



## May Newsletter 2023

### Message from Anne:

In these final weeks before our AGM our Newsletter Editor has asked me to reflect on the past three years in Ems Valley u3a ... mmm ... nice thought, but I struggle to remember what I did last week, never mind over three years .....ho hum.

The overriding reflection is reserved for your Committee - the hardworking people behind the scenes who manage and organise your monthly meetings, your coffee mornings, your group rooms, your queries, the finance, the business issues, your membership, the operation of our Beacon communication and our website. I bet you never think of the effort that has gone into your membership as you stroll in to the monthly meeting? (No, I didn't either, before I joined the committee!!)



So - what have we done in the past three years or so - three years that have been punctuated by Covid and lockdowns?

We held the 2021 AGM on Zoom. (For the first time we e-mailed papers out to all members before the meeting, which obviously saved a huge amount of time at the AGM and we have continued to do this.) Incidentally, Ems Valley was one of the first u3as to embrace Zoom for their AGM.

We started to hold our monthly general meetings at the Baptist Church, which of course was wonderful when we all had to

continue the dreaded social distancing (and for those of our members who wish to continue we are still able to do that).

Our newsletter was produced fortnightly throughout lockdown, keeping us all in touch, regularly giving us all a giggle through those somewhat dark times; the Newsletter continues to be produced monthly.

Three Christmas Lunches (including a virtual lunch by way of Zoom in December 2020).

Monthly talks on Zoom by our speakers in lockdown, and in person now we're returning to normal.

Virtual Welcome Coffee Mornings for new members on Zoom in 2020 and 2021.

Welcome Coffee Mornings in person in November 2021, March and October 2022 and February 2023.

Two Business Meetings, one on Zoom in 2021 and the other in person in 2022, to discuss ways forward for Ems Valley - so, so useful.

Our amazing u3a Celebration Day in June 2021 - this was a success beyond our hopes at that time. (Our MP attended, and stayed for more than an hour - and not just for the photos!)

Three Group Leaders' Social Evenings to thank them in a small way for their hard work.

A cake celebrating u3a's 40th Anniversary in 2022. Any reflections I might have absolutely include our wonderful Group Leaders, who continue to organise and prepare for your meetings each month. We take them for granted, don't we, just turning up and enjoying the hour or two once a month? So my reflections would include a huge thank you to all of them.

Your committee made every effort to keep in touch with members during lockdown, as did many of our Group Leaders. And our groups continue to flourish - we have over 50 at the present time, which is an amazing number for 524 (today!) members!! Your committee has worked hard to try to ensure that we don't have waiting lists for any group - encouraging current groups' members to start a new group if there is demand. As you know, Ems Valley meets the cost of room hire for any new group, so long as that group is at least 10 in number.

Our membership continues to increase and we now have over 500 members. It has been a particular pleasure to welcome all our new members who bring fresh thoughts and energy to our u3a. Virtually all members have access to email, which of course cuts down costs and enables us to get in touch with you quickly if need be.

There have been other issues -

In late 2022 the hosting company for our website (and those of many other u3as) failed us completely and we were offline for over two weeks until another company could host our site. At the moment we are also grappling with higher charges for rooms and for speakers.

I think my final reflection might lie in the pleasure I feel knowing that Ems Valley is flourishing, with a steady stream of new members. In other parts of the country u3as have had problems in recruitment and even in keeping their branch going. It is so lovely to see members arriving each month for our general meeting, happy to catch up with friends and make new ones. And within that final reflection of mine is the pleasure we have in seeing all our past chairmen and women still members of Ems Valley u3a!



**Anne**

## **Bricks Business**

Nearly five years ago, I started this group, very slightly with tongue in cheek. Eight diehard members immediately joined all anxious to support/amuse this elderly baked clay optimist. And so the first year was soon completed. We



covered the first ten thousand years in the history of Brickmaking from sun dried mud bricks in Mesopotamia through to the Romans bringing their portable Brick kilns with their invasion weapons, and then onto Regency and Georgian Britain.

Since then, we have looked at towns, cities and villages in Hampshire and Sussex. The group has expanded to over 50 members and you can see a typical attendance in the adjacent photo. I am pleased to say that the ladies now outnumber the gentlemen, thus totalling discounting

the idea that this may be a “male” subject!

