

This month's speaker is.....

..... Dr. David Baxter.

"The Origin of Life."



Dr. Baxter is a retired biochemist and worked in the fields of diabetes, obesity and vaccine development. Since retirement, he has kept a close interest in research into the origin of life, which has seen very significant progress in the last twenty years.

"All cultures have their own origin story, which, typically, are long on imagination and short on facts. Science hasn't been able to offer anything more convincing, until recently."

In his talk, Dr. Baxter draws on the results of research that provides understanding and insight into how life on this planet got started around four billion years ago. Appreciating the processes involved on Earth leads him to believe that life on other planets will be our final conclusion.

On **Friday 12th April**, our speaker will be **John Rayment**, with a talk on the "History of the Thames Sailing Barge."

John is the Membership Secretary and Editor, for the **Thames Sailing Barge Trust**, which is based on Hythe Quay in Maldon, Essex. The Trust became a charitable Trust in May 2003, to assist with the raising of funds, through grants and donations, to keep barges sailing. The Trust exists to preserve



its two Thames barges in sailing condition for the benefit of the public, and to pass on the skills required to sail them.

The talk will explain the purpose of the sailing barge, where it went, the cargoes it carried and he will talk about the Trust and its involvement in keeping two of these historic vessels sailing.

Gravesend, Northfleet & District



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Reg. Charity No 1180160

The deadline for notices, articles or photographs for next month's newsletter, which **Mick Brookes** will be editing, is:
12 noon on **Wed. 3rd April 2024.**

Please e-mail items to: grv.u3a.editor@gmail.com

“Be Kind to Our Planet,” (particularly apt with today's speaker.)

Could we remind members to bring their own tea/coffee cup, or container to meetings, if possible, in order to minimise waste and recycling?
Your co-operation is very much appreciated.

pp. Sue Kirwan

GROUP MEETINGS ANNOUNCEMENTS



Sunday Lunch Bunch Sunday Lunch Bunch will be meeting at 12.30 pm at
Sun 3rd March The George, Singlewell, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5UQ
with Marilyn. Please remember to register your car if you are
using the car park.

Marilyn Pascoe (contact details at end of newsletter).



Ramble
Fri 15th March.
with Sandra

Camer and Surrounding Area.

Sandra is leading our 4.5ml walk from Camer Park on an undulating route. It should be lovely, but could still be muddy, depending on rainfall to come.

Please contact Colin if you'd like to go.

Meet at 10:00am in Camer Park.

Colin Nice (contact details at end of newsletter).



Hike
Fri 5th April.
with Tessa

Otford.

Tessa is leading a 6 mile walk from the picturesque village of Otford.

Yes, the walk has a few steep hills but also some level walking.



Meet: at the village hall car park in High Street, Otford at 10am - parking is £2 for the day and there are toilets.

Directions: Approx post code: **TN14 5PQ**. If approaching Otford along the A225 from Eynsford, take the second exit, at the beautiful village pond roundabout in the centre of Otford (marked 6' 6" width limit). This is the High St. The car park is on the right, just past The Bull public house (journey time is 30-35 mins from Gravesend).

Colin Nice (contact details at end of newsletter).

Walkers take part at their own risk.

Sunday Lunch Bunch Sunday Lunch Bunch will be meeting at 1pm at
Sun 7th April. China Garden, 33 Windmill St, Gravesend,
with Marilyn DA12 1AS.



Marilyn Pascoe (contact details at end of newsletter).

GROUP NEWS:

The Fishing (fresh water) group.

Fresh water fishing group could start late March or early April.

Local History 2

I am restarting the above group and have some vacancies. If you are interested, please contact me (by email only - details at the end of the newsletter) and you will be sent further details.

Members will research places/people from the area, to share with the group, arrange visits and meet in members' homes. Meet date: 3rd Monday of each month - 10.30 in the morning.

Ruth Ricketts (contact details at the end of the newsletter)

Mindfulness Meditation.

