



Dorking & District  
University of the Third Age

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# news|letter

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**Number 81**

**September 2015**

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

# Holiday in Peloponnesian Peninsular



Front row seats at the Theatre of Epidauros, where audiences of up to 13,000 enjoyed dramatic productions 2,000 years ago. (Photo by Michael Blayney)

A view of the magnificent Theatre of Epidauros. As long as the spectators are silent, an actor's whisper can be clearly heard on the back row. (Photo by Laurie von Weber)



*Cover picture:* Riding high for a trip round the island of Hydra, which the group visited. Donkeys, of which there are many, are the only form of transport on this peaceful island, and they are laden with goods as they climb up steps to shops, building sites, etc. (photo by Mike Thurner)

# *Letter from the Chair*

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It is just a few weeks since I was elected chairman of the Dorking U3A so I am still finding my feet and meeting many of the important individuals who make the organisation run so smoothly.

We now have a full committee of 12 members, which includes six new volunteers. As a result we have a good mix of experience and new blood, so I am sure that we can take our branch to new heights of achievement in the coming year.



Our early committee meetings have highlighted plans for the forthcoming 25th anniversary of Dorking U3A next year. We are already discussing a celebration for next summer and, hopefully, a series of events throughout the year to mark this special occasion.

The existing publicity committee is being expanded and again is coming up with ideas for getting the U3A better known throughout the area. Although we currently have over 600 members we would like to reach even more people locally who might benefit from our services.

To do all of this, and to keep our U3A running as smoothly as it currently does, takes quite a lot of work; and I would like to appeal to all our members to volunteer a little of their time towards helping this happen. Please don't think that you have no relevant skills, or time, or you don't want to make a regular commitment. Any help would be appreciated – such as putting out chairs at our monthly meetings, manning a publicity stall for an hour, or making suggestions for improving the website.

If you do step forward, you will be warmly welcomed – and soon found a job that you will enjoy and want to do. Contact any of the committee members and we will make sure you are teamed up with the right person.

The coming year is going to be important for all members, so let's join together to make it one that is truly memorable.

*Phyllis Hughes*

# Membership

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## Welcome!

A warm welcome to each of the new members listed below.

Mrs Angela Deloford	Mr Keith Nielsen
Miss Yvonne Featherstone	Mrs Patricia Norman
Ms Lalage Grundy	Mrs Diana Parsk
Mrs Carol Hoare	Ms Jaqueline Reilly
Mrs June Letheren	Mrs Kathleen Wells
Mrs Mary Mitchell	

On 1 August 2015 the total membership of Dorking and District U3A stood at 604. Of these, 516 members had renewed their subscription for 2015-16. Members who did not renew by 1 September 2015 have now been removed from the membership list and will no longer receive Newsletters or other communications. The fact that you have received your September Newsletter indicates that you have renewed your membership for 2015-16! Thank you for your continued support.

*Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary*

## Our Website

Our website ([www.dorkingu3a.org.uk](http://www.dorkingu3a.org.uk)), already the subject of praise from enquirers, is in the process of being further developed. Now that around three-quarters of members have internet access, the intention is to make the website useful to members as well as potential members and the general public.

At the moment, you can use the website not only to find details of our activities as reported in *What's On?* but (on the Home page) to get the latest news about our activities (including any changes and cancellations) and to view a series of photos about our activities. The Newsletter page is an archive of articles from previous editions, and the Membership page enables you to renew your annual subscription online.

In the autumn, Michael Docker, the webmaster, plans to develop the site further.

Please visit our website to learn more about what's going on in the Dorking & District U3A.

# Group News

## Groups Now Being Planned

### *\*Proposed Wine Appreciation Group*



Some people have expressed a wish for a wine appreciation group. If you are interested, please phone or email one of us and we will investigate further.

**Lionel Cartlidge (01306 898491; [ljcartlidge@lineone.net](mailto:ljcartlidge@lineone.net))**

**Pam Toler (01306 882970; [pamtoler1929@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pamtoler1929@hotmail.co.uk))**

### *\*Proposed Drama/Performance Group*

This time next year, the Dorking & District U3A will be celebrating 25 years of learning together. Would you like to take part in a celebratory performance at the anniversary dinner?

We need a group of enthusiastic people to share ideas and skills to make this a glittering performance.

Can you sing? Can you dance? Are you prepared to stand on a stage and perform in any way? Can you sew? Can you make or provide props? Do you just have good ideas?



Please talk to me if you would be interested. You never know, interested members might then form the nucleus of an ongoing drama or performance group, hitting the footlights in their Third Age!

*James Dark (01306 730590)*

### *\*Archaeology*



We are always interested in establishing new members' groups provided there is sufficient support and we are able to identify a group leader. The most likely candidate for early activation is Archaeology in which a number of members have already recorded an interest. It is a vast subject and it will be essential to discuss and agree a manageable approach to it. We do intend, therefore, to have a preliminary meeting for this purpose (and preferably to identify a group leader) probably in early October. More details will be provided in due course. In the meantime, if you are interested in the subject but have yet to record your interest, then please e-mail or ring Lionel Cartlidge, Groups Co-ordinator, on 01306 898491; e-mail: [ljcartlidge@lineone.net](mailto:ljcartlidge@lineone.net).

## Established Groups

### *#Music Theory*

The new Music Theory group has attracted a viable number of interested members, and we now have a waiting list. Please get in touch with me if you would like to join the waiting list.

We'll start with the very basic methods of music notation, continuing gradually through all the elements of 'grammar', including rhythm, pitch, form and style. Sounds rather dull? – It won't be!

It will start at my house in Dorking – 13 Norfolk Road – unless two flights of stairs cause a problem to anyone, in which case we'll have to go somewhere else (with a piano).

We plan to meet every Wednesday of the month, from 10.30 to 12.30 from 9 September.

*Jill Sorrell (01306 740732; [jillsorrell@talktalk.net](mailto:jillsorrell@talktalk.net))*



### *\*Singing for Pleasure*

We sing a variety of music, and have a lot of fun as well. At the moment we are singing some folk songs, songs from the shows, and songs that we all know and love.

The choir is very friendly and open to new members and their ideas. Do come along – just drop in and see how you like us! No auditions.

We are desperately short of men! So, guys, if you enjoy singing please just turn up and give us a try.

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays from 10.00-12.00 in the Reading Room, Buckland. £18 per quarter for rent of room with piano and refreshments.

*Meike Laurenson (01737 248909; [m Laurenson@talktalk.net](mailto:m Laurenson@talktalk.net))*



# *Our New Chair and Vice-Chair*

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*To get to know them better, we are putting some questions to our new committee members. We start in this issue with the Chair and Vice-Chair, both new to the U3A as well as the committee.*

Phyllis Hughes

**Phyllis, can you tell us a little of your early life – where you were born, childhood, education, career?**

I was born and brought up in West Norwood in South London and went to school there and in Dulwich. I was lucky to be part of the generation that was able to pick almost any career – with background and education being no barrier to getting on. I wanted to be a journalist and joined the local newspaper where I covered everything from flower shows to court cases to royal visits. I spent my career as a hard-news journalist working at every level from local papers to Fleet Street. I was also the editor of several local newspapers and an editorial trainer.



**What led you to join the U3A?**

My husband was working in Singapore and we were living there. I had to make new friends and find new interests through the expat community. It made me realise that I would have to go through the same process when I returned to the UK and I started to investigate various organisations that catered for those who did not work. I knew about the U3A from being a journalist so it was one of my early calls.

**Have your expectations of the U3A been fulfilled? If so, in what respects especially? If not, why not?**

I was very surprised that the U3A did so

many different things. I knew about the groups, but did not appreciate the variety of meetings, outings and holidays that were also offered. I also did not expect people to be as friendly and welcoming as they have been, which has been fantastic.

**What U3A activities do you enjoy most, and why?**

I'm the leader of the Mahjong Group, which I really enjoy. I learnt to play in Singapore and found it a fun game that you could take part in without being too serious. The Dorking U3A group has the nicest, funniest, chattiest people, who

make every session a real joy. I like teaching newcomers as it is a pleasure to see them unravel the mysteries of the game – and then beat the rest of us.

### **What contributions can you bring to the committee?**

The committee seems to be exceptionally well run with a group of enthusiastic and skilled members. It will be difficult to offer something that they don't do already, but hopefully I will learn from them and add to what the U3A is offering.

### **What developments do you think could make our U3A even better than it is?**

I think the U3A does excellent things, but is not as well-known as it deserves to be, so it will be a priority to look at that. For me this will include developing our website so that people can easily access the information they want and receive

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***'The U3A does excellent things, but is not as well-known as it deserves to be, so it will be a priority to look at that.'***  
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news and comment more quickly. I also feel that society has changed since the U3A was formed in the 1970s and the needs of retired people are quite different now. Our aim should be to meet those needs and challenge the U3A set-up if it would benefit our members.

