

**RICHMOND-upon-THAMES**



**University of the Third Age**

[www.U3Asites.org.uk/richmond-on-thames](http://www.U3Asites.org.uk/richmond-on-thames)



**Newsletter May 2021, Volume 59**

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The cover shows one of my photos which I thought echoed current feelings and longings for the rewards when we get to the top of the steps we're climbing. Don't forget, if you have one of your photos that you would like to suggest as a front page, please just send it along to me. The next issue will be coming out in August so deadline for entries is July 15th picture on the front cover courtesy of Sue.

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

# RICHMOND UPON THAMES U3A

## COMMITTEE & OFFICERS

### OFFICERS:

**President:** Stephen Jakobi

**Chairman:** Chris Barclay – crbarclay@hotmail.co.uk

**Vice Chair:** Libby Barton

**Secretary / Editor:** Sue Wood – susan.orleans@tiscali.co.uk

**Treasurer:** John Cardwell

### MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE:

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

**Groups' Co-ordinator:** Norma Cook – norma.beagle@gmail.com

**Committee members:**

Peggy Roe

Bob Litherland

### SECTION LEADERS:

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

**Languages:** Norma Cook

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

**Recreation:** Tricia Abrahamsen

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Spring weather, trees in leaf and flowers coming up in the garden; people in our age group being vaccinated; restrictions being relaxed for outdoors activities. I feel closer to a return to normal life than I have at any time since last September.

Many Richmond U3A groups have continued to operate through the last year, mostly online, and more are planning to return. You may have seen in Third Age Matters that 2<sup>nd</sup> June is to be national U3A day. We are not planning any special publicity at local level. Our membership numbers have stayed up very well, even during the last year.

Our priority over the summer is to restore a range of safe activities for our members. People who join have often heard of U3A by word of mouth. So, if you know anyone who you think might enjoy what we have to offer then please tell them about us.

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

## GROUP NEWS

There is very little to report for this edition of the newsletter. We are all ready to go but we still have to wait until June 21<sup>st</sup> for the end to all restrictions and even then, we are being advised to be cautious.

Nevertheless, the minute some of the restrictions were lifted at the end of March, the walking, rambling and cycling groups were off, well-organised and following all the guidelines.

As we move into the warmer months (I am writing this mid-April and there was a frost this morning) groups are planning to meet

outdoors, even “indoor” groups like Scrabble and Cryptic Crosswords. Therefore, as always, an enormous thank you to all our group leaders who have persisted when it would have been so easy just to do nothing. You have all provided great pleasure to many members and prevented us from feeling isolated and lacking in purpose while we could not get out and about.

As always, ideas for new groups welcome. Just contact the section leaders (via the website):

Art, Music, & Science:	Graham Shortell
Drama, Literature, History & Philosophy:	Carole Fletcher
Recreation:	Tricia Abrahamsen
Languages:	Norma Cook

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

## **GROUPS A–Z LIFE ENHANCING GROUP**

If you’re looking for friendship and support this may be the group for you.

Before lockdown we used to meet every other week in Twickenham, but once lockdown kicked in we realised that we needed each other’s care and support so we carried on via Zoom.

Frustrations are brought to the table and sometimes we may enable you to look at a situation differently while joys are shared by everybody.

We meet every Friday from 10:30 till 12:00 on Zoom but look forward to meeting in person as soon as circumstances allow. Why don't you give us a try?

You can email me on [sue@sueplumtree.com](mailto:sue@sueplumtree.com) and find out more. Look forward to hearing from you.

**Sue Plumtree.**

## **ON BEING A GROUP LEADER 1**

We are all only too aware of the terrible details of life under this nightmare virus as we move towards the second year of its effects.

I first joined Richmond U3A when I was working part time but soon after that in the middle of 2019 I had retired completely and was looking for things to do. I belonged to a couple of U3A groups and would regularly go to the monthly meetings at Clarendon Hall. I had also offered my services as a volunteer. I wanted to join a Cryptic Crossword group but there was not one at Richmond but there was at the Kingston U3A, I got in touch with their leader, and he very kindly said I could come along and try it out before joining Kingston U3A, which I did.

It was also around this time that I was invited to a lunch for volunteers at Richmond U3A, we were sitting enjoying our lunch and I mentioned about a Cryptic Crossword group. I was sitting at a table with Chris Hack, who was the then Chairman of Richmond U3A, his ears pricked up. Looking at me he said a Cryptic Crossword group would go down well in Richmond. I promised nothing, but for the next couple of weeks the idea floated around

in my head. I talked about it to other people who all thought it was a good idea and they would join it. By talking about it I discovered that there was a mix of people some beginners and some were experienced. Should I perhaps start two groups?

