



Dorking & District
University of the Third Age

newsletter



Number 76

December 2013

Inside: Articles on sleep, the problem of free will and wind power

Poems – Reports – Humour

Inset: **What's On? – Your guide to forthcoming events and activities**



Above and right Images captured at the Watts Mortuary Chapel, near Watts Gallery, visited by the Art Appreciation Group this autumn (photos by Rosemary Hobbs)



Below Some of the Days Out party approaching the mansion at Bletchley Park in inclement weather during mid-October (photo by Laurie von Weber)



Cover picture The Walking Group in Betchworth last September (photo by Michael Blayney)

Editorial

I'm delighted to say that Michael Docker, who joined the Dorking U3A just over two years ago, has now joined the editorial team as Sub-Editor. Michael is highly experienced in this work, having at one time been Deputy Editor of the *Dorking Advertiser* and latterly responsible for the production of a trade magazine.

Michael also has experience in managing websites, and has agreed to be our webmaster. You will notice improvements! The website is updated at least four times a year, usually in the same month the *Newsletter* is distributed.

As always, we all owe a debt to our many contributors, without whom our newsletter would not exist in its present form. In this edition, 21 members have contributed reports, articles, poems and photographs. My warm thanks to you all.

My thanks also to Joy Parry and Carole Brough Fuller, who employ their acumen as diligent proof-readers, and to Elizabeth Holmes, ever efficiency itself, ensuring with her team of distributors that all members receive the *Newsletter*.

By the way, on the subject of U3A management, have you caught up with the latest executive jargon that is apparently common in workplaces nowadays? It's quite intriguing, with terms like 'backfill', 'drill down' and 'thought shower', and I am wondering whether our officers should 'move forward', as they say, and 'run up the flagpole' the language of modern day office-speak. In the 'Diversions & Delights' section, you can get a taste of what this might mean in practice for the U3A.

Have a great Christmas – and resolve in the New Year not to use the excuse that you have 'zero cycles'!

Jim Docking



From the Chair

The 2013 National Annual General Meeting and Conference of the U3A took place in Nottingham in September. Julie Mellows and I were your delegates, and our experience reinforced my already existing belief that it is extremely important for local U3As to be represented at such gatherings. The most valuable element is the interaction with other delegates and gathering information from them about how their U3As function, particularly picking up tips on how to solve problems and introduce new ideas. Neither Julie nor I joined the group entitled 'Get more fun out of your ukulele', but we did come away with many other ideas and further information about the national structure of our umbrella organisation, the Third Age Trust.



Moreover, there were impressive presentations from eminent speakers on the subjects of 'Body clocks, light and time' (more about this on pages 6-7), 'Women of the RNLI' and 'The Modern House of Commons'. The last was set out very clearly – and entertainingly, with many imitations of members of Parliament – by the Rt Hon John Bercow.

Rather than just giving a rather dry report on all the events, I want to set out here some of the ways in which I believe we could apply what we learned in Nottingham to the activities of Dorking and District U3A. This means that I am asking you to interact with us, the Committee and myself, in trying to keep our U3A alive and in introducing new ways of working together. First, we invite those of you who would like to know how we manage things to sit in on some Committee Meetings. There you will learn, among other things, that we are looking for someone to assist the Treasurer with certain tasks and also for someone with an interest in publicity to shine some light on this unexplored path. We also wish to set up a group of members who feel they would like to contribute something to our U3A but who are not sure what they might do, particularly those who feel they do not have the confidence to undertake a 'big' job. There are many 'little' jobs that keep everything running smoothly.

It is recognised by many U3As that fewer men join than women. It would therefore be valuable to know what interest groups men would look for. For example, should we try to create an Aviation group? What other ideas might you have? Would men play the ukulele? Well, George Formby did, and so apparently does the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. Many months ago we

introduced cards at New Members' Coffee Mornings on which new interest groups could be requested. This resulted in the setting up of several new groups once enough names had been added to the cards. The cards are now being put out at Monthly Meetings (where there is also a Suggestion Box to allow you to express other comments and requests).

A recent set-back in one of our groups has forced me to recognise that I must again set out the main guiding principle of the U3A movement – and that is **self-help**. This was expressed by one of our founding members as 'Those who teach shall also learn, and those who learn shall also teach.' Where we are fortunate enough to have a knowledgeable teacher for a subject or interest, it is too easy for members of a group to allow 'teaching' to take place. However, it is just as valuable – and, as demonstrated in some of our groups, sometimes even more so – if we teach ourselves, or rather explore together in order to discover and learn. A willingness to study something, learn something, explore something, all helping each other and all contributing to the discovery process, is the essence of this gathering together in our own 'University' (which just happens to be in the third age of our lives, when we are no longer fully employed either as wage-earners or as family mainstays, or even both).

Telephone me, send an e-mail to our D&D U3A address, talk to a member of the Committee or a group leader! Talk to us! As some of our sportsmen/women exhort their supporters, 'Come On!'

Doreen Raine



The Singing for Pleasure Group is performing carols at Denbies on Wednesday 11 December from noon to 12.45pm. Please come and support your fellow members!

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to each of the new members, listed below, who have joined since the last issue went to press. We now have 548 members.