### **Outside the U3A, what are your main interests?**

Learning Latin. This is my number one interest at the moment. I didn't learn it at school and always wanted to. Now I have the chance and I love it. Apart from that my interests are reading, walking, travelling, golf, gardening and journalism – I still write and sub-edit when I can.

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Keith Dakin-White

### **Keith, can you tell us a little of your early life – where you were born, childhood, education, career?**

Brought up in Wimbledon – went to grammar school and then on to Royal Holloway College, London University, to read biochemistry.

I later took an MA and doctorate at King's College, London. I work for the Open University as a tutor in the health sciences and teach courses in a range of subject areas, including cell biology, human physiology and global health issues.

I am also currently studying for an MSc in medicinal chemistry with the OU.

### **What led you to join the U3A?**

I feel that adult education and 'learning for life' are important in the modern world and that education should not just stop when we leave school. I have an interest in philosophy (as well as science) and discovered that the Dorking U3A has a group in these subjects meeting on a regular basis, so I decided to get in contact and have now joined the group as a permanent member.

### **Have your expectations of the U3A been fulfilled? If so, in what respects especially? If not, why not?**

I am becoming more involved since I initially joined the Philosophy Group and

also belong to the Science and Technology in Everyday Life group as well. I have also attended two of the monthly meetings, which I found most interesting, together with a day course run by the Surrey U3A Network at the Yehudi Menuhin School on the 'Future of the NHS', which I also found interesting and thought-provoking.

**What contributions can you bring to the committee?**

I feel that it is important to offer to help wherever possible with organisations such as the U3A otherwise it is left to just a few willing volunteers. If everyone works together, tasks generally become much easier to achieve!

**What developments do you think could make our U3A even better than it is?**

I hope that as the new Vice-Chair, I shall have the opportunity to meet with lots of different members and groups both in the Dorking U3A and also with other U3As and be able to discuss and consider new ideas and suggestions. I believe the introduction of MOOCs (massive open online courses) may be an interesting way forward which we should explore.  
[See next article]



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***'It is important to offer to help wherever possible... otherwise it is left to just a few willing volunteers. If everyone works together, tasks generally become much easier to achieve!'***  
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**Outside the U3A, what are your main interests?**

My wife, Susan, and I enjoy travelling, and since both of our children are currently studying in the USA, we are taking the opportunity to visit them and explore different parts of the country. My work for the Open University and a second master's degree obviously keep me busy.



# Articles & Verse

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## MOOCs and Me!

*Geoff Saunders introduces a new way of learning from the finest organisations and experts in the field*

**M**assive open online courses (MOOCs) are largely free online courses provided by a variety of institutions around the world. Among them are some of the most prestigious universities and best-qualified lecturers you can find. Institutions have banded together to provide courses. For example, the Open University belongs to a consortium called Future Learn, which includes universities from around the world with the European Space Agency, the British Museum and others.

Courses are provided in a huge range of subjects, in fact, almost all the subjects you would find in a traditional university and might like to find in the U3A.

The courses usually have a start date and a progression of lectures through the subsequent weeks, usually eight to 12. Students watch videos, follow links, read papers and contemplate problems. Feedback to the course tutors is normally via a 'blog', open to all and allowing students to comment on each other's remarks. Tutors comment too. While students are expected to follow, more or less, the chronology of the course, the material is available for some weeks after its first release.

### **Could MOOCs work for you and the U3A?**

I have followed a number of MOOCs, and enjoyed updating and expanding my knowledge on different topics. Personally I get more from group discussions of material rather than just from blogs. To expand and update knowledge for a subject area, a group might choose a course,

#### *Areas included in MOOCs*

Art, Architecture and Design  
Biology and Life Sciences  
Business and Management  
Chemistry  
Computer Science: Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Vision  
Computer Science: Programming and Software Engineering  
Computer Science: Systems, Security, Networking  
Computer Science: Theory  
Economics and Finance  
Education  
Energy and Earth Sciences  
Engineering  
Food and Nutrition  
Health and Society  
Humanities  
Information Technology and Design  
Languages and Literature  
Law  
Marketing and Communication  
Mathematics  
Medicine and Pharmacology  
Music, Film and Audio  
Personal and Professional Development  
Physical and Earth Sciences  
Physics  
Social Sciences  
Sports  
Statistics and Data Analysis  
Teacher Professional Development  
Veterinary

follow it individually but review it together and perhaps appoint a member to make blog postings and to report back. This might be particularly useful when a new group is established, or when a new topic is undertaken by a group.

Groups or individuals might like to explore the MOOC resources available on the websites indicated below to see if any would fit with their programme.

### Websites to start with

- **www.technoduet.com** has a good list of course providers, showing links to many sites, including those I have used.
- **www.futurelearn.com**, as mentioned above, includes the Open University.
- **www.edex.org** includes the Australian National University, Harvard and MIT.
- **www.coursea.com** includes London University, Princeton and Stanford.

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## Transport

What carries me from day to day?  
I do not know, I cannot understand.  
A moving stage; it never stops  
It brought me to the here and now.  
The new grows, as old decays.

'Tis strange: we take that long voyage  
Through life but cannot see the means  
Of transport moving us from age to age  
Or even be aware of being carried on  
A line called time we only know as now.

That present and only now is always here.  
Memories, stored shades of time gone by,  
Lie randomly within us defining who we are.  
Knowledge gained through life is filed  
Away for easy or involuntary recall.

Now is now. There should be more.  
We call it future and make plans  
To mould it to our will,  
But whatever may befall there is a time  
When we will have a now no more.

*James Gordon*

# The MoonWalk

*On 16 May 2015 Juliet Eberle walked 30 miles through the streets of London by night to raise money for charity. Here she describes her exhilarating experience.*

**Y**ou are like an old motor car,' the orthopaedic surgeon said. 'The bits wear out!'

'I am doing the MoonWalk in six weeks' time, and that is final. My health MOT says I have the fitness level of a 25-year-old, and your job is to mend "old motor cars",' I replied.

'How old are you?' he asked.

'Sixty,' I answered, not that I could understand the relevance of the question.

So – one arthroscopy later – five days after the operation I was back in the gym; three weeks later a 16-mile walk; four weeks later back into circuit training; five weeks later a 30-mile walk with 3,500ft of climbing, feeling confident and eager for the following weekend to do the WalkTheWalk cancer charity walk round the streets of London through the night into the early morning.

Each year this event raises over £3 million in aid of breast cancer research, and each year up to 15,000 women and men enter into the challenge of walking either a half or full marathon – dressed in their bras and other attention-seeking gear – round a well-marshalled route taking in some of the most iconic and fascinating parts of London.

Although the capital is quieter than in the bustle of the working week, London never goes to sleep; and, for me, it never feels more lively than when I am walking at around 4½mph, footfall after footfall, bridge after bridge, along the Thames, then over Tower Bridge, past St Paul's Cathedral, up the Mall, past Buckingham Palace, Marble Arch, the full circumference of Hyde Park...

But Battersea Bridge and taking in the earliest light of dawn was the highlight: quite breathtakingly beautiful, with only a couple more miles to go before the end. Then across the finishing line, mostly with those people having done the half-marathon only, in among the first 60 returning full marathoners. I decided the orthopaedic surgeon was not such a bad 'car mechanic' after all: not a single twinge of pain from the mended knee! I was tired, but happy.

Then, best of all? Yes, darling husband had got up early and was there at the crack of dawn to meet me and wheel me home, complete with the biggest, hottest cup of tea ever!

Of course I was not the oldest ‘motor car’ there. I came with a friend who turns 70 this year, who has been doing long walks for less than a year. She finished it in eight hours, enjoyed it, and to quote: ‘My special thanks to you, as you introduced me to an aspect of life which I had not considered before. It has been amazing beyond words to walk long distances, particularly those with you and our dogs.’

In fact, it was announced on the evening in the Moonwalk Tent that the oldest walker there was a gentleman of 90 with his wife in her 80s. So, come on Dorking U3A, let’s get a team up for next year’s MoonWalk! There is hope for us all yet.



**Juliet (right) with Soraya, her Iranian friend**

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## The Ferry story

*Joy Keen’s paternal grandmother was called Ferry, a member of a family of Huguenot refugees in the late 17th century. Here she tells us about the Ferrys’ enterprise and inventiveness as silk weavers in Spitalfields.*

**T**he Ferry story starts in France in the 1680s. The family belonged to a strongly Protestant sect, the Huguenots, many of them skilled craftsmen, the Ferrys being silk weavers. France was a Catholic country and persecuted the Huguenots, many of whom fled to England, at that time a place of refuge. Among them was Jacobus Ferry and his wife, bringing with them a young baby, also named Jacobus. He grew and married and there was a son, John, the first of a series of John Ferrys which reaches to this day.

