

# the northern line

*the magazine of north london u3a*

issue 76

april 2021

*Click on the  
title, go to  
the page*

**Creativity in the time of Covid part 2**

**Editorial**

**Twenty questions**

**The remarkable women of Highgate**

**Obituary: Wilson Briscoe**

**As I see it**

**Dark flourless chocolate cake**

**Meet ... Rosemary Helfer**

**Books by members**

**Monthly meetings**

Photo © Miriam David

Registered Charity No 1048587





- The Northern Line (TNL) is published three times a year. It is edited by Leni Green, with assistance from Judith Abbs, and designed by Barry Davies.

- Please send contributions for the next issue to [editor@nlu3a.org.uk](mailto:editor@nlu3a.org.uk) by 23 July.
- The editors may shorten or otherwise amend articles to fit spacing and style requirements.

# Creativity in the time of Covid part 2

Thanks to everyone who sent examples of work done individually at home or nearby during full and partial lockdowns. Enjoy!



**The sky over Highgate.** The view from our kitchen window in Jacksons Lane – straight out of a Cecil B de Mille epic, but in real life! **Mike Klein**



**Lyttleton Playing Fields.** Every morning I take my dog, Eddy, for an early walk. There are only a few people about. It's peaceful, and usually beautiful – with birds singing! That morning I'd left the house just before dawn. The 'lake' is flooded grass in the playing fields. The sky with the dawn breaking, the reflections of the trees in the water – it was so beautiful! I just had to take a photo. **Kathryn Saloman**



**Continental Shelf:** Mixed media. The first image depicts the Continental Shelf with colourful coral, fish and jellyfish. The second shows the effect of climate change with bleached coral, dull fish, no jellyfish and pieces of blue plastic bags and netting.

**Judy Roose**

- In the last issue, we highlighted Judy's Dr Covid teddies, whose profits she donates to the Red Cross Coronavirus charity. If you would like her to knit you one, please email Judy, who will send you details. [jroose.highgate@virgin.net](mailto:jroose.highgate@virgin.net)

**Cover picture: Sunset over Barnet.** This is my favourite because of the way the beautiful pinks and oranges of the glow of the setting sun in the sky are reflected in the puddle at the field gate. Serendipity really ... at a time of great anxiety.

**Miriam David**



# Editorial

A recent survey about Covid asked, among other things, if we were feeling isolated. To tell you the truth, I'm not. I see and chat with u3a friends most days on Zoom and other platforms, challenge my mind with that most difficult of games – bridge – and keep active with yoga and pilates. Nor am I glued to the computer – I go out for walks with my husband and my borrowed dog, work in the garden and allotment, listen to music, sing in an online choir, read and even find time to work on this magazine.

Most of my u3a groups are active; I don't understand why

people complain that there's nothing happening in nlu3a. We can't meet physically – there is a pandemic on – but we can and do carry on learning and giving each other mutual support. I love greeting and being greeted by people I know at meetings; acquaintances have grown closer and become friends.

Maybe by the time you read the next issue of TNL, we'll be back to some kind of normalcy. Maybe we won't. But please remember that nlu3a is its members and that we can all be here for each other.

In this issue we feature work done by individuals at home during this pandemic year. We



publish the story of Highgate's Pink Badge scheme, which celebrates remarkable women. We honour one of our original members, Wilson Briscoe, who died last December.

And we have a new cover! Please tell us if you like it. ☺

Leni Green  
Editor

editor@nlu3a.org.uk



**Super moon.** Every April when the moon is just opposite the sun and at its closest to the earth, the satellite appears at its largest and brightest, often pink. I took this photo in my garden at about 10pm during last April's lockdown, and I frequently use it as my virtual background on Zoom. **Leni Green**

**Sunrise.**  
Having shielded since early March 2020, it was so meaningful to see such a beautiful sunrise without leaving my flat. **Pauline Levis**



**Early morning sky.** I photographed this last August at about 5.45am from my bedroom window. I thought it was a very interesting sky. **Linda Day**



