



Dorking & District University of the Third Age

news|letter



Number 82

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Letter from the Chair – Membership News – Group News – Interviews with the new Committee members – Articles and Verse – Reports on Monthly Meetings, Days Out and Holidays

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

Holiday in Northumbria



**Listening to the guide
outside Durham
Cathedral** (photo by
Elsie Rosam)

**Night lights on the
Tyne near the hotel**
(Photo by Elsie Rosam)



**By a section of
Hadrian's Wall**
(Photo by Laurie
von Weber)

***Cover picture: The
Northumbria holiday
group outside
Durham Cathedral***
(Photo by Laurie von
Weber)

Letter from the Chair

As you receive this newsletter Christmas will be just around the corner and another active year for Dorking U3A will be drawing to a close. Our achievements over the past 12 months have been well documented on our revamped website, which I know the vast majority of you have access to, as well as in the *Newsletter*. But as we come to the end of 2015 I want to look forward rather than back, because next year is to be an exciting one when we celebrate our 25th anniversary.



Already we have organised a quiz evening for 2 February to be held at the Café Rialto in South Street. Then on 13 March it is the big day itself and we are planning a grand afternoon tea at Denbies. And on 18 June, at the height of summer, we have booked a dinner at Betchworth Park golf club. As the *Newsletter* goes to press we are still finalising the details of other events throughout the year, but details will be circulated as soon as they are available.

For most of our members the celebrations will be a chance to enjoy the fun side of the U3A and to make new friends outside their regular groups. But for a handful of people the year will be extra special as they were either founder members or joined very early on. Without them, and the scores of other enthusiastic committee members, group leaders and regular attendees, we would not have our U3A today.

Special thanks, therefore, to Jim Docking, the first chairman and founder member of Dorking U3A and still the editor of the *Newsletter* today. Angela Cooke, too, was an early recruit and still organises the hugely successful holidays enjoyed by so many of you. Charmian Corner continues to run the Shakespeare and His Contemporaries group as well as being an admired member of the Creative Writing group. Elizabeth de Rees, Dorothy Berry and Ken Kelsey also continue to support the U3A.

Dorking U3A has clearly got many things right to have such a loyal following for such a long time. As we look ahead to 2016 I hope that some of the new members we are welcoming will find that what we offer in terms of education, entertainment, friendship and interest might last the next 25 years.

Our vice-chairman, Keith Dakin-White, has stepped down from the role because of work commitments. I would like to thank him for his valuable work during his short time on the committee and for his support for the Dorking U3A. Keith continues to lead the science group.

Season's greetings and a happy new year to you all.

Phyllis

Membership

Welcome!

A warm welcome to the 29 members who have joined since the September issue and who are listed below. We now have 588 paid-up members.

Mrs Susan Beckett	Mrs Christine Holloway	Mr Hugh Parry
Mrs Janet Chapman	Mr Jim Howley	Mrs Pamela Reynolds
Mrs Sandra Clarke	Mrs Sue Jex	Mrs Tracy Taylor
Mrs Vicky Coleman	Mrs Ann Maughan	Mr Harry Tempam
Mr Richard Frost	Mrs Christine McClelland	Mr David Turner
Mrs Sarah Frost	Mrs Linda Osborne	Mrs Susie Turner
Mr Bernard Hawkes	Mrs Jackie Padfield	Mrs Jenny Usher
Mr Tony Hearne	Mr Matthew Padfield	Mrs Barbara Van Loon
Mrs Marilyn Heatley	Mr Tony Parker	Mrs Pauline Whitehead
Mr Barrie Heatley	Mrs Helen Parry	

Bob Crooks, Membership Secretary

Did you know... ?

... that more and more members are using our website to find out the latest news about our activities (including any changes and cancellations) and view a series of items and photos and about our recent activities.

Along with the *Newsletter*, the website is fast becoming one of the main means of communicating up-to-date information to members – indeed, much material reaches the website before it gets in the *Newsletter*.

The site also contains an archive of articles from previous editions, and the Membership page enables you to renew your annual subscription online.

Please visit our website (www.dorkingu3a.org.uk) to learn more about what's going on in the Dorking & District U3A.



Group News

Groups Now Being Planned

Archaeology

We held a very constructive preliminary meeting on 5 November about the new Archaeology group. Val Arundel has agreed to lead the group with immediate support from Peter Horitz and Frank Pemberton.



We are confident that the planning is in safe hands, but there are a lot of practical arrangements to be made such as dates, times, venue and, of course, the initial focus of studies. The meetings will be held monthly on a Tuesday afternoon, a day that seemed convenient for those at the meeting, but we have yet to determine which Tuesday in the month.

More information will be made available and will be circulated by email as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you have not yet recorded your interest in the new group, it would be very helpful if you would let Val Arundel know of your interest by phoning her (01306 885730) or emailing her (val@valarundel.plus.com).

Lionel Cartlidge & Pam Toler, Groups Co-ordinators

Military History

Barrie Friend would like to start a group on military history. Enquiries should be made to Barrie on 01737 668977.

Wine Appreciation

The proposed Wine Appreciation group will hold an inaugural meeting at 7pm on Wednesday 20 January at Majestic Wines Dorking (which has kindly agreed to host it).

Places are limited. Tickets are £5 per person. If you would like a ticket, please email Geoff Saunders (tallship@eircom.net) or phone him on 01306 884812.



