

**RICHMOND-upon-THAMES**



**University of the Third Age**

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



**Newsletter October 2020, Volume 56**

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### **NOVEMBER MEETING – ON ZOOM**

Because of the prolonged suspension of our usual monthly meetings the Committee have decided to try out a meeting on Zoom in November. This will take place on:

**Wednesday, 25th November at 2.30 p.m.**

and there will be a talk by Diane Burstein as previously scheduled. Her subject is The Hidden East End. Diane has 20 years’ experience working as a Blue Badge Tour Guide and will be taking members’ questions after the talk.

Members will be sent an email “invitation” on Monday, 23rd November, and you will just need to click on the given link to join in on the 25th and enjoy the talk.

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

## **OFFICERS:**

**President:** Stephen Jakobi  
**Chairman:** Chris Hack  
**Vice Chair:** Libby Barton  
**Secretary / Editor:** Sue Wood  
**Treasurer:** John Cardwell

## **MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE:**

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

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

### **Committee members:**

Peggy Roe:  
Herbert Wirth:  
Chris Barclay:  
Bob Litherland:

## **SECTION LEADERS:**

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

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As I sit here writing this report, yet another twist regarding the COVID tale descends upon us. This time it is to reduce all social gatherings to no more than 6 persons. There goes my hope of reinstating my groups in ETNA and the wine tasting in the Britannia; it was all looking so promising. I think we can safely say that it is unlikely that this rule will be relaxed before Christmas; for good reason if it allows our hospitality industry to remain open, people to get back to work and children to stay at school. I mention the above just to illustrate how quickly things can change.

I think this is the third revision of this paragraph in two weeks. Firstly, we had conflicting information from National Office, which implied that because we are a charity, we could get round the 6 rule. It then became clear that this would only apply if we were performing 'charitable services,' which technically we do not. So, any possible exemption was denied us. That is the current position as I now write, so as far as I can see the above paragraph remains the most likely outcome for the foreseeable future – but who knows!

Of course, many groups continue to meet on-line. The good news is that we plan to resume our monthly meetings via Zoom starting on the last Wednesday in November. Your committee continues to meet via Zoom monthly to discuss the issues of the day, which are less, but still enough to keep us occupied. I am grateful to my colleagues for their continued hard work and support.

We are now into the new academic year, and you should have received your membership cards – or are about to. I hope that you will want to stick with us during these difficult times. I am sure 2021 will bring better tidings, and a return to some sort of

normality for us all to enjoy. In the meantime, stay well and I send you all my very best wishes – dare I mention at this early stage – for Christmas and the New Year! This is likely to be my last missive before then.

**Chris Hack, [chack@onetel.com](mailto:chack@onetel.com), Chairman.**

*As Chris's report was written a while ago, the editor has added the following postscript.*

Of course, we are now in a High Alert Area for Covid-19, so must take extra precautions to stay safe. As the days close in, it is harder to meet outside and indoors becomes “verboten”. It is up to each one of us to use our common sense as to how we react to these guidelines and how much isolation we feel is necessary for our individual circumstances. Unfortunately for us as an organisation it makes life difficult and some activities virtually impossible. We will continue to do all we can and, as you know, many groups are remaining active online. I have received many appreciative comments from members and believe that we do provide a lifeline to many who are forced to isolate. Be assured we will be here ready and keen to get back to “normal” as soon as possible.

## **GROUP NEWS**

Two months ago, I was congratulating us all as 48 groups were active: now it is 84 (and I have not typed the numbers the wrong way round!). These can all be viewed on Beacon, via the Richmond U3A website. This is being written in mid-September and the news is full of tighter restrictions around the country, the Rule of 6 has come into force and we are bracing ourselves for a long winter. Group leaders are nonetheless keen to resume their meetings,

whether indoors or out and I am very pleased to see so many making determined efforts to continue, even with all the risk assessments which now have to be considered.

Of course, some groups just cannot meet at the moment, but many of these are maintaining contact with their members in various ways. Every member has to make his or her own judgement about whether to meet inside – we are all adults and have different responses and anxieties.

I am delighted to report that a new group has started, even under these conditions. Spanish Conversation 2 has started via Zoom, on Wednesdays, kindly hosted by Jan Singh (jan.singh2002@gmail.com). Language groups are usually over-subscribed, Jan realised this and so put herself forward to start this. Thank you.

I have had a request about a Beginners' French Group so if anyone wants to share their knowledge-or lack of it – I am sure that there are a number of our members who would be happy to join in. Stay safe and keep in touch.

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

## **ON BEING A SECTION LEADER**

*AKA ONE OF SUE'S RUMS*

When I joined the Richmond U3A my primary aim was to meet some like-minded people and make some local friends as most of my long-term friends had moved away from the immediate area.

