

the northern line

the newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

issue 64

april 2017



Paradise – not yet lost but losing its sense of direction

Though some deny it, climate change is perhaps the most critical issue facing our planet today. **Jeff Duckett**, who leads the Climate Change: Science and Society interest group, tells **Judith Abbs** about some of the issues they have explored

Climate change, science and society are massive global issues. What do you hope to achieve with your U3A group?

A better understanding of the living world. This includes everything from the causes of climate change to things in our everyday lives, like sell-by dates on food, to advances in medicine, to what causes earthquakes.

These are enormous topics. What can you cover in a single meeting?

I usually choose a topic that I think will interest the group and include items in the news about science and the environment (for example, Trump and most of his team are climate change deniers). But at most sessions we also discuss issues raised by members of the group; if someone asks a question that needs a fairly detailed explanation, I prepare an answer for next time.

Can you give us an example?

I started the group off several years

ago by explaining how we know that the earth is 4,565 million years old, determined by the decay of potassium 40, a radioactive element made during the big bang.

In 2016 I gave an account of how the entire concept of plate tectonics was formulated in our lifetimes to explain why earthquakes had just occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Recently I explained why cryogenic preservation – freezing a human body in the hope that it can be brought back to life in the future – is impossible because it goes against the laws of physics. It may be a new technique but it's no better than mummification as practised by the Egyptians.

Are all your sessions held in one meeting place?

We also have occasional outings that have included behind the scenes at the Natural History Museum, Kew, Wisley, and the wild orchids at Boxhill. This

summer we are planning a trip to Thursley National Nature Reserve, where we

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Editorial

The Goldilocks zone

The most important person as regards a publication is you, the reader. It's not the editor or the designer or the management committee. It's you. We on the editorial team write and design The Northern Line for you, but in order to do that, we need to know what you think of it. Do you like the content? Are you happy with the design? Is it too long, too short or, as Goldilocks opined about beds and porridge, just right?

If you're looking at this, you obviously read some of it, but many people don't. If you know someone who doesn't, do you know why? Is it because they don't know it's there, don't like reading online, or for some other reason? It's been decided that TNL should be mainly an online publication – partly to save trees; partly to save postage costs; partly because it's the way things are going in the wider world. I'd love to know your opinions of all of this, so please send them to me; my email address is below.

In this issue we introduce you to the very topical Climate Change: Science and Society group. Guest columnist Ian McCannah, the London regional trustee, presents proposed changes in the structure of the national umbrella group, the Third Age Trust. And, continuing our series on favourite places in London, I take you to the Museum of Brands, Packaging & Advertising.

Enjoy!

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, assisted by Judith Abbs, and Jane Marsh respectively.

Please send submissions for the next Update to Jane Marsh, oriana.jane@btinternet.com by 26 May.

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 in committee panel).

hope to see numerous dragonflies and birds, all six native British reptiles and some unspoilt native British vegetation.

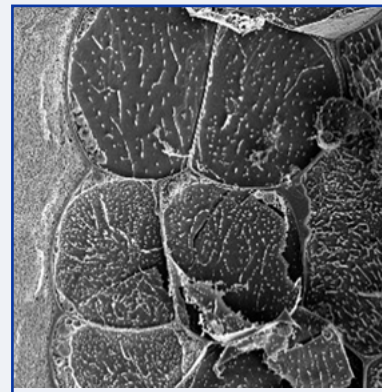
You are used to teaching university science students. Can non-scientist U3A members understand what you are saying? Do they need to learn a new language?

I believe that with the right approaches – often using images and diagrams – just about everything in science, or at least biology, can be made intelligible.

Some unusual words (see page 4 for examples), have come up in our meetings but there is nearly always someone in the group who knows what they mean. However, none of us would be any good at pub quizzes as our collective knowledge of current pop music is non-existent!

You told me that the driver in climate change is rising atmospheric carbon dioxide due to human activities. Have the U3A members changed their behaviour because of what they have learned in your group?

Actually I don't think they have



Why cryogenics is no better than mummification

This is illustrated by the image of a common moss growing on London walls that was frozen in liquid nitrogen at 100 degrees per second. With very fast cooling there isn't time for ice crystals to form so the water outside the specimen (left) freezes as a structureless glass and the cell contents (right) are preserved intact.

