

the northern line

the magazine of north london U3A issue 80 September 2022

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Editorial

When people are together for a while, they are bound to disagree at some stage. This is more likely the longer they interact.

Consider U3A groups, for example, where several people meet regularly, with varying ideas about how things should be run. We don't usually come to blows, but at times there can be harsh words and ill feelings.

It helps to remember that in the U3A there are no bosses. There are administrators facilitating groups, or members with skill or expertise in some area – technology, craftwork, a game or sport – sharing this with others. Group coordinators (and committee members) are

not superior; they simply help groups and our U3A to run smoothly; and when they have had enough, they pass the role on. Nobody should commandeer or willingly upset another. And everyone has the right to voice an opinion. All deserve respect; most members give and get it.

End of sermon. In this issue we explore the need for younger members of U3A. We visit Life, Art and Politics, a group that has existed since 2010. And Keith Richards pays tribute to Margaret Kennedy, the third chair of NLU3A, who died earlier this year.

Happy reading!



Photo © Ali Shahrari

LENI GREEN
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Away days are back!

Friday 14 October, Crick Institute for guided tour of their 'Outwitting Cancer' exhibition.

Friday 4 November, Royal Academy of Music.

For more details, contact Frank Kelsall
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The front and back cover photos were taken by Barry Davies on the concourse at King's Cross. They pick up on one of the topics discussed by the Life, Art and Politics group – the colour purple through the ages. See page 6.

As I see it

U3A turns 40 this year, so let the government give us a present: a minister for older people, says **Patricia Isaacs**



long overdue, despite her frequent campaigning for it, and that office would undoubtedly receive a serious amount of assistance from U3A, never slow in coming forward with new ideas in abundance. The appointment of such a minister would be a wonderful way to celebrate our 40th birthday, but being realistic, we can only hope that it will happen in time for our 50th.

*A minister
for older
people is long
overdue*

have many years left, but during those years we will live as full a life as possible, making the most of each day. And by the way, the days do not have to be constantly out-and-about active; quietly enjoying home life, coffee with a friend or two, are activities in themselves.

I am well over twice the age of U3A at 40 but I'm still learning, still finding new pleasures, still making new friends as well as cherishing the

beautiful friendships that have built up during my membership. Forty years of U3A have left their unique mark on me and on many, many others. Happy birthday to all of us!

PATRICIA ISAACS IS A PAST
CHAIR OF NLU3A

Writing in Third Age Matters, Esther Rantzen tells us of the very many suggestions she has received from U3A members on the attitude of government – and of the public – regarding ageism, and also of the pleasures and marvellously positive aspects to be found in growing older. A minister for older people is

U3As around the country have used collective imaginations and exuberant enthusiasm to make creative plans for the birthday celebrations. I don't suppose there is any other organisation that can boast of a similar response to sharing party ideas, certainly not one for those of us 'of a certain age', put aside as being past our sell-by date. Some of us may not

Not getting any younger

As U3A gets older, so do its members. **Susan Watt** reports

The greatest threat to the U3A movement is the lack of younger members. This was the opening statement at an online meeting for London U3As held on 9 May, where we shared experiences and ideas on how to entice more newly retired people to join their local U3A.

Apparently the average age of U3A members nationally has been steadily increasing for several

decades, and it will soon be 80 if the trend continues. Of course it's wonderful that we have so many older members and that we appear to be catering successfully for this important age group. But the reality is that, like every organisation, we need to keep recruiting younger people for a fresh input of talent and energy.

Many of those attending the workshop felt that the messages

and materials from the U3A office are off-putting for younger potential members, and many London U3As avoid using these altogether. But there was less consensus on whether to use the word 'retired' in promotional materials: some U3As avoided this completely, while others found it useful: 'From retired to inspired' was one creative slogan!

