

RICHMOND-upon-THAMES



**University of the Third Age**

[www.u3asites.org.uk/richmond-on-thames](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/richmond-on-thames)



**Spring Newsletter 2019, Volume 50**

# **RICHMOND UPON THAMES U3A COMMITTEE & OFFICERS**

## **OFFICERS:**

**President:** Stephen Jakobi

**Chairman:** Chris Hack

**Vice Chair:** Libby Barton

**Secretary / Editor:** Sue Wood

**Treasurer:** John Cardwell

## **MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE:**

**Membership Secretary:** David Wood

**Groups' Co-ordinator:** Norma Cook

**Committee members:**

Peggy Roe

Herbert Wirth

Chris Barclay

Bob Litherland

## **SECTION LEADERS:**

**Art, Science & Music:** Graham Shortell

**Languages:** Norma Cook

**Literature, Drama, Philosophy & History:**

Carole Fletcher

**Recreation:** Tricia Abrahamsen

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT – SPRING 2019**

It only seems like a few weeks ago since I last wrote a report – how time flies when you are enjoying yourself. There is not much to report since then. We had our AGM and the good news is that we managed to find 2 new committee members; Christopher Barclay, who returns after a 2-year break and Bob Litherland, who is a first-timer. I know that both are enthusiastic members of our U3A, and their involvement will be much appreciated.

The Wine Tasting group is now up and running with some 30 members. We enjoyed sampling some typical French wine on our first outing. Still no luck finding a Classical Music Appreciation Group leader despite offering my services to help get it started; we have a location and equipment ready and waiting.

Some of you may have heard or read about 'Beacon' the new computerised membership and administrative system which some U3As have adopted. We too are now looking at the system and actively thinking about adopting it later this year. It should prove a real boon to our membership secretary and treasurer.

Finally, I should mention that we have established a link with a Hounslow Council initiative 'Activities 60+'. We may get some new members and access to their events and facilities in Brentford. We will keep you posted.

Well, I think that is enough from me save to wish you all a very enjoyable summer partaking in the various groups and events on offer.

**Chris Hack, Chairman.**

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## GROUP NEWS

There have been a number of new groups so far this year, for example, Darts, Canasta for Beginners, Chess for Beginners and Bird-watching, which seems a particularly appropriate one now that Spring is officially here. As usual, I make a plea for new ideas as many groups are now full and I am sure that among our 1400+ members there are some of you considering volunteering to run a group and have interests and talents which you want to share.

I, and another committee member, recently went to a National Workshop on Recruiting and Valuing Volunteers. Richmond U3A certainly values its volunteers, and we are on hand to deal with any queries and offer support when requested. The Group Leaders' lunch is an annual fixture, an occasion when the committee is able to show its appreciation of everything that the leaders do – they are the backbone of the organisation – and the invitations will be going out very soon for this year's gathering on June 8th.

We do want to recruit as many volunteers as possible as this is the way to create a thriving organisation, so when you are reading this, please think about what you can do for your U3A as well as what we can do for you, as someone famous didn't quite say.

**Norma Cook**, Group Coordinator, [norma.beagle@gmail.com](mailto:norma.beagle@gmail.com)

## **GROUPS A – Z: LONDON EXPLORERS**

U3A London Explorers is a group of 86 members that enjoys visiting buildings, exhibitions, events or walks throughout London. Over the last year we have visited many places such as Freemasons' Hall, Somerset House, Royal Astronomical Society, Franklin's House, The Supreme Court, City Police Museum and walks around St. James and Regent's Canal. Afterwards, there is often the opportunity to go for coffee, or something stronger, to get to know other Explorers...

The idea behind this group is that members themselves arrange visits/walks, which are then circulated, and people opt in if they want to join; they also join trips that others in the group organise.

Visits can be at any time, and anywhere, and the group can be as large or small as the organiser chooses. Many are guided visits, but they don't need to be; some venues levy a small charge, others are free. Members that need support in organising a visit can speak with the leader Martin Hindley or other old hands. For those that have a Freedom Pass it can be an even more reasonable day out, with old and new friends, exploring and learning about our wonderful capital.

**Martin Hindley.**

## **GROUPS A – Z: WRITING**

Writing for Pleasure" is a group of friendly, sociable members who share one thing in common - we all love to write. Every fortnight, I set something for homework, but this is always optional, and people can write whatever inspires them. There is no set format for the writing - it may be prose, poetry or letters, for example.