Because the membership has altered considerably over the life of the group, I may go back to the history of Brickmaking again as so many were not here for that very first year. This may provide an opportunity to new members to join and be there at the start, once again.

**Alan Borrow**

## **The South East u3a Forum Summer School 4th-7th September 2023 at the University of Chichester – Residential or Day attendance.**

The bookings for this summer forum opened on Friday 17th March for places at this year’s Summer School. There was a stampede for the starting line, both by post and online, as some members wanted to ensure they secured a place on their chosen subject. Bookings are now still coming in but at a much more sedate pace.

If you wish to participate, please don’t wait too long - you might miss out on this opportunity to spend time with other like-minded members in your chosen subject, making new friends throughout the week, in the congenial surroundings of the University of Chichester.

This is the subject availability at the start of April:

- Archaeology & Egyptology – FULL
- Creative Writing
- Cycling
- Fizziks is Phun (Physics)
- Fun with French – Intermediate
- Irish and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts
- Mahjong – Beginners
- Mathematics demystified
- Poetry ‘A World of Dreams’
- Seated and/or Standing Yoga & Mindfulness
- Ukulele Intermediate - FULL
- Walking/Rambling – A Coastal Delight.

Although two courses are now FULL the remainder still have some spaces left.

### General Information

This is primarily a 4-day residential summer school held at the University of Chichester, although participants do have the option to be non-residential. Details about the choice of accommodation, costings and payment along with other relevant information can be found on the Course Information sheet on the Forum website. The Booking Form is also available on the Forum website for downloading. You can return the form either;

- online to - [sesummerschool2023@gmail.com](mailto:sesummerschool2023@gmail.com) or
- post to - Martin Livesey, Flat 12, 26 Goodworth Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1TE

Please note: For full payment details please refer to the Course Information sheet.

All this information and details on the subjects can be found on the Forum website at

<https://u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum/summerschool>

Please read carefully the Course Information sheet on “How to Book” before filling in the Booking Form, thanks.

Details on Summer School Itinerary

The participants register on the Monday afternoon and they are with their tutors by 5.00pm for a short introductory session. There is full programme with their chosen subject on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning. The summer school finishes after lunch on Thursday – home time!!

There is a programme of events each evening:

- Monday – Quiz night – getting to know each other and having fun
- Tuesday – Film night on campus – a recent film OR
- Tuesday – Theatre visit – TBC; Festival Theatre’s programmed play is full
- Wednesday – Speaker – Jane Glennie: “Violet’s Titanic Escape”

If you do not have internet access, please contact Jill Haistead on 07939 332542 and the relevant information will be posted to you.

## OUR ANCIENT GREEKS TAKE TO THE BOARDS

It was the turn of the Ancient Greece Group to fill the 20 minute after tea slot at the March Monthly Meeting in the Baptist Church. They presented a number of short items in a lively magazine-type programme, loosely under the theme of ‘Inspired by Ancient Greece’. In one section they looked at modern products which have been named after

mythological figures, followed by a performance of a skit, written by group member Rod Lipscombe, on the confusing re-branding that sometimes takes place.

For example:

Marathon/Snickers Sketch

PHEIDIPPIDES: Greetings Athenians. I have just run 26 miles from Marathon bringing news of a great victory.

ATHENIAN: From where?

PHEIDIPPIDES: From Marathon

ATHENIAN: Never heard of it.

HERMES/EVRI: Never mind that. I woke this morning and found that I am now called Evri, which must mean that I am every god and therefore King of the Gods.

ZEUS: (bellows) Enough! It seems that a god in the future called Advertising Agency has changed some names. So Marathon has become Snickers and henceforth it will be known that Pheidippides ran from Snickers to Athens with news of a great victory. And as for you Hermes, now known as Evri, for your impertinence you will now clean Mount Olympus from top to bottom every day. (very importantly) For I am King of the Gods. I am Zeus.

