



Dorking & District University of the Third Age

newsletter



Number 77

March 2014

Inside: Letter from the Chair – **Group News** – **U3A On-line Courses** and Special Events – **Articles and Poetry by Ken Kelsey, Robert Edmondson, Marjorie Hudson and Mike Thurner** – **Reports on Monthly Meetings, Day Outings and Holidays**

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

Photos from the Photography Group



A drowned St Catherine's Lock, on the River Wey at Artington, south of Guildford. Photo by Mike Thurner.



A milk float that didn't at Sidwell. Photo by Wendy Otewill. *See also inside back cover.*

Cover picture The Singing for Pleasure group performing carols at Denbies Restaurant on 11 December 2013

Editorial

Throughout our lives, we find many occasions that warrant a celebration. Birthdays are an obvious example – though as we proceed through the Third Age we may feel commiserations would more appropriately mark these occasions! Our U3A celebrated 20 years in 2011, and no doubt we will be commemorating 25 years in two years' time. Some fortunate people seem to find numerous occasions for celebrating something, but only a few – a very few – have good reason to celebrate a 70th (platinum) wedding anniversary.

Two founding members of our U3A, Lilian and Ken Kelsey, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on 15 January this year, and we send them our warm congratulations. The number of couples privileged enough to be in this position is so rare that even the Office for National Statistics cannot supply a figure. The best they can tell is that the average length of a wedding today is 32 years and that just 16% reach their golden (50th) anniversary. A statistic from the USA suggests that the percentage passing their platinum anniversary in that country is just 0.06%, or six in 10,000.

With some U3A members, family and friends, Ken and Lilian celebrated their platinum anniversary at the Arkle Manor (pictures are on the back cover). Lilian told the *Dorking Advertiser*: 'It was lovely for everyone... The only bad thing was that Ken got a speeding ticket on the way to it.'

To help mark the occasion for this newsletter, Ken agreed to write something about his life with Lilian (see pp9-12), and we have also reprinted a poem by him that we published many years ago as one of many clever pieces that he used to contribute to the delight of us all.

Could you follow Ken's example and contribute something to the *Newsletter*? We would welcome articles, poems, stories, photos, drawings, humorous sketches, paintings and book reviews, and look forward to receiving something from you.

Jim Docking

Letter from the Chair

When I was (very) young I believed in fairies. This was probably influenced by being taken to see *Peter Pan* and by being very impressed by the instruction to clap whenever anyone said that he or she did not believe in fairies, or else a fairy would die. Whatever the reason, I was convinced that fairies lived in the lilac flowers outside my bedroom window at my aunt's small cottage in Norfolk, where I spent the last year of the war.



You may be wondering whether I have now lost the plot, or whether the burdens of Dorking & District U3A are proving too much for me. Perhaps you would be right. Or perhaps I just want to know whether anyone reads what I write in this space in each edition of the *Newsletter*. Again, you may be right.

I have received some responses to my most recent appeals for help, and I thank those who have expressed willingness to give **even more** of their time to keeping the D&D wheels turning. I repeat, **even more** of their time, because the offers have come from members who are among the invisible fairy folk who already ensure the smooth running of our community.

Following our request for a Publicity Officer, a new suggestion has been made that we create a Publicity/Public Relations Group. This sounds a very good idea, because having a group to discuss ideas and share the responsibilities would lessen the load on any individual. Both Jim Docking and I would be very happy to participate in such a group, and we invite other members to join us – please!

Three members have recently accepted our invitation to sit in on a committee meeting to see what happens. I hope that others will also take up this invitation.

But, other than that, I can only assume that most of our members do still believe in fairies – and if you don't, you had better start clapping, because some of us may fade away, perhaps even by the time of the Annual General Meeting in May (see Notice enclosed in *Newsletter*).

With a sprinkle of fairy dust,

Doreen

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 571 members.

Mrs Tess Brookman
Mrs Christine Coe
Mr Martin Coe
Mr Julian Davenport
Mrs Carole Eastwood
Mrs Juliet Eberle
Mrs Rosemary Finlay
Mr Nicholas Grealy
Mr Raymond Hampton
Mrs Doris Heaton
Mrs Angela Hedges
Mrs Phyllis Hughes

Mrs Tonya Jhugroo
Mrs Patricia Jones
Mrs Veronica Lawton
Mrs Jennifer Lester
Mr Simon Orlik
Mrs Caroline Orlik
Mrs Barbara Pharoah
Mrs June Rainger
Mr Barrie Smith
Ms Inga Sorensen
Mrs Rosemary Thomson
Mrs Jennifer Williams

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

2014 Subscriptions Reminder

Our current subscription year ends on 31 March 2014, and to continue enjoying U3A activities you should renew your subscription by 31 April 2014. (Members who joined since 1 January 2014 have membership already valid until 31 March 2015.)

Current subscription rates remain unchanged at **£16** for each member, or **£28** for two in a household.

The easiest way to renew is to use the payment slip enclosed with this Newsletter, and either pay at a monthly meeting or send your subscription(s) directly to Bob Crooks at Deepdene, Longfield Road Dorking, RH4 3DE, enclosing a **stamped addressed envelope**.