The John born in 1781 followed the family trade, living in Spitalfields. He was a thoughtful man and he invented a key improvement in the handloom for weaving silk, using feet rather than hands to work the battens.

He sent the information to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, which awarded him a silver medal and £5. He later invented an instrument for drawing out terry wires, which previously was done painfully by hand. For this he was awarded £3. But John felt this was not enough reward for many hours' work, and he wrote to the society to complain: 'I feel it my duty to inform the Society that the getting up the invention for drawing out terry-wires cost me at least ten shillings and three days loss of time... I hope the Society will pardon the very rude manner in which I have expressed my mind, and remember the poor weaver's education is very humble.' But no notice was taken of his letter. These improvements are, I believe, still in use today.



**John Ferry, founder of the family firm of silk merchants**

Over the years, the spinners managed to survive but did not really prosper. In the 1830s, however, Queen Adelaide heard of their plight and poverty and ordered a Silk Ball to be arranged. All those invited, men and women, had to wear Spitalfields silk. Laura, my sister's daughter, has a small frame containing a piece of ivory-coloured silk with a pale mauve fleur de leys woven in it, a remnant from Queen Adelaide's ball gown. This was a turning point for the family.

There was at that time yet another John Ferry, born in 1814, who grew up to be a silk merchant and founded the family firm, which continued to supply silk to the tailoring trade in Savile Row until it was sold in 1974, at which time there were four directors, another John Ferry, plus Marjory Ferry and Jack and Geoffrey Coucke, which brings us up to date with that line.

In 1906 Cecily, my father's sister, was sent to visit her Ferry grandmother in a rather spooky house in Epping Forest. She knocked on the door and Granny opened it a crack and whispered. Cecily thought she heard 'Come in, I am dying!' Frightened, Cecily followed her upstairs and into the bathroom. In the bath were some brightly coloured curtains which Granny was dyeing!!

# Monthly Meetings

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Two Kinds Of Teardrops: Michael Grillo, 11 February 2015

**T**wo *Kinds Of Teardrops* was a hit song for legendary rock star Del Shannon in 1963 and provided our speaker, Michael Grillo, with the evocative title for his captivating presentation at our meeting in February. The lyrics of the song, thoughtfully projected on to the screen by our editor, Jim Docking, before the performance, gave the capacity audience an indication of what to expect.

An accomplished songwriter, musician and entertainer, Grillo performs at venues around the country as his alter ego Mike Vandetta, singing and accompanying himself on guitar. At our meeting he presented an in-depth exploration of the eerily parallel professional pathways of two iconic singer-songwriters: Roy Orbison and Del Shannon. We were treated to some illustrative visual clips and samples of their hit records spanning almost five decades, which had many of us tapping our toes and mentally singing along.

Roy Kelton Orbison was born in Vernon, Texas, on 23 April 1936. Given his first guitar for his sixth birthday, within a year he had decided to dedicate his life to making music, and at the age of eight he first appeared on local radio. Through his high school and college years Roy formed successful bands, having resolved to become a professional musician, heavily influenced first by Hank Williams, then Elvis Presley, and later encouraged by Johnny Cash. In 1956 Roy and his band, the Teen Kings,



**Michael Grillo (photo by Angela Rixon)**

were contracted to Sun Records and had their first major hit with *Ooby Dooby*, but after touring and some disputes Orbison split with the band to concentrate on song writing. He married his girlfriend, Claudette Frady, in 1957. His song *Claudette* was sold to the Everly Brothers.

Songwriter Joe Melson joined forces with Orbison and together they worked on the development of Roy's unique voice and style of presentation, first producing a modest hit, *Uptown*, and later the infinitely more successful *Only The Lonely*. At last Roy Orbison, the performer, was in high demand and, now with a young son, he was able to move his family to Nashville. He had to modify his voice during the production of *Running Scared*, which was based on the

rhythm of Ravel's *Bolero*, making his sound even more distinctive and leading to a succession of hit records in the 1960s.

A landmark tour with the up-and-coming Beatles raised Orbison's profile in the UK, by which time he had acquired a nickname, the Big O. However, his continued touring took a toll on his marriage and he and Claudette divorced in 1964, but remarried in 1965. The couple shared a lifelong love of motorcycles and, while riding together in June 1966, Claudette was struck by a truck and was tragically killed.

The Big O threw himself into work, writing and touring, but in September 1968 tragedy struck again when he had news that his home in Tennessee had burned down and his two eldest sons had died in the fire. The youngest son, aged three, survived and went to live with his grandparents.

In 1969 Roy married Barbara Jakobs, a German teenager, with whom he had sons in 1970 and 1974. By 1977 his health had declined, and the following year he underwent triple coronary bypass surgery, despite which he continued to smoke heavily and to work hard.

A remake of *Oh, Pretty Woman* and film work revived the Orbison brand and, eventually, in 1988 he joined the supergroup known as the Traveling Wilburys, with Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Jeff Lynne and Tom Perry, but in December of that year he suffered a massive heart attack and died at the age of 52.

Del Shannon was born Charles Weedon Westover in 1934, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and became a rock'n'roll singer, perhaps best known for his 1961 chart topper *Runaway*. As a

boy he learnt to play ukulele and guitar and loved country music. Serving in the army in Germany in 1954 he played in a band and, after discharge, worked as a carpet salesman and truck driver, performing in his spare time as rhythm guitarist in a group known as the Moonlight Ramblers, which he eventually took over in 1958.

He changed his name to Charlie Johnson and that of the group to the Big Little Band Show, soon introducing talented keyboardist Max Crook to the group. It was when Westover and Crook signed as recording artists in 1960 that Westover became Del Shannon.

Following the success of *Runaway* in 1961 hits quickly followed, including *Hats Off To Larry*, *Little Town Flirt* and *Two Kinds Of Teardrops*. In 1963 he became the first American to record a cover version of a Beatles song, with *From Me To You*. Shannon worked tirelessly through the sixties on both sides of the Atlantic and frequently changed labels.

The seventies brought him mixed fortunes, mainly due to his alcoholism, which he finally conquered in 1978. In 1983 he was divorced from Shirley Nash, his wife of 30 years, with whom he had three sons. His pure country-rock style and unique falsetto also kept him in the charts throughout the eighties, notably with *Sea Of Love* in 1981, and in 1986 he married Bonnie Leanne Tyler.

Interestingly, he was nominated as a possible successor to Roy Orbison in the Traveling Wilburys, but by February 1990, suffering from depression, Del Shannon killed himself with his .22-calibre rifle at his home in California. His wife, Bonnie, attributed the suicide to his use of the prescription drug Prozac

Michael Grillo's skilful narrative moved to and fro between the two artists, tracking the timelines of their careers until their untimely deaths. He took us on an absorbing journey which ended all too

soon, and most of us left the hall with compassionate thoughts of tears of joy and pain, and with minds full of song.

*Angela Rixon*

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## Where does our water come from? Daniel Woodworth, 11 March 2015

**O**ur original speaker, Bob Baldry, was unfortunately ill, and his place was bravely taken by Daniel Woodworth, who works for the Sutton and East Surrey Water Company under the unusual title of leakage manager. Daniel had not given this talk before and was somewhat overwhelmed by the size of our audience. However, he quickly warmed to his task and rarely had to refer to his notes.

His talk was illustrated with some fascinating slides, which ranged from meaningful graphs to thought-provoking archival material.

Sutton and East Surrey is one of 34 water companies in England and serves 650,000 customers. Its borders reach from Morden, Surrey, in the north to the Gatwick area in the south, and from Westcott on the west border to Bough Beach, Kent, on the east.

The company celebrated the 150th anniversary of its formation last year, although the merger with the Dorking Water Company, which had been formed by Act of Parliament in 1869, did not occur until 1959. Even today, one old pumping station remains in Dorking High Street.

Originally, water was delivered through pipes formed from elm tree trunks and, even today, main water pipes are referred to as 'trunk' mains. In about 1870 cast iron was used to replace the



**Bob Baldry (right) talking to two members after the presentation (photo by Angela Rixon)**

wooden mains, and in Dorking one important role of the iron pipework was to supply water to the fire hydrants situated around the town. By the 1900s, piped water was introduced to properties throughout the area to cope with the exponentially increasing demand.

At the present time, 85% of our local water comes from aquifers in chalk and greensand underground layers, extracted by means of boreholes sunk to depths of 90-180m. It is then pumped to treatment works, including those at Reigate and Leatherhead, and is stored in underground tank reservoirs such as the one at Tower Hill. The remaining 15% of our water comes from the company's only above-ground reservoir at Bough Beach, near Edenbridge, which is filled

from the River Eden during the autumn and winter months.

