A watercolor painting of two trees with dark, slender trunks and branches. The foliage is rendered in warm autumnal tones, including shades of yellow, orange, and brown, with some darker spots scattered throughout. The background is a mix of white and light brown washes, creating a misty or ethereal atmosphere. The overall style is soft and painterly.

Palmers Green & Southgate u3a

# YOUR u3a MAGAZINE

“SEASON OF MISTS AND  
MELLOW FRUITFULNESS”

Autumn 2024

## Message from the Chair - Val Girling



It's hard to believe that the summer is almost over. The air is definitely full of autumnal smells.

It is also the time of year when, as Chair, I look back over the previous year in order to prepare my report for the upcoming AGM.

I set out, three years ago, with the goal of increasing our membership from 385 to 500 by the time I completed three years in office. I am pleased to tell you we reached that goal this summer due, in no small part, to our members telling their friends, family and neighbours about us. They have realized that joining our u3a gives them opportunities to learn new things, go to new places and make new friends. Please continue to encourage them to give us a try by attending a Monthly Meeting, visiting an interest group or by attending a Welcome Tea where new and prospective members learn more about what we offer.

The next occasion for meeting old friends and welcoming new will be a seasonal afternoon tea party on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2.00-4.30pm in the lovely community hall of Christ the King Church, where we had such a wonderful time at the 10th anniversary celebration. We encourage you to bring as many prospective members as you can. In addition to cake, mince pies, mulled wine, tea and coffee there will be a slot in the afternoon for a seasonal karaoke sing-along for those who want to join in. The occasion will be free but there will be an opportunity to donate, to offset some of the expenses of the event. We hope many of you will join us and get the festive season off to a jolly good start.

I am fortunate that the Executive Committee is a great team of hardworking people who are prepared to support me in another year as Chair. I am also pleased to say that we have had three people volunteer to be on the Committee to take the place of those who have completed their three-year term. Our volunteers are our lifeblood, vital to our survival, so I urge you all to consider giving more to the running of our u3a. If you enjoy and value what we do, please offer to help us in some capacity whether it is periodically making refreshments for events, volunteering general help at events, leading an interest group or being part of a team or the committee. We can only move from strength to strength if we have members prepared to give a little time and energy to others. Get in touch with anyone on the Committee or me. You will be made very welcome.

Enjoy the glories of autumn – sights, sounds and smells and I wish you all the joys of the season.

# MEMBER PROFILE

## ELIZABETH DOBBIE



Elizabeth Dobbie's working life demonstrates that it is not only young people nowadays who have 'portfolio careers'. Elizabeth graduated in Chemistry at Edinburgh University, became a biochemist researcher at Cambridge University, retrained as a social scientist at Northumbria University and worked in various campaigning organisations helping people into employment. Then she switched again, retraining in horticulture where she made another significant career. We are so lucky to have Elizabeth living in the area in retirement and giving so much of her time and expertise to supporting local parks and gardens.

Elizabeth is hugely enthusiastic about plants, not just in her own magnificent garden but also in her volunteer work, where she and others have transformed the Broomfield Park Conservatory from an empty shell to a sub-tropical greenhouse.

The conservatory has been described as a "shining jewel" in the heart of Broomfield Park because of the leadership Elizabeth has provided to the conservatory group for 15 years.

Friends of Broomfield Park (FBP), a group of volunteers who work in conjunction with Enfield Council to maintain and improve the park, said: "Five years ago the borders in the historic walled gardens were in a sorry state – Elizabeth formed a large team of volunteers and worked closely with Enfield officers and staff to make this part of the park into the amazing asset it is today – much appreciated by visitors and residents.

Collectively, the volunteer teams that Elizabeth has established in the conservatory and horticulture group contribute over 1,500 hours each year to keeping Broomfield Park a major asset to communities across the borough.

Once a year, 81-year-old Elizabeth also opens her own carefully tended garden in Arnos Park to the public where they can enjoy a range of colourful flora including perennials, alpines and succulents, the latter being her special favourites.