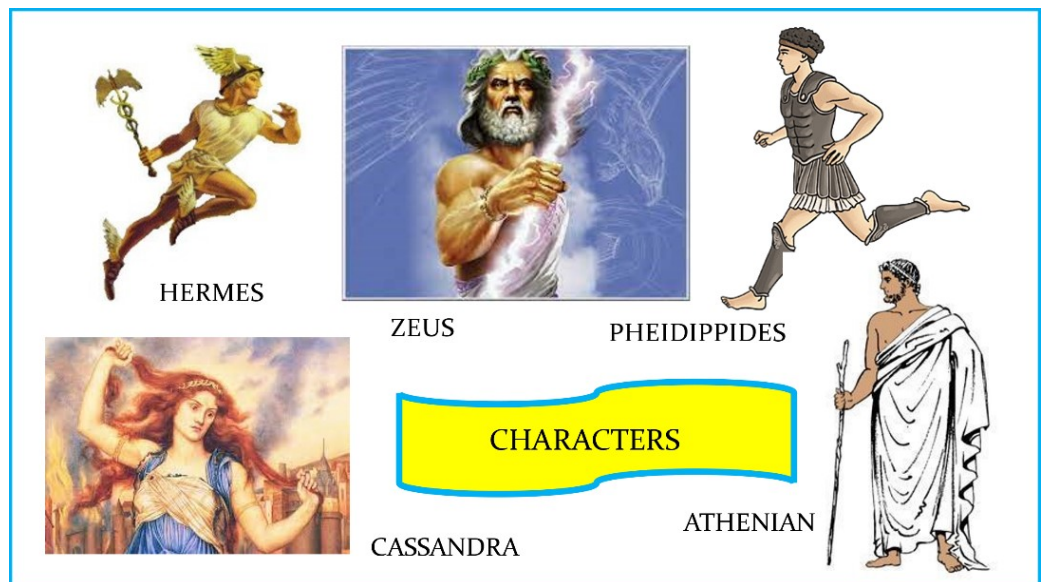
HERMES/EVRI: (cheekily) But maybe not for much longer!

CASSANDRA: (wailing eerily) I prophesy that after 30 years Snickers will once again become Marathon.

ALL: Unbelievable!

