



Dorking & District
University of the Third Age

newsletter



Number 78

September 2014

Inside: Letter from the Chair – **Membership News – Group News – Poetry & Articles – Reports on Monthly Meetings, Days Out, Study Group Outings and Holiday in Croatia**

Inset: **What's On? – Your guide to study and interest groups, monthly meetings, study days, day trips, theatre trips and national U3A events**



*Left: Betty Wright, who founded our U3A but who sadly died recently, at our 20th anniversary celebration at Denbies in August 2011 Photo by Elizabeth Holmes
Tribute on p4*

***Below: The Spanish Conversation group at Pagos de Leza Bodega during a visit to northern Spain
Photo by Sabina de Gaston-Cooper
Report on pp33-35***



*Cover picture: No, not a group of firefighters, but U3A members preparing to tour backstage at the National Theatre Photo by Laurie von Weber
Report on p24*

Editorial

Welcome to this bumper issue, and many thanks to our 35 contributors for their articles, reports, poems, news and photos.

This issue comes with both good news and sad news. The sad news is the death of three key players in the development of our U3A – Betty Wright, Jock Blackadder and Ken Kendall. Tributes to them can be found in Doreen's letter overleaf and on pp4-6.

The good news is that we have a crop of three new and four proposed study and interest groups. Robert Browning, Dorking U3A Hand Bells and Upwords are viable and have already started or will be beginning very soon (pp6-7). Three of the proposed groups – History, Line Dancing and Quilting – are viable in terms of expressed interest, and preliminary meetings to sort out details are now under way (p8). Some members have already expressed interest in performing plays and other forms of entertainment, archaeology, watercolour painting, creative writing and geography, but need more numbers to get going (pp8-9). The two group coordinators, Pam Toler and Lionel Cartlidge, will welcome further suggestions for new groups.

My grateful thanks, as always, to Michael Docker, our sub-editor, and to Joy Parry for her assistance in proof-reading. Needless to say, any remaining errors are my responsibility.

Jim Docking



The Summer Bowling Group in action

Letter from the Chair

In this *Newsletter* you will find appreciations of three of our recently departed members, who deserve our gratitude for all they gave to Dorking & District U3A. I leave it to the authors of their tributes to describe more fully their legacies to us.



First and foremost, this U3A might not have been here at all if it had not been for the founding inspiration of Betty Wright. Jim, who was our first Chairman and among Betty's co-founders, has written more fully about her contribution. We have also lost Ken Kendall, who was a long-standing member who contributed valuably to our activities, most recently in leading the now-disbanded Computer group. Finally, Jock Blackadder will be very much missed by his devotees in the Opera Appreciation group. You can read more about Ken and Jock's contributions to D&D U3A elsewhere. I can only say – and in this I feel strongly my own inadequacy – that we are enormously grateful for all they did for us, and that we send our deepest sympathy to Cecilia and Jane and all three families.

My own contribution to this *Newsletter* is much shorter than usual. Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts might understand if I say that this summer I am engaged in my own vagaries, ever singing, ever dancing, but not necessarily in a manner most entrancing.

I hope that you have all been able to make the most of this summer and that you will return to our activities in September with renewed enthusiasm and inspiration. We owe this to Betty, Ken and Jock.

With best wishes,

Doreen

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to each of the new members, listed below, who have joined since the last issue went to press. For one reason or another, 81 members have not paid subscriptions for 2014-15, leaving a paid-up membership of 521.

Mr Nigel Ames
Mrs Jennifer Bartholomew
Mrs Eleanor Campbell
Mrs Audrey Chitty
Mr Anthony Chitty
Mrs Wendy Crozier
Mrs Bridget Giles
Mr Michael Giles
Ms Pauline Heckman
Mrs Jenny Horstman

Mr John Kearsey
Mrs Dorothy (Betty) Kent
Mrs Phyllis Martin
Mrs Sue Neve
Mr Geoffrey Saunders
Mrs Jean Sawdon
Mrs Anita Smith
Mr Raymond Smith
Mrs Liela Thorogood
Ms Virginia Wheeler

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary



The Summer Bowling Group preparing for a new game

In Remembrance

Betty Wright, Founder of the Dorking U3A

Betty Wright, whose initiative and inspiration led to the launch of the Dorking U3A in March 1991, sadly died in June this year just short of her 95th birthday. No one who knew Betty will forget her as an active, hospitable, generous, cheerfully optimistic and enthusiastic person – and outspoken as well!

Betty had belonged to the Reigate U3A in its early days, but so enjoyed her experiences there that, as a resident of North Holmwood, she wanted the same opportunities for those living in Dorking and the surrounding villages. In November 1990 she invited some people she knew who would

be interested in such a venture to meet at her house to discuss the way forward. We had no trouble in agreeing with Betty's proposal and subsequently we held further meetings to discuss the detailed planning. Throughout the preparation period Betty did everything she could to ensure that our U3A would be a success – as, indeed, it proved to be.

Betty became our first vice-chairman, and she also started a rambling group as well as joining Current Issues and other groups. For her initiative and work in setting up our U3A, she was given life membership. She remained an active member until too frail to continue, but in March 2010, her daughter Christine was fortunately able to bring her to our 20th anniversary celebration at Denbies, where she was able to renew her acquaintance with some of the older members who remembered her well.

Fittingly, Betty's funeral service included the second movement from Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata. This was one of the composer's earliest works and not only contains one of the most beautiful and moving melodies in the repertoire but confirms Beethoven as a composer who inspires and enthuses – hallmarks, of course, of the U3A movement.

We shall all miss Betty as a warm-hearted and affectionate person, and will remember with much gratitude her enterprise in founding the Dorking U3A.



Betty, soon after the Dorking U3A started, at an exhibition of our work in Leatherhead

Jim Docking

Jock Blackadder, Leader of the Opera Appreciation Group

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death, aged 90, on 4 July of Robert Blackadder – always known as Jock by everybody including his family – who led the U3A Opera Appreciation group, which he had set up in 1996 and had continued to manage at his house.

The format for his monthly sessions was to present and study in detail the opera for the day, which would then be shown on a large screen. In addition to the time devoted to preparing for the opera, Jock and his wife, Jane, had the additional work of rearranging their sitting room with extra chairs and also setting up the audiovisual equipment.

In recent years the number of members attending each meeting was around 12-14 but, because it could stretch to a maximum of 17 on popular occasions, Jock decided to set up a computer booking system to control the numbers; there are at present 28 members on his list. Over the 18 years since Jock started the group there have been close to 180 meetings and only about 10% have been presented by others. It is remarkable that in all that time very few operas have been discussed more than once.

Jock was educated at Gordonstoun School, where he was a contemporary of the Duke of Edinburgh, and at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he read natural sciences. He was called up towards the end of the war and was sent to Pensacola in the USA where he trained to pilot flying boats. Subsequently, he spent a large part of his career as a management consultant.

Before moving to Dorking for his retirement, Jock lived in Reigate, where he was a keen singer in the East Surrey Operatic Society. In his retirement Jock greatly expanded his range of interests and so led a very full life: there was never very much space left in his diary.

Jock will be sorely missed.

CM Wilkinson

The Thanksgiving Service for Jock was permeated with humour, reflecting Jock's personality. His wife, Jane, and family clearly wanted a service that celebrated the life of one who lived every moment to the full. There was, of course, plenty of music, while the beautiful eulogies by Jane, their children and a friend spoke of the loving relationships within the family. A brilliantly composed video with musical accompaniment depicted Jock's life from early childhood, many of the slides showing his exuberance and great sense of fun.

JD



Ken Kendall, Founder of the Computer Group

Ken died peacefully at home on 22 June, aged 82. He was born as Ernest John Kendall, and was one of the very first members to join the newly formed Dorking U3A Genealogy group back in 1999. He was already well on the road to finding his ancestors but felt he needed some help to develop his family tree. This he did with the encouragement of group members and, in turn, he helped others with his background knowledge of London.



Some 15 years ago Ken founded the Dorking U3A Computer group, which met monthly in the Hamilton Rooms in Betchworth. He ran the group single-handedly, but by 2004 he found that he had so many other commitments and interests that he announced he wished to relinquish his role as group leader. In the event, he did not do so; instead, aided by Priscilla Munday and John Hale, both from Horley U3A, and initially by Ken Kelsey from Dorking U3A, Ken continued to take an active role in the running of the group. Unfortunately, dwindling membership forced us to suspend the group last year.

Priscilla and John have fond memories of Ken as, in earlier times, the three of us regularly sat round a table at the Squires Garden Centre, armed with cups of coffee, planning the group's future programme. He will be sadly missed by his family and many friends.

Paddy Neville and John Hale

Group News

New Groups

Robert Browning

On 21 July at our last meeting on metaphysical poets we discussed women poets of the 17th century and decided that they were remarkable in that their life experiences were so limited by their lack of opportunities and so endangered by constant child-bearing that it is a great wonder that they even *tried* to do anything as esoteric as writing poetry. We had to admit that most of the men at the time were better at it – especially Donne, Herbert and Marvell. Looking at the range of poetry which these three encompassed, it is no wonder that we found it difficult to formulate a definition of metaphysical poetry. But even TS Eliot found it difficult to say exactly what it was!

