



Dorking & District University of the Third Age

newsletter



The Committee – second left: Doreen Raine (Chair); others from the left: Jim Docking (Newsletter), Bob Crooks (Membership), Colin Pilbeam (Treasurer), Pam Toler (Groups Coordination), Lionel Cartledge (Minutes Secretary and Groups Coordination), Jenny Ford (New Members and Monthly Meetings), Julie Mellows (Correspondence) and Raymond Jones (Vice-Chair) *Photo by Mike Thurner*

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Inside: Letter from the Chair – **Membership News** – **Profile of our Vice-Chairman** – **Group News** – **Articles and Poetry** – **Reports on Monthly Meetings** – **Outings by Study Groups** – **Days Out** – **Holiday in Greece**

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



Jill Burberry, who climbed 10,000 feet above sea level to **reach the Tiger's Nest** Monastery (on right of picture) in aid of Migraine Action
See Jill's account of the hike on pp14-15

Days Out



Groups



Above left: Part of the party that visited the Royal Hospital Chelsea being addressed by **Pensioner 'Paddy'** (see pp26-27) and listening to a talk at Ightham Mote (see pp25-26)

Above right: **members of the Jane Austen Group on their trip to the author's house in Chawton** (see pp20-23) and meeting of the Dorking U3A Bells (see pp7 & 13) Days out and top right photos by Laurie von Weber; bottom right photo by Michael Docker

A note on the cover picture: One member (can you work out who?) was not present for the photo, but Mike Thurner cleverly 'photoshopped' her picture. In 1987 Thomas Knoll, a PhD student at the University of Michigan, took a six-month break from his studies to collaborate with his brother, John, on developing the software that, among other things, enables a photo to be transposed into another photo. Clever, of course, but can we trust newspaper photos any more?

Letter from the Chair

It has recently been my sorry and frustrating task to try to resolve issues that had arisen in the Bridge Group. I failed. As many of you will now know, the Bridge Group has been removed by its leader from our U3A.



And so, yet again, I find myself explaining our position with regard to the learning experiences offered in – and the management required of – our U3A.

Dorking and District U3A is a registered charity, and as such it has to abide by the requirements of the Charities Commission and the Principles and Objectives set out in our Constitution. The Committee and the Chairman have the duty to make certain that, to the best of our ability, we meet those requirements.

First and foremost, D&D U3A is here to provide educational benefits to third-agers. Very specifically, no qualifications are required, and none are granted. No one can be excluded from any group on the basis of failure to progress in the learning of the chosen material of the group. We are an inclusive organisation, and we all have responsibilities towards each other. To quote again one of our founders, ‘Those who teach shall also learn, and those who learn shall also teach.’

We are also given very firm guidelines regarding the management of our finances. We have a Treasurer who is a stickler for clarity and precision, and that is how it must be. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure that all the financial protocols are respected – and in this, as in other matters, the buck stops very firmly with the Chairman.

Fortunately, we have a strong and thriving U3A. We have marvellous group leaders who give and give, and give again. The same can be said of all the members of the Committee, and of all those less

* visible but essential contributors to the smooth running of this U3A. *

* However, the success of all our hard work depends on all of you, the *

* members. We need you to understand and stand behind what the U3A is *

* about. *

* I should mention again that we need still more individuals to come *

* forward to help us, and this may become acute when we have elections *

* at our AGM in May. Certain Officers will have completed their *

* permitted terms, and without Officers D&D U3A cannot exist. For *

* example, we know that we shall need a Treasurer, and there will be other *

* roles to be filled. *

* Raymond Jones mentions in his report on the National Conference *

* and AGM (p11) that two new documents have been published by the *

* National Executive Committee. The Committee is examining ways to *

* make the information in these documents available to all of you. *

* Although some of you may believe that I have morphed from *

* *Iolanthe* into the Wicked Witch of the West, my actions are always *

* intended to be for the benefit of the members of Dorking and District *

* U3A! *

* ... including my good wishes for a very happy festive season! *

* *Doreen Raine* *

Thanks and Best Wishes

Thank you to Michael Docker,
our sub-editor, and Joy Parry
(proof reader) and best
wishes to all our readers for a
wonderful Christmas

Meeting for New Members

A meeting for members who
have recently joined the U3A
will be held at the Lincoln
Arms (on the corner by
Dorking Station) on Tuesday 3
February 2015 at 11.00am.

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to each of the 37 new members listed below, who have joined since the last issue went to press. We now have 573 paid-up members. .

Mrs Elizabeth Ackers

Mr John Ackers

Mrs Shirley Andrews

Mrs Christine Blake

Mrs Sheila Cumper

Dr Keith Dakin-White

Mrs Anne Evans

Mr Brian Eves

Mrs Wendy Foley

Mrs Roberta Gallagher

Mr Constantine Giokas

Mrs Sue Giokas

Miss Alison Gray

Mrs Linda Green

Mrs Yvonne Harvey

Mr Peter Horitz

Mrs Anne-Marie Ireland

Mrs Dianne Ivings

Mr John Ivings

Mrs Jennifer Jones

Mrs Heather Keddie

Mr Ian Keddie

Mrs Diane Kemp

Miss Mollie Luther

Mrs Julie Morrish

Mr Frank Pemberton

Mr Michael Potts

Mrs Christine Price

Miss Claire Pullen

Mrs Jaqueline (Robin) Reilly

Mrs Fiona Reynoldson

Mrs Mary Rondel

Mrs Dee Selwood

Mrs Susan Smith

Mrs Carol Stewart

Ms Diane Sutton

Mrs Eve Toon

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Electronic Payment of Subscriptions

The committee has decided to offer facilities for members to pay subscriptions by Direct Debit or online (probably using PayPal) for next year (ie, year beginning 1 April 2015).

Full details will be provided in the March 2015 *Newsletter*, but in the meantime if you have any comments or suggestions, please email Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary (robertcrooks@rocketmail.com).

We will, of course, continue to accept cheques but hope that many members will take advantage of these more efficient and convenient methods of payment.

Profile

Raymond Jones, our Vice-Chairman

Raymond, the son of a hotelier, was born in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, where he lived until going to Brighton Technical College in 1954. Four years later, he graduated in mechanical engineering. He then went on to a varied, interesting and stimulating career in various engineering and managerial posts.

His first job was as a graduate trainee in the coal industry. He was then attracted to aero-engine research and worked on Concorde, the Hawker Harrier and the Black Knight rocket. During this period he was privileged to work with Sir Frank Whittle, whom he found an excellent researcher and a good companion. Later he worked on the design of flight simulators for training pilots and as a consultant with the Royal Aeronautical Society.



Returning to England after a short period in central Africa in the copper mining industry, Raymond spent 15 years as a manager for a company supplying goods and design services to the coal mining industry – a part of his career that ended abruptly with the demise of coal mining. For a short while he returned as a programme manager in the manufacture of flight simulators, ending his career as a programme manager with the British Standards Institution.

On retirement, Raymond became a National Trust volunteer at Polesden Lacey, acting as a steward, circulating among its various rooms. He enjoyed entertaining the visitors with stories about the house and its contents. Unfortunately, after 11 years, the physical demands of standing that the job entailed took its toll and he had to give up his NT work to have a knee replacement.

But he still itched for something to do and, through Joyce Kingsley-Jones at Dorking Age Concern, he learned about the U3A, readily becoming a member in August 2013. He joined the committee the following May, becoming our vice-chairman. Modestly, he says he has much to learn, but he also feels his organisational skills will allow him to offer a great deal. Raymond loves singing, as most Welshmen do, and has always been in choirs since a boy. He, therefore, quickly joined the Singing for Pleasure group and is now its convenor.

What Raymond likes about the U3A is, as he puts it, 'Everyone is young.' He enjoys the responsiveness of members and exchange of ideas, which, he says, gives him a new lease of life. He also appreciates its lack of distinction between learners and teachers and its tenet that you can start a new interest group even if no one has a background in the field. In this respect, he regards the internet as a wonderful source of ideas that can help new groups to get started.

