

RICHMOND-upon-THAMES



University of the Third Age

www.U3Asites.org.uk/richmond-on-thames



Newsletter August 2021, Volume 60

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RICHMOND UPON THAMES U3A COMMITTEE & OFFICERS

OFFICERS:

President: Stephen Jakobi
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Bob Litherland

SECTION LEADERS:

Art, Science & Music: Graham Shortell

Languages: Norma Cook

Literature, Drama, Philosophy & History: Carole Fletcher

Recreation: Tricia Abrahamsen

CHAIRMAN’S LETTER

We all know about the important role of information technology, but I want to celebrate something more basic – reading aloud. My mother read to me when I was small and some books were read aloud to us at boarding school. At the time, I enjoyed it but also thought that once we could read fluently, it would not be needed. How wrong I was. I failed to appreciate what a good way it was to cover books that were a little longer or more demanding. Of course, I read to my children and loved to see their excitement.

I first joined a group that read poetry aloud about 20 years ago, and since then reading aloud has become central to my life. Most of the u3a groups that I have joined or led have been based on reading aloud. Nor has the pandemic stopped them, because you can easily read aloud in a group on zoom. Language groups use reading aloud to practice pronunciation while some other groups use it to cover difficult texts or enjoy the sound of poems. Reading aloud is also something one can share as a group, rather than one person talking to the others. I read aloud with friends as well, including friends who are in poor health. I now read aloud in about 5 or 6 groups, formal or informal. I never thought how useful it would be.

[Chris Barclay, crbarclay@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:crbarclay@hotmail.co.uk), Chairman.

GROUP NEWS

By the time you read this you will probably have received your copy of the printed prospectus for 2021-2022 and have eagerly examined it to see which groups take your fancy. A big thank you, as always, to the Group Leaders for updating all the information (and, of course) for continuing to run their groups.

It is always tricky ensuring the accuracy of the entries, and particularly so this year. We hope to resume normal service but there is still so much uncertainty around that even when we say that a group is now running as usual, this may change and change again. It is important to check details with Beacon and the website, as these can be easily updated. Please be aware that there are events outside our control!

There are several leaderless groups. For one reason or another, a Group Leader is no longer available to run these... It would be great if you felt able to help out and take over the administration of one of these. Some groups only meet once a month – that means probably 10 times a year, allowing for holidays, - that’s not often, is it?

As always if you want to take over an existing group or have a really good idea for a new one, don’t hesitate to contact me or the section leaders (via the website):

Art, Music, & Science:	Graham Shortell
Drama, Literature, History & Philosophy:	Carole Fletcher
Recreation and Sport:	Tricia Abrahamsen
Or me: Norma Cook	Languages, and Group co-ordinator

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

GROUPS A–Z

POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY; WINE TASTING

Life is sort of returning to normal and as one of the more gung-ho brigades I decided it was time to re-start my groups with physical gatherings. I have two major reasons; we need to think about our

wider health issues and the economy. We have reached the stage where we are doing more harm to ourselves both psychologically and physically by being overly fearful and cautious and not getting diagnosis and treatment for potentially more serious issues. As for the economy we must remember ETNA is a valuable community facility, but it needs financial support. Our classes help in a small way to provide that support.

I realise that every member must make their own mind up as to the degree of risk they are prepared to take. Many of my groups' members would prefer to remain on Zoom and I respect their decision, but I am also mindful of those who do not like Zoom and would now prefer to resume the physical meetings.

Currently some of the Zoomers have not come to ETNA, but equally not all non-Zoomers have returned either. The net result is a smaller attendance as I write this in early August. What will happen in the coming weeks only time will tell but I will continue holding my meetings back in ETNA. If you are interested in joining either of these groups, please let me know. Details are on Beacon.

I feel I should also mention my wine tasting group. This of course can only take place in situ and we re-started in August so 'cheers' to that.

Chris Hack.

