

the northern line

the newsletter of North London University of the Third Age

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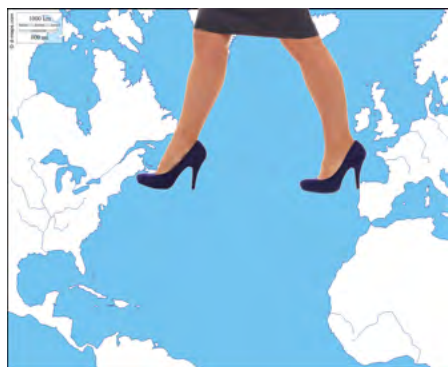


No nerds needed*

Technology and Changing Times sounds a challenging theme for a U3A interest group. But – as **Peter Hyams** explained to **Judith Abbs** – the group considers the implications for everyday life rather than technology for its own sake

Is it possible to discuss the impact of technology on our lives without understanding its inner working?

I would compare it with looking at the menu in a restaurant. You want to understand what the dishes consist of and what they will taste like, but you don't need to know details of the exact recipe or how to prepare the food.



A giant step for humankind?
See page 3.

**A nerd is a single-minded expert in a particular technical field.*

What has been on the menu for the group?

Artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data, genome editing and synthetic biology, to name some.

I don't remember any of those topics being on my school curriculum. Am I having a senior moment?

They are essentially new to the 21st century. Roots sometimes lie earlier, but they have only really kicked in since the millennium – at a notably accelerating pace. One major factor discussed by our group has, of course, been the growth of online communications. Ten websites in 1992, over a billion today. Meanwhile, social media dates only from 2004, and smartphones from 2007. Yet half the world's population now possesses one, and over one in five people shopped online in the past month.

What is the main factor behind the accelerating pace of technology?

The computing power in a

smartphone of today equates to a 'supercomputer' of 30 years

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Registered Charity No 1048587

NLU3A committee 2017–18

Chair (acting): Ruth Silver

07487 308 349 chair@nlu3a.org.uk

Treasurer: Leon Levy

8349 3103 leon.levy@btinternet.com

Business secretary: Edmond Cohen

8343 3088 edmondecohen@gmail.com

Groups organiser: Sue Teller

8381 4480 ginpalace@mac.com

Membership secretary: Ruth Silver

07487 308 349 membership@nlu3a.org.uk

Minutes secretary: Ann Dugdale

8346 7194 annmdugdale@tiscali.co.uk

Publicity Officer: Micky Mankin

8445 0453 michalmankin@gmail.com

Website manager: Mike Christie

8444 3317 info@nlu3a.org.uk

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 6 October.

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

Membership

For membership enquiries contact Helene Davidian, helenedavidian@googlemail.com, 8444 3669, or Ruth Silver (details in committee panel).

Editorial

These days I feel blessed. In July, I fainted while I was singing in a concert and cracked my scalp open as I fell to the floor. They patched me up at the Royal Free, and hopefully there's been no lasting damage.

But that's not why I feel blessed. It's because people have been so kind. The paramedics and hospital staff were wonderful; the choir whose concert I disrupted went out of their way to be compassionate and helpful. My friends in the U3A have shown me unbelievable concern, support and love.

I can be as negative and critical as the next person. Why can't they do things my way? Why do I have to put up with X, Y and Z? Doesn't anyone in this place know how to do anything?

What I've learnt is this: the strength of the U3A – indeed, of any voluntary organisation – is its people. Everyone has something to give; everyone has something to learn. And I count myself fortunate to be part of this association.

In this issue we learn about technology and its impact on our lives. We accompany the spring study group on a picture tour of the features of Suffolk. And our favourite place in London is Hampstead, which is on everyone's doorstep.

Enjoy!

Leni Green

Editor

helenjuni@ntlworld.com

On the subject of technology

*There was a young lady called Bright,
Whose speed was much faster than light.
She set out one day
In a relative way,
And came back the previous night.*

Continued from page 1

ago. The name deceives really – these are portable computers with connectivity that you can incidentally use to talk to people!

In the mid-1960s, a man called Gordon Moore forecast that computing power would double every couple of years, since it would be possible to keep doubling the amount that could be packed onto a single chip. This has held remarkably true.

