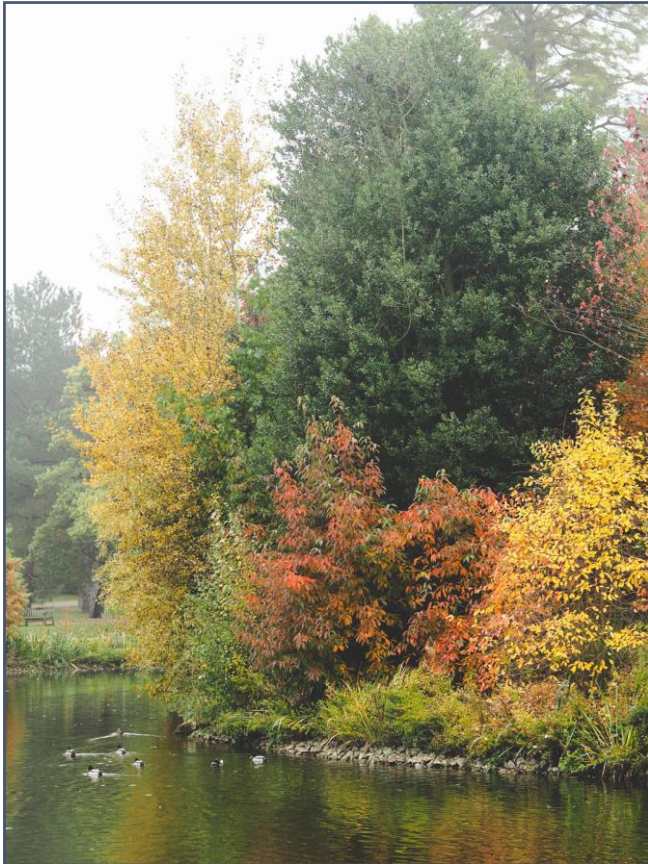


**RICHMOND-upon-THAMES**



**University of the Third Age**

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



**Newsletter October 2021, Volume 61**

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Front cover – Kew Gardens – copyright: “Little Miss Katy”.

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

## **OFFICERS:**

**President:** Stephen Jakobi

**Chairman:** Chris Barclay

**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

Bob Litherland

## **SECTION LEADERS:**

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

**Languages:** Norma Cook

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

**Recreation:** Tricia Abrahamsen

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

There are morning people who wake early but fall asleep watching TV after supper (like me), and evening people who keep going late into the night. Perhaps there are also spring people, who love the longer, warmer days and autumn people, who like the time of year when it gets cold. I am an autumn person because I associate this time of year with the start of new activities. My favourite poem since I was a teenager has been Keats' Ode to Autumn. The best plant in our garden? - Autumn Joy, which was planted more than 30 years ago and is now looking better than ever, giving us a large patch of deep red colour.

So, what does this autumn offer? We are all hugely grateful to our members for renewing their U3A subscriptions and to group leaders for adapting groups to the new situation. We are not back to normal, of course, and Clarendon Hall remains closed. However, the Group Leaders' lunch went ahead in St Luke's in Kew, as it used to do every year before Covid.

The new prospectus shows a huge range of groups. Some of them meet in ETNA or in people's homes but many remain online, especially on zoom. Some people actually prefer zoom groups because you do not have to travel to get there, but most of us like meeting face-to-face, when we can. Outdoor activities are possible, even in the winter, but a spell of bad weather can restrict them, as I well know from leading a walking group. The important thing is that together we have managed to keep going through lockdown and we will be here to offer more activities as they become possible. We hope there will be more face-to-face meetings and groups in well ventilated rooms. We hope there will be coach trips as soon as people feel ready for them. So, thanks to everybody.

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

# EDITORS LETTER

Dear Members,

This is the last of the “extra” two-monthly newsletters I have been sending during the Covid pandemic and now we are gradually learning how to return to what passes as normal life but probably with some differences, possibly in our perspectives as well as in external activities.

Personally, I am very much aware of the things I should have done but have failed to do – I have not sorted out even one of my cupboards or drawers, I have not learned a new language or other type of skill such as crochet, golf, painting, or pottery. I have not re-read all the books on my shelves or arranged them in alphabetical order. I have positively hated Zoom. I have not exercised excessively. And the house has not benefitted from an excess of cleaning.

