

Romsey & District U3A



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



Newsletter – May 2019

Web site: romseyu3a.org.uk

Monthly Meeting Speakers

All meetings start at 10.30 am.

19 June **Graham Bryant**
Debunking the Apollo Hoax

17 July **Philippe Lanoé**
Discovering France with Asterix

Not only do the adventures of Asterix the Gaul tell you about the typical behaviour of the French, but they also tell you about the opinions of the French on other nations.'

21 August **Dave Allport**
Trafalgar

The story of the build-up to the battle and the aftermath, using l'Movie element, music and accounts from those at the battle.

18 September **Jenny Mallin**
A Grandmother's Legacy

A unique insight into the five generations of an Anglo-Indian family during the British Raj.

Chairman's report

This is rather a sad occasion for me because it is my last Chairman's Report after holding this post for 4 years. It has been a real privilege to be your Chairman and to see how our U3A has developed over this time. Certainly it has been a very challenging time for your committee with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations and the changes in the Charity Commission regulations. We have also changed our database to one called Beacon which was recommended by The Third Age Trust, our National Office. This involved a lot of preparatory work by your Membership Secretary, Brenda Sennett with the support of Carole Cox who acted as an advisor.



Our most difficult decision was to close our membership in May 2017 and to start a waiting list because of the increase in our numbers attending our Monthly meeting in the Crosfield Hall, reaching to the Fire Regulation limit of 300. Our membership was closed for a year but in that time a new and now successful second U3A was started in Romsey called Romsey Archway U3A. So something good came out of a difficult decision. During my time as Chairman, our membership has doubled and we now have over 800 members. The greatest pleasure I have had is to see the number of new groups formed and the way our members are leading and supporting them.

This is my final opportunity to thank certain members of our U3A. In saying this, every member is important in the running of our U3A. First of all a big thank you goes to **Brenda Sennett** and **Jean Stone** who have been extremely busy dealing with renewals of membership and putting the information on our Beacon database. If you haven't renewed yet then do so by the end of May otherwise your membership will lapse. It is also helpful if you let Brenda know if you are **NOT** renewing. A thank you goes to **Mike Koscian** our Beacon Administrator and **Carole Cox** who is shadowing his work.

Like me, **Janet Payne** is retiring this year as Treasurer after being

in the post for 4 years. Thank you Janet for all your hard work keeping our many accounts running smoothly. I would also like to thank **Ron Maidment** for his work on our number 3 account, which is a separate account for the Travel Group, Questers and the Theatre Group. This is a very busy account taking in and giving out quite large sums of money for visits, theatre and travel.

I am particularly indebted to **Janet Moody**, our secretary, who has been a tremendous support to me and the committee, producing excellent minutes of our committee meetings and keeping us in touch with the National Office, The Third Age Trust.

Ann Jackson has once again found us some excellent speakers for our monthly meetings, on a wide variety of subjects. She also organised our very successful Interest Day when Andrew Davies came again to speak on "Why Britain looks as it does". Ann has decided to step down from the committee and the work she has done over many years as Programme organiser. This means that we need a volunteer for this important role. I must thank **Chris Webster** who stepped in at the last moment while Ann was in hospital to fulfil this role for the time being.

Our Interest Group Coordinators, **Jo Morgan** and **Margaret Marchbank**, have worked hard to introduce us to new groups. They always welcome suggestions of ideas for new groups. I feel the Interest Groups are the life blood of our U3A, helping everyone to learn new things, contributing to others learning and to make new friends. I am sure you would like to join me in thanking them along with the leaders of our groups.

David Thwaites has been looking after our website and keeping it up to date. If you are an Interest Group leader then keep in touch with David and make sure your information is updated.

The rest of the committee, **Liz Holloway**, **Elaine Rockell**, **Chris Webster** and **Glenda Taylor** have all contributed tremendously to the running of our U3A. Thank you for your help. I am sure you would like to join in with me in thanking **Glenda Taylor** and the newsletter team for the work they do in producing an interesting newsletter, keeping us up to date with all the events organised by our U3A and dealing with its distribution. Thanks also go to **Mike**

Driscoll for sending out the newsletter by email.

