we know how to perform these dances?

They were taught orally, but from the 16th century they were also

printed in broadsides sheets. We also know about dances from authors such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy.

How did country dancing survive the invention of the waltz, quickstep and foxtrot?

As couples began to hold each other in their arms in dances, country dancing declined. However, at the turn of the 20th century Cecil Sharp used village dances as a guide to publish reconstructions of traditional social dances from the Playford book. In 1911 he founded the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Sharp met Mary Neal – a social worker and suffragette – at the Hampstead Conservatoire. She co-founded the Espérance Club in King's Cross, where hundreds of

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North London U3A committee 2015–16

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Diaries

U^{3A} diaries for 2016 will be on sale at the October monthly meeting. The cover is racing green and the price is unchanged at £2.00. To order, ring Eve Brenner, 8446 0393.

Our publications

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

The deadline for the next Update is 2 October. Please send submissions to Jane Marsh, oriana.jane@btinternet.com **by that date**.

The editors may shorten or otherwise edit articles to fit spacing and style requirements.

Membership

For membership enquiries contact Helene Davidian, 8444 3669, helenedavidian@googlemail.com or Sandra Nistri (details above).



Patricia and Eric cut the cake at the 21st birthday party. See page 5 for a collage of birthday photos, all by James Crawford.

Editorial



You will have noticed Martin Goldman's photo of Northern line trains adding class to the masthead of our own Northern Line. Seen it before? As the winner of the NLU3A photo competition, it

is featured on the cover of this year's interest groups booklet. Martin, who took the photo from a bridge overlooking Finchley Central, says: 'I thought the slight movement blur of the trains gave it a sort of coming and going feel, and that seemed to be part of the ethos of U3A, in that we are not sat at home; we are out and about.'

What is the U3A ethos? Patricia Isaacs put it this way in her report at the AGM: '...the belief that we can all teach and ... learn at any age, that life does not end with retirement from a job or career.'

In NLU3A we have over 100 groups. These include more than 10 sports, physical exercise and walking groups; half a dozen outings activities; 14 classes in different languages; 13 arts, crafts and other creative activities; 11 board or card games; and lots of discussion and seminar-type groups.

One creative activity is the production of this newsletter, in which seven people are involved. I'm the editor, with invaluable assistance from Judith Abbs. Barry Davies does the layout; Tom Downes (recently recruited and very welcome) and Jo Pestel subedit; Helen Killick is in charge of photos; Myrna Lazarus deals with print matters; and Judith Litherland proofreads. We hope you enjoy our work!

Leni Green

editor

helenjuni@ntlworld.com



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girls learnt English folk song and dance from traditional musicians and dancers.

How did NLU3A members find out about country dancing?

The interest aroused by Sharp and Neal led to folk dance becoming part of the school curriculum in the 1920s. Almost everyone in our group remembers learning country dancing at school.

Who is the NLU3A dance master?

Our paid teacher, an expert

country dancer and caller, caters for all ages and levels of experience. She is sensitive to the fitness levels within the group and brings out the best of our abilities.

How many different dances come under the heading of 'country dancing'?

Hundreds – and probably thousands – as there are many variations to any dance. Our dances include: Walpole Cottage, Posties Jig, Morpeth Rant, Gay Gordons, Cumberland Reel, and the Leaving of Liverpool.

Does each dance use different patterns and steps?

Yes, but most movement is stepping, skipping and step-hops. We are familiar with the patterns including the ladies chain, do-si-do, allemande, and strip the

willow.

Are there any benefits from your weekly dance sessions – apart from enjoying yourselves?

Learning new activities, the repetitive nature of the physical exercise and the happy social environment all contribute to our mental and physical wellbeing. Psychiatrist Norman Doidge suggests that one way to improve our brain's health and performance is to learn a new dance. We leave the class feeling exhausted – but so much better than when we arrived!

AGM snippets

NLU3A in numbers

- Members: 710, with over 100 applications in the last year and more flooding in.
- Interest groups: 107, with new ones in the pipeline.
- Members on email: 85 per cent and growing.
- Financial surplus: £12,117, compared to £4,200 last year.