Mrs Margaret Avasia

Mrs Ruth Bergman

Mrs Belinda Burchell

Mrs Brenda Charlton

Mrs Jan Cunningham

Mrs Gerry Dibsdall

Mr Philip Dibsdall

Mr David Draper

Mrs Sheila Dyer

Mrs Annie Erratt

Mrs Elizabeth Hall

Mr Anthony Hall

Mrs Vera Hatley

Mrs Nicola Johnston

Mr Michael Kendrick

Mrs Christine Knight

Mr Peter Lambeth

Mr John Lawrence

Mrs Christine Lawrence

Mrs Barbara Lawry

Mrs Janet Leitch

Mrs Mary Lindon

Mrs Catherine Maclachan

Mr Roger Manning

Mrs Irene Melrose

Mrs Ann Newlands

Ms Judy Perry

Mrs Wendy Phelps

Mr Philip Price

Mrs Sheila Salter

Mrs Evelyn Stafford

Mr Paul Street

Mr Norman Waite

Mrs Valerie Waite

Mr Clifford Wanford

Mrs Lena Wanford

Mrs Brenda Wynne

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Group News

Art Appreciation

There was obviously a need for another group devoted to art as the new Art Appreciation Group has been well supported with enthusiastic members. We are still feeling our way and canvassing opinions, and would welcome any suggestions for further meetings.

We have now moved permanently to Canterbury Court in Station Road, which is comfortable and convenient for most people. We decided to choose one or two artists (or sculptors) each month with accompanying DVDs and then a general discussion. Members are encouraged to bring in any relevant books they may have. In November, it was Michelangelo who, of course, was a sculptor, painter and architect. Previously, we had an excellent talk by Bill Hill on African Art, and we have had a trip to the Watts



Gallery [pictures on inside cover]. We hope to have a further outing in the spring.

There is no meeting in December, but January will be on Klimt and Kokoshka to tie in with the exhibition currently showing at the National Gallery; and February, as a complete contrast, will be Dürer and Holbein. We are trying to cover a wide range of members' interests.

Jenny Ford [Enquiries to the Group Leader, Pat Lucas, 01306 711653]

Myths

After a period of studying Norse myths, we are about to dabble in North American Indian and Eskimo material. For the future, interest has been expressed in the Aborigines, so we are seeking books with Aboriginal stories. If any U3A members have them we would love to borrow them. (Don't suggest we look on Amazon! I am just buying one of theirs.) We have one vacancy.

Jill Burberry (01306 880653)



Philosophy

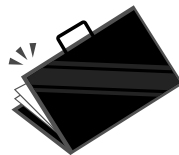
We have begun to explore aspects of Continental philosophy, starting with Spinoza. We meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm in members' homes. As space is limited, we now have a waiting list.

Marjorie Hudson (01306 888281)



Portfolio Management Group

This proposed new group, which stems from a Surrey University evening class many years ago, has space for new members. Its purpose is to discuss a range of topics possibly affecting capital investment and also ways of reducing risk. If you are interested, you can obtain details from Peter at lambethpj@macdream.net or by telephone on 01306 730494.



Reading for Pleasure

It is a truth universally acknowledged... that even devotees of Jane Austen eventually grow old, become ill and even die. Alas, our group has lost four members in the past year, and we would gladly welcome new members to join us.

In recent months we have read books from Palestine, the American South, France and Nigeria, as well as history, biography, humour, philosophy and poetry. We enjoy the challenge of tackling books we would otherwise not read. During the summer we went to Guildford Cathedral to hear Sally Vickers speak on her latest book, and visited the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre for a matinée performance of *Mansfield Park* (Jane again). We usually join up with another group for our Christmas party.

New people, new ideas, new friends – Welcome!

Joyce Kingsley-Jones (01306 885789)



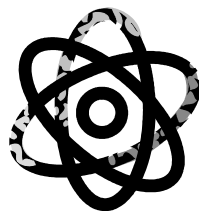
Science, Technology and Society

Our group is well attended and enthusiastic. The topics we have chosen to examine have included: an explanation of Einstein's theories; microchips (their development and their use in so many tools we now take for granted in day-to-day activities); the increasing use of robots in manufacturing and the entertainment industry; the geology that is the basis of our present landscapes, mountains and rivers. The last topic was extended into a discussion on the different soils in Mole Valley and how they have shaped the lives and working practices of the people living here in Dorking.

The aim of the group is to open minds with explanations of how the daily application of science has influenced our lives and how it affects the outlook of the next generation in the hope that this will help to keep us in touch with these new technologies and their consequences for good or ill.

New members will be most welcome. Please contact me if this is of interest.

Sheila Green (01306 883038)



Articles

The Significance of Sleep

Doreen Raine recorded some brief notes on a lecture, 'Body Clocks, Light and Time', presented by Professor Russell Foster at the U3A

National Conference last September

We live in a world of 24-hour rhythms in which biological influences interact dynamically with our physiology. For example, our blood pressure is lower and our cognitive processes slower at night. And, surprise, surprise, our alertness is at its worst early in the morning!

Sleep is the most important behaviour we experience. The function of sleep is to allow restoration of cells, the key components of the body. It also allows energy conservation because it reduces energy demands. But there is more to sleep than just a clock. Mood, cognitive processes, mental health, all impinge on our sleeping/awake behaviours, and everything is regulated by the light/dark cycle.

(There then followed some very complicated explanations about brain neurotransmitters, photosensitive retinal ganglion cells, and how light in the



24-hour cycle has an influence even in those who are fully blind.) I began to understand again when I heard Prof Russell say that no-one knows why the elderly have a disrupted sleep pattern! And again when he said that teenagers have a genuinely delayed body clock; this means that when we impose timetables on them they experience reduced sleep.

For me, the most important message in this presentation was that we need *sleep hygiene*. This means that we need a dark, cool bedroom, with no bright lights or other stimuli. We should drink *no caffeinated drinks from lunch onwards*, and in the morning we need increased natural light.

I believe that a fuller account of this presentation will appear in *Third Age Matters*, so no doubt you will find explanations for the parts I struggled with when the national journal drops through your door.

Doreen Raine



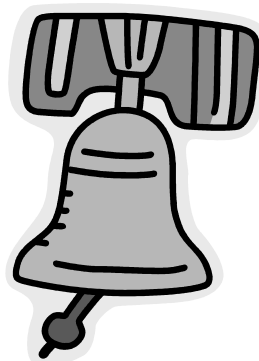
Are We Free Agents?