With slower rates of freezing, water forms ice crystals inside the cells. When thawed out the cells are damaged and die.

Only very small objects, such as the moss or a sperm cell, can be cooled at 100 degrees per second because large biological specimens, like human bodies, are very poor conductors of heat. So, if a human body is plunged into liquid nitrogen, only the skin will freeze very quickly.

All internal organs will be damaged irreparably by ice crystals.

changed their behaviour very much mainly because I have been most impressed by how environmentally aware the members of the group are. Rather than changing their behaviour I think they have become

increasingly aware of our everyday London landscapes and the British countryside and how these have changed dramatically – if not in our lifetimes, at least since the last Ice Age. For example, olive trees,

palms and acacias are increasingly common in London gardens now.

Do you have any messages for everyone in North London U3A?

Never keep your bananas in a plastic bag because the build-up of the gas ethylene given off by the fruits causes very rapid ripening; never take antibiotics for virus infection; and, if you are sceptical about human-made climate change, please join the group.

See next page for more on this group



Cauliflory: A Judas tree

What do they learn about in Climate Change?

- The causes of plagues ancient and modern, from the Old Testament to ash die-back and the Zika virus
- How biomes of the world, from tropical rainforest to Arctic tundra, are determined by plants and not the animals that figure in TV programmes
- Botswana – a country of droughts, elephants and AIDS
- The sex lives of flowers and the biology of hayfever
- The sources of hard evidence for climate change
- Key events in life on earth over 3,000 million years
- Why oceanic islands are important, with special reference to expeditions to Ascension and Fernando de Noronha
- The drop in conservation funds in the UK over the last 40 years.

Unusual words: extract from a science dictionary

Cauliflory: trees flowering on branches and trunks, for example the Judas tree (*see picture on page 3*)

Cryoturbation: disturbance of the soil surface by freeze-thaw

Isostasy: the state of gravitational equilibrium between the earth's crust and mantle

Monocarpy: flowering once and then dying

Poikilohydry: the phenomenon of not maintaining water balance but surviving cycles of drying out and rehydration eg mosses and lichens

Subduction: sideways and downward movements of the edge of one tectonic plate beneath another

From the chair, Patricia Isaacs



We ended 2016 on a high note with the success of our winter programme. This was an experiment but it worked so well that it will join the list of our annual events.

As I write this, the summer

programme team are working hard to prepare the forthcoming sessions for July and August and once again we'll have five weeks of popular activities. We will send all members a copy of the programme in June, along with full details of our annual general meeting (AGM), which takes place on Monday 3 July. In keeping with legal requirements, everyone will receive notification three weeks before that date. Next year's interest groups programme, the central point of any U3A, is also a work in progress and that, too, will reach you in good time for our autumn start.

I do hope to see many of you at the AGM, particularly as

this will be my last one as chair. I'm leaving the committee with mixed feelings after eight years in different roles: groups organiser, events organiser and chair. It will be good to have more time to do other things, but I'll miss the challenges and the involvement.

I've learnt a great deal; I have enjoyed those wonderful years to the full; I cherish the friends I have made on the journey; and I plan to remain involved in various ways with NLU3A, which is so much a part of my life.

My warmest thanks to every one of you for making our U3A so special, and for your support and friendship during my committee years. Thanks for the memories!

Patricia

chair@nlu3a.co.uk

As I see it

Keith Richards, who normally writes As I see it, says:

‘This column deals with national events, and as the most important issue at the moment is governance, I asked our national executive committee (NEC) representative, **Ian McCannah**, who is playing a prominent part in the debate, to write an account of where we are.’

When the Third Age Trust was set up in 1983, there were eight U3As. By 1987, there were already disagreements about the role of the trust and hence calls for changes.

There are now more than 1,000 U3As in the UK, with our neighbour in Hampstead Garden Suburb launched in March 2017. The U3A movement is growing by around 20,000 members a year with a current total of 384,436 members. So it is not surprising that there are proposals for the structure of the trust to be reviewed.

In response, a year-long consultation process into the future structure of the Third Age Trust was launched at the 2016 AGM by the current chair, Pam Jones, who set up a working group.