Proceeds of the Open Garden go to the upkeep of the conservatory's specialist collections of subtropical plants where Elizabeth's many years of dedicated volunteer work were recognised by a lifetime achievement award from Enfield Council.

Elizabeth, who has a fascinating knowledge of Broomfield Park's history – which dates to the 17th century – says of her own love of flowers: "I was brought up in Perthshire and both my mother and my grandmother were passionate about plants growing in their gardens and the surrounding fields and woods, and that is where my interest in wild flowers came from".



**Gold, Broomfield Park Conservatory**

She adds with a smile: "I like to see things growing in their natural habitat. I am enthusiastic about flowers, and I want my flowers to be enthusiastic too."

That passion about plants has taken Elizabeth around the world, to see poppies in California, a visit to Death Valley, the Swiss Alps, Norway and Malawi. A trip to the Russian Caucasus, where the steep terrain limits agriculture, farming and grazing, provided Elizabeth with the best environment to see wildflowers as nature intended.

Elizabeth also nurtures her front garden to provide Arnos Park visitors with a changing floral palette of colours throughout the year, in the hope that it will encourage them take a greater interest in gardening.

What is her advice to those who want to take up the secateurs and enjoy a green-fingered hobby that keeps you healthy and brings joy to others? "Grow the plants that you really love and try planting different things as you go along".

If you want to take up that challenge in your own garden, Elizabeth suggests that you pay a visit to Broomfield Conservatory Autumn plant sale at the Palmers Green Festival – held annually.

At the Broomfield Park event you can buy plants grown by local volunteers, which means that the plants are suitable for our climate and can grow strongly, with a little bit of tender loving care.

AND – if the fancy takes you, why not become a 'guerrilla gardener', planting flowers in a public space near you, to brighten up the neighbourhood?

Interviewed: July 2024 by Roger Hailey, our new Roving Reporter.

## And for cat lovers, another story from Elliot Finer

### A Cat's-Eye View

I don't know why I couldn't have kittens. It certainly wasn't due to a lack of mothering instinct. So I was delighted when they brought baby Tommy home. Of course, I couldn't feed him myself, but I could care for him in other ways. He loved it when I jumped into his cot and snuggled against him — he'd press his little hand into my fur and make cooing noises. The adults didn't approve, however. I suppose they were jealous. They shouted and screamed and chased me out of the room. But it was easy to sneak back.

They also behaved irrationally when I groomed Tommy. More yelling, and even attempts at violence, though I'm too fast for them. They made Tommy bawl his head off. He wanted me back, and so I obliged once the adults were out of the way.

As he grew older, my role changed to playmate and watchful companion. The adults seemed OK with this. I had expected Tommy to be scampering around, jumping and climbing, a few weeks after he was born, but instead, he crawled laboriously on all fours for about a year. And then tottered rather than walked. But he did love his little tricycle, which he scooted around the garden.

He loved to explore. Very healthy, I felt, though the adults didn't seem so keen. One day, he pulled a bucket over to the garden gate, turned it upside down, climbed on it, and managed to undo the latch. Off he trundled on the trike, up the alley between our and the neighbour's house, into the front garden. I followed.

After half an hour the mad barker from up the road trotted down the pavement. I enjoy taunting him by scooting up a tree in his garden and sneering down as he goes wild, trying to get to me. Strange how he reacts aggressively to almost everyone and everything. I prefer to play it cool. I avoid confrontation unless there's a real threat. I admit the rodents and birds I hunt might not see it like that, but with them there's no actual fighting.

This was the first time I'd seen the mad barker outside his home and alone. I'd thought he was unable to go anywhere without one of his humans, whom he treats as gods rather than the servants they really are. But there he was, outside our front garden. I was sitting in the bushes. He ignored me and focused on Tommy, who was scooting up and down the drive. He snarled, belted in and grabbed Tommy's sleeve in his nasty jaws. The poor kid started screaming.

I shot over and saw the dog off. I calmed Tommy down and escorted him through the alley into the safety of the back garden. No harm done. Except to the mad barker, of course.