The Philosophy Group has recently been exploring the age-old problem of free will, as Marjorie Hudson explains

No philosopher has yet solved the problem of free will, or satisfactorily answered the question: does it exist? Our group was no exception. We had mixed responses to our chosen book, *The Nonsense of Free Will* by Richard Oerton, written from a lawyer's perspective.

The debate is far from straightforward. But it could be said that a starting point is the widely held view that we all have choices. It is what we make of those choices that causes complications.

Simon Blackburn puts it this way: we usually regard ourselves as free agents, living our lives within an open space of possibilities. We deliberate which ones to pursue and, having deliberated, we choose. I went to the mountains this year for a holiday, he says, but I could easily have gone to the seaside. We are conscious and proud of our freedom. With freedom comes responsibility, and people who abuse it deserve blame and punishment. But no one deserves punishment for failing to do something if they could not do it; punishment for not going to the moon would be unjust. If we have acted badly in some way, we are sometimes punished. But is this



sense of freedom to act in different ways really an illusion? Could we ever have acted other than as we did?

In her recent book *Free Will: the Basics*, Megan Griffith explores the many and varied aspects of the issue. There is not one but a cluster of problems. We might think it is obvious, she says, that we do have free will. But the worry is that, although I feel as if my choices are up to me, they are already laid out by things that happened before – things that are not up to me at all. This idea that from any point in time the whole future is fixed, that events can only unfold in exactly one way, is called determinism.

Philosophers worry that determinism would rule out the possibility of free will. And that is precisely Oerton's stance. In one reviewer's opinion, 'Oerton explores the free will and determinism debate with remarkable clarity.' We, as a group, did not share this opinion. Rather, we felt that he came down hard on the side of determinism, without giving a fair hearing to the possibility that free will does exist in some form.

Griffith looks at various attempted solutions to the problem and some of the objections to the solutions. She examines moral responsibility and possible alternatives; what is moral responsibility and how does this relate to free will? She covers compatibilist theories: theories that hold that, even if determinism is true, we can still have free will. And she explores incompatibilist theories that hold that, if determinism is true, we cannot possibly have free will. She then follows with some current-day theories that do not fit into these other categories.

She has a chapter on free will and science, scientific theories and experiments that seem to have a bearing on the issue of free will. This includes, she says, everything from causal determinism to quantum physics to animal behaviour and experiments in neuroscience. She discusses these issues and talks about how we might approach them philosophically. She ends her book with some concluding thoughts. And her list of further reading demonstrates that this topic could be studied for a lifetime, and that the possible answers to the problem will be an ongoing cause for debate.

• **References:** Simon Blackburn, *Think*; Megan Griffith, *Free Will: the Basics*; Richard Oerton, *The Nonsense of Free Will*

Marjorie Hudson



Wind Power

As green energy subsidies come under threat, this timely article is based on a presentation by Val Arundel to the Science Group



Wind has been used for energy for many centuries. It was first used to mill grains, pump water, power ships and, from the 1930s, even to generate electricity.

What is wind? It begins with the sun warming the earth, which does not heat uniformly. The resultant changes in air pressure create a movement of air from high pressure to low pressure, which generates wind. The intensity, duration and direction of the wind is influenced by a number of factors: weather, vegetation, surface water and topography.

Today, wind power is generated mainly by turbines. They are large, at around 400ft high, and weigh in at close to 400 tons with three 200ft-long blades. A wind turbine works in the opposite way to a fan: instead of using electricity to make wind, a turbine uses wind to make electricity. The wind turns the blades, which spin the shaft; and this rotational energy is converted into electrical energy by a generator. Once transformed from variable voltage to mains voltage it is transferred to the national grid.

Wind turbines are set up in groups known as wind farms. In the USA these can extend over several hundred square miles.

The UK in general is not ideal for widespread onshore use of wind to generate electricity. Places like Dorking are much too sheltered. To ensure sufficient wind power in the UK we need to select areas either high up or on the coast for onshore sites. However, they are not that popular visually, and any application for a site in the UK comes up



against NIMBYs and stringent planning laws. Wind farms in the UK are, therefore, much smaller. The UK is much better situated for offshore sites. In February 2012 the UK had the largest offshore wind farm in the world, producing 367MW.

There are conflicting views as to how green the use of wind to generate energy is. One megawatt of wind energy equates to 2,600 tons of CO₂. However, it is not a continuous provider, and when wind drops other fuels have to be used to fill the gap, usually fossil fuels, although sometimes wind and solar power can be complementary. The current overall wind capacity in the UK is 5.5GW, although this is expected to increase to 32GW by 2020. Currently, wind power represents less than 10% of the total UK-generated electricity. At present the cost of power from onshore sites compares very well with fossil fuels; however, the cost of production from



offshore sites is three times higher. The big-money investment, however, is in offshore wind: £1.5bn in 2012. This is expected to bring £150m-£600m into the UK economy. It will also result in the gradual reduction in the cost of producing electricity by this method. In the future, other ways of using wind or air movement are being investigated. High-altitude wind power, which is more

consistent, has been imagined as a source of energy since 1833. Recent years have seen significant advances in technologies meant to generate electricity from high-altitude winds.

Canadian engineers plan to build a generator that runs on ‘tornado’ energy: air warmed by waste heat from a power plant is blown at an angle into the bottom of a hollow cylinder to create a controlled tornado effect, which can spin other turbines to create more electricity. By 2025 a 130ft tornado tower could generate 200MW of green electricity from a 500MW power plant. It is also safe, as it is easily switched off.