Around 20 members submitted detailed proposals to the group; another 60 submissions were made by members and nearly 500 U3As responded to a questionnaire on the future structure of the trust. The working group then travelled round the country to outline the

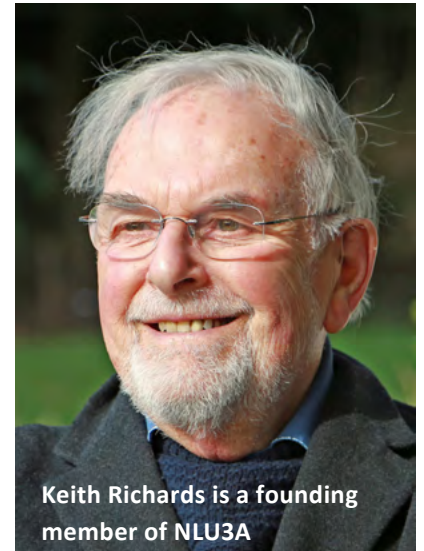
various options to 23 network and regional delegate meetings, which were attended by 470 members, representing 280 U3As.

The structural options proposed by members range from the radical – replace the current regional structure/national executive committee (NEC) with an advisory council and a smaller skill-based board – to retaining the existing structure but placing greater emphasis on the 60 networks that have grown organically over the last ten years, and streamlining the NEC and the trustee role.

The consultation closed in early March, when the findings were presented by a broad section of members who had written detailed structural proposals. The working group then analysed all of the findings before making their recommendations to the NEC at the end of March.

Once the NEC has decided on any changes to the Trust’s structure, they will present the appropriate resolutions for U3As to discuss and vote on at the AGM in August.

So watch this space!



Keith Richards is a founding member of NLU3A



Ian McCannah is London's regional trustee

If you want to find out more about the issues and the process, follow this link to the very helpful presentation at the plenary session of the AGM in August 2016. (www.u3a.org.uk/images/conference_2016/Trust_Structure_consultation_website.pdf)

Monthly meetings

Rocks of ages

Jason Middleton, an expert and independent supplier of gemstones, gave January's monthly meeting a whistle-stop tour of their origin and production, says **Melvyn Rees**

Most gemstones are minerals, formed deep in the heat and pressure of the earth millions of years ago. To become jewellery, they must be mined, then cut and set into metal.

There are six families of gemstones: 1) diamond 2) carborundum, eg rubies 3) beryl such as emerald and aquamarine 4) quartz, eg amethyst and citrine 5) organic – the one non-mineral class, which includes pearl, amber and coral 6) others such as onyx, jade and opal.

We learned that many gemstones have different colours depending on the elemental

impurities included. Jason illustrated his talk by passing specimens of the gemstones round the audience.

Gemstones differ in hardness (diamonds and carborundum are the hardest) and this dictates their uses in jewellery.

Wedding ring gems, worn constantly, have to be very hard, but others, such as emeralds, are suitable only for occasional wear



or pendants because they are much softer. Non-jewellery grade diamonds are used in industry.

The Highgate nobody knows

Janet Home presents a small selection of the Highgate stories told to the February monthly meeting

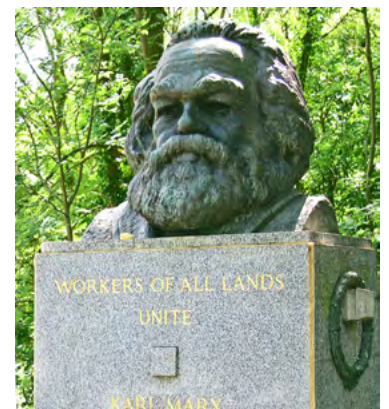
Some of you will remember Vermeer's painting *The Guitar Player* being stolen from Kenwood in 1974, but you may not know that it was held to ransom for the release of two Irish sisters jailed for bombing. The sisters were not released, but a tip-off led to the painting being recovered and returned to Kenwood.

In 1970, unknown assailants tried to plant a bomb in Karl Marx's statue in Highgate Cemetery. Having failed to cut into it, they left the bomb on the ground, where it damaged only the plinth. Despite anonymous threats, the statue remains

undamaged.

