

the northern line

the newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

issue 60

january 2016



No one's lonely as a cloud When Poetry Aloud's allowed

A friendly afternoon every month with 12 people for company, home-made biscuits to eat and a gorgeous cat called Bob to admire. **Judith Abbs** asks: 'What could be better?' And **Rachel Bowden** replies: 'Reading and listening to poetry with the Poetry Aloud group'

When you listen to a poem do you discover something different from when you read it silently?

Yes, definitely. When a poem is read well it can throw a completely different light on the meaning. But both are valuable.

We are experimenting with listening to poems read by the poets themselves or by actors. We have listened to songs to see the effect of music on words. Handel's arrangement of John Gay's *Acis and Galatea* and the Vaughan Williams settings of AE Housman's *On Wenlock Edge* make wonderful listening.

Does everyone in the group take a turn at reading? Do you sight-read or do people prepare?

Everyone shares in the reading but it is certainly not compulsory. We have some excellent readers and everyone improves as they come to feel at home in the group. On the whole, people prepare by reading their poems through to themselves several times. Practising reading out loud makes a real difference to the final performance.

I CAUGHT this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy!

From *The Windhover* by Gerard Manley Hopkins (see below)

Are some poets or styles particularly difficult to read aloud?

Some are certainly harder than others. Poems remembered from school days are usually fairly straightforward – for example, *Ode to Autumn* by Keats, Wordsworth's *Lines Composed upon Westminster Bridge*. Also TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, though much of his more modernist work, such as *The Waste Land*, is very difficult. Hard, too, is John Clare, the self-taught early 19th century poet, who uses no punctuation, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose sprung rhythms and made-up words can almost sound like tongue-twisters, as in the example from *The Windhover* in the box above.

Continued on page 3

Registered Charity No 1048587

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Editorial



I'm a compulsive form filler. So when I received a questionnaire from NLU3A asking me what skills I could contribute and how much time I could spare, I filled it out immediately. I could spare 15 minutes once a month, I said, and my skills were editorial. Two minutes after I'd pressed *send* I received a phone call asking me if I would like to work on the newsletter, and here I am – though the 15 minutes turned into more like a month (give or take) per issue. And despite the stresses and frustrations, I'm glad I offered. It has allowed me to retain my professional identity, and it's also fun. I've met fantastic people, and we all work together to produce what I hope is a quality publication.

In this issue, Judith Abbs introduces Poetry Aloud, an interest group in which poems are read as they should be – out loud; Keith Richards discusses the pros and cons of MOOCs (turn to page 8 to find out what they are); and we present a photo collage of last term's architectural study trip.

Happy reading – and Happy New Year!

Leni Green

Editor

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.

The deadline for the next Update is 5 February. Please send submissions to Jane Marsh, oriana.jane@btinternet.com

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

Membership

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

Does each session focus on a particular theme, poet or period?

We meet monthly. On alternate months we have a theme. *In Mrs Tilscher's Class* by Carol Ann Duffy (extract below) was a popular choice on the theme of childhood:

Over the Easter term the inky tadpoles changed from commas into exclamation marks. Three frogs hopped in the playground, freed by a dunce followed by a line of kids, jumping and croaking away from the lunch queue.

Relationships gave rise to *Meeting and Passing* by Robert Frost:

As I went down the hill along the wall
There was a gate I had leaned at for the view
And had just turned from when I first saw you
As you came up the hill. We met. But all
We did that day was mingle great and small
Footprints in summer dust as if we drew
The figure of our being less than two
But more than one as yet.

Other topics have been journeys, fruit, and winter. Or we might devote a session to one poet; so far we have done Wordsworth and Carol Ann Duffy. On the in-between months there's a completely free choice.

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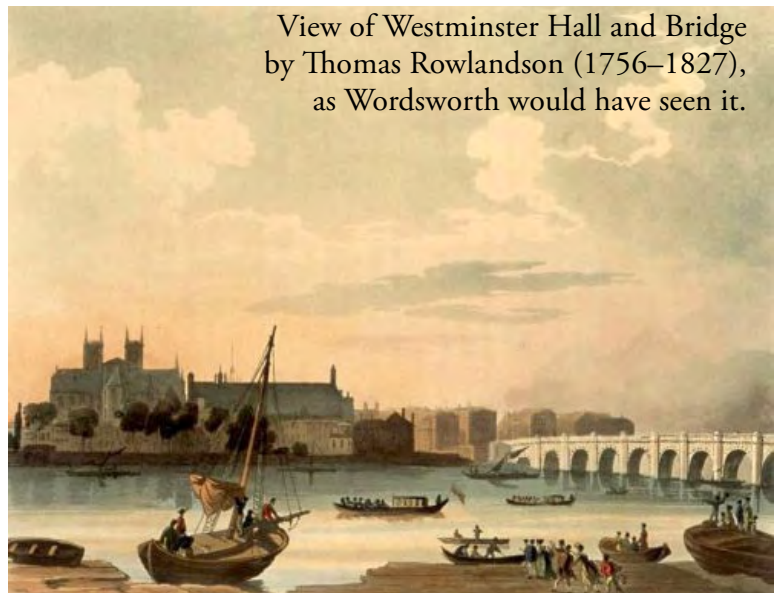
Bob enjoys a catnap while listening to Poetry Aloud