Instead of the usual A-Z entry the [History Group](#) offered the following fascinating set of questions for you.

[Question 1](#): Which English King can be regarded as the founder of the British Navy?

Question 2: Who, for sixteen months, was called King of England by a majority of English Barons, but never appears in any list of English Kings?

Question 3: When Portugal had Kings and Queens, what was the royal link to England?

Answers on page 12.

ANSWERS TO “ALL ANSWERS END IN END”

These are the answers to the quiz on page 12 of the May 2021 Newsletter

1. FRIEND	2. TREND
3. BEND	4. STIPEND
5. COMPREHEND	6. GIRLFRIEND
7. DIVIDEND	8. REVEREND
9. WEEKEND	10. MEND
11. LEND	12. SEND
13. EXTEND	14. LEGEND
15. PRETEND	16. REPREHEND
17. TRANSCEND	18. HYPEREXTEND
19. AMEND	20. SPEND
21. CONDESCEND	22. BLEND
23. FIEND	24. UPEND
25. RECOMMEND	

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1. Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the latest Richmond U3A Newsletter. I greatly enjoyed reading all the articles and story about the Cartier watch and will tackle the puzzle shortly.

Also please pass on our thanks to the organisers who arranged the fascinating talk on Zoom about “Mysteries” yesterday. My husband and I thought Andy Thomas was a very good speaker. He presented us with a lot of mysteries but not many answers!

Richmond U3A’s monthly meetings such as the above have been mind stretching, enlightening and entertaining for me during the pandemic. Whilst on the subject, I thought the talk, back in the depths of winter, about wanting to be an astronaut was excellent and the charming young lady who gave it was inspiring. It made me want to be young again!

Thanks again,

Jean Dubash

2. Dear Editor,

I just want to let you know that U3A learning/ national program/world cuisine - cooking challenge, approached me (they got my info from Richmond u3a) to kick start the program beginning June. I decided to feature "CULINARY JOURNEY OF EAST AFRICA" with six recipes of authentic Ugandan and some of my own innovation recipes.

If you go to u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/world-cuisine-cookery-challenge. Then go to East Africa page to see the details and recipes. I think it is also going to be featured in next TAM.

I am pleased to bring my Richmond U3A group to national level.

Best wishes

Kate Noonan

CELEBRATING OPENING YORK HOUSE

Celebrating the opening of the York House Community Garden
2nd July 2021

The importance of enjoying plants for their sensory qualities is widely recognised as having healthy benefits. Lead by local charity Dose of Nature, supported by members of the York House Society with staff from Richmond Council, Squires Garden Centre & Continental Landscapes, an under-utilised area in York House gardens has been transformed into an oasis of well-being.

Plants have been selected for their smell, look, listen and touch, greatly expanding the sensory garden at Strathmore SEN School at Petersham. Cuttings from that garden had been cultivated and the Mayor, Cllr. Geoff Acton, was asked to formally open the gardens and to plant the cuttings.



CEO of Dose of Nature, Dr. Alison Greenwood acknowledged the Mayor's support for their charity and the high demand for their services. The community garden was a place where people could learn more about the importance of plants and their healing properties. She paid tribute to all those who had helped make the facility possible.



The Mayor with Alison Greenwood from charity Dose of Nature & Paul Leonard, Chairman of the York House Society at the opening of the Community Garden.

Paul Leonard

THE THRESHOLD OF MARRIAGE

Like many of us, I have been finding time during the Lockdown to do some very much needed de-cluttering. In a file of souvenirs from my wedding in 1958 I came across a little booklet called “The Threshold of Marriage” which had been given to us by the Vicar of the church we had chosen for the service. Most of the views are so out of date that they are laughable, though it has to be admitted some of the advice is still quite sound. A few quotes may amuse you:

“A woman’s emotions, as a rule, are more quickly stirred than a man’s. She reacts more promptly to her immediate surroundings. She is more easily moved to laughter or tears. A man tends to be absorbed in a few main interests, often outside the home; and where those are not concerned, he is apt to be bored.