That evening, I was roused from a pleasant reverie by a tinny imitation of the mad barker snarling and yelping, accompanied by Tommy crying. The sounds came from my adult male human's computer. He became very excited and beckoned the female to join him. The sounds were repeated again and again. The humans started jabbering at me and behaving strangely.



I have no idea what was going on in their heads, but they gave me a load of cat treats.

People aren't always easy to understand.

Artwork by Tony McNamara.

## u3a Monthly Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> July

### What Did You Do in the War?

For the 9,000 people who worked at Bletchley Park (BP) during the Second World War, this was not a question they could answer. Mike Barbakoff, a volunteer at BP and the National Museum of Computing, treated us to the fascinating background of this story.



### Introducing Bletchley Park

Many u3a Members have visited BP but, for those who haven't, it is a *country pile* about 50 miles north of London near Milton Keynes. It was acquired by the security service (MI6) in 1938 as a base for the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) [now known as GCHQ and based in Cheltenham]. Bletchley Park was unlikely to be bombed, within easy distance of the West Coast railway, on the

trunk route of northbound telephone cables and within easy distance of some of the cleverest people in the country i.e. at Oxbridge. The advent of wireless created a communication system that could operate over great distances with great flexibility (i.e. without the wires on old-fashioned telegraph poles) but it also created a problem, especially for the military. In a wartime situation, wireless transmissions could be received by the enemy and confidential messages sent *in the clear* would be compromised.

## Enter the Poles

The need to encode messages (and decode those of the enemy) was recognised in World War 1 but the technology developed apace during the inter-War years. From 1931 three mathematicians from the Polish Cypher Bureau developed their understanding of how to access coded messages created by the German military using Enigma. As the decade preceded, the rise of Nazism made this work of increasing importance and Poland was in the front line! The Poles actually built an Enigma machine and something called a Bombe to help in the decryption process and in 1939, that fateful year, they shared their expertise with the British and French.

## Unpacking the Enigma

GC & CS staff built on the work of the Polish academics to create a system for decoding German messages during WW2. Who remembers the James Bond film *From Russia With Love* in which our hero succeeds in getting his hands on a Soviet coding machine – a Lektor - (with the aid of a suitably attractive woman, of course!)? You may remember that the device looked like a portable typewriter.



The German Enigma coding/decoding machine was a bit bigger and required three people to operate it. It had a keyboard used by the first operator to type in the original message with each character being converted through an intricate internal wiring system to an alternative character. However a simple character substitution system (i.e. A gets converted to Z) is easy to decode and the clever part of Enigma was the use of a set of wheels (rotors) to ensure that individual characters were never coded the same way. Mike did quote us a figure for how many options this created (159 followed by 18 zeros?) but I was losing the technical plot at this point. Enigma was considered unbreakable, but one feature

turned out to be a weakness. The clear text letter could never be encoded as itself. What about those other two Enigma operators? The coded letter lit up on the Enigma and was read by operator two to be transmitted using a radio (wireless for our older readers) by operator three. Sounds like pretty boring jobs but perhaps better than being shot at!

## Who were the decoders?

BP was a 24/7 operation and the 9,000 people worked in 3 shifts. Not all were decoders. For example, there was a cadre of drivers whose job it was to chauffeur staff members from wherever they were billeted in the local area. There was a canteen that could hold 1,000 people at one time so obviously cooks and cleaners were necessary.

Best known of the decoders is probably Alan Turing but other people who made vital contributions included Gordon Welchman and Dillwyn Knox. Academics in fields like Maths were obvious recruits but BP needed people who could, to borrow that hackneyed phrase, *think out of the box*. On one occasion a puzzle – to be completed in 12 minutes - was advertised in a national paper, but generally recruitment was on the basis of *Who do you know?* There were talent scouts too who had a briefing but knew nothing about BP or its role. Imagine:

*You look like a suitable person for this job*

What job is that?

*Don't know*

Where is it?