The survivors of this difficult course are, I hope, looking forward to a much less demanding exploration of the poetry of Robert Browning. His *Men and*

Women are wonderful explorations of the psychology of some remarkable characters, such as Karshish, an Arab physician; Andrea Del Sarto, a failed Renaissance artist; and Fra Lippo Lippi, a successful one. Then there is the sinister duke speaking of his last duchess, and Porphyria's lover cradling the woman he has just murdered. If you feel you would like to meet these people (and their creator, Robert Browning and his wife, the equally famous poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning), do contact me. We meet on the first and third Mondays in each month at 2.30pm, beginning on 6 October. We can take up to 10, and have a couple of vacancies.



Bette Phillips (01306 887112)

Dorking U3A Bells

We now have a viable group of interested members. Our first meeting will be in the form of a workshop. We are fortunate to receive help from the Brockham Handbell Ringers, who will demonstrate their playing and assist us with ours.

Venue: The Lincoln Arms hotel (near Dorking Station), where there is a car park.

Date and time: 10.30am to 12.30pm every Friday from 3 October until 12 December, by which time we hope to have made some Christmas music.

We have a few vacancies.

Florence Reid (01306 879835)



Upwords

We are up and running! The new Upwords group met for the first time at my house and we agreed dates and times for future meetings. We are meeting on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month from 2pm to 4pm in the Christian Centre café, Dorking.

Upwords is a word game, a sort of 3D version of Scrabble, easy to learn and fun to play. Tiled letters are piled on top of letters already on the board to create different words; the higher the stack the more points may be scored. Often short words score more than the long words a Scrabble player might be aiming for, so if you know any four-letter words, come and join us!



We hope to make the meetings fun as well as exercising a few brain cells and we welcome anyone who would like to try the game. You need never have seen an Upwords board before – we would love you to have a go and maybe become hooked! Please get in touch with me for any further details, or just turn up at the Christian Centre on any second or fourth Tuesday in the month.

Elizabeth Holmes (01306 88483; emh2010@hotmail.co.uk)

Proposed Groups

Preliminary meetings for Line Dancing, History and Quilting
Dorking & District U3A is never static. There are always new groups on the stocks but it takes a little effort by the participants to get them up and running. We now have sufficient interested members to set up new groups for Line Dancing, History and Quilting.

We are holding preliminary meetings for these proposed groups in the Lincoln Arms near Dorking Station. Each will start at 10.30am. We hope that enough members who would like to join the new groups will be able to attend these meetings, which are as follows:



Tuesday 26 August
Line Dancing



Wednesday 3 September
History



Thursday 4 September
Quilting

The distribution of this newsletter may come a little late for members who have not already expressed an interest, but please do not let that deter you. You can add your name to our lists by contacting one of the group coordinators, whose details are below.

We have also recorded interest in other potential groups but have not yet found sufficient numbers to make them viable. These possibilities include

- **Archaeology**
- **Watercolour Painting**
- **Creative Writing**
- **Geography**
- **Performing for Entertainment** (*see next page*)

If you would like to pursue an interest in any of these subjects please email (preferably) or telephone one of us, as group coordinators.

Pam Toler (pamtoler1929@hotmail.co.uk; 01306 882970)

Lionel Cartlidge (ljcartlidge@lineone.net; 01306 898491)

Performing for Entertainment

I would like to hear from anyone interested in forming a group to put on entertainments such as music hall, revues and pantomimes. It would involve performers, non-performers (production staff are always needed) and a pianist.



Age should not be a deterrent to joining – I recently wrote and produced a pantomime in which an 84-year-old fairy figured. Nor is previous performing experience necessary.

James Dark (01306 730590)

Established Groups

Ancient Greece

This group has now closed.

Art Appreciation Group - change of venue

From September, the Art Appreciation Group will be meeting in the Small Chapel of the United Reformed Church on West Street, Dorking. The meetings will still be on the 4th Wednesday of the month from 2pm to 4pm.



Future meetings are:

Wednesday 24 September: The Bloomsbury Group

Wednesday 22 October: Visit to Charleston and Berwick Church, Sussex

Wednesday 26 November: Sculptures of Rodin, Degas and Michelangelo

December: no meeting

Pat Lucas (01306 711653)

DIY Dressmaking (formerly Needlecraft and Stitching)

I had originally called the sewing group Needlecraft and Stitching as a sort of catch-all term to help me find out what people wanted. After a year's experience I think a more appropriate name might be DIY Dressmaking, as that is what it seems to have become. Times remain the same – 1st and 3rd Fridays from 2.15pm to 4.30pm.

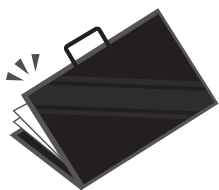
Members of the group learn the basics of pattern-cutting, dressmaking and alterations or makeovers. We work in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where you can practise an enjoyable and rewarding pastime, while



improving your sewing skills and achieving stylish and well-fitting clothes. Visits to exhibitions, museums, craft fairs and anything else to do with textiles are also on the cards. Beginners and established needlewomen are equally welcome.

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

Portfolio Management - Discussion of 'dummy' portfolios



An important part of our proceedings is the discussion of the current state of various 'dummy' portfolios, which may be compiled by any members who wish to do so as a guide to their own investments. These portfolios may include shares, bonds, exchange traded funds (ETFs), in any stock exchange and any currency, and can run for any period and be modified over time according to the performance of the constituents. Also discussed is a dummy portfolio comprising individual components on the London Stock Exchange, one from each member. Other standard subjects are current affairs as they affect financial matters and a special topic selected at the previous meeting.

We welcome potential new members to our meetings, which are held every 3rd Friday at 1.30pm. For more details please contact me.

Peter Lambeth (01306 730494; lambethpj@macdream.net)

Science, Technology and Society

In the sessions ahead our members will examine how numbers figure in our daily lives; the latest on bugs, bacteria and viruses; how the Thames Barrier has fulfilled its role in protecting London from threats of flooding; 3D printing and how that is reaching into manufacturing and our daily lives; what we know about genetic modification (what is the evidence for embracing it or dismissing it?); the legacy of Victorian engineers; and women in science.



New members to our group are most welcome. We meet in the Lincoln Arms, by Dorking Station, on the 2nd Monday in the month from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

Sheila Green (01306 883038)

Articles and Poetry

Cambridge Memories

Cambridge, kaleidoscope of memories
First seen in winter when a bitter wind
blew from the Fens and chilled us
through and through.

Daffodils a gold swathe along the
Backs,
tentative blossom showing on the
trees.

King's College Evensong, a blustery
walk

in darkness to an isolated inn.

Pictures at Kettles Yard, a gallery
arranged with intimacy like a home.

In the Botanic Gardens the freeze-
framed

cascade of the spectacular jade vine.

A second visit in September days
borrowed from summer, cerulean
skies.

Walking to Grantchester in dusty heat,
lunch in the Orchard underneath the
trees

loaded with apples glowing gold and
green.

Visiting once again late July
mixing with tourists strolling the busy
streets.

Quiet colleges with immaculate lawns
and vivid clumps of flowers basked in
the sun.

Walking each evening back to Burrells
Fields
through an intoxicating avenue of
limes.

Wandering round the modern area
in twilight with an apricot half moon.
Seeing the newly refurbished gallery
displaying ranks of French
impressionists.

Relaxing in a punt upon the Cam.
Scenery a stage set on either bank.
Hypnotic waves lapping the sides, a
trail

of swans and cygnets, one plumaged
in black

leading them with majestic dignity.

A sense of timeless peace pervading
all.

This then is Cambridge through a
stranger's eyes.

What is the essence of this ancient
place?

The image spins, the pictures merge
and blend

to be forever cherished in the mind.

Alison Lanning

*A report on a day out to Cambridge
appears on pp24-25*

Extinction

We are warming, warming, warming,
That is bad, bad, bad.
They say it will destroy us all,
So we should be very frightened –
But not just yet.

We are burning hydrocarbons
To keep us warm and cold,
To keep our motors running
And to light the winter nights –
Can't do without.

We are searching, searching, searching,
For more gas and oil.
One day it will run out,
So we should be very frightened –
Indeed, we are a bit.

We are drilling, drilling, drilling,
Everywhere we can,
Finding more by fracking.
Perhaps it will destroy us –
But not just yet.

They say it will destroy us.
We must use solar panels,
Wind, waves, geothermal,
So we play with all these things –
But must have oil.

They say it will destroy us.
I expect that may be true,
But I need my car tomorrow.
I'll turn down the thermostat –
If they will do it too.

Jimmy Gordon

Hard Work, Socialising, Entertainment and a Gala Dinner

Sarah Wakeford reports on an 'enriching experience'

at a U3A Summer School

This year, for the first time, I attended a U3A Summer School, which took place at Harper Adams University College, an agricultural college set in the Shropshire countryside near the small town of Newport. I wasn't sure what to expect but I reasoned that as each of us had the same purpose in mind – to learn more about our chosen subject and to meet other members of the U3A – there was no need to feel apprehensive.

The start date was 14 July, Bastille Day, which was appropriate for my group as we were studying French and France. The other groups included: canals, drama through the ages, Latin, creative writing, recorders, cinema history, the native people of the Americas, and philosophy (I don't think I've left out a group – my apologies if I have – and I'm not sure that I have given each subject its correct title). Suffice it to say we were a very mixed bunch of people, which added to the friendly atmosphere.

After registration we joined our individual groups for an hour to get to know each other. There were 12 in our French group from all corners of Britain, from as far north as Oban to as far south as Poole, as well as from Wales and East Anglia. After our individual group meetings we all joined together for a 'welcome drink' before dinner, which was followed by a quiz.