*Continued overleaf*





**Wall hanging.** The base is layered with odd shaped pieces of silky type fabric, fastened down with straight stitches. It has appliqué sycamore seeds, yellow flowers and grass, and is decorated with beads and embroidery stitches .  
**Christine Stammers**



**Cardboard castle.** I've always loved working with my hands, be it drawing, painting or sculpting. Another nice pursuit, especially in these lockdown times, is model-making from cardboard cut-outs. I made this castle from a cut-out from eBay. It's great fun and completely absorbing! **Mike Sabel**



**Cardigans.** I knitted these for my two grandnieces, whom I'd dearly like to hug. Making the cardis cheered me up immensely. **Yuen Yee Wong**



**Reflections in the lake at Greenhill Park, Barnet.** Drawing from a photo I took there. **Vivienne Trenner**



**The box camera.** I have always loved this picture of my parents and me, which was taken in the garden of our house/shop. My father sold wonderful mirrors in Hull and what is particularly interesting is the box camera being used by my mother. **Elaine Paradise**

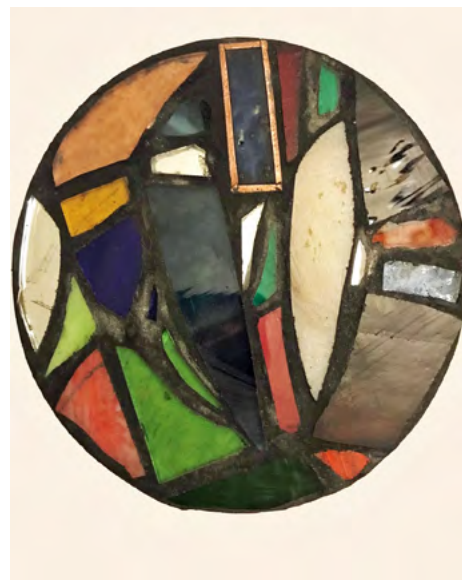


**Embroidered cushion cover.** During the lockdown I made this cushion cover for one of my fellow residents at the Mary Feilding Guild. We are both part of the gardening group, and we grew poppies among other plants on our small upstairs terrace, where the photo was taken. **Joy Winterbottom**





**Winter trees.** Tissue paper with paint background, applique fabric and stitch detail.  
**Ann Dugdale**



**Stained glass box.** I line the box with felt, paint it gold, then decorate the lid.  
**Helene Davidian**

# Twenty questions

## Music trivia

By **Judith and Malcolm Abbs**

1. Which satellite did Ol' Blue Eyes want to visit?
2. Who has had her boots made and wants to go for walk?
3. Where did Petula Clark go when life was making her lonely?
4. What did Rodgers & Hart think about a woman who loves the free fresh wind in her hair?
5. What joy went out of our lives with Brexit?
6. What did we do first – set our bounds wider and wider or rule the waves?
7. Which English Field Marshall inspired a Eurovision winning song?
8. Who keeps mad dogs company at midday?
9. Which composer introduced young persons to all the instruments in the orchestra?
10. Which Polish composer unknowingly wrote the signature tune for Just a Minute?
11. Whose music should we play on 5 November?
12. Which work by Sibelius reminds you of his nationality?
13. When Cilla Black wanted to know what it's all about, who did she ask?
14. What did Band Aid ask whether they know?
15. Where do troubles melt like lemon drops?
16. What was Ira Gershwin's verdict on the things that you're liable to read in the bible?
17. Where would you find an old man in a closed down market and an old girl with her home in two carrier bags?
18. Where could you hear a beautiful bird singing in the night while you tap-danced like Fred Astaire?
19. Which hymn links an Oscar winning film to the Women's Institute?
20. Which title of a composition by Mozart was translated by Stephen Sondheim into the name of a musical?

*Answers on back cover*

# The remarkable women of Highgate

In the last 150 years, more than 1,800 blue plaques have been installed on buildings in London to celebrate notable

figures of the past; about 14 per cent feature women. Since 2018, 31 pink plaques have been installed in Highgate, all celebrating

remarkable local women – present as well as past. **Judith Abbs** tells us about the pink plaque project

The pink plaque scheme, which celebrates Highgate's 'remarkable women', started during the 2018 Highgate festival to mark 100 years of women's suffrage. A group of artists created works inspired by local women including **Christina Rossetti** and **Angela Burdett-Coutts**.