“A woman lives more in the home, and more in the present. She finds in the passing moment entertainment and pleasure, as well as cause for apparently needless depression. This, and her keener sensitiveness, may make the process of settling down, in the first few months of marriage, more trying to the wife than to the husband, whose outside interests take his mind from the problems that ought to be faced by both of them.

“A man has, on the whole, smaller reserves of energy than a woman. She can miss a meal or a proper night’s rest with less discomfort than he. If a wife finds that her husband, when he comes home from work, does not take a keen interest in household affairs until he has had a square meal, this is not

because he is greedy, or merely pig-headed. Feed him before you tell him about all the day's events.

“Speaking generally, a woman's affections are more stable than a man's. When a man has married a wife, he may feel she is in his power. Just because he can feel so sure of her loyalty, he may take no special pains to deserve and retain it. It should, of course, be quite the other way round. Because he has his wife's happiness in his hands, he should show her all possible tenderness and affection. She, in turn, will make herself as attractive, intelligent and cheerful a companion as she can.

“A husband should remember that his wife's work in the home may be just as tiring as his own, and that sometimes she works more hours than he does. He will therefore be glad to help in the house as much as he can.

“The wife will remember that while she can do her work at her own time, he has to keep someone else's time, and it is in her interest as well as his to start him off to work punctually, without rush, and properly fed.”

Things have changed quite a lot, haven't they, and I'm thankful that my husband was a “modern man”.

Pat Havron

ANSWERS TO THE HISTORY QUIZ FROM PAGE 6

1. Henry VIII.
2. Louis VIII of France.
3. John I of Portugal married John of Gaunt's oldest daughter, Philippa.

Contributed by the British and European History Group For details of the Group please look on the website or contact **Bill Stevenson** at billof23@gmail.com

AND THEN THE RAINS CAME

In Australia, we love the rain. We welcome it with open arms for this is a dry country; nearly half of it is desert and a third is semi-arid grassland or scrub. The rain falls mostly in winter and if it doesn't, we know we're in for a summer of bushfires and stringent water restrictions. Many homes have a large rainwater tank in the back yard. The water is fresh, cool and sweet though you have to scan it carefully for the tiny, black tadpoles that frequently wiggle in. When it comes, the rain is often accompanied by fierce storms with crazy, jagged bursts of lightning and heavy booms of thunder. I have fond memories of waking up at night as a child, crawling across the bed to the window and watching a violent storm create wonderful drama before my fascinated eyes. I was never scared.

In England, the rain is a bit of a mixed blessing. No one wants a shortage of water but the cool, damp climate means we always crave warm, dry weather. Rain lowers the temperature, floods low

lying areas and quickly gathers in pools that splash the unwary pedestrian. Often it's no more than an annoying drizzle; weeks may go by without any. If you live here, you tolerate the weather; there are plenty of other advantages of living in this little island.

In India, the rain is different. It's not something you ever forget. You dread it and look forward to it in equal measure. Whole films and popular songs focus on the time of the rains – monsoon time.

In my first year in India, although I arrived in the middle of the monsoon season, the rains passed me by unnoticed. They were sparse that year and the rice crop was poor. The following year too, was a bad one for rain. But in 1972, the monsoon burst upon us with a mighty and unforgettable force. I've seen countless monsoons since but that is the one I remember.

By that time, I had a small child, just nine and a half months old when the monsoon broke. It was the first week of August and once it started, it didn't stop for two whole weeks. Rain, incessant, driving rain, violent spears of water that hit you like weapons and sent up muddy splashes as they struck the ground, rain that flooded the fields and cut the village off as effectively as a moat.

