

RICHMOND-upon-THAMES



University of the Third Age

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Summer Newsletter 2019, Volume 51

RICHMOND UPON THAMES U3A COMMITTEE & OFFICERS

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Art, Science & Music: Graham Shortell

Languages: Norma Cook

Literature, Drama, Philosophy & History: Carole Fletcher

Recreation: Tricia Abrahamsen

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT – SUMMER 2019

Another academic year has flown by and I hope that you are all eagerly looking forward to the new year ahead with its opportunities to 'live, learn and laugh' with your U3A.

In August instead of our usual monthly meeting there will be the chance to see some of our Groups showcasing their activities. I will be there to take any questions/suggestions you might have in a rare one-to-one opportunity for our members to buttonhole me!

I normally say something about our Groups but on this occasion, I am merely going to refer you to our Group Coordinator, Norma's article on pages 6-7 which I commend to you. It is a formidable undertaking trying to coordinate existing Groups as well as continually trying to find new ones to meet demand. Norma, we are all very grateful for your efforts – as I am to all the Committee working hard on your behalf.

I mentioned last time an initiative with Hounslow Council – Activities 60+. Some of them may have joined our U3A, but reciprocal activities seem unlikely. However, do watch out for more open lectures from Roehampton and St Mary's Universities.

I wish you all much joy in the year ahead with us.

Chris Hack, Chairman.

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GROUP NEWS

Our Group Leaders' Lunch was held in June and was, as usual, a great success. This event is the committee's opportunity to thank the group leaders for all their hard work throughout the year because, without them, there would not be a Richmond U3A at all. I am also conscious that, as well as the work the group leaders put in, there are often other helpers in the background, friends who loan their homes, partners who make sure everywhere is tidy and who make the coffees and teas, or the homemade cakes, or who help out with the tedious but necessary paperwork. To these unseen helpers, I say a big thank you here, in print.

If you are reading this newsletter in the printed version, you will have received the new printed prospectus in the same mailing. The group leaders have made sure that this is as accurate as possible – thank you. We can alter the website throughout the year, but the printed version is fixed. I am very pleased to say that we have added a number of new groups: Mahjong for Complete Beginners, Romanian for Beginners, an Italian Improvers group, Ancient Greek, Shakespeare's skill and enduring appeal, Healthy Food Adventures, which sounds fascinating, an intriguing one called Explore, Discover, Share, and a group on Interesting People, which could possibly be a description of Richmond U3A members!

Do go to the website for details of all these new groups.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is an article by Martine Osorio about her extremely successful "Opera for Pleasure" group. This group is now so popular that Martine suggests that it is time for a second one to be started, and she has very generously offered to help someone do that. I do hope someone takes up this offer. Chris, our chairman, has also offered to help start a Classical Music

Appreciation group: he has a sound system for anyone who wants to use it.

This time last year, I was writing about “a very interesting proposal” for a group whose aim is to encourage more activities during the weekend as other U3As do, especially for "Members on their own" who often find the weekend a difficult time. This proposal has now become “Weekenders” which has had a very successful first year, not just for members on their own, but for people to share in activities at the weekend when most other groups are not usually held.

I hope you all have a very interesting year and that you do indeed manage to “learn, laugh and live” as the U3A motto says.

Norma Cook, Group Coordinator, norma.beagle@gmail.com

EDITOR’S NOTE

As the next newsletter needs to go out in January with the Notice of the AGM and December is always a busy time for everyone, could I please have any contributions by the 8th November 2019.

I am always pleased to receive contributions, whether offerings for the A–Z series, letters to the editor or any musings, moans or suggestions you would like to share.

Sue Wood, susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk

GROUPS A – Z: OPERA FOR PLEASURE

We currently meet on the first Monday of each month in my house in Teddington. I am not an opera buff, by any means, though some in the group are.

The current membership is 16 and we usually have “Full house” of 13. We charge £1 per session as a contribution towards buying DVDs

We watch an entire opera or selected excerpts, depending on the length. Usually a member of the group introduces an opera of their choice with a brief history of the opera and the composer. We watch the opera for two hours and then have tea and homemade cakes, when we discuss the opera and many other things!

I have a large collection of DVDs and they can also be borrowed from U3A’s excellent Resource Centre at no cost.