Catharine Wells, a member of the Highgate Literary & Scientific Institute's archives, realised

that – although many inspirational women had connections with the area – only one woman, **Mary Kingsley**, was remembered with a blue plaque.

The pink plaques celebrate authors, actors, politicians; people who are well known and others who might have been forgotten. Here are a few of them.

Cultural centres at the heart of the community will have pink plaques to honour the local women who helped to

establish them. Jackson's Lane became a thriving arts centre in a disused Methodist church in 1975, thanks to **Nicky Gavron** (pictured), a long-standing member of the London Assembly. Lauderdale House, built in 1582, was damaged by a fire in 1963. **Sasha Young**, an artist and writer, helped to save it as an arts and education charity.



Local teachers include **Matilda Sharpe** (pictured), who founded Channing School in 1885, and musician **Anita Probert**, who



is still teaching piano and singing to local children after more than 30 years.

The plaque outside the Highgate Butchers describes **Phyllis Harper**, who has run the shop for 44 years, as the 'Queen of Highgate'.



**Kenwood Ladies' Pond lifeguards.** Opened in 1925, the pond is enjoyed by thousands of women all year round. It will reopen after lockdown and will have a pink plaque to recognise the passion and professionalism of its lifeguards.



Two charismatic personalities stand out – one from the 16th, the other

from the 21st century: **Nell Gwynn** and **Victoria Wood**.



Several women who transformed our health and social care systems had links to Highgate. We all know about the role of Florence



Nightingale, who convalesced in Highgate after the Crimean war, but may not know about **Dame**

**Geraldine Aves** (pictured), a pioneering senior civil servant who played a key role in establishing our modern social services system.

The project hopes to offer guided walks as part of the annual Highgate festival to introduce the women and their contribution to Highgate life and the wider world. Unlike the blue plaques, pink plaques are not necessarily permanent fixtures and may only stay up during the festival. However, the owners of several buildings have chosen to keep their plaques in place.

In 2020 the plaques were only shown online during the festival. It is hoped that actual plaques

will be displayed as part of the Heritage Weekend.

- An illustrated list of all the women, with audio recordings, is available at [highgatefestival.org/pink-plaques](http://highgatefestival.org/pink-plaques).

- You can nominate a remarkable woman for a pink plaque by emailing [info@highgatefestival.org](mailto:info@highgatefestival.org). The project would welcome anyone who wants to get involved and provide ideas, suggestions and research.

### Pink for a girl and blue for a boy?

This feels like a quote from a traditional nursery rhyme but it is actually a very recent fashion. A magazine from 1918 said: 'The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls'. No one seems to know why the choice of colours for girls and boys was swapped around at the end of the 1940s. ☺

---

## Obituary: Wilson Briscoe

### 19 January 1929–28 November 2020

I met Wilson Briscoe at our start-up meeting on 6 June 1994 at Lauderdale House, where Keith Richards, our first chair, had gathered people to create a committee for the new nlu3a. Wilson was nlu3a's second chair, from 1998–2004.

Wilson offered to set up a class embracing the 'Shape of London'. Joanne (my wife) and I were the first to enrol. Little did we realise the long and wonderful journey we were embarking on. The subject matter was fascinating and the class numbers grew, so I offered to take over the administration of the class from Wilson.

I found in Wilson a quality not possessed by many. He was a real gentleman – kind and considerate, fair, and extremely knowledgeable. We became a team described by class members as Morecombe & Wise, Wilson being the Wise man he was while I worked undercover. Together we



Wilson and Margery Briscoe

Photo ©Anne Scott

achieved a lot, obtaining grants for nlu3a from the Lottery Fund, Millennium Fund and Barnet Council. These totalled £9,400 and enabled us to digitise our administration.