So how have I passed the time? Well, I have done a lot of Ultimate Killer Su Doku puzzles, my excuse being that I had to keep my brain



in gear. Have cooked a lot of new recipes and drunk a lot of wine with the results. Have kept in touch with my ever-



increasing family. And restarted making Hickman line bags for the children at Royal Marsden Hospital. And even made a new cushion using bargello embroidery. Not a great deal to show for two years.

I have enjoyed my garden, especially now I have Martin to do the heavy work. It's only small but still seems very demanding. But it has been a real joy this year and we have eaten out in the evenings as often as possible.

We have also enjoyed the antics of the bird life in the garden, often laughing out loud at their posturing or their flirtations or feuds. Recently we had a young robin, still fluffy round the edges and whose tail had not reached maturity, so inevitably we called him Stumpy. He soon made himself at home in the garden and each morning when we opened the shutters, he would be sitting on the cage which protects the bird seed from the attentions of pigeons, parakeets and squirrels, and heaving a sigh that these humans were always so late getting up. Then there would be a stalemate while I explained to him that I couldn't put the food in the cage while he sat on top of it. No, he was not going to budge, so I finally had to give in and put it on the ground near the window. Alright he would grudgingly accept that and when he had had his breakfast, I would have to remember to put it inside the cage where he happily came to eat for the rest of the day. Score – Stumpy 1, Me nil.

Well, the Committee can now meet in person and groups are gradually restarting whenever possible. One change is that there will be four issues of the newsletter next year. So my search for interesting articles continues. If you feel you have a relevant photo in portrait mode which would look lovely on the cover please send it in and we'll have a look, or an interesting anecdote or an item for my fledgling ICWTST or a Group A-Z article please let me have a look.

I have enjoyed putting together the extra newsletters and trust they have been a source of interest to you.

**Regards, Sue Wood**

# GROUP NEWS

Dear Members,

Welcome back to all those who have just renewed their membership and welcome to all the new members who are joining us this year.

This is a reminder to everyone that the Richmond u3a only exists because members are willing to offer to run a group. It does not need to be an onerous task and the administration can be shared; you could offer your expertise or interest to run a group but someone else could do the (minimal) administration and other members could host the meetings in turn or you could hold your meeting in a local pub, cafe or library, for example. Meetings do not have to be weekly - in fact most are monthly – so they do not come round too quickly. You do not need to be an expert to start a group; there is plenty of help available both locally and nationally.

Language groups are always over-subscribed but you do not need to be bi-lingual to start a group; book groups are very popular – what about one devoted to crime writers? Bridge groups and Cryptic crossword groups are thriving - why don't we have a chess group or one devoted to games of all kinds? Or what about a craft or sewing group? With the big climate conference in Glasgow in November why not start a group about environmental matters?

Contact one of the section leaders with your suggestions, which are always interesting and imaginative. They will advise you on how to advertise your group, and help you get started.

Arts and Science: Graham Shortell:  
[graham.shortell@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:graham.shortell@blueyonder.co.uk)

History, Philosophy, Drama, Literature: Carole Fletcher:  
[carofletch@aol.com](mailto:carofletch@aol.com)

Languages and Group Co-ordinator: Norma Cook:  
[norma.beagle@gmail.com](mailto:norma.beagle@gmail.com)

Recreation and Sport: Tricia Abrahamsen:  
[tricia.abr@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:tricia.abr@blueyonder.co.uk)

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

## **GROUPS A–Z**

### **BOOK GROUP**

The 'Literary Group', which I joined four years ago, is well established and our tastes, I should say, could be described as 'eclectic' . We read a mixture of Classical Novels (revisiting many novels previously read) and Modern Novels and also from time to time Biographies.

Over the last two years we have read and discussed some of the following books: Silas Marner by George Eliot; French Man's Creek by Daphne du Maurier; Tom Jones by Henry Fielding; The Great Gatsby by F Scot Fitzgerald; Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell; Vanity Fair by William Thackeray; Any Human Heart by William Boyd and the list could go on and on, .... also, occasionally, we read a Shakespeare Play.

During the Lockdown we continued to meet on Zoom. We have recently returned to meeting twice a month, hosted by Brian & Joan King and complete with coffee and biscuits. We may take three meetings to discuss one book. Discussion time can be flexible,



everyone's opinions are valued, and we all appreciate the various insights given which enrich our understanding of the Book in question.

We would welcome more members and our Contact is Robert Bean who can be reached on [rbean@freeolamail.com](mailto:rbean@freeolamail.com)

**Gillian Bean.**

## **GROUPS A–Z**

### **FIX IT**

(Because Covid rules OK so this means no meetings)

Share hints and tips on how to "Fix It Remotely!"

