

Palmers Green & Southgate u3a

YOUR u3a MAGAZINE

Celebratory Edition



PG&S u3a - 10 Years Old!

Summer 2024

Message from the Chair - Val Girling

Well! What a wonderful day it was!



On Saturday, 4th May we held a joyful event to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of Palmers Green and Southgate u3a in the lovely community hall of the Church of Christ the King near Cockfosters. In 2014 Frances Halliday set up the group with the help of several other people who formed the first Executive Committee, many of whom joined us for the afternoon.

I was in charge of coordinating the various aspects of the day in the run up, which felt very much like spinning plates!

One of the most important features was the catering arrangements. We are very fortunate to have Sally Steele, a wonderful baker on the Outreach Team, who certainly exceeded all expectations in the array of mouthwatering cakes she baked for us. Days in the making and minutes in the devouring! Her spread was accompanied by the celebration cake, designed by Frances Halliday and George Howard, which I cut into very small pieces so as many of us as possible could share it! Our very own Heroes proved their worth on the day – organised by Sarah Brandi – slaving away making teas and coffees all afternoon.

Other members of the Outreach Team helped to create a beautiful setting with displays of artwork (Art 1 and Art 4) and lots of photographs taken during u3a interest group meetings, events and outings, showing what a good time we all have. Every table was adorned with a beautiful flower arrangement created by Iris Challis and Neena Hall. Music which accompanied the event throughout (and PA system) was ably managed by Bob and Jane.

The venue was perfect. Sunshine flooded in through the long glass wall of windows, with a lovely view of green lawns and mature trees beyond. Perfect for a May afternoon. Not warm enough to sit out, but very pleasant nonetheless.

We were fortunate that our guest speaker was the Chair of Croydon u3a and Vice Chair of the London Region, Jenny Wilson. I have found her an inspiration during the two years I have known her, and she gave an excellent speech, chatted to many of our members and regaled us with stories.

Of course, the event would not have been the success it was without so many members coming along to join in the celebration. We estimate about 150 attended. The friendly warm atmosphere was palpable and impressed new members who said they had never seen so many smiling faces in one room! I felt incredibly grateful to be part of this group of people and enjoyed meeting and chatting to members old and new during the afternoon.

It was such a success that the Committee has decided to make a Summer Tea Party an annual event! I hope even more of you will come along and celebrate being part of the very active PG&S u3a!

Member Profile



Frances Halliday: Deputy Chair PG&S u3a

Founder of Palmers Green & Southgate u3a

When I moved back to London in 2013, I joined Barnet u3a and they were very welcoming. However, I realised that there was no u3a in the Southgate and Palmers Green area so I set about starting one up! This was not new to me. I helped start a u3a in Waterlooville, becoming the first Secretary and then the Chair, so I knew what needed to be done. Very soon several people came forward and we formed a steering committee. We had flyers printed and started promoting it locally. In February 2014 we held a meeting at the Intimate Theatre to see if there was enough interest and were overwhelmed with the response. We were off to a flying

start and have never looked back. We now have nearly 500 members and are celebrating our tenth anniversary this year!

I am passionate about the u3a, which is a brilliant organisation, providing opportunities to “learn, laugh and live”. I have made many friends and seen others do the same. Each u3a relies on volunteers and every member is encouraged to play their part. I do hope that, with the help of more volunteers, our u3a will continue to thrive.

My earlier claim to fame is that I was born in a hut in front of Ashridge House near Berkhamsted towards the end of the war. I believe I was 6 weeks late and at 9lb 9oz I was quite a large baby.



Shortly after the end of the war we moved to Beckenham, my father’s home before he became a regular soldier. He returned to his job in a London bank but continued to serve in the Territorial Army. My mother had also been in the army during the war, which is no doubt where they met. I have two younger brothers, but one sadly died in 2020.

I was mainly educated in Catholic convents but went to a state grammar school to do my A levels. In the sixth form I became fascinated by computers and decided that I wanted to be a programmer. However, my mother thought I ought to be a policewoman because, apparently, I was quite bossy!

I had a place at university but chose instead to do a two-year full-time course at Leicester College of Technology (now de Montfort University). I was then able to get a job at the AA (Automobile Association) in Holloway as a Junior Programmer. I worked as an analyst/

programmer for a number of years and then taught programming in a college. I met my husband soon after I moved to North London. We moved to the Portsmouth area, and I got a programming job with West Sussex County Council.



We married in 1958. Our two children, a boy and a girl, were both born in Portsmouth. I lived in various locations in West Sussex and Hampshire for 47 years, ending up in Waterlooville.