Who chooses the poems? Who are the most popular poets?

Everyone in the group chooses what they want to read. Among poets who get chosen frequently (in no particular order) are Seamus Heaney, Wendy Cope, Shakespeare, Robert Frost, Edward Thomas, AA Milne, UA Fanthorpe, Thomas Hardy, Carol Ann Duffy, Dylan Thomas, John Donne and WH Auden.

Do you interpret and analyse the poems or do you just listen to the 'music'?

Some poems invite discussion, others less so. People are good at finding out about the poet they have chosen, and often someone else in the group can contribute interesting facts. We do not do a great deal of textual or other analysis. Occasionally people read very different things into a poem and this can lead to lively discussion. At other times just listening to the music is enough.



View of Westminster Hall and Bridge by Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), as Wordsworth would have seen it.

From the chair, Patricia Isaacs



Once again, Open Day in September was a great success; the enthusiasm around the stalls was (almost) tangible, and the coffee lounge buzzed. We have welcomed 75 new members since then, bringing our membership to over 700.

I hope you have discovered our website, www.nlu3a.org.uk. It is excellent and offers a great deal of information. So please check it regularly. And remember to read the email sent by our web officer every month. You will find links to many pertinent items, including monthly meetings, new groups, links to our publications, and forthcoming events and research projects.

Early in December we held our annual festive lunch; it was a delightful, happy event. The tables were beautifully decorated and the food was delicious. Many thanks to everyone involved in the preparations (and clearing

up!). A great deal of work goes on behind the scenes before any of our events, and our U3A is fortunate to have so many willing and enthusiastic volunteers. If you would like to join them – and it can be fun, truly – please let me know.

Longer, lighter evenings are on the way, and I hope this spring term will give you a great deal of satisfaction and much to think about.

Warmest good wishes to all of you for a very Happy New Year.

Patricia

Meetings and excursions

Beyond the plague

Jo Pestel reviews Dr Chris Derrett's talk on diseases once common in London

Dr Derrett gave an informative, humorous talk on common London diseases of the past. He spoke mainly about TB, syphilis and vitamin D deficiency.

We learned that syphilis first appeared in England in 1493. In its advanced stage it was referred to as 'general paralysis of the insane'. A distressing disease, it eats into the bones and can be congenital. A close inspection of Hogarth's painting *Marriage-A-la-Mode* reveals that some of the figures have a telltale black spot indicating the progression of the disease. Originally treated

by mercury and *lignum vitae* from Jamaica, the first effective remedy was salvarsan in 1907.

Vitamin D was first identified in 1919. Its deficiency leads to rickets in children and bone pain in adults. Dr Derrett said that in the UK, 10 to 15 minutes daily in the sun without sunscreen provides much of the vitamin D needed by most people.

TB, caused by a bacterium and readily spread in conditions of malnutrition and overcrowding, has long been with us. An Egyptian mummy, owned by a



Dr Granville and unwrapped in 1825, proved to have died of TB. People with TB believed that being touched by a monarch could cure them, and Charles II held many public healing sessions. TB, on the rise in recent years, is now curable. However, resistant forms are appearing and there are not yet any new antibiotics to fight them.

