

the northern line

the magazine of north london U3A

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- Please send contributions for the next issue to editor@nlu3a.org.uk by 18 March.

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

Editorial

Why is the media so obsessed with people's procreative status, not to mention their age? Fifty-four year-old mother-of-three Mary Poppins has won the Nobel Prize for Peace. Father-of-five Henry Higgins, aged 76, is the new international chess champion after defeating 65-year-old granddad-of-three Peter Pan. Is winning the Nobel Peace Prize or being exceptionally good at chess not enough? Does the number of children someone has managed to produce define them? When it comes down to it, who cares?

It goes without saying that we don't do that in the U3A. You can have 50 children or none, and no member will ever know

unless you choose to tell them. The same holds true for what job you used to do, whether you live in a palace or a shack, how much cash you do or don't have stashed away – even how old you are. What matters is that you, no longer in full-time employment (if you ever were!), have chosen to join an organisation that is run by its members for its members, that is based on lifelong learning, that has no bosses and no underlings.

In this issue John Dugdale takes us for a walk down Hendon Lane in Finchley and reveals many surprises. Keith Richards introduces a long-standing contemporary literature group which has analysed works by authors including



Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann and Seamus Heaney. And we treat you to a tasty quiz whose answers are puddings. ☺

Enjoy!

LENI GREEN

EDITOR

EDITOR@NLU3A.ORG.UK

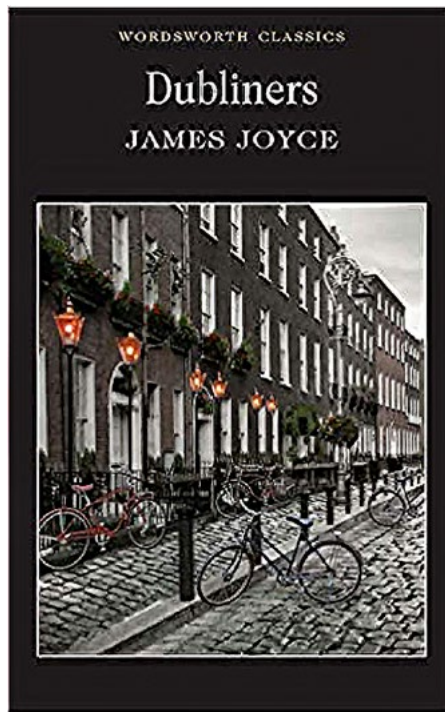


Photo © Leni Green

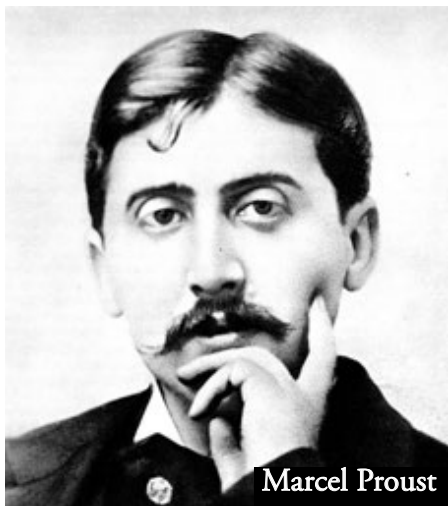
The **cover picture** was taken from this photo by Leni Green, who writes: 'I knew we were including a poem about Hampstead Heath and wanted to take some illustrative photos. At the lake near the entrance, a family of swans floated by and I was able to snap them through bushes and building works barriers.'

Modern times

A group that has been going for 27 years must be good. **Keith Richards** introduces Modern and Contemporary Literature, an exemplifying NLU3A gem



Since North London U3A's inception there has been a group of this name. It was one of six offered to the people who met in Lauderdale House in 1994 to discuss the possibility of establishing a U3A in the vaguely defined 'north London'. During the years there have been four coordinators – me, at first; then Audrey Jancovich; followed by Richard Callanan; and at present,



Marcel Proust

Ann Bracken.

While choice of texts has always been in the hands of all members, there has been some attempt throughout to draft the development of 'modernism' and to explore the critical movements which have sustained it. Major works discussed include Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (in its latest translation), James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Thomas Mann's *Dr Faustus*, T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. During Audrey's long stewardship the curriculum expanded to include and give prominence to works written in English (or translated) from all over the world. These profound experiences led to Barry Davies coordinating a separate group, now one of the jewels in North London's crown – Reading the World.