The Newcomer

My bedroom window looks on farmland
 And on the Ranmore's gentle wooded rise.
 That is why I bought this little flat:
 The peaceful views appealed to me.
 These Surrey hills are lovely, green and lush.
 But I still miss the Pennine Fells:
 Greystone walls and heather.
 I miss the views across the bay
 Of lakeland hills and sunset skies.
 I even miss the seagulls,
 Though I used to curse their cries.
 You think I'm homesick, don't you?
 Well, you're right!
 And so, thank goodness for the U3A:
 New friends, new things to do, new life.
 La Dolce Vita? Well, not quite.
 But now I have a reason to totter out of bed.
 Shall I go to play reading, or just play whist instead?
 Or stretch my mind with Shakespeare, or poetry or bridge?
 There is no time left now to miss the life I led.

P.M.

For Pam

I am the poet laureate,
Of the Dorking and District branch of the University of the
Third Age Poetry Unlimited group.

And from this exalted state,
It is incumbent to relate
What happens on a Monday,
With our dear leader, Pam.
Some ladies and a man (or two)
Assemble at some fine venue.
They all are lovers of the muse
And come along with their own views
About the poet of the day.
Milton, Lear or who can say;
Poor young Plath or lofty Keats,
Shakespeare, Eliot or Yeats.

Sometimes a subject, or emotion,
Memory, love or travels chosen.
Nonsense, humour, light or fire,
To see which poet can aspire
To put the subject best in verse.

Some forms of poems so obscure,
They are known only to a few or
To Google or our select troupe
The Poetry Unlimited Group.
All know sonnets, but villanelle;
How many ells we need to spell.
Haikus, too, are known to us,
We write them now with little fuss.

One must prepare a verse to read.
But 'tis allowed to read instead
A special poem one has writ
To entertain the members' wit.
If the inspiration of the muse
Imbues the poet with the views
Which fit the subject of the day.
And if it's worthy, well it may
Be included in the Collected Works of
The Dorking and District branch of the University of the
Third Age Poetry Unlimited group
One day.

James (Jimmy) Gordon

Monthly Meetings

The People's Vulcan and How We Were Going to Drop a Nuclear Bomb: Jim Barnes, 11 September 2013

Jim Barnes – or, to be more accurate, Squadron Leader Jim Barnes, retired – took us through the history witnessed by many of us from the days in August 1945 when the first nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

These and other serious aspects of our 'nuclear lives', such as the Cuban missile crisis and the ever-increasing threat of the Cold War, were clearly explained by Jim, together with his own life story during several years with 617 Squadron (the Dam Busters).

It was his ability to intersperse much humour that made Jim's talk so interesting and listenable.

At one stage his plane carried a nuclear bomb, but he explained that its release could be authorised only by the Prime Minister, and that even on the aircraft two people – the pilot and one other – had to 'press the button'.

One significant aspect of the Vulcan bomber was not just its ability to carry the bomb but also to fly at a high altitude and to operate from a short take-off. An important consideration at the time of the Falklands War was the short take-off at Ascension Island. There are still two Vulcan bombers in existence, but only one can take off.

Jim did leave us with one unanswered riddle, when he referred to a lady called Carol. We never did learn who she was and how she fitted into his life!

If you are travelling on a Fred Olsen cruise liner, you could see Jim again. He has many other topics to tell you about.

At the time of writing, it has just been announced that 617 Squadron will shortly go to Afghanistan and afterwards be decommissioned – the end of a not-to-be-forgotten era.

Chris Childs



Pigs, Polytunnels and Pick-Your-Own: Gordon Gillett, 9 October 2013

On the last day of the warm weather forecast before the autumnal chill approached it seemed appropriate for us to be gathering in the Christian Centre to listen to the story of a family whose chosen way of life is much governed by the weather.

Farming has ever been a hard way to earn a living, but the challenges facing the modern farmer were outlined clearly to us by Gordon Gillett as he described the lives of the Shinner family, of Priory Farm, South Nutfield.

The family bought the farm in 1957, and for the first 10 years it was a mixed farm. By 1967 things were not going well. They sold off some of their land as they wondered how they could keep the farm going. Their solution was to diversify.

Over the next few years Mr Shinner created a name for himself as a pig breeder. He contacted local schools and invited them to see the animals. He and his wife also decided to plant strawberries on his land, and Priory Farm became known for its pick-your-own strawberries. We are familiar nowadays with the concept of 'pick-your-own' but in the days when the Shinner family started with their PYO strawberries it was a novel idea. In subsequent years they introduced several other crops. Today they even grow pumpkins for Halloween!

As Mr Gillett described the changes wrought on Priory Farm over the 40 years since 1970 one became almost dizzy. He showed us a composite photograph made up of six pictures of the same piece of land taken over the years. In each picture the land use was different... and still the

changes continue. The pigs have long since gone. It seems that pig breeding is incompatible with attracting visitors to your farm, which is a pity as pigs are such lovely animals, but is quite understandable as they are not the most fragrant of creatures.

In 1985 the plant centre opened, hence the 'Polytunnels' in the talk's title. The early 1990s brought another flurry of activity with the opening of the coffee shop, glasshouse and farm shop. The farm shop endeavours to support local businesses by selling their produce: apparently they can even produce cheese wedding cakes!

Nowadays there are special events days, outdoor activities galore, fishing and a discovery walk on site. It is many years since the land sold in 1967 was bought back, and in 2014 more development is planned.

By the end of the talk one was left with a feeling of admiration for the creativity and tenacity of the Shinner family. In spite of the ups and downs of farming life they have made Priory Farm a success.

Mr Gillett gave us a fascinating insight into their story. He generously donated his fee to St Catherine's Hospice, a charity supported by Priory Farm. He also brought some vouchers so that we might enjoy a free cup of tea or coffee on our next visit. A speaker who comes bearing gifts is always welcome.