Changes at Legends will necessitate changes to Julie's group, Mindfulness Meditation.

The venue will now be Chalk Parish Hall, on 1st and 3rd Mondays from 1000 until 1130.

Julie Redmond (contact details at the end of the newsletter)

Painting and Sketching.

There is potential for a second Painting and Sketching group as there are 7 members on the existing group's waiting list. A group leader is required to lead and host such a group.

Ray MacLean (contact details at the end of the newsletter)

Russian language group.

Martin Bacon recently joined our U3A branch. Martin had been a member of a Somerset branch and, pre-pandemic, was in a Russian Language group.

In his own words:

Since then my only use of the language was helping Ukrainian refugees with English. I am certainly not up to teaching standard (!) but given what is happening in the world I did wonder if there might be interest in a very introductory group, just learning how to read and write the language, with coverage of a bit of Russian history, and the war in Ukraine.

From early May, I could hold meetings on the mornings of 1st and 3rd Thursdays, as my wife is out then.

We have space for 8, 10 at a squeeze.

"I envisage starting off by learning the alphabet and basic reading, and then moving on to Russian history since 1900, or whatever people want."

Martin Bacon

Theatre group leader.

The existing Theatre group leaders, Jan Rees and Ruth Ricketts, are standing down in April. Many thanks to Jan and Ruth for your sterling efforts. A new leader(s) will therefore be required.

Ray MacLean (contact details at the end of the newsletter)

New 9 Hole Golf Group.

9th April sees the start of our new 9 Hole Golf Group, a joint venture with Meopham U3A. The group will be meeting, once a month, visiting various Golf Courses across Kent.

The first venue is expected to be Poult Wood, Tonbridge, tee off 10:00 am.

Other venues will include Leeds Castle. So now is a chance to join the group, get out in the fresh air, and have fun playing golf with U3A friends.

To join this Golf Group please join via our U3A website, or sign up at our March CPC meeting.

Alan Scott (contact details at the end of the newsletter)



Walks in February.

February has been a warm (for Feb!) month. and our two walks took full advantage of this, with both being very well supported. Early in the month, Dennis led a lovely local walk from Cobham. It took in a few hills, some woodland and fields in our area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) or, as they are now to be officially called, National Landscapes(!)

In the middle of the month, amid 16 deg temperatures, Tony led a picturesque Medway walk from Riverside Country Park to the Strand in Gillingham. It was great to greet a new lady to our group, who had been a u3a member for a year or so, but had recently recovered from injury. We were all set to go when it was mentioned that Tony was leading. She said it was Mark, who was leading –



but we don't have a Mark. Turned out she had gathered with the wrong group! One way to poach a member! Later in the walk, at lowish tide, we saw the extraordinary sight of two people boldly walking out across the very soft, sinkable mud towards the river, some ¼ mile away. However, they were each wearing something like 'walking boards', from a distance looking like two large square bits of wood strapped to their feet. Amazing!

Colin Nice



Dartford Bowls Group.

"Treat them mean keep them keen."

Geoff Clark doing up Dennis's bowls shoes for him.

Doreen Neighbour

Geography – Uzbekistan & Peru

Our two Geography groups focused on opposite sides of the world this month. One group studied Peru, the third biggest country in South America, and lying just south of the equator. To the west is the Pacific, running north-south, and rather than green fertile land edging the sea, it is edged by desert. Despite the desert, it is on the coast, where most of the major cities lay. Inland from the desert, are the Andes Mountains, which, on travelling eastwards, descend and become the Amazon rainforest. Indeed, this area is the source of the Amazon. All was well, until we heard that a couple of the prize dishes were Alpaca and Guinea Pig. Hearing this made us feel ravenously hungry – not!