My group is definitely full and I think that a group in the Richmond or Kew area of the borough would be warmly received. I am very willing to help someone set up a new group and lend them my huge collection of Opera DVDs. Homemade cakes are delicious but not essential.

Martine Orsorio. martineo@blueyonder.co.uk

GROUPS A – Z: POETRY SINCE 1900

What is poetry? And what makes poetry poetry? How do you judge what is good or bad?

These are questions that are open to individual interpretation and opinion and these are the reasons that we enjoy our monthly sessions in our group, Poetry since 1900.

The current group of eight takes it in turns to suggest either a poet or a topic for close examination in our friendly meetings. If a poet has been chosen, then a short introduction to their life and work will form the start of the afternoon. We each bring eight copies of poems that we have chosen and read them out loud. Poems are much better usually when they are heard. Then we discuss what has made us choose that poem, what we like about it and what makes it a poem for us.

Does it have a rhyme scheme or is it blank verse? Does it use assonance or alliteration or half rhymes or internal rhyme? Is there a rhythm or have a syllable count? Or is there a sense of mystery which has you asking questions about its meaning? But I do not want to make it sound too academic because our main aim is enjoyment of the poetic form and the beauty of language.

We have all learnt a great deal about the poetry that is available these days. We all bring two poems to read but sometimes we need to have a third choice in case we have duplicated with another but this is not that common an occurrence. I have read that poetry is having a renaissance at the moment with more and more poetry being published and that sales are up with younger poets being quite prominent. Obviously the internet has made it easier for poets to bring their work to notice but does this mean there is a lack of quality control? This is a hot topic of debate in

poetry circles at the moment. Popular does not mean that the establishment will accept it.

What for me is the enjoyment of poetry is that it is a condensed use of language and can raise interesting questions about life. The best poetry is complex and sophisticated and should have you being puzzled about what the poet is trying to convey. Ambiguity and wordplay are often to be found in my choices. Which reminds me that now I ought to start finding some relevant poems for this month's topic, Weather. Rain or shine?

Steve Derbyshire. stevederbs@gmail.com

Overheard at our wonderful Group Leader's Lunch

“After teaching for most of my life, I was astonished when starting my U3A group to find that everyone actually LISTENED.”

“When I retired at 60 and joined the U3A, I was concerned about finding myself out of place amongst a crowd of older people. What a revelation – I was immediately drawn in to the enthusiasm, interest and excitement of the members and age became irrelevant.”

GROUPS A – Z: POLITICS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Where there is quiet may we bring discussion,
Where there is certainty may we bring question,
Where there is one opinion may we bring several,
Where there is hope may we bring justification.

They're great meetings. Organised by my great U3A people. You're gonna love'em.

There are some who say that conformity is the way of the future.
Let them come to our meeting.

And there are some who say that we can live in silence. Let them come to our meeting.

And there are some who say that one opinion is dull but it lets us make progress. Let them come to our meeting.

Britain has had enough of experts it is time to listen to us. Well, I would say that wouldn't I?

I have a dream that one day in the sweltering heat of Richmond men and women, Tory and Liberal, Brexiter and Remainer may come together as sisters and brothers to exchange opinions.

Strong and stable views are something you may not find because discussion means discussion. Our views are forged in the white heat of debate.

Every week we send 350 million reasons why you should come.

With apologies to Margaret Thatcher, Donald Trump, John F Kennedy, Michael Gove, Mandy Rice-Davies, Martin Luther King, Theresa May, Harold Wilson, Boris Johnson

Bob Litherland.

GROUPS A – Z: WINE TASTING

We meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 12:30 in the Britannia Pub [upstairs private room] on Brewer's Lane [off George St] in Richmond. They provide us with an excellent 2-course lunch [starter and main] while I seek out 6 wines [usually 3 white and 3 red] for us to taste. There is usually a theme and we are currently sampling wines from around the world; France, Australia and NZ, Italy and Chile so far.

No experience or knowledge of wine is required. The tasting is about just that; to enjoy tasting some reasonably priced wines. The relaxed, fun atmosphere is of course helped by the effects of the wine as the lunch progresses! All those attending seem to feel that the £30 cost is good value for money, so why not give it a try.

For more information just contact:

Chris Hack. chack@onetel.com

SAVE THE DAY, SAVE THE DATE

There will be an excursion to Arundel Castle on Thursday 10th October. More details will be circulated during August.