Please pay by cheque, not cash, with the cheque made out to 'Dorking & District U3A'.

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Group News

PROPOSED NEW GROUP

Singles Club

Are you on your own and keen to share activities at the weekend or in the evening? I am thinking about the possibility of forming a social group that would meet every three or four weeks to arrange activities or outings. This would be an essentially self-help group in which we agree what activities or outings we want to organise at weekends or in evenings.

If you are interested, please contact me, preferably by email (rosemaryj.smith@virgin.net) – if not, by telephone (01306 713373).

Rosemary Smith

OTHER POSSIBLE NEW GROUPS

A number of members would like groups that cover the following topics:

- Archaeology
- Creative Writing
- History (or aspects of)
- Line Dancing
- Quilting

If you are interested in any of these, please get in touch with Tom Arundel (013406 885730) or Pam Toler (01736 882970).

Art Appreciation – Change of time

The Art Appreciation Group will now always be meeting on the 4th Wednesday afternoon from 2.00pm until 4.00pm, rather than the 4th/last Wednesday of the month. This March, however, we are going on an outing to the National Maritime Museum, but it is fully booked.

The next group meeting will therefore be on 23 April.



Pat Lucas, 01306 711653

Bowls – New arrangements

There are now separate arrangements for spring/summer and winter:

Outdoors: Every Friday from 25 April to end of September (weather dependent), 2.30-4.30pm at Pippbrook Bowling Club: £3 per session, but two tasters are free.

Please contact David Pettman (01306 883043)

Indoors: Fortnightly through the winter, 2.30-4.30pm at Horsham Indoor Bowls Centre, Broadbridge Heath. £5 per session.

Please contact Ann Watney (01306 889115)

Jazz Appreciation – Vacancy

For the first time in its long history, this group, which meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 2.00pm until 4.00pm, has a vacancy. Enquiries to John Brown (01306 886819).



Music Appreciation – Group re-forming



This group is in the process of re-formation. Present and future interested members should get in touch with Doreen Raine (01306 886817).

Needlecraft and Stitching – Now meeting more frequently

We have been investigating a variety of needlework techniques in an effort to establish a programme that will be enjoyable, interesting and just a little challenging.

We have found that in meeting only once a month, the thread – literally – is easily lost. From now on we shall be meeting twice a month on the 1st and 3rd Fridays from 2.15-4.30pm; and we now have some vacancies.



So far we've tried our hand at small projects, such as making Christmas decorations and cards; this has been fun but not that challenging, though some did learn to crochet. To redress this I am at present showing some of the group how to draft their own skirt pattern, from which they will cut and make up a skirt; trousers come later. Embroidery hasn't been forgotten, and the techniques of stump work, or raised embroidery, are being explored.

In January a couple of us visited the Textile & Fashion Museum to see the excellent exhibition, 'The Glamour of Belville Sassoon'. In February a small group visited Grace, a local bridal boutique, to catch up with the latest techniques in the manufacture of custom-made garments. The follow-on from this will be to visit the V&A in May when the museum mounts an exhibition of wedding dresses in their collection.

Anne Blanchard (01306 884359); bablanch@ntlworld.com

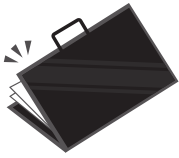
Philosophy

We have begun to explore aspects of Continental philosophy, starting with Spinoza. We meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month from 2.30pm to 4.00pm in members' homes. As space is limited, we now have a waiting list.

Marjorie Hudson (01306 888281)



Portfolio Management Group

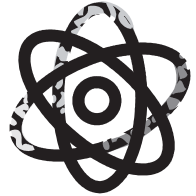


The purpose of this new group, led by Peter Lambeth, is to discuss a range of topics affecting capital investment and also ways of reducing risk. It meets at 1.30pm in the Hamilton Room, Betchworth (usually preceded by lunch at the Dolphin) at dates agreed at each meeting, and has space for more members. For further details, please get in touch with Peter at

lambethpj@macdream.net or by telephone on 01306 730494.

Science, Technology and Society

The subjects chosen for the monthly meeting of this group are generated by the group members reflecting matters which are felt to need some investigation and updating. Topics to be considered for the future include: flood defences, genetic modifications, genetic therapies, a glimpse into particle physics and quantum mechanics, changes in farming practices, and ‘Are humans good or bad?’



If you would like to see details of our future programme as an appetizer, please contact me and I will email the programme to you.

New members will be most welcome

Sheila Green 01306 883038

New Online Courses

At the end of March, the U3A will be launching the following new online courses. These will be interactive, and participants will be encouraged to contribute to the online discussion with their tutor. Enrolments are required by 29 March.

- *Fairy Tales*
The history of fairy and folk tales, with reference to writers – such as the Grimm Brothers – who collected or originated them.
- *All in the Mind*
The study of the mind, including much neuroscience as well as issues such as sentence.
- *Gawain and the Ploughman*
A look at two great poems, *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Piers Plowman*, and their relationship to the people and politics of the time, laying down the basis for the Wars of the Roses.
- *Six Impossible Things*
An accessible introduction to Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, Turing's Halting Theorem, Transfinite Numbers, Codes and cracking Enigma, Lorenz and Colossus and Prime Numbers.