Discussion points

- At 700+ members, are we getting too big? Does the increase in size mean that we will become less friendly? Will we be so big that we will have to exclude people from monthly meetings? On the other hand, more members mean more groups, more activities, more income. What's the solution?
- The Charities Commission recommends keeping money in reserve, with a policy that sets out how much is needed and how it should be spent. What should our policy be for our reserves? Members said they wanted paper copies of the summer programme and membership renewal forms, as well as the interest groups booklet. However, this would take a great deal of time and money.

The U3A concept, the belief that we can all teach and we can all learn at any age, that life does not end with retirement from a job or career – this concept is life-changing for many, many members throughout the world. ... We all know that it is never too late to learn, and education of all kinds is a continuing joy for us. Involvement in U3A stimulates the brain and the imagination, opens new doors, brings in new ideas, introduces new friends and there is no excuse, no reason to give up and give in to the ageing process.

PATRICIA ISAACS

From the chair, Patricia Isaacs



Hello to all members, and

welcome to everyone who is new. To help you navigate your way around North London U3A

(NLU3A), our welcome team will be inviting you to meet other members during the autumn, and I am sure you will find much to interest you as well as making friends.

I hope we will see you at our

monthly meetings, which are held on the second Monday of each month; they are an important aspect of NLU3A, both social and informative. Details of these are on the last page of The Northern Line, page 3 of the interest groups

booklet and on the website (www.nlu3a.org.uk), where you will also find a calendar with information about holiday study groups, outings and more, as well as term dates for 2015–16. Minutes of the annual general meeting, held in July, are on the website as well.

In June we celebrated our 21st birthday at a party which included performances by a professional jazz group and our own two choirs. Some members made delicious cakes, including two enormous birthday cakes, each cut into 100 slices; as if that wasn't enough, we had a show cake decorated in NLU3A colours. Our

guest of honour, Eric Midwinter, took part in the cutting ceremony; Eric is one of the three founders of U3A and we were thrilled that he was able to join us.

A new U3A might be starting in Mill Hill; we don't want to lose you, but some of you might like to join Mill Hill and stay with us, too. If you want to know about the launch meeting, please contact me by email at chair@nlu3a.org.uk

I hope this autumn term will delight you, and I hope to meet most of you at welcome meetings, interest groups, and monthly meetings.



With warmest good wishes to everyone,

Patricia

Really important reminder:

Some of our members don't bother to open the general email that goes out every month, and they don't use our website, either. This is unfortunate as those people are missing a great deal of useful and interesting information.

The question of 'going digital' was discussed at committee meetings and with the editors of The Northern Line (TNL) and Update, and there was unanimous agreement on the matter. The letter explaining the decision is on page 5 in the January issue of TNL; if you haven't read that letter, please do so now. If you think you are entitled to a paper copy of publications please let me know (chair@nlu3a.org.uk) and we will consider your request; but please remember that we are reducing the availability of these all the time. All our publications are available on the website; the monthly email link takes you there.

As I see it

A member of a U3A in London should be able to attend any group in the London region so long as there is a vacancy. This already happens in other regions of the country, says **Keith Richards**



At our lively AGM this year the question of limiting the size of our U3A was raised in the interest of keeping it friendly. I am sure that the volunteers who run it would also bring

forward organisational problems and the question of good and effective communication while some members are still resistant to email. No-one, while I was present, raised the necessity of

finding a venue large enough for all members who wish to attend monthly meetings. Eric Midwinter, one of the founders of our movement, memorably

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describes this as 'the tail wagging the dog'.

Our primary purpose is education and I know that the advocates of capping numbers would be the last to deny learning opportunities to anyone. In fact many supporters of the idea have been foremost in helping to found new U3As in neighbouring areas. Some delegates pointed to the size of Barnet U3A which, initially, was part of North London. Numbers are greater than ours (over 1,000) with, seemingly, no loss of friendliness.