Thank you to our “Meeters & Greeters”, organised by **Mary Greggains**, who have performed a very important role at our monthly meetings, welcoming everybody and making sure new visitors can find out about our U3A. As always, **Lois Dare** and **Margaret Eades** and their team of helpers have kept us well provided for with tea and coffee at our monthly meetings. Thanks must go to **Jo Morgan** and her team who have provided us with food and drink on our special occasions such as our Christmas meeting, Interest Day and our 20th Anniversary celebration.

Finally, I would like to thank **Roger Hunt** who is in charge of our technical support at the Crosfield Hall and also **Bob Wren** who makes sure that the halls are set up correctly for our monthly meetings.

May I close with a special thank you to **Ann Jackson** and **Chris Webster** who are retiring from our committee this year.

So many thank you's, but all have played their part in what I believe has been a good year for the group and a rewarding one for me personally.

I send my best wishes to you all and the new friends I have made through being Chairman.

Marion Fowler

News from around the Groups

Short Day Trips

February — St. Cross, Winchester

After a week of Spring-like weather it was rather disappointing to find that the day of our outing was chilly and grey; but the trip was not disappointing at all. We made an early coffee stop at **Brambridge Garden Centre** as we had had been advised that the café at **St. Cross** did not open until Easter.

St. Cross is the oldest surviving charitable institution in the U.K.,

where 25 brothers live under the care of the Master. On arrival at St. Cross we were met at the **Porter's Lodge** by Brother John, who gave us a potted history of the Hospital, which was founded in the 12th century by **Henry of Blois**, the then **Bishop of Winchester**. We were then led into the delightful garden which was already showing signs of Spring. Around the quadrangle were the almshouses, comfortable two storeyed dwellings of grey stone, each occupied by a Brother, who must be single, widowed or divorced and over 60 years of age. They are expected to wear their robes of office and to attend morning service at the church daily, but are otherwise free to come and go as they please.

The church itself dates from 1132 and is built of Caen stone with walls over a metre thick and a lead roof. On the floor there are still medieval encaustic tiles and so much more of interest to see. Indeed, such was the enthusiasm of Brother John for the history and stories of the church and its previous Masters (not all of whom behaved in a pious manner), that our leader had to contact the coach driver and ask him to drive around the block a couple of times to give us more time to listen!

A longer return visit would be most welcome in order to see the parts we did not have time to visit, and to partake of the **Wayfarer's Dole** - bread and ale - offered free to visitors (or pilgrims) on request.

Yvonne Goodridge

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March — The Watts Gallery, Guildford

On one of those lovely early spring days in March, we visited the **Watts Gallery** in Guildford. Most of us had not been there before and what a treat we had waiting for us. Originally built to display works by **G.F. Watts**, this was extended to incorporate works by his very talented wife **Mary** and now houses a vast collection of paintings and sculptures, both traditional and contemporary, spread over different galleries and the spectacular Watts Great Studio which was opened in 2015 following a major lottery funded revamp. A short walk down the lane leads to the

Watts Chapel which was designed by Mary Watts and built with the help of the local community - a breath-taking space which is a unique work of art in its own right. A wonderful place and well worth a second visit as it was impossible to take in everything on one day.

We then continued into **Guildford** where some people hit the shops whilst others stayed and enjoyed a relaxing lunch and a sit by the river.

Anne Scarborough

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April — Army Flying Museum

A 10am start and a leisurely drive via Salisbury took 44 of us to **Middle Wallop** for our visit to the newly refurbished and extended **Army Flying Museum**. The site is next door to the **Army Aviation Centre**, which trains helicopter pilots for all three UK services. This was a very active RAF fighter base from 1940. Sadly, there was no flying to be seen that morning, so we spent most of the time indoors.