At the New Members' Lunch, I met a few of the committee members, including Sue Wood, the Secretary. At that point I had not yet joined any of the groups, but as a retired Chartered Accountant I thought I might be able to help with any office or admin duties, so I volunteered my assistance. Sue invited me for coffee a week or so later and asked me if I would be willing to take over the position of Section Leader which was vacant and which involved some admin tasks relating to a section of the groups and helping any potential group leaders with setting up new groups.

Groups are now divided into four Sections and I am responsible for the Section that covers Drama, Literature, History and Philosophy under our Group Co-Ordinator, Norma Cook. I am asked to send out various emails to the Group Leaders and to remind them at intervals of the U3A rules and regulations relating to the hiring of rooms, keeping of registers for insurance purposes etc, and more recently, some notes about the introduction of the new Beacon system which is now being used for recording membership and group details and should make communications within our organisation much easier.

Being a Section Leader, and one of Sue's RUMs (Really Useful Members) has given me the opportunity to engage with more people and to feel that I am doing something helpful. I have not yet met all of the Group Leaders in my Section in person but hope to do so in time – Covid-19 permitting. Let's hope that won't be holding us back for too long and that we will soon be returning to normal, or at least a "new normal" where we are again allowed to meet together.

**Carole Fletcher.**

## WATER COLOURS IN KEW GARDEN

Soon after lunch when I arrived at Kew Gardens there were dark grey clouds floating in the sky, but the sun's rays streamed through the clouds brightly.



I wandered through the luscious greenery and flowers beds and finally found a bench to sit to sketch and paint.



After sketching for half an hour, I moved on, taking photographs of various colourful flower beds in the gardens.





The colours were from deep yellow marigolds to baby pink roses. There were tall yellow thin stemmed grasses which added highlight to flower beds.

There were also tall purple Allium gladiators which were standing up boldly embracing the sunlight.

The temperate house was a very worthwhile visit where tall sap-green palm trees with long thin pointed fan-like leaves, grew abundantly.



Soon it began to rain so I slipped into the coffee shop and then visited the gift shop where there were a variety of gifts to be bought as souvenirs.



I sat by a bench and watched the geese wander around looking for crumbs of food.



I enjoyed my visit and look forward to my next visit where I hope to venture over to the Japanese garden and other green houses.

**Pramila Muthiah**  
**Group Leader of our Art – Watercolours Group**

## MEETING HER MOTHER

Martin was walking slowly down the road with Lucy, his latest girlfriend. They had only been going around together for a few weeks, but already she had invited him home to meet her mother, and he was getting a bit nervous. This sounded serious. Maybe Lucy thought he was The One? Martin was besotted with Lucy's charm and sense of fun and felt pretty certain that they were soulmates – they had so much in common. She even liked football and supported his favourite team. Some days he thought he could swim deep rivers and fight duels for her. And maybe she was The One for him, but she didn't half talk a lot. Well, he would have to get used to that.

Lucy knew that she was talking too much, but she always did that when she was anxious. She was head over heels in love with Martin and kept stealing sideways glances at his lovely smile and his floppy blonde hair. She couldn't imagine wanting to be with anyone else, but what would he think about her mother? Lucy did love her mum and knew that her brusque and bad-tempered appearance masked a kind heart, but it could be a bit off-putting till you got to know her better. It had just been Lucy and her mum at home since her father had walked out two years earlier. She would need to explain that to Martin too.

Martin wasn't familiar with the area where Lucy lived, so she was able to introduce a couple of extra turnings into the route home, so as to prolong the delightful moments of having Martin to herself, and postpone the inevitable meeting with her mother.

Finally, there were no further detours to take. There was no putting it off any longer, and they turned into Lucy's road. Lucy's heart sank as she saw her mother standing at the garden gate looking grim.

'Where have you been?' she demanded crossly. 'I was expecting you fifteen minutes ago. I'm not just here to wait on you, you know.'

She turned back to the house, and the two six-year-olds meekly followed her indoors.

**Gillian Wetherall.** Writing for Pleasure, April 2020

## **JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

Our next edition will be due in January 2021 so in order to get it edited and prepared for the printer in time and allow everyone to enjoy their Christmas preparations could you please let me have any items for inclusion by November 20<sup>th</sup>. This is your newsletter so please use it. I am especially keen to have offerings for the new series of "I Can't Wait to Share This" so please get scribbling."

# CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS

A ditloid is a type of puzzle, in which a phrase is deduced from the number and abbreviated letters in the clue. I am reliably informed that the name derives from the clue

1= DitLoID – 1 Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.