The following two days were hard work, but great fun. We spent just over five hours a day – split into four sessions – with our own group, and the remainder of the time was taken up with meals, mixing with other members or 'doing our own thing'. On the second evening we were entertained by an excellent male voice choir, and on the last evening we were invited to a gala dinner (dress informal), which was a four-course meal with waiter service and was most enjoyable. On the day of departure we had two group sessions followed by lunch before going our separate ways.

Everyone I spoke to said that they had found the experience very enriching – even the hard work! I would recommend a U3A Summer School as it's a chance to meet other members from all over the British Isles; to study your chosen subject in more depth; to learn a little about other subjects; to find out how other groups run their courses; and, above all, to enjoy the conviviality of your fellow humankind. I, for one, will always look back upon my time at Summer School with fondness and joy.

I was asked to make a present for an evil queen

A day at the Royal Opera House workshops was an unexpected pleasure, says Jim Docking

Yes, I know the task in the title sounds an unlikely pursuit for a grown-up, even more so given that it occurred under the auspices of the Royal Opera House. What happened was this:

On a day last March, the ROH organised one of its pretentiously titled ‘Inspiration Days’, this one especially for U3A members, but I was the only participant from Dorking. I enrolled assuming we would learn how staged musical events are produced and rehearsed, given that the blurb had promised a workshop ‘on how major opera and ballet productions are put together’ – but not a bit of it.

To start with, the event was not in Covent Garden but in the depths of Thurrock, near the Dartford Tunnel. Here, the ROH occupies an attractively landscaped site with large purpose-built buildings, in one of which we all assembled for an explanation of what we were in for, accompanied by tea or coffee that made ‘railway tea’ a gourmet experience. It turned out that at Thurrock they don’t rehearse operas and ballets – all that is done at the ROH itself – but make the scenery and stage objects in order to ‘turn our brilliant designers’ visions into reality’, as the leaflet grandly put it.

We were divided into three groups of about 20, each headed by a guide, and during the day we rotated among three different sorts of events. My group first visited the vast building resembling an aeroplane hanger in which scenery is made. We looked down from a gallery, which gave us a bird’s-eye view of the proceedings, before descending into the workshop areas themselves. We were told that, although there was daylight from the glass roof, the artificial lighting was automatically adjusted to the weather conditions outside so that the scenery workers could see what they were producing in a constant light. What struck me was the huge number of men and women working there and the dedication they were giving to their particular task in assembling sets. In other parts of the building, we visited the carpentry and metal workshops.

We were told that the ROH made scenery for other opera houses in Europe and even South America, each piece of scenery being carefully

numbered and packed into containers. Those at the receiving end presumably had to put together a gigantic flat pack; I only hope they have more success in following the instructions than I do with these things.

We then moved on to a different building to hear short talks and watch a video about the way costumes and ballet shoes are made as well as other work that goes on behind the scenes. There was a particularly captivating clip that took us stage-by-gory stage through the construction of a decapitated head for Richard Strauss's erotic and murderous opera *Salome*. The head was cleverly shaped to resemble the singer playing the part, except that his eyes were suitably gouged out and appropriate amounts of 'blood' distributed about the face. Chilling stuff just before lunch!

The afternoon session was a real hands-on workshop, in which we sat at long tables surrounded by heaps of paper and card and numerous boxes of crayons, ribbons, adhesive tape, paste, assorted boxes and small objects. This is where, under strict orders, I underwent the unforeseen experience of making a present for an evil queen. We could work in twos or threes, and I had two ladies by me whom I quickly recruited, lacking any sort of talent for craft-making myself. Unfortunately, they too admitted possessing no creative talent and looked at me wide-eyed and helpless, hoping for inspiration. (Well, since it was called an 'inspiration day', someone had to take the initiative.)

Remembering the nefarious queen in *Snow White*, I suggested that we make a container so utterly beguiling that no one could resist opening it, but only to find that a snake jumped out emitting venomous liquid. And so the three of us proceeded to decorate a box, the ladies turning out to be much more imaginative than they had indicated. We were rescued on occasions by helpful assistants who knew just how to construct anything you cared to mention and pointed to useful materials we could retrieve from the surrounding containers.

After about 40 minutes we were asked to demonstrate our 'presents' to everyone else. Here we learnt how clever some third-agers can be. Our particular offering seemed well received, with the snake, made from concertina-shaped card, dutifully springing out when the extravagantly decorated present was opened. No venom, of course, so I had to explain that.

In the end, though, I knew what teachers mean when they say a student needs to be 'stretched' – but, strangely, I felt all the better for it, even when afterwards I had to negotiate the M25 in rush hour.

Another 'inspiration day' for U3A members will take place on Wednesday 8 October. See What's On? page vi.

Managing Your Investments

Gordon Williams suggests ways of keeping investment costs down

The system whereby financial advisers do not charge a fee but receive commission from investment managers is being phased out. Because the intermediaries will not receive commission in future, they will be making charges to investors instead.

In whatever form you hold investments, now is a good time to check the annual charges. In the UK we have very high charges due to the large number of firms in the investment chain. These include company registrars, custodians, nominee companies, fund managers, investment consultants, platforms and independent financial advisers.

The advertised cost of investments can be misleading since it does not normally include all costs, such as auditors' fees, stamp duty and dealing costs. The advertised cost of a unit trust may be, say, 1.5% per annum, but the total costs are likely to be 2% or more. At this level, over 20 years nearly half the investor's capital will be swallowed up in charges.

I have two suggestions to keep costs down:

- Use tracker funds, which generally have much lower charges, *or*
- Manage your own investments if you have the time and sufficient knowledge.

The big advantage of self-management is that you can avoid the high cost of churning the portfolio. Many managers do a lot of trading, which produces income for them but tends to destroy value.

Support for Jill Burberry's Climb in Bhutan

During the second week in October, Jill Burberry is climbing to the Eagle's Nest shrine in Bhutan for charity. She has been allotted a page by *Just Giving* that facilitates donations to Migraine Action for those supporting her climb. The link is <https://justgiving.com/bhutan-trek>. If anyone prefers not to, or cannot, find the link on their computer, Jill will be happy to do it for them on her machine. Her phone number is 01306 880653.

Monthly Meetings

The Measurement of Colour: Andrew Hanson, 12 February 2014



There was a lower than usual turnout for the February monthly meeting due to the weather, but the reduced number of somewhat damp members who braved a rainstorm of biblical proportions to attend were in for a treat.

Andrew, a senior research scientist at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), started by explaining that the NPL measures things. Not only does it measure the ‘nightmare that is colour’ in some of its 388 laboratories, it accurately measures everything from microwaves and weight to volume and everything in between. So the physicists who work there have to be able to solve the problems of how to measure virtually anything.

Question: How, for example, could one measure the volume of the cabin of a smart car? Would you fill it with water or fill it full of people or pump it full of air?

Answer: None of the above. You would fill it full of plastic balls, count them and measure their volume.*

As you might imagine, many businesses and individuals rely on the accuracy of the NPL’s results. If you are a beer manufacturer, you need an accurate colour-measurement gauge to ensure your beer is always the same colour, likewise hair dye, wine, etc. Actor, quizmaster and general knowledge enthusiast Stephen Fry is an NPL fan. Its data is always being quoted on his TV quiz, *QI*.

In the 1920s the NPL and Imperial College, London, collaborated to use 17 people (34 eyes) to define a ‘standard

observer’ based on their average response to different wavelengths of red, green and blue light. Andrew demonstrated to his audience how colour can be measured and that blue is a higher frequency than red and therefore needs more energy.

Andrew also demonstrated a verbal colour measuring machine, which, among other uses, could be helpful to the sight-impaired to ensure they are wearing matching socks or a non-clashing outfit. He demonstrated its accuracy by testing the colours of audience members’ clothes, which it identified correctly. Human flesh, however, proved more difficult, with one man’s hand being identified as ‘dark orange’. (Maybe he’s an antique dealer.)

The human eye can, apparently, differentiate between eight million colours; a computer, 16.7 million (why doesn’t my printer understand that?) Traffic lights, however, have to be a not-very-green green because of colour blindness (or ‘colour confusion’, as it is technically termed).

Colour is an extraordinarily complex area, and how it is perceived by the human eye can be substantially affected by many things, not least of which is light intensity. In the dark, blue can appear brighter (think of bluebells at night). The way we view the Sistine Chapel today must be very different from how Michelangelo saw it: close up, but without the benefit of today’s bright lighting.

* 3,441 balls, to be precise

Judy Yates

A view inside our magistrates' courts: Hilary Parker, 12 March 2014

Our speaker in March was Hilary Parker who gave an interesting insight into the workings of a magistrates' court. Hilary sits at Wimbledon Magistrates' Court, which deals with cases in south-west London.

A magistrate is a person who deals with a variety of cases, usually minor ones. However, all cases start in the magistrates' court, and more serious cases are then referred to the Crown Court. As many as 95% of all cases are dealt with in the magistrates' court and only 5% in the Crown Court. The crimes dealt with at a magistrates' court include shoplifting – especially to sustain a drug or alcohol habit, which may sometimes result in assault – domestic violence, possession of drugs, bus fare dodging, fraud and burglary, including mobile phones.