Daniel then moved on to the subject closest to his heart. As the company's leakage manager, the conservation of water supply is his top priority. He proudly informed us that the Sutton and East Surrey area had an extremely low leakage rate. At least 1% of mains are replaced every year and customers are encouraged to fit water meters and to be aware that the protection of our precious water is in our individual hands.

The supply of water to Dorking was at great risk during the floods of

December 2013, when flood water threatened to engulf the switch gear at the Leatherhead pumping station. Happily, the situation was resolved by fixing barriers around the vital equipment in the nick of time.

Daniel concluded his lecture on the positive note that there should not be the need for a hosepipe ban this summer, which left the avid gardeners among us in high spirits. He took a range of questions from the floor and was given a well-considered and justified vote of thanks by Henry Willis on behalf of the members.

*Peter Crook*

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## A Tour of the Universe: John Axtell, 8 April 2015

A good crowd turned up to hear John's talk, which he subtitled 'A Quick Whizz around the Universe'. John is a U3A member from Woking and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, so he came well equipped with facts and pictures to help us take the tour. He promised this in stages, first the sun, then the solar system and on to other galaxies, then speculation on the possibility of life elsewhere.

He started by reminding us of Douglas Adams's comment from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: 'Space is big. Really big.' To give some sense of the scales needed to talk about the universe he illustrated the speed of light and how far light travels in a year: six million million miles. This unit, a light year, is needed to talk about the size of our unremarkable galaxy, 100,000 light years across.

Our solar system is located in on unremarkable arm of the galaxy, not even near the centre. But the universe doesn't

stop there, for there are billions of similar galaxies, each with perhaps 200 billion stars, in total more stars than grains of sand on the earth. Very big indeed. And the distances within galaxies are vast, too: our nearest stellar neighbours are more than four light years away. John then showed how to find one in the night sky, Sirius, visible near Orion some eight light years away. Not really that near!

Equipped with these measurements, and sense of scale, John showed pictures of the sun, revealing some of its secrets. We saw sunspots and the 'boiling' surface where magnetic fields twist the plasma into hoops, loops and flares. These give rise to the aurora we see at the poles, and the strange corona visible during a solar eclipse. A current mystery is why the temperature of this corona is so much higher than that of the sun.

To illustrate the scale of the solar system, John showed a small dot travelling across a picture of the sun, revealing the relative sizes of the sun and

the Earth. So we moved on the planets, until recently nine in number. But controversy surrounded the discovery of small planets, so the International Astronomical Union agreed new criteria about what could be called a planet. Pluto didn't meet the criteria and was reclassified as a dwarf planet.

John showed recent pictures of Mercury taken from a NASA spacecraft, *Messenger*, currently in orbit around the planet. In the pictures, the small rocky planet looks remarkably like our moon. Moving on, we saw simulations of the surface of Venus, perpetually shrouded in thick sulphuric acid clouds. The runaway 'greenhouse' effect caused by the clouds means the temperature at the surface is high enough to melt lead. Not surprisingly, no manned mission to Venus can be envisioned but, as the brightest object in the sky, Venus is dear to us as either the Evening or Morning Star.

Stopping briefly to look at the moon, John moved on to Mars, often viewed as the next destination for human exploration. Mars has frozen poles, and has recently been shown to have water. Evidence of this water is visible in the topography, and in a picture of sedimentary rocks taken by the NASA *Curiosity* rover currently exploring the Martian surface.

John's talk helped show just how much space exploration is under way. Yet another NASA space probe, *Dawn*, is currently orbiting Ceres, a large asteroid now classed as a dwarf planet. Already it has shown us pictures of another moon-like object with bright white spots where recent impacts have taken place.

The next and largest planet, Jupiter, is also currently visible, a very bright



**John Axtell, our speaker**

object high in the south. Galileo's observations of Jupiter and his discovery of its four largest moons unsettled scientific and religious opinion at the time. Jupiter itself is a gas giant, with an active colourful atmosphere and storms visible with a small telescope. The Galilean moons, too, are visible to amateur observers and are currently the object of much interest as some have icy surfaces and probably oceans beneath the ice. The warmth to keep water liquid comes from the tidal effect squeezing the moons on their orbits of the huge planet. Could there be life there? Spacecraft are being designed to try to answer that question.

Saturn is probably everyone's favourite, such a weird world with its beautiful rings. But John pointed out these are possibly temporary, perhaps caused by a comet disintegrating as it came too close to the planet. They may be gone in a few tens of thousands of years. While they persist, they are spectacular, and a current space probe,

*Cassini*, has taken remarkable pictures, some including our own Earth.

Speeding up on our tour, we quickly peeped at Uranus and Neptune before moving on to the now dwarf planet, Pluto. It, too, is the subject of a current space mission by the nuclear-powered *New Horizons*, launched by NASA in 2005 and due to encounter Pluto in July this year. Already, information returned from the spacecraft has shown us that Pluto is in fact a cluster of many different objects.

Reaching warp speed to conclude his talk, John took us to various structures in deep space which have been studied from the Hubble Space Telescope: stars forming in a giant gas cloud; the Orion Nebula; also a star factory, visible as a smudge in Orion's sword; and the Ring Nebula, the death throes of a star not unlike our own. Eventually, some four billion years hence, our sun too will explode, like the Crab Nebula observed

by Chinese astronomers in 1054. When that happens, the elements built up in the sun's nuclear furnace will be recycled in a cosmic cataclysm, perhaps helping to build a new solar system not far from our corner of the galaxy.

A question from the audience touched on the source of Earth's water, thought to be comets, but currently unresolved despite the recent visit of the *Rosetta* spacecraft to a comet. Another asked about dark matter and energy, thought to comprise most of the 'stuff' of the universe and being sought by the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva.

John certainly delivered his promised quick whizz around the universe, in non-technical language, giving the audience a perspective on the current state of knowledge and leaving us with the thought that there can never have been a more exciting time to be an astronomer.

*Geoff Saunders*

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A report on the May monthly meeting will appear in the December issue

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## All I Ask is a Tall Ship: Geoff Saunders, 10 June 2015

**A**s a schoolboy Geoff Saunders had gazed through his classroom windows watching ships in Dublin Bay, yearning to travel. He'd watched the film *Mutiny on the Bounty* and become fascinated by Pitcairn Island, where the crew ended up and their descendants still live. So when he discovered that he could join the crew of the boat that starred in the television series *The Onedin Line* and cross the Pacific, he jumped at the chance.

Geoff, 52, a Dorking & District U3A committee member, spent three months

on the *Soren Larsen*, the 100ft boat with 12 sails to take her across the seas.

He joined the ship at Balboa, at the entrance to the Panama Canal, as one of 20 raw recruits. He climbed to the topmasts, swabbed decks, mended sails, cooked, cleaned, learnt knots, discovered how to coil ropes, hoisted and lowered sails – and all against the background of a gently rolling ship and an empty horizon.

Geoff even navigated the ship, at times by the stars. 'Sunset was the best time, when they first appeared,' he explained. 'We'd use a sextant to fix our

position. At night, if you were lucky, you'd have stars around, so you'd steer the ship towards one and just keep going. It got more complicated when it was cloudy!

'We all had to take night watches. But there was always someone around to help – a small permanent crew taught us and supported us.'

During the voyage they stopped at the Galapagos

Islands, famous for the studies carried out by Charles Darwin that helped him form his views about the origins of the species.

'The wildlife was amazingly unafraid,' said Geoff. 'They just sit there and look at you, no matter how near you get.' He showed a picture of a cow next to one of the island's famous giant tortoises, pointing out that the cow was the exotic species because it was not native to the islands.

They travelled on to Easter Island and were able to see the original quarry where the famous giant heads were carved. Geoff said there were scores of unfinished masterpieces. Production had stopped when most of the islanders were seized and taken to Peru as slaves.

The next stop was the Marquesas Islands, made famous by the artist Paul Gauguin, who lived and died there. They are also famous as the birthplace of the tattoo, brought back to the UK by sailors. Ink was tapped into the skin using slivers



**Geoff on board the *Soren Larsen* during his Pacific voyage**

of bamboo. 'Ta-too,' Geoff said. 'It copies the sound as they hammer in the ink.'

The voyage ended in Tahiti. 'It was really strange, quite a culture shock. For months we'd sailed the oceans and visited remote places. Suddenly we were back in the world of cars, motorbikes and tourists.'

His favourite island was Pitcairn. 'It was tiny – only one mile by two. There was no harbour and we had to be ferried in by small boats like everything else. Pitcairn Island is famous for its stamps, and people often send mail. I was different and had mail posted there from the UK, though we had to send it before I left!'

He explained that the mutineers chose the island because it had been wrongly positioned on the charts of the day. As a result they were never discovered.