**Juliet Walker**

**Editor note: Well done the Ancient Greeks – we were actually in stitches!**



## Ems Valley U3A Garden Group - Denmans Garden visit 11 April 2023

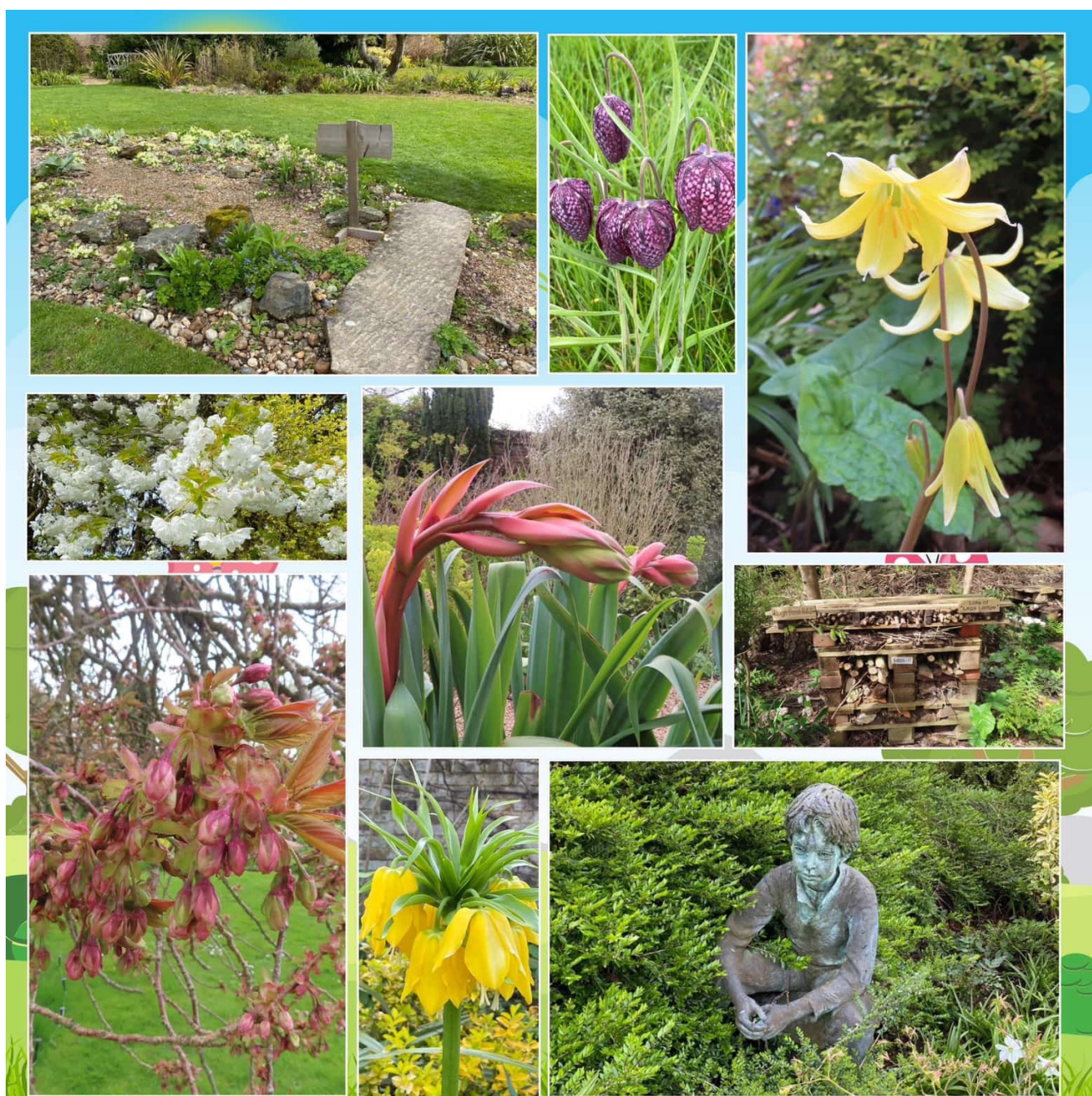
After organising a last minute alternative venue due to Cookcroft Garden cancelling, we gathered the troops and headed to Denmans Garden near Chichester.

We were met by the General Manager Mike, who we owe a big thank you for accommodating us at such short notice, especially with the Easter weekend just beforehand. He welcomed us warmly directing us to the Midpines Café for our usual garden visit start of coffee and cakes.

With a wary eye on the weather and relief that the rain was holding off, we had a leisurely stroll around the garden taking in the variety of different plants looking healthy and unscathed by the heavy frosts earlier in the year that decimated a lot of plants.

As with many gardens we visit, there is almost always a plant new to us. This time we discovered a triffid plant with pink flowers (middle picture) which we were told was a *Beschorneria Yuccoides*. It looked as though it was going to reach out to us and call "Feed me, Seymour"!

Joyce Robinson originally developed the ornamental garden, gravel gardens and planted unusual and interesting plants in the Walled Garden. She also built dry riverbeds inspired by the Winterbourne rivers. John Brookes came across Denmans through the NGS. Joyce Robinson described the garden as 'glorious disarray' whilst John Brookes called it 'controlled disarray'. We would say it's just wonderful!



Since John Brookes' death in 2018 the garden has been carefully and lovingly brought back to life. If you haven't been there for a while, it is well worth a visit. You'll be agreeably impressed.

**Ronnie Tyler**

## **AND YET ANOTHER 'AFTER SPEAKER' TALK BY A GROUP IS COMING UP!**

"GARDENS" are due to speak to us after the Speaker at the JUNE MEETING! I understand that they have been discussing what to do, that will be light hearted, fun, entertainment but with a garden theme, and not just a 'talk' about gardens. So, in order to avoid having a situation where those who are not interested in gardening might leave after the tea break, they have requested that their 'spot' is titled '**Entertainment by members of the Gardens Group**'.

Watch this space or better still, put 22<sup>nd</sup> June in your diaries NOW!