Based on information supplied by Raymond and conversation with the Editor

Group News

Groups Now Being Planned

From the Group Coordinators

***Lionel Cartlidge (01306 898491; ljcartlidge@lineone.net)
and Pam Toler (01306 882970; pamtoler1929@hotmail.co.uk)***

We are trying to set up three new groups where interest has already been expressed:

Bridge

The former Bridge group has been removed from our U3A and is currently run as a private activity. We are aware that some of our members would prefer to participate in a Bridge group under the U3A umbrella. Our intention would be to accommodate players of all levels of ability. In order to make progress it is essential to find a member willing to act as group leader to look after the organisational side of things. Of course, he or she may be helped by other members undertaking some of the specific tasks, such as the collection of money, emailing, or setting out furniture, but we also need someone to take on overall responsibility and whose name can appear in the group listings in *What's On?*. If any member is willing to serve as group leader, would he or she please contact either of us as soon as possible.



Another area where we need help is in supporting new or inexperienced players to improve and enjoy the game. We shall be pleased to hear from any experienced bridge player(s) who will be willing to offer such assistance from time to time.

If we can find members prepared to develop a Bridge group in this way it may well be possible to meet in the Christian Centre, Dorking, on three Wednesday afternoons each month (that is, excluding the Wednesday when the U3A Monthly Meeting takes place).

Please confirm your interest in joining a new U3A group or contributing to the running of the group by emailing or phoning one of us.

History

In order to make progress with setting up a History group it is essential to discuss the arrangements at a preliminary meeting that must be well attended. An attempt to do this in September had, unfortunately, to be cancelled because there was insufficient attendance. We will set up a preliminary meeting at the Lincoln Arms if there is



enough demand. The meeting will have to consider the appointment of a group leader, the venue and timing of meetings and the material to be presented. We would like to gauge the level of positive interest before we set up a preliminary discussion.

Please, therefore, confirm your interest by email or telephone. Our aim will then be to hold a meeting in January with a view to establishing the new group from early in the New Year. Those who have expressed interest will be notified of the date.

Quilting

This will, of necessity, be a small group, but interested members will still need to agree the structure, place and timing of meetings in advance, including the desirability of guidance from experienced quilters. Our earlier attempt to set up a preliminary meeting did not have sufficient support, so we invite interested members to confirm that you wish to participate in a new Quilting group.



Phone numbers and email addresses are at the top of the previous page

Computing

We would like to hear from members who would be interested in setting up a new Computing group. It is envisaged that this would be a forum for discussion and practical projects on a wide range of computing topics, and would be of interest to more experienced computer users rather than beginners.

We feel that beginners are already catered for by classes run by other organisations such as AgeUK, Surrey Libraries and the WEA.

If you are interested, please email Bob Crooks (robertcrooks@rocketmail) and provide any suggestions you have for suitable topics.

If there is sufficient interest, a preliminary meeting will be arranged to discuss details.



U3A South-East Region Summer School, 22-27 June 2015

A large range of courses to choose from

See ***What's On?*** p.xv

Further details and application forms will be available from Julie Mellows (01306 889404) in January.

Groups Recently Started

Dorking U3A Bells

This group is now a going concern and meets in the Lincoln Arms every Friday from 10.30 to 12.30. New members are welcome. Please see p13 for a short article on handbell ringing.

Florence Reid (01306 879835)



Line Dancing

We are now up and running! We step out on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month, from 11.00am until noon, at the United Reformed Church main hall. Our tutor, Kate, is patiently teaching us key steps and dances. It's a fun way to keep both mind and body working, so if you would like to join us, please contact me on 01306 740062 or email gillcrooks1@gmail.com.



Gill Crooks

Creative Writing

Ever wanted to write but lacked the time/opportunity/confidence? Experienced and new writers very welcome. All you need is pen, paper and a sense of humour.

We meet on the 1st Friday in the month from 11.30am to 1.30pm. Please contact me by email if at all possible.

Judy Perry (01306 640388; judyperry9@btinternet.com)



Established Groups

Classical Music Appreciation

We meet on the first Friday of each month. We define classical music broadly, but tend to focus on music written between 1750 and 1900. Members are welcome to bring along CDs or DVDs of their favourite music and to introduce (as briefly as they wish) their choices, perhaps saying what particularly attracts them to their selection. However, there is no pressure to introduce music. The group leader is very happy to take on this responsibility.

Recent music has included Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, Beethoven's third piano concerto, Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, Rimsky



Korsakov's *Scheherezade*, a DVD about Elgar, various orchestral works by Mozart, and a Bruckner symphony.

We would like to expand our number a little, so we are inviting more members to join us. Existing members of the group have a range of experience of classical music, from relatively knowledgeable to complete beginners, so anyone who likes classical music or would like to learn should feel welcome in our group. The group provides an ideal place to learn about and to share the beauty of music. Please call or email me.

Mike Stewart (01306 884153; mikestewart999@btinternet.com)

Indoor Bowls

Indoor bowls has now taken over from the summer outdoor group. We meet from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on the 1st and 3rd Fridays at Horsham Indoor Bowling Centre, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham. All welcome.

Ann Watney (01306 889115; ann.watney@btinternet.com)



Mahjong

The Mahjong group now meets every Wednesday from 10.00am to 12 noon at the Lincoln Arms pub by Dorking station. There is a £1.50 charge to cover costs. Coffee and biscuits included.

The meetings include regular teaching sessions and we plan occasional 'special hands' mornings to test our skills.

We welcome everyone, so if you have never played before, come along and learn about the fascinating game of mahjong.

Phyllis Hughes (01737 479839; oakdene4@aol.com)



Photography Group Photomathon

This was not as daunting as it may sound, and members spent a challenging but enjoyable two hours in Dorking on a glorious hot afternoon in late July.

The idea came from the 10th anniversary Photomathon held in Cardiff earlier this year, in which one of the members took part. This involved taking 12 photos between 10.00am and 10.00pm on the day of the event, one for each of 12 categories. The first four categories were made known at 10am, the next four at 2.00pm and the last four at 6pm. Your memory card was checked before you started to ensure that it was empty and, when finished, you had to submit your 12 photos in the order given.



We decided to simplify things and had just six categories over two hours. Members were seen to bribe children with ice creams (with parents' permission) to capture photos in the 'Summer' or 'Lovely' categories. Sneaky photos were taken in shops or of signs to fulfil 'Red' or 'Numbers'. Animals, people or birds were caught for 'Together' and the church was snapped many times for 'Symmetry'.

No post-processing was allowed – everyone was trusted on this! – and, at our next indoor meeting, we enjoyed looking at the six chosen photos of each member who took part, commenting on them, awarding points and choosing a best in each category. *(These can be seen on the inside cover of this newsletter.)*

Many group members said that they would like to repeat the event again next year.

Pauline Bezodis

Reading for Pleasure

Healthy body, healthy mind? It is amusing to discover that three of the eight members of our Reading for Pleasure group have joined the new Line Dancing group. I am, as well, a member of Age Concern's Tai Chi classes. And I've noticed that most golf players play bridge and readers of quality newspapers tend to be avid gardeners. *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body)?

Apart from that, we are glad to welcome new members to Reading for Pleasure. We enjoy a mixture of books, old and new, serious and hilarious, novels, travel, biography, poetry – and a Christmas party – all to keep Alzheimer's at bay.

Joyce Kingsley-Jones (01306 885789; joycekingasleyjones@hotmail.co.uk)



Science

For the forthcoming monthly sessions, our members will examine and discuss women scientists; the use of clays and bentonite; the place and value of science in education; risk and risk perception; inventions and their contribution to, and their effect on, society; and where nanotechnology is taking us.

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

Sheila Green (01306 883038)



Singing for Pleasure

Please note that the group leader is now Raymond Jones (01306 713652), to whom all enquiries should be addressed.

The group is singing at Denbies during lunchtime on 8 December and would welcome your support. Please see notice on next page.