*No idea. Are you interested?*

People with creative backgrounds and people who would be described today as neuro-diverse were all assets at BP. Class divisions were de rigueur in 1940s Britain but these were irrelevant at BP where debutantes (often fluent in languages) worked alongside women from working-class backgrounds. The armed services provided a lot of personnel, particularly women who were apparently much better at focusing on getting the job done than men. Despite this, BP was a decidedly unmilitary place and was run more like a university department although the man in charge was Commander Alistair Denniston

## How did it work?

The main building at BP was complemented by a series of huts in which staff processed the encrypted data they received from the Y radio stations which sent it to BP via teleprinter or motorcycle courier. The German military reset their Enigma machines every 24 hours so BP had to work quickly to reveal information that might be vital to the Allied war effort. The decryption process started with a guess – BP staff made a guess as to what a particular message might be about and set up their Bombe machines based on this. If it 'bombed out' they had to start again but once they knew how Enigma was configured, they could set about decoding the other transmissions in that period. Decoding was not the end of the process as the *clear* text was in German and had to be translated.

## The geese that never cackled

At one stage senior staff, such as Turing and Welchman, wrote directly to Winston Churchill to complain about the lack of resources for their work which was vital to the war effort. His response was the classic Churchillian *Action this day!* He is purported to have regarded BP staff as golden geese and acknowledged that no one ever breached

security during the war years (or thereafter until the 1970s). There are amazing stories of how related people (married couples, sisters even!) discovered decades after the war that they had worked at BP!. How was this possible?

BP was an intelligence factory in which very few people at BP had an overview of the process. It was a bit like working on a production line without even knowing what you are building, let alone seeing it. The intelligence revealed by BP was given very limited distribution and even fewer people knew where it came from. Once read, it was destroyed. No wonder post-war interviews with German personnel confirmed that they did not realise that Enigma had been broken.

### **Time out and time up**

Although no-one lived at BP, work and leisure time were closely meshed and off-duty staff took part in a wide range of activities including learning and performing arts. Very few photographs were taken, and when the War finished, Churchill ordered that the whole operation be closed down and never discussed. It was only in the 1970s that the BP story emerged notably in a book by Frederick Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*. Mike reported that recent books are more accurate as they contain official information released by GCHQ.

Robin Charnley

## **u3a Visit**

### **u3a Treads the Boards at the Garrick Club 28<sup>th</sup> May**

A real treat for us non-thespians – a visit to the Garrick Club.

The Garrick Club was founded in 1831 in a location near to Covent Garden and Drury Lane theatres, in order to elevate the social standing of actors. According to the constitution, at the club, “Gentlemen and men of refinement can meet with actors and



artists on equal terms.” The Club’s first Patron was the then Duke of Sussex, a great devotee of the theatre. Its original home, leased from an aptly named Gentleman Lewis, soon became too small for the expanding membership and the Club relocated to its present premises in 1864. The new, much bigger and grander, building was designed in the Italianate style by Frederick Marrable. Although the entrance is quite imposing and there is an impressive stairway to negotiate on entry, from the street there is no Club signage or indication of the treasures within.

The Garrick Club, like the Garrick Theatre and indeed Garrick Street itself, is named in honour of David Garrick the most celebrated figure in 18<sup>th</sup> century theatre. Garrick was an actor, manager and playwright, and after the 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee which he

promoted, his name became inextricably tied to Shakespeare's.

Many renowned actors, directors, writers and artists have been Club members, from Charles Dickens and Henry Irving through to Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, and Benedict Cumberbatch and Damian Lewis in the modern era. The ultimate Gentlemen's Club, the Garrick voted only in May 2024 to allow women - well, Ladies - to become members. Today the Club has around 1,300 members.

There are strict rules of dress and behaviour, with restrictions on the use of mobile phones, conducting business, using the Club address, taking photographs, wearing casual clothes or certain footwear. No photography is allowed.