Established Groups

Bridge

We now have two venues – very complicated, and I aim to make it a lot simpler in future; but at the moment I am trying to judge who wants to come when and where! The two groups are:



- a) At Canterbury Court – meets on the first Monday and fourth Wednesday 10am to 12 noon, and we have vacancies.**
- b) At Dorking Tennis Club – meets on the second and fourth Monday, 2-4pm, and at the moment we don't have any vacancies.**

If anyone is thinking of taking up bridge, it may be possible to arrange an hour's taster session in the New Year if people get in touch with me.

Elizabeth Holmes (01306 884831; emh2010@hotmail.co.uk)

French Conversation



As our numbers are growing, we are thinking of forming a second group for any new members who might wish to join. Please get in touch with one of us if you are interested.

*Audrey Mark (01306 742093)
Helen Kendrick (01306 889284)*

Myths

Bemused by the heritage of Welsh myth and by the bard, shaman and seer Taliesin, we are now meandering among Ireland's treasures. However, we plan to interrupt our British journey at Christmas with a tape of Jewish tales told by a modern Sephardic raconteur. She was recently hosted by one of our members, Heidi Darley, who recommended the tape. We will all contribute material to support the genre taken from books such as Richard Hamilton's *The Last Storytellers – Tales from the Heart of Morocco*.



Jill Burberry

Pilates

The Pilates classes are now full for this year. If you would like to be put on the waiting list, please let me know your name and I will contact you when a place becomes available

Mary Rowlett (01306 882272)

Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

After our lengthy study of *The Winter's Tale* we tackled *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare's least often produced play. We soon realised why! It has a complicated and often difficult to follow plot, a beheading on stage, and a battle with the Romans: all quite difficult to stage. It is also one of his longest plays so that even the BBC version is cut. However, the RSC plans a production next season. Nothing daunted, the group have decided to go on and study another of the late plays, *Pericles*, not thought to be entirely by the Bard. He may have taken over from Wilkins, and only the last acts are thought to be entirely by Shakespeare. It will be interesting to see if we can spot his additions in the earlier acts. Like all these late plays it has a fairytale aura. This play, too, is to be produced shortly, this time at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

Charmian Corner (01342 883374; charmian.corner@care4free.net)

Singing for Pleasure

There were 23 of us singing with pleasure to residents at Kenward Court, a retirement/sheltered housing complex in Brockham, on Monday 19 October. An exciting challenge for all of us (*picture on back cover*).

Gina Eason, our director, pianist and accompanist, is also an organist but still quite comfortable with a wide range of musical styles.



We meet on the first and third Monday at Buckland Reading Room 10-12 and hope to find some more men and altos to join us so we can sing in parts.

From 2 November onwards we will be preparing Christmas songs to present to Broome Park nursing home on 21 December. I remember how much the residents there enjoyed our singing last year. Music touches those who fail to succeed with words.

Meike Laurenson (01737 248909; mlaurenson@talktalk.net)

Walking

I recently led a 4½-mile walk from the Prince of Wales, Westcott, up to White Lees, through Deer Leap Wood, round Wotton Church and back via Westcott Heath (*picture on back cover*). To my great surprise 22 walkers turned up. This is the largest group there has been for some time. I did feel a bit anxious, but all went well and everyone seemed to enjoy the walk.

Sixteen of us then had lunch at the Prince of Wales.

Jan Cunningham

More profiles of new committee members

Pat Smith (New Members and Publicity)

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

I was born in Gibraltar and moved around a huge amount. I attended 13 different schools – not because I was kicked out, but because my father was in the Army. I spent several years in Singapore and Hong Kong before modernisation made them identikit cities. I remember elephants walking around in Singapore, the Death House where people went to die and huge mangrove swamps on our way to the swimming pool in Changi.

Hong Kong was building huge resettlement blocks to cope with floods of refugees from Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution. Kowloon Walled City was a mysterious no-go area ruled by triads; planes roared just overhead on their approach to Kai Tak Airport and US servicemen used the port as their rest and relaxation break from Vietnam, which delighted my older sister.

Unsurprisingly, my education was varied, but I ended up at university and taught English and drama for many years. I gave it up when 52 and went trucking across Africa. I'm still not sure where I found the courage but it was the best thing I ever did. I ended up teaching in Ethiopia for three years.

What led you to join the U3A?

I'd thought about it for years but never found the time as I was too busy travelling. I love the 'dip your toe in the water' approach where many things are on offer and you choose what you want.

Have your expectations of the U3A been fulfilled?

I really enjoy it. I'm a useless member of the Science group and totally out of my comfort zone but the other members are very patient with my questions and I learn loads. The groups are quite brilliant, and I love the way people can start new ones if they want – it's all made very easy and there's lots of support.



What U3A activities do you enjoy most, and why?

I went on the summer school in Chichester to do birdwatching (another leap out of my comfort zone) but was the only Dorking member to go. It's a truly excellent way to meet new people and focus on discovering something new. (*see pp9-10*)

What contributions can you bring to the committee?

With responsibility for new members, I really enjoy chatting to people and making sure they're happy in what they do – though my memory for names is dreadful so I apologise to everyone for this. I'm also involved in publicity, and it's an exciting time with the 25th anniversary coming up – though I'll be away for much of it.

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

More events involving groups from other U3As, especially with our 25th coming

up. And more use of the internet, though I'm at heart a great technophobe.

Outside the U3A, what are your main interests?

I really enjoy writing. I've five books in the pipeline at present, starting with a series of four historical novels. I've just self-published the first one on Amazon and Kindle. It's called *The Divine Curse*, and the next two are almost ready to go. I've almost finished a comic travelogue based on my truck journey from Dover to Cape Town. Well, you had to see the

funny side of it to survive. And I write a blog.