The Singing for
Pleasure and the
Dorking U3A
Bells groups are
performing
during lunchtime



at Denbies on Monday 8 December from noon onwards

Please come to support us and enjoy yourself

Age Concern Computer Drop-in Centre

On Monday, Thursday and Friday mornings, Age Concern operates a free computer help service for the over-50s living in the Dorking area. On each day there are two 90-minute sessions, 10.30 to 12.00 and 12.30 to 14.00. The service operates in a friendly and informal setting at the Mayflower Centre (shortly to be renamed The Point) at the bottom of the slope up to the Sainsbury car park in Dorking High Street. Anyone interested can register (email ageconcerndorking@yahoo.co.uk or phone 01306 899104) and opt for a day and time convenient to them. They will then be allocated a six-week period with assured availability of a computer to use.



Newcomers to computing are entered by the centre for a guided online **beginner's course**. If they have their own computer with an internet connection, they can follow modules of interest to them at home at their own speed, centre staff remaining available to help in case of difficulties. Otherwise, they can follow the course on a computer at the centre. Those who already have some computing knowledge but have issues related to specific interests or applications can benefit from one-to-one tuition focused on their specific interest, which may include using the internet, communicating through emails, online shopping/banking, organising and sharing digital photographs, writing and printing letters, keeping accounts, etc. Those without access to a computer or internet connection can be authorised to use computers at the centre on a drop-in basis.

Mike Thurner

The National U3A Conference

The conference and AGM, held last September at the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester, was attended by Doreen Raine and Raymond Jones as our representatives.

Following a welcome by the Chairman, Barbara Lewis, there was a strong programme of talks, workshops and plenary sessions, centred around the conference theme 'More Time to Learn'. The first plenary session was on a new booklet of this title. This publication outlines the aims and objectives of the U3A, underlining the fundamental principle that 'there is no distinction between learners and teachers' because the learners teach and the teachers learn. This is followed by a series of guidelines and suggestions on setting up interest and activity groups and the different ways of running them, including the use of numerous online and DVD resources to enable groups to get started even if no member has any expertise in the subject. There are also useful sections on the role of the Committee and those who oversee all the groups in a U3A.

There was also a choice of workshops. Doreen attended 'Learning Styles' and 'Technology for Learning' (the presentation of the latter can be found on the national website), and Raymond attended one workshop on using an iPad and another about being a chairman. The latter was an opportunity for chairmen and prospective chairmen to outline problems they had encountered and how they had dealt with these.

Of particular interest on the last day was a talk by Richard Faragher (pictured), Professor of Biological Gerontology at the University of Brighton and Chair of both the British Society for Research on Ageing and the International Association of Biomedical Gerontology. He emphasised that we do not die of old age, but of age-related diseases, and stressed that people's maximum lifespan hasn't changed over the ages – there have always been those who live to a great



age: what is different recently is the markedly reduced rate of early childhood mortality enabling more people to live longer. Whereas in the 16th century one baby in four would die in the first four years of life, today it's less than one baby in a hundred. Of course, the cost of treating older people is enormous, with money spent by the NHS on keeping third-agers alive roughly the same as that spent on the Ministry of Defence – and more and

more may need to be spent with an increasingly ageing population. What worries him, however, is that while many people get much better treatment than formerly, many end up living longer yet miserable lives, and that can't be right.

Whilst accepting that it is feasible and desirable to intervene with the ageing process and that ageing research is grossly underfunded, Faragher also believes that too many people 'age badly' and that the focus must also be on helping more to live comfortably. We must accept the ageing process and, of course, work for more effective treatments. However, we should also place less emphasis on striving for elusive immortality and more on helping older people to live healthier, happier lives (which itself should prolong lifespan). Clearly, U3As have a valuable contribution to make in this field.

At the AGM, we were introduced to another document called *Going Forward 2014-16*. This has been produced by the Executive Committee as a vision and mission statement to aid planning for the next three years. The main messages here are continually reinforcing the core principles of the U3A movement, managing areas of growth that put a heavy burden on all involved, getting to grips with the impact of new technology on all U3As, encouraging U3As to join local networks to provide advice and support, and being consistent with regard to all promotional publicity and training materials.

Both *More Time to Learn* and *Going Forward* will be studied by our own U3A and the Surrey U3A Network, and all important elements will be presented to our members and integrated into our practice where appropriate.

The essential business of the AGM was to elect the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Treasurer. All were-elected by a large majority, there being no other nominations.

Based on an interview by the Editor with Raymond Jones

'Members share their skills and life experiences: the learners teach and the teachers learn, and there is no distinction between them.'

Home page of the national U3A website

Articles and Poetry

The Art of Handbell Ringing

Learning the skills of ringing handbells needs hard concentration, Florence Reid and Jill Sorrell tell us

Bells in church towers were introduced into England as long ago as the eighth century, but the first tuned handbells were not developed until the turn of the 17th century. When sequences were used in church towers, change ringers used tuned handbells to practise them outside church towers. (Change ringers use a set of tuned bells in a series of mathematical patterns called ‘changes’).



Christmas is the time when handbells are most often used, and as many as five octaves can be rung in more complicated music. Nowadays, handbells are rung throughout the world, and the art is growing increasingly popular.

In our Dorking U3A group during our weekly meetings last October, we learned the experience of handbell ringing, assisted by the ringers of Banstead and Brockham. We found there was much to learn about ringing techniques, particularly the way you use your hands and arms. To ‘dampen’ a handbell, your shoulder comes into play.

Then there are skills to learn about playing staccato (making each note short and sharp) and legato (playing smoothly, without breaks between notes). All this requires a hundred percent concentration. If one of us makes a mistake or forgets to play a note, we *must* continue our playing, otherwise chaos ensues. The show must go on!

This all sounds like a serious hobby, and so it is. Yes, we do have to concentrate carefully, but we also have some very amusing moments, and none of us is perfect.

We hope to participate in the lunchtime concert at Denbies on 8 December (along with the singing group). Let us hope the clatter of cutlery and crockery will mask any errors we make!



**Belle Wringer, from a postcard
contributed by Barbara Pare**

The Tiger's Nest

*Congratulations to Jill Burberry for completing the tough climb
in Bhutan to raise money for charity*



Yes, I did it! To the surprise and delight of our guide, Karma, I did get to Taktsang Goempa, the Tiger's Nest Monastery in Bhutan.

Guru Padmasambhava was credited with bringing Buddhism to Bhutan in 746AD, and he sanctified this monastery that evil spirits were said to frequent and bring much harm to the people. It made it

one of Bhutan's most sacred religious sites. The Tiger's Nest hangs on a cliff above a forest of blue pine trees and rhododendrons at an altitude of 3,100 metres. After the Guru's miraculous journey on the back of Yeshe Tsogyal, whom he transformed into a flying tigress, he meditated there for three years, three months, three weeks, three days and three hours.

Our group of about eight people set off from the bottom of the small mountain at 8am, one member joining riders of small sure-footed ponies that took them up to a café where climbers can have a break. The rest of us walked through pine trees, over boulders, up uneven dirt tracks and climbing haphazard irregular steps. We were dressed in layers we could peel off and carry in backpacks as the day warmed up. I soon dropped behind others in our group, who were somewhat younger than me. I am 81 and was making frequent stops to get my breath.

Karma was concerned I was suffering from altitude sickness and might try to force myself. The doctors at Medwyn Surgery had equipped me with Acetazolamide tablets, which help people adapt to altitude, and I was taking half a tablet twice a day. As I had no experience of altitude sickness I feared the queasiness caused by the motion of our hotel minibus through potholes and twisting round the bends might be a symptom. Similarly, with the mild disorientation I experienced from constant physical effort and the receding landscape, I seriously feared I would have to give up. But after coffee in the café, a biscuit and an effervescent energizing tablet, recommended by Medwyn pharmacy, I realised my fears were groundless and breathed a deep sigh of relief. Karma took my backpack, I applied sun cream liberally and stripped down to a sky-blue Migraine Action cotton top over a plum-coloured

silk vest to attack the steps up which we continued the climb. There were handrails on one side of some of them, and I had a walking stick. This proved a help both for balance and to take the stress off a weak foot arch and ankle.

The views as we climbed were breathtaking: yellow rice fields far below, tiny buildings, prayer flags fluttering on poles among the trees. Paths undulated, mainly up, with some down. We had to climb higher than the monastery and down the other side of our peak to cross by a thrillingly high fast-falling waterfall much decorated with the blue, red, yellow and white flags. This gave stunning photo opportunities that combined one's image with a view of the distant temple.