The exhibits include displays covering the British Army's use of aerial observation and assault devices – ladders, kites, balloons, gliders, aircraft and helicopters — from pre First World War to today. It is a truly stunning collection highlighting the ingenuity and extreme bravery of those involved. The contribution of vast numbers of huge, flimsy gliders during the Second World War was a particular feature. There are also recreations of wartime British homes and of battlefield scenes after glider assaults. A sobering reminder of terrible times of fear and loss.

Afterwards, we travelled a few miles to **Weyhill** for lunch and shopping at **Rosebourne Garden Centre**. Then home again just after 4pm. This was an excellent, unusual day and the weather, though very windy, was mainly bright and dry!

John Scarborough

HAVE YOU SENT BACK YOUR RENEWAL FORM?

Please remember to send back your completed **Renewal Form** to the **Membership Secretary** by 31 May, even if you pay by standing order. Membership also need to know if you **change any of your contact details** in the year. You can let them know at a main meeting or by email, phone or post.

Bird Watching - Testwood Lakes

On the fine and sunny morning of 1 April, eight members of the Bird Watching group visited **Testwood Lakes**. Starting our walk we saw clouded yellow butterflies and heard plenty of bird song before passing through some woodland, where we saw tits, chaffinch, warblers and a **nuthatch**. On the way to the Hides, fast moving martins were seen hunting for a late breakfast.



Once inside the hide, we saw many sand martins not only feeding on the insects over the water, but investigating the **sand martin holes** in one of two artificial sandbanks built at Testwood Lakes, to encourage the birds to breed here.

The lovely day encouraged us to stay out so after a pub lunch we went to the screens and hide at the Lower Test site. We didn't add much to our list of 37 species, though had glimpses of a **blackcap** in a hedge. From the bridge crossing the Test we saw a kingfisher fly from its perch along the river.



All stages of interest in birds are welcomed in the group; we had a first time member with us on the day. **Sheila Holmes**

Photo credits: Nuthatch: Mike Driscoll; Blackcap: David Thwaites
Artificial nest site: ©The Sand Martin Trust 2015

Architecture & Local History

Our 2019 programme began when **Nan Keightley** gave a talk on the **Poor Laws of England**, which were introduced in the Tudor period and continued until the introduction of the Welfare State after WW2. The documents of the Poor Law are one of the gems of history, as they are where the poor take centre stage, telling their stories in their own words. Who could fail to sympathise with widow Joane Dolling, made pregnant by her employer, or Easter Kiley, who found herself elderly, destitute and homeless in Poole, an ocean away from her home in Newfoundland? This brief look at the way in which this country has treated, and mistreated, its poor might still have lessons for today.

Phoebe Merrick gave us an illustrated talk about **The Causeway and Sadlers Mill** in Romsey using some very interesting old photographs. Sadlers Mill formed part of the **Broadlands** estate after its purchase by **Lord Palmerston** in 1745 (great-grandfather of the Prime



Minister). Milling continued until the 20th century. The causeway is a private road with a public right of way. It was badly damaged in the 2014 floods. One of our group, **Mavis Sawdy**, followed Phoebe in explaining how she, with a number of like-minded residents, worked to stabilise the river bank by buying, filling specially made bags with gravel and soil, then stacking them along the bank following the curvature of the river. They were held in place by geo-matting. The audience were most appreciative of the vast amount of effort, not least in fund raising, that Mavis and her team had put into the project to preserve Romsey's beauty spot.