*Pat Smith*

## The Crop Circle Mystery: Andy Thomas, 8 July 2015

The controversies surrounding the formation of crop circles were highlighted by expert in the unexplained Andy Thomas.

Andy told members of the Dorking U3A at their July meeting that there was more to crop circles than met the eye with more than 10,000 examples having been recorded throughout the world.

The first written evidence of them dates from 1678 in Hertfordshire when they were thought to be the work of the devil. To this day the mysteries of how they are created remain with theories ranging from being man-made, through geological influences to aliens.

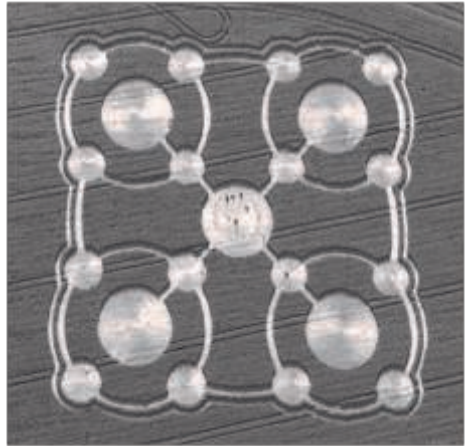
From 1932 photographic evidence appeared showing that they were formed in many crops including wheat, barley, rapeseed, sweetcorn, wild grassland and heather.

‘What is amazing is that the crops are not just flattened as they would be if a plank or garden roller was used. The stems of the plants are interweaved very carefully and stalks are never broken or damaged,’ he said.

Publicity in the 1960s showed relatively simple circles with limited designs, but during the 1980s the patterns became increasingly complex with the majority showing geometric shapes with sophisticated mathematical relationships between the symbols.

‘Mathematically crop circles are of great precision. The geometry is very precise. However they are being made, it is with incredible genius.’

Scientists in the United States estimated that to recreate one complex crop circle with the required accuracy



**Increasingly complex crop circles began to appear during the 1980s**

would take experts nine days. Yet eye witnesses have seen the patterns emerge in less than an hour.

‘One of the most complex appeared near Stonehenge, within sight of the main A303 road, in broad daylight. Those who saw it say it was created in 45 minutes.

‘Some people have estimated that they are made by the military but then why are they created so publicly?’ said Andy. ‘Others think geology plays a role and it is apparent that there are clusters of crop circles in areas of the UK where there is chalk.

‘Tests have revealed that electronic equipment such as cameras and mobile phones seem to go wrong inside the crop circle and then work perfectly once the owner steps outside.

‘Others have reported feeling unwell after being near a crop circle.’

By the end of the 1990s designs were getting really complex and some were

interpreted as predicting natural events. What appeared to be a representation of the near solar system showed the planets in a particular configuration. When this exact line-up occurred some years later there was a massive solar flare.

‘So could it be that nature is warning us in some way of things we need to be aware of,’ asked Andy.

Crop circles appear in many countries round the world including Britain, Canada, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Croatia and Australia. But in North America there have been hardly any at all.

‘One of the most controversial circles appeared in 2002. It looked like the face of an alien with a disc covered in rectangles. Computer experts recognised the rectangles as a system known as ASCII which can be read by a computer. The exact message they deciphered was:

‘Beware the bearers of false gifts and their broken promises. Much pain but still time, believe. There is good out there. We oppose deception. Conduit closing.’

Although Andy has studied the subject for 25 years, interviewed eyewitnesses, talked to mathematicians, science experts and the sceptical, he said he was still unable to draw any conclusions about crop circles.

‘This is one of the more alluring aspects – it is something we are unable to explain. Crop circles don’t give us any answers, only questions.



**Andy Thomas, the speaker (photo by Phyllis Hughes)**

‘But if it is nothing else they are great designs, giving us grace and beauty and art.’

Andy Thomas is a leading expert on crop circles and other unexplained mysteries, as well as history. Among his other talks are Unexplained Mysteries and Cover Ups, Lewes and Bonfire Night, An English History of Freedom and a Conspiracy History of the World.

For further details see [www.truthagenda.org](http://www.truthagenda.org)

*Phyllis Hughes*

# *Days Out*

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## **Dennis Severs' House, 24 February 2015**

**M**ost things are made dramatic by candlelight, as members of Dorking U3A discovered recently when they time-travelled back into the mysterious historical imagination of Dennis Severs.

His former home at 18 Foley Street, Spitalfields, proved a lifetime's passion for the eccentric Severs who, having ripped out the electricity and other 20th-century home comforts, set it up as a Georgian still-life drama. He lived within the rooms of number 18 and invited friends, and then the curious public, to dwell and reflect on his unique artistic interpretation.

It was in the 1970s that Severs openly rejected the 20th century, instead utilising his innate talent for style and the theatrical to fill the house – built in the 17th century for immigrating Huguenots – with the trappings and scents of his imaginary Jervis family of silk weavers.

This is no stately home, no dry museum, but as Severs wanted: an experience, as if you were passing through a painting. He felt that each of the 10 rooms harboured 'spells' that swiftly engaged the visitor's imagination.

We are asked not to talk, but to explore in silence, as we ascend the creaking staircase and explore each candlelit room setting of 17th-century life with its echoes through to the early 20th century.

Urgent whispers rise through the walls, a baby's cry, the trotting of horses, arguments, laughter – evoking a family

life we can almost touch. A wealth of childhood memorabilia includes dolls with china faces and rag bodies, a whip and top, and a box crudely yet painstakingly embroidered with a quote adapted from Longfellow: 'Kind hearts are the garden, kind thoughts are the roots, kind words are the seeds, kind deeds are the fruit.'

There is so much detail in every room for us to savour. With its sights, sounds and smells, Severs' creation is a feast for all the senses.

An epergne groaning with crystallised fruits and sweetmeats is an enticement.

The ceilings are high in the living rooms, tea cups half-filled, cake crumbs still on dainty plates, a meal half-eaten, a glass half-full. Have we, perhaps, interrupted them? In the distance we hear cannon fire from the Tower of London marking the death of King William IV. Have they rushed to join the gathering crowds?

Artistic licence – and there's a touch of that! – allows an early Beatrix Potter book open on the downstairs kitchen table near a huge sugar loaf complete with nippers and scraper. Everywhere are elements that form the storybook image of a below-stairs pantry from yesteryear. The range fire is welcoming and from the shoulder-height windows, level with the pavement, we hear and almost see the rattling horse-drawn carriages trotting by.

A freshly killed rabbit needs to be cleaned ready for the pot; a huge dresser is

laden with gleaming blue-and-white china; a miserable shallow scullery sink sports a tiny nugget of carbolic soap and steel wool. The detail is everywhere, and it would take numerous visits to fully appreciate it.

As Severs wished it, we continue to absorb the intrigue and rose-scented atmosphere of this lived-in home as we steal from room to room. At times we may wonder if the Jervis family will

make an actual physical appearance.

The master bedroom features an unmade four-poster. We almost feel intrusive – are the greyish sheets still warm? In the corner a used chamber pot with a small bunch of lavender across the top. Everywhere candlelight shifts and dances shadows on the walls, adorned and overflowing with china, sconces and paintings.

Clothes are strewn across a velvet chair. A scarlet uniform waits for the gentleman, a silk gown for Mrs Jervis. Across the room a dressing table displays little bottles and potions, a brush, a few hairs in the comb, a sapphire ring... and there are voices whispering in the next room – always the next room. We never could quite catch them.

Upstairs we enter a time coinciding with the collapse of the silk-weaving industry. In pitiful contrast to the rooms below, we find where impoverished lodgers eke out an existence. A china hot



**Waiting for the coach home in the biting wind! (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

water bottle, a damp and unkempt bed where shifts of people slept. A string of washing runs overhead across the top landing – little lawn breeches for the baby, grey undergarments – amidst an air of total dejection. The smell of dry stone and ash from the fire, long burnt out, pervades our senses as we envisage a sense of hopelessness and tears running down the bare walls. Momentarily we are terribly sad for those lives so cruelly challenged by abject poverty.

The Dennis Severs' House experience ranks as one of the rarest in the world, and illustrious visitors have been many, including artist David Hockney, who equated the visit with 'the greatest operatic experience'.

Unfortunately, because of traffic hold-ups, our time in the house was cut short. Nonetheless it proved an enjoyable and memorable trip to a past life our ancestors may well have shared.

*Patsy Payne*

Kew Gardens, 21 April 2015

The weather was perfect for the U3A visit to Kew Gardens – a warm, calm spring day with an unclouded blue sky. The coach driver, Darren, pointed out some features of interest en route, including the Deer Park and the bridges across the Thames.