When I reached the monastery I found that it consisted of a number of temples that were decorated with brightly painted scenes and various Buddha incarnations, as in shrines throughout the land. We had to remove our shoes to enter. One of the Buddha incarnations granted wishes, and I earnestly wished! There was a rail across a platform where worshippers left offerings of money, food, anything they wanted to give, and a monk poured holy water into our hands. Some devotees prostrated themselves. My money was in my backpack in Karma's possession, and I hoped the Buddha would not mind me being empty-handed. We also climbed to a rickety area where the tigress was said to have nested.

The journey back was much easier, mainly downhill, but also involving steep upward stretches. I did not get breathless, but it was tiring, and I did not dare take my eyes off the path or steps for fear of losing my footing. We stopped at the café for lunch: noodles with tiny bits of chicken attached to morsels of splintered bone; tasty and welcome, and a Pepsi Cola too.

During the final 90 minutes we flattened ourselves against the cliff to avoid being swept along by the small ponies on their way home. When I reached the coach, which was awaiting us among stalls selling figures of gods and demons, I reflected that the biggest problem for me had not been the climb, but the months between booking the trip and actually doing it! As one gets older the likelihood of injury becomes stronger, and the knowledge that many people had donated to Migraine Action in the belief that I would succeed in my venture and get to the Tiger's Nest proved a heavy burden to live with!

Donations can be sent direct to Migraine Action, 4th floor, 27 East Street, Leicester LE1 6NB, stating they are prompted by my Bhutan Trek; or they can be registered online at www.justgiving.com/bhutan-trek, or given to me to forward. To contact me, phone 01306 880653.

There is a colour photo of Jill near the monastery on the inside cover.

It Seemed To Be An Ordinary Saturday

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday
As I sat down in my comfortable chair.
A cup of tea to drink, an opportunity to think
About how normal I was sitting there.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
I could go out and buy some milk and bread.
Nothing special was in view, no urgent tasks to do,
No serious matters coming to a head.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
Perhaps I could meet Peter, an old friend.
We would argue or agree, with peaceful bonhomie
But nothing would be altered in the end.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
With weather fine a short walk in the park
Would benefit my health without reducing wealth.
I could be there and back before the dark.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
Unopened magazines lay on the table.
A situation needing concentrated reading
Of solid facts and history and fable.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
My house was quite untidy as I knew.
I must stop being static and sort things in the attic.
A massive clearing out was overdue.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday.
But then my musings took a different road.
On this third rock from the Sun evolution's starting gun
Had left our planet with a heavy load.

It seemed to be an ordinary Saturday
Till I realised how unlikely was the chance
That a being such as me could be sitting drinking tea
And playing a minor role in Life's Great Dance!

Robert Edmondson

Monthly Meetings

What happens when the oil runs out? Professor Chris Rhodes,
10 September 2014

Perhaps because of the subject of Professor Chris Rhodes's talk, more men than usual attended the September monthly meeting.

Chris is director of the Fresh-lands Environmental Actions organisation and author of numerous scientific articles. He quickly pointed out, and it is difficult to comprehend, that the world currently produces 84 million barrels of oil a day, which is a thousand barrels per second, and it will not be possible to continue at that rate. We must reduce demand – but can we do so with a heavily increasing world population?

Although there are 98 countries in the world producing oil, the major producers are Saudi Arabia and Russia, which together account for about 12% of the total.

We were told that global energy by source in 2011 was 33% oil, followed by 30% coal and 23% natural gas, with the remainder coming from nuclear, hydro and renewables. This shows how we are so dependent on carbon fuels.

Unknown to most of us, I suspect, is the fact that oil can be 'light', 'heavy', 'sweet' or 'sour' according to its viscosity and sulphur content. Light, sweet oil is best for petrol and easiest to refine, and Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran have large quantities.

It was emphasised that while we probably think of oil purely as fuel for our cars and machinery, it is also used in the manufacture of plastics, chemicals,

pharmaceuticals and many other modern materials for computers, mobile phones, etc.

Without oil and natural gas modern agriculture could not exist. In the food sector alone, both imported and home-grown, it takes some seven million tonnes of oil per year to feed Britain.

Apparently, world oil discovery peaked in 1965, and by 1980 we were beginning to use oil faster than we found it. Half of our oil supply will have gone by 2030.

The message is quite clear, he said: we need to find alternatives to oil. Although by using less oil we will emit less carbon into the atmosphere, society would collapse without alternative fuel to run it.

One possibility would be hydrogen, hailed as the perfect 'green' fuel, because when it reacts with oxygen it produces electricity, which can be used to run 'green cars'. But where does the hydrogen come from? Electrolysis of water could be one solution, but a series of figures showed that we would need 61 new power stations to provide it. The problem then is that if they were coal- or gas-fired, they would triple our carbon emissions.

Another alternative is the renewable energy of wind power but, again, with a series of complex figures, the speaker





‘Fracking is a controversial matter, and there are grave concerns about ground water contamination from the process.’

explained that we would need more than 40,000 wind turbines around the country, which would not only be difficult to achieve but also an eyesore.

Other fairly extreme options involve the use of rare earth elements (REEs). These are a little-known group of metals in the soil whose unique properties make them essential to the emerging technologies that contribute to environmental efficiency solutions. There is a problem there, however, as 97% of REEs come from China, and it is keeping them for its own use.

Chris also mentioned the possibility of growing sugar beet or rapeseed and fermenting the sugar into ethanol, but we would need approximately twice the amount of arable land than we have available.

And then, of course, there is hydraulic fracturing, better known as ‘fracking’, and he showed us a useful slide on how it is done.

Fracking is a controversial matter, and there are grave concerns about ground water contamination from the process. It is not only the fear that the chemicals that were originally present in the fracking fluid might migrate upward into the water table, but that other toxic materials, such as radon, that were confined safely within the natural prevailing geology, might be exhumed as well.

The Royal Society has concluded that the procedure is safe so long as it is strictly regulated, but how can this be guaranteed when profits are the order of the day and if the technology is employed across the world?

There are serious concerns with not only its effect on the landscape but its potential for contaminating ground water and air and weakening the infrastructure (roads and water). Most importantly, fracking cannot match the loss of conventional oil.

Chris’s view was that we must reduce our demand for oil, whether it is by any of the methods above. The obvious means is to cut our use of oil-based transportation and, for example, concentrate more on local food production; reduce petrol-fuelled cars by using electrical tram systems for local transport; and perhaps travel by foot or bicycle. We must live a lower-energy lifestyle.

With this important conclusion, which will have serious implications for government and future generations, our speaker finished a very interesting presentation.

Colin Pilbeam

A Journey in Search of Convict Ancestors: Judy Davies, 8 October 2014

There was a good turnout for this October talk. The journey was Judy Davies's own. She gave a personal and informative talk, effectively illustrated by photographs, newspaper cuttings, prison and other records. Amusing cartoon animations brought a humorous touch to many of the slides.

Judy began her talk by explaining that searching for one's ancestors is made more difficult if they bore common names, which hers did (White and Wright). An unusual occupation can make this task easier. The family belief that a forbear had been transported to Australia helped her on her way.

She found that her great-great-grandfather, George White, born in 1824, was sentenced in 1849 at Bedford Assizes to transportation for 15 years. He was a married man with one child who had been found guilty with two others of wounding a policeman while resisting arrest. The three had been found with sacks of grain and six chickens. The evidence against them seemed inconclusive and, indeed, the other two were either pardoned or served a lighter sentence. George White, however, spent some time in English prisons before being transported to Australia on board the ship *Mermaid*, arriving there in 1851.

On a long family trip to Australia, Judy Davies was able to track George White to Northampton, a town in Western Australia, north of Perth. As a prisoner, George had worked building roads and after his release became a wheelwright. He had married and had other children with another woman. Judy discovered

that a local museum had once been his house. Though she was not able to find George's grave, a local cemetery revealed the gravestone of another George White, her

ancestor's son. He had died in 1893 aged 40. In the museum Judy found a file of information provided by one Jane King. Jane turned out to be another descendant of George, this time by his second wife. The two women subsequently became friends.