Kentish delights

Memories of a five-day September coach hop around Kent, relishing the architecture and other charms, organised by Wilson Briscoe, James Crawford and Mary Fraser. Photographs by **James Crawford** and **Jutta Lawrence**



Kentish Hop Trip 6-10 September 2015



Bexhill
James Crawford



Foreshore at Deal
James Crawford



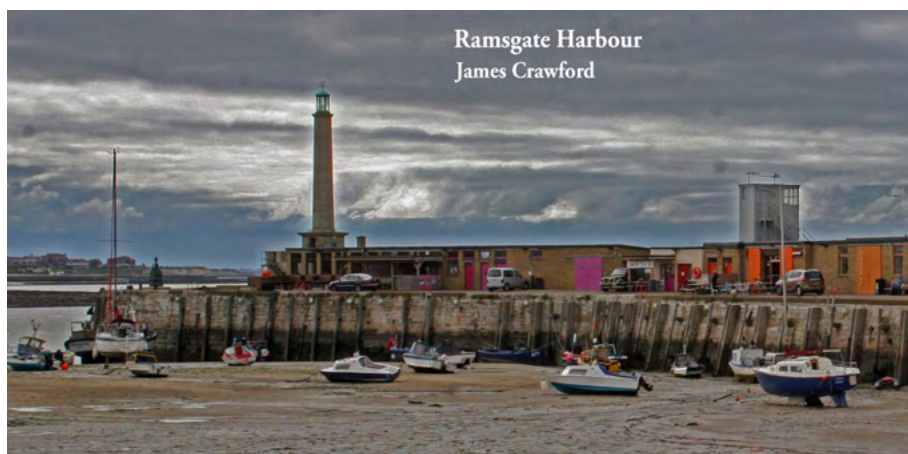
Rochester Cathedral
Jutta Lawrence



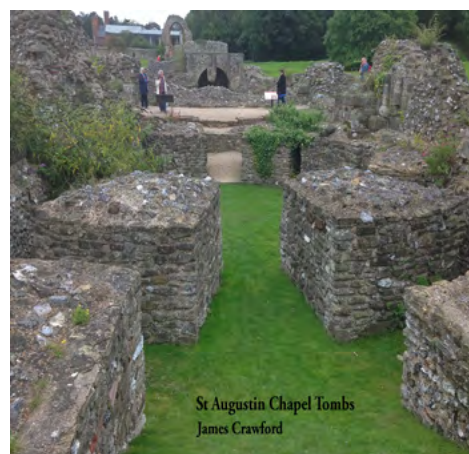
Bodiam Castle
James Crawford



De La Warr Pavillion
James Crawford



Ramsgate Harbour
James Crawford



St Augustin Chapel Tombs
James Crawford

The caricaturist's progress

In this, the bicentenary year of the death of famed caricaturist James Gillray, enthusiast Ian Keable gave an imaginatively illustrated talk about him. **Jim Sweeney** reports



Gillray was reared in the austere evangelical Moravian Brotherhood sect which taught that death and disease bring one closer to God. The only one of five children to survive to adulthood, his view of life and morals was severe.

He was an apprentice engraver at the Royal Academy but his natural talents lay in satire and caricature. His distinguished predecessor, Hogarth, had paved the way with engraved morality tales such as *The Rake's Progress*.

Gillray's savage depiction of men and women seemed more akin to immorality tales. Late 18th century England was not short of suitable subject matter. He laid into the royal family, the court, and the political and social elite with equal abandon. He became more selective, however, on receiving a state pension.



Abroad, he attacked the French revolution, republican France and Napoleon. At his peak, Gillray was regarded as the country's



foremost living caricaturist, but after 1800 his mental and physical health and artistic output declined, and his death in 1815 went largely unrecorded.

We were treated in the talk to some of his finest works on screen, magnified in places to highlight the detail. In *The Gout*, Gillray, a sufferer himself, depicts an imagined fiend sinking its fangs into a grossly inflamed foot. A case of the biter bit?

How about you?

What can you contribute? What skills do you bring from your working life, hobbies, interests, activities? Can you cook? Speak another language? Play the piano? NLU3A is run by members for members, so the more people who come forward to share their talents, the more inclusive and successful we will be. And it's actually fun!

**The Northern
Line wishes
all members
of NLU3A a
sparkling 2016**

Interest groups

If winter comes...

Believe it or not, spring is on its way. Groups organiser **Sue Teller** invites you to a spring-term photo competition

Kee your eyes and cameras at the ready for our forthcoming photo competition, in which I shall soon be inviting you all to take part. We are looking for interesting pictures illustrative of our north London area. So get snapping now because it would be good to have photos from all seasons to choose from. The winning photo will feature on the cover of the next interest groups booklet, as the current fabulous image of the Northern Line at Finchley Central does. Details will follow later.

Most new groups have settled in well but others are looking for

more participants. These include Improvisation Drama (see below), Cookery for One and Meditation. There are possibilities of new groups starting: Poker, French Intermediate+ Conversation, and Latin. If you are interested, please get in touch with either Candiss Waldram or myself for more information. Our details are below. Also please contact either of us if you have an idea for a new group. We will advertise this and ask for expressions of interest.