Wilson was an inspiration to us all; he was our mentor and I feel I was privileged to be his friend and colleague over the past 26 years. I remember the struggles we all had

during our setting-up time. I was out looking for donations, study

areas, tutors for our IT studies, making tables and boards for the art class, attending numerous committee meetings, preparing digitally our first membership list, acting as treasurer with Joanne as membership secretary for 10 years. What a wonderful experience I was fortunate to have had and thankfully I am re-enacting it for my new U3A in Scotland. ☺

HAMISH (JAMES) CRAWFORD

We are also sad to report the deaths, in December, of two more of our members: Sally Billot and

Ken Carter. Our thoughts and sympathies are with their families and friends.



# As I see it

There's been more to lockdown than doom and gloom, says **Patricia Isaacs**



**I**t is almost a year since u3a groups were able to meet physically, and many throughout the country have discovered ingenious ways to stay in touch with their friends. Many, too, have discovered hidden talents and creative abilities – it hasn't all

been soda bread and banana cake! Zoom sessions, email and WhatsApp have been life enhancing for many members, exchanging personal anecdotes, photographs, poems, jokes; almost without exception the tone has been determinedly light-hearted and positive in defiance of the terrible daily news of illness and death.

Perhaps we can allow ourselves some hope for the promised better summer, after a long, long year of Groundhog Days. It is wonderfully reassuring that so many u3as have become strong friendship groups despite physical separation; is there another organisation in the country as extraordinary as u3a? (u3a

now replaces U3A, but that conversation is for another time).

In many ways I have enjoyed aspects of lockdown rather too well: uncommitted to anything, idle when it pleased me, having plenty of time to plan home-based activities (and plenty of time to not do them ...). Against that, I have badly missed family, friends, hugs, freedom to go out, hugs, coffee bars, the library, hugs. I wonder how long it will take for the pandemic to fade from memory, to forget all the kindness, the selfless caring, the community spirit? Let's try to keep it in mind during the phased easing of lockdown. ☺

PATRICIA ISAACS IS A PAST  
CHAIR OF NLU3A.

## Sonnet to hope in the time of coronavirus

*(with thanks to William Shakespeare for lending me the first line of his Sonnet Number 17)*

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
When lockdown and restrictions memories fade,  
And isolating months in distance hum,  
And new eventful patterns have been laid?  
These groundhog days will pass, life will re-form;  
In hope a happier future we shall see.  
Embracing loved ones soon will be the norm  
Our hearts will sing with glee that we are free.  
So then, my friends, let's cast away all gloom  
And be forever grateful for small joys.  
This Covid time is passing; now there's room  
To relish life anew with regained poise.

In confinement some hard lessons we have learned  
And good times far less fearful we have earned.

PATRICIA ISAACS (FEBRUARY 2021)



# Dark flourless chocolate cake

A great cake, fudgy and moist with chunks of Turkish delight, halva, chopped dates and dark chocolate. Serves 8–10. Enjoy and don't blame me if your waistline expands! **Hilary Segall**

## For the cake:

6 egg whites  
200g caster sugar  
125g ground almonds  
¼ tsp ground green cardamom seeds  
300g halva, crumbled or chopped into small pieces  
200g Turkish delight, half finely chopped, half left slightly bigger for decoration  
150g finely chopped dates  
200g 70% finely chopped dark chocolate

## For the decoration:

100ml double cream  
150g 70% roughly chopped dark chocolate  
30g finely chopped pistachios  
Rose petals (optional)



Photo © Hilary Segall

## Method:

1. Preheat oven to 170C/150C fan or gas mark 3.
2. Grease and line a 24cm spring-form tin (I tend to use square tins; cake-cutting is easier).
3. Beat egg whites to stiff peaks; gradually add the sugar, beating continuously for five minutes until you have a thick and glossy meringue.
4. Fold in the ground almonds, cardamom and pinch of salt, then add the halva and the finely chopped Turkish delight. Next add the dates and

finally the chocolate.

5. Stir briefly until just combined. Spoon into the prepared cake tin and bake for 60–70 mins until the cake is set and firm to the touch (it will still be moist in the centre, so a skewer will not come out clean).
6. Remove from oven and leave to cool in tin on a wire rack.