Judy's voyage of discovery not only brought her the satisfaction of learning about her genealogy and of making new friends; she was also drawn to finding out what drove people to crime. In the first half of the 19th century this was often the extreme poverty experienced by the working classes in difficult economic conditions. Often for minor crimes, men, women and sometimes children were imprisoned. When the prisons were full, the authorities sent the problem away – to Australia. When New South Wales refused to accept any more convicts, further shiploads landed elsewhere: in George's case in Western Australia.

The cruelty of this punishment was exacerbated by the dreadful conditions on board the transportation ships. Many died on the voyage of sickness, starvation or shipwreck. The prisoners were brutally treated, and those who survived were



often too ill to move off the ship.

Judy had to decide what to do with all the data she had uncovered. Despite losing a large chunk of her manuscript to a computer virus, she persevered and published a book based on the information, *Selling Sparrows*, published

under the name of Judy Wright. The book was later made into a play, which was performed in Sydney.

This was a fascinating and entertaining talk, backed up by extensive knowledge of the subject.

Virginia Wheeler

Outings by Study Groups

Jane Austen Group outing to the author's house in Chawton, 20 August 2014

There was a red ring on the calendar around 20 August: Chawton Day. The Jane Austen group would be visiting the 'cottage' in Hampshire where Jane had lived from 1809 with her sister Cassandra and her mother until her death in 1817. It was here they lived quietly and comfortably and where Jane, relishing the privacy, wrote all her great books.

At first, there had been the problem of us getting there. For me, living in Guildford, Chawton is an easy car's ride, but Dorking is twice as far away and many of the members were not keen to drive. Florence and I examined other means of transport but they were all complicated and expensive.

'What if we do go by car?' (I think this came from Cynthia). 'What's the parking like and is it expensive?' I assured her that parking was easy. We merely leave the cars in the road near by and it is free to leave them there all day and every day. That did it. They were to go in two cars and I was to pick up Linda at Guildford main-line station around 10am.

And so it was. To cheer me even further was the weather: it was glorious.

I was glad of Linda's presence, as I had not driven alone to Chawton for over two years and was doubtful where to go when the A31 came to an end. It was her sharp eyes that saw the turn off to Chawton, and soon we were parking in the quiet narrow street near our destination.

Even apart from Jane Austen's presence, Chawton is worth a visit. The houses, many Elizabethan with manicured thatch and windows of diamond-shaped panes, lie behind gardens of such perfection that a weed would surely shrivel if it allowed itself to encroach.

To our relief, everyone had arrived and all were gathered in the small but delightful tearooms (unfortunately named Cassandra's Cup). Everyone was in good spirits and looking forward to visiting the cottages, which had just opened.

At first sight, the house – much too large to be called a cottage – seems opportunely situated by a crossroads, where a signpost shows Alton and

London to the north, Winchester to the south. What a bonus for bored ladies without transport, though six-horse coaches trotting by must have shaken those whose bedrooms were to the front of the house. It was known, too, for the occupants of slower-moving coaches to enjoy the spectacle of the Austen family at breakfast!

Our party of eight (pictured) was expected and greeted with enthusiasm by everyone, including my old friend Ann, and by Mary, who is now curator of the house. But before we set a foot further I persuaded everyone to come into the garden to enjoy the flowers, largely so that I could tell them of Jane Austen's family, not just the two who lived with her in the house, but the others, particularly her brother Edward Knight, who, of all the Austens, was the most fortunate.

Jane had six brothers, all except one healthy and moderately successful. Francis and Charles joined the Navy as boys and became admirals. James, the eldest, was the scholar of the family. He went up to Oxford at 14 and wrote poetry and plays. Henry, who followed their father into the Church, was largely responsible for having Jane's novels published. Edward will come later...

Though Jane's father, the Reverend George Austen, had done well at Oxford, marrying Cassandra Leigh, niece of the Master of Balliol College, he had few resources. He was an orphan, and though he had a good living, once he was dead his wife and daughters were homeless.

Neither of the girls had married. Cassandra's fiancé, Tom Fowle, a young clergyman, had died of fever abroad just months before their wedding.



The brothers had helped, having mother and sisters to stay, but what was needed was a permanent home. And only one brother had the resources to provide that.

Edward Austen, son number three, had at 12 attracted the attention of a distant cousin, Thomas Knight. Knight's family were childless and Edward found himself more often at their house in Godmersham than he was at his own. Eventually, despite Mrs Austen's protests, the Knights adopted Edward and he became the 'rich young man who did the Grand Tour' and married a baronet's daughter. Now he was rich in his own right, with estates and properties in Hampshire. It was one of these he offered to his mother and sisters.

The village of Chawton contains two properties relating to the Austens: the Great House, 10 minutes up the road; and Chawton Cottage, where the family lived until 1845 (though Jane herself died in 1817).

Fortunately, all this family information did not deter anyone, and when we entered the cottage I felt that at least everyone had an idea of the sort of people who lived there.

I think my first impression was one of



doors: there seemed to be so many between the offices and the living rooms.

In a small area between a creaking door and the rest of the house was a small, battered table – and this was the object that we all wanted to see. This object, not 12 inches across, sat on a central pedestal, and it was that on which Jane Austen penned many of her sublime novels. Her nephew wrote of her desire for privacy. Besides, her family wanted to know what she was doing. The creaking door warned her of anyone's approach, and she wrote on small pieces of paper which could easily be put away or covered with a piece of blotting paper.

The dining and sitting rooms downstairs are spacious and have an air of graciousness about them. The dining room, in particular, is full of light from the beautiful Gothic window which occupies the garden side of the house. Each room has its own fireplace, which was normally lit every day, not only for comfort, but to allow Jane to make and prepare breakfast for her mother and sister. Here, she brewed their tea and made their morning toast. On the large table were remnants of the family's original dinner set, bought especially by Jane and her brother from Mr Wedgwood's.

The drawing room, equally spacious, contains the beautiful square piano on

which Jane played. She used to get up very early to practise so as not to disturb her mother. I noticed that on the lid lay sheets of music with the written message that this was the sort of music she liked to play. It did not appear to be too difficult!

In both rooms was a guide, an unobtrusive lady who helped us with our enquiries. I think several of us appreciated their knowledge and enthusiasm, particularly as they drew our attention to things we had missed – such as the original wallpaper in one corner.

Upstairs, there were four bedrooms and a tiny box room, for storage perhaps. The best room was for Mrs Austen, the second for Martha Lloyd, the family cook, mentor and friend of Mrs Austen.

The third room, the most interesting, was shared by Jane and Cassandra, who also shared the bed. This may seem strange, but these two girls had been inseparable since childhood and had no desire for personal privacy. In this room hung several dresses in the style of those they might have worn. They were tiny, both in length and width, looking suitable for a slim eight-year-old child.

The fourth bedroom was the Admiral's room, especially furnished with naval memorabilia to remind the occupant of how proud the family was of their two sailor sons (and, of course, Jane's lovely seagoing characters).

The old quilt is magnificent, and I believe it was worked by Mrs Austen and her daughters. Again, each room had its tiny fireplace, and I can just imagine Cassandra huddling over the tiny blaze while Jane read to her the next chapter of *Mansfield Park*.

Outside, there were the kitchen; the outhouses, where the donkey to pull the coal cart for the necessary fires was

housed; a small room where a film showed us bits and pieces of the Austens' lives; and the garden: Mrs Austen's pride and joy, where, to feed the family and to save money which was still in short supply, she grew all their fruit and vegetables. Right into her seventies she tended her plot, dressed like a labourer – she, Miss Cassandra Leigh of Balliol College.

Today, the gardens are extended and set out with lawns and benches. And all around them bloom Jane's favourite herbs and flowers. Mint, lavender, camomile, autumn crocuses, Japanese anemones – and we are in August. It must be wonderful in spring.

I forgot to mention: Cassandra's Cup serves delicious lunches. A good day? I think so.

Shirley Andrews

Art Appreciation Group trip to Charleston and Monk's House, 22 October 2014

Our trip to Charleston farmhouse and Monk's House was linked to our September meeting about the Bloomsbury Group. We arrived at Charleston rather early on a bright, chilly morning and eventually had coffee before being divided into small groups for the tour of the farmhouse.