An important and unique feature of the Garrick Club is its collection of paintings, seemingly on every wall. The collection originated with Charles Mathews, a very popular comic actor in his time, counting Dickens among his admirers. His speciality was performing humorous monologues with quick changes behind a screen. He had a collection of four hundred pictures, chosen to allow him to study and imitate other actors. When the time came to sell the collection to provide for his financial security, he offered it to various private collectors and even to the National Gallery - without success. Eventually it was bought by a Club member, a wealthy stockbroker, who proceeded to donate the whole collection to the Club.

New paintings are still being acquired to enhance the collection, which is now regarded as the largest and most significant collection of British theatrical works of art in the world with over one thousand paintings, drawings and pieces of sculpture. The collections are not open to the general public, but a tour gives the opportunity to see famous actors in their favourite roles and appreciate that before the internet, phones, cameras or recording, these portraits were the only way that contemporary actors and their successors could see what they were like.

A favourite artist of David Garrick was Johan Zoffany and several Zoffanys are on display. Zoffany was born in Frankfurt and apprenticed in England where David Garrick met him. Garrick had displayed his wealth by buying a country house with a folly on the banks of the Thames, a temple to Shakespeare, and he commissioned Zoffany to paint him there with his wife, Eva Maria. Although a towering figure of the theatre, Garrick was actually rather diminutive in stature, only 5'4" tall, making him a lot shorter than Mrs Garrick. Zoffany cunningly disguised this discrepancy by placing her on the steps above him. Hopefully, Garrick appreciated this nod to Garrick's sensitivity about his height!



A lot can be learned from the portraits on these walls. One example is in a painting from 1786 by Thomas Beach, a pupil of Joshua Reynolds, showing Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kendal in Macbeth. The position of the hands with the palms out captured in the painting, a rather over the top gesture to our eyes, would signal to eighteenth century audiences impending horror or drama and an attempt to push the evil away down to hell.



Another common stance of that time, often used to concentrate an easily distracted audience's attention back on the action and make sure they knew the high status of an actor, was the characteristic right-angled splayed feet-apart posture, as in Garrick's portrayal of Tancred by Thomas Worlidge, found in the Club's Morning Room.

Also smothered in a lavish wallcovering of actorly talent is the Coffee Room, actually the main dining room. The table is impressively laid, rather like a room in a stately home, with some rather splendid silverware and glassware. Each item, including mats, is laid out with pinpoint precision, identically for each setting. The house rule here is a requirement always to sit next to someone!



AA Milne loved the Garrick and left the Club a legacy in his will. The downstairs room bearing his name has what is viewed as one of the best portraits of Sir Henry Irving, painted by Millais. Irving was the first actor to be knighted (in 1895) and is credited with making acting respectable. As important a figure in theatre in the nineteenth century as Garrick was in the eighteenth, his manager was Bram Stoker and it is said he based Dracula on Irving!



Halfway up the grand staircase are two chairs facing each other - a restored version of one of Garrick's favourite Chippendale chairs from the Drury Lane Theatre, and a chair from the entrance to the Midland Hotel in Bradford on which Irving died, having left the nearby Theatre Royal after feeling unwell at end of a play, the last lines of which were, "...into thy hands, lord".

With special thanks to our guide Sarah, an inexhaustible fount of knowledge on all things theatrical. In the Irving Room, our last stop, a head popped around the door saying to Sarah, "I learned more about my own club sitting next door than I have coming here for years!"

By the way, regarding the right-angled feet apart gesture to prove your importance, don't try this at home....it didn't work!

Edward Doff

### **u3a Festival in York 18th-20th July**



The festival was attended by over 900 members, over three days. Members could attend for a day or for all three. York University proved ideal, all venues were close together, located on a beautiful lake complete with fountain and wildfowl.

For those of us staying, student accommodation was available on site. The programme was packed full of interesting talks, ranging from astronomy to Christopher Marlow. A range of indoor activities were available to book: everything from painting and sewing to music workshop.



On offer for the more active there were yoga and tai chi, plus outdoor sessions of croquet, pétanque and pickleball. In addition, there were music sessions featuring groups from different u3a's and a quiz.

This was a floral crown made at one of the workshops



Among the display was a beautifully embroidered quilt.