Kew Gardens were founded in 1759 when Princess Augusta decided to plant a garden that would ‘contain all the plants known on earth’. The gardens grew as Sir Joseph Banks and Sir William Hooker dispatched botanists to collect plants from the distant outposts of the British Empire. Its experts advised on transfers of important commercial crops between British colonies and other nations. The transfer of rubber seeds and seedlings from Brazil to Sri Lanka and Singapore launched the global rubber industry. Today, Kew works with organisations and governments around the world to monitor and protect the world’s plants.

On arrival at the Victoria Gate of Kew Gardens, a ‘train’ ride – like that at Denbies – was available to take us round most of the gardens and to suggest features that we might wish to visit later in the day, including the Pagoda, the Japanese Garden, the Palm House and Kew Palace. Although the Temperate House and the Evolution House were closed for renovation there was more than enough to interest everyone.

I chose to visit the Xtrata Treetop Walkway, climbing up over a hundred metal steps – although a lift was available – to the ‘pathway in the sky’ that enables visitors to look down on the gardens and across the river to some of the newer London skyscrapers. I also revisited the



**Boarding the Kew train (photo by Robert Edmondson)**

Japanese Gateway and Gardens, where the cherry blossoms were at their best. This was followed by the Davies Alpine House, the Bonsai House and the extensive ‘Plants and People’ exhibition in the museum across the lake from the Palm House – a comprehensive exhibition summarising the use of plant products in textiles, medicines, lubricants, dyes, tools, strings and ropes, musical instruments and, of course, food and drink.

At 2.30pm another appealing option was a talk and tour of the Kew Kitchen Gardens with Joe Archer, of *Kew on a Plate* TV fame. He described how the kitchen gardens, extensive during the 19th century, were revived on a smaller scale in 2013 for the TV programme and are producing vegetables and herbs, with fruit trees, including ‘heritage’ varieties, becoming established too. He explained how they minimise the use of poisons and artificial fertilisers by organic or mechanical methods, for example by the use of ‘green manures’ and fixing screens two feet high to repel carrot fly, and the



**Relaxing at the end of the day (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

importance of keeping the ground clear of planks and large stones, which would provide havens for slugs and snails. However, some wildlife can still cause problems, especially pigeons, grey squirrels and Kew's resident peacocks!

The experiences of other U3A members would have been different from mine because of the numerous options available, but I am sure we all would agree that we had an excellent day out and would like to thank the days out team for a memorable visit.

*Robert Edmondson*

## Whitstable, 26 May 2015

Two coachloads of members travelled comfortably along motorways flanked by the lush green countryside of late spring to our destination drop-off point – the busy quayside of Whitstable Bay on the north Kent coast.

Renowned since Roman times for its oysters, the Whitstable fleet provides an amazing range of seafood, available to purchase in the fish market and stalls on the quay or to sample in bars, inns, cafés and restaurants along the sea front and in the town.

In May 1830 the single-track Canterbury and Whitstable Railway Line was opened, and as a public line designed to carry people as well as freight it is believed to have provided the first passenger rail service in Britain. Known locally as the Crab and Winkle Line, nothing now remains of the railway and its buildings except the goods sheds on the quayside, which have been converted into a flourishing fish market at ground

level and a renowned gourmet fish restaurant on the first floor, bearing the colloquial name.

Within easy walking distance from the harbour we were able to explore Whitstable's art galleries, antique shops and pretty boutiques and, further away, Whitstable Castle, an imposing manor house with beautiful gardens.

We were blessed with warm, sunny weather and a light sea breeze in which to enjoy the sheltered beach front, with its quaint converted fishermen's huts and warehouses, and the narrow alleyways said to have been used by the smugglers of old. Stark breakwaters along the steeply sloping shingle beaches provided shade and shelter for family picnics, and the yacht club's location was evidenced by a forest of tall white masts set against a cloudless azure sky.

In the afternoon all sea haze had dissipated, and it was possible to see the 30 futuristic turbines of the Kentish Flats

Wind Farm some 10 miles to the east, while, out on the horizon, a cluster of World War Two anti-aircraft forts, named for their designer Guy Maunsell, stand in stark contrast to our modern technology.

The harbour, dominated by towering black sail lofts of old and the stylish RNLI boathouse and slipway, provides the town's bustling hub, a veritable paradise for the keen photographers among us. Complete with enticing ice-cream vendor, it was the perfect pick-up point for our members to regroup for their rather reluctant journey back home.



**Three members relaxing at Whitstable**  
(photo by Angela Rixon)

*Angela Rixon*

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## Art Appreciation group trip to the Red House and Eltham Palace, 27 May 2015

**T**he Red House (National Trust) in suburban Bexleyheath and Eltham Palace (English Heritage) are both located close to the A2 east of London, making a convenient pairing for an outing of the Art Appreciation group and friends, and we were blessed with a beautiful sunny day for our visit.

The architect Philip Webb was commissioned by William Morris to build the Red House in what was a rural area of Kent in 1859. Morris collaborated in the design of a modern house 'very medieval in spirit' and moved there soon after marrying Jane Burden. She was a poor, uneducated girl who had been spotted in Oxford by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and had then modelled for Rossetti, Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The couple entertained their artistic

friends, who helped to furnish and decorate the house, and recent conservation work has exposed more of these original decorations. Morris's aim was for the house to be a 'Palace of Art' illustrated with medieval tales. We saw examples of window panels painted by Burne-Jones and Morris, murals, tiles, painted furniture and wallpaper, all of which had been specially designed and made for the Red House. However, the general impression we gained was of the Arts and Crafts style of the late 19th and early 20th centuries rather than that of a much earlier period.

The collaborative efforts of the artists and designers led to the foundation of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co in Red Lion Square, London, to produce domestic furniture, fabrics, tiles and wallpaper. Jane Morris gave birth to two daughters while at the Red House but,

sadly, found it lonely once the workshop opened. William and Jane moved to London in 1865 and sold the Red House.

Our comfortable coach took us to Eltham Palace, where the approach road is very narrow, and the driver performed quite a feat to get close to the entrance. Most of the group had lunch in the café on site, while a few of us took the opportunity to explore the extensive grounds and beautiful gardens before our guided tour.

Eltham is most unusual in being a grand 1930s mansion incorporating the remains of a medieval and Tudor palace. It was given to Edward II in 1305 and became an important royal palace for 200 years, with Henry VIII spending much of his boyhood there. However, as other palaces (notably Hampton Court) were used more extensively, Eltham fell out of use and into disrepair. By the 19th century the great hall was all that remained intact, and it was used as a barn. Repairs were carried out in the early 20th century, including dismantling and reassembling the magnificent oak hammerbeam roof of the great hall.

On our tour, modern ‘imaginings’ of the medieval appearance of the hall, such as the minstrels’ gallery, were pointed out. Unlike many historic buildings, Eltham Palace had been in private hands and the hall had been extensively restored and incorporated with the modern parts of the building.

Our tour started in the magnificent entrance hall of the 1930s mansion built for Stephen and Virginia Courtauld, which links the modern mansion to the medieval great hall. The curved walls



**Members of the Art Appreciation group (photo by Rosemary Hobbs)**

covered with wood veneer and marquetry, huge circular rug and curved white furniture and windows gave the impression of being in a grand ocean liner.

Adjoining reception rooms had been designed to exemplify the best of 1930s fashion, with no expense spared, and the Courtaulds entertained lavishly. The wonderful art deco dining room had a magnificent pair of black and silver doors with reliefs of birds and animals, drawn from life at London Zoo. The bedrooms and study were in the ‘Cunard style’, with sleek veneered built-in furniture. The house was designed for comfortable modern living and many rooms have only recently been reopened after extensive renovation.

Eltham Palace would have merited a whole day’s visit, as there is so much to see. The gardens incorporate the remains of the moat and excavations of parts of the palace, as well as more modern formal areas, and there was some beautiful planting. There was not enough time to explore at leisure, making a return visit an attractive proposition.

*Rosemary Hobbs*

## The Manor House, Upton Grey, 9 June 2015

The quiet little village of Upton Grey is a gem hidden away in the Hampshire countryside, and here, in 1983, Rosamund and John Wallinger purchased a grand Elizabethan manor house in a derelict state and with a totally neglected garden. Research showed that the original garden had been designed in 1908 by none other than Gertrude Jekyll, and Rosamund, though not an experienced gardener, having tracked down the original plans, determined to re-create the Jekyll dream.

Our visit began with the coach journey to Upton Grey, pausing for a coffee break at Guildford Cathedral, before arriving at the Hoddington Arms, a sensitively restored village inn. There was time for us to explore the unusually shaped 15th-century church of St Mary and some intriguing gravestones and to admire some charming cottages along the way.