We each read out the piece we have written and then everyone discusses the issues arising from it. Often a piece will take us all down memory lane and we enjoy reminiscing about the way things were! We laugh a lot, but we also engage in some serious discussion, depending on the content of the piece. We are happy to give feedback if wanted but only in a positive, constructive way. We are not particularly bothered about any of our work getting published. However, we are thinking of putting together an anthology of our work and self-publishing it.

The group has grown from just a few members to the point where I have had to set up a waiting list. Perhaps someone would like to start a second group. There certainly seems to be enough interest to warrant one.

**Jan Singh.**

## BEING A GROUP LEADER

Sue Wood asked me to write a short piece about being a group leader. Groups vary enormously, both in subject matter and in how they are handled, so I do not suggest that my experiences are necessarily typical.

Perhaps it is best to start from where I am now. It is seven years since I retired and five years since I started leading groups. Most of my close friends today are people whom I met through U3A, many of them people who just came to groups that I advertised. So leading groups is not just good fun. It gets you to meet people with similar interests. That may be more of a common feature between groups than the activities that are covered. Groups cover all sorts of subjects from the most intellectual to the most down to earth. However, they always happen because someone chooses to lead the group and other people choose to turn up. In other words, they have a great deal in common, and that can be the basis for friendship.

When I first joined U3A, I hesitated about starting a group because I thought that I did not know enough about anything. However, the key thing about a group is that the leader does not have to be the most expert person in the group. The role of the leader is to host a session that other U3A members enjoy or find interesting. Over the past five years, hosting groups has become a regular part of my life. It makes me think about subjects to prepare for the sessions. I always cheer up when I see people arriving. My idea of a good session is one where people have a good time.

First of all, I choose a new subject for a group. I have never taken on an existing group or an existing subject. For me, the fun is the challenge of taking a new subject and thinking of how to present



it to a group. I usually have more ideas than I have the capacity to handle. That can be useful. Groups like this do not always last a long time. For example, my group about Michelangelo was only meant to last for a few months.

So, I like to think of more ideas and spend (or waste) a fair amount of time daydreaming about how I might develop some idea into a group. When I announce a new group, I always feel a bit like I do if I invite people to a party. The house is tidy, the food is ready, and the tables are covered with glasses but absolutely nobody is going to come. Well, I have not yet had a group where absolutely nobody did come. In fact, you often find a lot of interest at the start but a much smaller group of people coming to the group regularly. The regular group will often become a group of friends.

### **Christopher Barclay.**

*Editor's note: As Christopher said at the beginning, groups vary enormously, as do the ways in which they are organised etc, but the friendship they generate seems a common denominator. If any other group leaders would like to talk about their experiences, I would be delighted to print them.*

## **SHARED LEARNING PROJECTS**

Have you ever considered joining one of the Shared Learning Projects (SLPs) that the U3A advertise but been daunted by the prospect? If so, think again. They are usually quite short (often 12 weeks) and just require an interest in the subject matter and a willingness to learn and be adaptable.

Don't think that the other team members will all be experienced researchers. Efforts are made to include some people on each team who have not been involved in a project before.

You get a chance to go behind the scenes in a wide range of interesting organisations and work with U3A members from across London. For instance, when I was on an SLP about the history of the Women's Royal Naval Service with the Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich the U3A team got the chance to visit the Tudor cellars which were part of the original Greenwich Palace and have meetings in Admiral's House. Neither of these are normally open to the public.

Working together with more experienced U3A team members means that you can gain new skills and refresh old ones. You also get to collaborate with others who have similar interests to reach a shared goal.

How do I know all this? Well I have been involved in more than 10 SLPs and despite each one being very different, I have enjoyed them all.

My most recent project was with the South London Botanical Institute (SLBI). They wanted their recent history recorded including undertaking oral histories from key people who had been influential in their development. The project ran from September to December 2018. We were a team of six people, of which two were new to shared learning projects. We met every two weeks and shared progress and problems, supporting each other throughout. Some members of the team undertook document research and others organised the oral history interviewing; some did a bit of both. Feedback from the SLBI at the end was very positive.

So, if you see a U3A Shared Learning Project advertised on a subject you find interesting, why not apply and give one a go!