Simon Scott joined me for a talk entitled '**A Duty of Care**' which was based on a topic from our **railway volunteer project** commemorating the First World War. We explored Hampshire connections to the physical and spiritual care of the wounded as well as the recording of events and experiences. This took in

Melchet Court at Sherfield English and the work of **Sir Alfred and Lady Mond. Brockenhurst** was a big part of story with its care of Indian and New Zealand soldiers. **Netley hospital**, long a haven for wounded soldiers, was also covered. Finally, we featured the **Chaplaincy** and the establishment of **Talbot House (Toc H)** at **Poperinghe, near Ypres** (for rest and



recuperation of all ranks) in memory of **Lt Gilbert Talbot**, son of the then Bishop of Winchester. (*photo*: Chapel in Talbot House)

In April, we accepted an invitation to visit **Melchet Court**, where **Stephen Whelan**, Head of History, gave us an illustrated talk about the history of the house, built in the 19th century in the Elizabethan style. We saw photographs of the sumptuous rooms in its heyday and were shown round. The house stands in extensive grounds. It was used as a convalescent hospital during the First World War and requisitioned in the Second. The house is now **St**



Edward's school, run by the Catholic Church, for boys of secondary age with behavioural problems. Our members were very interested in the work of the school and left feeling privileged to have shared such a special morning.

We now look forward to further planned visits in the coming months.

Shirley Rogers
Group Coordinator



Interest Groups News

A new group has emerged from the Welcome Meeting held in January : **Italian for Novices**. It was started with the help and support of members of the Italian Improvers Group (run by Marjorie Blundell) and we would like to thank them for making it possible for this new group to get going.

Horticulture now has a new group coordinator: **Gillian Smith** and treasurer: **Linda Meyer** and we would like to thank them for taking on these roles.

If you have any suggestions for new groups, please see Jo or Margaret in the Annex or contact them as below:

Interest Group Coordination Team

Jo Morgan : 01794 514134

Margaret Marchbank : margaretmarchbank@btinternet.com

* **Newsletter Comment** *

* A huge **THANK YOU** this month goes to **Barbara Butcher**, your *
* copy contact from January 2018. She will continue, along with *
* Margaret Marchbank, to be a 'Post Lady' mailing out your *
* printed newsletters. We welcome Dave to our Newsletter team. *

* Please send **copy** for the **AUGUST** newsletter to: *

* **Dave Lovell : 01794 515316** *

* **news.copy@romseyu3a.org.uk** *

* The deadline is **Friday 26 July 2019** *

* **but please send any copy as soon as you have it!** *

* **All other queries regarding the newsletter should be sent** *
* **to the Newsletter Team at: romseyu3anews@gmail.com** *

* **Newsletter Team** *

Interest Day - March 23 2019

Why Britain looks as it does

with lecturer **Andrew Davies**

What a treat! This was our second Interest Day, and yet again a resounding success for the 50 or so who attended. We knew the lectures would be good because we had invited Andrew back from last year, when Ann Jackson had set us off on this journey by finding our speaker.

During the day we were treated to lively insights into the lives and works of three important English architects: **Sir Christopher Wren**, **Nicholas Hawksmoor** and **Augustus Pugin**. Andrew structured his presentations well; we saw plenty of wonderful buildings and their interiors, learned a lot, laughed a good deal and just about kept up! Each lecture was separated by a coffee/tea or lunch break and the catering was wonderfully organised by our U3A members, with the food both attractively presented and tasty.

Lecture 1 - Sir Christopher Wren

Wren lived for 91 years from 1632 to 1723. He was a workaholic and so accomplished a great deal. When he was a child, the family moved to Windsor when his father became Dean. The family were Royalists and during the Civil War, 1642-1651, their home was ransacked twice. Christopher was clearly very bright, and after three years at **Wadham College, Oxford**, he was chosen to be a fellow of **All Souls, Oxford**, a rare privilege. One of his great skills was that he got on with people. At Oxford he developed an interest in architecture, but his interests were broad and both science and astronomy interested him. At one point he is credited with doing a blood transfusion on a dog!

He spent the Plague year of 1665 in Paris. On returning he began to design buildings: chapels for **Pembroke** and **Emmanuel Colleges** in Cambridge and the **Sheldonian Theatre** in Oxford among them. His big chance came after the Fire of London in 1666. Not many people died but 80% of all the buildings were destroyed. Following

what he had seen in Paris, Wren submitted a grid plan for re-building, which was turned down. Ever the pragmatist, he gave way graciously, was appointed **Surveyor General**, and got on with what he could do. He had only wanted 19 churches, but 52 were re-built, 51 on the rubble of those destroyed. His main concern was that the congregation would be able to see and hear.