Geography 2, meanwhile, had been studying Uzbekistan in western Asia, formerly (until independence in 1991) part of USSR. Desert occupies the western and central part of the country, with plains (steppes) in the south-west and north-west. Most of the major towns and cities are in the south and south-east. A couple of features came across very strongly – the stunning architecture of many ancient cities, not least their beautiful mosques, and the friendliness of the people. Indeed the hospitality shown by a family is a quality that ranks more highly than their wealth and prosperity. All meals begin and end with drinking green tea. However, the more honoured the guest, the less the amount of tea is poured into his cup. This is because the more the guest needs to ask the host for replenishment, the better. It is a sign of respect to the house.



Colin Nice

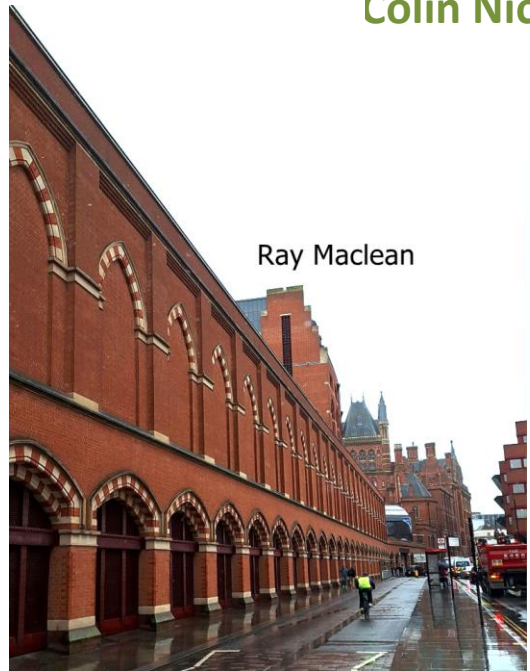
Photography 1: St. Pancras.

In February, we visited St Pancras Station to take photos of this iconic building. Being indoors was a good choice, because it was very wet and rainy outside! There were stunning photos to be taken at every turn and below are a few of our efforts

Colin Nice



Rob Newman



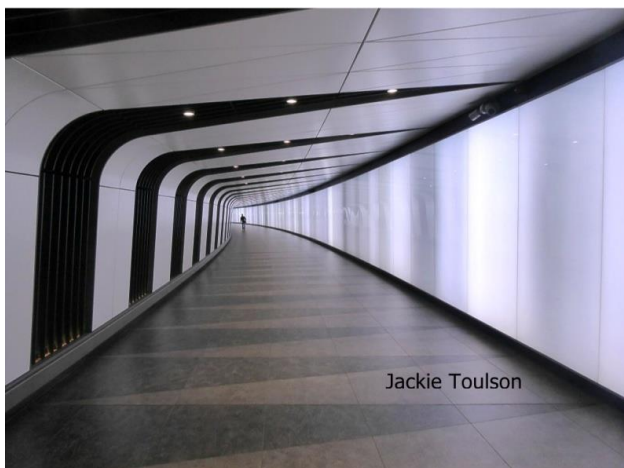
Ray Maclean



Jackie Godwin



Colin Nice



Jackie Toulson



Trevor Woodward

Creative Writing 1 – Story of the Month.

The Fortune Teller by Joyce Bell

Ellie's face must have been a study in rapt concentration as she examined the painting and tried to understand its caption with her schoolgirl French.

Ah Mademoiselle" said a voice just behind her. "You must have exquisite taste; you are looking at one of my favourite paintings in the whole of the Louvre. Allow me to tell you a little more about it."

The man's English was absolutely perfect but with a strong French accent which Ellie found extremely attractive. She turned around to see who owned this mellifluous voice and wasn't disappointed. He looked every bit as attractive as he sounded – late 30s, early 40s with dark



blond hair turning to grey, wearing an immaculately tailored suit and dazzling white shirt. But his most noticeable feature was his intense blue eyes, which bore into Ellie as he spoke.