All magistrates are volunteers, and at present most are over 50 years of age. They need to have a good character, understanding and communication skills, social awareness, be of sound judgement, have maturity and sound temperament and show commitment and reliability. There is no legal training, but each new magistrate has a mentor. Three magistrates sit in the court, but they do not wear wigs as in a criminal court. The very important person sitting in front of the magistrates is the legal adviser, who is a trained solicitor and is there to help in matters of law. There are special youth courts for under-17-year-olds.

Hilary outlined how cases came to court: after a crime has been committed and reported to the police (only 30% of



mobile phone thefts are reported) investigations are carried out, and if the suspect is caught, they are arrested and charged. They are taken to the custody suite and charged by the Crown Prosecution Service. They can plead either guilty or not guilty. If they plead guilty, they are committed to a magistrates' court. Those pleading guilty have a third taken off any fine or length of imprisonment, as less time is taken having to bring witnesses, etc. Once in court, if pleading guilty, they are fined on the spot for minor charges, depending on income; but for more serious cases there may be more information needed, such as social reports. Those pleading not guilty face a trial with witnesses and, if found guilty, it has to be beyond reasonable doubt.

There are four sentences that can be passed in a magistrates' court. Very rarely there is an absolute discharge; second is a conditional discharge – this is usually awarded for a small misdemeanour, or sometimes for a first offender or young person; the third sentence, and most common, is a fine. A community charge may involve doing unpaid work, tagging, or

rehabilitation for a drug user. The last and most severe is a custodial sentence: magistrates can impose up to a six-month prison sentence.

The intention of court sentencing is to be a punishment, to reduce crime, to reform, to protect the public, and reparation. The consequences of going to court may be the loss of a job, public shame, a criminal record, visa and travel restrictions and, in some cases, higher insurance premiums.

Hilary asked all those at the meeting to spread the awareness of magistrates and help the local community to understand what is done in court and help build confidence with the criminal justice system. New recruits to the bench are needed of all ages, and anyone between 18 and 70 years of age would find it a worthwhile job.

Hilary was thanked for her very informative and interesting talk.

Judy Peace

Songs of Flanders and Swann: Stanley Griffiths and David Lane, 9 April 2014

Like many of us I was charmed in my comparative youth by the wit and warmth of Michael Flanders and Donald Swann, who were giants of the musical comedy scene in the 1950s and 60s with their revues *At the Drop of a Hat* and *At the Drop of Another Hat*. Those days appeared far simpler than our current times, and the music and lyrics of Flanders and Swann seemed to reflect this. Perhaps this was the illusion they created, because there were plenty of social and economic problems then, too. There are references to some of them among the songs such as *Slow Train* and *The Gas Man Cometh* (which resonates today) but, in the main, we remember them for the sheer musical pleasure of their ‘respectable songs for responsible people’.

Over the years the memories of their musical comedy have faded somewhat and it was a great pleasure, therefore, to be reminded of their ostensibly simple

musicality by Stanley Griffiths and David Lane, who performed some of the all-time favourites, including a number of the delightful songs about animals

such as *The Gnu*, *The Elephant*, *The Rhinoceros* and *The Hippopotamus*. We also enjoyed *In the Bath*, *A Transport of Delight* and *A Song of the Weather*, among others. My favourite remains the simple, eternally relevant comedy of *The Gas Man Cometh*.

Stanley Griffiths and David Lane performed the songs with great affection and their own brand of humour and it was a pleasure to hear once again some of the work of two such stalwarts of the British musical comedy scene of the very recent past.

Lionel Cartlidge



As winner of the History Channel competition to dive on the wreck of the *Titanic* for a TV documentary, Rob Goldsmith shared with us his interest and enthusiasm for the subject which started when he was eight years old. In 2005 he became one of 200 people who have dived on the site of the wreck deep in the Atlantic and taken film and photographs at close quarters from a submersible.

The history

Rob started his talk by giving us something of the history of RMS *Titanic*, from its conception in 1907 by J Bruce Ismay to its building by Harland & Wolff in Belfast for the White Star Line and its fateful maiden voyage in April 1912. For those who like statistics, here are some of the facts he gave us:

- Ship's capacity: 3,500 passengers, though only 2,200 plus crew were on board at the time of the sinking
- Tonnage: 46,000 (the *Queen Mary* is now bigger than this)
- 10 decks
- Designed to carry 64 lifeboats for 1,178 persons, but these were cut to 20
- Top speed: 23 knots
- Fitted with 16 watertight compartments, with the ability to remain afloat with any four of these flooded (the iceberg ruptured five)
- Powered by three enormous propellers run by steam engines.

A catalogue of circumstances, errors and mishaps contributed to the disaster, including the fact that the night of 14-15 April 1912 was cold, calm and moonless, with icebergs in the north Atlantic likely to be further south than usual. The crew's

only binoculars were in a locked box on the bridge rather than available for the use of the crow's-nest

lookout (the key to this box was later sold at auction for £90,000).



When the iceberg was sighted it was reported to Sixth Officer Moody, the captain being elsewhere on the ship at the time, and the order 'Hard to starboard' was given by First Officer William Murdoch. When this was followed by 'Stop. Full speed astern', the water flow over the rudder was reduced, causing the ship to turn more slowly than it might have done if speed had been maintained and the iceberg possibly avoided.

When the ship hit the iceberg, buckling the hull plating (partly due to weak rivets), passengers were aware of a judder but, having been assured that the vessel was unsinkable, continued what they were doing at the time. Murdoch ordered the watertight compartment doors to be closed and the pumps to be started. By midnight the ship had come to a complete halt and begun to list. The Marconi Company radio operators were ordered to send out an SOS, but as they were normally paid only for messages sent by passengers it seems they did not give priority to the distress call. The SS *California*, only 20 miles away, apparently did not take the SOS seriously and even when distress flares were sent up thought these were fireworks.

At 12.46am the first lifeboat was

launched. It contained only 28 people, when its capacity was 65, because passengers did not believe the ship was sinking. The crew were not properly trained in lifeboat drill and the launching process was long and laborious. The last lifeboat, a collapsible canoe, was launched at 2.05am, and at 2.18am the power failed. Eventually the ship split between the third and fourth funnels with 1,500 people still trapped on board or left in the ocean. The lifeboats, by then too far away trying to avoid the suction created by the sinking ship, were picked up by the RMS *Carpathia*.

The death toll in due course revealed that priority for the lifeboats had been given to first-class passengers, and there were many more fatalities among second- and third-class passengers and the crew.

The dive

Out of 30,000 entrants, Rob was chosen from six finalists who entered the History Channel competition to dive on and film the wreck. He flew to St John's, Newfoundland, in July 2005 to join the support vessel, from which a Russian submersible named *Mir* was used to reach the wreck. *Titanic* is two-and-a-half miles down, where the water pressure is three tonnes per square inch. *Mir* carried one pilot and two passengers and was under water for 12 hours. We were treated to video footage of the vessel being lowered into the water for its descent to the sea bed, which took two hours.

The wreck is buried in thick mud with about 30ft of the bow section visible

(and, no, Kate Winslet and Leonardo di Caprio are not on it!). Many life forms have been feeding off the structure, which will eventually collapse completely, but windows are still there in their frames and light bulbs are in position. Rob had filmed and showed us much of what they saw, including a fallen mast, which they followed up to the bridge, a lifeboat davit and the captain's bathroom. Other items which could be made out were dinner plates, a cup from the second-class dining area, champagne bottles with their corks still in and a lady's leather shoe. In addition, some of the boilers could be seen and the enormous bronze propellers. We felt privileged to see the murky footage of a ship which has become an icon of 20th-century disasters.

Rob's film ended with *Mir* resurfacing and being boarded precariously by the so-called 'cowboy', whose job it is to connect a tether to link the submersible to the support vessel. After 12 hours at the bottom of the ocean he said it was a relief to be given food and drink and answer the call of nature (*Mir* having no toilet facilities).

Footnotes

It is probable that Edward Smith, captain of the *Titanic*, went down with the ship, but rumours abound, one of which was that he was spotted in New York and later went to South America.

Further details and footage of the whole adventure can be found at www.robgoldsmith.co.uk.

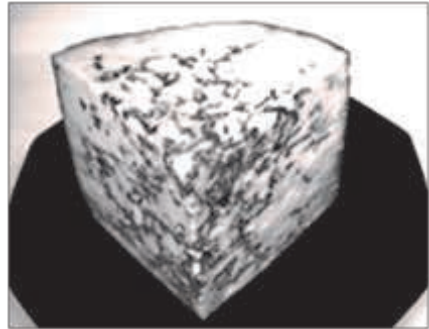
Julie Mellows

At the July monthly meeting we were given a talk on English cheeses by Rosemary Horton, a real enthusiast for her subject. She started by telling us that the origins of cheesemaking probably goes back thousands of years when nomads travelling in Europe discovered the process by accident. On their travels these peoples would have carried surplus milk in the stomachs of animals, where residues of rennet and the movement of travelling would have created a form of cheese.

The Romans were thought to have brought cheesemaking to Britain. Over the centuries the process would have been refined and improved. As there was very little direct contact between communities, particular ways of making cheese would have been confined to individual communities – resulting in a great variety of local cheeses.

The first cheese factories opened in Derbyshire during the 19th century. Nowadays only nine or 10 varieties of cheese are made in factories, but there are still a large number of locally made farmhouse cheeses. The decline in dairy farming, particularly in the South East, means a lot of milk is imported for cheesemaking. Most cheese production is in the western counties, such as Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset and Gloucestershire. In Surrey there is only one farmhouse cheese, Norbury Blue, made on a small scale at Norbury Park (using the original dairy room).