The air quickly became foetid with the smell of damp; the ceiling leaked and wet patches spread down the walls; water seeped in under the door and through the glassless windows; everything was damp and nothing would dry. Matches wouldn't strike and someone would have to go from house to house looking for a burning fire to light a piece of dry dung cake and carry it carefully back home. My daughter had diarrhoea; there were no such things as nappies and all I had available were useless strips of old cotton saris. The bedding quickly became stained, her clothes all marred with the familiar yellow mark of baby poo. I frantically washed

clothes and sheets every day but it was a waste of time. Nothing dried. Soon there was nothing clean left to put on her.

The combination of heat and damp drew insects of every kind. We couldn't light a lamp at night for within minutes the surrounding air would become thick with them. They'd stick to our hair, crawl up our clothes, fly in our faces and land on our food. There was no escaping them. In the darkness of night, they still wouldn't leave us. Sleep was a macabre dance of waving hands fitfully brushing the mosquitos away while we tried to snatch brief spells of uneasy slumber. By morning, my poor baby would be covered in red blotches where they'd bitten her.

Grain was kept in large earthen pots and as the water seeped through their porous walls, the wheat and rice began to grow mouldy and tiny black insects started feeding on them. We had no choice other than to clean them as best we could and use them to make the daily rice and chapattis. They didn't taste good but it was food.

There was not much to eat with the bread. We got our fresh vegetables from the village but that supply soon dried up as the fields became water-logged and the vegetables rotted in the ground. Reactions that would take weeks in a cold climate like Britain's took mere days in the summer monsoon of north India where even when it was raining hard, the temperature didn't drop below 35 degrees.

Somehow, we managed and eventually, the rain stopped, the sky cleared and the sun glared down. Now we had to cope with the consequences. Clothes and bedding had to be washed again and dried in relays in the sun. Many of them were spoilt. They'd been

damp so long that mould had formed and nothing shifts mould. Those ugly grey patches stayed.

Beds were dragged outside to air. Floors were scrubbed and everything taken off the shelves to be cleaned and dried. It was a dangerous time too, for snakes and scorpions had scuttled in looking for shelter during the rains and now they ventured out in hungry and aggressive mood. A scorpion bite would cause an adult excruciating pain for 24 hours but it would kill a small child.

In every house in the village, the same long, slow process of washing, cleaning and drying was going on. Women's work, of course. The men were checking the fields and clearing the alleys and lanes. Although it took weeks to restore the village to its normal state, I never heard anyone complain. There was only one comment – "The rice harvest should be good this year!"

Jan Singh

KEEPING YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

I should have known better. No, not the Beatles tune. But a remark made to me on a cricket field some years, in fact decades, ago that caused me an inordinate surge of pride.

Cricket, and the importance attached to the playing of it, "is not a matter of life and death. It's much more serious than that", to quote a pundit who was referring to football but it applies equally to the noble game. From the age of nine the playing of the game, its Laws (one of the few sports to have Laws rather than rules) its statistics, history and personalities absorbed me utterly. My father encouraged me, bought me a bat, took me to Lord's, practised

patiently with me in the back garden and enrolled me at a local indoor cricket school for coaching on Saturdays. He impressed the rule “Keep your eye on the Ball’ on my juvenile mind. But despite this paternal devotion I was never any good at the game. At the tiny prep school I attended I on one memorable occasion, scored fifteen... fifteen! Almost as fulfilling as scoring 200 at Lord’s against Australia would be. I ran up to the station that evening to meet my dad on his way home and to give him the news. He was duly impressed.

At “big school” from the age of 11 I failed to impress. Many of my contemporaries, having attended boys’ prep schools, were quite competent at the game and, I’m sorry to say, the talented chaps were given much more encouragement than us rabbits. I did however develop a reasonably accurate impersonation of the commentator John Arlott and his distinctive Hampshire burr and my performance of this while we were waiting to go in to bat gave me some passing prestige among the lads.

I was in my twenties before any hope of playing the game at all came my way. Where the idea came from I cannot recall but I played for a couple of workplace based teams on a few weekends each year. The standard was variable which suited me - some players less competent than I, many much more skilled.