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Having a diversity of interest groups is obviously important in attracting new members of any age, so encouraging all members to start new groups was a key strategy for many U3As. Another successful strategy is to research other forums through which your U3A can be promoted: it's a good idea to cast out as many lines as possible and see what comes in. But the U3As that were most

successful in reaching those aged 50–65 agreed that using social media – especially Facebook – was a crucial element in their strategy:

The reality is that, like every organisation, we need to keep recruiting younger people for a fresh input of talent and energy.

it's the main way to get beyond personal recommendations. NLU3A will be taking note – and the committee would love to hear from anyone with social media experience who might be interested in helping us, or just giving us your thoughts. Please do get in touch: you can email us at info@nlu3a.org.uk

SUSAN WATT IS NLU3A'S WEBSITE AND PUBLICATIONS EDITOR

Let's talk about it

'The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together...'

Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends Well, Act Four, Scene Three

...and **Life, Art and Politics**, one of our most popular discussion groups, deals with it all. **Barbara Kushner** describes how it works.



Life, Art and Politics (LAP) has always been immensely popular. The first group started before 2010 and quickly became fully subscribed. A second, parallel group was inaugurated by Patricia Isaacs in 2010, and it, too, filled up almost immediately. By 2014 there were six such groups!

Our members are lively and well informed, with many different views and interests. We cover a wide variety of topics, suggested and presented by members. The atmosphere is companionable and fun! Friendships develop and continue, and members are always supportive of one another.

One session in particular remains in many of our memories. The son of one of our members, a personal trainer, came along in the early days to talk about maintaining good health as we age. And, one sunny day, in the communal garden immediately below Patricia's flat, he held an exercise session.

Clinging onto balcony walls and garden chairs, women of 65 plus tried to stay on their feet, bending, stretching and groaning – and laughing, too, at our valiant attempts. Neighbours were out on their balconies, baffled and intrigued at the odd, unusual sight, no doubt trying to contain their own laughter.

I joined LAP2 a couple of years after Patricia started it, and we met in her home in Highgate. I took over running it in 2015, together with Myra Bloch, after Patricia became chair of NLU3A and had ‘enough on her hands’.

It continued meeting

fortnightly in my house, alternating with the Blochs’ home, both in Finchley. We met every other Wednesday until the pandemic struck, when we started meeting weekly on Zoom. It has been a great boon for me, and, I think, all the other members, to have this weekly contact at a time when many of us felt very lost. It worked well, even though we were relating just to each others’ heads and shoulders!

More recently we have also started meeting in person at a hall in Finchley Central. It’s great to be able to meet face to face – the dynamic is different, yet

both work well. So far we have continued with both Zoom and face-to-face meetings, alternately.

We are a group of 12, usually with about 10 people at any one meeting. We talk about anything and everything. Sometimes one person presents a paper on a topic of their choice. At other times we all try to bring a topic to introduce to the group – for example, an item from a newspaper, a film, a tv or a radio programme which we have seen or heard. Discussions are always lively, and I know that I, for one, have learnt a lot.

What do they talk about in Life, Art and Politics?

Here’s a sample of recent topics



Gun control in the US, **knife control** in the UK: how to discourage violence

census 2021

Census 2021: how should Jewish identity be recorded – as ethnicity or religion?



Cancel culture: is this the world gone mad, or just liberal democracy in action?

‘Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous.’

attributed to Albert Einstein

Coincidences: the statistical probabilities of these occurring – if they exist!

Trans people: at what age, and under what circumstances, should young people be permitted to start taking hormone treatment in order to change sex?



The future of the monarchy: how changes there or elsewhere could potentially help hold governments to account



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Photos © Leni Green

The colour purple through the ages: its origins, history, associations etc. A motif taken up on the cover

National identity cards: should we have them and if so, why?

