

# RICHMOND-upon-THAMES



## University of the Third Age

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



## Newsletter August 2022, Volume 64

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Front cover – Diana Loch took the picture on the cover, and you will find another of her photos accompanying the Editor's Letter on page 5.

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

## **OFFICERS:**

**President:** Stephen Jakobi

**Chairman:** Chris Barclay

**Vice Chair:** Libby Barton

**Secretary / Editor:** Sue Wood

**Treasurer:** Carole Fletcher

## **MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE:**

**Membership Secretary:** David Wood – davidewood80@gmail.com

**Groups' Co-ordinator:** Chris Barclay – crbarclay@hotmail.co.uk

### **Committee members:**

John Cardwell – Speakers

Peggy Roe

Bob Litherland

## **SECTION LEADERS:**

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

**Languages:** Norma Cook

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

**Recreation:** Tricia Abrahamsen

# **CHAIRMAN'S LETTER**

## **Incorporating Group News**

The summer is a strange time for University of the Third Age. Existing subject groups are often taking a summer break or unable to do much in the hot weather. However, we are planning for the autumn which will be on us quite soon. Several new groups are just about to take off, in a range of activities. The Rock Band is starting; Ceramics is to start in September; the Chess Club is due to start soon; Found Art is also nearly ready. "Homer and his literary and artistic influences" should be on the way. We very much hope that an existing walking netball group could come within u3a as well.

Our members, like everyone else, have worries at the moment with energy costs and inflation. We feel more than ever that a co-operative model is the way forward. That model enables us to offer each other language groups, writing groups, recreational groups and so on at the lowest possible cost. Of course, we cannot directly help with the effects of water shortage or spiralling energy costs, but we are a community within which all of us are better placed to cope with whatever happens. Indeed, following the u3a slogan we can Learn, Laugh and Live.

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

## **PLEASE REMEMBER**

**PLEASE REMEMBER** that if you change your email address you **MUST** let us know if you wish to continue receiving our bulk emails. Similarly, you **MUST** tell us if you change postal address and wish to continue receiving printed material.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

I seem to spend an inordinate amount of time watching the antics of the fledglings in my garden as they fall over themselves cheeping loudly and attempting to convince their parents that they will starve



*A rather more exotic illustration of a kestrel feeding its offspring taken by Diana Loch*

if they are not fed by them. Then, when left alone, they happily dig into the food perfectly able to feed themselves. The baby robins had us confused at first as their red breasts had not appeared but they were definitely robin shaped and not sparrows. It's amazing how differently the breeds move. Then recently we saw two sparrows in the garden, and it was only when the smaller one flew away that we realised the larger one was the chick!

The recent Group Leaders' Lunch was great fun, as usual. I love the buzz when they all get together, and the noise level increases as they recognise friends and get down to some serious chat. And for me it is a wonderful chance to meet new Group Leaders and find out about their groups and to catch up with those I've met over the years who are still giving sterling service. I find there's never enough time to speak to everyone, but it feels good to see members departing with a big smile on their face.

My brother died recently in Australia, and it was strange to feel that I had lost the last person who had shared my childhood. We would speak every Sunday morning for at least half an hour and I sometimes wondered how we found so much to talk about. Luckily my partner, Martin, and I had seen him just before lockdown,

getting back into the country just in time. He lived up in the Snowy Mountains which is a delightful place to visit. I spent two years in Australia many decades ago but recently often visited as my youngest daughter lives in Auckland so I would combine a visit to both. When living there I didn't have much chance to explore the country as I had four children in school and a newborn to take care of. It's certainly a fascinating place to visit.

Now, I look forward to hearing that groups have all got back to meeting in person. We all long for that contact with others and the opportunity it gives for making friends. Sharing interests and learning new skills helps to make us more interesting people as well. So don't miss out, there are new groups forming regularly and some fascinating things on offer.

**Sue Wood**

## **GROUPS A–Z: FRENCH MODERN LITERATURE**

The Modern French Literature group has been in existence since 2016. We are united by a love of literature, and the desire to have the opportunity to speak French in our monthly meetings.

After many sessions on Zoom during lockdown we are meeting face to face again, which is preferable, although Zoom served us well.

Discussing novels (and sometimes autobiographies) in French is not always easy, but our members are not put off by the challenge. We are much more interested in personal responses to the books than in the production of perfect French grammar.