A competition was launched, open to all u3a members, to make a quilted square, depicting an aspect of the u3a. These squares were then judged by a panel of experts and the best 40 selected. The Blanket Hall in Witney, Oxfordshire, have agreed to hang the quilt in pride of place in the historic upstairs Great Room.

The organizing team were mainly from Yorkshire & Humber u3a region, led by their trustee – Margaret Fiddes. It was a mammoth task and involved many months of planning. Already, they are planning for the future: 2026 seems likely so look out for advance news. I am sure members would enjoy the experience.



Litchfield u3a Guitar group

Chris Burnikell

## Focus on U3A Groups

### Highlighting Walking Groups

Walking Groups are one of the most popular activities in local u3a's across the country. There's hardly a Third Age Matters magazine that doesn't feature some intrepid walking group up a mountain, along a towpath or admiring the historical features of a city scene. There is a national u3a team of Walking Subject Advisers who help local u3a's to start up walking groups as well as provide ideas for walk themes or walking routes for more experienced leaders of local walking groups. A new initiative is the u3a Walking Exchange, where members can join a walking group when away from home on holiday or a whole u3a walking group can twin with another in a different part of the country.

### The Benefits of Joining a Walking Group



As an outdoor person, who enjoys being part of a like-minded social group, a walking group ticks all the boxes for me. It contributes to one's mind-body wellness balance, to a sense of belonging and fosters making and developing new friendships. As an outdoor activity, it helps one to connect to and appreciate the beauty of nature, to learn about the history of new places, and discover new parts of the country. The great day is always wrapped with a nice lunch and afterwards members share their pictures and happy memories of the day via WhatsApp.

As well as being thoroughly enjoyable, regular walking is one of the most effective well-being activities recommended by health experts - and it costs nothing!

Shev Gul

### 3-5 miles Walking Group



We meet on the first Friday of the month. Members of the group take it in turns to lead the walks, deciding where to walk and how long. Where we walk varies, sometimes it is local to Enfield, sometimes London, occasionally we venture into the countryside of Hertfordshire or Essex. You can always get to and from a walk by train or bus.

We walk rain or shine and are a friendly group. Three to five miles might seem daunting, but if you have interesting things to see and good conversation along the way, it's easier to walk further than you might do on your own. We stop for coffee during or at the end of a walk.

We all enjoy being part of this group because it is sociable, good exercise and being out in the fresh air is an added bonus. It's amazing what you see and learn when you are out and about, often popping into churches and other interesting buildings and always learning something new.



In November Stuart McGowan led the walk from Golders Green to Hampstead. In Golders Hill Park we paused at the deer park, zoo and aviary, enjoyed the various water features, and admired the statue of Golders Hill girl. Then we puffed up the steep climb to the Hill Garden which boasts a 250 yard wooden pergola, one of London's hidden gems and the highlight of the walk.

It's covered in fountains of wisteria flowers in Spring. On we went through Hampstead Heath to the Vale of Health for a bit of blue plaque-spotting before finishing the walk at the cafe at Burgh House, Hampstead's local museum.

Our Christmas Walk in London passed by Christopher Wren's magnificent St Paul's Cathedral, built in the Baroque style after the previous cathedral was razed by the Fire of London in 1666. We crossed the River

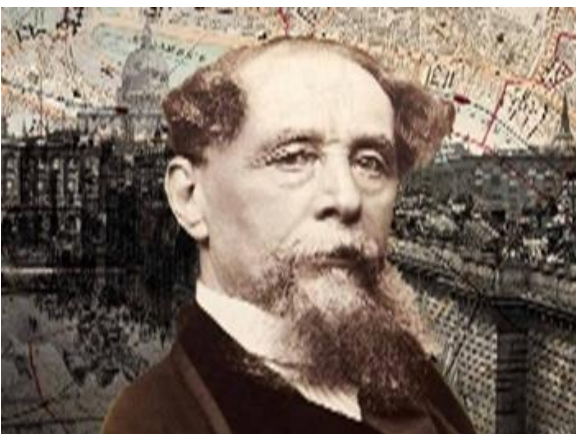




Thames to the more modest but beautiful Southwark Cathedral built in the Gothic style in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We walked along the South Bank riverside to the Christmas market with its log cabins and meandered through the log cabin Christmas market, twinkling with various seasonal decorations.