Think you can't?

Think again.

Now we've got a Right-to-Repair.

Whoopee!

So let's not waste it (pardon the pun)

Let's make the most of it before we sink under a tide of defunct junk.

Those of you who enjoy retail therapy read no further...

Call **Dave** on email [dhecoles@gmail.com](mailto:dhecoles@gmail.com)

# **GROUPS A–Z**

## **HISTORY**

Originally a Group who met to listen to a Professor lecturing on a specific period of history. A very clever man. Brilliant lectures.

When he was too old to come to talk to us, we had to work out how the group would survive and carry on.

The answer came for everyone in turn to research a topic of interest to them and to talk about it.

I never knew that the Peasant's Revolt extended up to Yorkshire and not just Kent and Essex. I never knew that there were two payments of the Poll Tax, with the revolt starting when the third much higher payment was demanded. I never knew the young King Richard II was nearly deposed. And so on.

It is this finding out which makes delving into history topics so interesting. And everybody has different interests, different topics. Not just dates and battles, but thoughts and ideas.

Our group currently has some vacancies so do please contact me for further details.

**Bill Stevenson**, [billof23@gmail.com](mailto:billof23@gmail.com)

# **GROUPS A–Z**

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Do you find the thought of Philosophy to be a bit daunting? Well, think again! We try not to be too high brow in our attempts to answer some of the big questions in life; from ‘Am I really free?’ and ‘Can machines think?’ to ‘Why be good?’.

The second half of the session is less philosophical and more ‘thoughts and opinions’ about everyday issues; we are currently considering the 7 deadly sins and the 7 heavenly virtues.

If you feel like joining in the discussion in a fun, relaxed atmosphere then come and join us.

We meet fortnightly in ETNA in Rosslyn Road at 1030 - 1230. There is a £2 charge which goes to support ETNA in its wider charitable pursuits as well as providing us with an excellent room, free tea and coffee and delightful surrounds since its refurbishment.

If you are interested in coming along – even for a trial - let me know by e-mail: [chack@onetel.com](mailto:chack@onetel.com).

**Chris Hack**, Group Leader

## **ORGANISING SPEAKERS**

I think this is a peach of a job. All the others on the Committee work SO much harder. I don't have to go out and find speakers, rather they find me, or members give me recommendations.

My very limited IT skills are only a bit of a handicap. The lovely bit is making contact with often lovely, interesting people. I try to find a mix of subjects, hoping to draw in the many elusive members who never come but hey-ho, you can't please everyone. I also, importantly, try to find "good speakers". Occasionally, despite my best efforts, we get one who disappoints, with a wonderful subject poorly delivered, which is a pity.

I've been doing this job now for – can it be? – it must be getting on for 10 years! Have decided it's time for me to stand aside and let someone else have the fun of doing it! Please think about it and maybe have a chat with me about what precisely it entails.

**Peggy Roe, [pegroe33@gmail.com](mailto:pegroe33@gmail.com)**

## **MY LIFE IN TWO U3As**

I have inadvertently become another of Sue's RUMs as I have become a regular fixture at the desk at monthly meetings when they take place in the Clarendon Hall. I am a member of Richmond but my first allegiance is to Hitchin U3A where I am an ex-Chairman and now act as Speaker Secretary for their fortnightly meetings and I also run a technical group. I am also on the North Herts Regional

Committee where I prepare annual lists of speakers culled from about 30 of the member U3As.

Interestingly Richmond U3A and Hitchin U3A are very different animals. Hitchin is an old market town surrounded by outlying villages of varying sizes without much public transport. Getting to know this area I have been staggered, and even envious, of the constant flow of buses at the end of the road. However Hitchin U3A because of its location draws its 200 members mostly from Hitchin itself whereas Richmond has a much wider more densely populated catchment area. Richmond is surrounded by several large U3As, some of which it co-operates with having instigated the SW London Network. Whereas Hitchin's nearest U3A is 12 rural miles away.

But here's a strange conundrum, despite the difference in membership numbers (Hitchin 200 Richmond 1300) the number of members attending Hitchin's fortnightly meetings is the same as Richmond's attendance at their monthly meetings. Seems strange but it's not unusual. In general, the ratio of those attending always seems to fall as the membership increases despite there being no obvious reason. Richmond used to attract 100 members when it only had a membership of 450. It would be interesting to know why.

Of course, the basic concept is the same. Hitchin and Richmond both adhere to a ratio of about 1 group per 10 members. A committee of ten oversees its operation and members have similar responsibilities and concerns.