"You will have seen that this painting is The Fortune Teller by Caravaggio. It shows a gypsy girl reading the palm of a young man. There are in fact two versions of this painting – both painted in the 1590s. One is now in the Museo Catolini in Rome, but I think this one is superior. When he first painted it Caravaggio sold it very cheaply but in time it became part of Prince Camillo Pamphili's collection. He in turn sent it as a gift to Louis XIV when Bernini visited Paris in 1665. By 1683 it was in Versailles where it remained until the French Revolution. After that it was transferred to this wonderful collection.

"The gypsy girl looks very innocent – but look carefully – she is not just telling his fortune – she is removing a ring from his finger."

With that he took Ellie's hand into his own as if to read her palm.

"Ah Mademoiselle" he continued. "I too consider myself something of a fortune teller. It would be my honour to read the palm of such a beautiful young woman as yourself. I see a long life with ..."

Suddenly the moment was interrupted by a loud shout from across the room. The entire gallery stopped and turned to look in Ellie's direction as a security guard marched over to her and the charming Frenchman.

"Up to your old tricks again, Gaston" shouted the guard with a smirk on his face. With that he reached into the Frenchman's pocket and pulled out Ellie's watch.

"Sorry Mademoiselle. I'm afraid our friend Gaston is well known to us. Normally we don't let him in to the Louvre but somehow he slipped past us today. Just check your bag will you – make sure he didn't pocket anything else."

Ellie checked her bag but nothing else was missing. The guard gave her back her watch.

"I'm afraid I will have to ask you to wait while we wait for the Gendarmes to arrive. They will want a statement from you but you won't need to go to Court. Trouble is, they will lock him away for a month or so and then he'll be back. All the galleries and museums know our old pal Gaston."

Ellie was shocked and embarrassed that she had allowed herself to fall for such an old trick – she had travelled all over the world on her own and thought she was pretty street-wise.

"Idiot" she chided herself. "You wouldn't have let him get anywhere near you if he hadn't been so good-looking. I was just as naive as the young boy in the painting."

Photography 2: "Getting Better."

Instead of a monthly theme our new challenge was to take 5 photographs of the same subject, each somehow different, or 1 photograph edited 5 different ways and then explain the how we got to the end result of the photos taken that we were most satisfied with. Here are a few of our efforts.

1. Glass on Foil – Ann MacEwan,
2. Medway wreck – Ben Winder
3. Spider on Flower – Ken MacEwan,
4. Prosecco trio – Jill Pritchard,
5. Silver Birch – Joan Porter,
6. Gravesend pontoon – Peter Buttle,
7. The Rocket – Rob Porter

Next Month – photos of 'Home Town Pride'. It will have to be 'Adopted Town' in some cases. I wonder what shots you would take to demonstrate your pride in your home/adopted town? It takes some thought!



Joan Porter



Social Diary dates:

2024 Forthcoming events:

Sat 2nd Mar Quiz Night. £2 please pay at the door. Stan Morris

**Tues 9th Apr Cobham Hall tour and cream tea. Doreen Neighbour
£13.25 (approx 2 hrs.)
Please pay at meeting on 8th March**

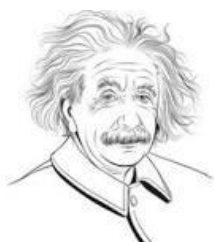
**Fri 19th Apr Gads Hill School tour with tea & Biscuits
10.30 am Please allow 2 hours Doreen Neighbour
Please pay at meeting on 8th March Steve Nolan**

**Fri 17th May Guildford Spike & Watercress Line. Linda Howe
Full day trip £46.
Please pay at meeting on 8th March**

**Sat 1st June Big Ben trip. Linda Howe
As tickets go, as soon as they are on the website,
please contact Linda Howe for more information.**

**Thurs 6th June Rye Market & Hastings Summer Day Trip
Joan Porter
Price £17 - **now fully booked**. We have a waiting list.
Please pay Jewels directly, letting them know your
preferred pick-up point - Cascades or The Overcliffe**

Quote of the Month:



“Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe.”