I did some research, what did other groups do? Kingston group took home four crosswords from each meeting and did them as far as they could and would go through them at their meetings explaining their reasoning. Another group in London went to the pub and would do crosswords together without using digital aids. I decided to do a bit of both at least with the experienced group. With the beginners we would follow a book written by Henry Howarth who is the U3A National Cryptic Crossword Advisor.

Both groups started in January 2020 and were very popular but within three months we were in lockdown. The groups worked ok on Zoom but we cannot do a crossword between us until we meet in person again. The beginners are no longer beginners and a new Cryptic Crossword group for beginners was started this year by Alan Mitchell with people from the waiting list.

Doing crosswords between you is enjoyable because we all have different areas of expertise, one knows about composers, another is a keen gardener and knows about plants, a third knows about birds but we are all women and none of us know anything about wretched cricket! We are convinced all setters are white men of a certain age and if anyone could show us a woman setter we would eat our hats! We applaud a clever clue and moan about a weak one. One lady on the original beginners group asked if I thought Cryptic Crosswords were addictive and I have to admit I think they are, I know I need my daily fix.

There are two parts to my being a group leader, supplying crosswords and the tea and biscuits. Seeing as we have been in lockdown most of the time I have been a group leader I have forgotten the tea and biscuits and sourcing crosswords is fun, I have to do more than a daily crossword. People have been kind supplying me with crosswords and some I download. One of the group will always complain they found a crossword too hard but I am beginning to ignore this because if they were all easy it would be boring. We always have one easy one and a couple more challenging. It doesn't matter if a crossword hasn't been finished we will finish it in the meeting.

The best bits are those lightbulb moments when one of us sees how an answer has been arrived at.

**Esther Gould.**

## **ON BEING A GROUP LEADER 2**

Really? About 20 years? Yes, I have been a group leader a very long time.

It started when, shortly after I retired from teaching, Anne Marshall – an early member of U3A Richmond – suggested to me I should start a German group. People, meaning she, would like to learn a little German and I, as a German, would be the right person to do it.

And so it came that soon a group of 8 ladies - that much I could fit round my table - assembled in my dining room. I offered coffee and cake, a German tradition when you have guests during the



day, and I tried to teach them how to ask for a cup of coffee, a certain sort of cake, etc.

That was the beginning. Other topics followed. The ladies were keen. They wanted to learn about grammar as well and even asked for homework!

The years went by. We progressed to reading books in German. A children's book first. Then we tried to read 'parallel': everybody had the same book in German as well as in English. We read passages in German in class and then, at home, continued with the story in English. It still took us about two years to finish the book!

The class was ambitious. Having a translation at hand was too tempting and we progressed to reading Easy Readers and finally 'proper' books in German.

Sometimes I wondered why the ladies (over the years also three gentlemen) were still coming. Was it my coffee and cake? Was it the company? We had become friends. We had even travelled together to Germany, to Hamburg and Luebeck. Niederegger Marzipan is still a favourite! We accompanied each other through illnesses and bereavement.

About three years ago I thought the class had come to a natural end. We were all getting old, had health problems, the way to my house was getting longer and longer. I decided to stop and I did. But a couple of months later I was talked into starting again, as a conversation group.

Now we meet once a month to talk about and discuss themes and articles I take from the newspaper DIE ZEIT.

Looking back, I can hardly believe it all started so many years ago. But they were good years and I hope there are more to come once Covid 19 is behind us.

**Elke Nauke.**

## **CARTOONS – SOME LIGHTEARTED MOMENTS**

Some lighthearted moments culled from “Keep Smiling” a weekly offering from the newsletter editor of Wanstead and Woodford U3A.

**I don't always  
go the extra  
mile, but when  
I do it's because  
I missed my  
exit.**





First trip booked for 2021.  
Hopefully off to Iceland  
in May.  
If that goes well,  
probably looking at Asda  
in June and Tesco in July.