## **Easter Morning service on the foreshore at the bottom of Warblington Road, 6.00am**



**Thank you Richard Swaine for sending this atmospheric picture1**

## **CRAFTS group learn how to make an attractive NOTICE BOARD**



Angela Blunden writes: Below are the photos of our April 5th Craft meeting.

We had a lot of fun as usual, this month we made Fabric Notice boards using painting canvas boards as the base, with wadding and ribbon. The Slow Stitching panels are made up of all sorts of scrap material, buttons, ribbon, lace and anything else that might look good, creating pictures, or abstract designs, the finished articles can be used for various things, from wall hangings, to book covers, purses, and bags. We enjoyed ourselves, swapping ideas and materials!



## **‘CAMEO’ stands for Come And Meet Each Other.**

**An interesting new interest group is being proposed:**

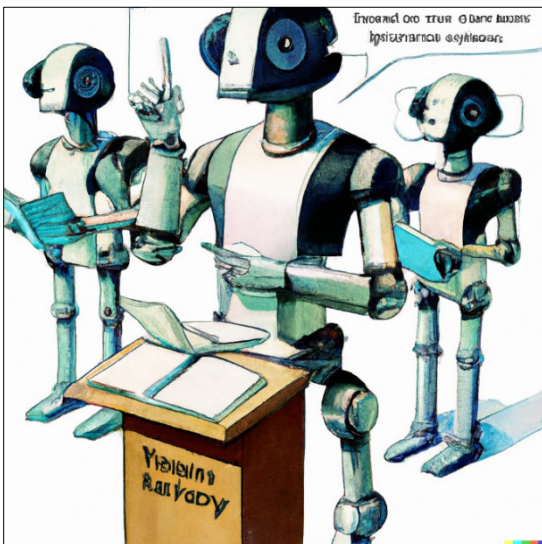
The meetings will take the form of a Coffee Morning and informal chat – getting to know one another and sharing enthusiasm for other u3a Groups and/or general life experiences.

The proposed meeting date and time is the first Thursday morning of each month, starting around 10.15 a.m. for an hour or so. Our first meeting will be Thursday 4 May 2023. However, if this time is not convenient for you, please do still contact me – if sufficient people make it viable a second CAMEO Group, meeting at a different time, can be organised.

If you are interested in finding out more – without committing yourself at this stage - **please contact Ann Sims, Groups Co-ordinator through the Ems Valley u3a website.**

## **Science and Technology Group Workshop on Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

For our April meeting STEM held its first workshop, as opposed to a talk, on Artificial Intelligence. Members of the group did some personal research beforehand, getting to grips with the basics, and on the day a few did short talks on areas of particular interest.



Lots of issues were covered - what it can and cannot do (turbo charge research, pass exams, design, play chess, write essays and poems, create novels and art in the style of... an AI painting just sold for \$432,000!). Being confident of what has been created by humans or machines is impossible now.

We covered why there is such a previously unknown race to get these products on the market (hundreds of millions of users for a product only launched at the end of last year), regardless of the potential for serious harm to our lives. It's money, as ever.

**LEFT: is this how our Future will look?!**

One area we were all impressed by is the huge benefits AI already brings to the field of medicine – many more

cancers are being detected.

We learned education is about to be totally transformed – whether we like it or not. Views were mixed within the group – that’s what we’re about! – but we all can see lots of positives.

“The most exciting invention since electricity.”

“The biggest thing since the Industrial Revolution.”

But there are also negatives. Versions currently on the market are far from reliable in their answers and could cause serious problems if the outputs are relied upon – but that will improve quickly.

A huge concern is that each version released is scarily better than the last. Better than humans? AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) certainly is looking as if it may have that potential when version 5 is released.

“It’s going to be the end of humanity if it gets into the wrong hands.”



**Above: an AI generated picture of a university.**

One thing we all agreed on – there’s no stopping it now. Our World has already changed and many of us are only just waking up to it. After our workshop we’re all aware we can’t trust what we see or hear. From most of us knowing very little about Artificial Intelligence six weeks ago, after our session we’re all more knowledgeable.

Feedback has been that the workshop format is great for learning – lots of interaction, lively fun and really informative. We completely ran out of time and almost missed our cup of tea!