The late and so much missed Richard Callanan joined the group when a detailed study of James Joyce was announced. Ann Bracken also attended. I was again coordinating by then and proposed beginning with *Ulysses*, but Richard and the group felt otherwise. So we began with ALL the stories in *Dubliners* followed by *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* before embarking on a 20-session study of *Ulysses*. I remember this time as truly remarkable as members prepared and read passages. The most challenging sections were not shirked. I had been 'reading' it since my twenties but not in a peer-to-peer learning group.

At the end, Irish literature had taken a hold and Richard coordinated a detailed study of W B Yeats which included his plays. Seamus Heaney was then proposed and I had some doubts about whether his work would sustain the lengthy examination



Wood engraving by Garrick Palmer from the Folio edition of *Moby Dick*

which was now the mark of the group's work. I could not have been more wrong: the sessions lasted for two years. Sadly Richard died, and at that point Ann Bracken took over and guided us through contemporary Irish

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 3

poetry until the group settled on the next writer to emerge from group discussion, Ted Hughes – and again

I wondered
but many,
many sessions
later in the
Finchley
Progressive
Synagogue
and now on
Zoom, many

of us feel we are just beginning.
It is, of course, impossible not to study Sylvia Plath in conjunction,

and for some of the group, *The Birthday Letters* has emerged as a modern masterpiece.

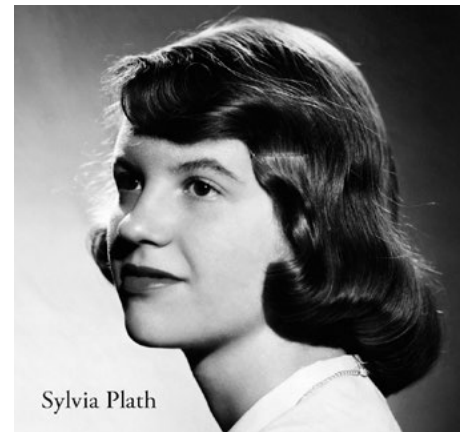
From the beginning members have not been asked whether

they 'like or dislike' what we are reading. I sometimes tell enquirers that we read what we 'don't like'.

Signing out one day as always with regret that I have to wait two weeks

before we meet again, I thought how ironic it was that while we are working at that level, the

From the beginning members have not been asked whether they 'like or dislike' what we are reading. I sometimes tell enquirers that we read what we 'don't like'



Sylvia Plath

national U3A movement has finally given in to demands that we demote the *U* in university to lower case should anyone ask what it stands for. ☺

As I see it

Outdoor meetings were great in the summer, but what about now? Will social distancing be enough to keep groups getting together in the colder months?

Patricia Isaacs ponders the future



Speaking to a friend in a West Country U3A led me to wonder how U3A groups nationwide have been faring during the pandemic. Judging by articles and photos in *Third Age Matters*, many have stayed lively with Zoom and physical activities,

but many groups within the U3A decided not to use Zoom, and some closed down altogether.

It was easy enough to maintain outdoor contact during the two Covid summers, meeting in gardens or on walks. Members of two groups of which I am a member met regularly during those summers at the café in a Highgate park as soon as six people were allowed to get together;

those meetings kept us sane. Our conversations were low-key – after all, we had been nowhere, experienced very little to lead us into wide-ranging discussions – but contact with friends was stimulation enough after so much isolation. For those of us who

Contact with friends was stimulation enough after so much isolation.

live alone, it was awkward at first to be with a number of people, surrounded by others enjoying the sunshine, the beautiful park – and of course the coffee and cake! But joy overcame concern.

So what does the future look like? Now those two groups are meeting again inside, windows open and suitably distanced from one another, but

will that continue if the weather turns colder? Omicron is on an upward trend in England, and it is impossible to have a firm picture of the coming months. But we must hope for renewal and a positive outlook. ☺

PATRICIA ISAACS
IS A PAST CHAIR OF NLU3A

Pictures and poems

Taking up the literary theme, here are poems that members have written and some of their photographs