Most of the books we read were published post 2000, hence the title 'Modern French Literature'. Our latest read was 'La Gouvernante suédoise' by Marie Sizun. The story is loosely based on her own family history three generations back, and set in Sweden and France. The novel produced a mixed response with some members loving it, others were very critical. This is probably the best outcome as the ensuing discussion was animated: when we all like a book, there is less to debate.

We now have a long summer break, in the French tradition, with a summer social in August.

**Alison Dietz**

## **GROUPS A–Z: PIVOTAL HISTORY**

What makes an event or a person pivotal? Is it the impact affected then, or is it the effect on us today? Is the effect today a direct result, or is it more oblique?

Propose, debate, question! Anything, anywhere, before 1918 (except WW1).

We meet on alternate Wednesdays at 14:30 at 9 Victoria Road, Twickenham (limited spaces) and online via Zoom. Starting again in late September.

**Patrick Ducker, [patrick\\_ducker@hotmail.com](mailto:patrick_ducker@hotmail.com)**

## **GROUPS A–Z: SINGING FOR PLEASURE**

We've now completed three 'terms' of Singing for Pleasure since we resumed 'in-person' singing last September, and it really has been a pleasure, as always.

Our regular informal pre-Christmas performance last December for our friends in the local Abbeyfield Care Home became a freezing cold acapella run-through of carols and seasonal songs in their courtyard garden, with the Residents in the warm watching through the windows; how we suffer for our Art! And on our last session this year before the Summer break, again at Abbeyfield, though this time in their rather steamy front sitting room, we performed a selection of the songs we've been practicing this year, then joined them for tea, cake and a chat.

During lockdown, we kept in touch via regular monthly emails containing news, suggestions of songs to practice, more or less relevant video clips, jokes, and Group members' own Desert Island Disc choices. It all seems a long time ago, but sadly, as we know, the spectre of Covid is still hovering around, and some people are understandably still wary of gathering inside in groups and, of course, particularly of singing together, and our numbers are taking time to return to normal. But we're hoping that, barring any further variants, over the Summer our singers will be able to re-set their internal calendars so that the first and third Thursday afternoons of the month are once again reserved for Singing, and that we'll be welcoming more members back for the Autumn term.

So, if you are a Group member who is yet to return to us, and particularly our gentlemen members, do please seriously consider coming in September - our first session will be Thursday September 15th at 2.15pm, because SINGING FOR PLEASURE NEEDS YOU! We



are now in a position to welcome new members, so if you're interested, please get in touch.

I'm so grateful to all the loyal singers who've stayed with us through these difficult times, and as ever we must thank our wonderful pianist Sally and Conductor Nick, without whom, quite simply, nothing would happen!

**Lyn Keay, [spillings@hotmail.com](mailto:spillings@hotmail.com).**

## **GROUPS A–Z: THEATRE MATINEE GROUP**

When theatre lights went out mid-March 2020 the group had eight productions planned, booked and paid for, four musicals and four plays. Some were completely cancelled, money refunded, most eventually rescheduled. The previous month 44 members had been to Hamilton, 27 to Cabaret and 42 had enjoyed a New Year's Lunch party.

### **The Year of Zoom: We Never Closed**

Once we realised that Lockdown was going to continue for some time, a couple of us decided to set up a zoom group. We purposely kept the numbers small so everyone had the opportunity to contribute to the group discussion.

Once we'd dispensed with the formalities, how much our hair had grown, doorstep deliveries, things we planned to do and hadn't got round to, we discussed the online theatre production we'd watched in the week. During the second half of the meeting we read and discussed a short story chosen by one of the group. I know it's a cliché but these structured weekly meetings became a lifeline as

they did for many U3a groups and provided a much needed focus and shape to each week.

### **The Show Must Go On**

September 2nd 2021 was the first large group outing to live theatre for almost 18 months. The (rescheduled) play was Tom Stoppard's Leopoldstadt. I'd assumed, wrongly, that those going would be understandably wary about travelling, being socially 'undistanced' and would be anxious to see the play and rush home. I'd forgotten that many members see the social aspects of the group as integral to their enjoyment of the day so hadn't arranged the usual pre-theatre lunch. Big mistake!

I got the message and since then there have been a further 20 productions, 15 well attended pre theatre lunches and there are 8 more events booked in the next four months.

