

the northern line

the newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

issue 63

january 2017



You'll never walk alone ...

... if you join the local walking group, which meets every Friday morning throughout the year (unless Christmas Day is on a Friday!), as **Gillian Doyle** explained to **Judith Abbs**. Photos by **Tony Levy**



Not alone, then, so how many people walk with you?

We send the programme to around 50 U3A members. There is no need to book and usually 10 to 16 turn up on a Friday morning. Inevitably, some people are waiting for builders or deliveries, on holiday, looking after grandchildren or just don't feel like a walk. The membership has gradually changed over the eight years since we started, but three of

us who were founder members are still part of the group.

Are you walking for fitness, with a target of covering a certain distance or achieving a specific speed?

Our only aim is to go on an enjoyable walk in good company. This is an incredibly easy-going friendly group who all look out for each other. We just walk along chatting to whoever is beside us;

sometimes we stop to admire a tree or a plant or a view. We pause from time to time to let people catch up, and if there are many walkers we will have someone at the back.

How do you define what is local?

Over the last few years we have covered at least 25 different north London walking routes. In the summer, we occasionally go further afield – Trent Park, for instance.

How do you plan your routes?

I try to vary the directions to suit members of the NLU3A although most people will come to different venues. For instance, from Finchley to Cherry Tree Wood; from Golders Green to Golders Hill Park; from Highgate to Waterlow Park; from Muswell Hill to Alexandra Palace; from Hampstead to Kenwood. Some walks are too muddy and slippery in the winter so the routes change

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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 10 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 Ruth Silver (details above).

Editorial

Is anyone looking forward to 2017? I'm approaching the new year with trepidation for reasons that I probably don't have to expand on.

Still, there must be something to feel positive about, and that's where the U3A comes in. In November the Third Age Trust welcomed its 1000th U3A (Churchdown U3A, in Gloucestershire). One of the newest U3As is in Mill Hill.

That's 1000 groups, maybe more by now, of mainly older people coming together throughout the UK to learn from each other in pursuits from acting to archaeology; majjong to music; walking to woodwork. In my six years in NLU3A I've been able to cultivate old interests and develop new ones; spend time with pleasant, like-minded people; and fill my days with so much that I wouldn't have time to work even if I wanted to. I hope it's been the same for you.

In this issue, we look at one of our most popular groups – local short walks; we accompany the architecture group on their trip to Dorset; and we continue our series on favourite places in London with a visit to Trent Park.

So, happy 2017 to all!

Leni Green

Editor

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at different seasons.

We have been doing most of these walks for a long time and they are generally popular. If only a few people turn up, we may decide not to repeat it. Some walks on the programme, such as Primrose Hill and Kings Cross, were suggested by members.

I always welcome suggestions and I am looking into a couple of new walks for the spring. We do a recce for new routes. I usually ask someone to come with me or, if someone has suggested a walk, I will do it with them.

If it's a different route every week, how do people know where to meet and where they are going?

We plan the programme three times a year and distribute a schedule well in advance, giving all the routes and where to meet; it's always 10.30am. For instance, if it's a canal walk the programme

says which entrance of Camden Town underground station to meet and that we are going to Kings Place or Little Venice. There's a slightly different canal walk soon, which will end at Granary Square.

Are the walks circular?

The walks are not circular but always begin and end at places with convenient public transport.

Do you ever cancel because of the weather forecast?

We have never cancelled because of the weather. We are generally optimistic despite the forecast and have walked in wind, rain and snow. Once or twice we have foregone the walk and decided on coffee. Recently when there was torrential rain over London only two intrepid people walked along the River Lea.



Fifty-two walks a year is a big commitment. How do you manage?

I rely on two or three people to lead a walk if I cannot be there and on one computer 'wiz' who puts the programme online and sends it out.

I see that all of your routes include a café. Is that part of your itinerary?

We always end up having coffee together. People have been known to miss out the walk but still manage to join the group for coffee!