Postman's Park: a peaceful park in the City of London which contains the Watts Memorial to Self-Sacrifice: 54 plaques commemorate 62 adults and children aged 8 to 61 who lost their lives trying to save someone else

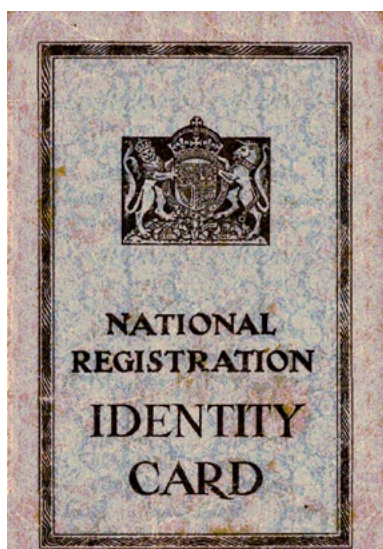


Photo © Leni Green

Plus lots of brief presentations and discussions about books, films, exhibitions, opera – anything members have enjoyed or found interesting.

‘But what’s most delightful,’ says group member **Susan Watt**, ‘is that, despite our mix of *Telegraph* and *Guardian* readers (among others), we truly always learn from each other. If only “Life” were really like that!’

Refugees, then and now

Michael Johns describes a poignant piece of Jewish history shared by **Ruth Silver** at a Sideways Look at History meeting

The two Sideways Look at History groups work by taking a period of time and researching and presenting papers about what happened in that era anywhere in the world. Sideways 1 is currently looking at the period 1850–1914, and Ruth Silver recently presented a paper on Jewish emigration from what is now Belarus and Ukraine, based around the experiences of her family.

The stories of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty are all too familiar to us today, and we had a lively discussion of the similarities and differences between fleeing pogroms and economic restrictions around 1900, Nazi persecution and obliteration in the 1940s and war today.

Sometimes nothing seems to change, and persecution and mass murder of people who are different from their neighbours is a recurrent pattern of our studies of world

The stories of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty are all too familiar to us today.

history. And as always, the welcome they found in their new homes was ambiguous – Ruth's grandfather was sent back to Russia as an enemy alien during

the First World War and got caught up in the White Russian war against the communists before he could return.

But there were also touches of hope in the new lives that Ruth's grandparents established in London. Her father, having trained as an etcher, became a

brilliant commercial artist and Ruth shared with us this very moving drawing (above) which he made of refugees in the 1940s. Their dignity shines through and echoes down to the stories of Ukrainian refugees today.



NLU3A wants YOU

Henrietta Cohen sings the praises of volunteering

A few months after joining NLU3A, I was invited by Patricia Isaacs, the then chair, to meet a few people over lunch at her flat. By the end of the meal I found I had volunteered to join the groups organiser (GO) team!

Although I didn't really know

what this meant, I knew I would be working with enthusiastic, friendly people who would always be there to help me. Sue Teller took over the role of groups organiser from Patricia on her promotion to chair; we became a team of three, and I gradually learnt the ropes and began to



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enjoy it. By the time Sue retired from the post, she had passed on to me her wide knowledge of all our groups, how to use the members' database (called 'Beacon'), and the increasingly relevant website.

As GO my job is to help the coordinators to run their groups in the best way possible, and to do this I have the excellent assistance of two other volunteers

(Ruth Newman and Candiss Waldram), who between them organise the bookings of our external venues, liaising with our treasurer (Roy Seger) to keep him in the loop.

The last part of my GO role is as a member of the committee of nine, which I very much enjoy. We have stimulating discussions and feel we usually reach the right decisions by working through any disagreements. At the end

of our meetings I generally feel that our time has been well spent, and I for one look forward to our monthly get-togethers.

I can honestly say that my experience of volunteering with NLU3A has been stimulating, challenging and thoroughly rewarding, and I do urge everyone to give it a try, at whatever level suits you; you are likely to be very surprised – in a good way!

Margaret Kennedy (1930–2022):

an appreciation. By Keith Richards



Photo © Barry Davies

in her lovely, book-lined house in Highgate, where she had lived with her husband, Dr Stephen Kennedy, since their marriage in the 1960s.

She had had – and continued to have – a rich and varied life. Trained as an actor, she appeared all over the UK in the glory days of repertory theatre. Recalling a play, she was given to saying: 'I think I was the lead' with a deprecating smile. These experiences played out in the many literary groups in NLU3A. She was a superb reader.