A wholesome lunch had been arranged at the pub, after which we were transferred by coach the short distance to the Manor House and disembarked next to an ancient yew tree reputed to be over 2,000 years old. It marks part of the route of a Roman road, the Chichester to Silchester Way.

We were directed into the enchanting wild garden, where mown paths meandering through long grass took us past the pond, edged with rocks and aglow with yellow iris. Through a grove of walnut trees and past banks of wildflowers we eventually came to the semi-circular grass steps and imposing iron gates centred on the forecourt of the manor house, where we were warmly welcomed by Rosamund and formally



**Outside Upton Grey (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

introduced to her beautiful garden.

The weather was kind to us and the threatened rain held off, allowing us ample time to explore the kitchen garden, with its useful well and flock of busy bantams, and to especially enjoy the famous formal garden. The re-created Gertrude Jekyll design delighted us with its tennis lawn, bowling lawn and rose lawn each on terraces supported by planted drystone walls and enclosed by tall clipped yew hedges. These provided the perfect dark backdrop to the lush planting schemes in the main herbaceous borders.

A pergola of oak beams and ship's ropes leads from the house to the rose lawn, where geometric beds with stone centres are filled with cottage-garden flowers in soft pinks and greys. These contrast wonderfully well with the long main borders, which are arranged in bold drifts of colour flowing seamlessly from cool blue, lilac and white flowers through hot oranges, yellows and reds, then back to cool tones.

We were able to identify individual borders and plants with the aid of a

comprehensive guide thoughtfully given to each of us on arrival, and we were left to wander at will, and at our own pace, in this lovely living museum.

Tea was served on the lawn, where we were joined by John Wallinger and enthusiastically greeted in friendly

fashion by Ernest, one of the house dogs.

All too soon it was time to board the coach for our journey home, some of us clutching precious plants we had been inspired to buy as souvenirs of a very special day out.

*Angela Rixon*

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## Enjoying Architecture group visit to St Bartholomew's and Charterhouse, 21 July 2015

### St Bartholomew's

London's oldest surviving church, the Priory Church of Saint Bartholomew the Great, was the subject of the latest visit for the Enjoying Architecture group.

Founded in 1123 as an Augustinian priory, it has been in continuous use since 1143. It is an active Anglican/Episcopal church located in the Smithfield area of the City of London.



The priory church was built when Henry I, son of William the Conqueror, was King of England. It survived the Great Fire of 1666, the bombs dropped in Zeppelin raids in World War I and the Blitz in World War II. In the late 19th century it was renovated and restored to its medieval plan as far as possible by Sir Aston Webb, his first major restoration project. The church is noted today for its remarkable architecture, traditional formal worship and marvellous music.

The church has appeared in many films, including *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Amazing Grace*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, *Sherlock Holmes* and *The End of the Affair*.

For more information visit [www.greatstbarts.com](http://www.greatstbarts.com).

### Charterhouse Alms Houses

On the same trip the group also visited the Charterhouse Alms Houses.

These almshouses were originally a Carthusian monastery, of which little remains today. In 1611 the place was bought by Thomas Sutton, thought to be the richest commoner in England. He used his considerable wealth to set up the hospital of King James at Charterhouse,

which included a school for poor boys and almshouses for impoverished gentlemen.

The school flourished and still exists today as one of the top public schools in England, although it has moved to Godalming in Surrey. The almshouses continue and provide homes for 40 men, who must be single, of limited means and sympathetic to the values of the Church of England. Although the priory

itself is gone, a number of the medieval buildings from the time of the Carthusians survive.

The almshouses have featured in many films and television programmes, including *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, *Mr Selfridge* and *New Tricks*.

For further information visit [www.thecharterhouse.org](http://www.thecharterhouse.org).

*Bill Hill*

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## Holidays

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The Spanish Conversation group welcomed the Universidad de la Tercera Edad on a return visit from Santander, February 2015

Following the successful visit of the Dorking U3A Spanish group to Santander last June, their counterparts, Universidad de la Tercera Edad (UNATE), paid a return visit to us.

Led by José Herrera, six members of the Cantabrian group came to Dorking on 24 and 25 February, having spent a few days in Cambridge beforehand.

We welcomed the party at the Watermill, Dorking, where we enjoyed pre-dinner drinks and a meal with our guests. We were soon chatting happily in Spanish and English. Some members of the Redhill and Reigate U3A Spanish group joined us for the occasion, as they, too, will be going to Cantabria this year. José also introduced us to Linda Parker, former director of the Association of Language Learners, who was interested to find out how our reciprocal trips functioned. Our U3A chairman, Doreen Raine, attended the dinner and was most supportive.

The next day a number of us spent the morning at Wisley, where our visitors

were grateful for the tropical warmth of the Butterfly House. They saw other parts of the gardens afterwards, and cameras clicked enthusiastically.

In the afternoon the Spaniards were taken to the Burford Bridge hotel to sample a typical British afternoon tea, a meal which does not formally exist in Spain.

This was a very happy occasion and, as well as conversing, the visitors participated in a variety of gentle word games to improve their vocabulary.

The U3A party hosted a farewell dinner at the Bell, in Fetcham, to mark the end of a brief but enjoyable stay. Our visitors seemed as delighted with their trip as we were to entertain them. We all agreed that these cultural exchanges are valuable and enhance friendly links with our European neighbours.

On 26 February, José took his party to Denbies for breakfast and then to Guildford, before returning to Stansted en route for Bilbao.

*Sylvia Herbert*



**The group from Santander  
visiting Dorking**

## Spring holiday to Greece, 9–15 May 2015

**O**n Saturday 9 May a coach left sunny Dorking heading to Heathrow with U3A members on time, on board and all in good holiday spirit. After rather a long journey by plane and coach we arrived safe and sound in Tolon, an old fishing village within the Peloponnese area of Greece. Because it was late evening we checked into our rooms and went straight down to dinner before unpacking and then retiring to a much-anticipated bed.

The next day we finished settling in after enjoying the array of breakfast dishes and were absolutely delighted with the view from our hotel. It was built on the beach, with the sea lapping just 20ft away and an array of boats moored in front of Romvi Island. At 10am in the hotel lounge we listened to our Sunvil rep, Jackie, explain our itinerary, the places to see and organised tours on offer. We were given a small welcome gift, map etc. When the business side was



**The entrance to the tomb of the King of Agamemnon at Mycenae (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

taken care of we were free to do our own thing. Many of us walked into Tolon village with its array of shops and friendly people. We lunched in a restaurant on the beach and had stuffed vine leaves, ham hock and a Greek salad –delicious! We explored the alleyways and village before returning to our hotels. We were the Minoans; some were in



**Listening to the guide at Mycenae (photo by Elizabeth Holmes)**

the King Minos hotel in Tolon village; and most were in the Knossos, also on the beach. We all ate in the Minoa, and after dinner some of the group spent the evenings in the lounge, which had a bar. Time was passed just getting to know each other and making new friends.

On Monday 11 May after breakfast we made our way to the coach for a visit to Mycenae, home of the ancient king Agamemnon, who commanded the Greeks during the Trojan War. Agamemnon is said to be a principal character of *The Iliad* in Greek legend, and the site had been excavated by the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s. We explored the beehive, or Tholos tomb, built around the 14th century BC, which had a small side chamber. At the main entrance megalithic elements were used for jambs and lintels with carved masonry. Sadly, like all Tholos tombs, it had been robbed and,

therefore, nothing remains of the grave goods or burials it once housed.

Our second visit was a short coach ride to see the famous Lion's Gate, which was the entrance to the citadel of Mycenae and is the oldest monumental sculpture in Europe, dated circa 1240 BC. Sadly, the heads of the two horses carved in the stone entrance were missing. Within the walls there were various areas including an unearthened grave circle and a granary

with construction to mid-12th century BC, again discovered by Schliemann, where special pottery was found dating from the late 13th century BC. The luxurious grave goods can be seen in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

South of the grave circle are two houses, the Ramp House and the House of the Warrior Vase, with its Mycenaean warrior decorations, bronze vases and carbonised olives. Beyond the houses on the North Quarter the buildings were utilised fully in the second half of the 13th century BC. These buildings were destroyed by earthquake but, further up the hill, the entrance to the palace remains. After the destruction of the Mycenaean Palace a temple was built on the summit of the acropolis (hill) and evidence has shown it was used in the early Helladic period (3000BC to 2000BC).

With well-exercised leg muscles, we then boarded the coach for a visit to Epidaurus with its 3rd century BC theatre, which has near-perfect acoustics. It is still used today, some 2000 years later, during the Epidaurus Festival in July and August. It was a temple to Asclepius, son of Apollo and god of medicine. Epidaurus is also claimed to be Apollo's birthplace.

People travelled great distances to seek a cure for their ailments, but Asclepius was struck dead by a thunderbolt from Zeus and transformed by Apollo into the constellation of Serpentarius (now known as Ophiuchus). We all recognise the symbol of Asclepius, a snake coiled around a rod, as being related to medicine and doctors.