As an aside, Rosemary mentioned another cheesemaker who, some years ago, had to sell up because the layout of his site did not meet with inspectors'



approval. All his cheesemaking equipment was bought by someone with scant knowledge of the process, so he offered to tutor this new enthusiast. The operation was finally relocated to Somerset, where the two cheesemakers are now a couple and their business is thriving.

The milk required for cheesemaking needs to be of a higher quality than the milk we buy as it must have nothing that can contaminate the cheesemaking process, such as antibiotics or odours resulting from cattle feed such as kale. The milk is pasteurised to remove unwanted bacteria. The good bacteria destroyed in the process, which is needed for cheesemaking, is then added as a starter. The bacteria converts the lactose into lactic acid. Rennet, either naturally produced or made from a certain type of fungus, is then added. The latter is suitable for vegetarians, and all cheeses made with this are labelled accordingly.

The rennet causes the milk to form curds, which are then cut and cut again into small lumps until they are the size required for the particular cheese being made. It all needs to be stirred constantly

and kept warm until the curds become gritty or 'shotty'. The whey is drained off from the lumps of curd that have formed. The curd is then cut into blocks, which are piled up and turned over each day during the drying process – this is known as 'cheddaring'. The curd is put through a cheese mill, any flavourings or colourings are added, and then it is packed into containers which are wrapped in plastic or muslin and placed in cardboard boxes. The cheese is left to ripen for up to a year depending on the variety being produced.

The whey is used in several ways. Its main constituent is water, and this can be drained off leaving a type of syrup containing valuable proteins which is used in confectionery or for sweetening things such as baby food. In Ireland it is used in the production of Baileys, and it is said that it is even used to run the tractors at the plant. At one time it was used for making a type of plastic. During the Second World War, Army uniforms had buttons made from it, and it is said that certain beetles in North Africa were partial to the buttons and overnight could

eat all the buttons on a soldier's trousers, causing much consternation among soldiers who had slept in the garments.

Whey powder is a useful protein for rebuilding tissue: for example, following chemotherapy. Before the advent of modern washing powders, workers were known to soak their overalls in a whey solution before laundering.

Rosemary ended her talk with some facts about cheese: it takes eight pints of milk to make 1lb of cheese; there could be up to 700 varieties of English cheese in all, mostly from very small producers – more than in France; red Leicester is the same as white except for the addition of a flavourless vegetable dye; blue Stilton is only produced in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, but white Stilton is produced in Dorset; and Wensleydale was brought to Yorkshire originally by monks from France.

We were urged to be more adventurous when buying cheese and to get the best we can, savouring it by using less than we would normally do as it is such a special product.

Shareen Beswick

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Did You Know?

At the back of the summer edition of *Third Age Matters*, a notice advertises converting video tapes to DVDs for £10 each (ring 01477 532751). A member has tried this and found the service excellent—and much cheaper than the £35 charged in town.

Days Out

Behind the scenes at the National Theatre, 13 February 2014

On a lovely February day a coach load of U3A members travelled to the National Theatre in London. We were set down near the entrance and walked into the foyer, where some of us decided to have a coffee while we waited for our guide. There were two lay guides, and we were divided into two groups and made to wear hard hats. I wondered how dangerous it would be behind the scenes!

We were taken to one of the theatres and saw a drawing room scene being put in place on the stage for a forthcoming production. We were then taken down the corridors to behind the stage and saw where the scenery was moved by hand. It must be very hard work.

The spaces behind the stages were vast, high caverns, partly painted black, which made these areas seem very large indeed. We also saw some props stored in another area, some animals made out of rubber and various wooden shapes.



Entrance to the National Theatre Photo by Laurie von Weber

We ended our tour, taking off our hard hats and thanking our guide. As there was time left before our journey home, several people decided to go for a walk by the river, and some of us had a nice lazy lunch at a nearby pub.

It was a very interesting day out, and many thanks are due to Judy Peace and Jean Williams, who organised the outing.

Jo Thomas

Cambridge, 18 March 2014

The Hardings coach carrying 49 U3A members would usually take well over two hours to reach Cambridge, but on that fine March day we made such good time that we could stop for coffee en route at Birchanger Green Services on the M11 near Bishop's Stortford. We left the coach near 'The Backs' opposite Clare College and we were divided into three groups, each allocated to one of the knowledgeable and patient guides for a brief tour on foot of some of the sights of the city.

Cambridge is about 50 miles north-north-east of London and has been subject to four invasions: the Romans, the Vikings (ninth century), the Normans (11th century) and, most significantly, the students (early 13th century). They were escaping from those hostile natives of Oxford! Though most heavy industry has gone, Cambridge is now of world importance as a centre for scientific research in biology, physics and electronics and for the creative and pharmaceutical industries. It has been

described as ‘one of the most beautiful cities in the world’. Bicycles predominate, as students are not allowed to drive cars in the city.

Of necessity we could visit only a small fraction of the attractions of the city. From the bridge on Silver Street we could see the punts on the River Cam and the Mathematical Bridge connecting two parts of Queens’ College. We passed some of the historic churches, including St Bene’t’s with its Saxon tower. We paused by the Eagle, a famous public house, where the discovery of DNA was announced to the outside world with the words: ‘Gentlemen, we have discovered the secret of life,’ by Francis Crick in February 1953. On the ceiling of the RAF bar at the back are scrawled graffiti made by RAF and US aircrews who scorched names and numbers with candles and cigarette lighters. (How times change!) An unexpected encounter was with one of the strangest public clocks in the world: the Corpus Christi ‘Chronophage’ clock with its metallic grasshopper ‘eating’ time. Officially unveiled by Stephen Hawking in 2008, this gift from a former student – Dr John Taylor, who invented the kettle thermostat – cost £1m and took seven years to build.

The official highlight of the tour was an extended visit to King’s College Chapel. With the world’s largest fan vault ceiling, it was built in phases spanning the Wars of the Roses by a succession of English kings, from 1446 (Henry VI) to 1515 (Henry VIII), though even then without the windows. The impressive stained glass windows avoided destruction during the Civil War of 1641-45 possibly because Cromwell himself had been a student at Cambridge.



Students’ bicycles in Cambridge *Photo by Robert Edmondson*

A surprising item of decoration in the chapel was a small Christmas tree, which was in place for filming a TV programme! The imposing dark oak screen separating the nave from the altar bears the initials of both Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn and thus may be dated between 1533 (Anne’s marriage) and 1536 (her execution). On the sanctuary altar beneath the great East Window is the spectacular painting *The Adoration of the Magi*, produced by Rubens in 1634 and donated to the college in 1961. For its display major structural alterations were made to the east end of the chapel.

After leaving the chapel our ‘official’ tour ended at the Market Square, when we had a couple of hours free before catching the coach home. It was difficult to decide what to do, with so many possibilities suggested, including a visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum, a walk by the river or around the city, a return to King’s College Chapel and/or to the Eagle for a late lunch.

We would like to thank our three expert guides and the organisers, Judy and Judith, for yet another excellent educational, stimulating and entertaining day out.

Robert Edmondson

Hughenden Manor, 28 April 2014

The coach journey to Hughenden Manor was an unexpected adventure. Much credit is due to Ross, our driver, whose satnav (and several local residents) led him to two or three places where a large, self-respecting coach really should not be. His manoeuvres included turning the coach round in almost impossible places and reversing in a narrow lane a considerable distance. He got well-earned applause from his passengers.

On arrival we had a fine view of impressive Hughenden Manor set in extensive and immaculate gardens surrounded by the lovely Chilterns countryside near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.

After the inevitable, and welcome, coffee break, we were fortunate to have a very articulate and well-informed young lady as our National Trust guide. She gave us a detailed and lively account of the manor and of Benjamin Disraeli. The reception she received from her listeners showed that her talk was much appreciated.

Hughenden Manor is an 18th-century three-storey house, transformed in 1862 by Disraeli or, more accurately, by his wife, Mary Anne, after consulting with the architect Edward Lamb. We were able to explore the ground floor and the two upper levels, all of which were extravagantly furnished in keeping with Disraeli's belief that England should be ruled by aristocrats, and he lived accordingly.

The basement of the manor was occupied from 1941 by RAF Bomber Command as a highly secret base for their photographic and map-making activities and is now a museum to show



Front of Hughenden Manor *Photo by Laurie von Weber*

the work done there. The secret was well kept until 2004. Our guide gave us a summary of the life and career of Benjamin Disraeli, a truly memorable man. Born in 1804 in London to an obscure Jewish family, Disraeli was educated principally at Higham Hall School near Walthamstow. He was not a conscientious student until, at 15, he was allowed to study at home and became devoted to the classics. He did not go to a public school or university.

Flamboyant in manner and style of dress as a young man, he was influenced by Lord Byron and was widely considered a dandy. Disraeli had a successful career as a novelist. He wrote 12 novels and other fictional and non-fictional works and a political biography.

Throughout his adult life Disraeli's charm and personality resulted in many close relationships with women, particularly older, wealthy, married women. His closest friendships were with women (he was known as a ladies' man) and often sought their maternal care, their affection and their money, being unable to manage his own.