On one occasion we were playing on yet another dreary suburban ground. I recall that the weather was dull, humid and overcast. I usually cast myself as wicket keeper (that way there was no doubt whatsoever about whether the ball was coming in my direction) but this time I was sent out to a spot close to the boundary. Much

opportunity for daydreaming and musing about various non-cricketing subjects. The game was proceeding in its usual pedestrian pace; a run here and there, a wicket falls from time to time. A flock of pigeons skims across the sky. Cries of children from a neighbouring field. I was rarely troubled by the ball. But suddenly I was distracted by shouts from the small number of spectators. The batsman had connected with some ease with a loose delivery and had sent the ball steeping into the sky and I was the only fielder anywhere near it. Thank the Lord that I was awake! The Law of Gravity seemed to have been suspended for what seemed like an eternity. I was aware that all attention was on me.....the ball seemed to be poised for ever many feet up. I prepared to concentrate on “th’ descending orb”. It completed its descent eventually and to my delighted surprise crashed onto my welcoming palms.

“Ohwellheld” exclaimed the fielding colleague to my right. A smattering of applause from our supporters. The batsman retired with what I fancied was a nod of appreciation in my direction. That completed my afternoon. I knew that such a perfect moment could never be repeated. Or so I thought.....about half an hour later the situation was almost repeated. Not such an extreme shot, the ball not quite reaching the heavens and the catch slightly less demanding but still one required concentration. This time the Law of Gravity was doing its job and once again I was successful. This time the batsman, whom I knew slightly, diverted his walk back to the boundary to pass near me: “I should have known better than to hit it over here” he said. What a compliment! One that was repaid in beer not much later.

I was still living at home with my parents at that time. “Took a couple of catches” I reported later to my dad when he enquired about the game. “I kept my eye on the ball.”

Robert Smith

I CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE THIS

ICWTST (I can't wait to share this). Unfortunately, most of us haven't been covering new ground just lately so I haven't had any contributions for this section.

Like others I don't have anything startling to reveal apart from a quick trip up to Herefordshire to celebrate my great-granddaughter's fifth birthday. Otherwise, life has been predictably quiet and, yes, predictable.

Hopefully as restrictions begin to loosen up we will have a flood of contributions to excite you in the next issue.

Sue Wood

NEXT NEWSLETTER

I'd like to thank all our contributors to this issue. I find it so interesting to read of their experiences. So please don't hold back if there's something you too would like to share. Whatever it is we'd like to hear about it. The next issue will be due in October so please let me have all your offerings by the end of September.

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

RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS SEP – DEC 2021

Until Government regulations allow us to meet in Clarendon Hall, we will hold these meetings via Zoom. Members will be sent an email “invitation” to join prior to each meeting.

Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 14:30.

29th Sep: Michael de Podesta – Carbonaut

Michael de Podesta worked as Lecturer in Physics at Birkbeck and University College and in 2000 moved to NPL. Retiring in 2020, he is now ‘attempting to become a carbonaut – someone who lives without emitting carbon dioxide.’ In his talk today Michael discusses why reducing carbon dioxide emissions matters.

27th Oct: Tony Gibney–Recognising Unpaid Carers & their Work

Across the UK today 6.5 million people are carers, supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill. That’s 1 in 8 adults who care, unpaid, for family and friends. Carers UK aims to make life better for carers by providing expert advice, connecting carers and campaigning to increase recognition of unpaid carers.

24th Nov: Paul Leonard, Yvonne Hewitt – History of York House

Today’s talk will cover a brief history of York House and its fascinating owners. 2022 will be the centenary of the formation of the York House Society, whose members were instrumental in saving York House encouraging the Council to purchase the building and gardens.

15th Dec: Patricia Gentry – Rubens and Van Dyck in London

Learn why the two most famous 17th century Flemish baroque masters came to England to work for the British royal family, and what political climate they encountered not long before the outbreak of the civil war.