In a *Ulysses* group she brought challenging passages to vibrant life. I recall a Shakespeare class in which participants spoke about passages they had selected. Margaret avoided the well-known plays and went for *Venus and Adonis* to the benefit of all; the final work which we shared was a detailed study of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. She was, of course,

active in many other groups, which other members will recall with pleasure.

When she ended her stage work, Margaret decided to train as a teacher: initially at Trent Park and later gaining a degree in English which led to distinguished contributions in schools and further education colleges. She developed an immediate understanding of the 'U3A way' – peer-to-peer learning – when she became one of our earliest members. Not always easy for 'teachers'!

She was a frequent opera- and theatre-goer and a great traveller: she was planning a trip to the Hebrides this year. She looked ageing in the face and then seemed to ignore it. She was a lovely and inspiring person who lived independently until her death.

After the death of her husband, another tragedy struck in 2014 when her daughter, Sue, died after a long illness. She is survived by her son, Nick, and his and Sue's families. I am so grateful to him for sending me some information about her early life.

Margaret, who was the third chair of North London U3A, died earlier this year. Her stewardship was a notable one and included the celebration of our tenth year. She organised a massive day of group meetings in one venue open to everyone to 'drop in'. Committee meetings were held

Scamwatch

A spike in Omicron variant cases has led to scammers sending out text messages asking you to order a test. The text includes a link that could download adware or spyware onto your device.

So if you receive a text message purporting to be from the 'Health Department UK' website, delete it immediately.

All official Covid guidance can be found on the government (gov.uk) and NHS (NHS.uk) websites.

Do NOT do this:

We've been notified you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 (Omicron). Please order a mandatory test via: [health-department-uk.com](https://www.health-department-uk.com)

Looking forward

Camden Adult Learning is offering five free Zoom workshops in partnership with the **British Museum** in October and early November. All take place from 11am to 12.30pm and use images and spoken information to introduce, explore and discuss the topics. They are open to all adult learners across the 33 London boroughs.

Monday 3 October

The British Museum in the 20th century

The impact of the two world wars on the museum and its collection, the changes made to museum spaces and displays, and the famous 1972 Tutankhamun exhibition.

Monday 10 October

Vindolanda tablets: a snapshot of life in Roman Britain

Learn about how these documents from the first decades of the Roman occupation of Britain reveal details about garrison life on the northern frontier of this new imperial province.

Monday 17 October

Dogs at the British Museum (plus one cat)

Discover how the collection of the British Museum gives us an insight into the long-standing relationship between humans and dogs around the world. Learn about the different roles taken on by dogs through the ages and meet some historic dog owners and their pets.

Monday 31 October

Queen consorts at the late medieval and early modern royal courts

The lives and times of the queens who ruled in late medieval and early modern times, including Elizabeth Woodville, Anne Neville, Elizabeth of York and Katherine of Aragon.

Monday 7 November

Unexpected item in the bagging area: Egyptian obelisks in imperial Rome

The significance of obelisks in Egyptian religion, the Roman conquest of Egypt and how the citizens of Rome might have viewed the latest architectural arrivals.

To enrol on any of them, click on this link:

www.webenrol.com/camden/?page=list&catID=5&

If you have an enquiries about the workshops or the enrolment process please email **Malcolm Hay** at Malcom.Hay@camden.gov.uk

The saint, the school and the war memorial

Christine Stammers explores the link between St Aloysius and north London

Riding on the bus beneath the bridge on Archway Road, I often idly wondered why the lads from St Aloysius' College always scampered up and down the left-hand staircase when I knew their school was on the right-hand side, but when I got up onto the bridge to look at the memorial, I decided they had deemed it safer to cross 'Suicide Bridge' than the Archway Road!

The St Aloysius War Memorial is on Hornsey Lane, close to the school, neatly tucked into the hedge behind a railing and looking like a European wayside shrine or calvary.