How can a group who are not technology nerds begin to grasp the implications of this?

To bring Moore's law to life, group member Rosemary Helfer walked round the room, each stride measuring 2 feet. We imagined this was 1971, the year of Intel's first silicon chip. If Rosemary's stride kept doubling every two years, it would measure 4 feet in 1973 and 8 feet in 1975. After doubling for 30 years, one stride would stretch across London;

after another 16 years, by 2017 one step would stretch across the North Atlantic. And after doubling for another two years Rosemary could take a single step to get from Finchley to Hong Kong! In other words, computing power doubling has been increasingly dramatic, which is why so much technology has leapt forward in the last few years.

What is on the menu of the group for the coming year?

In the case of transport, we have already started to look at progress towards driverless cars and 'transport on-demand,' but there is a great deal to return to.

The same goes for the nature and implications of genome editing, for prospects for commerce (including retailing, finance and manufacture), for telecare, for medical advances, and for AI and robotics – in

particular, which jobs will they really be taking over?

We have dipped our toes into those topics, with much scope to revisit, while others have yet to get started. There are also sure to be new advances in all areas to keep abreast of.

Will it be difficult for any newcomers to catch up?

A mere dozen buzzwords (such as genomics, crowdsourcing, big data) only need to be understood in outline, which we can easily help a newcomer to do. The main thing is to have an enquiring mind, an internet connection for researching and following up, and an interest in the social implications of technology more than inner workings and specs. Whether new to the group or not, this is mainly uncharted territory for all of us – and for humanity in general – so we are all in the same boat.

AGM snippets

- Membership continues to grow: we have almost 800 members (780 at the time of the AGM in early July), and 106 groups.
- Eighty per cent of members use email, a slight increase on last year's 75 per cent.
- Finances are also healthy, with adequate money in reserve. However, the rise in rents for hire of venues is worrying, so subscriptions are going up by £1 per person across the board.
- Two new U3As have started recently – Crouch End and Hampstead Garden Suburb. The main reason for new U3As

is travel – people don't want to have to take several buses.

- Ruth Silver and Micky Mankin were elected as membership secretary and publicity officer respectively, having previously been co-opted into their roles. Mike Christie was re-elected as website manager.
- Some terms of office have ended, and a search is on for successors. Ruth Silver has agreed to serve as acting chair, replacing Patricia Isaacs, who has completed her four-year term. Sue Teller will stay on as groups organiser until someone can be found to take over, hopefully by Christmas.

- In her farewell speech, Patricia shared her view of the U3A: 'The belief that we can all teach and we can all learn at any age, that life does not end with retirement ... this concept is life-changing for many thousands of members throughout the world. ... Ageing is not always fun, not always easy, and many of us have some difficulties with wellbeing. But we are fortunate in that our membership of U3A brings with it a focus both mental and physical, a sense of community and purpose to our lives, and a very good reason to get up in the morning.'

As I see it

In the chair

It's an important office – shame about the terminology, writes founding NLU3A member and first chair **Keith Richards**, who is also a former national chair



Keith Richards

While paying an impromptu tribute to Patricia Isaacs at her final AGM in July, I began to think a little more about this office, which I described as 'a difficult job but the best in the world'. Patricia's four-year stewardship has been remarkable for its vibrancy, growth, development and memorable marking of our 21st anniversary in 2015. She has also been notable for looking outwards to 'network' our geographically nearest U3As, including the new ones that have sprung up in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Crouch End. It is good to know that she will be concentrating on this work in the future.

Patricia, like her predecessors, made sure that we are a significant voice in the London Region where, as in NLU3A, the current office holder, Chris Feldman, is stepping down after doing great work in bringing together over 30 U3As and establishing our own annual London summer school. Chris co-chaired the rapidly expanding Barnet U3A with Ian McCannah, and their partnership was really significant before they went on to other roles.

Ian has been a superb representative on the National Executive Committee, and it is great news that he is standing for national vice chair at the coming AGM in Nottingham. Over the last year or so he has had a major chairing role, leading with two colleagues a series of meetings all over the country on the topic of governance of the Third Age Trust. The current chair, Pam Jones, is entering her final year in the job, and already the search for a successor has begun in the minds of active members who think and act nationally and internationally. The role of national chair lasts only three years – once described to me as 'learning, doing and finishing'.