In 1913 Roger Fry had founded the Omega Workshops, of which Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell were directors. Until they closed in 1919 the workshops produced furniture, pottery and textiles designed by various young artists, including Duncan and Vanessa themselves. Some of the designs were available on scarves for sale in the Charleston shop and the Laura Ashley Company has reproduced a few of them on fabric and wallpaper.

Before this, Vanessa and her sister, later famous as the writer Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), had formed the circle known as Bloomsbury with their brother Thoby's Cambridge friends. Vanessa had also married Clive Bell, by whom she had two sons.

In 1916 Duncan and Vanessa moved to Charleston, near Firle, East Sussex. They had a daughter, Angelica, in 1918.

Together they decorated several houses, including Charleston, and carried out other commissions, including decorations for the church at Berwick, near Firle, in 1943. They were closely associated in their professional and personal lives for more than 50 years.

We were fascinated to learn about the complicated personal relationships within the Bloomsbury Group, and the number of prominent figures of the time who had connections to them. Duncan and Vanessa had moved into Charleston with her two sons, Quentin and Julian Bell, and the household was enlarged by their daughter Angelica and Duncan's lover, David Garnett, who were later to marry and produce four daughters.

John Maynard Keynes, widely considered to be the most influential economist of the 20th century, spent every weekend at the house while working at the Treasury. He had met Duncan, who was one of Keynes's great

loves, in 1908. Keynes was avidly involved in the Bloomsbury Group, in which attitudes were relaxed about homosexuality, and supported the arts in general as well as writing some important works whilst at Charleston. Clive



Bell moved to Charleston in 1939 to escape the London bombing. Other guests included Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, TS Eliot, EM Forster and Benjamin Britten, who was an avid collector of art.

We gained an impression of an extremely industrious household. The house was rather chilly and ramshackle, with ducks in the yard, a vegetable garden and furniture. Walls and floors were hand-decorated in a free and irregular style. Curtains, rugs and bedding were in original designs, many from the Omega Workshops. Members of the household and visitors would have been found sitting about in the house or the garden discussing their philosophy and artistic ideas, and their children remember having complete liberty to roam. Some of the most striking paintings in the house are those by Vanessa of her daughter Angelica as a child and young woman.

After a stop for lunch in Lewes, we continued to Monk's House (pictured) in the picturesque village of Rodmell near by, which had been the home of Virginia and Leonard Woolf from 1919, chosen

for its proximity to Virginia's sister at Charleston and for its beautiful garden, which Leonard tended. Unlike the remote Charleston farmhouse, Monk's House is adjacent to the village church and the school. We could hear the children playing as we toured the garden and were treated to a dramatic rendition by one of the National Trust volunteers of a short story written by Virginia Woolf and set in our location in the orchard.

Smaller than Charleston, Monk's House was similarly decorated with hand-crafted furniture and fabrics and paintings by other members of the Bloomsbury Group. We visited the three rooms open to the public, and the summer house where Virginia did much of her writing.

The journey back to Dorking took around an hour, and some of us who are not familiar with that area of East Sussex felt that Lewes and the surrounding area would be well worth another visit, given its proximity to home, the beautiful South Downs scenery and the number of sites of historic interest near by.

Rosemary Hobbs

Days Out

Ightham Mote, 22 September 2014

On a bright sunny morning we boarded a Harding's coach bound for Ightham Mote. The journey along the M25 went smoothly, with no delays, but this soon changed as we headed into the depths of the Kent countryside with its rolling hills and narrow, winding lanes. Our driver managed brilliantly, weaving in and out of vehicles approaching from the opposite direction, until we were faced with hedge-cutting and tree-felling machinery. Passing it was out of the question, so reverse gear was engaged until we reached a road junction and tried another equally challenging route.

Finally we reached our destination, Ightham Mote, a 14th-century medieval moated manor house close to the village of Ightham, near Sevenoaks.

After a welcome cup of coffee in the cafeteria we walked down a steep pathway, where, nestling in a sheltered wooded hollow, lies the beautiful timber-framed house surrounded by water. We were fortunate to arrive at the entrance to the house just as a National Trust guide was commencing a short introductory talk on the history of Ightham Mote.

She told us with great enthusiasm how the historian David Starkey had described Ightham as being 'one of the most beautiful and interesting of English country houses'. It was built nearly 700 years ago and has seen many changes over the years. It has had a variety of owners, including medieval knights, courtiers to Henry VIII, some colourful



Entrance to Ightham Mote Photo by Pam Chivers

characters from Victorian high society and an American businessman.

This last owner was Charles Henry Robinson of Portland, Maine, who bought Ightham from a consortium of Kentish businessmen in 1953. He was a bachelor and, for tax reasons, lived in the house for only 14 weeks a year. He made a few urgent repairs to the house and refurnished it with 17th-century English furniture, but in 1965 he decided to give the property to the National Trust. He died in 1985 and is buried in the crypt.

In 1989 the National Trust began an ambitious conservation project, which

lasted until 2006 and cost in excess of £10 million.

There are more than 70 rooms in the house, all arranged around a central courtyard, looking inwards. The house is surrounded on all sides by a square moat, crossed by three bridges. A large kennel was built in the late 19th century for a St Bernard named Dido. Ightham Mote can boast that this is the only Grade I-listed dog house.

There are many rooms to view, including the Great Hall, the old and new chapels, the drawing room and servants' quarters, all of which surround the secluded central courtyard. All of the furniture has been added since the 1950s, when the original contents were sold.

During our visit we were shown a Victoria Cross, which is displayed in the

New Chapel and was awarded posthumously to the third son of Sir Thomas Colyer-Fergusson, a former owner of Ightham Mote who died, aged 21, in 1917 at the third battle of Ypres.

After touring the house there was time to explore the nearby well kept gardens before heading back to the tearooms, where a cream tea had been included in the cost of the outing. We enjoyed large scones, clotted cream with strawberry jam and, of course, a welcome pot of tea. It was now time to head back home, passing through the quaint Kent villages along the A25 back to Dorking.

Thank you, Jean and your team, for organising another very enjoyable day out. Ightham is a real hidden gem, well worth a visit.

Pam Chivers

Royal Hospital Chelsea, 17 October 2014

We were blessed with a glorious sunny day for our visit to the Chelsea Pensioners. We arrived in time for coffee and a walk before having lunch in the café.

The hospital was founded in 1692, and its motto reads 'For the succour and relief of veterans broken by age and war, founded by Charles II enlarged by James II and completed by William and Mary, King and Queen in the Year of our Lord 1692'.

The building was designed by Sir Christopher Wren for Charles II. It was originally intended to house all Army pensioners and comprised a single quadrangle known as Figure Court. Because of the enlargement of the Forces, Wren added quadrangles to the east and west, named Light Horse Court and



The dining room

Photo by Laurie von Weber

College Court. He completed his task in William and Mary's reign.

As intended by Charles II, the 'in-pensioners' have always been organised on military lines, with a governor and other officers. The scarlet coats and ceremonial tricorne hats worn by the

in-pensioners are a modernised version of the service dress from the Duke of Marlborough's time.

The in-pensioners are drawn from Army pensioners, now both male and female, who are of good character and normally not less than 65 years old. The Royal Hospital currently accommodates up to 340, split between the Long Wards and the Infirmary. They receive board, lodging, clothing and medical care, in return for which, where they are able, the in-pensioners act as ambassadors for the hospital and the Army at home and abroad.

Two of the pensioners took us round the buildings and showed us the beautiful panelled dining room (pictured), the chapel and the Great Hall. They both gave a very entertaining talk about their roles within the hospital and the history of the living quarters, which have been – and are still being – modernised to meet an up-to-date standard with en suite facilities. They also had a very welcoming bar for the in-pensioners and their friends and families, and a few of our party were discovered in there at the end of the day!