I also cycle and love long journeys. I cycle-camped home from southern France a couple of years ago and also cycle-camped from Dorking to Land's End, which took four weeks (I took the scenic route) and six hours back by train. I'm linking the two interests next year by cycling around the British Isles, including Southern Ireland, for eight months from February and writing about it. That's if my knees hold out.

Michael Docker (Treasurer)

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

Born in Acock's Green, Birmingham, into a military family. Grew up around the world as an army brat. Packed off to boarding school aged seven. Entered Sandhurst aged 17 and became the youngest officer in the Army two years later. Resigned commission soon after to take part in the Swinging Sixties in London. Survived as singer in a band for six years. Made a few records, had a few adventures. Moved to Toronto, Canada, to seek fortune. Didn't find it. Worked in record industry for a while, then freelanced as a photographer. Met and married Faith, and returned to England in 1982. Got a job as photographer at the *Wimbledon News*. Bad back eventually put paid to paparazzo career, so gratefully took up offer of desk job at the *Dorking Advertiser*. Later appointed group production editor at the *Surrey Mirror* before ending working life in more lucrative pastures of business publishing.

What led you to join the U3A?

Initially, a fear of not having enough to do after retirement. In retrospect, the fear has proved unfounded, but the U3A's range of activities and absence of political or religious affiliations was attractive.



Have your expectations of the U3A been fulfilled?

I didn't have expectations when I joined, but I was impressed by the work put in by committee members and group leaders to keep the organisation functioning and I have gained satisfaction from helping Jim Docking in the production of the newsletter, and I manage the website.

What U3A activities do you enjoy most, and why?

I like to play bridge and hope to attend the group more often when time permits,

and I enjoy going to the Computing group and the monthly meetings in the Christian Centre.

What contributions can you bring to the committee?

As Treasurer, a steady hand on the financial tiller, and a partial understanding of web technology.

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

I think the events planned for our 25th anniversary year will serve to increase fellowship among members and raise our

profile locally. Nationally, I would like to see an effort to make the organisation more widely known.

Outside the U3A, what are your main interests?

I enjoy live music of several kinds and theatre, especially Shakespeare. I like to keep my hand in strumming my guitar and singing with the local community choir. I'm an avid rugby fan, supporting Dorking, Wasps and England; and I enjoy the solitary pursuits of photography, computer programming, crosswords and walking in the hills.

Geoff Saunders (Online Courses)

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

I was born in Dublin, and completed my education there, at Trinity College, where I studied maths. My subsequent career involved many changes of direction, but broadly involved systems development and implementation, largely concerning engineering and related industries. My work took me to all the world's continents.

What led you to join the U3A?

Lifelong learning! I have always enjoyed learning new things and sharing knowledge with others.

Have your expectations of the U3A been fulfilled?

Lets say it's a project in progress! I'm new to U3A, and you might say settling in.

What U3A activities do you enjoy most, and why?

I've enjoyed the monthly talks – giving and receiving! But I've not yet joined any groups. That will come this winter, but I travel lot.



What contributions can you bring to the committee?

Hopefully, some fresh thinking. And some sceptical analysis...

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

That would be presumptuous, since I'm a new boy.

Outside the U3A, what are your main interests?

Travel, cycling, walking, writing, giving talks for charity, reading, grandchildren.

Twitching in Chichester

Pat Smith describes her experiences at a U3A Summer School

I signed up months ago for the U3A Summer School at Chichester University. The main problem was deciding what course to follow. Did I want to be a philosopher? Or a psychologist? Visit Roman villas at Fishbourne and Bignor? Find out how satnavs worked on the maths course? Discover the history of knitting and actually *do* some (slight problem here ...) Draw? Become an expert on memory?

Spoilt for choice between the dozen or so courses, I decided to become a twitcher and signed up for the Watching Wildlife course. 'I can tell a crow from a robin,' I reassured myself. 'Long walks in beautiful nature reserves can't be bad as long as it doesn't rain.'

On the Monday, as I travelled to Chichester, it poured. At the opening reception people looked pityingly at me. 'It might clear up. The weather forecast says it'll improve.' And it did. For the next three days the 12 of us put on sun cream, not gloves, hats instead of waterproofs, and actually enjoyed the shade.

Pagham Harbour was our first destination, a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reserve which is seven miles from Chichester. It's a big inlet that fills and empties with each tide, sheltering wild ducks, geese and wading birds. It has a wealth of wildlife, beautiful landscapes and a rich historical heritage. It's also one of the few salt-marsh habitats left on the South Coast.

We walked slowly through this beautiful landscape, spotting bee orchids, yellow poppies and teasels among the grasses. These tall, spiky plants, which look like extras from *Jurassic Park*, hide a ghastly secret: 'They're semi-carnivorous,' said our guide. 'Tiny insects fall into the join between main and side stems and drown in rainwater collected there. As they decay they're absorbed.'

We saw many, many birds – notice the precise detail here – and learnt to



Part of the bird-watching group at the U3A summer school in Chichester

recognise several bird-calls as we wandered alongside creeks, pausing to scrutinise the area with our binoculars and watch fleets of fluff-ball ducks following their mothers. Skylarks have become rare, but we managed to spot one. We also saw people striding along with huge-lensed cameras, telescopes on tripods slung over their shoulders and all the paraphernalia of dedicated twitchers. They were seeking the Hudsonian Whimbrel, an American wading bird with a long, delicate beak, spotted in Pagham on 12 June. It has only been sighted twice before in mainland Britain, so has created a sensation in the birding world.