Wren's ability to get on with people is well illustrated by the fact that he worked with the same Master Builder and the same Plasterer for years. His model for **St Paul's Cathedral** was based on **St Peter's** in Rome. When this was turned down, it is said he burst into tears but, once again, he did not sulk. The final building is 80% of the model he submitted. Twenty-four Wren churches in London either survived, or were re-built after WW2. We had a look inside some of them, the most notable being **St Bride's Fleet Street**, now the journalist's church with its 'wedding-cake' spire; **St Clement Danes**, now the Central Church of the RAF; and **St Stephen Walbrook**, Wren's Parish church, which had the first dome in England and was most likely the prototype for St Paul's.

He also worked outside London: in **Salisbury Cathedral** his struts inside the spire prevented it from falling down; he was also responsible for **Lincoln Cathedral Library**; had a hand in **Belton House** in **Grantham**; **Christ Church Tom Tower** in Oxford; **Trinity College Library** in **Cambridge**; the **Royal Hospital, Chelsea** and **Hampton Court Palace**, along with many others.

Buried in the crypt of St Paul's, his simple Latin dedication says:
"Reader, if you seek his monument - look around you."

Lecture 2 - Nicholas Hawksmoor

He lived from 1661 to 1736 and his family were farmers. Although not as well-known as Wren, he had a profound impact on the built environment of England. He often worked with Wren, and there is a story that Wren taught Hawksmoor to read and write. The orangery at **Kensington Palace** is probably his first notable piece of work and he was involved in the **Royal Naval Hospital** at Greenwich. A

General Election in 1711 returned a High Church Tory Government which set out to build new churches on what were then green-field sites. Twelve were built and these buildings are large and symmetrical. Seven by Hawksmoor survive today, albeit that a lot of money has been spent on refurbishment post WW2. **Christ Church, Spitalfields** had an £8 million lottery grant in recent years; **St Luke's, Old Street** is now the rehearsal rooms for the London Symphony Orchestra.

Hawksmoor was perhaps Britain's first town planner; much of the centre of **Oxford** was laid out to his design. He did a lot of work in the **Clarendon Building, Worcester College**, and on the impressive entrance to **Queen's College, High Street**.

Perhaps his most famous work was in stately homes. With **Sir John Vanbrugh**, he is responsible for **Castle Howard**. Vanbrugh was the dreamer, but Hawksmoor got the job done. He is famous for elegant Palladian style entrances, with few embellishments. **Blenheim Palace** is a Hawksmoor gem, and **Holkham Hall** in Norfolk and **Chiswick House** owe much to his influence. The twin **Towers of Westminster Abbey** are a Hawksmoor trade mark. A Canaletto painting, done just 20 years after they were first built, celebrates these towers.

Like Wren, Hawksmoor was a very private man. His tomb is something of a mystery. The church where he was buried was deconsecrated and his tombstone is now in the grounds of a private home, possibly owned by a Russian tycoon!

Lecture 3 - Augustus Pugin

Pugin lived for just 40 years, from 1812 to 1852 but influenced a whole generation of other architects. His father was French and his mother came from the **Welby** family in Lincolnshire. Augustus was a child prodigy, involved in furniture and theatre set design. For a number of years he was in **Salisbury**, where he obtained his first architectural commission and built his first house - **St Marie's Grange** in **Alderbury** - as well as **St Osmund's** Roman Catholic church in Exeter Street. In 1836 he published his

seminal work **Contrasts**; his architectural manifesto. By then he had become a Roman Catholic and saw architecture as a moral force. He contrasted hideous slum building with the simple beauty and elegance of **medieval Gothic Architecture**, and had a major influence on the style and theory of the C19 **Gothic Revival**. He loved stained glass and decorated tiles.