## ALL ANSWERS END IN ‘END’

For instance: to upset someone.....would be.....offend

- 1 A person you like a lot.
- 2 A new development in fashion.
- 3 To move a body so it's not straight.
- 4 The income paid to a priest.
- 5 To understand someone completely.
- 6 Avril Lavigne's first US Number One.
- 7 Payment to Shareholders.
- 8 Title for a priest.
- 9 Saturday and Sunday.
- 10 To repair something.
- 11 To loan something.
- 12 To despatch a letter.
- 13 To reach or stretch.
- 14 A story from ancient times.
- 15 Imaginary or not real.
- 16 To tell someone off.
- 17 To rise above.
- 18 Forcefully stretch a limb.
- 19 To change the words of a text.
- 20 To give money for payment.
- 21 Be patronising.
- 22 A mixture of different substances.
- 23 An evil spirit or demon.
- 24 To overturn.
- 25 Advice as a course of action.

**Have fun! Answers in the next issue (August 2021).**

## DEAR EDITOR 1

I'm not about to submit anything for the next Newsletter, but just wanted to let you know how very much I have enjoyed the latest one and am full of admiration and praise for those members who have contributed so readily and interestingly!

Thank you and hope you had a very happy Easter

**Aileen Cockshut.**

## MY DEAREST HARPO

When you read this letter, it will be to celebrate your eighteenth birthday. I shall be with you in spirit when you open your present: a Cartier gold watch.

I feel you I should tell you the most extraordinary story of the Cartier gold watch which came from your great grandfather Jean Dixmier (my father).

You are the only boy in the Widdo family, therefore the Cartier should be yours; your sister and cousins will be well provided for in different ways.



To understand you need to know about the history of the time when this incident took place just after the war 1939 to 1945.

France was bombed and invaded very soon after September 1939. The German army occupied

France, lived in people's houses, shared their kitchen, bathroom, etc., rationed the food and sent the rest to feed the German soldiers, and this was for 5 years. Dire times.

It happened that Italy was allied with Germany and The Mont Blanc was a kind of natural border between France, Italy and Switzerland. Of course it was easy for the Resistance to employ guerrilla tactics by hiding and helping people (many Jews) to hide or escape in the mountains.

No doubt you will be destined to go to B where the family house still stands. In the main street there is a memorial plaque for a young Resistance chap killed by the Germans (the plaque is a few shops after the end of the arcades, if they still exist in 2032). So The Mont Blanc was a strategic place to escape to Switzerland which was neutral.

All the mountains along the Alps were tightly guarded by German trained alpinists. For 6 years no one from Le Bureau des Guides de Chamonix, where all the guides were registered, was allowed to climb any mountain.

Now as soon as freedom was restored Papa (Jean Dixmier) and his school mates decided to climb The Mont Blanc. This was August 1947 and they were in their late thirties.

My father had been brought up by his grandparents, whose origins were in the in the Alps, in B until the age of 12 when his grandfather died and he went to live in Paris.

To climb The Mt Blanc from Chamonix, remember there was no cable car in those days, you had to start the walk from the bottom of the valley. They had crampons, pickaxe, rucksack, warm clothes

and food. It took them at least 8/10 hours in all. There were 3 or 4 chaps, may be with a guide or at least a local man who knew the way.

I am told that the actual climbing is relatively easy but the sudden change of weather, the ice, the glaciers, crevasses, and the lack of endurance were, and still are, dangerous (there are always some idiots who go with ordinary shoes and ignore the weather broadcast predicted by le Bureau des Guides).

The climb started right from the town Chamonix late in the afternoon and they slept at the refuge des Mulets so they could benefit from a very early climb when the ice is still frozen and easily gripped by the crampons.

The rucksacks, the pickaxe (le piolet) and crampons are still in the attic in the house in Blle. Crampons are an iron plaque with around 13 spikes which you lace up through the curved hook on to your boots.

When they arrived almost at the top, my father noticed a little round hook in the snow and thought he could probably adapt it in case his crampon needed it. He pulled it and there it was, the full gold Cartier watch in good order ticking away once he wound it up! Imagine his surprise.

When he came back to the valley he went to the police and the official club of all the guides to declare it. He gave his Paris address but kept the watch. After one year it would become his if no one claimed it. So what happened? No one claimed it.

The following is a speculative theory. An Italian or Swiss (rich no doubt) must have lost it before the war, since no one climbed on The Mt Blanc for the last six years, and probably did not notice

when or where he had lost it. Now it is known that glaciers move, and very often things reappear so perhaps the watch moved with a glacier.

I have always known my father wearing the watch. When he died I went to the Cartier shop in London to have the bracelet altered to my size and to change it to battery operated because you had to wind it up every 8 hours.



The people there could not believe their eyes and flatly refused to touch it. “It is a museum piece. Where does it come from?” I said that I had always known my father wearing it. This was true but I was economical with the truth by saying I did not know where it came from.