RECIPE FOR SPANISH CHICKEN SALAD

This is one of the popular dishes prepared by Libby for the Group Leaders' Lunch.

Serves 4 – 6

Ingredients

2 to 3 (depending on size) freshly cooked or thawed cooked chicken breasts

About 4 inches of cooked chorizo from the deli counter. Make sure not to buy cooking chorizo as there are 2 types

Small jar of Piquillo Peppers

75gm grated Manchego Cheese

1 Tin of Cannellini or similar white beans

1 Tin Artichoke Hearts in salted water

Dressing

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon sherry or red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon paprika

Pinch of dried thyme

Salt and Pepper

METHOD

Slice chicken breasts into strips

Slice chorizo into thin rounds

Slice peppers into thin rounds

Drain and rinse the beans

Drain and slice the artichoke hearts

Place all the above ingredients including the grated cheese into a mixing bowl.

For the dressing

Whisk all the ingredients together and season to taste. This can also be done by putting ingredients in a small bottle and shaking well to mix.

Finally

To serve. Mix the chicken etc with enough dressing to moisten. More can be added later but do not overdress at this stage.

Cover and leave for the flavours to develop.

At this stage the salad can be left for up to 2 days in the fridge set at 5 degrees C or less.

When ready to serve add more dressing if necessary, to make a moist mix – taste and season if required. Place the finished salad on a platter and garnish with sprigs of fresh thyme or parsley.

LATIN SCHOLARS

In 2017 Norma, our Latin teacher, organised a very successful visit to Fishbourne Roman Palace, near Chichester, for her groups. There was talk also of a later visit to Bignor Roman Villa, not that far away inland.

So, this year I mentioned this to a handful of friends, the idea spread, and I then threw the invitation open to our U3A Latin groups. So it was that 17 of us assembled at Bignor on the Tuesday before Easter, a rare fine day this spring.

Fishbourne was built to impress from its beginnings about thirty years after the Roman invasion of AD43. On a vast scale, it is reputed to be the largest Roman residence north of the Alps.

Bignor, by contrast, started off as a modest country house on a working farm estate. It grew organically and over a couple of centuries ended up during the fourth century AD as a courtyarded complex of housing covering about a hectare of land with



further outbuildings. It is now relatively remote but during the Roman period was just a short access road away from Stane Street, the main route between Londinium and Noviomagus Reginorum (Chichester). While not on the scale of Fishbourne, Bignor must nevertheless have been an impressive sight in its heyday.

We have no direct evidence of the occupants of either complex. Possibly Fishbourne's first owner was King Cogidubnus, an ally of

Rome. Bignor's archeology suggests the house remained in the hands of a single extended family, growing increasingly wealthy via the farm's output, and the surrounding area remains a working farm to this day. Indeed, it was discovered in 1811 while the then owner of the land, George Tupper, was ploughing; the estate remains in the Tupper family.

Bignor has been extensively excavated but only the floors of the bathhouse and the western half of the north wing remain exposed though largely protected by rural-style Georgian buildings (themselves Grade II listed).

Like Fishbourne, Bignor has superb and fascinating mosaics, the highlights as follows. The geometric North Corridor mosaic is probably, at 24 metres, just part of the original length, the longest on display in Britain. A more elaborate geometric mosaic underlies a room on the outer part of the north wing. In the north-west



corner is the quirkiest, known as Venus and the Gladiators; this has a head and shoulders portrait of a presumed goddess (hence "Venus") and a frieze showing in light-hearted fashion winged cherubs in various gladiatorial activities.

One of the dining rooms has a fine mosaic showing Ganymede being carried off by an eagle; the same room has a cooling water basin. Two rooms represent the Seasons, one older and cruder, the later room with a well-preserved image of Winter. Another intriguing mosaic shows a dolphin with an adjacent motif interpreted as TER, likely Terentius, possibly the designer of some

of the mosaics. The separate bathhouse contains a mosaic of Medusa.

Both Fishbourne (<https://sussexpast.co.uk/properties-to-discover/fishbourne-roman-palace>) and Bignor(<https://www.bignorromanvilla.co.uk/>) are worth a visit, perhaps in a single day if you have access to a car.