Last term we undertook an audit of members in groups. As a result, the website is being updated so that you can find

which groups have spaces and which are full. However, don't let size deter you from contacting the group coordinator: things change quickly and sometimes spaces miraculously appear.

The groups organiser team is having a slight change. Family commitments have meant that Fiamma Shani can no longer organise venues, so Henrietta Cohen is taking over this task. Thank you, Fiamma, for all your hard work; we shall miss you.

I wish you all a happy and busy U3A New Year.

Sue

Groups organiser team

Groups organiser	Sue Teller	ginpalace@mac.com	8381 4480
New groups	Candiss Waldram	scwaldram@yahoo.com	8883 1395
Waiting lists and venues	Henrietta Cohen	henanded@gmail.com	8343 3088

Improvising in rhyme

Once a week we meet for drama improvisation.
We exercise physically to loosen up for the session,
could be a facial expression,
perhaps a celebrity interview or whatever –
that's why impro gives such pleasure.
We break for tea and cookies or cake
to catch up on what we undertake.
Another hour to express spontaneity,
then off we go to life's reality!

Improvisation Drama

Thursdays 2–4pm,
Trinity Church,
Nether Street N12 7NN
Contact Pat Solomons
07949 761 033

How's your memory?

Jenny Clark and **Estelle Phillips** have been running five-week-long memory courses, once a term since 2013. But now they need a rest, so are looking for a new team, says Estelle, who describes how it works

We lead the group with the help of two administrators. We are guided by the books compiled by the Aughton & Ormskirk U3A group* (which all participants buy at £5 each) but do not stick rigidly to them. Participants are encouraged to read about the session they have just attended *after* they have heard what we have to say. In this way they can revise and add to what we have already covered. We feel that this is preferable to their reading ahead on their own

without any help or explanation. The books include some jokes about memory, which go down very well, and we collect and have added to these so that all sessions end with a relevant joke or two. We add some information about memory not contained in the books and also leave much of what does appear for participants to read after the session. We help each other to remember our names by constantly using them.

A participant says: 'Since I've been coming to this course, I have

much more confidence in my ability to realise that occasional lapses don't matter. I enjoyed the good, relaxed atmosphere and the jokes.'

- If you would be interested in being part of the new team, please contact Jenny on: jenmal@talktalk.net or 8346 3751.

* U3A Memory Course: booklet of notes for course members

As I see it

MOOCs are all the rage in U3As these days, but **Keith Richards** – a founding member of North London U3A – wonders if they are undermining the ethos of U3A learning

Today I received the agenda for the next meeting of the Third Age Trust's Standing Committee for Education* and commented to the chair that it was 'very MOOCsy'. Perhaps most readers of The Northern Line are well into MOOCs, but in case you aren't, it stands for Massive Open Online Courses.

Universities, led by the example of the Open University, are now sharing huge amounts of course content completely free of charge and some enthusiasts

dominated the last meeting I attended. They kindly swept aside my comments about a solitary learner sitting in front of a computer not being my vision of U3A learning. Where was the shared learning?

I was, however, pleased to hear from them that many U3As now have MOOCs groups in which members all download the courses and then get together to discuss their experiences. Much more like it, of course; will North London U3A follow suit?



I have some doubts, almost entirely based upon experiential learning being the basis of years of exciting study in U3A groups. I still relish the circle of students

**The SCE (Standing Committee for Education) was established nearly 20 years ago after a delegate commented that she had attended the AGM/Conference and did not hear the word 'education' mentioned once.*

who will join with the group coordinator in exploring the content as the session develops; each individual articulates the learning to mutual benefit. Not easy to achieve and I still hope that the trust will establish some

kind of training for those of us who wish to develop the art. Meanwhile it will be interesting to see if online learning establishes itself as a norm in U3As. Perhaps readers will contact the editor with their view. A close friend,

who is a member of a south London U3A, and usually shares my views, sent me an email this weekend saying: 'I have done my first MOOC. It was on Agincourt and was wonderful!'

Outings

Away days

Organised by Jim Sweeney, John Hajdu and Sue Teller

Gillray's Ghost

The Cartoon Museum
35 Little Russell Street
WC1A 2HH
7580 8155
Friday 15 January

On the 200th anniversary of James Gillray's death, the small but excellent Cartoon Museum is running a special exhibition entitled 'Gillray's Ghost: James Gillray and his influence on political cartoons'. As a follow-up to our November monthly talk on Gillray (*see page 6*), which likened him, at his peak, to Hogarth, and described his subsequent descent into insanity, we have arranged a visit to see many of his works and trace his influence on numerous later satirists. There will be a short introduction, along with tea, coffee and biscuits, after which we can view the exhibition and the rest of the museum at our leisure.