### **Judy Craik, Group leader**

## **AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE**

When our previous treasurer, Jim Davidson, died he left £500 in his will to Richmond U3A. At the time I suggested an annual competition, photography, art, writing, etc, but the committee personnel were all too busy to take it on. The idea died and the money went into general funds.

On a previous occasion a member, Tyrrell Marris, had contacted me as I had obviously written a piece in the newsletter about George Hobbs, a previous Chairman. Although I wasn't editor then but must have been chairman.

He suggested a competition to be judged by the members on the occasion of the AGM where the entries could be displayed, if necessary, the numbers whittled down by a panel of judges. Or written ones put in the newsletter.

Photographic subjects could be something like “A Richmond street scene, garden, etc.” Other subjects such as a plant arrangement from my garden, my needlework, my art work. Themes for written works could be humour, poetry, travel, family, horror, etc. The ideas are numerous, these are only suggestions.

I am not suggesting that our committee take this on as they are just as busy as the previous members were, but I am talking about this now as we have sufficient funds to do something and surely we can find someone who might like to take this on as a one-off project.

Jim gave many years of great service to our U3A. The only man on our committee, he always took on any challenge we gave him with great good humour and dedication. He was a joy to work with, a perfect gentleman. As well as being treasurer for many years, he even taught members how to use computers and would go to their homes to help them. He deserves to be honoured. Will someone please take on this important and interesting project?

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

The next newsletter is due out in late October so please could I have any offerings by the first week of October **at the latest**. This is your newsletter so let's hear from you.

## ROCHESTER TRIP

At the end of April, two coachloads of U3A members descended on Rochester, on a day trip organised by Libby Barton. I had never been on a U3A excursion before, and I had never been to Rochester. It was a great day out on both counts.

My friend Joss, a fellow U3A member, came too. On arrival in Rochester, we found that the way from the coach park to the town centre led conveniently through a large building that housed the Tourist Information Centre. So, being of like mind, we paused only to pick up a couple of maps before heading for a coffee shop in the high street.

We found ourselves immediately opposite the cathedral, and quickly realised that Rochester is a compact town, with most noteworthy buildings readily accessible from the high street.

Town, yes – Rochester was a city until it lost its status in 1998 and was absorbed into the unitary authority of Medway. Since then, there have been ongoing campaigns to get city status restored.

After a bracing walk beside the river Medway, we went to explore the castle, which dates back to the early 12th century. The three storeys and basement of the castle can still be accessed, and the higher levels provide good views of the nearby cathedral.

Next stop, the cathedral. It is England's second oldest, founded in 604, though very little survives from that date. Charles Dickens has a strong local connection, as he spent his childhood years in Rochester and Chatham, and he wrote of the view down the cathedral's Great West Door: 'Dear me, it's like looking down the throat of Old Time'.

Rochester has a number of independent shops and cafes, some making the most of their association with Dickens: Little Dorrit, Peggotty's Parlour and Tiny Tim's Tearooms. Ignoring these, we lunched at an unmemorable café, where I was twice warned that the piri piri chicken I ordered was 'really, really hot!' (It really, really wasn't).

After lunch we visited Eastgate House, a 16th/17th century town house which was an inspiration to Dickens when he lived at nearby Gad's Hill Place. In the garden of Eastgate House is the Swiss Chalet – formerly constructed at Gad's Hill, it is where Dickens was writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* on the day he died in 1870.

Also in Eastgate House is a reconstruction of a schoolroom – I guess it was Victorian, but I'm sure I wasn't the only U3A member to look at the desks, complete with inkwells, and think 'I had one just like that at Infants school!'

We had hoped to visit the Huguenot Museum in the Precinct, but unfortunately this was closed. So, there was nothing for it but to have another cup of tea (and a cake) before our journey home. Our thanks to Libby for arranging such an enjoyable day out.

**Gillian Wetherall**

## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

### ***Dear Editor – Re. IT Support***

The dependence of individuals on the Internet and associated mobile technology is steadily increasing. I doubt if I am the only Richmond U3A person who finds this bewildering and does not have readily available younger family support to assist me.

Richmond U3A used to have a person who offered to help individuals on this and many other U3As still provide a group of individuals willing to help on:

### ***Downloading Apps***

**Passwords** – A secure and sensible approach for remembering passwords (the general advice is to not to use the same ones - but multiple passwords are not easy to memorise)

### ***Being secure with online banking***

### ***Avoiding scams***

If Richmond U3A could arrange for a few people ready to assist on these, I think it would be highly valued by many members.