As I see it

Keith Richards describes the celebration of the emergence of the 1000th U3A in Britain but wonders whether this expansion is entirely a good thing

On 22 November the Third Age Trust celebrated the establishment of 1000 U3As in the UK. Several North London members went to Friends' House in Euston, joining around 500 people who had travelled from many parts of the country, in some cases battling against a transport system ravaged by weather conditions. I know of Cornish and Devon members who did not make it at all.

Founding member Eric

Midwinter, who spoke at NLU3A's 21st anniversary party, represented the three initiators. The other two, Peter Laslett, who introduced me to the movement, and Michael Young died a few years ago. Many readers will have Eric's book *Five Hundred Beacons*, the title now, joyfully, out of date.

Eric thinks that membership of 'the most radical educational innovation in the 20th century' could be much higher. We have evidence of this potential



growth as we help develop new neighbouring U3As and watch them gain new members, sometimes more quickly than we do ourselves.

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Eric Midwinter

Eric is always an inspiring speaker who manages to say everything that needs saying attractively and entertainingly,

and at the celebration he was in transcendent form. It was a great occasion and, while I was there, I silenced a few personal doubts about the

swelling numbers. The rapid increase is due in some measure to the dilution and growing cost of other

provision. Some people join a U3A expecting that we are another version of the Workers' Educational Association (their tutors are paid and trained) or the university extramural classes so valued by many.

There is a great need to educate new members in the self-help and participatory principles which

'There is a great need to educate new members in the self-help and participatory principles...'

Eric thundered out again. These are not universally accepted, and I view with apprehension some recent emphasis on what was once

known as the French model – the provision of course materials by universities.

These have a place, and I hear of exciting groups where members join together in assimilating and assessing online information.

But they can never substitute for the placing of the learning in the hands of members who bring their own experience to the groups. This was the radical decision made by the founders in 1982. The fire remains but does, occasionally, need rekindling.

KEITH RICHARDS IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF NLU3A

From the chair, Patricia Isaacs



A new year and some new beginnings. One, for North London U3A, was our winter programme, a social calendar covering the festive season. I'm writing this before it takes place, but if it is successful we'll do it again next year. If you took part, your comments would be really helpful.

As our groups and classes continue to grow, both in

numbers and in membership, it's evident that we all want to go on learning. As Albert Einstein said: 'Once you stop learning, you start dying'.

In October I went to a London Region workshop on MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses – and was inspired to start taking a couple of these courses. The courses are self-paced, with open start and end dates; there are thousands of them; and they can be used by one student or by a group. If you are not confident with a computer, we have a computer buddy scheme to get you started. See page 46 of the interest groups booklet for full details.

There is plenty of information about MOOCs online, or you can contact Ian Hunt, the U3A member who led the workshop; he will be happy to give you information and ideas:

ian_hunt@yahoo.co.uk. And one more thing – MOOCs are free.

Several members of our committee (including me!) will retire in July, and we are looking for their successors. If you are interested in becoming more involved with NLU3A, do please get in touch with me – new members are very welcome – and we can meet for a chat. No previous committee or other experience is necessary; you would be given full support and you would be doing a rewarding and important job for our U3A. As I've said before, the more involved we are and the more we give, the more we get back.

Warmest good wishes to everyone for the coming year, and a big welcome to our many new members.

Patricia
chair@nlu3a.co.uk

Interest groups

Welcome and Happy New Year to all members – new and old alike. We have a few new groups to introduce to you:

- **Creative Writing** is looking for members. We have a small number who would like to start this group, but we need a few more to make it viable. Please contact Sue, 8381 4480, ginpalace@mac.com, if you are interested and would like more details.
- **Portrait Studio.** This is a new portrait drawing and painting group, run by Michael Richman, who also runs the Life Study group. Meets Wednesday afternoons at Muswell Hill Methodist Church, Pages Lane. There are a few spaces available. Contact Michael Richman, rumik50@yahoo.co.uk
- **Sideways Look at History 2.** Wednesday afternoons at Muswell Hill Methodist Church in Pages Lane. Co-ordinator is Frank Fisher on 8349 9586, frankfisher@btinternet.com
- **Festina Lente (Latin).** Wednesday mornings, Regents Park Road. Coordinator is Julie Yahel, 8349 1312.
- **French Literature** has a change of coordinator and venue. It is now at Church Lane (off Hendon Lane) in Finchley Central, and the leader is Elsa Ramsey, 8346 1359, elsaramsey@btinternet.com
- **Playreading 2** has started in Highgate but needs a few more members. Please ring Rachel on 8444 6001 if you would like to join.
- **Freestyle Embroidery and Textile Art 2.** Monday afternoons in Finchley Central. Coordinator is Ann Dugdale, 8346 7194, annmdugdale@tiscali.co.uk



Please keep an eye on the website, where group news is updated regularly. In the meantime, enjoy all the activities that NLU3A offers. If you need help regarding any groups, please contact me (details below). I'm happy to help in any way I can.

Best wishes to all of you from the groups organiser team.

Sue Teller

Groups organiser team

Sue Teller	Groups organiser	8381 4480	ginpalace@mac.com
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A journey through time

An NLU3A architecture trip to Dorset and Hampshire in September was an opportunity to experience history in the making, as **Dorothy Barnes** explains. Photos by **James Crawford**



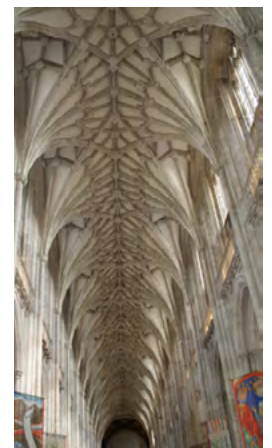
Visions of humanity's attempts through the ages to reach the skies will endure in my memory as a result of the architecture group's tour of Dorset in September. The bell tower of Winchester cathedral, begun in 1067; the spire of Salisbury cathedral, soaring 123 metres high and completed in 1338; the 15th century spire of old St Michael's in Southampton, heightened in the 1870s to help guide ships into the harbour; the steel Spinnaker, a monument of our 21st century, rising starkly 170 metres in Portsmouth Harbour.

Though based in Bournemouth, we saw little of the resort beyond a brief coach tour as we left.

For we were there to see the buildings and patterns of development of the important county towns and ports and appreciate their place in the history of the region.

The layout of Dorchester and Winchester revealed them to be important Roman towns which

the people of the south coast have been concerned to defend from intruders since Roman times. While we strolled around in leisurely fashion in the warm sunshine, we were aware that it was fear of Saxon invaders that had prompted the building of Portchester Castle. Raids by French invaders caused the walls at Southampton to be built, and fear of the French navy was the reason for Henry VIII to order the construction of Southsea (or Portsea) Castle. And from the Spinnaker we could see the Second



Winchester Town Hall



Corfe Castle



World War defences of Portsmouth Harbour.

At Corfe, we climbed up to the magnificent ruin of the castle, caused not by a foreign invader but by a civil war.

History has made these towns and ports an important part of our heritage, but now they are adapting to different times. While Portsmouth is still a naval base, tourism is becoming important, as we saw on our visit to the fascinating Mary Rose exhibition.

Religion does not play so important a part in modern life. We visit churches as though they are museums, yet we all shared the enthusiasm of the vicar of St Michael's in Southampton proudly

displaying its treasures and talking of their plans for their 950th celebration.

Many of our London buildings are built of Portland stone, which is still being quarried. Portland Bill and Chesil Beach are the start of the Jurassic coast, a World Heritage site. We could have spent a whole day there. So much to see.

I shall not forget the tiny Portland museum with its haphazard collection: a Roman sarcophagus made from Portland stone, fossilised tree stumps, and dinosaur bones lovingly curated by village volunteers.