In the 19th century, the cemetery witnessed the exhumation of Lizzie Siddall, the wife and muse of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in order to retrieve from her coffin a volume of poems he had buried with her following her suicide in 1862. Rossetti did not attend the exhumation, but a friend said Lizzie's hair was as golden and glorious as in life. When Rossetti died he stipulated that he should not be buried at Highgate.

The house at 65 Cromwell Avenue bears a plaque to Savarkar, an Indian student who lived there from 1906–09. It developed



into a centre for revolutionary Indian nationalism, leading to the murder of an Indian Army officer in London and, following Indian independence, to the murder of Ghandi. Although arrested, Savarkar was freed and is described on the plaque as 'patriot and philosopher'.

A sucker born every second?

Fraud and cybercrime account for nearly half of all UK crime – and that's just what's reported, said former Metropolitan detective inspector **Steve Roberts** at the March monthly meeting. Here he gives tips for avoiding being scammed

Whenever anyone asks you – in person, by phone, email, text or in writing – for financial or other personal information, you must

- **Stop**, so you can focus your full attention.
- **Think**, so you can properly reflect on the situation.

- **Check**, before disclosing any details so you can ensure that the request is from a genuine source – even if they say they are from the bank, police or another official organisation.

Remember:

- Never disclose security details, such as PIN or full banking password. Banks and other such organisations will never ask you for these in an email, text, in writing or by phone.
- Don't assume that an email, text or phone call is authentic.

- Don't be rushed or pressured into making a decision.
- Listen to your instincts
- Stay in control. Have the confidence to refuse unusual requests for information.

If you think there has been a fraud on your card or bank account, or if you suspect someone has attempted to compromise your financial details – report it immediately to your bank or other financial services provider and then contact Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre, on 0300 123 2040 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk



Interest groups

The 2017–18 interest groups booklet will be with you at the beginning of August, and I hope you will find lots of good things there. Meanwhile, the following groups would like more members this term. If you are thinking of starting a new group, please feel free to contact me or any member of the groups organiser team, listed on the next page.

Sue

Sue Teller, groups organiser

- **Arts and Crafts**, which encompasses embroidery, watercolours, card-making and calligraphy among others, meets at Cranley Dene in Highgate on Thursday mornings. **Contact:** Gill 8340 7990, gillpellant@waitrose.com
- **Book Circle** reads books chosen by the group and supplied by the library; you don't need to buy any books. We would welcome new members as we've lost some through ill health and other reasons. We meet on the first Thursday of the month, 10–11am, in Highgate N6. Good transport connections and parking. **Contact:** Ruth, 7263 3960 (preferred), ruthmendick@yahoo.com
- **The Croquet season** for NLU3A members will start on Wednesday 10 May at 10am at Fellowship House, 136a Willifield Way NW11. Join us for some gentle exercise in pleasant surroundings. Beginners welcome. **Contact:** Geoffrey Cox, 8458 5790, geoffreywcox@hotmail.co.uk
- **Festina Lente (Latin)**, a self-help group for anybody interested in renewing links with their Latin. **Contact:** Julie 8349 1312.
- **French Literature**, where books are read and discussed in French at an intermediate level. **Contact:** Elsa 8346 1359, elsa@btinternet.com

- **Irish Literature** will be starting a study of some of Samuel Beckett's poetry and a short play, beginning May 5 at Finchley Progressive Synagogue, Hutton Grove, N12. Keith Richards will be providing his expertise to the group. **Contact:** Ann Bracken abracken@talktalk.net (preferred) or 3489 9366.
- **Portrait Studio**, where you will learn and improve portrait techniques in both drawing and painting. Meets Wednesdays at the Methodist Church in Pages Lane, Muswell Hill. **Contact:** michaelrumik50@yahoo.co.uk
- **Reading the World** would love to welcome new people. We read and discuss significant works by authors from around the world: people writing in English where English is not their first tongue, translations from other languages, anything in fact written by a non-English author, including novels, drama, poetry and other genres. We have been introduced to some wonderful literature which we would not otherwise have known about. **Contact:** Barry Davies 7226 7658, julibar@blueyonder.co.uk
- **Possible new group of Spanish**, lower intermediate. We are hoping to work with Palmers Green and Southgate U3A to start this group, and details of time and place have not yet been finalised. We are asking for expressions of interest; ring Sue on 8381 4480 or email ginpalace@mac.com if interested. A little knowledge of a little Spanish is necessary.
- **Thoughtful Topics**. Please come along to a friendly inclusive group and add your thoughts to our list of topics. We meet every Thursday, 2–4pm, Livingston room, Trinity Church extension, Nether St N12 7NN. (Small free car park.) **Contact:** Susan 8458 2207, susanwright7@hotmail.co.uk