Shoreditch used to be a manufacturing area on the edge of the City but is now the home of a wide range of artistic creativity including street art. Robin Charnley led

our January walk through a series of streets displaying traditional graffiti alongside pieces embodying skills that would surely qualify them for an art gallery. We even managed to catch sight of a venerable Banksy. Words don't really reflect the spirit of the walk so let's conclude with this image from Whitby Street.



In February Jeff Chesnick led the walk on the theme of Charles Dickens' London, discovering the city that was home to Dickens and his inspiration for many of his novels.

Our journey of literary adventure began at Number 48 Doughty Street which was the Dickens' family home April 1837-1839. Dickens and his wife of one year, Catherine, moved here with Catherine's sister, Mary Hogarth, and their baby son, Charley. Sadly Mary died in

1837. In subsequent years, two daughters were born, Mary and Katy. In this house, Dickens completed 'Pickwick Papers', 'Oliver Twist', and 'Nicholas Nickleby' and began work on what became 'Barnaby Rudge'.

From the museum we headed south to Mount Pleasant where Dickens situated the home of the Smallweed family in Bleak House: "Always solitary, shady and sad, closely bricked in on all sides like a tomb". Today you see the Post Office complex established there in 1900.

A short distance away we passed the pub, 'The Betsy Trotwood', named after the David Copperfield's aunt. On the other side of the road is Pear Tree Court, thought to be the site where Oliver Twist sees the Artful Dodger.

Next, we arrived at Clerkenwell Green, with the Sessions House which features as the destination of Mr Bumble in 'Oliver Twist'. Following the plot of that novel we came to Number 54 Hatton Garden. This is the property where Dickens sets the police office and magistrates court where Oliver is brought after being apprehended for allegedly picking

Mr Brownlow's pocket. Dickens also uses Hatton Garden in 'Bleak House' as a quiet refuge for Mr Jellby to escape his wife's philanthropic obsessions.

Further on, we came to Smithfield Market, the original one of which, closed in 1855, appear in both 'Oliver Twist' and 'Great Expectations'.

### The Old Bailey

Following round to Snow Hill we see at the bottom the Old Bailey and Central Criminal Court. Dickens set several trial scenes here: Fagin in 'Oliver Twist', Magwich in 'Great Expectations', Charles Darney in 'A Tale of Two Cities'.



Our walk took us past St Bartholomew's Hospital. The medical school opened in 1662 and is mentioned in 'Pickwick Papers' and 'Martin Chuzzlewit'. On we went into Gresham Street, where, at Number 25, The Cross Keys inn stood. It was here that ten-year-old Dickens arrived by coach in 1822 in the damp straw of the coach's upholstery.

We continued to the Guildhall, seat now of the Corporation of London, but the setting for the trial for breach of promise in 'Pickwick Papers', and round the corner to Mansion House, home of the Mayor of London and the end of our Dickens' walk.

A very agreeable pleasant walk of approximately 2.5 miles in very convivial company.

Marie Brent, Stuart McGowan, Robin Charnley and Jeff Chesnick

### 7-10 miles Walking Group

I met a very lively, chatty and friendly walking group at the beginning of their March Walk at Palmers Green railway station. They were doing a circular walk of about 8 miles starting at Canary Wharf and going around the Isle of Dogs.

The group meets every month since 2015 when Jeff Chesnick and a small group started to organise the walks. The walks vary from city sightseeing (usually in the winter to avoid excess mud!) to Chiltern hikes and the variety of different routes is exciting. One of the group takes responsibility for organising the trail and has reviewed the route beforehand. There are stops along the way for lunch, site information, loo breaks and snacks.



The day was well organised and supervised. There were 20 of us but this varies from about 6-20. The group has both seasoned and occasional walkers but they all share a love of being out in the open and enjoying the variety of destinations.