Down the hill was an amphitheatre and museum built between 1905 and 1909, housing pots and medical instruments, which proved that not only was medicine produced and dispensed here, but also operations were carried out. The archaeological dig is continuing.

From Epidaurus we had a short coach ride to the fortress of Palamidi. Some braved the wind and rain to climb, and discovered the amazing views and that the five-sided bastion, which was built between 1711 and 1715, overlooked Nafplion. It was used as a prison until the 1920s.

On Tuesday those travelling to Athens were up for a 6.40am breakfast to get on the coach with our guide, Aggi, as it was a two-and-a-half-hour journey to



**Group at Epidaurus Museum (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

the city, the historical capital of Europe. We passed superb scenery, with citrus groves and numerous beehives among the trees, also olive groves and vineyards. Our first stop was at the old Panathenaic (Olympic) stadium, built entirely from marble, which has been well preserved within the city. It seats 60,000 people, and the ceremonial carrying of the Olympic torch started here. The stadium dates from the 5th century BC (the Golden Age of Pericles). At that time Athens was the womb of western civilization. It became the capital of Greece in 1834.

We continued by coach on to the Acropolis, which is crowned by the Parthenon. It is considered the most important ancient site in the Western world and is visible from almost everywhere within the city. We met another guide and climbed innumerable uneven steps to the top, where we were given a description of the history and architecture. It was hard to hear all she said as it was interspersed with the strong wind, workmen and the noise of the crowds. The architect Mnesikles designed



**At the Acropolis in Athens (photo by Elizabeth Holmes)**

it in 437-432BC. The paintings and frescos on the walls are still visible. The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, was built in the second half of the 5th century BC and is a Doric peristyle temple with eight columns on the ends and 17 columns on the sides, all in white Pontelic marble. All sides were exquisitely carved. The presence of scaffolding showed that restoration work was under way. This has been going on for 30 years and may take another 30. It goes without saying that the views from all sides of the Acropolis are stunning. On leaving the Parthenon some of the group visited the museum, others had lunch there, and some explored the alleyways of the Plaka and dined in whichever venue they chose.

The coach picked us up at the statue of Nana Mouskouri, which is opposite Hadrian's Arch, built in 131AD, the symbolic gate of the city of Athens. All fed and watered, we continued on to the Greek Parliament Building in time for the changing of the guard, which was

opportune as it was preceded by a wreath-laying ceremony by military dignitaries at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. There were also a number of Greek navy and army soldiers lined up and fully armed, together with a military band. We waited some minutes and observed the changing of the guard. It was wonderful to see the guards in their traditional Greek costumes. The Evzones, or presidential guards, are an elite

ceremonial unit of volunteers drawn from various parts of the Greek army. They must be 6ft 1½in tall to qualify. The costume has evolved from clothes worn by the Klephts, who fought the Ottoman occupation of Greece.

Back on the coach, we headed back to our hotels via the Corinth Canal, for a fleeting glance and comfort stop, as some of the group had booked to cruise along the canal on the following day.

On Wednesday 13 May we had an early start for the Corinth Canal trip. Some of the group had elected to take a restful or self-organised day. The majority caught the coach for 8.30am to board the boat for a cruise on the canal, which connects the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf in the Aegean Sea and separates the Peloponnese peninsula from the Greek mainland. It is 6.4km long and 21.4m wide at its base, and the rock walls rise 90m above sea level, making it impossible for most modern container ships to sail through or even pass each other. It thus has little economic use

today. The canal is crossed by a railway line, a road and a motorway at a height of 45m. It was mooted in early 300BC but dropped by various emperors until 1882, when King George I of Greece agreed it could be completed. The work was started by a French company, which went bankrupt, and it took 11 years in total. A Greek company completed it in 1893. In 1988 submersible bridges were installed at each end of the canal.

From Corinth we travelled on to Nemea, which is an ancient site dedicated to games and includes the 4th-century Temple of Zeus, which still has three remaining columns. Our guide, Georgio, took us around the museum and explained the various artefacts. Excavation work was started by Stephen Miller, of Berkeley University in California, and is being continued by the American School of Classical Studies. Nemea was famous in Greek myth as the home of the Nemean Lion, which was killed by the hero Heracles.

We had lunch and continued up the hill to the stadium where the games were held. It was constructed in 330-320BC. The track is 600ft long. The balbis (starting line) consisted of a line of stones and included the hysplex, a gate-like starting mechanism which allowed athletes to have a fair start. The eastern changing rooms are connected to the stadium by a 34m-long barrel-vaulted tunnel. The games were reborn in 1996 and are run every four years. The next games are on 10-12 June 2016.

From Nemea it was a short journey to Domaine Bairaktaris Winery, where over 250 hectares of vines are grown in the red, fertile soil. We enjoyed our tour of the winery and tasted red, white and rosé



**The Evzones (presidential guards) at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier outside the Parliament Building in Athens (photo by Laurie von Weber)**

wines interspersed with intriguing nibbles. Now in 'happy mood', we travelled back to our hotels for dinner, which was followed by a demonstration of Greek dancing by two very energetic young men. They even encouraged hotel guests to join in and learn some Greek dancing steps – what a wonderful way to complete our day.

At this point we felt the days and time slipping away all too quickly, and on Thursday we boarded a boat in Tolon harbour for a cruise to two islands. On the way, dolphins were to be seen diving and jumping in the wake of our boat. The first island we docked at was Hydra, and it was beautiful: the only motorised vehicle was a fork-lift used to unload goods, perishables and merchandise from ferries. Everything was packed on to donkeys for delivery to homes, hotels, restaurants and shops. The people were very friendly and enjoyed recommending places to eat or shop – mainly souvenirs – and telling us about their lives. The vast majority spend the summer on Hydra and the winter in their villages on the mainland.

After lunch we boarded the boat for a visit to Spetses, where, again, there were many donkeys, but also a lot of scooters, motorbikes and cars. A pretty island but, sadly, the cathedrals, churches, museum and most shops were closed until 5pm. Nevertheless, we enjoyed exploring, and there were tours of the island by donkey and carriage. We finished with a relaxing cup of tea overlooking the sea.

We boarded our boat for the return cruise to Tolon, where we enjoyed our last evening meal and drinks at the hotel bar before retiring to our rooms to pack for our homeward journey. The following day we had to be up for a 7am breakfast

in order to load our luggage and catch the coach to Athens Airport – where the speedy check-in machines didn't prove to be at all speedy – but we did, with help, all eventually get through. We arrived at Heathrow and met our coach, and were dropped off to make our way home around 6pm.

Our very grateful thanks to Angela and Jim for organising this wonderful experience. It was both enjoyable and educational, and some of our fellow travellers are already looking forward to September's autumn break in Glorious Northumberland.

*Laurie and Betty von Weber*

### The Preservation of Man

The horse and mule live 30 years  
And nothing know of wines and beers.  
The goat and sheep at 20 die  
And never taste of Scotch or rye.  
The cow drinks water by the ton  
And at 18 is mostly done.  
The dog at 15 cashes in  
Without the aid of rum and gin.  
The cat in milk and water soaks  
And then in 12 short years it croaks.  
The modest, sober, bone-dry hen  
Lays eggs for nogs then dies at 10.  
All animals are strictly dry.  
They sinless live and swiftly die.

But cheerful, beerful, grog-soaked men  
Survive for three score years and 10.  
And some of us, the mighty few,  
**Stay pickled till we're 92.**

*Contributed by Jenny Ford*

## Holiday in Peloponnesian Peninsular (cont.)



Sunset over Tolon Harbour, where the holiday group stayed. (Photo by Elizabeth Holmes)

Those on the trip to Athens enjoyed the spectacle of the changing of the guard outside the Parliament building. The procedure bears little resemblance to the equivalent exercise outside Buckingham Palace! (Photo by Elizabeth Holmes)



# The New Committee



**Phyllis Hughes**  
Chairman



**Keith Dakin-White**  
Vice-Chairman



**Lionel Cartlidge**  
Correspondence  
Secretary and Groups  
Coordination



**Michael Docker**  
Treasurer, Newsletter  
Sub-Editor and  
Webmaster



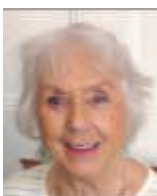
**Bob Crooks**  
Membership Secretary



**Michael Potts**  
Deputy Membership  
Secretary and  
Deputy Treasurer



**Jenny Ford**  
Monthly Meeting  
Speakers



**Pam Toler**  
Groups Coordination



**Pat Smith**  
New Members and  
Publicity



**Judy Perry**  
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**Geoff Saunders**  
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**Jim Docking**  
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