It has been exciting to watch such developments but my suggestion is more radical. I have been putting it forward for years to no avail. Membership should

be universal. A member of North London U3A should be able, if willing to travel, to attend a group in any part of the region where a vacancy exists. Clearly home members take precedence but, given that, I have yet to see the problem. Certainly no money should be involved as everyone has already paid the national fee.

I raised this at the national standing committee of education and the chair, Marion Clements, was astonished. She is from Cheddar and it has been the practice in the huge West Country region for years. There some members have to undertake long car journeys to get to groups. Our regional representative on the national executive committee and the current chair of the London

region are taking this to meetings this autumn. London seems to me the ideal location for at least a pilot scheme. Having coordinated a most exciting group at the London region summer school in July, I am even more enthusiastic about friendship existing beyond our individual borders. We tried a local network scheme once under the indefatigable leadership of Pat Taylor, but it faded as individual treasurers raised the subscription problem. Let's try it again with, this time, the whole of London involved. Perhaps even further afield! There were people in my summer school group from Stansted, Kent and beyond.

KEITH RICHARDS IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF NORTH LONDON U3A

Meetings and excursions

When pictures paint 1,000 words

A story picture enables the viewer to deduce what had taken place before the scene depicted in the painting and guess what might happen afterwards. **Angela**



Cox, an expert on English painting, summarises the talk she gave about these pictures at the May monthly meeting

Story pictures were popular in the middle years of the 19th century.

Small in scale, they were familiar to a wide audience through art journalism and print reproduction. Much of their appeal lay in the seeming reality of the events depicted, brought about by the fidelity of the painting style and careful attention to detail. These pictures reflected and reinforced the values of the mid-Victorian period for their largely middle-class audience. Thrift, piety, respectability and hard work were constantly depicted, and

rural scenes in particular were cosy and reassuring.

And When Did You Last See Your Father? (WF Yeames) is a historical anecdote with a cast of characters and a moral dilemma that Victorian viewers could relate to – does a boy reveal the whereabouts of his Royalist dad to a Parliamentary interrogator?

Literary subjects were also popular, but the majority of paintings depicted scenes from contemporary life, and these were

revealing for the themes and issues that recurred. Dutiful wives and daughters are a Victorian given, and the anxiety over the ‘fallen’ woman, which seems to have been an obsession, is exposed in a number of paintings. The final picture, *In Memoriam* (JN Paton), which depicted women and children about to be massacred at Cawnpore in 1857, had to be modified in the wake of a public outcry.

Brunel's Untold Story

Some of Brunel's less-known engineering feats were covered at the May monthly meeting by **Peter Meggs**

Brunel crammed more creative innovation into his life than his contemporaries. Aged just 20, he was resident engineer on the construction of the Thames Tunnel. He also surveyed the track and designed the gauge for the Great Western Railway, and designed bridges, tunnels, and three steamships, each the largest in the world when launched.

Brunel also had a sense of fun. He once inadvertently inhaled a coin while conjuring to amuse children. When a tracheotomy