Ivan Berti. ivan@latin.ivanberti.co.uk

WRITING STYLES

Editor's Note: I received a wonderful email regarding the A–Z of Writing for Pleasure article in our last edition from one of the participants in that group. Jan had set a piece for homework with the title "First person, present tense". When the group heard Muriel's offering they suggested she send it to me. As she said in her email, "There's no such thing as a typical piece of writing in the Group - everyone writes in their own style, some serious, some frivolous, some a bit saucy, some fact, some pure fiction." I trust you will enjoy Muriel's style as much as I did.

2019, JUNE 18 – FIRST PERSON, PRESENT TENSE

'I'm sitting on the railway station, got a ticket for my destination...'
Oh, it's alright for Simon & Garfunkel, all they seem to be worried about is getting to a particular geographical location. I'm sitting here with a brain that's gone blank wondering where my life is going.

I've spent the last 40-odd years being logical, methodical and neat, so retirement seemed like a good time to try something more creative, but so far it's not proved very successful. Piano lessons have been and gone – I've clearly got no aptitude for that skill and despite being good at maths, I can't count, read the foreign language that is printed music and translate it into finger action.

Patchwork? One of the ladies working at Creative Quilting tells me it's very relaxing. Oh, no, it isn't. To start with, the fabric has to be cut very precisely or everything ends up looking decidedly wobbly; then there's choosing the layout of the finished 'squares.' These sit on the floor of the spare bedroom for several weeks, getting moved around time after time, until at last I'm satisfied and can finish the stitching.

Dressmaking proved to be yet another challenge too far. Measured myself and the pattern, cut the fabric out carefully and stitched according to the instructions. Tried the dress on for a first fitting and found there was room for two of me in it. But what to do now? I can't fathom out where to start to put things right, so does anyone know a good dressmaker who'd sort it out for me?

Don't even ask about drawing. Within the first few minutes the teacher said we shouldn't draw what we see, just draw the spaces. What??? Needless to say that little experiment didn't last long.

Luckily, embroidery does seem to be showing some improvement and it's a very sociable way of spending a Monday morning, so maybe that can stay on the list of 'things to do'. Knitting, too, is definitely going to stay as is crochet, so maybe that's the creative side sorted out?

Writing for pleasure? Now there's an interesting challenge. Sometimes, but not recently, I've woken up with the story ready-

made in my head. For a while now though, the helpful dreams seem to have abandoned me.

Maybe I ought to go back to something more academic. But again, there's that big question – what to do? I could finish my degree, but these days there's too much reliance on using computers to find source material. They can't do that with English literature, but do I want to spend my time analysing the minute subtleties of what I read? And I certainly don't want to have to study traditional poetry, which always seems to be like trying to solve cryptic crossword clues.

So, it looks as though it's going to be a return to European languages – they are all in desperate need of revision, but I don't want to do evenings and daytime classes are becoming fewer.

I know – a brain transplant. Just have to find the right donor and away I go. In the meantime it's yoga – at least that only requires the ability to breathe and move gently. Even I can manage that.

Muriel Sprott.

Editor's Note: Well I don't think the writing muse has completely abandoned Muriel yet. But at least as a member of Richmond U3A there are plenty more subjects she can have a go at and, with more than 30 daytime language groups, there's really no excuse. If this lovely article has got your creative writing juices flowing, then what about sending me an article for the next newsletter? or even starting a second writing group?

SNAPSHOTS

It's such a nuisance, isn't it, when you can't remember something? I go upstairs and I can't remember why. How often I can't recall a name I've always known. Yet there is a certain satisfaction in suddenly recalling, with absolute clarity, an incident from the distant past. It must have been about 1935. I remember curling up on the sofa some winter evening, to watch with close interest the Tuesday Ironing Ritual.

First my Mother fetched the doormat and carefully laid it down near her feet. Next an old blanket folded into four, with an old tablecloth smoothed on top. Then the two irons were introduced, one carefully arranged among the coals of the fire, the other waiting its turn. My first effort at 'Needlework' was a square holder – I then fully understood, as Mother used it to hold the handle of the iron, now hot. She removed the hot iron from the fire and replaced it with the other one. When the first one was cooled down, the second iron was ready. The doormat served to clean any blackness from the fire, and then we were off.

Daddy's shirts came first. Shirts were sold with two detached collars, which were starched, so a clean handkerchief was put between the collar and the iron in case of stickiness. And then there was the smell, so evocative I can recall it now. As for collar studs – remember them? Daddy's were kept in a little jar on the shelf. Today's generation wouldn't even know what they were for!