- *The History of the Design of Gardens*

A look at aspects of gardens through recorded history and the reasons behind the designs, and further matters.

It is also hoped to re-run courses on Anglo-Saxon Poetry and the First World War.

Appeal for interested members to form a Publicity/Public Relations Group

The Committee is forming a group that would ensure we have measures to inform the public about the Dorking U3A and its activities and also look after communication among current members.

If a number of people are in this group, the various tasks could be shared so that the work involved for each member would not be very time-consuming. An example might be making sure the Library and other suitable places have a poster and leaflets to take away.

Please tell Doreen (01306 886817) if you would like to help with this.



Pixham Potager Community Vegetable Nursery

Pixham Potager gets its name from the French word for a vegetable nursery. It is where residents of Pixham and Dorking grow vegetables.

Alaster Calder, a Dorking resident, decided to seek enthusiastic gardeners to cultivate a plot of land that had gone spare when Friends Provident, which was at the bottom of Pixham Lane, was sold. The land had been used as a plant nursery, contains a shed with electricity, running water, a Victorian glasshouse, a double glasshouse and a polythene tunnel: too good an opportunity to miss! Alaster asked around and soon gathered a number of keen gardeners.

We grow potatoes, tomatoes, beans, sprouts, raspberries, blueberries, asparagus, carrots, radishes, pumpkins and much besides. Volunteers can buy the **produce at discounts based on the amount of work they put in. Members' ages** range from 10 to 80. We have propagating, potting, field-work, plumbing, carpentry, publicity and selling skills, and need more volunteers. Beginners as well as the more experienced are welcome.

So, if you like to get your hands into the earth and would like to pick and eat vegetables you have grown yourself, do come and look around.

For more information you can email Jenny Whiting (ja.whiting@ntlworld.com).

Jill Burberry

Special U3A events

The National U3A is organising a number of events in London, to which all U3A members are invited:

You need to apply for tickets, enclosing a cheque for £18 (limited to two per person) and a stamped-addressed envelope, to the Third Age Trust, 19 East Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1QE. It would wise to phone first to make sure tickets are still available: 020 8466 6139.

Further details and booking forms are normally available in the foyer at monthly meetings or from July Mellows (01306 889404).

Thursday 27 March, 11.00am-3.00pm

Best of British: Exploring 18th Century Painting, a study day at the National Gallery. *Cost: £18*

Thursday 3 April, 11.00am-3.00pm

Royal Opera House Workshop, a study day to find out how major opera and ballet productions are put together. *Cost: £18*

Wednesday 30 April, 2.00-4.00pm

U3A Spring Concert at the Queen's Chapel in the Savoy

Programme includes Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* and works by Vaughan Williams, Richard Rodney Bennett and Charles Stanford.

Cost: £18

Wednesday 21 May, 2.00-4.00pm

Staying Sharp: Technology, Well-being and the Brain

The Wellcome Trust Lecture Theatre, The Royal Society, London SW1Y 5AG

Dr Paul Howard-Jones, Reader in Neuroscience at the University of Bristol, talks about how technology may influence well-being in good and bad ways, including hopes and evidence for protecting or enhancing cognitive function across the lifespan.

Cost: £15 including refreshments

Articles and Poetry

Seventy Years and Counting

To mark the 70th wedding anniversary of Ken and Lilian Kelsey, Ken kindly agreed to tell us something of his life with Lilian

It is 28 October 1940. A 17-year-old lad is about to start work at Babcock & Wilcox in the City. He is ushered into the office where he is to work and sets eyes on the loveliest 16-year-old on the planet. In that brief moment he knows without a shadow of doubt that she is the one he is destined to marry. So begins our love story, which has yet to run its full course.

In asking Lilian to go out with me I was faced with two problems. The first was financial. My weekly wage was 30 shillings (£1.50). Each Friday I would hand my wage packet to my mother. She would give me back eight shillings and keep the rest towards housekeeping. Now you cannot give a girl a good time on 40p a week, especially when your fares have to come out of it as well. We both came from very poor backgrounds. I was the third of seven children and Lilian was the first of a pigeon pair, so we were brought up learning how to stretch the pennies. But hey! Who needs money when you're in love?

The second problem was travelling time. Lilian lived in North London and I in the East, and this problem was compounded by the Blitz. Lilian lost her home in an air-raid about this time and lost everything. After an evening out I would run to catch a late train from Holloway Road and change to the District Line for East Ham. If an air-raid was in progress, the train would stop underground at Whitechapel, which at times entailed a long walk home, once over hoses and broken glass. I would arrive home in the wee small hours to find a note from my mother on the kitchen table. 'Dear Love-sick Swain,' she would write, 'your dinner's in the oven.' The thought of cold, congealed gravy makes me shudder to this day.