Identity

Identity is complex to define
With life's experience we begin to refine
Who we are and how we are seen
So if we lean to the positive and seem keen
We are deemed optimistic; type glass half full
But does that stand up to the push and pull
Of what life may send our way
Or are we chipped and dented with the flay
Of successes or failures or come what may
Are we eroded or built up day by day
How is identity formed, how does it evolve
Does it depend on our genes and how we solve
Problems or is it nature or nurture
Or where you are born
In an affluent country or one war torn
If we are fortunate to be 'normal'
Without a disability to overcome
Already one's advantaged in bracket number one
Pessimist or fighter does that hold throughout
life
Or is it destroyed by trouble and strife
Can we rise above abuse, use education to grow
Overcome adversities, deflect each blow
Yet remove us to a place and people afar
Does our identity stay with us stuck like tar
Or do we need to create ourself anew
As suddenly there is nobody to view
Us with the labels that have been attached
Is our identity strengthened or do we feel
detached
Needing to view ourselves from within
What feels essential what could we bin
Is one given the chance to start again
Creating an intricate, new cell chain
Or is who we are, what we remain

*I constantly write, sometimes on a given topic
and sometimes on something that takes my
interest.*

ROSALIE AJZENSTEJN © JULY 2021

Walk

She remembers seeing colour
many years ago,
it is a treasure, secure in her mind;
lightly, she links arms with me,
we walk through fragrant woods where the brook
flows, here is rough willow bark to stroke,
quiet reflections, restless dapples
a panoply of birdsong,
here is a black hawthorn she must see,
a woven world of dark leaves
under a halo of fragile blossom,
lace light, white as a cloud,
I take her wrist, guide eager fingers
to feel; fairy petals flee from her touch,
the earth is like a speckled bird;
we both laugh, going slowly, deliberately,
into the open, where sun warms the skin,
walking under a canopy of sky the young blue of
spring.
A sunlit sea of grass waves peacefully
as if in greeting.
I fumble with words,
she will see the pictures.

The poem is about my friend Sunethra from Sri Lanka. She has suffered from poor sight since she was born, and became totally blind in her 30s with three young boys to look after. She is one of the happiest, most peaceful people I know, and is very accepting of her blindness.

LIS VANDYK © 2021

Autumn on the M25

Gold, russet, emerald:
Even the M25
Glorifies autumn.

Over three days in November on trips to Harefield Hospital, I composed this haiku. I was transfixed by the deepening colours of the leaves. (I wasn't driving!)

LENI GREEN © 2021



Photo © Leni Green

A walk on Hampstead Heath

How I love to walk on the Hampstead Heath
 over springy turf, leading me underneath
 the sprawling branches of mighty spruce and beech
 squirrels scampering up trunks, way out of reach.
 The sound of shoes squelching in the grassy dew
 flower beds ablaze, with colours of a differing hue.
 Ducks gliding easily on waters, e'er so still
 busy searching for food with a toss of their bill.
 I see a dog and his master making play with a ball,
 perspiring human bodies jogging around, as if all
 the world is watching their particular endeavour
 to reach physical fitness as a personal measure.
 Wending my way over the fields to Parliament Hill
 enjoying the peace and quiet, everything so still.
 Gaunt houses in the distance showing up in relief
 against a skyline glowering over Hampstead Heath.
 Standing still for a moment, gazing in wonderment
 at the natural vista before me, surely heaven sent.
 Deriding man, in his puny attempts to create
 comparable scenes, which tend only to aggravate.
 Oh! How I love to walk on the Hampstead Heath
 under an open sky and springy turf beneath,
 feeling a sense of freedom, worries left far behind
 enjoying the spectacle before me, gaining peace of mind.

*Hampstead Heath was one of the prime destinations
 Joanne and I would make a bee-line for, as walking
 over the various parts, we could see great views of
 London but more important was the soothing effect of
 space, trees, shrubbery and flowers which, combined
 with bird songs and children playing, returned us to a
 real world feeling refreshed.*

JAMES CRAWFORD © 28.8.21

James (Hamish) Crawford

has been a member of NLU3A since it began. After the death of his wife, Joanne (also a founding member), he moved back to his native Scotland. Now an honorary member of NLU3A, he offers the memory on the left.