## To decorate:

First make a ganache. Pour the cream into a small saucepan and place over a high heat. Bring to the boil, then remove from heat. Little by little, whisk in the chopped-up chocolate (fairly rapidly so that the cream doesn't cool too much and melt all the chocolate).

Once melted, allow the ganache to cool in the pan for about 10 minutes, by which time it will

stiffen a little to a thick, pouring consistency.

While waiting for the ganache to cool, transfer the cake to a large serving plate, then pour the chocolate ganache over it, allowing it to drip down the sides. Decorate with the chopped pistachios and the remaining Turkish delight. Add the rose petals if using.

This recipe appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* magazine, 29 August 2020

# Meet ... Rosemary Helfer

Christine Stammers introduces one of our most active members



**T**he most striking thing about Rosemary is her incredible commitment to education. Most learners concentrate on a few subjects; she is engaged in so many! She also takes care of her physical and social health.

She spent her early years in Argentina, leaving with a degree in Educational Psychology. This was not accepted in the UK, so she became a bilingual secretary and translator for a South American embassy. Later on she was a carer for her mother.

When she retired, in 2007,

she considered her position, a more elegant way of saying she wanted to make the best use of her retirement years, and showed excellent judgement by joining nlu3a.

With the u3a, using her brain, she studies French and Italian, Latin and German, does playreading, plays canasta and has studied social history; for her physical health and companionship she does country dancing and Friday morning local walks; for joy, she sings in the choir.

She is a member of the technology group, which looks at the social implications of technology. Far fewer printed newspapers are sold because people read the news online. Also, in some countries if you visit a friend in an apartment block, facial recognition and other processes installed in the building can tell the government

who you are, who you are visiting, how long you stay, what you talk about and what you do.

Rosemary also enjoys the trips she makes with Awaydays and Farawaydays, the u3a holidays, visiting gardens and walking the Thames.

With lockdown, things are more difficult for her, particularly as she lives alone, but with other u3a members she does a lot of Zoom meetings and goes walking in small numbers. She also 'tries to keep up with the news, sometimes too much,' watches TV, reads, cooks, and does the other things we all do to make the most of our lives.

Two quotes:

'We should all try to enjoy what we can, and look forward to better times.'

'Housework is what I do least.'

A wise woman. ☺

---

## Books by members

We inaugurate our series of books written or edited and published by nlu3a members. **Judith Abbs** writes about *The Parent's Handbook*



**T**his is the actual cover of a new copy of the book that I wrote with Felicity Taylor, which was published by Pelican in 1976. It was a disaster on bookshop shelves. I watched people take one look at it and – assuming it was a battered second-hand copy – put it down again. I'm sure the designer thought he was being funny but Felicity's husband, who was

in marketing, said it was the triumph of the art director over common sense. In spite of the cover, thousands of copies were sold.

It wasn't an easy project. The dedication says it all: 'To our families, but for whom this book would never have been written and without whom it would have been written in half the time'.

We had seven school-age



children between us and could only work in school hours in term-time. No internet for research, of course. We sat at my dining-room table writing everything by hand. We managed to acquire a portable electric typewriter and I typed up the day's work after the children were in bed.

*The Parent's Schoolbook* does not tell parents how to bring up their children and it does not tell teachers how to teach them.

Everyone wants the best possible education system. Teachers, education officers and politicians were all equipped with the means to fight for what they wanted: unions, political parties, professional knowledge and expertise, legal advice, money and resources. But what about the millions of ordinary children who were attending state schools and their parents? They had no union, no resources and little knowledge and expertise about how the system worked.

Yet parents have a unique contribution to make because they are looking at the system with a unique perspective. For a politician the horizon is the date of the next election, which

may be three or five years away. For an administrator the horizon may be the next budget or planning schedule. But parents have a much more stringent time-scale. If they have to wait two or three years, their child has missed out on some vital part of infant schooling; a four-year wait and junior schooling is lost; another five-year programme postponed and the child has left school altogether.

If the people who are responsible for educational policy do not send their children to the schools principally affected by it, then the people whose children do go to those schools must be given a voice in policy-making.