In March 1942 I volunteered for the RAF and was accepted as a radio observer, the only aircrew trade open to colour-blind men. The pending introduction of radar, however, closed even this trade and I was placed on deferment. After a long delay I was posted to No. 5 Radio School, which was



lodged in a large mansion on the outskirts of Oxford. There were eight or 10 of us on the course, where we were instructed in the operation of various cipher machines. Our instructors were all officers and we were treated as young gentlemen. In the mornings we would parade on the garden lawn and, at a signal from the CO, a warrant officer, crouching behind the roses, would put a record on a portable gramophone and play *Moonlight and Roses* (I am not making this

up)! Lilian came to visit me one weekend, which we spent sightseeing in Oxford. I passed the course, was promoted to sergeant and given embarkation leave with a clear understanding that I was bound for the Far East.

We sailed from Liverpool on *MS Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*, a luxury Dutch passenger liner. The less said about that week's long journey the better. Suffice it to say that it was not a Saga cruise. The one thing I did learn on board was that it is dangerous to turn over in your sleep when you're in a hammock.

From Bombay I was posted to the Wireless Experimental Centre, the counterpart to Bletchley Park in the Far East, based in Anand Parbat, a town just outside Delhi, where I was vetted, let into the secret of Ultra and sworn to secrecy. I was given a travel warrant for the journey to Ceylon, where I was to join Mountbatten's Special Liaison Unit (SLU) at his headquarters located in the beautiful botanical gardens at Peradenya, near Kandy. From this point on it was continuous hard work dealing with decrypted Japanese signals, work which carried on even after the Japanese surrender in September 1945.

The SLU network also carried diplomatic traffic, and from this it seemed that there was a difference of opinion between Mountbatten and Churchill about the location of our headquarters now that the war had ended. Churchill saw no reason for it to leave Ceylon, but Mountbatten was determined to move it to Singapore. He saw, as perhaps Churchill did not, that a grand gesture was required in Singapore to avenge the inglorious surrender of the British troops there in February 1942. So against Churchill's wishes (orders?) the entire headquarters boarded the *SS Devonshire* for the sea journey to Singapore. The vessel was so overcrowded that, by comparison, my journey to Bombay was a Saga cruise.

In Singapore Mountbatten achieved his dramatic gesture. On 12 September, in a public display, he accepted the surrender by General Itagaki

Seishiro of 300,000 Japanese troops; and on 30 November in Saigon he received from the hands of the dying General Terauchi Hisaichi his ancient 15th-century sword.

I was subsequently posted to Hong Kong for a few months to wind up the local SLU and returned to Singapore via Saigon. By June 1946 the Singapore SLU was winding down and I was transferred to the Air Booking Centre. There was no commercial airline in operation at this time and all air traffic was operated by the RAF. A rigid system of priorities for civilians and service personnel was set up, overseen by the Air Priorities Board. In order to allow the application of common sense I sometimes bent the rules and on two occasions deliberately broke them.

At the end of 1946 my demob number came up and I sailed home on *SS Queen of Bermuda*. I arrived back on 6 February 1947 in freezing winter weather having been away for nearly three years. In that time Lilian and I had written to each other every day – a total of nearly 2,000 letters. We lost no time in starting a family. Our daughter Sue was born at the end of October and our son Jeremy in April 1951 in our very first house, a two-bedroom end-of-terrace house in Manor Park.

I returned to Babcock's and began charting a career. In December 1952 I became a chartered secretary and was made assistant secretary (later secretary) of Babcock's largest subsidiary.

In 1956 Lilian and I decided that there were far better places than London in which to bring up children so we moved to Surrey; first to Woodmansterne, then to Epsom in 1964, and finally to Dorking in 1990.

The 26 years we spent in Epsom was the most active period of our life. We were able to indulge our passions for opera and music. We were both active in the Lions Club, and Lilian in the Townswomen's Guild. We travelled a lot on holidays, Lilian getting an extra ration. From 1978 to 1988 she and a recently widowed friend spent two weeks every May sampling the Greek Islands or elsewhere in the Mediterranean – two mature Shirley Valentines enjoying freedom. I studied law and became a barrister in 1968. In 1967 we were blessed with our first grandchild, followed by others in 1974, 1977, 1979 and 1981.

In a bookshop in 1974 I saw a book, *The Ultra Secret* by Group Captain Fred Winterbotham, my titular boss. The great secret was out, and so for the very first time I was able to tell Lilian what my job in the Far East had been. Today it is difficult to believe that tens of thousands of people would be able to keep a secret for 30 years.

Our last move was to Dorking in 1990 and I finally retired the following year. We had hoped to join a thriving Lions Club in Dorking but it was not to

be. The club had folded. Fortunately, a new U3A was in the offing and we eagerly joined that at the very start. We became active participants, either as members of study groups or additionally, in my case, as group leader.

Soon our family started to grow, with the arrival of our first great-grandchild in 1992. Others followed in 2000 (twins), 2009 and 2011. Our family now consists of our son and daughter, five grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and two step-great-grandchildren. With a great-grandson now aged 21, will we be permitted to see a great-great-grandchild?

At our celebratory party at the Arkle Manor it was remarked that 70-year wedding anniversaries are rare. What was our secret? I can only point out to any aspiring couples the three rules: marry young, stay healthy and stay together. After that they can only hope to be lucky. I know that I have been.