Time

10.50am for 11am start. Meet just inside the entrance. There is a disabled toilet, plus two handrails on the 17-step staircase to the first floor, but no lift.

Travel

The museum is close to the main entrance to the



James Gillray, John Bull taking a Luncheon, etching 1798

British Museum, on the opposite side of Little Russell Street. It lies between Museum Street and Coptic Street and is about five minutes' walk from Tottenham Court Road or Holborn tube stations or the Gower Street and New Oxford Street buses.

Cost

£6.50, which includes tea, coffee and biscuits, payable in advance.

Booking is essential.

Please use the booking form on page 10 or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque.

The Pre-Raphaelites

Tate Britain

Millbank SW1P 4RG

Friday 26 February

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood started by wanting to return art to the style before Raphael. Clearly this was an unrealistic idea, so the movement did not last and the main adherents soon went their different ways, swapping wives even more dramatically than the Bloomsbury Set nearly a century later. Their art remains and the Tate has the greatest collection in the world. We have arranged a tour with our esteemed guide, Brian, and will see Millais' *Ophelia*, Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* and the sumptuous art of Burne-Jones, Waterhouse, Lord Leighton and others.

Times

We meet at 10.50am for 11am, near the cloakroom in the foyer accessed from the Atterbury Street side entrance (not the main entrance).

Travel

Pimlico tube station is about a five-minute walk



away, along John Islip Street to the Atterbury Street side entrance, the one closest to the tube.

Facilities and access

There are toilets on the far side of the cloakroom, and beyond that, the large café. There are lifts to all levels.

Cost

£6, payable in advance.

Booking is essential.

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

Away days booking form

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

Name(s) _____ Membership number(s) _____

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.

Growing up in wartime

North London U3A member **Peter Cox**, who has spoken to us about his books on John Lewis and the Radio Ballads, has now published *Growing Up In London 1930–1960*. It is based on reminiscences from over 100 U3A members born between the wars whom he has interviewed over the last 18 months. They came from all over London and included several from NLU3A. The book's 23 themed chapters cover everything from first memories to early home life, school, games and illness, living through the Blitz and evacuation, to the first job or (rarely) further education and national service, to courtship and marriage. A 266-page illustrated hardback, it is available for half price – £10 – to U3A members

from its website (www.gruil.co.uk), where you can browse the first two pages of each chapter.

Peter tells us he wrote the book after talking to a number of our older members and realising what fascinating stories they had to tell. Some had written them down, but most hadn't, and he wanted to record them so they wouldn't be lost, and our grandchildren could understand this earlier generation's upbringing, disrupted as it was by war.

Here's a taste of the book: 'On VE Day I wanted a flag to wave and found one left over from Edward VIII's coronation, the one that didn't happen, all dusty from the back of the shop. I went to a parade in Mare Street and remember seeing armoured cars



pass by with flails in front to set off mines. Not that there were any mines in Mare Street.'

A Woodland Walk

A walk towards dusk

The snow had stopped already
gone from the city streets
But in this magic woodland
every branch and fern was
laden with its narrow hush of white
and the sky, a myriad of silent inter-crossing
branches as far as the eye could see.
It was as if, and perhaps we were
the only ones to see this illuminated, spectral scene.
The beauty seduced us to simply gaze and feel.
Your mind was heavy with things less luminous than
the snow but it still gave you a moment of peace,
a soul caressing interlude.
Let us come in Spring you said when it will
be so different. Were you thinking of life's
affirming scattering of daffodils, tulips and bluebells
which would greet us then.
That too will be wonderful
but I carry like a gossamer cloak the still perfection
of this winter scene.

Rosalie Ajzensztejn ©February 2013, for the Weaving Words group



Spring monthly meetings

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

Monday 11 January

Active ageing with music: how music can change your life

Sue Hallam, professor of education and music psychology at the UCL Institute of Education, will present findings from a major UK project, Music for Life, which explored how actively making music could enhance the lives of older people.



Monday 8 February

History and Humour of Fleet Street

Peter Durrant has worked in Fleet Street since the age of 14. He started at the *London Evening News* and is a member both of the Concert Artists Association and the Press Club. He will give a personal view of the press.

Monday 14 March

The sharing of great things

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



Term dates

Term	Start Date	Finish Date
Spring	4 January	18 March
Summer	15 April	15 July