Other days were just as interesting. We spent time at Pulborough Brooks, another RSPB site a little south of the town. Although there are many habitats, their main focus is on reclaiming the natural heathland from a conifer plantation. Progress is slow and steady, with natural wildlife increasing. The warden pointed at a green iridescent beetle resting on a leaf. 'It's a tiger beetle,' he said. 'There's a particular wasp that preys on it by stinging the female to paralyse it. Then it injects the beetle's larvae with its own egg. When the egg hatches it feeds off the beetle's larvae.' Nature – red in tooth, claw and injection needle.

It is delightful to study a small patch of ground. At first nothing seems to be happening, then you notice the twitch of a leaf as a bug settles, a flower dipping its head as a bee lands or a flicker in the grass as a lizard darts through it.

I stood and watched a log for about five minutes as moths fluttered, beetles scurried and three iridescent damselflies rested in the sunshine. Pond-dipping revealed even more delights, with tiny water beetles scurrying through the water, several varieties of larva and a host of other wriggles.

On our final morning we strolled along the Chichester Canal and learnt to tell the difference between water parsley and hemlock water dropwort, which is the most poisonous indigenous plant in Britain. At our final lunch most of the group steered clear of the lettuce!

What made the summer course so special? I loved the way other members of the group accepted my level of ignorance and took time to share their expertise with me. Accommodation was single rooms in student halls of residence with ample facilities for wheelchair users. And we even had evening events: two drinks receptions, a quiz, the frothy Gershwin musical *A Damsel in Distress* at the Festival Theatre, and a local group entertainment with a bluesy mixture of old favourites. Best of all, it was a chance to meet random people from all areas of the South-east and discuss issues from their groups, put the world to rights or simply 'chill' and enjoy a glass of wine in good company. That's what the U3A is all about, really.

Change

We notice as the years go by
That children grow and old friends die.
At first we think we would prefer
No alteration to occur,
No loss of sympathetic friend,
No good times coming to an end,
Nothing to age, corrode or rust,
No mountains crumbling to dust.

But what a planet this would be –
No animals, no plant, no tree.
Just rock and silence, starry sky.
No life forms to diversify.
And now we have to face the fact
That we arose when Earth was whacked
By one gigantic rock from space
Then evolution of our race.

That was a change we don't regret.
Now dinosaurs are not a threat.
The little changes we deplore –
Car noise, new houses, Tesco store,
Bureaucracy, new regulations,
New arguments between the nations.
New politicians may arise
To tell us all the usual lies.

New types of nonsense they promote.
Utopias promised for our vote.
The fact is this, though passing strange,
The only constant known is change.
Incessant change marks life's design.
We're born, we grow and then decline.
But one big change I would adore:
To see the world renouncing war!

Robert Edmondson

Completing a 100-mile cycling challenge

Despite a puncture and gear problems, Bob Crooks completed the leg-testing cycling challenge—and enjoyed it too!

Prudential RideLondon is one of the world's largest cycling festivals and started in its current form in 2013. The route is on closed roads throughout and, although this undoubtedly causes some inconvenience to people living close to the route, it ensures that the event can be enjoyed safely by thousands of cyclists of all shapes, sizes, abilities and ages.

This year I was one of the 25,500 participants in the 100-mile amateur event, which takes place immediately before the professional race. Entry is by ballot, with the participants chosen at random from over 100,000 applicants.

The course began in the Olympic Park. Each rider was given a start time between 7am and 9am and set off in groups at five-minute intervals. It was a joy to be riding through traffic-free London streets on a beautiful sunny morning with the first part of the course flat and smooth. I covered 18 miles in the first hour but unfortunately my average speed then went down rapidly as I spent time fixing a puncture and some problems with my gears. Leith Hill and Box Hill were the main challenges in Surrey and there was a traffic jam in West Street, Dorking (what's new!) caused by a bike pile-up in the High Street. After Box Hill, the route back into London was fairly flat. Fuelled by a few days of carbo-loading and a supply of energy gels, I managed to keep my legs turning at a reasonable pace up

to the finish in the Mall.

The amateur event is a 'sportive' rather than a race. An electronic tag is attached to each bike and times are recorded at start, finish and various

points along the way. I finished in 7 hours 46 minutes and 38 seconds, which gave me a ranking of 21,253 out of 25,500, but I achieved my own target of finishing in less than eight hours.

The results make interesting reading. The fastest time was 3 hours 57 minutes 17 seconds by a 35-year-old man. There were around 1,200 'third-agers', defined as over 60, and the fastest of these was over 70. He was ranked 101st and achieved an incredible time of 4 hours 7 minutes 35 seconds. (He must have taken a short cut!) There were also another 40 third-agers who finished in less than five hours.

Thanks to any of you who lined the route in the Dorking area. It produced a great atmosphere and really gave me and the other riders a boost before the climb of Box Hill. Sorry if you were inconvenienced by the road closures.

If you fancy having a go yourself in 2016, the ballot is now open and will close on Friday 8 January .



Success! (photo by Gill Crooks)

Monthly Meetings

Art and Society: Bill Hill, 20 May 2015‘

Art doesn't advance or evolve, but it does change,' argued Bill Hill, suggesting that change in art reflected changes in society. For instance, art in the Middle Ages reflected the domination of the Church in western society, while the Renaissance offered a larger variety of themes for the artist.

With the advent of photography, artists were challenged to explore how paintings can reveal a view of the world from the mind's eye rather than the physical eye, as illustrated in the works of Monet, Turner, Van Gogh and Cezanne.