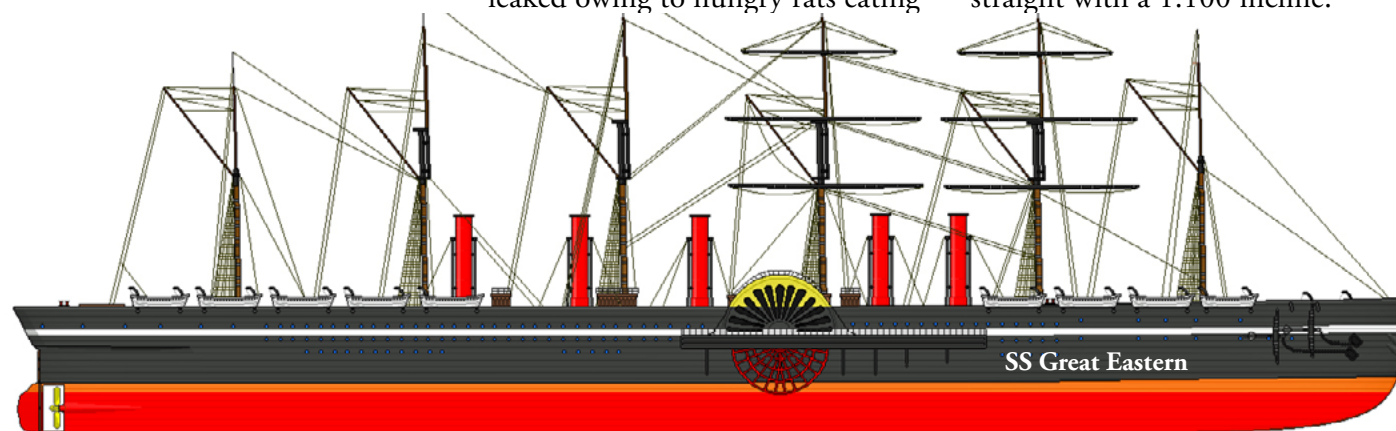
– without anaesthetic – failed to remove it, the coin was finally dislodged when his body was tipped upside down, strapped to a device he invented.

On the South Devon Railway, Brunel evolved a train design for eliminating the need for heavy steam engine power on inclines; it was remarkably similar to those used on the London underground 40 years later. But he didn't have access to today's electric power rails or overhead wires; his piston-through-pipes vacuum technology leaked owing to hungry rats eating

the leather sealing flaps. So the project failed.

Brunel's 1859 steamship, the *SS Great Eastern*, was not exceeded in size until the 20th century. She laid the first successful transatlantic telegraph cables. And when she went aground – with comparable hull damage to *Titanic* – she survived, thanks to Brunel's ‘double skin’ design.

Brunel's Great Western Railway Box Tunnel was the world's longest – two miles – when constructed in 1841. It was dead straight with a 1:100 incline.



Westward ho!

Somerset was sunny and the sights spectacular. Dorothy and Douglas Barnes describe this year's U3A holiday.

That morning the cathedral gradually appeared, a ghostly presence through the mist. A warm sunny day was beginning as we waited for the coach to collect us from the hotel in Wells – a lovely little city and an ideal base for our 2015 spring study tour in Somerset.

On another day we explored the cathedral, admiring the golden stone of the glorious west front, and marvelling at the 'scissor arches', a perfect conjunction of medieval engineering and aesthetics. The bishop's palace and its gardens were delightful – especially a water garden fed by St Andrew's Spring, one of those that gave Wells its name. One member of the group spoke of the pleasure to be had in the morning from observing the burgeoning life among the ancient houses of the marketplace.

If we had asked each person in the group what was the highlight of the tour we would have received diverse answers, for Margaret Kennedy and her team had devised delights for all. We two



enjoyed most of all Wells itself and the lake and gardens at Stourhead.

We had guides for many of our visits. One was Alice, a lay servant of Glastonbury Abbey, who had a local Somerset accent and was dressed in the everyday wear of centuries ago. She led us like a primary class into the abbey, helping us to imagine the enormous church that now only exists as a few walls and foundations. In the Fleet Air Arm Museum a very different guide, a retired wing commander, after showing slides of past aircraft, told us that the dangerous excitement of the piloted Fleet Air Arm would one day be replaced by drones.

The great houses we visited characterised the tenacity of the English upper classes through the centuries. Tudor marriages and the acquisition of land generated the wealth to build Longleat and Montacute; 18th century banking made the

beauties of Stourhead possible; and it was the undignified importing of guano that financed the Victorian grandeur of Tynesfield. Today this tenacity survives only at Longleat, where the Marquis of Bath still secures an income by the less noble means of safari park and visitors' resort. The other three survive in the hands of the National Trust, the charity that preserves these rich relics for us to enjoy. We benefitted from English Heritage, too, at the ruins of Muchelney Abbey, where a professional guide helped us to understand its rich past, speculating about the lives of craftsmen who had fashioned the feet remaining from a statue of Jesus, and those who had designed the tiles and the paintings that are still vaguely traced on the walls.