Despite his modest early education, Disraeli became a very powerful figure in English Victorian politics. He first stood for parliament as a radical independent, at High Wycombe in 1832, and twice more, and was defeated each time. In 1837 he was elected Tory MP for Maidstone. In 1847 he was elected MP for Buckingham and in 1849 became leader of the Conservative Party and held that post for more than the next 20 years. Disraeli became prime minister (for nine months) in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880, when he was defeated by Gladstone.

Among many important acts in his aggressive foreign policy he brought about the acquisition for England of a major shareholding in the new Suez Canal in 1875 and, in 1876, he crowned Queen Victoria Empress of India. He had a great respect for the monarchy and became a close friend of Queen Victoria. He died in London in 1881 and was buried at Hughenden.

Some members of his party visited the Hell-Fire Caves, near Hughenden, which

were excavated by hand under the direction of Sir Francis Dashwood in the 1740s to give employment to the villagers. The caves were, and still are, unique. Many of the great estates had landscaped gardens and temples, but at Hughenden the digging of the caves was the first time that providing a showpiece had involved an underground venture. The chalk dug out was used to build the road from West Wycombe to High Wycombe. Some 300ft deep, the caves have winding passages and a host of small chambers leading to the banqueting hall and further, over the River Styx, to the Inner Temple. The River Styx, according to mythology, separates the living world from the underworld.

Before the journey home there was time to explore the tiny village close to Hughenden Manor which boasted two coffee/tea shops and at least one pub. We reflected on a special day of activity and interest when even the weather was kind enough not to rain on us until we got back to Dorking. *Eddie Meadows*

More Romney Marsh churches, 13 May 2014

The Romney marshes were formed by sea sediment, and the area has been drained over the centuries, embankments have been built and rivers have silted up. Thus, summer pastureland became the location for permanent settlements by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086. Drainage ditches are still a feature of the landscape, and flooding occurs regularly in the winter. The medieval churches stand on the marshes as a reminder of past communities. They mostly date from the 12th century. The Romney Marsh Historic Churches Trust was set up in the

1980s to raise funds to preserve the 14 remaining churches. On our previous trip we visited the churches at Old Romney, Iychurch, Snargate and Brenzett.

Fortified by a quick coffee stop at the Rose & Crown pub in Old Romney, our first visit was to St Nicholas' Church in New Romney. John Hendy was again our guide, sharing his enthusiasm for the area and excellent knowledge of the churches.

New Romney is one of the Cinque Ports, which provided sailors and boats to defend the coast, could raise their own taxes called 'scots' (the origin of the

expression scot free) and so became independently wealthy. The town was originally on the sea edge – it's now a mile or so inland – and this is the only remaining one of four medieval churches in the town. It was begun in the mid-12th century and has a Norman nave with solid round arches made of Caen limestone, probably built by the same craftsmen as at Canterbury Cathedral. The church would have been decorated with wall paintings telling Bible stories. The church was extended in 1220 with a new chancel, which is built in the Early English style in Kentish ragstone with pointed arches, and the higher part of the tower was added, again with pointed arches. The river began silting up during the 13th century. By 1420 it was completely silted up and drainage ditches became roads. The church is slightly below the level of the road, indicating the changes in sea/ground level over the centuries. During the Reformation in the 16th century windows were smashed, statues broken and wall paintings whitewashed over. The coat of arms of Queen Anne (1665-1714) hangs on the wall

We then visited St Peter and St Paul, at Dymchurch, which was built in the mid-12th century, mainly of Caen limestone again. The unusual tower, forming part of the west wall, was built in the mid-13th century. This church was built on a natural clay knoll, which recent excavations have shown contains first and second century Roman pottery. The ancient church has zig-zag patterns on the chancel arches and the remains of two sundials set into the walls outside. The north aisle was extended in 1821 as the population grew, and a gallery was added at the west end. Modern stained-glass



Waiting to enter St Thomas Becket Church, Fairfield, which is located in the middle of a field *Photo by Laurie von Weber*

windows represent Love, Faith and Hope and include a small etching of a train in memory of a churchwarden. The medieval lead-lined font has been re-sited by the chancel arch and has staples showing it once had a lid – to prevent witches from stealing the holy water. The church has the coat of arms of George III.

After a satisfying ploughman's lunch at the same pub, we visited St Thomas Becket at Fairfield. This small church is in the middle of fields accessed via a causeway, complete with sheep, and was completely surrounded by water in February as our guide showed us in his photo. Built in the mid-12th century, the interior still shows a 15th-century king post timber-framed roof. However, the wattle and daub exterior has been rebuilt over the centuries, and the whole building was rebuilt in 1912 to replicate the original, as it was in danger of collapse. The church contains striking box pews in Georgian black and white, with a three-tier pulpit and Georgian text boards fixed to the ceiling slopes. Owing to the problem of flooding there is no

churchyard: burials took place at neighbouring churches.

The last church was St Augustine at Brookland. The land around here was reclaimed in the 12th century to grow crops, using ‘innings’ – ditches with openings for controlling the water flow. The stone building was started in about 1200, and the nave piers are irregularly placed owing to the unstable ground. It is built in the Early English style with lancet windows, and internal buttresses were added to strengthen the arcades. The two-tier pulpit has a wooden sounding board over it. The box wooden pews would

originally have been painted black and white. Much was altered in the Victorian era. The font, dating from 1175, has the impress of the signs of the zodiac and the labours of the farming year on its lead surround. Unusually, there is a massive free-standing timber bell tower, dated to 1264 by scientists using timber-dating techniques. It is 60ft high and 36ft across with three tiers of roof.

The WI provided us with a splendid tea at the Village Hall at Brookland, and we once again did battle with the M25 to return to Dorking.

Ann Watney

The White Mill and Salutation Gardens, Sandwich, 17 June 2014

On a beautiful sunny morning we had a smooth ride round the M25 and on to the furthest reaches of Kent. By mid-morning we arrived at the White Mill Rural Heritage Centre with its delightful collection of ancient buildings, including the miller’s cottage, granary, forge, wheelwright and several other workshops. Every building is packed with appropriate tools, machinery and farming equipment, all of which has been donated so it can be conserved and put on display.

The smock mill was built circa 1760 and is of the pattern where the top section including the sails is able to be turned to face the wind. The internal timbers are massive, and we marvelled at the skill of the builders in assembling the structure and making gears and drive shafts entirely from wood.

After a welcome coffee and biscuits we continued on to the centre of Sandwich and were thrilled to see a wonderful



Salutation House Photo by Laurie von Weber

abundance of medieval buildings in the old town, recently declared to be the ‘most complete medieval town in England’. It was irresistible walking round the town, following footpaths that led one to discover yet more interesting features.

Our focus for the trip to Sandwich, though, was the Salutation Gardens, or Secret Gardens. The manor house was designed by Edwin Lutyens in the Georgian style and made a wonderful

setting for the gardens by Gertude Jekyll. It was an absolute joy to wander through the diverse grounds taking in the riot of colour and scents.

We ended our visit at 4.15pm and

returned to Dorking via Dover, taking in a view of the docks and ferry terminals, which reminded some of trips to the near continent.

Betty and Tony Hall

Buckler's Hard, 16 July 2014

U3A day out took us to a beautiful part of the Hampshire coast. I last visited Buckler's Hard 45 years ago and remembered very little but the charm of the area. Fortunately, development to cater for the demands of tourism has been sensitive and subtle. Peace and tranquillity are still very much in evidence, demonstrating that it is possible to create a satisfying visitor experience without ruining the attraction.

Buckler's Hard, which is part of the Beaulieu Estate, has a long and fascinating history mainly connected with the sea and shipbuilding. In the early 18th century the second Duke of Montagu tried to build a free port for the sugar trade from the West Indies, but the project failed. However, shipbuilding soon began to thrive.

The little museum gives a comprehensive description of the ships built there, including warships used by Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar and, sadly, in some cases, how they were wrecked. More recently hundreds of small craft sailed from the Beaulieu River during the D-Day landings, and Buckler's Hard was the home port of Sir Francis Chichester while he was preparing for his round-the-world trip in *Gipsy Moth IV*. There was also a delightful, atmospheric reconstruction of the New Inn as it was in 1790.



Buckler's Hard cottages and Beaulieu River *Photo by Laurie von Weber*

Many of the cottages were open for visitors and demonstrated the lives of the families who lived there through the use of wax models and contemporaneous artefacts. The little chapel was particularly charming. This was formerly used as the village school but was consecrated in 1886 and is still in use today. Indeed, the current Lord Montagu's daughter was married there.

After lunch we were treated to a short cruise up the Beaulieu River and were given a lively description of passing points of interest. On our return there was just time for a peaceful woodland walk and a cooling ice cream after a perfect day. Many thanks to Jean and her team.

Jenny Ford

Outings by Study Groups

The Art Appreciation Group's Greenwich trip, 26 March 2014

Twenty-four members of the Art Appreciation group travelled by coach to Greenwich on a rather chilly day in March for a visit to the National Maritime Museum and the exhibition *Turner and the Sea*.

We started with the exhibition, which contained an extensive collection of works by JMW Turner, including large oils, smaller pictures in pencil and watercolour, sketches and engravings, hung alongside maritime paintings by contemporaries of Turner and earlier artists such as Willem van de Velde the Elder. The large canvasses included *The Fighting Temeraire*, voted the nation's favourite painting in a BBC poll, and the controversial *Battle of Trafalgar*, commissioned by George IV in 1822, which alludes to the human price of Britain's triumph rather than giving a more traditionally heroic depiction of a battle scene.