Jackie Rance



Days Out

Lacock Abbey, 19 September 2013

When we passed through Lacock and entered the gates of its abbey three characters from *Pride and Prejudice* greeted us and we were handed a list of 16 film companies which had used the village as a location. There was no need: we were already entranced! It was not in the least surprising to learn that productions such as *Emma*, *Cranford*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Robin of Sherwood*, *The Woman in Black* and three Harry Potter epics had been filmed there.

Lacock Abbey was founded in 1229 'in a spirit of prayer and thankfulness by a grieving woman in memory of her beloved husband, William Longespée'. Ela, Countess of Salisbury, set it up as an Augustinian nunnery, a home for between 18 and 25 nuns, and had it dedicated to St Mary and St Bernard. The nuns were not permitted to take services so were assigned chaplains to 'care for their souls'. The abbey had a sizeable income from wool, and Ela retired there in 1238. She had private stairs to her room from the cloisters and a peephole through which she could keep an eye on the nuns! The nuns also had a private staircase from the cloisters to their dormitory so they could easily access the church for night services. The chaplain's room had a carved male head above the door.

On entering the beautiful arched medieval cloisters which surround a grass courtyard we were directed to Ela's tomb. It is ornamented with faded strawberry and turquoise carving.



Lacock Village

A conservation photographer was working in the sacristy. He was photographing items which had to be moved for repair so they could be returned to their original position, and fabric, ceilings and pillars were being recorded in situ for later discussion with appropriate craftsmen.

A travelling Jane Austen exhibition had been set up on screens in the chapter house. A bell metal cauldron that had been used in Harry Potter films was also on display. Recently sheared sheep could be seen from the windows amid extensive fields traversed by a river with clumps of trees along its banks. We were told that a side of pork and a sackful of peas had been cooked here for Queen Anne in the 15th century.

The warming house, or parlour (from the French *parler*, to speak, we were told), was heated from 1 November to Good Friday. There was a gallery of paintings in what had been the nuns' refectory.

There were so many rooms, all generously furnished with games for children and kinemascope to whirl, bringing the depicted figures to life. The Blue Room had been a high-class abbey B&B, and another room displayed an ancient gramophone with records and lit-up dance-step footprints on the floor. They brought back a vivid happy memory of my mother who matched her feet to them when we visited Lacock together over 20 years ago.

The abbey was sold to Sir William Sharrington on the dissolution of the monasteries. He converted it into a house in 1539, demolishing the abbey church and adding an octagonal tower. He used the lower chamber as a treasury. It now contains a table supported by cloven-hoofed caryatids. He used the upper room, only accessible across lead on the roof, for entertaining.

In 1750 the abbey was acquired by John Ivory Talbot and renovated by the architect Sanderson Miller in Gothic Revival style. Thus it came into the hands of the 'Father of Photography', William Henry Fox Talbot, and was left by him to Matilda Talbot. Matilda never expected to inherit it, but her generosity and hospitality brought it to life. There was a *Daily Mail* cookery book on a very long oven in the kitchen where she taught cookery and a note that one of her pupils requested soap to wash the potatoes! She wrote a book, *My Life and Lacock Abbey*. Two of the bedrooms had dainty flower wallpaper.

Later we came to the grand Gothic hall. It has a stone-flagged floor, shields with coats of arms on the ceiling, including Talbot and Longespée lions, and a high open fire. Rust-coloured Austrian statues

of relations and allegorical figures, including a scapegoat, are displayed on the walls, and small tables for board games, bridge and refreshments await the guests. Here, William Talbot 'filled responsibly his position as an English country gentleman'.

Finally we gravitated to the Talbot museum, where William's work (1800-1877) is recorded. William was interested in light, botany, chemistry, optics, archaeology, architecture and maths. His interest in Egypt caused him to study cuneiform script, which he could read. He wrote a book called *Legendary Tales*, including *Rosina*, which is set on the shores of Lake Como in 1833 and has similarities to his later account of his initial ideas.

Ancient photographic equipment is on display, including the first surviving example of a photographic negative: a picture of the oriel window in the South Gallery. Antiquarian sculpture is also on display and there is an exhibition of black and white photographs.

William is remembered as the inventor of the negative-positive photographic process. He began by sandwiching a negative silhouette made on light-sensitive paper with another sheet and exposing them to sunlight. He found that by chemically 'fixing' the latent image on the original sheet many prints could be produced from just one negative.



**Fox Talbot, the
father of
photography**

He later announced the discovery of a highly sensitive negative material that cut down exposure time from hours to minutes. He called the new process 'calotype' from the Greek words kalos (beautiful) and typos (impression).

After a walk through the botanical gardens, where we found a long greenhouse with an early heating system bulging with black grapes, we enjoyed a quick lunch in the old stables and then set out for the enchanting village.

Light and space welcomed us in to the village church of St Cyriac. Meanwhile, baking smells wafted out of the Lacock Bakery. There was a shop stocked with locally made hand-crafted woollen items, a farm shop selling yummy ice cream, and just time to visit Lacock Pottery Bed

and Breakfast, where my friend vanished down a steep flight of steps clutching her purse in pursuit of the owner, David McDowell, a descendant of an illegitimate daughter of Winston Churchill. Happily she re-emerged clutching a trophy: a large majolica pottery dish, which David told us was made by the best majolica potter in Europe, Andrew Temple Smith. Pieces of his work on display featured quirky animals on saucers and plates and winding round vases and jugs where their heads forever followed their tails.

And then it was time to go home. I hope this rendition of our fascinating day gives readers a taste of the pleasures and interest on offer.

Jill Burberry

Bletchley Park, 14 October 2013

With their curiosity previously aroused by Ken Kelsey's interesting talk, Dorking U3A members arrived at Bletchley Park, 50 minutes north of London, after a journey of two hours in a large, comfortable Hardings coach. After a welcome cup of tea in the mansion overlooking the lake we were given an introductory talk by our tour guide, John Fielding, one of the many volunteers of the Bletchley Park Trust, about the history and significance of the site.