Our tour started and ended with cathedrals. Winchester, with its magnificent nave – the longest in Europe – was Norman with Saxon origins and so respected that kings of England were crowned and married there as late as the 15th century. The glory of Salisbury was the vision of one mason; he took only 38 years to build the main body of the church and we can appreciate its glory 750 years later.

Our thanks are due to Wilson Briscoe and James Crawford, who planned and organised this memorable and enjoyable tour and to Edmond and Henrietta Cohen, Judy Griggs and Mary Fraser, who each took responsibility for one day.



Portsmouth Spinnaker



Portsmouth Harbour from 4th floor of the Spinnaker

Monthly meetings

The route to the afterlife?

Overawed by the pyramids, **Janet Diamond** set out to discover how and why they had been built. She shared her knowledge of the world's first pyramid, the Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara, at the November monthly meeting, as **Sarah Wrightson** tells us

The ancient Egyptians, having discovered that bodies could mummify naturally in desert sand, dug the earliest tombs in Upper Egypt. They lined them with mud bricks, placed the coffin in a separate chamber below, accessible by steps, and sealed it up. They also did all they could to ensure a comfortable passage to the afterlife by supplying their departed kings with food, wine, goods, pets and courtiers.

Lower Egypt's mortuary complex was at Saqqara, west of the capital, Memphis. Here conscripted labour assisted the permanent labour force with cutting the tombs into rock during the annual Nile flood. More of the tomb was above ground, roofed; this is now called a *mastaba*.

The Saqqara pyramid was built between 2650 and 2575BC for the king, Djoser, who was



buried in a tiled rock chamber below ground. His burial complex was carved to look like bricks, had stone columns that resembled papyrus reed bundles and was roofed over with stone that resembled logs. There were numerous portcullises to hinder potential grave robbers.

It is thought that the stepped design of the pyramid represented

the six stages to heaven. A statue of King Djoser was placed facing north so that he could view through an opening the stars 'that never set'. The architect, Imhotep, enlarged the pyramid and mortuary complex several times and finished it with polished limestone to reflect the setting sun: an impressive sight and an inspiring talk!

From the lighthouse

Pharology – the study of lighthouses – was the subject at the October monthly meeting as **Mark Lewis**, an amateur pharologist, led us on a historical and engineering tour of their construction and gave an account of the hazards faced by lighthouse keepers in this most specialised of occupations. **Frank Kelsall** reports

Lighthouses go back a long way. Two ancient world wonders

– the Pharos of Alexandria and the Colossus of Rhodes – were

lighthouses, and later land-based lighthouses included the Roman



Winstanley's Eddystone Lighthouse 1698

Pharos at Dover Castle and the mediaeval light on the Isle of Wight.

Trinity House, founded by Henry VIII in 1514, became a

training lighthouse where keepers were taught the tricks of the trade, from maintaining lights to self-catering in confined spaces.

It is the remote rock lighthouses that capture the imagination today. The first, Eddystone, built in 1698, was destroyed with its builder, Henry Winstanley, in the great storm of 1703. It was quickly replaced and a third Eddystone, with pioneering interlocking stones, was built in 1759; the present Eddystone is the fifth.

These lighthouses contained all that was necessary to maintain the light and a crew of three for six weeks (or longer if weather prevented a relief boat). The high physical and psychological demands of this work were eased in the later 20th century by helicopters, and today everything is automated.

Mark told a gruesome story of how a crew of three keepers became stranded after the



Smalls lighthouse

death of an attendant at The Smalls lighthouse in 1801. A further story, the mysterious disappearance of all three keepers from the Flannan Isles lighthouse, north-west Scotland, in 1900, has never been satisfactorily explained.

Visit Suffolk – Sunday 21 to Thursday 25 May

Join us on our spring tour of Suffolk – an agricultural county with a heritage coast that has seen invasions by the Angles and the Danes.