**Maggie Coleman.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Re David J Knight's letter (10/01/2019)

It is not clear what views are '...not necessarily those of the editor or the Richmond U3A Committee.'

Is it the fact that there are fewer birds about?

Or because the writer is 80 years old?

Or maybe because David, Maggie and I met in the Richmond Unitarian Church Gardens for tea!!

O, horror!! perhaps it is because the writer is gay and refers to U3A gay groups.

As an older gay woman, who is an active member of the U3A, I am appalled that it still seems necessary to apologise for gays, older people and birds.

I await your response

**Virginia D. Bruno**

Editor's note: *On 28 Jan 2019, the editor responded:*

*Dear Virginia*

*Thank you for your email. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to explain my editor's note.*

*I specifically used the words "not necessarily those....." to indicate that the editor and members of the committee may well be in agreement with the views expressed but that this was an individual's opinion that he wished to convey. This was therefore definitely NOT an apology of any kind.*

*If you consider any publicity to be bad publicity then I can understand your objection to me including this letter in the Richmond U3A newsletter. On the contrary I felt that a letter welcoming the U3A LBGT group would have been a plus for all older gay men and women.*

*If you would like me to print your letter please let me know and I will do my best to include it in the April edition.*

*Sue Wood*

*Editor's note: If you have a view you would like to add to this conversation do please let me know. If you wish to respond in our next newsletter, please email: [susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk) heading your contribution "Letters to the Editor".*

# U3A EXCLUSIVE EVENT AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

20th June from 11am – 3.45 pm

The Italian Renaissance saw the creation of some of the finest art works ever made. Join National Gallery experts for a day of talks on iconic paintings and hidden gems of the Italian Renaissance, by artists such as Botticelli, Leonardo and Titian, as well as some less known artists.



For more information and to book a place please go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

## EDITOR'S NOTES

As you know the next issue will be in August when membership renewals are due. Holiday time is always a difficult time to try to persuade members to think about contributing but please if, for instance, you would like to take part in the controversial letters discussion, are proud of a group you belong to and want to tell us about it, would like to review a book you have read, want to criticise or praise something about our U3A including the newsletter, or have suggestions to make, then please get in touch. And do remember that your newsletter will die if it doesn't get fed.

Latest copy date 1st July 2019 please.

**Sue Wood**, [susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk)

## **LONDON REGION SUMMER SCHOOL 2019**

**23<sup>rd</sup> – 25th July**

St Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet Street (easy access: 5 minutes from Blackfriars underground station).

This is a popular annual non-residential event. Members can attend for one, two or three days, and can choose from 28 different talks, 4 workshops, and 6 guided walks around the City of London.

There is a wide range of topics taken from the subjects of Art, Current Affairs, History, Literature, Music, Science and Travel. This year we have also selected 'Celebration of the Sea' as a general theme.

Bookings are being taken now. Please note that sessions book up quickly, so we advise booking as soon as possible to avoid disappointment

Programme and applications are available via the Events page of the London Region website: <http://u3asites.org.uk/london-region>  
You can book online or use a postal application form.

Cost is £38 per day Refreshments and a cold buffet lunch are included.

## **U3A NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS 2019**

This year we have two schools, held in August and September, providing an exciting programme covering 20 courses. There is a wide range of subjects on offer including Opera, Italian, Cryptic Crosswords, Creative Writing, Art History, English Poetry and International Films.

Summer Schools are a wonderful example of the peer to peer learning model which U3A has helped to pioneer. U3A members learn from each other in a hands-on-learning experience. Residential study also gives students the opportunity to spread their learning over four days, meet with members from other U3As and share knowledge and experience.

**ASTON UNIVERSITY, BIRMINGHAM**

Monday 12th to Thursday 15th August

**ROYAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, CIRENCESTER**

Tuesday 10th to Friday 13th September

For full details and booking forms please go to [u3a.org.uk/events/summer-schools](http://u3a.org.uk/events/summer-schools)

**SOUTH EAST FORUM SUMMER SCHOOL 2019**

**CHICHESTER UNIVERSITY**

Monday 24th to Thursday 27th June

For full details and booking form please go to [u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum/events](http://u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum/events)

**BARBARA LEWIS U3A FUND**

Barbara Lewis, former Chair of the Third Age Trust, has established The Barbara Lewis U3A Fund for the development and support of new U3As. It will help new U3As to get off the ground – funding for instance their initial publicity and venues for their inaugural meetings.