The park was bought by the British Government in 1938 to house the codebreaking and intelligence activities of the Government Code and Cypher School. It was generally expected that London would be a major target in a future conflict, and a quiet rural location (as it was then), easily accessible from

London, Oxford and Cambridge, was required.

Then we had a guided walk around part of the site. Extensive restoration and building work by English Heritage is in progress. We visited the Polish Memorial and sheltered from the heavy rain in one of the larger huts. After lunch in the drawing room of the Mansion (used as a recreation room during WW2) we could visit other parts of the site independently. Fortunately, the rain had now stopped. There were no restrictions on photography – nothing secret occurs here now!

The museum has some original Enigma machines for encrypting messages, with an audiovisual display showing their use by the German forces. The Enigma codings were changed daily.

Alan Turing, who is represented by an impressive 1.5-ton statue of Welsh slate, was, with Gordon Welchman, one of the pioneers on designing the ‘bombes’, the decoding machines that enabled Enigma messages to be read. The reconstructed ‘bombes’ with their numerous rotors and miles of wiring were demonstrated in running mode by the informative and patient volunteer stewards.

In principle, Enigma and its successors were unbreakable, but poor operational procedures and occasional mistakes by the Germans enabled the British codebreakers, after considerable effort and time, to use ‘cribs’ to read the messages successfully. For instance, prior to D-Day 1944, the Allies knew the location of most of the German divisions on the Western Front. Outgoing messages from Bletchley were encrypted in the Type X machines, also on display in the museum. The decoding work played a major part in the Battle of the Atlantic (protecting the convoys), the North African campaign (depriving Rommel’s army of supplies), deciphering Japanese codes, the Strategic Deception before D-Day, misinformation sent to German bomber aircraft, and other aspects of the war.

By 1944, more than 8,000 people, sworn to secrecy, were working at Bletchley Park. They included mathematicians, engineers, linguists, chess players and poets – women outnumbering men by three to one. Artefacts and panels illustrate the use of spies and double agents, and in other huts are peripheral exhibitions on ‘Pigeons in the War’ and ‘The



The statue of Alan Turing at Bletchley Park (photo by Robert Edmondson). More pictures on back cover and inside front cover.

Occupation of the Channel Islands’. There are also vintage vehicles and a toy museum. Some U3A members saw the immense ‘Colossus’, the world’s first semi-programmable computer, used for decoding later in the war.

Despite the first impression of a building site, and in inclement weather, there was more than enough at Bletchley Park to interest everyone. Perhaps the last word should go to Winston Churchill, who described the codebreakers as ‘the geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled’.

Robert Edmondson

Holidays

Holiday in Croatia, May 2014

Since the announcement in the September newsletter, arrangements for the holiday in Croatia have changed as the numbers applying fell short of Simply Group's minimum requirement. The new details are as follows:

- Dates: May 2nd to 9th, 2014 (7 nights, 8 days)
- Flights from Gatwick: dep 1625, arr 1945; return 1400, arr 1535
- Organiser: Saga Holidays
- Hotel: Blue Sun Hotel Alga, Markarska (gets good reviews on Trip Advisor). All rooms have balconies.
- Cost: £699 (+£21 for sea view), full board (if out for the day, picnic lunch provided). Singles: no extra charge, but may have to be especially applied for. Insurance included (and normally no extra charge if health problems). Deposit £150 on application, with balance due 10 weeks before the trip
- Features of hotel: Resident Saga representative; portage; free drinks at the table and free bar 11am to 11pm (!); welcome drink and cocktail party; fruit and water in room on arrival; exclusive Saga lounge; buffet restaurant (Trip Advisor guests say this is good); covered patio garden; indoor and outdoor pools; sauna and fitness centre; massages (extra charge); evening entertainment
- Range of trips offered: Half-day tours of **Makarska** and **Tuceps** are free. Others (prices £25 to £45, half-day and full day) include **Krka** national park and waterfalls, **Brac** and **Hvar**, **Dubrovnik**, **Bickvoko Mountain**, **Riviera cruise**, **Mostar**, **Split** and **Tragir**, **Omis**. All these will be explained by the Saga representative soon after arrival, and you pay then, but we will circulate some details to applicants beforehand. Exchange facilities in hotel.

At the moment, there is a vacancy for a twin room, but we understand more rooms can be applied for. If you are interested, please without delay ring Angela Cook (01306 886211) or contact Jim Docking (01737 843260; *email* annejim@docking.eclipse.co.uk)

Dorset and Hardy Country, October 2013

It was our first day in Weymouth and we were free to do what we fancied. Sheila and I decided to explore Radipole Lakes RSPB Reserve, which is in the town centre. It was a 10-minute walk from the hotel and gave us a chance to find our bearings. We heard lots of birds and saw ducks and geese and were surrounded by wildflowers and saw many butterflies. It is a delightful area, but sadly we didn't see the Cetti's warbler we had come to see, and the flock of bearded tits had just flown off when we arrived.

Charmian and I then took a bus to the Heights on the Isle of Portland, where we had lunch while enjoying a wonderful view of Chesil Beach and Weymouth. Afterwards we explored the Sculpture Quarry. There is a section set aside for local children to try their hand at carving the soft Portland stone. There is another area for experienced stonemasons where there is a large sculpture by Antony Gormley.

Later, back in Weymouth, we had a ride on the Sea Life Tower, rising several hundred feet to the top, and travelled round to be shown a 360-degree view of Weymouth, the bay and the Jurassic Coast.

It was a good start to the holiday.

Sue Sheldrake



**The Sea Life Tower,
Weymouth**

Angela, Inge and Virginia decided to explore Weymouth rather than go further afield. We left the hotel and headed off in the direction of the harbour. Passing Sandworld and the Sea Life Tower, we made our way to the harbour, seeing fishermen with their crab pots and boats at anchor.