**Andrew Holt.**

*If any member would like to volunteer for providing this very worthwhile assistance, then please get in touch with Graham Shortell, Section Leader. [Graham.shortell@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Graham.shortell@blueyonder.co.uk)*

*Moira Stuart already offers help and assistance for members with iPads and, in the meantime, could possibly offer help with other technology if asked nicely. I'm sure that she'll let me know if she gets inundated. [moirastuart1@gmail.com](mailto:moirastuart1@gmail.com)*

### ***Dear Editor – Re. Stamps***

During lock down a few Richmond U3A members were dusting off their stamp collections & some were keen for their collection to be used for fund raising by their favourite charity. I have been happy to help & can be contacted on the number below or any member is welcome to turn up at our next planned meeting, as per the following flyer.

**Paul Leonard, [paul.leonard.ed@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.leonard.ed@btinternet.com), 07828 182 352**  
**Leader of the Richmond U3A Stamp & Postal History Group**

**Next Meeting: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022 at 11-12 in Hampton Hill  
United Reform Church, 35 High Street, Hampton Hill TW12  
1NB**

**Map: <http://www.hamptonhillurc.org.uk/location/>**

**Bus route R68 and R70 stop near the church**

**Theme for the meeting: **Sorting Out My Stamp Collection****

**Paul Leonard, [paul.leonard.ed@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.leonard.ed@btinternet.com)**

Advice on collecting, how to look after your stamps and  
information about specialists and societies. Plus, suggestions on  
donating your stamps to good causes.

Paul Leonard is a member of the Twickenham & District Philatelic  
Society and also a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society.

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## **A BIT OF A GAMBLE**

I stood outside Arrivals at Luton Airport, holding up a name placard and scrutinising every single young female walking through the doors. Would she be the one? Would we recognise each other from photographs? Finally, a timid looking girl with a tiny suitcase walked through, looked at the name on my placard, caught my eye, and smiled. At last! After four weeks of waiting Masha and I finally met face to face.

Her journey had been a long one. First an 18-hour bus journey to the Polish border, and she hadn't been sure what would happen once she reached there. Then luckily she was able to get a bus to Krakow station, where she spent the remainder of the night, and from there a train to the airport and her flight to Luton. Masha is 24 years old and was travelling on her own, leaving her fiancé, family, and friends behind, to come and live with someone she had never met before. Brave girl.

In our emails (using Google Translate), Masha had asked me to tell her about my routine in the house and things I did and didn't like, and I had asked her about her food likes and dislikes. I had explained that my partner, Jim, is here for part of the week and prepares his own breakfast as I often don't have any. Masha agreed that she would like to do the same and was used to fried eggs and bread and sometimes sausages.

By 11o'clock the next morning she still hadn't appeared, so I sent her an email (in case she was still asleep). She soon appeared and I think she had been too scared to come out of her room. I was tempted to make her breakfast but decided I ought to start as we had agreed. I showed her where everything was and left her to it. She only made herself one fried egg and a small slice of bread!

Masha's English was extremely limited, so we used an App on our phones called SayHi. I would speak in English and a voice would translate it into Russian, and vice versa. It was a huge help to us both as we tried to work out how we were going to live together with as little friction as possible.



She has now been here for 12 weeks, and her English has really improved. We no longer need a translation App. She attends classes three mornings a week and at the moment is on a two-week intensive course for Ukrainians at Richmond College.

Already qualified as a Special Needs Therapist, Masha had been doing an online (because of Covid) Masters in Speech Therapy before the war started, but her university is now in a Russian occupied area. Volunteering for one morning a week at a local school was quite traumatic to begin with as she couldn't understand anyone, and realised just how much she has to learn. If the war continues, her aim is to improve her English enough to work as a Teaching Assistant. She also collects a Ukrainian friend's son from school.

So how are things after 12 weeks? Much better than I could have ever expected. It probably helps that I am out a lot and so is Masha, so we each have plenty of personal space. Sunbury Leisure Centre has given Ukrainian refugees a free one year's membership and she is always hopping on the 290 bus to go to swimming, yoga, and Pilates. She is a delightful girl and very considerate, and we have managed to sort out most things.