New group: Older Living

This group will discuss the many aspects of life that matter to us as we age. So far we have had lively discussions on: types of accommodation and where to live (the pros and cons of each); fun and mental stimulation in our later years; transport and mobility; and loneliness.

We will tackle a wide range of topics, including carers' perspectives and buying in care), equity release (things to look for and things to watch out for), talking to doctors and other professionals (planning and what you need to ask). We welcome suggestions for more topics.

Although we are a discussion rather than self-help group, some of the topics have a self-help feel and we may be inviting speakers to start off some of our discussions. We meet at 10.30am on alternate

Tuesday mornings in Melvyn's home in North Finchley.

Please phone or email to book a place for each meeting and get the address: Melvyn Rees, 8446 3029, melvyn.tymel@gmail.com; or Geoff Garfield, 8883 6859, ggarfield1946@aol.com

Meetings this term

9 May	Euthanasia/assisted dying
23 May	Buying in care: council services
6 June	Love life in old age
20 June	Living with illness
4 July	Lasting powers of attorney
18 July	Dementia

Groups organiser team

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

Of shoes and ships and sealing wax

If it was ever sold it will probably be on show at the Museum of Brands, Packaging & Advertising in Notting Hill, as **Leni Green** discovers, in our series on interesting places to visit with your Freedom Pass.



Breads, cereals, drinks, soaps, tins of peas, washing powder – they may be called what they were called all those years ago, but their boxes, bags and bottles look completely different. A trip through the Museum of Brands

reveals how products and packaging – for branding is all about packaging – have evolved over the past 200 years to reflect changing tastes and attitudes, fluctuating fashions and fads.

The Time Tunnel takes visitors on a

journey from Victorian times to now. We see the first vacuum cleaners – huge, clunky things that would have been impossible to lift; cigarette packs, designed to make smokers feel rugged, sophisticated or ‘cool’. There are dolls: crying baby dolls, Barbie dolls, dolls that wet themselves; and teddy bears, not as cuddly long ago as they are today. We marvel at the first radios, televisions and computers, which were gigantic in comparison to their compact contemporary versions.

What makes a product look dated? When do the manufacturers decide that it is time for a change? Does the branding reflect society, or does society imitate the brand?

Established 50 years ago by social historian Robert Opie, the Museum of Brands is a journey through history that

uses commercial products and changing technology as artefacts. Collecting runs in Opie's family. His parents, Peter and Iona Opie, built one of the greatest private collections of children's books and literature and compiled the Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes. So they were not surprised when their son revealed his curious new hobby of collecting packaging: shoe polish tins, soap powder packets, cereal boxes, coffee jars, and more, each annotated with date and price.

It takes about an hour to see all 12,000 items, and if you need sustenance after that, the museum has the statutory café and gift shop, and a lovely garden with tables if the weather is nice.

I was surprised at how interesting I found it, and I recommend it to anyone who fancies a nostalgic experience, or who wants to show their grandchildren what it was like way back then.

Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising
111–117 Lancaster Road
Notting Hill W11 1QT
Tube: Ladbroke Grove
Buses: 7, 23, 52, 70, 228, 452, 295

- Look out for our away days visit to this museum in the autumn

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



Special visit: The Mansion House

Walbrook

London EC4N 8BH

Tel 7626 2500

Friday 2 June (not our usual last Friday of the month.)

We have been very fortunate to have obtained, at short notice, an offer to visit the renowned

Grade 1 listed Mansion House, the official residence of the lord mayor of London and site of many well-known annual addresses by the chancellor and the foreign secretary among others.

We will see the public rooms on the first floor – the Salon, Long Parlour, Egyptian Hall and the Drawing Rooms – and have a guided tour of the wonderful Samuel collection of 17th century Dutch and Flemish art.



usual 11am start). The visit will last about 1½ hours.