**Pam Palmer**

### **Westbourne Gardens Open Day – 18<sup>th</sup> June**



Our Member Graham Mortimer is reminding members that there will be a charitable event called “Westbourne Gardens Open Day” on 18 June 10.30am - 5pm. This will involve 15 or so gardens in Westbourne, both large and small, and the cost will be £8 to visit any or all of the participating gardens. The proceeds will mostly go to benefit Westbourne Primary School. Refreshments will be arranged by the WI in the Parish Hall and a BBQ by the school.

**Graham Mortimer**

### **Did I read that sign right?**

TOILET OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE FLOOR BELOW.

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In a Laundromat:

AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES: PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR CLOTHES WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT.  
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In a London department store:

BARGAIN BASEMENT UPSTAIRS...  
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In an office:

WOULD THE PERSON WHO TOOK THE STEP LADDER YESTERDAY PLEASE BRING IT BACK OR FURTHER STEPS WILL BE TAKEN.



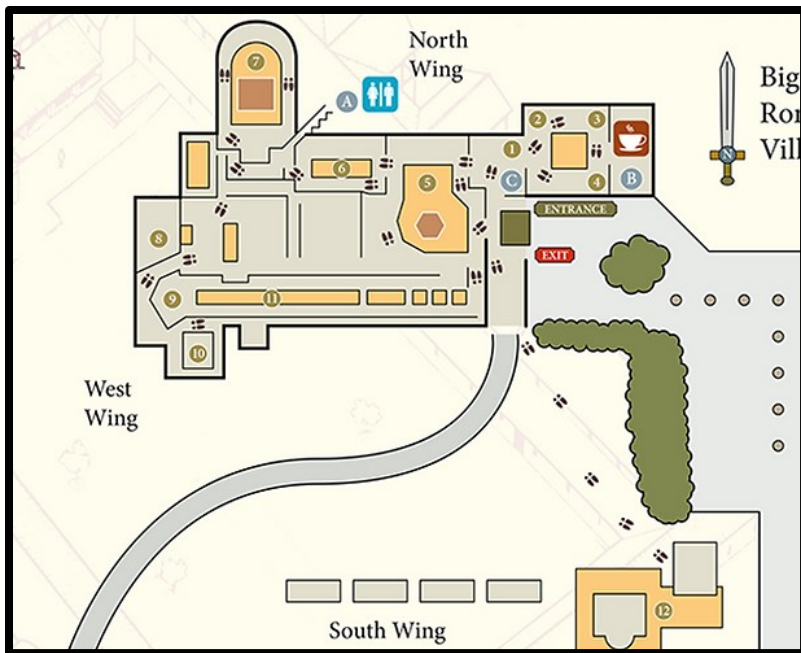
# Roman Villa Visit

On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April, Ancient Rome group were off to Bignor Roman Villa near Bury in West Sussex. The villa was officially closed on a Monday, but our numbers were sufficient to warrant a special opening! We were blessed with fine weather until the close of the visit, which was just as well because it is spread around and some outdoor visiting is necessary.



Our guide, Liz, opened with “Imagine the excitement of George Tupper who in 1811, now over 200 years ago, uncovered the Summer dining room water basin after striking it with his plough.” (see pic bottom - 2 in from the left) Today the Villa is still managed by the Tupper family under the control of the Trustees.

Who lived here? They don't know, but it would have been a Roman immigrant family, a family from elsewhere in the Empire, or more likely, according to experts, a Romano-British family, and, judging by the quality of the mosaics it



was someone of considerable wealth. Just look at the red brick like tiles, top right, fired by the Romans and still being walked on by us in 2023! All quite amazing – see the central heating arrangement – left, middle line - under floor heating fired by an outdoor furnace, hot air drawn through the system by the elaborate flue draught method. Gosh, we are just introducing that into today's buildings, albeit fired by very expensive electricity.... I asked where the tesserae for the mosaics were 'mined' – I counted six different colours – and was told mainly locally but the furthest would have been the black stones from Purbeck. The long mosaic corridor shown as number one on the attached plan is the longest Roman mosaic floor found in Great Britain – so far! (74 feet long!) The Bath house, shown bottom right on the plan, had been reconstructed several times in its life from 190AD until nearly

400AD. The Ancient Romans from Ems Valley that day were all very suitably impressed and they thank Richard Galloway and Sheila Kirkpatrick for organising a great and informative day out!