We kept, where accessible, to the River Thames Path, with the river to our right walking from west to east. There were stunning views over the south bank of the Thames. We passed McDougall's Park, named after the famous flour company that had seven windmills and processing factories on the site, hence the name Millwall! We stopped to view the site of Brunel's slipway

built to launch the SS Great Eastern in 1858, then the largest ship in the world. Our walk occasionally took us inland to view original dock workers' houses, some remaining despite WW2 bombing.

We lunched at a converted fire station before proceeding to Mudchute Park and Farm, one of the largest inner city parks in Europe, with photo stops at the animal pens and a 1940's Ack-Ack gun. Back to the river we enjoyed iconic views of Greenwich, the Cutty Sark and the O2 Dome across the river. Later we stopped at The Gun public house, passing by Nelson's House in the same street. The route back to Canary Wharf took us to Millwall and Blackwall docks with glimpses of Billingsgate Market. A great walk in glorious weather.



Helen Hattersley and Pauline Henley

**So, why not join a Walking Group now? You'll be made most welcome.**

## Architectural Heritage Walks

Peter Gray, a former chartered surveyor and architect lecturer used to convene these walks. Over eighteen months they took place roughly once a month, on varying days of the week, in areas as diverse as Hampstead Garden Suburb, Southgate, Highbury & Newington Green, Enfield Town & Grange Park, Islington & Canonbury, Camden Town, Hackney (2), Mile End and Stoke Newington & Dalston.

They took place in all weathers, although when there was extreme weather such as heavy rain or excessive heat, a cancellation was made.

They weren't exercise walks, although it has to be said that quite a few 'steps' were achieved. The idea was to encourage participants to look up and around, to see what we usually miss when driving or making our way from A to B, and obviously, to educate and inform. Questions and observations from participants were encouraged and welcomed.

Architectural and historical matters were discussed, and even surveying matters, peppered with anecdotes from Peter's long surveying career in North, East and North-West London.



The house on the left is the former home of the well-known author and raconteur, Alan Bennett. Peter told the group the story of when he parked outside Bennett's house to prepare for undertaking a building survey on the property next door - also with a literary connection, being the home of another English author, Alice Thomas Ellis. Bennett appeared, mistook Peter for a minicab driver, and tried to get into the back seat of his car!

Peter Gray

**Unfortunately, it is not possible to continue these walks though they were very pleasurable to all participants .**

# LIST OF GROUPS

## **Arts and Crafts**

Art (2)  
Art Appreciation  
Floristry  
Improving your Photographs (3)  
Photography

## **Games and Puzzles**

Board Games  
Bridge for Beginners (2)  
Bridge for Improvers (2)  
Cryptic Crosswords  
Magic  
Mah Jong  
Rummikub  
Scrabble

## **General**

Come Dine with Me (2)  
Current Affairs  
Discussion  
HEROES  
Mindfulness and Meditation  
Members on Their Own (MOTO)  
Retirement Sept 2024  
Science, Nature, Technology (2)

## **History**

Historical Pub Walks  
History  
History for Pleasure  
Remember When

## **Out and About**

Gardening  
Museum & Gallery Visits  
Outreach Team  
Strollers  
Travel (Day Trips and Holidays)  
Walking 3 to 5 miles  
Walking 7 to 10 miles

## **Languages**

French Advanced  
French for Beginners  
French Intermediate (2)  
Italian Conversation (2)  
Spanish Intermediate

## **Literature**

Book Group (6)  
Play Reading (2)  
Poetry

## **Theatre and Film**

Film Club (2)  
Free Lunchtime Concerts  
Fringe Theatre  
Local Live Music and Theatre  
Theatre



To find out more about these groups and to contact the group convener, visit the website at [pgs.u3asite.uk](http://pgs.u3asite.uk)

For general group enquiries contact the Groups Coordinator, Val Girling, [chair@pgsu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@pgsu3a.org.uk) or telephone 020 8886 3773 and leave a message.