Catholicism and Gothic architecture became his over-riding passions; **Alton Towers** is his work, built, as often, for an impoverished Catholic. He completed over 50 commissions, including churches, rectories and houses, which was a phenomenal work rate in a short life. When the **Crystal Palace** was built, he disliked the modernity and placed a **Medieval Court** within it for the Great Exhibition. He was very involved with the building of the **Houses of Parliament**. The clock tower, now the **Elizabeth Tower** which houses **Big Ben**, is pure Pugin, as is **the interior of the House of Lords**.

George Gilbert Scott was the designer of the **Albert Memorial** but it has a strong Pugin influence. There are other Pugin gems, mainly churches, in **Ireland** and as far afield as **Australia**.

Pugin's private life was deeply unhappy. He had three wives, two of whom died young, a number of mistresses, and 8 or 9 children. It is thought he contracted syphilis in his late teens and was often deranged, spending time in a mental asylum. In 1852 he suffered a total breakdown and was confined, including some time in the **Royal Bethlem Hospital**, before his third wife could finally move him to his home **The Grange**, in Ramsgate. He died soon after and was buried in **St Augustine's** church next door, built and largely funded by him, and dedicated to the Saint he thought he was named after.

Over two centuries, these three English architects had enormous influence on the structural design of their time and shaping our city landscapes. We are fortunate to be able to still visit and admire a large number of these important buildings today.

Pat Batchelor

News from around the Groups continued

Digital Photography Group

You Are Probably A Photographer

Nowadays, most people have a smart phone, all of which include a camera, a very good camera. If you have a smart phone you then also carry your camera with you most of the time - and the best camera is the one you have with you.

'Cameras are so clever now all you need to do is point the camera and press the button'. Well not exactly; you do not have to worry about the technical stuff, but you do need to consider the creative part.

Creativity is principally one of composition and imagination. Three principal points will set you on the way. These are:

- a) Put yourself in the right position
- b) Arrange your subject
- c) Watch the background

You set up your photograph using the phone screen in camera mode. It provides all the control that you have. Firstly, turn on the screen grid. Go into Settings, Camera and turn on screen grid. This places four lines on the screen to divide the screen into nine parts.



It is best to place key points of the view onto these lines when composing the image. Place the horizon on either the top or lower horizontal line and a key vertical on one of the vertical lines. This may be a tree or building edge or a person. The four points where the lines cross are called power points and are good places to place a person's nearest eye. In photographic parlance, this is known as the Rule of Thirds. There are times when you can break this "rule" but you should do so deliberately and not accidentally.

Before you press the button, place yourself in the right place. Only you can judge where that is by looking at the screen to get the best balanced picture. Move closer or further away, move left or right, even move up or down. Sometimes, you need to move to a different time! The position of the sun and hence the light may need to be different so you will have to wait. A slight change, a few steps, can make an enormous difference, wait for people to move away or into your shot or wait for the sun to emerge from behind a cloud.

Arranging your subject is not straightforward. You will probably have to move, not the subject. If you are photographing someone, you may be able to direct them to assume a certain position or pose. The key thing to observe is that the subject is facing into the centre of the frame and not out of it, ideally, looking from left to right as that is the direction we normally read in the west. Try not to have a person in centre frame looking directly at you. A three-quarter stance with the head turned towards to camera and the person on the left vertical third-line looks much better and more natural. This is just guidance. You need to make judgements.

If you are photographing a particular point of interest, such as a person, always look at the background. It is easy to overlook it and get a nasty surprise. You do not want your subject to merge into a background of similar colour or texture. Complementary colours will make someone stand out. For example, someone in red clothes will stand out from a green hedge. Watch out for background items sticking out of someone's body. It might be less obvious than a lamp post. If you can, keep your subject a short distance from a background such as a wall. Intruders can creep into the frame.

Wait for them to move. If someone moves into frame as you press the button, delete the frame and try again. Cars have a nasty habit of doing this!