We thank Margaret for preparing informative notes for the visits, and Janet Home and Krishna Dutta as well as Margaret for making this enjoyable trip available to us.



Interest groups

Fresh beginnings

As NLU3A grows, so do its interest groups. Groups organiser Sue Teller introduces some of them

A warm welcome to everyone at the start of a new U3A year. Good news: several new groups are starting this autumn. They include Art for Those who Think They Can't Draw; Supervised Bridge; Grandparents Talking; Cycling; and Rambles not Ambles. The last two are being led by John Dugdale, whose correct email is johnlakedugdale@talktalk.net, and not what was mistakenly entered in the interest groups booklet.

If enough members are interested, we hope to go ahead

with the following groups: Cooking for One – Simple and Economical; Portraiture and Life Studies; Improvisation Drama Group; and iPad Drawing, which was popular in the summer but needs more commitment to make it viable. So let me know if you fancy any of these. My details are on page 2.

We also have some great ideas for other groups, so please keep your eye on www.nlu3a.org.uk, our website, where they will be advertised as soon as they are

ready to start. And remember that our website is constantly being revised, with details of new groups, changes to existing groups and items of useful information 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 our monthly meetings.

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

Sue Teller

Groups organiser team

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

Found in translation

I was reluctant to join yet another book group, but I was told that Reading the World would be interesting. That turned out to be an understatement! I now realise that my education pretty much excluded most world literature other than American writing and a few international classics. In the last year we have read in translation Russian memoirs, contemporary Iraqi literature, German poetry and South American, Palestinian and Japanese novels,

and more. Sometimes we have different versions of the same work and stimulating discussions about how translation changes nuance and meaning. And sometimes an English book creeps in. I can say sincerely that this group has opened my mind to world literature, culture and attitudes that I would never otherwise have met. The good news? Because we meet at a large venue, we have vacancies and would welcome new members.

ALISON WATSON

Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney, John Hajdu and Sue Teller

The British Library

96 Euston Road, NW1 2DB

Friday 23 October

Opened in 1998, the building, once described by Prince Charles as suiting 'an academy for secret policemen', has been awarded Grade 1 listed, the highest heritage honour status. Our tour covers the history of the library and its collections, and explains how millions of items are stored, requested and delivered to researchers in the reading rooms. We will find out about the 'jewel in the crown': the King's Library, which once belonged to George III. We will go behind the scenes into a book-handling room and also to the viewing platform to see researchers inside the Humanities Reading Room. Finally we will go to the Treasures Gallery, where some of the most precious, iconic items are on display. We will then have time to look around by ourselves.



Time and travel

10.50am for an 11am start. Meet at the information desk in the main foyer. The talk will last 75 to 90 minutes. Tube stations: Euston or Kings Cross.

Facilities

There is a café and restaurant on site.

Cost

£6 each, payable in advance.

Booking is essential.

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

British Libraries booking form

BLOCK LETTERS please. Only two names per application.

Name(s) _____ Membership number(s) _____

Contact phone number _____

- Cheques payable to NLU3A
- Send booking form and cheque to Sue Teller, 27 Midholm, London NW11 6LL.
- 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. For last-minute cancellations, phone Jim Sweeney, 07930 974 752.

Faraway days

Stowe – follies and gardens

Wednesday 16 September



Richard Temple, later Viscount Cobham, was a precocious child; court-martialled aged 10 for disobedience and discharged from the army, he went on to become a field marshal. The grand, neo-classical mansion at Stowe was built for him in the first half of the 18th century.

Stowe marks a new departure for English country-house parks. Although man-made, the park looks natural and features streams. Stowe is famous for its several dozen follies which were an innovation to British gardens; many are neo-classical, designed by the well-known architects John Vanbrugh and James Gibbs.