We're almost there with food. She said she felt uncomfortable with my providing all the food, but I said I would like to provide the food until she finds a full-time job. We've reached a sort of compromise where she buys some things like Nescafé and breakfast cereal (no more eggs and sausage for breakfast!) and tiramisu that I don't have plus extra fruit, and if she sees we need milk she'll get that. On a

couple of occasions she has brought back the ingredients and cooked a meal for us.

People ask me why I joined the Homes for Ukraine scheme, especially as I really like my own space. At the time, it was because I felt so guilty about the western world, and Europe in particular, leaving Ukraine to fight Russia on its own. I completely understood the reasons but couldn't get over a feeling of shame. By opening my home to a Ukrainian refugee, I felt I would be helping in some very small way.

And I feel I'm benefiting from having her here. I'm learning a bit about cultural differences, and will no doubt learn more as her English improves. I am also questioning things I do in the house, like whether it really is important that a particular cloth be used for wiping work surfaces 😊.

Jim and I each have two daughters in their late thirties and we look on Masha as another young daughter.

It was a bit of a gamble, but it has paid off.

**Tricia Abrahamsen**

# PHOTOS OF SUMMER

This time Maureen Landau has sent us some stunning photos of the amazing water lilies at Kew Gardens. How incredible they are.

**Sue Wood.**



## THE LONDON REGION SUMMER SCHOOL 2022

After last year's success of a one-day Summer School our Committee decided to organise a two-day event on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> July.



The Summer School was held at our usual venue of the St Bride's Institute, Fleet Street. This is a popular location because it is easy to reach by tube, train and bus.

Unfortunately, the 27<sup>th</sup> July was hit by the RMT strike but 70% of members made the effort to travel and enjoyed the day.

This year we advertised the Summer School in TAM which resulted in a number of applications from not only the Home Counties but from members in Lancashire, Northumberland, Devon, Norfolk and Wales.



The theme this year was Discovering London, past, present and future. The talks were wide ranging and included history, art literature and science related subjects. We even had a presentation by a Pearly King and Queen which was not only hugely entertaining but very informative about their charitable works.

Of course, there were topics of a more serious nature such as The County Lines dealing with drugs including the historical perspective and Carbon Capture for Industry. Walks were especially popular and due to popular demand; we organised 4 walks each day. These covered routes for example like Wren's Churches, Spitalfields and the East End, Architecture of the South Bank and the City and Slavery.



For members wanting a more interactive experience three half day workshops were available. The subjects were Writing Your Own Play, Art into the Unknown and Playing with Shakespeare.





The organising Committee is now looking forward to 2023 when we will be celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Summer School Anniversary. 80% of this year's attendees plan on joining us next year and I hope you will be too! So please watch this space.



*We would like to thank Jim Jenkins from Barnet U3A for the brilliant photographs of the London Region Summer School.*

**Libby Barton**

# **RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS AUG – NOV22**

*Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 14:30 in St Mary's Church, Church St, Twickenham, TW1 3NJ. The church overlooks the river and is close to the Civic Centre off Richmond Road. Served by bus routes 33, R68, R70, H22 and 490 (Lebanon Court bus stop). Walk towards the Council offices and turn left down the walkway just before you reach them.*

## **31<sup>st</sup> Aug: Ian Jones – Tales of a Roving Reporter**

Twenty years of weird, wonderful and downright crazy stories, from nudists, to royalty, dangerous animals and nervous Bishops. Anything can happen and go wrong when there is a "Live Microphone". Discover what really happens "On" and "Off Air"!

## **28<sup>th</sup> Sep: Fatemeh Geranmeyah – Strokes and their Impact**

Fatemeh is a Consultant Neurologist at Imperial College, London. The talk discusses research into treatments and recovery of cognitive functions after a stroke.

## **26<sup>th</sup> Oct: Ian Keable – The History of Cartoons – from Hogarth to Private Eye**

In this talk Ian tracks the early stages of cartoons (in the form of satirical prints) and how, through the works of Hogarth and James Gillray, they gradually evolved into the familiar format of today's newspapers and magazines.

## **30<sup>th</sup> Nov: Hannah Lumley – Scams Awareness**

We will be raising awareness on the types of scams that are circulating. Advising people on how to stay safe and what to do if they do find themselves in a situation where they have given money/bank details to a scammer.