After you have taken your photograph, you may feel that you would like to tweak your picture to improve it. This is all rather subjective as you should have a decent image but improvements can normally be achieved. This is called post-processing and is quite easy. All you need is an appropriate app on your phone. There are many free ones available in your app store. I would suggest one called Snapseed. It will do all you will need and is easy to use.

It will allow you to adjust the brightness of the picture, alter contrast and colour or write a caption on your picture. One tool you really should try is the crop tool. It allows you to trim the picture a little or a lot. Many pictures will benefit from this. The crop tool allows this. Snapseed has a rotate feature so that you can straighten up wonky horizons. These are very common as it is quite hard to hold your phone level when taking a photograph. A sloping horizon in a seascape stands out like a sore thumb!

Who knows, before long you will start to take photographs for their own sake and you will be looking at better cameras in the shops!

Malcolm Heathcote



April bluebells in Farley Mount Country Park,
enjoyed by some U3A Strollers. *Photo credit:* Shirley Rogers

Wine Appreciation

News Update from the Wine Group

The wine group continues to flourish with a full membership of 25, although with a few changes in our group over the year. We have a full schedule planned for the year with the first few months covering **Merlot, Rioja, and Sparkling Wine**, all led by the members.

Our February meeting fell on the 14th so the theme for the evening had to be **Wine with Chocolate**, which was very interesting.



August will be another outdoor event with an importer of **Spanish wines** coming along with an assortment of wines, and explanations along with Tapas.

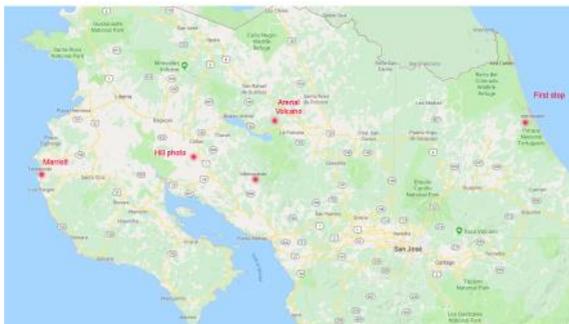
We do have a waiting list so if you are interested or would like to know more please get in touch.

Derek Morley

Birding in the sun

Blue skies, sea, warm sun and a proliferation of colourful birds, of the feathered variety I hasten to add. February this year drew my wife Barbara and myself to **Central America** to the wild life haven of **Costa Rica**, a destination on our list of places to visit.

Sandwiched between Nicaragua in the north and Panama to the south, Costa Rica is approximately eleven hours flying time non-stop and six hours behind the UK.



On arrival, our party of forty Brits were picked up at the airport in San Jose by our guide and whisked off to our overnight stop at a Crowne Plaza hotel.

Over the next eleven days we explored the vast network of rivers in the rain forests of the **Tortuguero National Park** on the Caribbean coast, with its abundance of birds, reptiles and mammals. We were woken to a dawn chorus of howler monkeys and the more mellow tones of local birds.



Broad-billed Motmot



Blue-capped Motmot



Summer Tanager

In October the area is the breeding ground for various varieties of turtles.



We retraced part of our journey back to Costa Rica's youngest volcano, **Arenal** on the outskirts of the town of **La Fortuna** in the Central region. The area is rich in bird life, many of which visited us for breakfast! I was treated to a birthday present of a bird watching tour at 6am at a local reserve. Our guides were very knowledgeable and I swear had eyes like a hawk, as we were able to record over fifty different varieties.

Heading south-west we moved in to the **Cloud forests of Monteverde** situated on the west side of a central mountain range. Here we encountered numerous species of plants as we looked down on the forest floor from the labyrinth of suspended walkways.



Our final destination was north-west on the Pacific coast in the region of **Guanacaste**, to a five star Marriott resort situated on the beach. Here we were entertained by numerous sea birds and a sighting of tracks made in the night by leatherback sea turtles.

As a keen wildlife photographer it was a dream come true and I am still editing the results of my work through the viewfinder.



Rufous-tailed humming birds



Mike Driscoll