An easier example would be: 7 D S = 7 Deadly Sins

The quiz begins with easier clues and ends with a more difficult one – though, of course, that depends on which ones you can do.

Answers in the next edition – but if you can't wait that long, do email me on [norma.beagle@gmail.com](mailto:norma.beagle@gmail.com) and I *may* send you the answers!

1. 3 BM
2. 10 Y in a D
3. 12 D of C
4. 36 I in a Y
5. 147 MB in S
6. 7 H of R
7. 15 M on a DMC
8. 20 Q in a R
9. 39 B of the OT
10. 64 S on a CB

11. 4 F on a P
12. 6 B in an O in C
13. 36 BK on a P
14. 168 H in a W
15. 225 S on a SB
16. 206 B in a HB
17. 118 E in the PT
18. 220 C in a P of G
19. 40 P in a F
20. 15 L in a N

**Norma Cook.**

## **I CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE THIS**

1. The Plainsong Trilogy by Kent Haruf

Plainsong: Eventide: Benediction

Wonderful books set in a small town in Colorado, where not a lot happens but they are beautifully written and observed. If you haven't read anything by this author, try them. I was entranced. One reviewer called them understated novels of small-town life.

## 2. Days without End by Sebastian Barry

A novel set in America in the 1850s about a young man who fled the Irish Famine, joined the US army, fought the Indians and eventually was in the Civil War – but it is much, much more than that. I cannot describe just how poignant it is about Thomas McNulty's life and the people he loves amid the most appalling horrors. Sounds terrible but I assure you it is an amazing read!

## **Norma Cook.**

3. You will remember I wrote a blog daily about my scarves for 100 days during lockdown, which I scaled back to a weekly edition (featured in the June newsletter). The blog was picked up by the New York Times and they published this article on me and the blog yesterday. It has gone viral and yesterday's blog got 2684 hits to date.

Your Meeter and Greeter has a new role.

## **Hazell Jacobs.**

The website for the blog is [www.busybeehazell.com](http://www.busybeehazell.com) and the link to the news story in the NYTimes is:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/27/us/lockdown-blogger-finds-an-audience-covid-quarantine-scarf-aid.html>

Since then Hazell has also featured in an article in the Sunday Telegraph of 5th October.

4. War Doctor by David Nott. Pan Macmillan. 2020.

'I have travelled the world in search of trouble...' The opening line from the biography of an extraordinary individual; a humanitarian and thrill seeker in equal parts who travels to the most dangerous places, performs miracles of surgery, often under fire or danger of kidnap. Known as the 'Welsh Indiana Jones,' David Nott is not only a qualified and experienced Surgeon, he is also a qualified pilot!

Although a bit gruesome in parts, this is a moving, honest and inspiring story.

**Janet Daniel.**

5. On a recent trip to Cornwall I'd read in my Cornwall Guide book about a lovely café in Looe called The Island View Café. It's perched on a hill amongst residential houses and guest houses and bang opposite St. George's Island which is commonly referred to as Looe Island. According to local legend, Joseph of Aramithea landed here with the Christ Child.



This café is perfect to visit on a sunny day as there is ample outdoor



seating with turquoise benches and pink sun umbrellas and of course, the island view. The afternoon we arrived was after a morning of torrential showers. The sun had eventually broken through, the rain had ceased, and blue skies were replacing cloud cover.

We ordered a savoury cream tea for a change. What a delight. The lightest cheese and rosemary scones were served with Cornish Yarg, homemade apple and thyme chutney, pickled onions and a salad garnish. It was simply mouth-watering. The homemade cakes looked so appetising that even my husband, who usually has no interest in such sugary temptations, remarked on their appeal. So, if you're ever near Looe in Cornwall on a pleasant day call in to the Island View Café – you won't be disappointed.

**Mandy Maynard.**

*This is a new series which I would invite members to make their own. If there is something which you feel excited about, perhaps a book, film, piece of art, music, or even a household gadget, etc., and would like to share your enthusiasm then this is the place for it.*

## **GARDEN FEAST**

After a morning's hard work, the vegetable beds were looking very promising. Two rows of Brussels sprout seedlings, four rows of spinach beet (the perpetual kind, which should 'cut and come again' all through the winter), two rows of kale and a random scattering of spindly dwarf bean plants. Separate to the beds, there were also two potato planters and three tomato plants in large clay pots.