Part of the park in which the follies stand – the Grecian Valley – was the first commission of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. Though not the first garden designer at Stowe, he brought the park into the naturalistic landscape that it is today. The follies and statues illustrate Cobham’s political views. He was opposed to Britain’s first prime minister, Robert Walpole, and the Temples of Virtue and Vice reflect this with statues of some British worthies.

Our guided tour will last about one hour. The public rooms are unavailable because of a prior

booking; should this change, admission to the house will be £4.50 – including National Trust members.

Stowe has good catering at the New Inn café, where you may buy lunch or snacks.

There will be a lot of outdoor walking so please wear appropriate shoes and clothes for the weather.

Cost

Coach fare: £31.30 for NLU3A members; £33.30 for non-members (if there are places available)

Admission and tour of follies: National Trust members free; non-members £9.50.

Pickup point

East Finchley tube station, 9.30am

Contact

Melvyn Rees, 8446 3029, 07903 456 385,
melvyn.tymel@gmail.com

Faraway days booking form

Stowe – follies and gardens

16 September

How many people are you booking for? _____

Name(s) _____

Membership no(1) _____ Home phone _____ Mobile _____ NT? Y N

Membership no(2) _____ Home phone _____ Mobile _____ NT? Y N

Membership no(3) _____ Home phone _____ Mobile _____ NT? Y N

Please return this form with cheque payable to North London U3A to **Melvyn Rees, 20 Hemingford Close, London N12 9HF**, by the appropriate date. Please remember to include your U3A membership number. **If you are booking after 2 September, please phone Melvyn first.**

Portraits of north London

This year we took a new approach to the front cover of the interest groups booklet and invited all members to take part in a photography competition featuring an aspect of north London. You will have noticed the dramatic cover picture of the Northern line taken by the winner, Martin Goldman (and not Goodman as was erroneously printed in the booklet), both on the booklet and as a

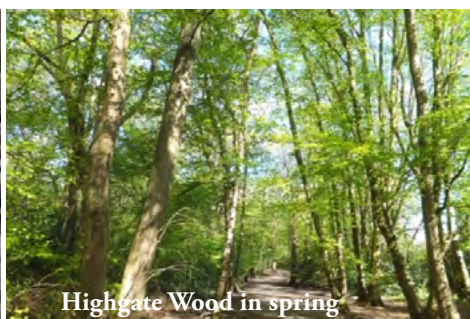
backdrop to the masthead of TNL. We hope you are as delighted with it as we are.

The winning photos are shown below. We are so pleased with the results that we plan to hold another competition next year, so stroll around north London and get clicking! Well-earned applause to the winners!

SUE TELLER AND THE GROUPS ORGANISER TEAM



First prize, £25, Martin Goldman



Second prize, £15, Gill Pellant



Third prize, £10, Sandra Nistri

Autumn monthly meetings

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

Refreshments are served from 10.15. After Open Day on 7 September, these are:

12 October

Diseases under control? Some lessons from history

Dr Chris Derrett, a retired medical educator, has a special interest in the social and medical history of Victorian east London. He will discuss the history of some diseases that were common in London in the past, were almost eradicated in the 20th century and have now returned. Covering the period from medieval times to the present, he will concentrate on tuberculosis, syphilis and rickets, will discuss the way in which these diseases were acquired, how they were then perceived by doctors and how patients were managed.

9 November

Satirist to insanity: celebrating the life and work of James Gillray

Professional magician Ian Keable will speak about 19th-century caricaturist James Gillray, the natural successor to William Hogarth. Gillray tore into politicians and the royal family alike but pursued a staunchly patriotic stance when it came to the French Revolution and accepted a pension to tone down his satirical bite. After he died, insane, in 1815, his reputation plummeted. It is only now that he can be seen as the natural forefather of *Spitting Image* and cartoonists Gerald Scarfe and Steve Bell.

Term dates

Term	Start date	Finish date
Autumn	7 September 2015	18 December 2015
Spring	4 January 2016	18 March 2016
Summer	15 April 2016	15 July 2016