From my experience of attending several annual conferences I am aware that there is no such thing as a typical U3A and long may it continue thus as that is one of the strengths of the U3A that each

branch serves and reflects the nature of its members and the U3A is a bottom up organisation.

I am well aware that I am not the only Richmond member who also belongs to another U3A, but I have found it fascinating to belong to and compare two such diverse ones.

**Martin Alexander**

## **FELLOW TRAVELLERS – A NEW GROUP**

This group is essentially a travel club for members who wish to travel or take short trips, and sometimes find they do not have a suitable travel companion or as Americans say, “travel buddy” for that trip.

**Fellow Travellers** provides an opportunity to:

- Meet members interested in the same sort of trips which we want to do
- Get to know those members and have the time and opportunity to explore timings, budgets, activity levels etc, which are so important.
- Obtain up to date and relevant travel information from a professional travel agent without fee or obligation.

### **Monthly meetings**

Meetings will be once a month on the **second Thursday** of each month, 10.30 – 12.30 in the morning, at the **Richmond Library**

**Annexe**, Quadrant Road, Richmond, TW9 1DH. As at this date the first/launch meeting date is planned for 11th November 2021.

The group leader is Bryan Tully, [bryan.tully@btinternet.com](mailto:bryan.tully@btinternet.com)

020 8286 3228. A more detailed “**What’s it all about?**” digital document is available on request.

### **Travelling as a small group**

Some people prefer to travel in a small group but prefer that to be with people they have met before, and the group activities to be bespoke and designed for their special requirements, rather than as a standard package.

### **Evolution as a group**

There is far more to travel than just going on a trip. It turns out that imagination, planning, reminiscing and above all, sharing all these activities with others, is what builds beautiful and worthwhile memories for us to enjoy. Reading and sharing good travel writing contributes to this as well. The “**Wanderlust & Wisdom**” u3a group has compiled a growing bibliography of such writing which can enrich any discussion on this matter. Bryan will be happy to send a digital copy to anyone who would like it.

There are, obviously, many paths not yet taken.

**Bryan Tully**

## THE NUN'S OUTING

In the late 1960's, my father took up the post of Chief Medical Officer for an area in the north of Jamaica and went to live in a small town called Highgate. Highgate was very pleasant, up in the hills where the rainfall was plentiful and the weather cooler than on the coast. The vegetation was very lush; most houses boasted a hedge of red hibiscus flowers; bananas and cocoa grew well in the area. The nearby town of Richmond is a centre of chocolate production.

In those days there was one main road from the capital, Kingston, to the North Coast. The road to Highgate branched off from this and crossed a small stream before heading up the hill to the town.

One of the features of the town was a well-reputed girls' school, run by Franciscan nuns; the nuns, the various ministers of religion, teachers, doctor and other such persons were well known in the local community.

One December, approaching Christmas time, the nuns decided to go to Kingston for the weekend, to do some Christmas shopping and to visit friends. They duly set off in their little car, driven by the Mother Superior, a plump elderly lady of great dignity and gravitas, and three younger Sisters. After a successful shopping expedition and a pleasant time spent at the big convent in Kingston, they headed back to Highgate. It had been raining heavily for several days, so they were slightly anxious about the drive over the winding mountain road, but they had to be back for school on Monday.

The heavy tropical rain continued to pour; hundreds of tiny streams cascaded down the hillsides and in places the road was flooded. They said their prayers and pressed on.



A big country bus, packed with people coming back from a day in Kingston, was rumbling along in front of them. Eventually they came to the turn-off for Highgate, where they found with horror that the little stream had swollen to a torrent and swept away the bridge. The bus ploughed through and the nuns followed behind, but their small car was no match for the rushing water and immediately started to be swept downstream. The terrified nuns managed to push the doors open and tumbled out into the now chest-high river. They fought their way through the surging waters to the nearest refuge, a big jack-fruit tree that had previously stood on the banks of the stream. With difficulty, they clambered up into its branches and clung there, shivering. They watched their car disappear towards the flooded cane fields, along with a tide of broken branches, livestock and general debris.

Meanwhile, the people on the bus had been looking out and saw their plight. As the bus chugged up the hill, they debated how best to help; as soon as they reached the outskirts of the town, several young men rushed to the priest's house, yelling "Father, father, come quick! Four nun dem up inna jack fruit tree!" Father Murphy leaped from his chair and ran outside to his car. Five of the strongest and fittest men piled into the ancient Volvo and they all careered down the hill at the break-neck (for Fr Murphy) speed of 25 miles per hour. When they arrived at the edge of the river, they jumped out. The men stripped off their clothes and dived into the water to rescue the petrified nuns.