Paintings following the First World War communicated the horror of war, as in John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* and Paul Nash's *The Menin Road*, both painted in 1919. These paintings had more impact than newspaper accounts. Salvador Dali's works reflected the artist's interest in scientific advance, while pop art in the 1960s celebrated a more colourful society after the dreary post-war years.

Bill's interesting talk attracted warm applause from an appreciative audience.

Florence Reid

Fascinating Tales from Balloons, Barnstormers and the Royal Flying Corps: Jim Barnes, 9 September 2015

This intriguing title heralded a well illustrated talk packed with facts, dates and figures in which Jim Barnes described early events in the history of aviation.

Starting with the Montgolfier brothers in 1777, who used hot-air balloons, the early military applications of balloons were described. These included Jean-Marie-Joseph Coutelle, who observed Dutch and Austrian troops for the French Revolutionary army. Later, in 1861-65 during the American Civil War, the Union forces used balloons extensively for observation of Confederate lines of troops. In 1878 the Army School of Ballooning was set up in Woolwich, south London. To encourage political support for the application of balloons

one Captain James Templer took up two members of parliament in a flight in 1881. Unfortunately, one MP was lost and never seen again.

Meanwhile, winged aircraft were being developed, and in 1909 Samuel Cody designed the first aeroplane for the British Army, but the contract was cancelled. However, he continued to popularise flying by giving joyrides for 10s 6d a time. Pilot licences were available, but only for those aged under 40. Lord Brabazon obtained the first one.

In 1914 Louis Blériot opened a flying school at Brooklands in Surrey, where



Geoffrey de Havilland became involved in aircraft maintenance. De Havilland developed the BE2 aeroplane used for many years by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Considerable effort was put into aircraft engine development, and over 70,000 examples of the Gnome rotary engine were built. This had good cooling characteristics and used castor oil lubrication. Some of these engines were used in the Sopwith Camel fighter. Although parachutes had been developed as early as 1797 they were initially issued only to balloonists in the First World War.

Several pictures were shown of posters encouraging people to 'join up' for the war. Among those awarded the Victoria Cross, William Rhodes Morehouse was the first to receive one for action in the air. We were also told about Lanoe Hawker VC, who, with No 6 Squadron RFC, developed mountings for Lewis machine guns. He became the first British

flying ace, but was shot down by Baron Manfred von Richthofen. Captain Albert Ball VC shot down 44 planes. He flew a SE5 aircraft but wanted a Nieuport, which was a single-seater.

As the conflict developed the importance of the clock code for artillery spotters, morse for communications, and aerial photography for battlefield observation was realised.

The Royal Navy Air Service came under the control of the Royal Navy in 1915 and it controlled squadrons on the Western Front – a plane from one of these is claimed to have shot down von Richthofen – as well as aeroplanes on ships.

Jim finished by referring to the huge growth in aeroplane construction during the First World War and to the report by General Smuts which recommended the formation of the RAF by combining the RFC and the RNAS, which took place in 1918.

Peter Shelley

Vaughan Williams in Surrey: Robin Wells, 14 October 2015

As a girl of 10 or 11 years old I was taken to my first concert at the newly built Royal Festival Hall. As we entered the foyer my mother exclaimed, 'There's Vaughan Williams!' and the figure of an elderly man was seen staggering up the stairs into the main concourse. That image has always remained in my memory, and I feel privileged to have set eyes on him long before I ever dreamt that I would live in Dorking, where he passed much of his life.

Robin Wells was well qualified to talk to us about the composer's life, being a former director of music at Charterhouse,

the school attended by Ralph Vaughan Williams from 1887 to 1890.

Ralph was born in 1872 to Arthur, vicar of Down Ampney (the name given to the hymn Ralph later composed) in Gloucestershire, and Margaret Wedgwood, daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, who had married his cousin, Carolyn Darwin. The Wedgwoods had earlier purchased Leith Hill Place, and Ralph's mother returned there after the death of her husband in 1875. She herself lived to the age of 95.

Ralph was brought up with music, and composed his first work, *Robin's Nest*, at the age of six. His early schooling was in

Rottingdean, followed by Charterhouse, where he played violin, viola and organ and sang in the choir. When he and a friend organised a successful concert at the school, the maths master was heard to encourage him with the words ‘You must go on’.

In 1890 he went to the Royal College of Music, where he studied viola and composition with Hubert Parry, and then on to Trinity College, Cambridge, under Charles Wood. Having obtained his degree he returned to the Royal College, studying with Charles Villiers Stanford and becoming a friend of Gustav Holst. Ralph married Adeline Fisher in 1897 and they lived in London until about 1928, when they returned to Dorking, dwelling at ‘Whitegates’ in Nutcombe Lane until 1953. That house was later demolished.

The famous Leith Hill Musical Festival was started in 1905 by Lady Farrer and Ralph’s sister Meggie in a hall which later became a fire station. The event moved to the Dorking Halls in the 1930s. Ralph conducted the festival until 1953. Dorking residents will be familiar with the relief bust of the composer in the porch of St Martin’s Church as well as his statue outside the Dorking Halls – minus baton! – erected in the last 10 years.

In 1938 Ursula Wood came to the Vaughan Williams home to be Ralph’s secretary, remaining with them until Adeline, rendered increasingly immobile with arthritis, died in 1951. Ursula and Ralph married in 1953 and moved to 10 Hanover Terrace, Regents Park. He died in 1958.



Vaughan Williams relaxing in the gardens of ‘The White Gates’, Dorking in 1952 (courtesy of the RVW Charitable Trust)

Space does not allow more than to list some of his numerous compositions, including nine symphonies, concertos for oboe, tuba, piano and harmonica, film music for *Scott Of The Antarctic*, operas such as *Sir John In Love*, *The Poisoned Kiss* and *Pilgrim’s Progress* and numerous songs, for which English folk song was often the inspiration.