There are lots of wonderful gadgets these days, which are designed to make household chores easier. But some of us still have snapshots of memory, which illuminate daily life from long ago.

Oubliette.

MEDIAEVAL RICHMOND

The history of mediaeval Richmond is really the history of the manor of Richmond and later Richmond Palace, but the manor was originally known as Shene.

The earliest reference to Shene was in the will of Theodred Bishop of London, who died in 951, bequeathing his land at "Sceon." (Shene like Kew was spelt in many different ways in the mediaeval period.). There is no reference to Shene itself in the Domesday Book as William I had included Shene within the royal manor of Kingston. However in about 1130, King Henry I divided up the manor and gave the Manor of Shene to John Belet, a Norman courtier. By the early 14th century, Shene was once again a royal manor.

In the 1360s Edward III decided to build a palace known as the palace of Shene. When he died, his grandson, Richard II, who had inherited the throne, married Anne of Bohemia. Shene became their favourite palace, but in 1394 she died of the plague and Richard, broken hearted following his wife's death, ordered the palace to be demolished.

Five years later, Henry IV seized the throne from Richard II and his son, Henry V, who won the battle of Agincourt in 1515, decided at about the same time to build a new Palace of Shene on an adjoining site, though it was not completed until many years later. He also founded and richly endowed a monastery known as the Charterhouse of Shene, built near where Richmond Railway Bridge now crosses the Thames.

In 1498, fire seriously damaged the palace and Henry VII decided to rebuild Shene Palace on an even grander scale. In 1501, Henry

VII renamed the palace “Richmond” by royal decree as he had been Earl of Richmond of Yorkshire and it became his favourite palace.

From early mediaeval times, the Lord of the Manor was responsible through his Court Leet for the maintenance of law and order and this duty later passed to the parish vestry. Each parish had its own Constable, an unpaid official and not many citizens would volunteer for this post as it covered not only law enforcement, but a wide range of duties from inspecting alehouses to suppressing gaming houses, apprenticing poor children and removing vagrants from the parish.

As Shene was by the Thames, there were frequent disputes there between the owners of fisheries and the boatmen who needed to go up and down up river. One dispute involved the Merton Priory and the City of London. The Belet family had granted the Priory certain lands at Westerly Ware in 1218, where the Priory then established a fishery. While building of weirs on the Thames had been banned by royal charter, a powerful priory such as Merton was able to flout the law except when faced by an equally powerful body like the City of London who took the Priory to court in about 1400 and the dispute ended with the City officers seizing a wherry belonging to the Priory.

John Moses.

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

Bookings are now being taken for the following 2019 events:

Friday, 20th September – Human Genetics Developments

Development of Personalised Medicine and Treatment of Disease
Presenters: Daniel Biggs, Felicia Anna Tucci and Justin Whalley. The Wellcome Centre for Human Genetics, University of Oxford.

Friday, 18th October – An Age of Uncertainty

The Changing World of Victorian and Edwardian Britain

Presenter: Nigel Arch – Public discourse in the Modern Age and It's not the Economy Stupid.

Presenter: Evan Davis, BBC Radio 4's PM Programme presenter.

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

Friday, 15th November – UK in a Changing Europe

Presenter: Dr Simon Usherwood, Department of Politics, University of Surrey.

Please see www.u3asites.org.uk/surreyu3anetwork/events for full information and booking form.

RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS AUGUST-DECEMBER 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.

28th Aug: Groups-R-Us – a Celebration

A showcase of some of our groups and members will be there to answer questions and share experiences. So come along and enjoy a chat and a glass of wine with them.

25th Sept: Barbara Marlow – A Child in a Polish Ghetto

In 1939 Barbara, a 9-year old Catholic child of Jewish origin, was living in Warsaw with her family. In September, when war was declared, she and her mother faced 5½ years of German occupation. Come and hear her amazing story.

30th Oct: Diane Burstein – Theatrical London

Discover how theatre developed from Elizabethan playhouses to the current vogue for unusual venues.

27th Nov: Catherine Parry-Wingfield – Turner & the Thames

Exploring the inspiration of the Thames in Richmond for England's greatest landscape painter, and the lure of this part of the river.

11th Dec: Andy Thomas – A Celebratory History

In a fascinating and uplifting presentation, Andy uncovers the long and intriguing background to the festive season