Later, after they were safely home, dry and comfortable, one of the younger nuns who had not been on the hair-raising adventure turned to the Mother Superior: "Mother", she said, "weren't you scared when those big naked men came to fetch you out of the tree?" "My dear", replied the old lady, "when I was up that tree, with the thunder and lightning and the lizards and frogs and

cockroaches running all over me, if the devil himself had held out his arms to me, I would have jumped into them without a second thought!”

## Julie Valentine

# I CAN'T WAIT TO SHARE THIS

I was amused to hear that one of our members wasn't sure what ICWTST stood for and looked it up on the internet, only to find out that it stood for the International Conference on Web Testing and Security? Sorry, it was just me being lazy. Did you realise it was supposed to be I Can't Wait to Share This?

### 1. *Film: The Courier*

WOW! You must see 'The Courier', a spy thriller based on a true story, starring Benedict Cumberbatch. Nail-biting suspense, brilliant acting and a total absence of special effects. A joy. I saw it in an almost-empty cinema and afterwards felt I wanted to grab people off the street and haul them in to see it !

## Peggy Roe

### 2. *Book: F. SCOT FITZGERALD'S The Great Gatsby*

The novel is set on Long Island, the holiday playground for affluent New Yorkers, the year being 1922. The protagonist is 'Jay Gatsby' a handsome American, 26 years old. It is the Jazz Age. Gatsby explodes onto the scene. No one knew who he was or from where he came. He was certainly wealthy having bought the largest of the

mansions. His generosity knew no bounds. Each weekend the windows of his mansion and driveway were blazing with electric lights, as an endless stream of partygoers drove up to the glittering spectacle to consume the never-ending caviar and expensive wines. Everyone was welcome, although no one seemed to know Gatsby personally. Rumours abounded: “He got his money from the Mob” – “No, from Drugs” – “He’s in high finance & takes calls from all over the world”- “He’s killed a man” – “He was a Major in the Great War and decorated for Valour” – “He went to Oxford and calls everyone “Old Sport””. In short, Gatsby was an enigma....

The narrator, Nick Carraway, living next door is also intrigued, and the two become socially linked through Nick’s beautiful, spoilt, cousin Daisy, married to wealthy Tom Buchanan. The prose is taut and succinct in keeping with the edgy, feverish atmosphere of the time. The drama plays out ... The last words should perhaps be left with Nick “...he was the best of them all.....” Why not read the book to see if you agree?

**Gillian Bean**

## **NEXT NEWSLETTER**

A big thank you to all the contributors to this issue. As editor I welcome all feedback, good or bad, otherwise I feel I am whistling in the dark in deciding what is of interest to members. So please if you feel strongly about something – let me know; if you enjoy your group and would like to tell us about it – let me know; if you have enjoyed a book, film, museum, or experience – let me know; if you don’t like the way Richmond U3A does things – let me know. Deadline for January issue – mid December please.”

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

## **RICHMOND U3A SPEAKERS NOV21 – FEB22**

*Until Richmond Council opens up Clarendon Hall, we will hold these meetings via Zoom. Members will be sent an email “invitation” to join prior to each meeting. We will try to give you ample warning of any change of venue. Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 14.30.*

### **24<sup>th</sup> Nov: Paul Leonard, Yvonne Hewitt – History of York House**

Yvonne and Paul have both been involved with the York House Society and Paul is current chairman. Their talk covers a brief history of York House and its fascinating owners and tells how YHS encouraged the Borough Council to save it for the benefit of local residents.

### **15<sup>th</sup> 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 royal family and see some of their most important works such as the Whitehall Palace ceiling paintings by Rubens and the propaganda paintings of Charles I by Van Dyke.

### **26<sup>th</sup> Jan: Paul Barwick – “White Mouse”– the Nancy Wake Story**

Paul Barwick served in the Police Service for 34 years, in uniform and later as an intelligence officer. His talk will reveal the true story of an Australian journalist married to a wealthy French industrialist who became known to the Germans as “The White Mouse”.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Feb: Bernard Lock–Social/Political Satire of Gilbert & Sullivan**

Apart from Sullivan’s exquisite music, Gilbert’s words are full of social comment and consideration. This is not just a wonderful reflection of Victorian society but equally applies to so much in our lives today.