**Alan Borrow**

## More Signs to confuse:

In an office:

AFTER TEA BREAK, STAFF SHOULD EMPTY THE TEAPOT AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN ON THE DRAINING BOARD.

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Outside a second-hand shop:

WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING - BICYCLES, WASHING MACHINES, ETC. WHY NOT BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG AND GET A WONDERFUL BARGAIN?

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Notice in health food shop window:

CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS...

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Spotted in a safari park:

ELEPHANTS, PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR.

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Seen during a conference:

FOR ANYONE WHO HAS CHILDREN AND DOESN'T KNOW IT, THERE IS A DAY CARE ON THE 1ST FLOOR.

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Notice in a farmer's field:

THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES.

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On a repair shop door:

WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR - THE BELL DOESN'T WORK.)

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Man Kills Self Before Shooting Wife and Daughter

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Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers

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Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over

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Miners Refuse to Work after Death

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Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant

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If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile

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Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures

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Enfield (London) Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide

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Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

(You mean there's something stronger than duct tape?)

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Man Struck By Lightning: Faces Battery Charge

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New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group

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Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft

That's what he gets for eating those beans!

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Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half

Chainsaw Massacre all over again!

Hospitals are sued by 7 Foot Doctors

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Typhoon Rips through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead

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## DEFINITELY NOT GETTING ANY OLDER.....

"First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zip up, then you forget to pull your zip down." - Leo Rosenberg.

"Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you are aboard there is nothing you can do about it." - Golda Meir.

"Old people shouldn't eat health foods. They need all the preservatives they can get." – Robert Orben.

"You spend 90 percent of your adult life hoping for a long rest and the last 10 percent trying to convince the Lord that you're actually not that tired." – Robert Brault.

"The years between 50 and 70 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down." - T.S. Elliot.

"The important thing to remember is that I'm probably going to forget." – Unknown.

"We don't grow older, we grow riper." - Pablo Picasso.

"Everything slows down with age, except the time it takes cake, ice cream and Chocolate to reach your hips." - John Wagner.

"Grandchildren don't make a woman feel old, it's the knowledge that she's married to a grandfather that does." - J. Norman Collie.

"When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old." - Mark Twain.

"Looking fifty is great—if you're sixty." - Joan Rivers.

"Time is a great healer so put on a smile and keep moving forward." – Anonymous.



Nobody told me  
that when you  
get a husband  
the ears are sold  
separately.



Just returned from one of the most entertaining Monthly Meetings I have ever attended! In the first half, the guest speaker was Fran Sandham who talked about his book "Traversa", a fascinating account of the hardships and hilarity he experienced during his epic solo journey on foot across Africa, from the Skeleton Coast to the Indian Ocean through Namibia, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania. He told us that he was inspired by the legendary crossings of the great explorers including Stanley and Livingstone. He left the daily grind of London to undertake this

extraordinary adventure, and he described his brushes with danger in the form of lions and snakes and bandits, his 2-month battle with a syphilitic donkey, less with the replacement aggressive mule, his brush with malaria and many other everyday troubles that arise when you choose to walk across Africa. We could not help get caught up with his grit, determination and sheer obsession that carried him through! We did indeed experience the Wow factor but interspersed with loads and loads of humour!

In the second half of the meeting, Play Reading One took to the stage with a fully costumed Pantomime "Rumpledkiltskin"! We had all been looking forward to this finale to the panto season and ..... What can I say – they were absolutely brilliant. Full credit to Mary Mumby, Angela Baldry and the evil Rumple (and the very sexy ccok) but also to the sound effects man who even managed to insert the theme tune from "Dick Barton – special agent", a ploy which caused the 1940's to spring to life in the very happy audience! I hope to bring you pictures of this extravaganza in the next issue! In the meanwhile, I just need time to calm down, gather myself and prepare for a Coronation which I now fear will become the "B" film compared with Rumple's antics.

**All contributions for the next newsletter please to:**

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