Each town we will visit has unique features – mediaeval streets, beach huts, churches built in the boom of the wool trade, a working tidal mill, and more. We'll rest by riversides, walk in gardens and stroll on beaches. We will explore a castle, a fort, a ruined priory and a stately home. We may even get on a boat, visit a brewery or go up a lighthouse.

We will stay at Ufford Park – a three-star

hotel with a golf course and a spa. Half board is provided and free access to the pool, gym, sauna, steam room and jacuzzi.

Travel will be in an executive coach with all necessary facilities. The cost to cover accommodation and half board, coach transport and entry to five sites is £445 for a single room and £345 per person for a shared twin or double.

For more information and a booking form, contact Helena Green, 8349 3058, helena.green@talktalk.net or visit our website www.nlu3a.org.uk



20th Century Rooms of the National Portrait Gallery

St. Martin's Place
London WC2H 0HE
Friday, 27 January



We have again engaged the services of our esteemed Blue Badge guide, Brian, and will tour the gallery's 20th Century Rooms. Starting with World War One personalities, we will travel through the century and meet writers and artists including the Bloomsbury Group; statesmen such as Winston Churchill and Neville Chamberlain; and famous scientists, generals and explorers taking us through our own times with portraits of the Queen, Henry Moore and the Beatles.

Times

We meet at 10.30am in the onsite basement Café, or 10.50 for an 11am start inside the main St. Martin's Place entrance. Our tour

Trafalgar Square.

Facilities and access

The main toilets are in the basement, as is the café. There is a third floor restaurant and lifts to all levels.

Cost

£6, payable in advance.

Booking is essential. Please use the booking form on the back page or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque.

will last around 90 minutes, plus a 5-minute break in the middle.

Travel

Leicester Square and Charing Cross tube stations are nearby. Numerous buses serve St. Martin's Place and

Wesley's Chapel, House, the Museum of Methodism

49 City Road
EC1Y 1AU
Friday, 24 February

John Wesley laid the foundation stone of what became Wesley's Chapel in 1777 and after 200 years of vicissitudes, it was extensively restored and reopened. The Museum of Methodism, in the crypt, tells the history of Methodism from John Wesley to the present day and its contribution to shaping Britain's political and social history. His house, standing next to the chapel, was his home for over a decade and is one of the finest surviving small Georgian townhouses in London. Immediately opposite is Bunhill Fields, formerly a non-consecrated burial ground, and now a pleasant public space, where lie the graves of John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, William Blake and George Fox. We have

arranged an introductory film and a conducted tour of the chapel, grave monument, house and museum.

Times

10.50 am for 11am start, in the chapel. About 1½ hours' duration.

Travel

Nearest tube station is Old Street (exit 4), about five minutes' walk. Nearby buses are 21, 43, 55, 76, 141, 205, 214, 243 and 271.

Facilities and access

There are onsite toilets, including a showpiece 19th

century gents' lavatory. There is ramp access into the chapel. The museum and disabled toilet are accessible by lift. There are many cafés in the area.

Cost

£5.00, payable in advance.

Booking is essential. Please use the booking form on the back page or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque.



Ancient and modern: In praise of Trent Park

What do Winston Churchill, Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, Charlie Chaplin, and George Bernard Shaw have in common? They have all visited Trent Park, which, says **John Dugdale**, is 'one of London's jewels within the M25'

I have been enjoying Trent Park for over 30 years. For me it is the perfect place to go and chill out with a walk following well-defined footpaths and bridleways. It covers an area of approximately 167 hectares and a walk round the outskirts is about five miles. Its paths go through ancient woodlands that date to Tudor days, when Henry VIII and Elizabeth I used to enjoy hunting on 'the Enfield Chase'.