*The Parent's Schoolbook* gave parents the information they needed to influence education policy in their children's school, their local education authority and nationally. It explained the legal framework within which decisions were made; where the power and responsibility rested for everything from admissions to work experience. It also explained how the decision-making organisations worked and suggested techniques for getting things put right when

they go wrong.

The review in the weekly journal *Education* said: '*The Parent's Schoolbook* will be a winner, its unattractive cover design notwithstanding. It should certainly be read by education committee members and officers, as well as headteachers.'

In his book *Equality* in 1931, R.H. Tawney wrote:

The capital fact about English educational policy is that it has been made by men, few, if any, of whom themselves attended the schools principally affected by it, or would dream of allowing their children to attend them. In such circumstances it is not surprising that they should grudge expenditure upon it ... What a wise parent would desire for his own children, that a nation, in so far as it is wise, must desire for all children.

Looking at the politicians who control our education system, has anything changed for the better in the last 90 years? ☞

## ***Debating the Zeitgeist and Being Second Generation.* Edited by Miriam David and Marilyn Moos, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2021**

**T**he edited book that Marilyn Moos and I conceived of in late 2019 has come to fruition during the Covid-19 pandemic. We share a background as daughters of refugees from Nazism and hold similar politics today with commitments to gender and social equality, human rights and anti-racism. We are also both

professional educators.

We wanted to explore how we felt about being the British-born children of refugees from Nazism, now that we are in the twilight of our years. How did growing up with continental parent(s) affect our consciousness and personal and political experiences? We invited others of our generation

in similar circumstances to contribute. We found ten people eager to reflect on their upbringing and how they now felt about current politics, especially the question of the treatment of refugees and their children today. Some of our contributors are also members of nlu3a, for example Janet Leifer

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

and Ines Newman.

There are many studies of the survivors of Nazism – the first generation – and there is a growing literature by their children – the so-called second generation. Reflecting on the experience of having parents who are refugees, exiles, emigrés, asylum seekers or migrants is also highly topical, today, as millions of people globally are on the move. We found that we all share a commitment to better treatment for migrants and their children, and disapproval of the current racist zeitgeist. We all share a feeling of being outsiders or others, despite our successful professional lives. ☺

1. The moon; 2. Nancy Sinatra; 3. Downtown;  
4. The lady is a tramp; 5. Ode to Joy; 6. Rule the waves; 7. Duke of Wellington; 8. Englishmen;  
9. Benjamin Britten; 10. Chopin; 11. Handel; 12. Finlandia; 13. Alfie; 14. If it's Christmas; 15. Over the rainbow; 16. It ain't necessarily so; 17. On the streets of London; 18. Berkeley Square; 19. Jerusalem; 20. Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

## Monthly meetings

**P**hysical meetings are currently suspended because of Covid-19. Until we are permitted to meet as large groups, we will present these meetings using the members' Zoom facility. This will permit up to 100 participants, but you will have to pre-book a place. Details will be sent out in the monthly email newsletter and posted on the monthly meetings page of the website ([nlu3a.org.uk](http://nlu3a.org.uk)). Meetings start at 10.30am.

### Monday 10 May

#### Doctors who changed the world



William Harvey

**T**his is the story of great discoveries by some less well-known medical heroes. Their breakthroughs laid the foundations for modern medicine, and their stories are a fascinating account of genius and innovation.

The speaker, **Brian Posner**, was educated at Durham University Medical School. He was a GP for 40 years and a medical administrator for a further ten years. For much of this time he was Clinical Tutor to Newcastle University and Medical Advisor to Sunderland University.

### Monday 14 June

#### All things banned and censored

**T**he talk is a light-hearted survey of banning and censorship over the past 100 years or so, with pictures, songs and anecdotes.

It will touch on George Formby, the BBC, cricket, Marilyn Monroe, GB Shaw, the Crazy Gang, Dr Crippen, Alfred Hitchcock and many more. Christine and Peter Padwick, the presenters, have devised a programme of shows which they have performed all over the country. They have raised many thousands of pounds for charities including the Salisbury Trust for Homelessness and Cancer Research UK. Based in Salisbury, both have a background in teaching.