Cowboys

This poem by Ken Kelsey is reprinted from an earlier edition to mark the 70th wedding anniversary of Ken and Lilian

Really, Mrs. Palmer, there's no need to make a drama
Of the one or two mishaps that have beset us.
They happen every day in a disconcerting way,
But we professionals must make sure they don't upset us.

Now the driver has said sorry that he backed his heavy lorry
Hard into the side of your Mercedes;
But I'm sure that you misheard that he said the effing word,
For he'd never use such terms in front of ladies.

And it wasn't all his fault that his nearside mirror caught
The slack in your satellite dish cable;
And from the ease with which it fell I could very quickly tell
That its fixing on the roof was quite unstable.

Since for that we're not to blame, I think that you should claim
On your insurance, and I'm as sure as hell
You'd recover all the cost of the many tiles you've lost -
Plus, of course, the greenhouse roof as well.

I'm sorry your cat came far too near our blow-torch flame
And suffered all that singeing to his rear;
And with one shrieking yell like a bat from out of hell
Shot through the door to get away from here.

Though he left in such a hurry I don't think you need worry,
For his speed suggests that he is fit and sound.
You'll find his fur will grow within a month or so -
That is, of course, if he is ever found.

Now about the toxic bond we spilled in your garden pond
Where your specimen koi carp are being bred,
Though the water's turning brown and they're floating upside-down,
Are you sure that means they're definitely dead?

Well, that only goes to show that we never really know
What lies ahead of us around the corner.
Of course, I'm only guessing, but I think it was a blessing
That at least it made the water that much warmer.

I'm so glad, Mrs. Palmer, that those pills have made you calmer.
For a while back there I thought you'd have a seizure
When our steam-and-strip machine vaporized your TV screen
And somehow blew the fuse in your fridge-freezer.

It's a shame it's all defrosted and will have to be composted,
Though you could of course give some of it away.
To help you out we'll take the brisket, 'cos we're quite prepared to risk it,
And then we really must be on our way.

I'll let my guv'nor know in the coming week or so
That on the whole you're not too satisfied
With some of what we've done, and I'm sure he'll be the one
To see your bill is duly rectified.

We'll be off now, Mrs. P, and it's heartening to see
That your neighbours will support you anyhow.
Though we've had our little frights things will soon be put to rights
For I think I hear the engines coming now.



Cast Down Your Eyes

(or In Defence of Weeds)

*Leave weeds alone, argues Robert Edmondson, and enjoy
the benefits they bring*

Next time you walk to the shops look down at the plant life on the pavement between the slabs or at the edge of the roadway. They are there, growing, flowering and producing their seeds. They are the weeds.



The more you look, the more different types you find – chickweed, groundsel or plantain. The yellow climbing corydalis, the delicate pink and magenta ivy-leaved toadflax and even buddleia are thriving on our urban walls. From the train to London in early summer you will see the tracks bordered by Oxford ragwort, to be succeeded by the rose-red blooms of rosebay willowherb. Why, with poison and machine, strive to obtain a sterile, uniform lawn when, with less effort and expense, you can add colour and biodiversity with a few dandelions and daisies?

Each so-called ‘weed’ has a complex ecology, an interesting history, and often possesses useful properties such as being a source of nectar for pollinating insects. When the Romans invaded Britain they brought their own varieties of nettles to use as pot herbs or for their medicinal properties.

For more information about this issue, I recommend Richard Mabey’s book, *Weeds*.

Why not consider an ‘urban weeds’ walk around the town?

I end with an original poem:

What Have They Done for Us?

I’ll tell the tale of Derek Deed, whose hatred of each garden weed
Was all-embracing and intense. The wild flowers by his garden fence
Could never have the slightest chance of playing a part in Life’s Great Dance,
Nor of adding colour to the scene. ‘My garden edges will be clean
And free from plants I have not grown,’ he’d say in a determined tone.
‘With a regular and maintained border and a pleasing, geometric order,
Unwanted plants I will suppress. My garden will not be a mess.’

‘The only good weed is deceased. I’ll prove that I’m a man, not beast
By showing who is in control. EXTERMINATION is my goal.
My main objective, far from crazy, is to ensure that not one daisy
Will show its face upon my lawn at sunset, midday or at dawn.
I’ll keep the dandelions at bay by digging out and toxic spray.
I won’t put out the welcome mat for them, and that is simply that.
It’s worth the work. It’s worth the fuss:
WHAT HAVE THOSE WILD WEEDS DONE FOR US?’

That is THE question I suppose, and this is how the answer goes,
Although exceptions can be made. Some noxious plants do fail the grade,
Like those that come from foreign shores with pathogenic fungal spores.
Weeds give our butterflies a space for propagation of their race.
Supporting predator and friend, their benefaction has no end.
By adding to the Living Web, variety will never ebb.
So refrain from all that pointless toil. You poison weeds – you poison soil.

From weeds came all our basic crops. In weedy soils erosion stops.
Remember, most of what we need originated in a weed –
The medicines, vitamins and drugs to counter illnesses and bugs.
And it is usually the case: WEEDS ARE WILD FLOWERS IN THE WRONG PLACE.