Joanne and James Crawford



Photo © Leni Green

Photo © Joan Swann



Photo © Joan Swann



Photo © Joan Swann



Bake-off

A pastry quiz, submitted by Judith Abbs, to get you smacking your lips and licking your fingers. The quiz came from the National Women's Register, nwr.org.uk
Answers on page 12

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Endless dilemma for motorists. | 13) Opens a citrus door. |
| 2) Lucky Roger. | 14) Klimt and Freud spin together. |
| 3) Is this Spike's favourite? | 15) Small quartet. |
| 4) Who is the South American revolutionary girl? | 16) Eccentric ugly Leo at Christmas. |
| 5) A French culinary flash. | 17) Served in the other place. |
| 6) Unusual lilac less vain. | 18) Dairy instruments. |
| 7) Scrambled sub scot shorn. | 19) Midsummer moth uses soap. |
| 8) Cricketer hits half score at the castle. | 20) A treat at the flower show. |
| 9) 4.321 | 21) Ballerina. |
| 10) Absorbent Queen. | 22) Dance with degree. |
| 11) Floozy in the Trafford Centre. | 23) Girls, you might have been one when young! |
| 12) Common money with Hazel. | 24) Sounds like crazy time. |

Tales of unlocking

Zoom was the venue for many of our groups during the lockdowns. Some have continued that way, but others have started venturing out, with social distancing, open windows, hand-sanitising and lateral-flow tests. Two groups tell their stories

Picture me

The photographers' group functioned well during the lockdown, having at least one meeting each month over Zoom. This turned out to be better in some ways than a meeting at our previous venue, the Blue Beetle in Hendon Lane. Obviously, we missed the person-to-person contact, as social cohesion has always been a major part of the U3A, and we missed being able to sit down and have a coffee and conversation. The big advantage for us was the ability to use the screen-sharing element of Zoom: we could discuss photo editing live and have the software running in a way that was never

that successful when we met at the Blue Beetle.

Since the relaxation of mixing rules, we have been going out once a month for a photoshoot at locations in London such as Brick Lane, Regents Park and the Southbank. As we are currently a small group, this has been relaxed and informal. As the world opens up (well, London at least) we will be searching out more photogenic locations.

- We welcome others to join our group, which meets on Zoom on the second Thursday of the month, and other Thursdays when opportunities present. 📷

MARTIN GOLDMAN



Brick Lane walkabout
© Martin Goldman



London Bridge © Martin Goldman

Ça va?

The NLU3A's advanced French conversation group kept going all through the pandemic, its leader Louise Lewis regularly finding ingenious ways to meet safely and legally every Wednesday afternoon.

At first, of course, it was the ubiquitous Zoom. But during the warm weather, we started to meet in the open air, in Highgate Wood. First to get there commandeered a log to sit on.

And when we started to yearn for a bit more comfort, and some protection when it rained, we upped sticks and moved into

the café, under a vast umbrella. Sometimes the other customers looked at us strangely – a group of folk in the middle of the café, talking French rather loudly and laughing a lot. We're a cheerful lot. Sometimes they asked us what we were doing, and we told them. In English, usually.

We're still meeting in the café, but it's mid-November as I write this; it's getting cold, and it's time to move into a nearby Highgate pub.

Meetings are small – very seldom more than eight, often fewer. We like that, but we've got

room now for a few more.

We find it a good way of hanging onto our language skills. Your French doesn't need to be fluent, but it needs to be up to an impromptu conversation in which we help each other when necessary. If you did A-level French once, even if you're rusty, you'll probably be fine. ☺

• If you're interested in joining us, text or phone **Christine Kienzel** on 07880 593 783 or email **Fred Morris** at morris.lee@btinternet.com
FRANCIS BECKETT

Chilling out at the AGM

Susan Watt reports on proceedings at the 2021 annual general meeting

Members had to wrap up warmly for NLU3A's annual general meeting, which was held on Monday 8 November, in St Paul's Church, Finchley – with plenty of windows and doors open for Covid-safe ventilation. The formal proceedings followed on after the first in-person monthly meeting since lockdown, which featured an entertaining talk by Lester Hillman on the Battle of Barnet. The battle took place 550 years ago, ranging across many places in north London – albeit not actually Barnet.

Forty-seven NLU3A members attended the AGM, which was chaired by Edmond Cohen. Papers had been circulated in advance, and all proposals were approved unopposed at the meeting. These proposals included:

- membership fees: these will be

held at the current rate of £25 for 2022

- NLU3A will continue to cover venue costs for groups meeting in paid-for venues throughout 2022

- We now have a new constitution, which allows for online members' meetings and proxy voting. The new constitution has been approved by the Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission.