Robin Wells ended his talk by playing us a recording of Vaughan Williams’s hymn, *For All The Saints*, sung by the boys of Charterhouse School at his funeral, which took place at Westminster Abbey.

Julie Mellows

Days Out

Magna Carta Commemoration, 24 July 2015

It was an unseasonably grey morning when 51 intrepid folk from Dorking & District U3A, accompanied by Darren, the coach driver, embarked on their July outing to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta.

First stop was the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, where we were joined by our very knowledgeable guide, Victoria, with her all-weather panama and ever-ready humour. We made our way on foot to All Saints Church for coffee, passing through milling students clad in blue-sashed gowns en route to the Guildhall for their graduation ceremony.

There has been a church on this site since Saxon times. It was probably here that in 838 King Egbert of Wessex held a great Council of Kingston, where 24 bishops made a compact of mutual support between the church and the state. It's a relationship that still exists today in the House of Lords, and one of the reasons Kingston is nationally important.

In 900 Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great, was crowned here, uniting the Angles of Mercia and the Saxons, with the result that together they could fight effectively against the Danes.

In 925 Kingston hosted another important moment, when Athelstan was crowned first King of England. In all, eight Saxon kings were crowned at this site. The Coronation Stone they sat on predates the Scottish Stone of Scone in Westminster Abbey. It is currently sited, somewhat ignominiously, beside Kingston's police station, having been

removed from the church in the 18th century when it fell out of favour. (Pagan Neolithic people thought stones could be worshipped. Maybe that was why it was subsequently neglected.) All Saints hopes to have it back indoors soon. However, should the Scots ever want their Stone of Scone back, Kingston can always offer their Coronation Stone as substitute.

It was raining lightly when we arrived in Thames Ditton for a very enjoyable lunch at the Old Swan. By the time we left significant puddles were developing.

Darren drove us past magnificent Hampton Court, built in 1514 by Cardinal Wolsey. (Interestingly, Wolsey wouldn't visit Kingston as he thought it was bad luck.) Apparently, Henry VIII, irked that Wolsey lived in a palace superior to his own, persuaded Wolsey to give him Hampton Court in 1524. Henry liked it so much he honeymooned there (five times). His only son was born there and his third wife, Jane Seymour, died there.

We drove on through Runnymede, where King John signed the Magna Carta in 1215, towards Windsor and on to the highlight of our day out: the boat trip down the Thames, back past Runnymede to Staines, where we were to disembark.

At Windsor, Darren reversed down an impossibly small alley to get as close as possible to our vessel so that we wouldn't get wet (have I mentioned the rain?). Once aboard, we discovered that our boat had only a small saloon, so most of us sat outside on deck, enabling us to enjoy the view (and the weather). Victoria, ever

resourceful, brandished a broom, which she used to bash at the sagging tarpaulin draped delicately above our heads in an attempt to keep us dry. She was partly successful.

But never let it be said a drop of rain – actually, a whole month’s worth fell that day – could daunt the members of Dorking & District U3A. We’re British! We have the bulldog spirit! We laughed and joked and brandished our brollies as we sailed sedately past Windsor Great Park, through three beautiful locks, past lovely homes – some of which were badly affected by the floods last year – under a bridge named after our guide (Victoria) and on towards Runnymede. However, after an hour and a half, nobody complained when Victoria announced that the trip was to be cut short. We would abandon ship at Runnymede. Soon after we were treated to the sight of our saviour, Darren, and his coach waiting by the river bank.

As we disembarked at Runnymede we walked past the beautiful new statue of Queen Elizabeth II, unveiled on 14 June 2015 by John Bercow MP, before Darren whisked us home, damp and ‘bloodied but unbowed’.

With thanks to Darren and Victoria and, of course, to Jean and Judy, who ably organised a very interesting and memorable outing.



A very wet group on the Thames boat trip
(photo by Laurie von Weber)

And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were
not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any
speaks
That near-drowned with us upon our trip to
Runnymede.

(with apologies to Will S)

Judy Perry

**These clauses from the Magna Carta
remain on the statute book today:**

‘No free man shall be taken, imprisoned,
stripped of his rights or possessions,
outlawed or exiled or in any way ruined,
nor will We proceed against or prosecute
him, except by the lawful judgement of
his peers and by the law of the land.’

‘To no one will We sell, to no one deny
or delay right or justice.’

Architecture group day trip: A Minor Misunderstanding

This article, by a member of the Enjoying Architecture group, first appeared in St Martin's Magazine and is reproduced with their kind permission

The title was 'Visit Newdigate for Guided Walk'. Newdigate is a Saxon village and this was an invitation from my U3A Architecture group to enjoy the delights of this ancient village. Mary, our leader, had arranged for us to start the morning with a pleasant cup of coffee at the local pub before departing for our guided tour.

When leaving home I considered my attire. The forecast of possible showers, probably in the afternoon, didn't deter me from taking a lightweight raincoat. Footwear didn't seem important as on previous U3A outings much time had been spent standing on solid pavements looking at buildings and receiving fascinating information on their past.

After coffee, a similarly clothed group and myself gathered outside the pub. Mary, who had joined us for coffee, gave her apologies for having to leave but handed us over to our guide, who explained his plans for the morning: a one-and-a-half to two-hour walk across fields, with three or four stiles en route. I looked down at my shoes: flip-flops! I then surveyed the group and perceived a look of universal dismay at their unsuitable attire. These were pensioners of varying size and form. I pondered the possibility of the need for multiple bladder-relieving stops, joints that had long made any sort of excursion a thing of the past – I counted at least six walking sticks – and a generally unspoken view that this was not what they had signed up for.