Postscript on Free Will

Last December’s issue contained an article by Marjorie Hudson that was based on the Philosophy Group’s discussion on the problem of free will. Here, Barbara Pare adds her personal response.

I was one of the Philosophy Group discussing the question *Are We Free Agents?* I came out of it stubbornly adhering to my reliance on free will. I stand by the last two lines of WE Henley’s 1875 poem *Invictus*:

I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

(And, by the way, didn’t the great Kant subscribe to this too?)

Photographic Group Prophecy

*Mike Thurner reports on recent activities of the
Photography Group*

The Photographic Group sets itself a monthly theme for members to photograph. At the end of the month we bring our images along and project them on to a screen for other members to see, encouraging constructive comment.

The theme for December, chosen in November, was 'Running Water' and, right on cue, as December unfolded, the worst storms in decades swept in from the Atlantic and the clouds opened, leading to floods and plenty of running water to photograph.

A few of our pictures are shown on the inside cover. These include one taken on Boxing Day of St Catherine's Lock on the River Wey Navigation just south of Guildford. At that time the towpaths were under water and the lock was completely submerged, with water pouring over the top of both lock gates, the lock itself looking like an extension of the river and the side weir under the bridge a raging torrent.

There is also an image of 'the milk float that didn't', as described by Photographic Group member Wendy Otewell, who reports: 'I live close to the River Mole and we are accustomed to flooding after prolonged rainfall. After a very stormy night I awoke on Christmas Eve morning to the sound of a tractor on our drive, which crosses the river. There was a widespread flood all over the surrounding fields where the river had burst its banks and I was puzzled as to what its purpose could be, since the drive was impassable.

'I discovered that at about 6.00am a Dairy Crest milk lorry had driven into the flood water and got stuck. The driver had called the Fire Brigade on his mobile phone and in the meantime our local farmer had made an attempt to rescue him. The tractor is an impressive piece of machinery, but as the water rose up to the top of his wheels the farmer judged the situation to be unmanageable and withdrew.

'It was some four hours before the Fire Brigade arrived with a canoe, but they decided the current was too strong to attempt a rescue and called the Environment Agency.

'About 20 years ago, after a similar flood which lasted for some days, I had installed some posts on a bank in my garden to allow us to reach the drive by climbing over our neighbour's wall. These came into use again and we found her pouring tea for the Fire Brigade. We saw that the stranded

driver had climbed out of his cab and was sitting on the bonnet of the lorry.

‘I’m sure we all thought we were going to see some aerial acrobatics when a helicopter appeared overhead some time later, but soon a siren was heard and Environment Agency rescuers approached from the main road on the other side of the river and used a boat to pluck the driver to safety. He was whisked off to hospital, where he was found to have nothing more serious than mild hypothermia.

‘On Christmas Day the flood had receded enough to show that several metres of my post and rail fence, which had been submerged in my lower garden, had been swept away. My home, situated above flood level, was safe.

‘Meanwhile, a pair of swans had flown in to take advantage of the body of water sitting in the fields, which now formed a lake. You can *just* see the swan towards the left of the lake shown in this photograph.’



Monthly Meetings

Lawrence of Arabia: David Williams, 13 October 2013

Thomas Edward Lawrence was born in August 1888 at Tremadoc, North Wales. He was the illegitimate son of Sir Walter Chapman and Sarah Junner, a governess, who was herself illegitimate. He was one of five brothers. Chapman, whose family had a distinguished lineage going back to Sir Walter Raleigh, had left his wife and first family in Ireland to live with Sarah. They were never married but lived together as Mr and Mrs Lawrence.

The family moved many times, eventually settling in Oxford from 1896 to 1921, and Lawrence attended the Oxford High School for boys. When he was 16 years old he broke his leg, and this seemed to stunt his growth. He ended

up 5ft 4½in tall with a light build. At school he was an extremely bright and capable student, gaining a place at Jesus College, Oxford, where he studied history from 1907 to 1910.

In the summer of 1910 Lawrence spent three months walking in Syria, visiting Crusader castles, and he travelled 1,000 miles. After completing his first-class honours degree he went to the Middle East as an archeologist and became fluent in many dialects of Arabic. While there, he spent a great deal of time walking the German-built ‘Baghdad Railway’, which was being constructed as a link between Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

Following the outbreak of war in

1914 Lawrence was commissioned and immediately posted to the intelligence staff in Cairo. On behalf of the British Government, he encouraged the Arabs to revolt against the Germans and Turks, and they agreed, after being promised they would keep the land they won. Lawrence fought with the Arabs throughout the war and his success earned him promotion to colonel.

When the war ended, Britain and France divided the Middle East between themselves, leaving the Arabs with very little. Lawrence felt the Arabs had been betrayed. He left the Army in 1918 and, four years later, enlisted in the RAF under the name of John Hume Ross.



However, he had to leave after his real identity was discovered. He was briefly in the Tank Corps, but eventually re-enlisted as an aircraftman in the RAF, where he remained until his death in 1935 following a motorcycle accident.