The gardener regarded this potential bounty thoughtfully. As in previous years, she had raised some spare seedlings on windowsills indoors, as she anticipated losing a few of her precious plants to snails. She had no intention of introducing those poisonous blue pellets into the food chain, as she knew they could harm birds as



well as any other wildlife that visited her garden. She didn't really like killing snails by any other means either, so she relied on removing them manually and relocating them to an unfrequented and overgrown alleyway adjacent to her garden. From there, of course, they made their way straight back over the fence again. The gardener knew this perfectly well, but lived in hope that by the time they came back, the plants would be strong enough to withstand the onslaught. A clear example of the triumph of hope over experience.

The clay pots were snail proof, she thought, as they were perched on a rickety construction made out of the metal struts from an old mini greenhouse. Maybe she could surround the other tender seedlings with broken flowerpots, which surely the snails would prefer not to slide over. After another hour's labour, each plant was surrounded with a collar of flowerpot shards, and the vegetable beds looked as if an ancient Roman pavement had just been discovered. The gardener went indoors for lunch.

From his hiding place under the rim of one of the clay pots, Snail was aware that, somewhere in the vicinity, some fresh green shoots were urgently requiring his attention. He knew better than to venture out in the heat of the sun. His feeding time would come in the dampness of the evening.

That evening brought a cool shower of rain. Snail had no difficulty crawling down from the tomato pot and into the vegetable bed. The flowerpot shards weren't much of an obstacle now they were wet, and soon he was grazing on the tasty greenery.

Sometimes, just for a change, Snail would nibble part way through a stem – just enough to make the plant keel over slightly but without killing it. The next morning the gardener would inspect the

plant, exclaim in sorrow over the injury, and build a little framework of twigs around the stem to hold it upright again. A few hours later, Snail would move in for the kill and chew right through the stem.

Despite all this, the gardener persisted, and most years did manage to cultivate enough vegetables to last her through the winter. This live-and-let-live approach also satisfied the other wildlife in the garden, and birds, butterflies and even the occasional hedgehog were welcome there.

The death blow, when it came, was not from the heel of a boot or a garden implement. Snail was seized and battered mercilessly against the garden path until his shell detached and his soft body was swallowed by a blackbird. He felt no pain as he travelled down the bird's gullet, and had he been capable of rational thought, he would have experienced a quiet satisfaction that hundreds, maybe thousands, of his kith and kin were scattered all over the garden, and would continue to flourish for as long as the garden existed.

**Gillian Wetherall.** (yes, I am the gardener)  
Writing for pleasure Group, June 2020

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

I read the article in the last edition of the Newsletter and thought you'd be interested to know about my experience. I've done about 9 MOOCs, most recently that on the British Army from Waterloo to the Rhine 1815-1945. It was very enjoyable and stimulating, not

least because it allows those in our age group to contribute the experience of those in our families.

I've also done courses on Irish History and Culture, The Causes of War, Archaeology, Ancient Rome, and Controversies of the British Empire. There's a lot out there!

**Steve Cobb.**

PS: I've just started a FutureLearn course on Introduction to Norwegian! It may prove a step too far.

Dear Editor

In the last U3A magazine we were asked whether any of us have enrolled on MOOCs. I'm in danger of becoming addicted to FutureLearn, being on my 7th course. I started with one on 'Genealogy & Family History' and moved on to 'Hadrian's Wall' after which it seemed a logical progression to 'Health & Wellbeing in the Ancient World'. 'Archaeology from dig to lab and beyond' followed, and then came 'Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology' which was fascinating, though rather harrowing in places. I've now gone down-market by studying 'Nutrition and Wellbeing.' 'Recreational Maths' was something of a diversion.

On the whole, I've found the course content to be good and relevant, though have been irritated on occasion by the manner of presentation by some of the lecturers.

**Muriel Sprott.**

## **RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS NOV 2020 – JAN 2021**

***Due to Government regulations and for Public Safety, we are unable to continue our face to face meetings. However, we are going to hold the first of at least three virtual meetings via ZOOM, starting in November.***

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

### **25<sup>th</sup> Nov: Diane Burstein – The Hidden East End**

Diane has 20 years' experience working as a London Blue Badge Tour Guide.

*Members will be sent an email "invitation" on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, and you will just need to click on the given link to join in on the 25<sup>th</sup> and enjoy the talk in the safety of your own home.*

*We have also arranged meetings for December and January on Zoom and "invitations to join" will be sent out at the appropriate time.*

### **16<sup>th</sup> Dec: Georgina Lock – Lady in a Veil**

Georgina's subject is Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, 1689 to 1762, writer and wife of the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, who was responsible for the introduction of smallpox inoculation in 1720.

### **27<sup>th</sup> Jan: Dr Jackie Bell – Becoming an Astronaut**

Jackie was chosen from over 3,500 applicants on the BBC series Astronauts: Do You have what it Takes? to undertake tests used to select astronauts at space agencies around the world.