Albert Einstein

THE GUILDFORD SPIKE/THE WATERCRESS LINE

Friday 17th May 2024

An outing has been arranged to visit The Guildford Spike in the morning and then travel on to Alresford Hampshire, to experience a single journey on the Watercress Line to Alton, where the coach will meet us for the homeward journey.

THE GUILDFORD SPIKE is a unique example of an Edwardian casual ward. It was built to house vagrants and casual workers and was once part of the larger, Guildford Union Workhouse. There will be a guided tour at the Spike, with refreshments. The tour will be in two groups, with the second group following the first by 15 minutes, after having their refreshment. The first group will have their refreshment after the tour.

We will then travel to Alresford, and have time for lunch and a look around the Georgian town before we catch the 3.00pm steam train to Alton (40 minutes)

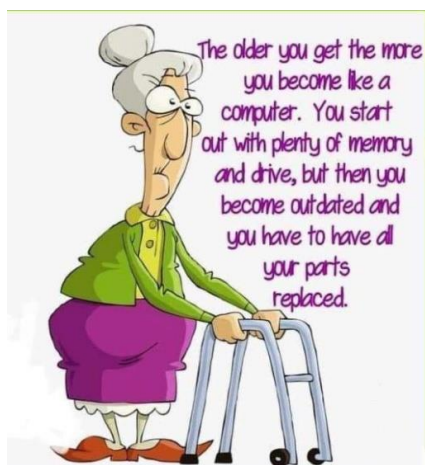
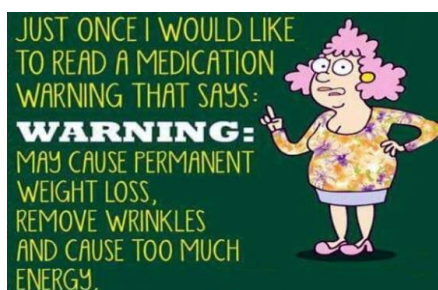
The **WATERCRESS LINE** is a 19th century heritage line, with steam trains travelling through vintage stations. The line gained its popular name in the days when it was used to transport locally grown watercress to market in London.



The cost of the trip is £46.00. The coach pick up point is Cascades - time 9.00am (Eden Place pickup point may be added at a later date).

There will be a sign up sheet at the General Meeting 8th March. Please pay when you sign up. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please contact me - email address and phone number in the newsletter.

Linda Howe (Contact details at the end of the newsletter)



Repeat after me, "Retinal." One more time, "Retinal."



Reminder - all Groups, Activities and Events are undertaken at your own risk

Calendar of Group Meetings and Events

The information printed below has been derived directly from the Beacon website as at 24th February 2024. If your group meetings are missing or incorrect, please contact the relevant Group Leader.

MONDAY 11 MARCH

10:00 Ten Pin Bowling – Arthur/Chris
10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
14:00 Jazz Apprec'n – Brian Edwards
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUESDAY 12 MARCH

10:00 Philosophy – Jean Stephens
12:15 Petanque – Joan Porter
14:00 Cribbage 2 – Anne Stott

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH

10:00 Mah Jong 2 – Sandra Parker
11:30 Singing for Fun – Alan Scott
12:00 Virtual Get Together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker

THURSDAY 14 MARCH

10:00 Cribbage 1 – Brian Edwards
10:00 Geography 2 – Colin Nice
10:30 Low Impact Fitness – Lynne Scott
14:00 British History – Mick Brookes
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 15 MARCH

10:00 Ramble – Colin Nice
14:00 Canasta - Sylvia Stickings
14:00 Mexican Train Dominoes – Peter Buttle

MONDAY 18 MARCH

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
10:00 Mindfulness Meditation – Julie Redmond
10:30 Local History 2 - Ruth Ricketts
12:00 Ukulele – Alan Scott
14:00 Rummikub 1 – Margaret Pullen
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUESDAY 19 MARCH

10:00 Short Mat Bowls – Ray MacLean
10:30 Creative Writing 2 – Sally Spellman
12:00 Fully Loaded Lunch Club – Ben Winder
14:00 Genealogy – Peter Buttle
14:00 Reading – Margaret Groom
14:00 Afternoon Tea – Maggie Hart