To return to Patricia, one of her innovations has been the establishment of regular meetings of all who have chaired North London U3A since the beginning. These are happy occasions and much looked forward to. Our only regret is that the term 'chairman' is under endless scrutiny. 'Chair' and 'chairperson' seem to arouse anger as well. Someone once suggested to me that we should try 'chairbeing'.



Patricia Isaacs



Pam Jones
Chair of the Third Age Trust

New groups

Art we Like. Led by an art historian, this is a group for people who wish to share their pleasure in art. Meets fortnightly in N2. Contact: Angela Cox, 8883 6952, angelacoxx@yahoo.co.uk

Older Living. We meet to discuss various topics relevant to us as we grow older. Subjects have included becoming invisible as we age; having fun in our later years; types of accommodation and where to live. Meets fortnightly on Tuesday at 10.30am. Takes place at Hemingford Close, N12. Contact: Melvyn Rees, 8446 3029, melvyn.tymel@gmail.com

Playreading 2. Meeting in Highgate, we read from plays borrowed from Hornsey Library, usually short works, taking two sessions. Reading is shared and enjoyed. This is a parallel group to Playreading 1. Meets fortnightly on Wednesdays, 10.30am

to 12 noon. Contact: Rachel Pierce, 8444 6001, rachel.pierce12@gmail.com

Women and Wisdom 2. This group explores women's cultural and social roles as, among others, academics, writers, philosophers, poets and teachers. This is a parallel group to Women and Wisdom 1. Meets fortnightly on Thursdays, 10.30am to 12.30pm. Contact: Roz Davy, 07957 972 941, rosalinddavy@btinternet.com

Women in Society. Our aim is to explore the changes and challenges of the role of women in our various cultures and how history will view the 20/21st century woman. Meets on alternate Wednesdays, 10.30am to 12 noon, in Woodside Park, N12. Contact: Ruth Silver, 8492 9331, treves43@gmail.com



Happy birthday, Janette

Many happy returns to Janette Harris, who celebrated her 100th birthday in May. Janette, the first NLU3A member known to have reached 100, was presented with honorary membership, a cake and flowers by friends who visited her on the day.

After a distinguished wartime career and many years working in the financial sector, she retired and joined NLU3A and U3A in London (based in Belsize Park). Janette made a vital contribution to a variety of groups in both U3As and also served as NLU3A's treasurer for many years.

Winter programme

It may not feel like it right now, but Christmas will be here before you know it, and it's time to think of repeating last year's winter programme. Hats off to Estelle Phillips for suggesting what was a much appreciated way of bridging the gap over the holidays, when the main programme has come to a halt.

Would you like to host a coffee morning or a tea party? What about a lunch in a local café or pub? Perhaps you have an idea for a social event? If so the organisers would love to hear from you. Contact Pat Taylor (8458 3468, patriciataylor847@btinternet.com) or Jenny Clark (8346 3751, jenmal@talktalk.net).

Suffolk snapshots

Helena R Green and **Jane Marsh** take us on a picture tour of this year's spring study trip to Suffolk. Photos by **Jane Marsh**



Flatford

What a coffee stop! We walked the paths that Constable trod, though the trees have grown and the views have changed since his time.

Framlingham Castle

While some people picnicked on the sward, others braved the heights of the ramparts. The extremely daring descended via the tubular metal chute. Other delights included historic Victorian pillar boxes – two of the oldest still in regular use – and the Fram Soap Box Races that were taking place in the town during our visit. An entertaining accompaniment to afternoon tea!



Otley Hall

This Grade I listed Tudor hall is a lived-in home to which we had an invited 'invasion of privacy'. Not sure many of us would be happy with 40 people tramping through our rooms, sitting on our beds and checking our bedside reading matter. Even the cat asleep in the kitchen didn't seem to mind our intrusion, and we felt so at home that we were ready to move in!



The roof in Blythburgh Church

To get the best view of the Angel Roof, you need to lie on the floor. None of us quite managed that, but we could still appreciate all its features in the extraordinary light that flows through the beautiful tracery windows of this 'Cathedral in the Marshes'.