Edmond welcomed two new members to the committee – Michael Lewin and Susan Watt – and expressed his gratitude to all the committee members for the work they do. Two people were awarded honorary life membership of NLU3A: web editor Mike Christie and membership secretary Ruth Silver. Many thanks to both for all their hard work.

In the members' open forum, the main topic of discussion was

how NLU3A communicates with members who don't have computers and online access. Ruth Silver explained that very few members do not have email, and paper documents are sent to those who notify her that they need them. Some members said they had not received their documents; this has been followed up with the people concerned.

Finally, Edmond explained that unfortunately the festive lunch would not take place this year, as some people – including the catering manager – are still, quite reasonably, rather uncertain about meeting up in large numbers. So the next scheduled event would be the monthly meeting in January 2022, again in a well-ventilated and possibly chilly St Paul's.

Dress code: coats, hats, scarves... ☺

Where I hang my hat: Fascinating Finchley

John Dugdale presents a bit of local Finchley history, right on his doorstep and within 10 minutes' walk of Finchley Central tube station (Photos ©John Dugdale)



From the tube heading towards Hendon Lane and on our right is a modern building, Winston House, and a pub called The King of Prussia. It's had various names over the years including Ye Olde King of Prussia and the Dignity. It may not look that interesting but in the mid 1800s Henry (Inky) Stephens and Charles Dickens used to meet there. Dickens is known to have lived

in Finchley at Fallow Court/ Cobley Farm in 1843, when he was writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*. A commemorative plaque can be found on a house in Queens Avenue to mark the site. In 1844 the Stephens family moved to Finchley, to Grove House in Ballards Lane. Then in 1874 Inky Stephens purchased and moved to what was once known as Avenue House but which has been re-christened Stephens House and Gardens. In 1887 Stephens was elected MP for Hornsey, which at that time included Finchley.

Moving on from the pub, we continue down Ballards Lane. On our right we see what is now Barnet Civil and Family Courts Centre. The Courts Centre was built on the old site of St Mary's School, which relocated to Dollis Park in 1990. The original St Mary's School was built in 1813 as a national school. It had 65 pupils – 35 boys and 30 girls. The school was expanded and rebuilt over the years with an infants' school being added in 1905. By 1975 there were 415 pupils on the roll, but it's worth noting the average attendance at the school in 1922 was 463. The school in Dollis Park now has between 450 and 500 pupils.

From pubs, schools and court houses we discover dairies. As we continue down Hendon Lane we come to the junction with Victoria Avenue. Stand back, take note of the corner shop and look up. On the turret one sees the sign for the Manor Farm Dairy.

The dairy, founded in 1875, amalgamated with United Dairies in the 1920s and in 1959 went on to merge and form Unigate. The Manor Farm survived until 1932. Finchley has had several other local dairies such as the Jersey Farm Dairies and the Dollis Park Dairy Co. Was Finchley a hotbed of dairy farming? In 1884 College Farm, run by Express Dairies, was the distributor of the first-ever bottled milk.

This is not the end of our walk down Hendon Lane: for the next Northern Line I will tell you a bit about a plague pit, the oldest church in Finchley, another local school and two of its interesting 'old boys' and finally a Georgian house. ☺



Those we have lost

We pay tribute to those of our friends who died in late 2020 and in 2021. We are sorry if we have missed anyone; this is the information we have.

Sally Billot

Joan Booth

Janice Boughton

Marjorie Briscoe

Ken Carter

Malcolm Cass

Mal Clark

Margaret Davies

Mary Fraser

Annie Hopewell

Valeria Mosini

Evelyn Shepherd

Alan Toms

Crimewatch

Waiting at a bus stop for the elusive (lesser-spotted) 143, you whisk out your mobile to see when it might arrive. On a street corner the phone rings, so naturally you take it out and answer it. Suddenly a scooter zooms by; a hand reaches out, and presto! No more phone.

This sort of crime is common and its victims are those who are unaware of their surroundings. So don't take your phone out in public places, or if you must, make sure you're away from passing two-wheeled traffic, whether on the road or on the pavement. Stay vigilant; stay safe. ☹️

It's the pandemic, you know...

Francis Beckett experiences an increase in life's little frustrations

In the holiday flat my wife and I rented in Valencia, we found only one set of keys. We asked for a second set. They said they used to give people two sets. But then came the pandemic, so they have been forced to reduce it to one. To keep us safe, apparently.