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH

10:00 Mah Jong 1 – Linda Mei Stevens
10:00 Photography 1 – Colin Nice
10:00 Tame Your Digital Tech – Peter Buttle
12:00 Virtual Get Together – Peter Buttle
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker
14:00 Classical Music Apprec'n - Carol Edwards
14:15 Line Dance Beginners - Linda Howe

THURSDAY 21 MARCH

10:00 Creative Writing - Penny Collins
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 22 MARCH

10:00 Bird Watching – Irene Robson
10:00 Solos - Linda Howe
14:00 Pool – Tony Tigg
14:00 Wine Appreciation – Brian Edwards

MONDAY 25 MARCH

10:00 Tai Chi – Alan Scott
14:00 Readers' Forum - Carol Edwards
19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUES 26 MARCH

10:00 Spanish Intermediate – Jan Rees
12:15 Petanque – Joan Porter
14:00 Bridge – Anne Stott
14:00 Painting & Sketching – Judy Duffield

WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH

10:00 Psychology – Lin Fridd
12:00 Virtual Get-together – Peter Buttle
12:30 Lunch Bunch – Maggie Hart
14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker
14:15 Line Dancing Beginners – Linda Howe

THURSDAY 28 MARCH

10:00 Rummikub 2 – Sandra Parker
10:30 Senior Elastixs Fun Fitness – Jan Elci
14:00 French Conversation – Anne Stott
14:00 Geography 1 – Colin Nice
14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

MONDAY 1 APRIL

10:00 Mindfulness Meditation – Julie Redmond

TUESDAY 2 APRIL

09:30 Sewing Together – contact Ray MacLean

10:00 Spanish Intermediate – Jan Rees

10:00 Model Making – Chris Hewlett

14:00 Local History 1 – Joyce Bell

14:00 Rummikub 3 – Anna Burroughs

WEDNESDAY 3 APRIL

10:00 Film – Jean Stephens

10:00 Tame Your Digital Tech – Peter Buttle

14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker

14:15 Line Dancing Beginners - Linda Howe

THURSDAY 4 APRIL

10:00 Solos Coffee Morning - Linda Howe

14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRIDAY 5 APRIL

09:30 Hike – Colin Nice

14:00 Table Tennis – Tony Tigg

14:00 Mexican Train Dominoes – Peter Buttle

SUNDAY 7 APRIL

13:00 Sunday Lunch Bunch - Marilyn Pascoe

MON 8 APRIL

10:00 Ten Pin Bowling – Arthur/Chris

10:00 Nine Hole Golf - Alan Scott

14:00 Jazz Apprec'n – Brian Edwards

19:30 Modern Jive – Alan Scott

TUES 9 APRIL

Cobham Hall visit - Doreen Neighbour

10:00 Philosophy – Jean Stephens

12:15 Petanque – Joan Porter

14 :00 Cribbage 2 – Anne Stott

WED 10 APRIL

10:00 Mah Jong 2 – Sandra Parker

11:30 Singing for Fun – Alan Scott

14:00 Badminton – Sandra Parker

THURS 11 APRIL

10:00 Cribbage 1 – Brian Edwards

10:00 Geography 2 – Colin Nice

10:30 Low Impact Fitness – Lynne Scott

14:00 British History – Mick Brookes

14:00 Dartford Bowls - Dennis Neighbour

FRI 12 APRIL

10:00 Photography 2 – Ben Winder

13:45 General Meeting CPC

Parking at the C.P.C.

Parking at the CPC for our monthly meetings is now available at the following locations:

(1) The CPC car park in Dering Way.

(2) The CPC car park in Lower Higham Road.

(3) The North West Kent College car park in Lower Higham Road.

(4) On street parking in Lower Higham Road.

Please car-share, if you can, in order to reduce the number of vehicles that need to be parked, and to increase the number of members able to attend in those vehicles.