Later, a few of us took the opportunity to join an entertaining introductory tour of the artefacts displayed on the ground floor of the museum. These include the figurehead and stern carvings from HMS *Implacable*, formerly the *Dugay Trunee*, which was captured from the French by the Royal Navy in 1805 at Trafalgar and renamed. Of the speedboat *Miss Britain III*, our guide said it was typically British to display a boat that was narrowly beaten in the 1933 Harmsworth Cup race by *Miss America X*; however, in that same year she was the first boat to pass the 100mph mark.



Floor of the Queen's House, Greenwich
Photo by Rosemary Hobbs

Greenwich Park also houses the old Royal Observatory and Planetarium, but the weather was not conducive to enjoying a walk across the park so most of us explored other areas of the museum, such as the new Nelson, Navy, Nation gallery and the Queen's House.

It was fascinating to see the letter written left-handed by Nelson two days after his right arm was amputated in 1797, in which he wrote: 'I am become a burden to my friends and useless to my country.' Subsequently, his outstanding skill as a leader and naval tactician earned him cult celebrity status, and many commemorative souvenirs of his death are on display.

The Queen's House is highly significant architecturally, being England's first Classical building. Started in 1616, it was designed by Inigo Jones for James I's wife, Anne of Denmark, but not finished until 1638 after her death. James gave the manor of Greenwich to

Anne, allegedly for swearing at her in public when she accidentally shot his favourite dog while out hunting.

There were plenty of opportunities for refreshment stops, both in the museum and in Greenwich town centre, and many other places to visit, such as the Painted Hall in the Old Royal Naval College.

Maritime Greenwich was awarded World Heritage Site status by Unesco in 1997 and is well worth a visit if you have not been before. We were glad to escape the wet and blustery weather for our journey back to Dorking, and judged our first coach outing a great success.

Rosemary Hobbs

Science Group visit to the National Physical Laboratory, 20 May 2014

On World Metrology Day (metrology meaning the science of measurement), members of the Science, Technology and Society group attended a crowded open day at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in Teddington. The NPL is a 'leading centre of excellence in developing and applying the most accurate measurement standards, science and technology available', as the accompanying booklet describes it.

There were so many laboratories open to visitors that we had to choose which ones appealed to us most. Here are just a few of the subjects included: the safety of electromagnetic fields from sources such as mobiles and hospital equipment; optical technology such as holograms; graphene, a material discovered only in 2010, which is very thin, transparent and flexible yet tremendously strong and also a good conductor of electricity, so it has numerous potential applications; atomic clocks that measure one second to 17 decimal places; ways of measuring the health of plants by the use of satellites, very useful for farmers in drought-ridden countries where the information can be used to treat crops appropriately; new



Entrance to the National Physical Laboratory

lighting technology that could halve the amount of electricity we use; and establishing a national standard kilogram.

There were also two parallel series of half-hour lectures from 2.30pm to 7.00pm. We all chose to attend a most entertaining talk on the amazing properties of liquid nitrogen. It was given by Andrew Hanson, who had spoken at our February monthly meeting and who had alerted us to the open day.

Altogether a fascinating visit, with regrets that there was not time (or energy!) to see more. Our thanks to Sheila Green, who organised the trip.

Jim Docking

Spanish Group visit to Cantabria, Spain, 1-8 June 2014

Members of the Spanish Intermediate Conversation group spent the first week of June making the acquaintance of their Spanish U3A counterparts, UNATE, in northern Spain with a view to a linguistic and cultural interchange. This was a pioneering visit to assess its suitability for older language learners.

Under the aegis of José Antonio Herrera, director of Links into Spanish, the group flew to Bilbao, from where we were taken in José's minibus to Comillas, an attractive small town not far from Santander, where we had been booked into a four-star hotel.

Our first trip, the following day, was to La Cantábrica, a coach company with special facilities on its vehicles to accommodate wheelchair passengers and others with varying degrees of mobility. The company had been run by the same family for 108 years and the present owner, Fidel, showed how adaptable and suitable the transport is for U3A users. He assured us of the company's best attention at all times.

Our next visit was to the Learning Centre in Comillas, a beautiful old building, specially converted and fully equipped for the purpose of language teaching and immersion into Spanish. The deputy mayor greeted us and we were shown a class in progress with some American students.

Back at our hotel, we were given a demonstration of tapas making by the chef, Juan Manuel España. We participated in the preparation of ingredients for tortilla and croquetas, while members of the Press came and took photographs of the proceedings. We were able to sample our efforts at lunch,



Sylvia Herbert (group leader), the Mayoress of Comillas, and José Herrera, who organised the trip

which was augmented by a selection of delicious typical desserts.

In the afternoon, we were taken on a conducted tour of El Capricho, one of the first houses built by Gaudí in his distinctive style, for a local family whose fortune had been made in South America at the end of the 19th century.

On Tuesday, after a reception by the mayoress, we left Comillas for the famous caves of Altamira, where we were taken on a fascinating tour of a replica of the paintings executed nearly 20,000 years ago. We marvelled at the beauty and accuracy of depictions of animals and the first known European cave image of a man. After lunching on a specially prepared paella in the restaurant of the museum, we watched a demonstration of how the cave inhabitants would have created fire in damp conditions, by using leaves and twigs to hand. We were also shown how to make spears and javelins from saplings and how to aim them at animal prey, skills which we practised with more or less success.

Next we were taken to a small brewery being set up as a one-man enterprise by a young man who was also a metal

sculptor. He had made his own equipment and was trying hard to gather funding at a difficult time for the Spanish economy. We took sips of pale and dark ale and watched the automatic labelling process.

Our scheduled live broadcast on local radio had to be shelved due to fatigue and lack of time, and we made our way to the Silken Rio Santander hotel where we were to spend the next three nights. It was pleasantly situated, overlooking the sea, and handy for local shops and restaurants.

On Wednesday morning we were given a Spanish lesson by two dedicated and competent teachers, Ana and Piedad, both normally engaged in teaching English in a business context. Even our weaker members enjoyed the session and were making useful conversation by the end. A video was made of us and we watched another one showing how Spaniards use gestures to accompany speech.

The important element of our visit to Spain was now about to start: our meeting with the Spanish equivalent U3A members (UNATE) in a seafront bar. We were introduced to about 15 people who gave us an enthusiastic welcome. We were soon chatting in English (for them) and Spanish (for us) and quickly felt like old friends. We were to meet them all again in the evening at our hotel, where a fiesta had been prepared consisting of an elegant meal preceded by an ingenious game devised by José to get us talking about ourselves to the assembled group. Afterwards, a professional dancer taught us the steps of the paso doble and we were soon all twirling about happily with our new friends. Before the end of the evening many names and email addresses had been exchanged.

Thursday was a day of different experiences. We were taken by José through breathtakingly beautiful scenery under blue skies to the Picos de Europa, where eagles soared and swallows wheeled. We stopped in Potes, an ancient mountain town, where we lunched on ‘cocido’, a typical local stew, consisting of meat, cabbage, potato, garbanzos and chorizo – a very rich mixture. The climax of our visit that day was going to the monastery of Liébana, which houses a relic of the True Cross of Jesus. The keeper of the reliquary, an exceedingly elderly monk, gave a short talk and then we were allowed to file past the cross and kiss or touch a tiny exposed part of the wood – a moving experience. We went also to a museum in Potes where we were shown the ancient books and illustrated manuscripts depicting everything from Genesis to the Last Judgment.

After our last night in Santander, we proceeded to the region of la Rioja, where we stopped at a new bodega and vineyard, Pagos de Leza. We were all familiar with Rioja wines, but were pleased to sample the new ones with a delicious picnic provided for us by the owners in the grounds near the vineyard. We then drove on to our next overnight stopping place. José had surprised us by booking rooms in a very elegant parador in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, on the pilgrims’ route to Santiago de Compostela. The parador was the conversion of an ancient house and was remarkable for its great character and comfort. After dinner in an excellent restaurant nearby, some people played bridge quite late into the night.

On our last day, José drove us to another monastery, San Millán de la Cogolla de Yuso. Here we wandered through the

impressive cloisters and sacred halls and studied many more ancient and beautiful manuscripts, including the first document to be written in Castilian, as opposed to Latin, by Gonzalo de Berceo. A well-informed guide, Pilar, took us round the museum and allowed us to try our hand at writing with a feather quill and ink, as the monks had done so many centuries before.

While José took two members back to the airport for commitments in England, the rest of us were dropped in a pretty little town called Haro. We strolled around and had lunch and noted an enchanting scene of a mother stork feeding her young in a large nest precariously perched on a high roof in the plaza. There was evidence, too, that a bullfight was to take place that evening in the town's Plaza de Toros.

José returned in the afternoon and took us to our final night's abode in a hostel in a small town where a wine festival was being held. About 13 stalls, representing different bodegas, were set up around the square and locals and visitors alike were able to sample the different wines, accompanied by

bocadillos and tapas. This was all quite noisy and lively, but introduced us to the local colour of a provincial town.

Sadly, our week's visit was now coming to an end. On Sunday we were driven back to Bilbao airport, but not before we had stopped for lunch at a delightful Basque farmhouse, set in shady gardens, where peacocks strutted around us as we sipped our aperitifs. We ate in the cool, atmospheric interior, served by waitresses in traditional Basque costume. It was a fitting end to a most profitable and enjoyable stay in northern Spain.