After a meander we arrived at the Town Bridge, which opens at certain times to let tall craft sail up the channel. Fortunately it was down for the intrepid three to cross.

On our way we noticed that there was a boat trip leaving at midday from the harbour to view the coastline from the sea. As we had plenty of time we decided to go to the Nothe Fort and gardens first. The views from the gardens were spectacular, so we found a welcome bench and enjoyed the surroundings. Once rested, we made our way back to the harbour, with Inge at the helm expertly map-reading to bring us back to the boat departure mooring. Fortified by coffee, we boarded a small craft and out to sea we went. The skipper pointed out interesting facts about the amazing



Weymouth, Wyke Regis and Portland Harbour from the Isle of Portland

coastline, including the erosion of the cliffs where houses and gardens have been swallowed up by the sea. He also pointed out Osmington Mills, where so many fossils have been excavated, including the largest dinosaur jawbone, now exhibited in Dorchester Museum. On our return trip we also saw the prison on Portland Bill, a rather bleak and forbidding place, best avoided.

Once on dry land, now quite hungry from a surfeit of sea air, we made our way into the town. After a very good lunch of crab sandwiches from the café we saw the bridge open, which was a real bonus.

Now refreshed, on our way back to the hotel we indulged in some retail therapy, experiencing the delights of Weymouth shops. We had a great day.

Virginia Johnson

Seems a long time ago now, Weymouth. It's a seaside town most of us had visited before. Some had early childhood memories, and all were looking forward to what our travel agent promised: 'Dorset – stunning scenery and coastline with historic houses and towns, fabulous gardens and a plethora of other attractions, and a day devoted to the country's most famous literary son, Thomas Hardy.'

That was the promise; certainly most of it was fulfilled. For those who'd like to know, this is where we went:

Compton Acres Garden – better seen in spring but some of it still dazzlingly colourful and all of it lit by bright sunshine.

Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens with views, for those who wanted a steep and slippery climb, of the Jurassic Coast and Chesil Beach.

Abbotsbury Swannery, with a chance at noon of getting messy and feeding the hundreds of swans. One great surprise on our walk back to the coach was to come across an example of Elisabeth Gaunt's father's [Barnes Wallis] 'bouncing bomb'.

A one-way trip on the **Historic Electric Tram** from Seaton to Colyton was something we might have done without, though there was some exciting birdlife to be seen. Rather, we would have liked more time in **Lyme Regis**, where those of an energetic disposition strode along the front to the famous Cobb (thoughts of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) and most of us eventually succumbed to tea and toasted teacakes with lashings of butter.

In midweek we had our **Thomas Hardy** day: his birthplace, his main home and his heart's resting place. His Higher Bockington birthplace was reached by a long, narrow stony lane. The interior was cosy – such little rooms – here we had the opportunity to read and hear about the women in his life, particularly his unpleasant mother, Jemima. Then off to Max Gate in Dorchester where, through the words of our softly spoken, knowledgeable guide, we learnt about Thomas and wife Emma's life; how frugally they lived and how they gardened without harming any wildlife. In his study it was easy to imagine him at work on his poems and stories.

The end of our Hardy day saw us in the Dorset County Museum with so little time to study, whatever our interest. On to the Jurassic Coast gallery, others to the Hardy exhibits, nearly all to the teacakes department.

On the morning of Thursday we were not over-thrilled by a visit to **Sandworld**,

though the skill involved was remarkable to see, and we (nearly) all finished up with scrumptious hot chocolate and marshmallows.

We could perhaps have done better to have spent all day at the **Kingston Lacy** estate, seat of the Bankes family, of whom more anon. I, for one, spent so much time in the gardens, the park, the allotments and woodlands that I scarcely had time for the house and its outstanding collection of paintings and sculptures.

On our last full day the Swanage Railway took us to **Corfe Castle**. For most of us the climb up to and through the castle was a must. It was good that the sun shone brightly and the breeze, though strong, did not threaten to overbalance those of us who reached the very top.

The thousand-year history of Corfe Castle would fill a book. There we found a surprising link to the Kingston Lacy estate, for in 1635 the Lord Chief Justice, Sir John Bankes, purchased the castle, and in the 1640s brave Dame Mary Bankes commanded the defending forces and resisted two sieges during the Civil War. Then her son, Ralph, patched up the ruins and went on to build a new mansion at Kingston Lacy. In 1982, after three-and-a-half centuries of ownership by the Bankes family, Corfe Castle was given to the National Trust.

The day, alas, turned wet, dampening our enjoyment of **Lulworth Castle** and its surroundings. So wet was it that no one was brave enough to take up the challenge of a walk to Lulworth Cove. Shame on us!

On the last day our noble driver, Hazel, delivered us back to Dorking via **Mottisfont Abbey**. As the National Trust



Corfe Castle

guidebook says: 'You are never far from water at Mottisfont,' and we found walks by the sides of the river, ponds with ducks, and streams with brown trout, all dominated by vast ancient trees – yew, cedar and London plane.

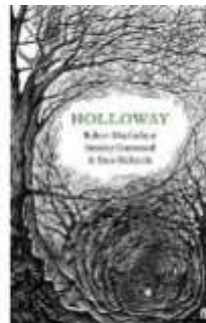
My account of the holiday would be incomplete without a few words regarding **the hotel**. Although on the front, a hundred yards from the shore, most of us did not have the 'stunning views' we had hoped for. Three hotels had been squashed together to create the Fairhaven. We thought a better name would have been the Labyrinth. My everyday journey from room to restaurant went something like this: leave room, turn left, up two steps, right, through door, turn right, along corridor, through door, up two steps, turn right, turn left, down 15 steps, turn right, then to the restaurant. It was worth the journey, though. The staff were very attentive, the food was good and the conversation flowed and flowed.