They said we could find out where and when he got it using the number engraved on the back. I politely declined as I was frightened of being accused of stealing or lying. If you look at the Cartier shop in Geneva airport you can still see the same squarish design in steel.

Voila .... Good luck with it, do not sell it, look after it. Do not put it on a cold marble table and be sure to keep it in the family.  
Grand maman with love

*A delightful and true story sent to me by Dominique Widdowson.  
So a big thank you for sharing this with us.*



# I CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE THIS

## **1. *The Fall and The Cinderella Killer*** BBC iplayer and You Tube

Of the many offerings on BBC iPlayer which have eased the tedium of lockdown “The Fall” has been one of my greatest finds but having finished the series I did feel a little light relief from serial killers and Northern Irish noir was called for.

I have found it on You Tube (but it is also, I think, available from Radio 4's back library) with Bill Nighy's lovely laid-back performance as the actor sleuth Charles Paris. Comedy and whodunnit come together as he seeks out the murderer of a visiting star while coping with the exigencies of pantomime in Margate in ‘The Cinderella Killer’, while dealing, as always, with his troubled but sustaining relationship with his wife Frances.

I listened to “The Cinderella Killer” out of sequence, but am looking forward to following the rest of this radio series (based on Simon Brett's novels) in a more ordered way from here on in. These are for all fans of Bill Nighy - traditional detective stories - and the theatre.

**David Robins**

## **2. *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes.**

There has been a wave of novels in recent years, loosely based on The Odyssey and The Iliad, but telling the timeless stories from the women's perspective. Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, Madeleine Miller's *Circe* and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Women* come to mind - all of them enjoyable and very readable.

I also want to recommend *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes as one I think many of you will enjoy. My very last visit in the olden days (February 2020) to the British Museum was to the exhibition on Troy and then to a lecture given by Natalie Haynes. I say lecture, but as she is a stand-up comic as well as a serious classicist, her talk was much more humorous than that rather serious word suggests. She talked about her novel and wanting to give women the voice that is all too lacking in the ancient texts – but this is a novel not just for women! Try it and I hope you will enjoy it.

P.S. I am sure that I shall return to the British Museum – just not sure when!

**Norma Cook**

### **DEAR EDITOR 2**

My name is Vanessa Devereaux and I've been a member of the U3A for a few years. I was reading the article about art in lockdown by Ormond Noonan and, as suggested, I thought I would tell you what I have been doing.

I have always done art of one sort or another. At university I concentrated on sculpture and then lived in Italy, where I was able

to make some bronze sculptures which I exhibited at the Academy of Art of Torino. Since returning to the U.K. I have mainly done drawing and watercolor.



When lockdown started, I thought I would try something I loved when I was at school- lino cut printing. I have found it very therapeutic. The new soft lino that you can get these days is so

much easier to cut and gives good definition.

I have concentrated on one colour prints but also tried 2 and 3 colours which is a bit more complicated. The simple tools that are made for schools to use work well and are inexpensive but recently I've splashed out on a couple of expensive



blades which will allow me to make finer details.



I had forgotten how much enjoyment this form of art brings and I wanted to encourage others to have a go. I have attached a couple of examples of my work.

**Vanessa Devereaux**

## **RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS MAY – JUL 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.*

### **26<sup>th</sup> May: Andy Thomas–Unexplained Mysteries and Cover-Ups**

Today Andy explores some of the most famous global mysteries, finding intriguing linking threads. What is the truth about real-life ‘X’ files – UFOs, ghosts, the Bermuda Triangle, strange creatures, religious apparitions, psychic phenomena and visions of the future? Are we really told the truth about the world we live in, and if not why not? A lecture guaranteed to spark debate.

### **30<sup>th</sup> Jun: Jenny Malin – A British Raj Family**

Jenny is an award-winning author and public speaker. Here she delivers a fascinating insight into five generations of her family who lived during the days of the British Raj in India. With an extensive collection of family sepia photographs, she brings her stories vividly to life.

### **28<sup>th</sup> July: Robert Nurden – Stanley James – Cowboy, Preacher and Friend to the famous**

Robert is a writer and journalist whose talk today is based on his belief that the most interesting lives are often those that lie just under the radar of the public gaze, such as his unconventional grandfather, who as a young man in 1891, lived in Richmond. Emigrating to Canada, he became a cowboy, navy, hobo, soldier, war correspondent, poet and actor. Back in England he married, became a Nonconformist minister. In 1923 he converted to Catholicism and became deputy editor of the *Catholic Herald*.