But we are a tough generation and, undaunted, 25 senior people set off. Our

group negotiating the first stile was a sight to behold. For those who found it most difficult there was a team on hand to assist in lifting each limb in turn to find the correct height and position and to offer encouraging 'you can do it' emotional support. At this point our guide was saying that we were going to 'zoom across the first field and then turn right'. I must say that during the whole morning I did not detect any zooming, merely a feeling that we were 'in the trenches' and each obstacle, uneven ground, cow pat and stile had to be viewed with determination and a spirit of 'this will be our finest hour'.

Slowly the rain started, and after a while our instruction maps were bedraggled. However, I did observe one man's inventiveness in using the map's plastic sleeve as a hat. It fitted perfectly, did the job and looked quite becoming. Necessity is the mother of invention.

On passing one particular field I noticed, fixed to a post, a sign informing us: 'Kangaroos 25 metres'. Maybe this would cause some zooming across fields. However, I didn't see any kangaroos, but if anyone knows the reason for this sign – a joke, maybe? – I'd love to know.

After being on the go or, should I say, the plod, for about an hour, we came to our second coffee stop. It was by this time pouring with rain. We were told to use the tent in the garden, as the coffee shop roof was leaking. We gave our orders. At this point some people left. This put the coffee order into disarray when it arrived – minus any sugar, which was my need. Everything had reached a

low. Even one lady quoting her long-departed mother's optimistic comment when caught in rain – 'It's just a clearing shower' – did not lift our spirits, and the remaining diehards drank up, admitted defeat and returned directly to base, bedraggled but not downhearted.

The Enjoying Architecture group is first-class. Mary spends an enormous

amount of time organising each outing and has an excellent eye for detail. I have thoroughly enjoyed every trip that I have been on. This particular outing was definitely an anomaly and, while giving me inspiration for writing, somehow took on a life of its own which was beyond Mary's control.

Christine Lawrence

Women of the Great War and the Suffragettes and Soldiers Exhibition, 13 October 2015

The theme of October's day out was suffragettes and inspirational women of the Great War. After picking up our friendly and knowledgeable guide, Carole, we started our trip with coffee at a flower-decked pub near Waterloo station. We were then taken on a coach tour of central London, with Carole explaining the importance of women's contribution to the war effort. Men were conscripted in 1916 and women were needed in all areas, including the Post Office, munitions, farming and, of course, transport, to keep the country going. They were never allowed to drive a train, however – that treat was reserved for men!

Carole pointed out many places connected to the suffragettes and the war, such as the statue of Emmeline Pankhurst in the House of Commons garden; Edith Cavell's statue; the Ritz, where many fund-raising events were held; and the Military Hospital in Charing Cross. She also explained the background to the white feather, which was given to men who were not in uniform.

We were told that cock fighting was a



Entrance to the Docklands Museum
(photo by Laurie von Weber)

popular sport but, apparently, white cocks are timid and do not fight.

We returned to the pub for a pleasant lunch and then on to the Museum of

London Docklands. This is devoted to a history of the dock area from Roman Times to the present day. A fascinating story was presented, charting the importance of the Thames for transport over the centuries and illustrated by pictures showing the river crowded with ships of all sizes. Change came in the 1960s with containerisation, the dock strike and, of course, the end of the Empire. The wharves and docks were left deserted and ripe for later development into flats and offices, as we see in the area today.

The main reason for our visit was the excellent exhibition devoted to Christina Broom (1862-1939), regarded as the UK's first female press photographer.

After her husband was crippled in an accident this tough and redoubtable lady took her camera and tripod to the streets of London, capturing thousands of images of people and events. These she had made into postcards, which she sold to support her family.

Many of her pictures were of the suffragettes and, although she did not march herself, her contribution to the advancement of women's equality was every bit as valid. I am sure that, given the chance, she would not have hesitated to take her camera to a war zone, as Lee Miller did in the Second World War.

This was an enjoyable and instructive day.

Jenny Ford

Holidays

SOUTH-WEST IRELAND, 2-7 MAY 2016

Details of this holiday were circulated to all members by email on 2 November and we tried to telephone as many as possible of those not on email who had been on holiday with us on a previous occasion.

The holiday is now full for single rooms, though you are welcome to ask to be put on a waiting list. At the time of going to press, there were a few twin/double room places.

Flight from Gatwick to Cork – transfer to Ashe Hotel (3*), Tralee.

Tours include Killarney, the Ring of Kerry, Muckross House and the Dingle Peninsula.

Return flight from Shannon to Gatwick.

Cost: £557 pp DBB sharing a double/twin (single supplement £100). Includes flights and internal transport.

Autumn holiday in Northumbria, 14–20 September 2015

We left Dorking on a gloomy and wet Monday morning in mid-September, but this did not daunt us as we journeyed north to Teesside. The rain was intermittent all the way. Our guide from Northern Secrets was waiting in Newcastle to help us to settle into our hotel for the week.

The next day it was still raining. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a tour round Newcastle, including a visit to the impressive Sage Centre (a huge concert centre designed by Norman Foster). This was followed by a brief visit to Hadrian's Wall and then on to Corbridge, where we explored the village and saw two pele towers. Soon after this the rain stopped as we travelled across the Cheviots to Cragside. Over 150 years ago Lord Armstrong, a lover of all things scientific, built this visionary home. It is an amazing Victorian house, with 103 rooms, built on the side of a hill in a hotchpotch of architectural styles, but is truly impressive. In 1880 Lord Armstrong installed electric lighting, the first in the world to be powered by hydro-electricity.