Walpole Chapel

It was well worth visiting this dissenters' chapel, another architectural gem uncovered for us by Frank Kelsall. Its whistle was used to put an end to long sermons. The congregation must have been extremely grateful!



Blythburgh Church



Woodbridge Tide Mill

A monumental structure saved from destruction by a group of dedicated volunteers and now in full working order. Sea water fills the adjacent lagoon at high tide and drives the mill wheel as it drains away. Some of us took home bags of the fine flour produced at the mill from local wheat.



Barbara Hepworth sculpture at Snape Maltings



Landguard Fort

Living up to its name, it was in military use until 1956. Now it is an interesting lookout post for the nearby Felixstowe Container Port.



Little Hall Lavenham

From the 14th century the town grew wealthy from trade in 'Lavenham Blues' – a woollen cloth that was dyed in woad before weaving. When the blue cloth trade declined there was no money for new buildings, so historical gems such as this private house were preserved. It is now the headquarters of the Suffolk Preservation Society.

Letters

We are all in this together

At this year's AGM, alongside news of new U3As splintering off, there was talk of limiting our own membership to 800; it seems that beyond that number the administration becomes unwieldy. Yet despite a large membership, there are roles that no-one is prepared to take on.

The U3A movement is based on the idea of cooperation within a peer group: we have not 'group leaders' but 'group coordinators'. However, it seems to me that they are not getting much coordination. Members are shying away from getting involved.

When people say that they do not have the capability to take on a task, I think they are underselling themselves: most of us have worked, raised families, had life experiences. So we all have the capacity to contribute

something to our U3A.

Not everyone needs to be a coordinator, but within a group there are many smaller tasks with which participants can help: researching information, writing a report, sorting out the tea break. If you are getting something out of the U3A, you need to put something back. Try something new – you will be surprised how much confidence you will gain. Let me assure you that risk-taking in NLU3A is OK: my own errors have been generously forgiven. Perfection is not our aim.

As the much-banded saying goes: 'we are all in this together'; we need to be, or our U3A will not survive.

Helena R Green

Challenging misogyny

I was invited to speak at the London Region U3A summer school, which took place in early August. My talk, based on my book published last summer, *Reclaiming Feminism: Challenging everyday misogyny*, aimed to demonstrate how women are routinely belittled and made to feel small. Feminism may be on public agendas but few people recognise that everyday practices are patriarchal, sexist and even misogynist. This latter is a term which came into widespread use in the 21st century, although the practices of violence against women and girls, whether physical or verbal, are eons old.

I gave illustrations from my own life and the lives of others, such as Harriet Harman,

the former acting leader of the Labour Party, to show that although intellectually they realise that it is clearly the sexist structures of society that are at fault, feminists can still experience rejection as a personal hurt.

My talk fell on stony ground: one audience member sneered that, as her father had always told her, gender was nowhere near as important as social class. The chair jumped in with her own opinion – that there are more women than men in U3A because men prefer to play golf!

So how do we challenge misogyny?

Miriam David

MIRIAM LEADS THE WOMEN AND WISDOM GROUP

- What do you think? Do you agree with the sentiments expressed? Send your opinions on this – or anything else – to helenjuni@ntlworld.com for publication in the next issue.

Hampstead: on top of the world?

Think you know Hampstead? Think again, says **Patricia Isaacs**, in our series on places to visit using your Freedom Pass. Photos by **Joan Swann**

How to choose? So many favourite places in my home town. Let's go to Whitestone Pond at the top of Hampstead Heath and gaze at the views across London. Then walk down Heath Street to Back Lane, turning left into Streatley Place, and left again into Mansfield Place, to discover an almost secret part of Hampstead.

The fortunate residents live in enchanting cottages with front gardens and gates onto a narrow path going nowhere, and everything that Hampstead offers within a few steps. Retrace your steps, follow the road downhill and turn right along Flask Walk, past the 1888 laundry and bath house to the Flask pub. Sit outside for a drink – no cars here, just a lane with individual shops. Don't miss the last one on the right: Keith Fawkes' Antiquarian and Second-hand books, a tiny, old higgledy-piggledy shop of wonderful treasures inside, and an intriguing



Mount Vernon

collection of bric-a-brac outside. Haircut? 'Enry 'Iggins will provide.