In the north of the park you can visit the enclosed site of Camlet Moat, one of my favourite

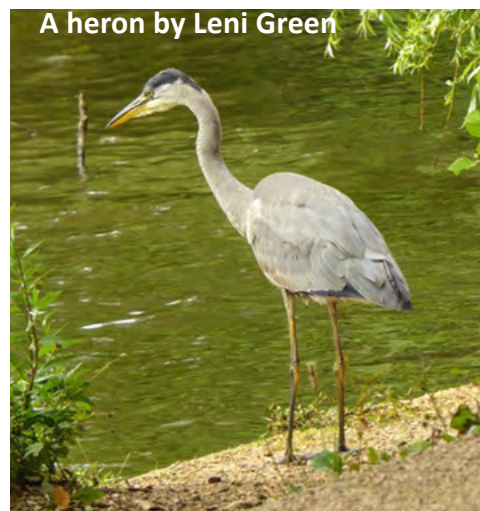
parts. The moated area is now a protected monument but would have been used as a dwelling, forester's quarters and jail in days gone by. For the more sensitive among us, Camlet Moat is believed to form a corner of the Barnet Triangle of Ley lines.

After visiting the moat, head south down the hill towards the lakes and visit Sir Philip Sassoon's water garden and walk along the side of the lake, where he kept numerous exotic wildfowl and two king penguins.

From the lakes you can navigate back towards the car parks and outdoor café, remembering to keep an eye out for the mansion. A family home, in the 1940s it was also a prisoner of war camp where 84 generals are known to have been house guests. The house is currently unoccupied but was last used as a teacher training college and part of Middlesex University Campus.

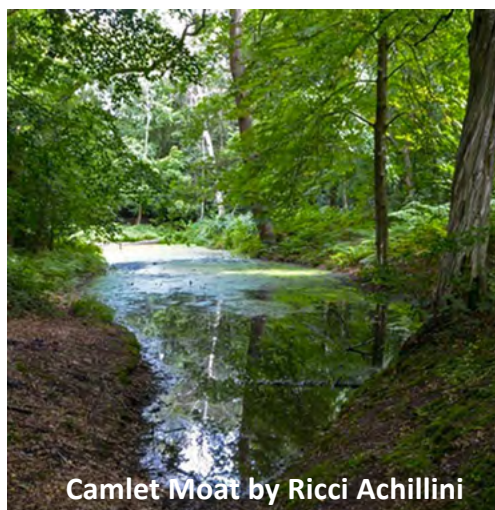
The park is easily accessed by underground trains going to

A heron by Leni Green



Cockfosters and Oakwood stations. And there is plenty of parking.

Further information from trentparkmuseum.org.uk



Camlet Moat by Ricci Achillini

Do you have a favourite place in greater London, accessible with a Freedom Pass? Send a brief description to helenjuni@ntlworld.com to tell us why it's wonderful. Don't forget to include a photo!

Away days booking form

Name(s) _____ Membership number(s) _____

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

Phone Number(s) _____

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 0778 478 428 for last-minute cancellations.

Spring monthly meetings

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

Monday 9 January

An introduction to gemstones

Gemstone buyer Jason Middleton will talk about gemstone families and their different properties; where and how gemstones are mined, cut and fashioned; birthstones; famous gemstones and what to look for when buying jewellery. As a bonus, he will pass gemstones around for the audience to view and touch.

Monday 13 February

The Highgate nobody knows

Volunteer Highgate archivist and award-winning radio and TV writer Mark Hayes will reveal some of the area's most fascinating and least-known stories. These include Russian espionage, the theft of a Vermeer, midnight exhumations in Highgate Cemetery, the poet Coleridge's drug-fuelled retirement and Margaret Rutherford's chimpanzee.

Monday 13 March

Safeguarding your identity

This talk, by Steve Roberts, a former metropolitan detective inspector, will increase our awareness of scams and fraud. Steve will show us how to safeguard our identity by looking after personal details and discourage criminals who contact us by email, phone, text, post and door-to-door. He will also highlight some prevalent scams.

Term dates

Term	Start Date	Finish Date
Spring	9 January 2017	31 March 2017
Summer	18 April 2017	21 July 2017