On Wednesday we spent the day at Alnwick Castle – wonderful state rooms, such a treat. The castle featured as the family's summer residence in the 2014 Christmas episode of *Downton Abbey*. It was also used for one of the Harry Potter films. The gardens were a pleasant surprise, with amazing fountains.

The next day we went to Lindisfarne, which was most interesting and has wonderful views. We were able to see the church, priory and castle and had the opportunity to buy fresh crab sandwiches. One's time in Lindisfarne is always limited because of the need to beat the



The group at the Sage Centre (photo by Laurie von Weber)

incoming tide. On the way back to our hotel we stopped briefly to see Bamburgh Castle and visit a mining exhibition.

Friday was a mild autumn day, perfect weather for a tour. On our way to Durham we stopped to view the Angel of the North. Durham Cathedral is beautiful: very old, and a mixture of Norman and Romanesque architecture, with enormous Norman columns. Our guide took us round the town and then we were left to our own devices. We were able to explore the town and the little streets around the cathedral and along the river. Lovely views of the river can be seen from high up by the cathedral.

Saturday, our final day, was spent at the Beamish Open Air Museum. We went back in history from 1520 to the 1900s. We were able to ride on trams, visit a farm, an old hall, a street and a railway station and to witness a demonstration of falconry. On Sunday it was into the coach and back to Dorking with a two-hour stop at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire.

This was a very interesting and educational holiday. The grateful thanks of all who went go to Angela Cooke and Jim Docking for organising it.

Jacqueline Greenlees

Places visited on the Northumbria holiday



Clockwise from top left: An old mine, featuring some of the ceramic poppies created by Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, originally displayed in the Tower of London to mark 100 years since the first day of Britain's involvement in the First World War; Alnwick Castle; Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, visited on the journey to Newcastle (photos by Elsie Rosam); Cragside House, 'an amazing Victorian house, with 103 rooms, built on the side of a hill in a hotchpotch of architectural styles (photo by Laurie von Weber)

25th anniversary events

The committee is planning a series of events throughout next year to celebrate 25 years of the Dorking & District U3A, which was begun in March 1991.

Some groups are also planning special events.

Date and time	Event	Ticket price	Tickets from...
Tuesday 2 February at 7pm	Quiz night at the Rialto Restaurant, South Street, Dorking	£10, includes food	Pat Smith (01306 889278; info@dorkingu3a.org.uk)
Sunday 13 March at ?	Afternoon tea at Denbies	£10	Judy Perry (01306 640388; judyyates@btinternet.com)
Thursday 16 June at 7pm	Dinner at Betchworth Golf Club	£27	Jenny Ford (01306 882534; jennyaford@btinternet.com)
Wednesday 26 October, provisionally 9am to 5pm	Exhibition of our activities – group displays, exhibitions, demonstrations	Free	

Diversions & Delights

From Medical Records

*Allegedly, these comments were taken from actual medical records
dictated by doctors*

- On the second day, the knee was better and on the third day it had completely disappeared.
- The patient has been depressed ever since she began seeing me in 1983.



- Discharge status: alive but without permission.
- The baby was delivered, the cord clamped and cut, and handed to the paediatrician, who breathed and cried immediately.
- She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life until 1989 when she got a divorce.
- Rectal exam revealed a normal size thyroid.
- Between you and me, we ought to be able to get this lady pregnant.
- The patient lives at home with his mother, father, and pet turtle, who is presently enrolled in day care three times a week.
- The patient was to have a bowel resection. However, he took a job as a stockbroker instead.
- When she fainted, her eyes rolled around the room.
- She has no rigors or chills but her husband says she was very hot in bed last night.
- Whilst in Casualty she was examined, X-rated and sent home.
- The patient is tearful and crying constantly. She also appears to be depressed.
- Healthy-appearing, decrepit 69-year-old male, mentally alert but forgetful.
- The patient has no past history of suicide.
- The patient expired on the floor uneventfully.
- Patient has left his white blood cells at another hospital.
- Patient was becoming more demented with urinary frequency.
- The patient experienced sudden onset of severe shortness of breath with a picture of acute pulmonary oedema at home while having sex which gradually deteriorated in the emergency room.
- Patient has chest pains if she lies on her left side for over a year.
- By the time he was admitted, his rapid heart had stopped, and he was feeling much better.
- The patient is a 79-year-old widow who no longer lives with her husband.
- The patient left the hospital feeling much better except for her original complaints.
- The patient refused an autopsy.



Our treasure hunt stall at the Pippfest event attracted great interest and raised awareness of the U3A in Dorking (Photo by Phyllis Hughes)



Congratulations to Membership Secretary Bob Crooks, who completed this year's 100-mile Prudential RideLondon-Surrey cycle event in a time of 7 hours and 43 minutes, despite suffering delays of more than an hour to fix a puncture and a gear malfunction (Photo by Gill Crooks)

See article on p12



Photography group member Angela Rixon captured this bumblebee among the catnip for the group's recent focus on wildlife



This dramatic scene is by Painting for Pleasure group member Frances Lawrence

Groups



The Singing for Pleasure group entertained residents at Kenward Court, a sheltered/retired housing complex in Brockham, with a



The Exercise for Health group in Westcott



The Walking group on a 4½-mile ramble from Westcott



The winning team at a session of the Bowls group (Photo by Phyllis Hughes)