The fund will be on-going, and donations can be sent in favour of the Barbara Lewis U3A Fund, c/o Chief Executive Officer, Third Age Trust, 52 Lant Street, London, SE1 1RB

## **SURREY U3A NETWORK STUDY DAYS**

Study days are open to all U3A members and guests are also very welcome. They are held in the Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon; normally starting at 9.30am with registration, and running from 10am to 4pm. The cost is £10 for members and £12 for non-U3A members. Attendees should bring a packed lunch. Prior booking is necessary. Full details are available at:

[www.u3asites.org.uk/surreyu3anetwork/events](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/surreyu3anetwork/events)

Bookings are now being taken for the following 2019 events:

### **Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> May – People and Places of Surrey**

Presenters: Speakers from Guildford Cathedral, the Watts Gallery, the Lewis Carroll Society and Woking Surrey History Centre.

### **Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> June – Mathematics in Action**

Presenter: Dr Roger Luther, Sussex University and U3A member.

For the following items booking will open on 1st June:

### **Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> September – Human Genetics Developments**

### **Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> October – Current Affairs in 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

### **Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> November – UK in a Changing Europe**

Presenter: Dr Simon Usherwood, Surrey University.

### **Monday June 24<sup>th</sup> – Thursday June 27<sup>th</sup> - Chichester Summer School 2019**

Please see [www.u3asites.org.uk/surreyu3anetwork/events](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/surreyu3anetwork/events) for full information and booking form.



## **IT'S WEDNESDAY IT MUST BE .....**

Yesterday I did a trip up the Amazon for 2,500 kilometres, visiting various indigenous tribes, and in January I visited Hungary, last June it was Russia, and last October I explored Literary London and in May travelled along the Thames. In between I have spent happy afternoons learning about cheese making, the job of magistrates, tax and home care, and the delights of Capability Brown's garden designs. All for £15 a year. What a bargain.

Alright I didn't leave Richmond but just went along to the Clarendon Hall on Wednesday afternoons when the U3A members were being entertained, and sometimes educated, by the wonderful speakers that Peggy Roe had chosen for us.

If you want to join us on our voyages of exploration and education, please do look at the back cover where you will see the programme for the next few months.

**Sue Wood.**

## TALKING POINT

I came across this quote from Mortimer Adler the other day and thought it was worth sharing.

“No-one has ever been educated in school or college. The reason is simply that youth itself – immaturity – is an insuperable obstacle to becoming educated..... Education comes later, usually much later. The very best thing for our schools is to prepare the young for continued learning in later life by giving them the skills of learning and the love of it.”

I’m sure the founders of U3A would agree.

**Sue Wood.**

## DID YOU KNOW.....?

Although local U3As are operationally independent, as members of the Third Age Trust they must adhere to the original guiding principles. Some important ones are:

All members of the university shall be expected to offer voluntary service to it.

The university shall consist of a body of persons who undertake to learn and to help others learn. Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach.

## **RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS MAY TO JULY 2019**

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 14:30 at Clarendon Hall, York House, Richmond Road, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ. It is on bus routes 33, R68, R70, H22 and 490.

### **29<sup>th</sup> May: Janet Diamond – Egypt, from Nomads to Nation**

Janet has been a teacher and trainer and travel has always been an important part of her life. She lived in Egypt for 3 years and her presentation begins with the time before the pharaohs. Then moves through the era of the early settlers, the movement of the semi-nomadic people of the Savannah, to the unification of Ancient Egypt which set the scene for the building of the world's first pyramid.

### **26<sup>th</sup> June: Catherine Parry-Wingfield – Canals, Carnivals and Courtesans – The Art of 18th Century Venice**

Catherine is an art historian specialising in 18th century British and European painting and sculpture. Venice exerted a strong fascination for the 18th century tourist and the pageantry of church and state, the regattas, and the slightly risqué pleasures of carnival added to its artistic attractions. This was the age of Canaletto and Guardi and the great Tiepolo family.

### **27<sup>th</sup> July: John Bowers – “If only I knew then .....**

John talks about his experiences as an offender within the criminal justice system. After 25 years of crime he resolved to “turn his life around”. He paints a powerful, realistic picture of how criminal activity can impact so many lives and the problems faced by offenders of all ages – particularly the young.