*Haircut?
'Enry 'Iggins
will provide.*

Ready for more? Walk up Back Lane again, cross Heath Street, climb the steps to Holly Mount, explore the little squares and lanes, ending at The Holly

Bush, an 18th century pub of great charm. Quiet Hampstead away from the High Street. You'll love it!

If you have time for a 15-minute walk, go back to Whitestone Pond, turn right down East Heath Road and follow the path alongside the Heath down to South End Green. Just before the shops, turn right into Keats Grove and visit Keats House. The small house and garden are enchanting and it is easy to imagine the poet writing love letters there to his Fanny Brawne.

How to get there::
Hampstead underground station, Northern line.
Buses 210, 268, 46

- 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 or two!



Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising

111–117 Lancaster Road,
Notting Hill W11 1QT
7243 9611

Friday 20 October

Come on a self-guided meander through a treasure trove of retro design and memories, where every corner you turn leads you into a different decade. Rimmel cosmetics from the 1890s; First World War Oxo Cubes, Mars Bars, Rolos and KitKats from the 1930s; a 1970s Chopper Bike and around 12,000 other items that will open your eyes to the way we lived and shopped.

It's all here – the brands and packs, posters and ads, fads and fashions, toys and games. Evocative and inspiring, a kaleidoscope of images and iconic brands. (Ad-speak gets infectious.)

Do also read Leni Green's description in the April 2017 TNL, easily viewed online.

Times

10.50am for an 11am start.

Cost

£5.00, payable in advance.

Travel

The museum is located just off Ladbroke Grove and the nearest tube station is Ladbroke Grove, a few minutes' walk away. From the tube exit, go down Ladbroke Grove, away from Westway, and turn right into Lancaster Road.

Facilities and access

There is an award-winning café and garden (open from 10am), where we can meet before we enter. There are also toilets and full access to all areas.

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

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 478 428 for last-minute cancellations.

Autumn term monthly meetings

All take place on Mondays 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 10.40.



11 September

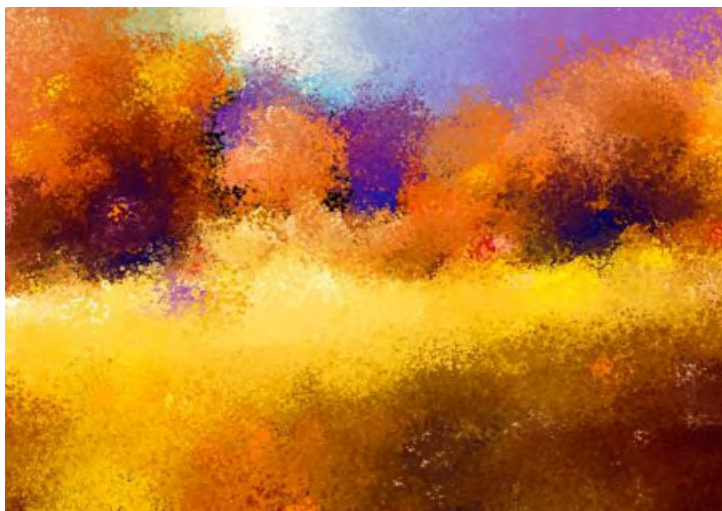
Sparkling stories from my life in show business

Howard T'Loosty (pictured), who spent over 38 years in the entertainment industry, will talk about the many well-known and well-loved artistes and entertainers with whom he worked. Most of the stories are funny and all of them are true!

9 October

Treasures from the Thames

Senior community archaeologist Helen Johnston will talk about the disappearing archaeology on the Thames foreshore in London through the work of the Thames Discovery Programme, with which she works.



20 November

London through artists' eyes

The story of London's life, landscape, people and social manners, explored through the work of artists down the centuries to the present day. The talk aims to show the continually changing visions of Britain's capital city. The speaker is Mark Lewis, freelance artist, silversmith and retired lecturer. (Painting: Woodford Green in Autumn by Mark Lewis)

Term dates

Term	Start date	Finish date
Autumn	11 September 2017	15 December 2017
Spring	8 January 2018	30 March 2018
Summer	16 April 2018	20 July 2018