Judy Peace

Holidays

Scotland, 28 September to 4 October 2014

This report was compiled by several members of the group

Sunday 28 September. At Euston, with great excitement as 21 members climbed aboard the train to Glasgow. At last we were off on our adventure, racing north to Scotland. But what was this? An unexpected stop at Rugby. It seems the police had stopped the train to escort away an abusive passenger. Off we went, but now we were behind a slow train! Still, we made good time, and on arrival at Glasgow we were met by our guide and travelled by coach to the hotel. Most rooms had wonderful views of the Clyde Valley, and the grounds led down to the mighty river with attractive walks along the towpaths.

Sue Sheldrake

For me, the highlight of our holiday was a day trip to Edinburgh. After a short tour of the city, we visited



Holyrood Palace (pictured), famous as the residence of Lord Darnley and his wife, Mary, Queen of Scots, and as the site of the murder of David Rizzio by Lord Darnley.

On entering Lord Darnley's apartments the atmosphere changed. It was quite a large room but dimly lit and very masculine. This cruel and jealous man guarded Mary, hoping she would die of some illness, enabling him to become king of Scotland. Poor Mary was terrified of Darnley and his band of drunken

thugs, and was made almost a prisoner in her rooms, which were immediately above Darnley's. Apart from sewing and singing, she was entertained by the young David Rizzio, her private secretary, who was always by her side providing gaiety, card games and music to relieve her dull and oppressive existence.

Lord Darnley had been a handsome young man who was now pox-ridden and unstable and is said to have been jealous of Mary's friendship with Rizzio because of rumours that he had made her pregnant. On the night of 9 March 1566, in a jealous rage, he and his nobles stumbled up the narrow staircase to Mary's rooms and dragged Rizzio out of a small room where he and Mary had been playing cards. Terrified and helpless, he clung to Mary's skirts. Darnley probably held Mary back while his bullies pulled Rizzio away from her, stabbed him 56 times and dumped him unceremoniously in her dressing room. Today, bloodstains can be traced on the smooth wooden floor, possible enhanced by a bit of red boot polish – but all adding to the atmosphere. Mary did eventually give birth to a healthy son, who became James VI of Scotland and James I of England.

Elsie Rosam

The Scottish Parliament (pictured), 'considered to be one of the most innovative buildings in Britain today', reminded me at first sight of a petrol station. Not beautiful. The plans, however, and a model showed that the buildings seen from the air represent a harbour full of ships and boats, large and small, closely packed and facing the same direction. Intriguing but not, from the



'Once we were inside the debating chamber, I fell in love.'

inside, attractive or easy to understand. Stairs went in contorted directions, and views from the windows were of small spaces and yet more windows.

Once we were inside the debating chamber, I fell in love. Golden oak of roof beams and members' seats, glass in the ceiling letting in sunlight, windows looking out on to The Craggs, all give warmth and light. The members' seats, at individual desks, face the Speaker's table in a horseshoe. There is no feeling of confrontation, as at Westminster. All in all, several weeks later, the impressions I am left with are of an exciting and inspiring home for the Scottish Parliament.

Elisabeth Gaunt

In Edinburgh we also spent a fascinating time touring the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. For over 44 years the ship served the Royal Family, travelling over one million miles and offering facilities for glittering state visits, official receptions, royal honeymoons and relaxing family holidays. We saw the royal bedrooms, offices, living room and dining room, and also the crew's accommodation, the kitchens, laundry and medical rooms, the bridge, engine



Left: The Queen's bedroom.
Right: The crew's quarters
Below: Entrance to Stirling Castle

room, and control room. Striking was the contrast between the Queen's and Duke's living quarters, the former preferring lighter furniture and more flowery fabrics. Also striking was the contrast between the royal bedrooms (modest, but spacious) and the crew's accommodation, where the ordinary seamen slept in a small, cramped galley (pictured above)

Jim Docking

On Tuesday the weather was bright and sunny. We had grand views from the hilly road to Aberfoyle, where we stopped for refreshments, walks along the river, shopping, and a fascinating talk about the different breeds of sheep and how they were crossed for best profitability – some good for meat and some for wool. A demonstration of sheep handling followed, but using Indian Runner ducks. The collie dog was very enthusiastic, shepherding them round and over obstacles.

Travelling on, we had a short stop to look at Highland cattle and Hamish, the Highland bull (pictured, p31). These cattle are hardy but gentle, the only ones to not get TB, and the oldest pedigree breed in the world, dating back to the 6th century.

Stirling Castle, our next stop, stands high on volcanic rock controlling the crossing over the River Forth. Its importance as a royal residence peaked in the 16th century when it expressed James V's power and



sophistication. From 1881 to 1964 it was the military depot for the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Major works by Historic Scotland in recent years have allowed what is arguably the finest complex of late medieval and renaissance royal buildings in Scotland – a setting for the royal Stewart court at its most brilliant.

Our last stop was at the Falkirk Wheel, the world's first rotating boatlift and Scotland's most exciting example of 21st century engineering. It connects two major canals, the Forth & Clyde and the Union, and is part of a Lottery-funded millennium project to open up the canals. It has the only tunnel in the Scottish canal system.

Along the road to the hotel, we experienced queues of traffic on the M8 around Glasgow – not surprising, as it is the busiest motorway in Scotland, carrying over 150,000 vehicles a day.

Phyllis Palfreeman

Wednesday was our day to explore the beautiful city of Glasgow. There is so much to see and so many places to visit, we could have spent the whole week there! We toured the different areas of the city, including the trendy West End, and stopped briefly at Glasgow Cathedral (pictured) with its striking architecture and beautiful stained glass windows.

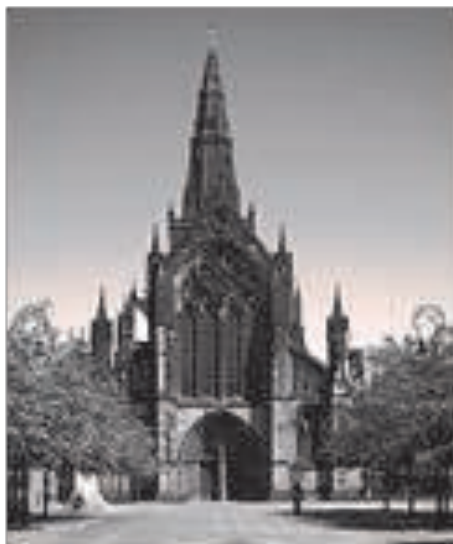
The East End of the city has seen significant regeneration in recent years, with new public amenities including the Transport Museum, to which we paid a visit and were really taken with its very interesting and engaging displays.

Then it was back on our coach and on to another of Glasgow's many fine museums, the Burrell Collection, donated to the City by shipping magnate Sir William Burrell. The building is set in lovely grounds with nearby Pollok House, a large country residence owned by the National Trust. This was our afternoon to leisurely explore it all and enjoy tea and cake in lovely surroundings, all in beautiful early autumn sunshine.

Rosemary Thompson

Today our guide was John, who arrived resplendent at the hotel in his Colquhoun tartan kilt, ghillie brogues and sporran. The trip was going to take us through the lovely lowland country to Culzeal Castle. Our scenic journey first of all took us along the coast road through Greenock, with its regeneration and new infrastructure incorporating old buildings with modern developments.

Having left the coast we passed through the green undulating fields of Ayrshire, with cattle and sheep grazing, the landscape interspersed with castles, to the breathtaking Culzeal Castle (pictured on next page),



approached through a ruined arch and viaduct. The castle is perched on a rocky promontory overlooking the sea and has spectacular views over the Firth of Clyde.

The recorded history of Culzeal starts in 1569 when it came into the hands of Sir Robert Kennedy, who was given the estates by his brother, the 4th Earl of Cassillis. The Kennedy family is one of the oldest in Scotland that can trace their ancestry to Robert the Bruce. The ownership of Cassillis Castle goes back to around 1350. Through the centuries many changes have been made to Culzeal, and in the 1780s Robert Adam was employed to redesign the castle. Unfortunately, Adam did not live to see the completion of his work, as he died in 1792. The romantic style of Adam for Culzeal, with its massing of crenellated wings, square turrets and monumental rotunda, was thought to be quite lavish in Scotland.

Having sampled the extent of the beautiful grounds and had a very good lunch we departed for West Kilbride,



Culzeal Castle from the rear with the sea in the background. Photo by Elizabeth Holmes

Scotland's only designated craft town. We were welcomed to the Craft Centre by a bevy of Scottish ladies and admired the exhibits, including basketwork, painting, textiles and jewellery.