Throughout the talk, Mr Williams indicated that there were many

anomalies in Lawrence's life. What was his sexuality? Was he tortured and abused when captured by the enemy during the war? Was there more to his death than there seemed? These and many other questions remain unanswered, and will probably remain a mystery.

Raymond Jones

So, what is wrong with packaging? (and why can't I buy a cucumber without a plastic wrap?): David Shires, 11 December 2013

Well, the simple answer to the cucumber question is that the plastic wrap extends the shelf life from three days to 15 days; without it there would be a huge waste of cucumbers and a larger energy cost to produce them.

This was one of many fascinating facts presented by David Shires challenging common prejudices about this topical issue. One of David's roles is as guest professor at Jinan University in China, where they take the complex science of packaging very seriously. Seventy-two Chinese universities conduct research into, and teach, packaging science.

Food packaging delays the ageing

process, and each food product needs its own 'little world' to protect it and, therefore, us. Pitta bread, for example, is enveloped in nitrogen and carbon dioxide, as oxygen would turn it rancid. There are five layers to its advanced plastic wrap. White sugar can be packed in cheap paper, but brown sugar needs plasticised wrapping as a water vapour barrier.

What about other common criticisms of packaging? David agreed that companies can be guilty of deceptively sized containers and advised us to refer examples to the Trading Standards Office. He gave reasons, however, for

what may appear to be oversized boxes stuffed with foam fillers and plastic pillows and for why packets and jars can be impenetrable. One explanation, unfortunately, is what David referred to as the 'human factor'. He showed



film of distribution workers whose attitude to their task was, to be generous, cavalier; packages marked 'fragile' were tossed around in an alarming manner.

Impenetrable packaging is necessary to prevent theft. If shower heads are hung on racks unwrapped, the washers are stolen from them. Human tampering can also be more sinister: jars are tightly sealed to prevent the insertion of glass or poison.

We may criticise the wastefulness of packaging, saying much of it is unnecessarily elaborate, yet when manufacturers try out more modest

containers, sales drop. David showed that our attitudes are often contradictory and suggested that packaging reflects societal values. We are a throwaway society as our behaviour at Christmas shows only too clearly.

David's conclusion was that under-packaging is a greater environmental burden than over-packaging because it creates more waste and involves greater energy consumption. In the future good packaging could even replace the preservatives in food.

By the end of his talk many of my assumptions had been overturned. I have given only a flavour of his erudite lecture, so do refer online to the publications he recommended: *Saving Water: From Field to Fork and Table for One*; *the energy cost to feed one person*.

Gill Crooks

Mistresses, Scoundrels and Princesses – Secret Stories of Kensington Palace: Nigel Arch, 8 January 2014

'I enjoyed going to work for the past 30 years – it was like a second home,' were Nigel Arch's opening words at the U3A's January monthly meeting. His 'second home' was Kensington Palace, so it's no wonder he enjoyed going there.

We were treated to an amusing and intriguing lecture on scandals, corridor-creeeping and roguish behaviour in days gone by at the palace, which underwent a major refurbishment in 2012 at a cost of £12.5 million.

The biggest event that happened during Nigel's career was the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, when the palace was swamped with flowers and messages, but he pointed out that there had been many other large events over the years.

Many royals have had apartments at the palace. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have just moved in after refurbishing Lord Snowdon and Princess Margaret's old home.

William III and Mary II were the first royal owners, and Queen Victoria was born and lived there also. There is a statue of her in the grounds.

Portraits of servants were extremely rare, but Queen Mary's Gallery in the palace contains a portrait of Catherine Elliott, who was the wife of Charles II's Gentleman of the Bedchamber.

Nigel also mentioned that George II, the last reigning monarch to use Kensington Palace, was a bad-tempered king and



George II, who had several mistresses

took mistresses, which probably wasn't difficult with the interconnecting doors and secret passageways.

It had clearly been a busy, glamorous and happy working life for Nigel and it was great to be a small part of it for an hour on a rainy afternoon.

He ended by saying that secrets at Kensington Palace would not stay confidential for long nowadays with modern technology and phone hacking.

Perry Doust



Days Out

The British Broadcasting Corporation, 26 November 2013

A great time was had by all on this day out. A few of us were even able to try out newsreading, weather presenting and performing in a radio play – but I'm getting ahead of myself.

This was a visit to Broadcasting House, the headquarters of the largest broadcasting company in the world. The BBC transmits to over 300 million people in 200 countries and employs 6,000 people in its headquarters in Portland Place (25,000 worldwide). The building we visited was the result of a 10-year £1,025,000,000 project – yes, that many noughts! – and it was a truly amazing experience. We arrived early enough for all of us to get our lunch in the BBC's Media Café before the start of the tours at 1pm and 1.15pm.

We split into two groups of 25, and each group was taken around the complex by two very knowledgeable guides, who were able to answer our questions about everything we saw and enhance the experience with a plethora of interesting facts. The new part of the building was eight stories above ground and three below, stopping only two metres above the Underground. All the news, weather and most drama programmes for both radio and TV are broadcast from this complex, as well as the World Service, which broadcasts in 28 languages from 12 separate studios.