Cuts designed to keep us safe are often, by a strange coincidence, cuts that make life easier and cheaper for companies and government departments.

All the mean little economies they have wanted to make for years, they are now rushing through, using the pandemic as a pretext.

A few years ago, my hearing declined badly and my GP sent me to the Ear Nose and Throat Hospital in Grays Inn Road, where they tested me and gave me a hearing aid. There was a clinic

I could turn up to whenever I needed it, three mornings a week, where they adjusted my hearing aid according to my hearing tests, and dealt with any problems I had about using it.

I thought it was wonderful service, and told one of the doctors so. She asked me to write to the chief executive saying so. She said they were under continual threat of closure. Their bosses fancied saving the money.

I had another hearing test last October, and my hearing aid needs adjustment. I asked where the clinic is now held, but I think I already knew the answer from the doctor's harassed, frustrated expression.

The clinic has been closed, of course. It's the pandemic, you know.

They gave me a number to

ring. I got a recorded message saying no one was available, and I should send my hearing aid in.

All those kind, skilful, knowledgeable folk who used to help me and many others – their jobs have gone.

After several telephone calls, I was given an appointment to see someone. In a month's time.

Try telephoning the taxman. Last time I did it, I spent half an hour listening to a recorded message, constantly repeated, about how they were keeping me safe from Covid, and then they cut me off.

Try staying in a hotel. Ibis is just one of the hotel chains where they have stopped cleaning your room and making your bed. To keep you safe.

Once you've grasped the trick, you'll notice everyone's at it. ☹️

Spring term monthly meetings

Meetings start at 10.30am at St Paul's Church, 50 Long Lane, Finchley N3 2PU. However, the venue is subject to change in line with prevailing circumstances. Refreshments are served from 10am. You must book beforehand at meetings@nlu3a.org.uk

10 January

The Wallace Collection



With an outstanding collection of 5,500 works of art including paintings, sculpture, furniture, armour and porcelain, there is something for everyone at the Wallace Collection. Art historian Julie Barlow will explore both the most famous highlights and some of the lesser-known treasures to tell the story of this wonderful collection and the family behind it. Julie has over 20 years' experience working as a lecturer and museum educator at the National Portrait Gallery, the Wallace Collection and the National Gallery. She is also an art history tutor at City Lit.

14 February

Jack the Ripper

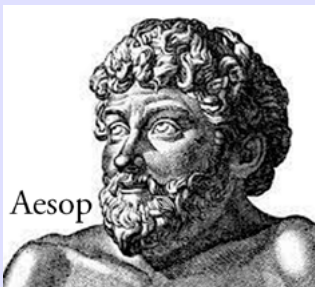
Historian, presenter and author Paul Robbins returns to the East End of his childhood to talk about history's greatest 'criminal who done it'. He will paint a vivid and moving picture of the East End of London in the late summer and autumn of 1888 as he reviews the crimes and main suspects and offers his own suggestion as to the identity of the Whitechapel murderer aka Jack the Ripper.

With over 40 years of experience in public speaking, Paul has many personal recommendations from delighted groups whom he has entertained with his unique style of presentation.



14 March

Fables: from Aesop to Orwell. (We end with Animal Farm.)



Nowadays we tend to dismiss fables – short moral tales peopled by animals – as children's stories. In fact, they are possibly some of the oldest pieces of literature in the world, full of life and humour and wit, and a tonic for us all. Human nature never seems to change – or learn!

Isabel Raphael, the speaker, started reading at the age of three, and has never stopped. Her aim in life has always been to pass on the glories of books – as a school teacher since 1960, a headmistress of Channing School (1984–98) and now with adult groups.

Answers to Bake-off quiz on page 7 1) Parkin 2) Jammie dodgers
3) Eccles cake 4) Quiche Lorraine 5) Eclair 6) Vanilla slices 7) Hot cross buns 8) Battenburg 9) Mince pie 10) Victoria sponge 11) Manchester tart 12) Doughnut 13) Key lime pie 14) Viennese whirl 15) Petits fours 16) Yule log 17) Devil's fruit cake 18) Cream horns 19) Fairy cake 20) Chelsea bun 21) Pavlova 22) Rum baba 23) Brownie 24) Madeira

Term dates

Spring	3 January	1 April
Summer	18 April	22 July