Thank you, Angela, for keeping us in order, and for all the hard work that went into arranging our (mostly) happy trip.

Sheila Bowers

Book Review

Holloway by Robert Macfarlane, Stanley Donwood and Dan Richards (Faber & Faber, 2013)



This book is a little gem. The words are mainly by Robert Macfarlane, who many will know is one of the finest writers on nature and landscape. He seems to be connected with the land, and he delights in following ancient footpaths. An opening sentence describing the Holloway introduces the reader to the richness of his words and the pleasure in store: 'A sunken path, a deep and shady lane. A route that centuries of foot-fall, hoof-hit, wheel-roll and rain-run have harrowed into the land.'

Macfarlane is an admirer of the First World War poet Edward Thomas, and his choice of words sometimes reflects writing of that period. He also uses words which I enjoyed for their sound, but which were new to me: widdershins (in a direction opposite to the usual; the wrong way) and deasilwise (right hand-wise) are two such words.

Holloway is beautifully illustrated by Stanley Donwood. His well observed and intricate drawings make one want to set off for south Dorset at once to find this amazing ancient path. I hope the book will give you pleasure and help us all to be more observant walkers.

Joan Gregory

Diversions & Delights

Let's run contemporary office jargon
up the flagpole

A recent newspaper article* explained in some detail examples of jargon that are evidently becoming prevalent among managers and senior office staff. Maybe the U3A management should take note of this. Or perhaps not!

Here is an extract from what might be the Dorking U3A AGM minutes in a few years' time should we decide to go down this road. The jargon is in italics. A glossary of terms follows. Needless to say, the two officers mentioned are not the present incumbents.

Chairman's Annual Report

In introducing his report, the Chairman announced he wanted to *give a heads-up* on an *issue*. He explained that he had had to *transition* the Treasurer who had admitted using U3A funds to pay for her husband's life membership of a golf club and to buy herself a diamond ring. Obviously, we would have to *drill down* to identify a *backfill* – and preferably by *close of play*. But, the Chairman emphasised, he had told the Committee that it must *revert*, adding that, *going forward*, we must take measures to ensure we have officers of the highest integrity. He therefore wanted to *leverage* everyone's cooperation and not let the matter *go offline* – or, even worse, allow discussion to *sunset*. The Chairman said what was needed was a *paradigm shift*, and invited anyone willing to join him in a *thought shower*, when the most useful ideas would be *run up the flagpole*. He concluded by urging us all not to give the excuse that we have *zero cycles* to think about *getting a yield*.

GLOSSARY

Give a heads-up = to tell you about

Issue = a less alarmist term than 'problem', which might also make it look as if it's all the chairman's fault and therefore his own responsibility to sort it

Transition = dismiss

Drill down = look at the matter in detail

Backfill = replacement (or, as a verb, replace)

Close of play = by the end of the day

Revert = promise to do something

Going forward = in the future

Leverage = ask for

Go offline = be postponed

Sunset = come to an end

Paradigm shift = new ways of thinking

Thought shower = more PC than 'brainstorm', which could be associated with an epileptic attack

Run up the flagpole = tried out

Zero cycles = insufficient time

Getting a yield = finding a solution

**Guardian G2*, 23 October 2013, pp6-10

JD

Is proofreading a dying art?

Some headlines that have appeared in recent newspapers

Man Kills Self Before Shooting Wife and Daughter (Remarkable, if cruel)
Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers (Taking things a bit too far?)
Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half (This too)
Panda Mating Fails: Veterinarian Takes Over (Well!)
Miners Refuse to Work after Death (I should think so too)
War Dims Hope for Peace (I can see it might have that effect)
If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile (Seems logical)
Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures (This too)
Couple Slain: Police Suspect Homicide (Are you surprised?)
Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges (Are you sure?)
New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group (Were the last lot not fat enough?)
Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft (Eating too many beans?)
Hospitals are Sued by Seven Foot Doctors (**Can they see their patients' feet?**)

Dorking & District Age Concern: Update

Computer drop-in centre at the Mayflower

We have had many enquiries during the frustrating delay in opening, but by now the main problems should have been sorted.

T'ai Chi classes at the Follett Hall, United Reformed Church

Since the start earlier in the year, numbers have increased amazingly, from two in the hot weather to 13 the following week! We have been well supported by U3A members, for which we are most grateful. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists cites research showing that people who did t'ai chi were 35% less likely to fall than others, and that this enables them to live independently for longer. Time: 2.15pm on Thursdays.

Social Scrabble for Seniors at the Mayflower

This is a new venture, not meant for experienced scrabblers! Tea and cake are provided by the Grange. Time: 2.15pm on Mondays.

Visiting lonely older people

This is our most important service. We are always looking for volunteers.

All enquiries to our Advice and Information Officer, Pam Toler, on 01306 882970, or pamtoler1929@hotmail.co.uk.

Joyce Kingsley-Jones

Newsletter is published three times a year – in March, September and December. *What's On?* is published four times a year – as a supplement to *Newsletter* and also as an expanded edition in June.

Contributions for the March *Newsletter* and *What's On?* should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **Friday 7 February 2014**.

Apart from reports of U3A activities, contributions of general interest – articles, short stories, poems, puzzles, humorous sketches, book reviews, letters, drawings, photos, etc – will be most welcome.

If possible, please type your contribution and, if you have the facilities, send it by email, either as an attachment in Microsoft Word or in the main body of the email. If you send a handwritten contribution, please write names of places and people in CAPITAL LETTERS.

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Above Waiting for the guide, having just arrived at Bletchley Park (photo by Laurie von Weber); see also inside front cover. *Below* Some of the Dorset Coast holiday group (photo by Sue Sheldrake)