After the introduction, we were shown the Newsroom (which is the actual room



A group from the U3A trying their hand at play-reading. The rest of us watched while technical assistants supplied sound effects. The recording was then played back to us.

seen by the nation behind BBC News presenters), where all the UK and world news programmes are generated for transmission, whether by airwaves, satellite, cable or online. We were shown the 'red carpet' where an unsuspecting journalist might be 'in shot' if there was a news programme on air.

We were then taken across the World Piazza to the Old Building. The pavement of the piazza features artwork by Mark Pimlott consisting of elegant steel lines of longitude and latitude and more than 750 flagstones inscribed with the names of countries to which the BBC transmits.

On top of the Peel Building we glimpsed a glass sculpture called 'Breathing' by Catalan artist Jaume Plensa, inscribed with a poignant text about silence, which commemorates all news reporters and crews that have lost their lives in conflict zones. The feature is lit so that it glows at night, and at

10pm, in tandem with the news, a fine beam of light projects from its base 900 metres into the sky.

The Old Building dates from 1932 and was purpose-built for the BBC in the Art Deco style. It has been carefully preserved and decorated to maintain its distinctive features. We learnt about the first director-general, John (later Lord) Reith, and other historical facts before moving on to a display of the timeline demonstrating how the BBC has developed from its inception in 1922 through the invention of television, *Dr Who*, etc, until the present day. Apparently, when World War Two broke out, the TV programme that was being transmitted – a Mickey Mouse cartoon – was suddenly cut without explanation, which caused many viewers to write in and complain. When the war was over, the BBC completed the transmission and apologised for the interruption!

We were then shown the Artists' Lobby, which displays a famous tapestry given to the BBC by the French in recognition of the broadcasts that were made by Charles de Gaulle from a studio there during the war. We were later shown the Radio Theatre, where many shows requiring a live audience are still recorded – sometimes as many as two per day. Old favourites such as *Just A Minute* and *The Now Show* are still staged here as well as many concerts for Radio 2.

The BBC transmitted news programmes throughout the war, and we heard a recording from 15 October 1940 during which a bomb that had landed on Broadcasting House exploded during the reading of the nine o'clock news, but the newsreader, Bruce Belfrage, carried on implacably after a short pause as though nothing had happened. Very good for British morale, I should think.

The highlight for some of us was the opportunity to try reading the news in

front of a camera and to see what it was like following the Autocue, while the rest of us watched them in the studio as well as seeing them on a TV screen. Another member of the U3A had the opportunity to give a weather forecast, complete with weather map, but this was more difficult as there are no scripts for weather presenters! We also took parts in a little radio play, complete with music and sound effects – this time from a radio studio. Needless to say, none of these were broadcast!

There was another break for coffee at the end of the tour when we all compared notes on which BBC celebrities we had spotted during the day.

Overall it was a very enjoyable, well organised day out with the added bonus of seeing the Regent Street Christmas lights on the way home.

Thanks to our Outings Committee for another splendid trip!

Jonathan Grant

The Cheapside Hoard and the Museum of London, 17 January 2014

The trip got off to a tricky start when the coach could not reach the Cabin in North Holmwood due to road closures. Of course, those waiting to be picked up had no knowledge of this and could not understand the half-hour delay. They had to take life and limb in hand to cross a dual carriageway to meet the coach. After this we had a trouble-free ride to the museum.

Our entrance to the exhibition was timed for 12.30pm, so there was plenty of time for coffee and a browse.

The exhibition was amazing! All this

jewellery – a collection of nearly 500 pieces – had lain hidden under a cellar floor for 300 years. It was discovered by workmen in 1912.

I wondered why we were handed a huge magnifying glass on entering, thinking there must be lots of tiny writing, but no, it was to see the exquisite tiny jewels, so beautifully put together. The jewels were from all over the world and 400 years ago would have taken months to reach England from these far-flung places.

The exhibition not only gave the



Just three of the items from the Cheapside Hoard, an extraordinary and priceless treasure of late 16th and early 17th century jewels and gemstones, which in 1912 was discovered buried in a cellar on Cheapside in the City of London. It has now, for the first time, been displayed in its entirety.

history of the time but also demonstrated how the raw materials looked before the cutting and polishing process began. There was lots of information about the life and times of the early Stuarts and theories about how the jewels got there and remained untouched for so long.

After looking round the exhibition there was plenty of free time before returning home.

The exhibition is on till 27 April and I highly recommend a visit – it really is unbelievable and well worth the time.

Sheila Cole



Holidays

Holiday in Scotland

Angela Cooke and Jim Docking are planning a holiday in Scotland, probably based on Glasgow and Edinburgh, in early October. Once the U3A Committee has approved the holiday, details will be announced at monthly meetings and in the June *What's On?*.



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 special edition of June *What's On?* should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **Friday 9 May 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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The flooded garden of Wendy Otewill, who took the photo.

Photos from the Painting for Pleasure Group



Artichoke and Summer Roses, painted by Elaine Major.



Above Ken and Lilian Kelsey, who recently celebrated their 70th (platinum) wedding anniversary. Below Ken and Lilian with some U3A members at the **couple's anniversary celebration** (see Newsletter).