It is a Carrara marble relief, with a base and flanking side panels. A relief of the crucifixion is set between Corinthian colonnettes and within a cross-topped gable. The stepped, moulded base includes the inscription below, in incised lettering.

TO THE SACRED AND LOVING MEMORY OF THE ALOYSIANS WHO
GAVE THEIR LIVES TO THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR,
1914-1918,
AT SEA, ON LAND AND IN THE AIR.
DUTY WELL DONE; REST WELL WON.
REMEMBER THEM IN YOUR THOUGHTS.
REMEMBER THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS.

Flanking panels on the left list the First World War casualties and on the right, those of the Second. It is a Grade II Listed Building, number 1271513, listed on 22 May 2001. The mason and/or designer is unknown

The Aloysians are pupils of St Aloysius' College in Islington,

one of many across the country dedicated to the saint. Aloysius was born on 9 March 1568 after being baptized in the womb as his life was in danger. He was the oldest son of a wealthy Italian aristocrat, and his first words were reported as being 'Mary and Joseph'.

His father wanted him to join the military but apparently at the age of eight he developed a lifelong kidney disease, which meant he was not robust, so he began to read widely about the saints and decided on a religious life. Aged nine he took a vow of perpetual virginity and kept his eyes persistently downcast in the presence of women.

When he was 18 he gave up his enormous inheritance to his brother and persuaded his father to let him join the Jesuits. A year before he died the Archangel

Gabriel told him in a vision that he would be dead within a twelvemonth. Notwithstanding this vision, he looked after plague victims during the outbreak of 1590 in Rome, bringing them 'consolation and comfort'. Sadly he caught the disease, received the last rites and died at the age



Photo © IWM (WMR-12056)

of 23. The last word he spoke was 'Jesus'.

In 1879 the Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy opened a school on the site in Hornsey Lane and named it after the Italian saint. In 1961 the De La Salle Brothers took over the school at the request of the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Heenan.

In 1971 it became a voluntary aided comprehensive, under the Archdiocese of Westminster. In 1990 the London borough of Islington took over, and in 1996 the De La Salle Brothers' connection ceased.

I tried to find information about some of the dead commemorated here, but the name and initials are not sufficient for the websites to identify any single person, even one named McClumpha R.C.

I also thought about their nationalities; the majority have English names, followed by Irish ones, but there is a sprinkling of Dutch, French, German, Czech, Romanian, Hindi and Norwegian appellations.

Important dates

The **autumn term** begins on 5 September and runs until 16 December.

The **Jewish holidays**, which may affect your group if you meet in a synagogue, are:

New Year (Rosh Hashanah): Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 September

Yom Kippur: Wednesday 5 October

Sukkot: Monday 10 – Sunday 16 October

Simchat Torah: Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 October

Open Day

Monday 19 September in the morning (exact time to be established) at St Margaret's United Reformed Church, Victoria Avenue, N3 1BD.

Autumn term monthly meetings

Please note that the venue for monthly meetings has changed to St Margaret's Church, as above. Doors will open at 10am, when refreshments will be served. Meetings start at 10.45am.

12 September

Ernest Shackleton, Antarctic hero



Shackleton is famous for escaping, with all his crew, from the icy grip of the Weddell Sea during his momentous expedition of 1914–1916, and for his incredible 800-mile sail from Elephant Island to South Georgia. In addition, in 1909 he got to within 100 miles of the South Pole, the first

expedition to get so far on the Antarctic plateau. He lived up to his family motto, 'By endurance we conquer'.

The speaker, Isobel Williams, who has written biographies of several Antarctic heroes, has always admired Shackleton and wants to share her enthusiasm with us.

10 October

The tidal Thames: its folklore and traditions

This talk, by Mark Lewis, explores the rich tradition of lore and legend in the tidal reaches of London's river, including pagan gods, riverside taverns, ghosts, ceremonials, frost fairs and tales of smuggling and pirates.

Lewis, a freelance artist, designer-silversmith and retired university lecturer, has published a book on folklore and popular customs of the church.



The talk will be followed by NLU3A's annual general meeting (AGM).