John, our guide, said we must experience the 'Electric Brae' on a road near Dunure, a phenomenon where vehicles appear to be drawn uphill when apparently going downhill. This was quite a unique experience.

Homeward-bound we stopped at Largs for an indulgence of Italian ice cream made by the Nardini family. The restaurant was typically art deco and the ice cream was excellent. A most enjoyable day.

Virginia Johnson

On the Friday we left the hotel in pouring rain and travelled via the Gourock Ferry across the Clyde estuary to Dunoon. We drove along the coast of the Cowal Peninsular to the lighthouse, where we had a short walk along the seashore for a welcome breath of sea air. Back in the coach we explored Dunoon and then drove through the Highlands to beautiful Benmore Botanic Garden.

After a brief stop for coffee, we drove along Loch Fyne, passing a stand of palm trees which had been planted by Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise. We stopped for lunch at Inveraray, a pretty little town dominated by its castle. Then we continued on through Loch Lomond National Park to Loch Lomond itself, where we boarded our boat and sailed round the beautiful lake that is surrounded by towering mountains overlooked by Ben Nevis.

Sadly, the last day dawned. We were off to Glasgow again, this time to explore the Kelvingrove Museum. At last we were able to view a wonderful exhibition of Charles Rennie Mackintosh artefacts. Then it was off to Glasgow Station for the train home at the end of a marvellous holiday.

Sue Sheldrake



Hamish, one of the oldest Highland bulls in Scotland. He lives in Aberfoyle with his wife, Heather, and their little daughter, Honey. Photo by Elizabeth Holmes

Holiday in Greece, May 2015

We are planning a seven-day holiday (six nights) from 9 to 15 May next year. We have worked very hard, contacting many companies with respect to both mainland Greece and Crete, to find a holiday that (a) is in an attractive location; (b) is within easy access to a variety of places for day trips; (c) involves flights that are direct (for Crete you usually need to change at Athens) and at 'civilized' departure and arrival times; and (d) is good value for money. In the end, we have settled on a holiday in mainland Greece that seems to meet all those requirements.

Where are we staying?

We are staying in a small port called Tolon (sometimes spelt Tolo), near Nafplion, in a beautiful bay in the Peloponnesian Peninsular. You probably won't find Tolon in an atlas, but you should find Nafplion (sometimes spelt Navplion or Nafplio).

Who is organising the holiday?

We are arranging the holiday through Premier Travel in Reigate, but the holiday itself is organised by Sunvil Holidays. The great advantage of using Premier Travel is that we can easily discuss arrangements face-to-face; indeed, representatives have come to us!

What are the hotel arrangements?

The hotels are by the sea. Because of our likely numbers, we shall probably need to use three hotels, all with a 'really Greek' feel and just a few minutes' walking distance from each other. The hotel names are Minoa, Knossos and Romvi. All have good reviews on TripAdvisor. We have breakfast in whatever hotel we are staying at, but eat together in the evening at the Minoa, which is the largest of the three.

What is there to do?

There is plenty to do – or not do! Some interesting places to visit are within a short walking distance (ancient Assini, in the next bay), a short bus ride (Nafplion and its fortress) or involve a short coach journey of up to one hour (eg, to the ancient sites of Epidauros Theatre, Mycenae, Corinth Canal and Nemea). If only a few want to go on a trip, a taxi can be arranged. There are other trips on offer, too, such as an ouzo distillery; a cookery morning; and a trip to the islands of Hydra and Spetse, which could include a horse-drawn carriage ride on Spetse as an optional extra. A longer day trip to Athens is also possible. For major trips, we have an English-speaking guide.

How much does the holiday cost?

The cost of the holiday is approximately £623 per person for a twin/double room and £750 per person for a single room (probably a single-occupied double room). These prices include flights, transfers to and from Athens airport and half-board

accommodation. Trips involving a coach or taxi are charged separately and are usually between €20 and €50. Details of trips will be circulated to applicants for the holiday. Please note that prices may go up or down, depending on how many members come.

The initial deposit is just £50. This is a holding charge to secure the booking that is returnable if a substitute can be found. Once this is received, you will be sent a booking form to complete and asked to pay the rest of the deposit, which is £150 per person, making the total deposit £200 per person. The balance of the holiday would then be due 10 weeks prior to departure.

What are the flight times?

The flight times are as follows: depart from Heathrow on 9 May at 12.15, arrive in Athens at 17.55; return from Athens on 15 May at 13.30, arriving Heathrow at 15.30 (these are local times). We shall arrange a coach to Heathrow.

What should we do if we are interested?

To pay the initial deposit of £50, please make out a cheque to Premier Travel Reigate accompanied by:

- your name AS ON YOUR PASSPORT
- your date of birth
- whether you want a single or twin/double room

and send it to Angela Cooke, 10 Sheephouse Green, Wotton, Dorking RH5 6QW.

Premier Travel strongly advises taking out travel insurance at the same time as paying the deposit. It can arrange this for you (phone 01737 244411) or you can make your own arrangements.

It is important to send your deposit to Angela without delay since air fares are likely to increase and hotels get booked up.

Please ring either Angela (01306 883594) or Jim Docking (01737 843260) if you wish to discuss the holiday.



Diversions & Delights

Notes Left for the Milkman

For those of us who remember milk deliveries, here is a collection of notes left in empty bottles

Dear Milkman ...

- I've just had a baby, please leave another one.
- Please leave an extra pint of paralysed milk.
- Cancel one pint after the day after today.
- **Please don't leave any more milk. All they do is drink it.**
- Milkman, please close the gate behind you because the birds keep pecking the tops off the milk.
- Milkman, please could I have a loaf but not bread today.
- Please cancel milk. I have nothing coming into the house but two sons on the dole.
- **Sorry not to have paid your bill before, but my wife had a baby and I've been** carrying it around in my pocket for weeks.
- **Sorry about yesterday's note, I didn't mean one egg and a dozen pints, but the** other way round.
- When you leave my milk please knock on my bedroom window and wake me because I want you to give me a hand to turn the mattress.
- **Please knock. My TV's broken down and I missed last night's *Coronation Street*.** If you saw it, will you tell me what happened over a cup of tea?
- My daughter says she wants a milkshake. Do you do it before you deliver or do I have to shake the bottle?
- Please send me details about cheap milk as I am stagnant.

- Milk is needed for the baby. Father is unable to supply it.
 - Please send me a form for cheap milk, for I have a baby two months old and did not know about it until a neighbour told me.
 - From now on please leave two pints every other day and one pint on the days in between, except Wednesdays and Saturdays when I don't want any milk.
 - My back door is open. Please put milk in fridge, get money out of cup in drawer and leave change on kitchen table in pence, because we want to play bingo tonight.
 - Please leave no milk today. When I say today, I mean tomorrow, for I wrote this note yesterday.
 - Milkman, please put the coal on the boiler, let dog out and put newspaper inside the screen door. PS – Don't leave any milk.
 - No milk. Please do not leave milk at No 14 either as he is dead until further notice.
-



The Ightham Mote dog kennel, which is a Grade I-listed building (left), and a guide talking to the Royal Hospital Chelsea group (reports on pp25-27)

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

Contributions for the March *Newsletter* and *What's On?* should be sent to the Editor (details below) to arrive not later than **Friday 6 February 2015**.

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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Winners of the Photography Group's Photomathon
See 'Photography' in Group News, pp8-9



Clockwise from top left:

'Summer' by

Graham Speed;

'Red (Read)' by

Elizabeth

Holmes;

'Lovely' by

Pauline Bezodis;

'Numbers' by

Peter Shelley;

'Symmetry' by

Pauline Bezodis;

'Together' by

Polly Fernie

On holiday in Scotland, 28 September to 4 October 2014
See pp27-31



Clockwise from top: The Scottish holiday group by Culzeal Castle; **'Off with their heads' – Jim Docking and Angela Cooke sitting on thrones in Culzeal Castle** Photos by Elizabeth Holmes; Charles Richardson with a piper in full Highland regalia Photo by Sue Sheldrake