José really did us proud and was sensitive to the requirements and limitations of an older party. His enthusiasm, care and commitment impressed and charmed us all and we would not hesitate to recommend a similar journey to other U3A Spanish groups. It was enormous fun and we spoke a lot of Spanish and made new friends, which was the main purpose of the trip. We packed in a great number of events as this was a pilot excursion, but all visits can be tailored to the needs of individual parties.

Sylvia Herbert

Science Group visit to Mullard Space Science Laboratories, 6 June 2014

The visit, in conjunction with Horsham Amateur Radio Club, comprised an introduction to the work of Mullard Space Science Laboratories (MSSL), talks on CubeSats (mini-satellites) and electronics in space and a tour of the workshops.

MSSL is a commercial department of University College London. Set in beautiful parkland on the outskirts of Abinger Hammer, it is engaged in research, development and production of

scientific instruments for installation in satellites and space probes. These are used to study the earth and its weather systems, the sun and its solar wind, the planets in our solar system and to explore deep space. The work feeds back into education, science and engineering. Some of the instruments create images of cosmic objects in various ranges of the electromagnetic spectrum, from X-rays through ultraviolet and visible light to infrared, involving specialised optics.

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A CubeSat is a small (10cm cube) and relatively light package carried by a larger satellite and fitted with specific instrumentation. These mini-satellites are affordable and accessible to universities, and a collaborative project, QB50, involving 50 universities worldwide has been set up to make use of the technology. Data captured will be beamed back to earth in an ‘open source’

format available to amateur radio operators.

Electronic components sent into space have to withstand the mechanical stress of launch and landing impact, extreme temperature ranges and temperature cycling, that is hot to cold and

back many times, which stresses components. They have to have very high reliability and a lifetime of at least 10 years, since there is no possibility of repair. Special conservatively rated components and redundant systems (duplication of critical parts) are used to achieve these ends.

We were shown a machine shop where aluminium satellite parts were being manufactured from solid billets and an electronics manufacturing area where components are mounted on circuit boards by careful hand-soldering. There was something thrilling about seeing instruments built that were for future space probes.

Mike Thurner



Scientist holding a CubeSat in front of MSSL's thermal vacuum facility

Visit to Bignor by the Latin for Today Group, 15 July 2014

Location, location, location – certainly the Romans knew all about that!

In July, some of our group visited Bignor Roman villa in the South Downs national park. Bignor is approached from the A29 Stane Street (between Pulborough and Arundel), then along

small country lanes and streams that lead into the River Arun. The villa, an affluent Roman dwelling, is surrounded by lush rolling hills and open countryside and is not overlooked – there is even a nearby vineyard.

It is 200 years since Bignor was first

open to the public, and one can visit daily from 1 March to 31 October.

Bignor's mosaic floors are well preserved and the hypocaust, bath house and north corridor are also visible. Originally the length of three tennis courts, one-third of the corridor is now exposed, the longest on display in England.

Mosaic floors illustrate stories of Venus with cherub gladiators, Ganymede carried away by an eagle, Medusa, and the four seasons. As Romans considered only gods to be perfect, there is always a mistake to be found in their mosaics, which took some of us a while to discover.

Occasional events at Bignor include falconry, weapons/armoury demonstrations and textile weaving/spinning/dyeing. The gardens have plants



Members of the Latin group at Bignor
Photo by Rosemary Harbridge

and herbs that were used by the Romans.

After an informed and informal walk round the villa, we then enjoyed lunch in the local village pub. Bignor is part of a Heritage Open Day scheme in September and is well signposted. It's worth a visit.

Rosemary Harbridge

Art Appreciation Group's Visit to the Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse at Tate Modern, 23 July 2014

We had enjoyed a session in the Art Appreciation group on the work of Henri Matisse, and since we had all heard of the amazing reception accorded to the exhibition of Matisse's paper cut-outs, we decided to see the works and draw our own conclusions. I must say that any views expressed here are mine and are not necessarily shared by all from Dorking & District U3A.

Thus it was on a hot July day the D&D U3A group joined the hundreds of visitors at the exhibition in the Tate Modern. Although Matisse had tinkered with cut-outs in the 1920s and 30s, the works in the Tate Modern come from the 1940s and 50s – the last phase of the artist's long career. The technique of

'painting with scissors' developed at the outset in the key areas of wall decoration and book illustration, in which Matisse made major contributions.

We were confronted by bright primary colours and simple cut-out shapes influenced by geometry or natural forms, including a lot of philodendron leaves. The artist's achievement is in the combination of these shapes and colours. Things reminiscent of paper chains and decorations from childhood Christmases are converted by the artist's skill and judgement into outstanding artistic expression.

Cut paper shapes were first used by Matisse to arrange elements of his intended work to his satisfaction.

Cut-outs were a means to an end, as his scenery and costume designs for a Léonide Massine ballet demonstrate. Gradually, however, Matisse recognised that his cut-outs were works of art in themselves, evidenced in his art book *Jazz*, which elaborated the cut paper techniques. As the artist's skill and experience with the techniques grew, the maquettes became larger and more complex, such as in the famous *Oceania* cut-outs that were built up on the walls of Matisse's apartment on the Boulevard Montparnasse in Paris.

I found all the works in the exhibition pleasing, but not all of them suit my taste as great works of art. To me, the most effective and absorbing works are the *Blue Nudes* – deceptively simple but beautiful forms, unlike some of the other multi-coloured but occasionally fussy



combinations. Most of all I admired the cut-outs that were designs for stained glass. These include the delightful windows for the Dominican Chapel in Vence and the work on a Christmas Eve theme, where the paper cut-outs are shown with the resulting stained glass commissioned for the Time-Life Building in New York.

I am sure that everybody from Dorking U3A enjoyed the visit and that many more such trips will happen in the future.

Lionel Cartlidge

Holidays

Croatia, 2-9 May 2014

Some 25 members set off from Gatwick and, after a good flight and a lengthy drive along the coast from Split, arrived at the Bluesun Hotel Alga, a well-appointed modern hotel overlooking the sea at Tucepi, on the Makarska Riviera, midway between Split and Dubrovnik.

Although it poured with rain on the second day, we soon chose and booked our excursions and, luckily, the sun came out for the rest of the week.

On Sunday, a group of us visited the charming old village of Omis with its imposing cliff-top castle and narrow streets with cafés. Afterwards we were taken to the village of St George, where

the 'drinks and appetisers' became a full-scale meal. (Our packed lunches were fairly rapidly binned.)

The next day, after a wild night with the Borah wind howling round, there was an outing to the Krka waterfalls, which, thanks to a very wet spring, were spectacular. With wooden walkways over rushing torrents, it was most exhilarating.

Despite all the amenities at the hotel, about half the party decided to go on the River Norin trip. First of all we visited a small Roman museum, where all the statues and artefacts had been found on the spot. It made it very real because they were so close and you were allowed to



In the stonemason school on the island of Brac. The unique white stone quarried on the island has been used in prestigious buildings such as the White House.

Photos by Elizabeth Holmes

touch the statues. After this we got into two tiny boats that were so low in the water that you could touch it. Reeds and wild flowers towered above us and we saw cormorants, a heron, an egret, an owl and lots of swallows and housemartins. You really felt very close to nature. We were also entertained by songs accompanied by an accordionist and guitar player.

Following the boat trip we were taken to a typical Croatian restaurant, where they wine and dined us copiously. Wherever we visited the inevitable cherry brandy was offered to us, which was appreciated. After a short ride through mountains and lakes we returned to our hotel, where we took advantage of the lovely swimming pool and watched the housemartins building their nests.

On Tuesday we took an island tour of Brac, famous for its hard white stone. Here we visited the stonemason school and observed pupils practising with their hammers and chisels – the purpose was to ‘hear’ the stone, though quite how this worked out with the students listening to their iPods I’m not sure!

The next day it was the turn of Dubrovnik to welcome us. Known as the ‘jewel of the Adriatic’, it is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site following restoration. Whilst it is a beautiful city, sadly the permanent population is now a mere fraction of what it was before the Bosnian war damage occurred.

The final full day offered a trip to Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovena, famous for its 16th-century Old Bridge (Stari Most), after which the town is named. The bridge was another casualty of the 1993 war, but a huge project was undertaken in 1999 to rebuild it to its original design. Some of our party opted for the included tour of Old Tucepi, visiting a typical dwelling and, of course, a further opportunity to sample the local brandies! In the afternoon we enjoyed a Riviera cruise – this time sampling herbal brandy (very ‘medicinal’).

All in all, a most enjoyable holiday – my first with the group – good hotel, good food, congenial company and an excellent variety of excursions.

Well done, Angela and Jim!

Austra Harmon

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 December *Newsletter* and *What's On?* should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **Friday 7 November 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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Croatia Holiday

Top picture: One of several amazing waterfalls in the Krka National Park, Croatia

Bottom picture: Part of the holiday group at a gala dinner in the hotel

Photos by Michael Blayney Report on pp38-39



*Top picture: Some of the Croatia holiday group in the Saga lounge after dinner, preparing to play Upwords, with the free drinks counter (!) in the background
Photo by Michael Blayney Report on pp38-39*

Bottom picture: Listening to an excellent talk on the steps of Hughenden Manor, visited on a day trip in April Photo by Laurie von Weber Report on pp26-27