Cost

£5.00, payable in advance.

Travel

Nearest tube stations are Bank (Northern Line, very close) or Mansion House (District and Circle, 5 minutes.)

Facilities and access

There is a lift and toilets, but no eating or drinking is allowed within the building. There are nearby cafes.

Times

We will be met at the Walbrook main entrance to the Mansion House at 1.50pm for a 2pm start (not our

Booking is essential. Please use the booking form below or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque. Early application is advisable.

RNLI Tower Lifeboat Station

Lifeboat Pier

Victoria Embankment

Westminster

London WC2R 2PP

Tel 07516 000249

Friday 30 June

Tower Lifeboat station is one of the busiest in the country. It covers the Thames from Barking to Battersea and was called out 465 times in 2015 to incidents ranging from injuries on a party boat and broken-down vessels to people – and the occasional animal – in the water. In this one year, it rescued 245 people and saved at least 15 lives.

Unlike many other lifeboat stations, Tower always has a crew ready to go within 90 seconds of an emergency call coming in. Its 55 volunteers may have different 'day jobs' – fire crews, bankers, TV



producers, civil servants and students – but they are united in giving up their time to help save lives on the Thames.

We have arranged a small group visit to see how the station operates and learn about the more general vital role of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Times

10.50am for 11am start. The station is almost under the north end of Waterloo Bridge and is accessed

from the Victoria Embankment. We will meet outside the entrance and enter together. Please phone Jim (07930 974752) or Sue (07748 478428) if you are held up. The visit will last about 1½ hours.

Cost

£7.00, payable in advance.

Travel

Nearest tube stations are Temple (5 minutes' walk) or Embankment (10 minutes' walk), from both of which you walk along the Victoria Embankment. Or, if you walk from the Strand and turn right into Waterloo Bridge approach, on the opposite corner there is a Pret, Café Nero and restaurant. Then, looking down from the bridge itself, the RNLI station is clearly marked and there are steps down to the Embankment and to the Lifeboat Station.

Facilities and access

There are no public toilets at the station, but there are pay toilets by Embankment tube exit and free toilets in Somerset House, whose rear entrance is close to the station. Note that the station floats on a tidal river and is accessed by a ramp which slopes down quite steeply when the tide is low. It may also jolt around in the wash of passing vessels at times, so if you suffer from seasickness please take precautions before coming. Access around the station is by an outside walkway grille separated from the river by just a railing, so you will need to wear flat footwear and outdoor clothes appropriate for the weather.

Booking is essential. Please use the booking form below or send us a note with the requested details and your cheque. Early application is advisable.

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 07748 478428 for last-minute cancellations.

Here comes summer

We want to make your **summer programme 2017** the best one ever, but to do this we need you. Please let us know what event or activities you could offer, and we will give you all the help you need. It could be an outing to an exhibition, a stately home, a park, a swimming pool; inviting a small group to watch a classic film or have tea at your house, or lunch in a cafe; teaching a taster class in Russian or bridge or tai chi; leading a walk in London...

You will have many other ideas; all will be welcome. Please contact

Kathy: kathleenkyriakides@hotmail.com

Christine: christinestammers@gmail.com

Summer term 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. Please note that, out of courtesy to the speaker and to abide by the fire regulations, you might find yourself locked out of the meeting if you do not arrive by 10.40am.

Monday 8 May

The architecture of London underground stations – there's more to it than meets the eye!

The architecture of London's tube stations can be iconic – but we often take the stations for granted and are unaware of the reasoning behind their features. Royal Geographical Society member (and NLU3A member) Michael Burman will reveal the principal architects, works of art sponsored by the underground and prospects for future station design.



Monday 12 June

Picasso's Guernica: The story of a masterpiece

Guernica was a republican-held town which the German Condor Legion blitzed for several hours on a market day in 1937. There was great destruction and loss of life. Picasso heard about the atrocity while working on a mural for the 1937 Paris Exhibition. He abruptly abandoned the original design and began this great anti-war painting. The speaker is Robin Blake, author of books on art.



Monday 3 July

Annual general meeting.

Details forthcoming in June

Summer term 18 April to 21 July 2017