At the age of 50 I had a complete career change and trained as a financial adviser with a large insurance company. Following redundancy, I ran a business with my late husband selling traditional toys mainly in shopping centres, hospitals and at festivals and shows. I moved back to London to be near my daughter and her new baby who is now 11. My other granddaughter works as a teacher in Dubai.

Alongside paid work, I have always been involved with the voluntary sector. I have worked with homeless young people, trained as a CAB advisor, been a Samaritan and the President of a Lions Club, not to mention u3a!

I am a very active person. I am an avid bridge player, mainly in an online club. I started a beginners group in Petersfield u3a. I taught some members and started a group playing duplicate bridge. In 2017 I started teaching bridge to a few of our PG&S members and we now have four groups, from beginners upwards. I enjoy the cinema and theatre and take advantage of the cheap tickets on offer to our members via Stage Audience. I have never been rated for my singing, but I now belong to an amazing singing group that meets in Potters Bar once a week. I joined a year ago and haven't yet been thrown out! I also enjoy travelling and have been to Australia, several States in the USA, various parts of Asia and many European countries.

I am fascinated by my family history and have built a large tree on Ancestry. A DNA test produced a large number of matches to cousins all over the world. I am directly descended from James Wyatt (1746-1813), a famous architect of his time. Coincidentally, he was the architect for Ashridge House where I was born! He also designed The Pantheon in Oxford Street which is now the Marks & Spencer Pantheon branch. The Pantheon itself burnt down in 1792 and Turner painted the burning building. Another interesting ancestor is Jabez Hogg who was a famous early photographer and well-known ophthalmic surgeon. I have had a tour of the house in Bloomsbury where he lived, which is now the headquarters of Cameron Mackintosh.

But anyone who knows me is aware that above all it is u3a that is my great enthusiasm – friends, groups, visits, travel, social activities – what's not to like, as they say?!

And now for a Royal Command Performance from Roger Gardiner

Maundy 2024.



On 25th January 2024 a letter postmarked “Buckingham Palace” landed on my door mat. Full of curiosity I found it contained an invitation to be one of this year’s recipients of a Maundy Gift of specially minted coins at the Royal Maundy Service in Worcester Cathedral at 11am on Thursday, 28th March.

75 men and 75 women, each group equal to the King’s age had been chosen from across the United Kingdom having been recommended by the Bishop of their Diocese. Each Recipient was invited to bring a companion to accompany them and assist them, if needed, and would sit by them in the Cathedral.

There then followed a short section requesting a reply by Monday 12th February confirming that one could attend the service and providing details of the recipient and companion matching their appropriate I.D. that would be used on the day.

Investigating available accommodation I found overnight prices in Worcester were almost double those outside the city. However, as my companion, my youngest son, would have his car that was not a problem. I would travel by train to Worcester.

Maundy Thursday was bright and sunny but cold.

Unwisely, perhaps, we left our coats in the car and walked to the Cathedral, greeted by the numerous policemen and women on the way. Fortunately, it felt warm on entering the cathedral and we were ushered to our seats after traversing the cloisters. We were seated in the South Aisle facing across the building opposite the door through which the Queen would enter in an hour’s time. Our position prevented a view of the platform and the Chancel.

When Queen Camilla arrived, I was struck by the numerous processions generated for her arrival. First was the Cathedral Procession followed by the Ecumenical Procession, then the Queen’s Procession and finally the Royal Almonry Procession. An impressive service followed and after a recorded message from King Charles, the Maundy Gifts were distributed. This was accomplished in two sessions. Gifts were taken from trays carried by Yeomen of the Guard and handed to each recipient by the Queen. Her Majesty shook my hand saying she was pleased to meet me and moved on with my thanks after a few seconds.

The Maundy gifts were in two purses, a red one containing a nominal allowance for clothing and provisions, a five pound coin and a fifty pence piece. The white purse held seventy-five pence (representing the king’s age) in silver one, two, three and four pence special Maundy coins.

After the Queen and her procession left, with the Yeomen of the Guard in their splendid ceremonial uniform, followed by the other three processions, my son and I spent a short while taking photos and talking about the occasion. We then shivered our way through the crowds, gratefully retrieving our coats from the car and went for a hot drink, before departing for home.

I can't quite believe it all happened, but I have the Maundy Gifts and some photos to prove it!



Roger Gardiner

For those who enjoyed 'A Furry Tale' by Elliot Finer, here's a more sinister sequel

A Ferry Tale

DANGER! NO PASSENGERS PAST THIS POINT.

The rain and spray suck away the light from the lamps on the superstructure, leaving only dim halos.

He tries to see what's on the other side of the safety barrier, but all he can make out is a clump of bulky metal cabinets connected by thick cables.

He scans the passageways behind him. No sign of her, but that doesn't mean she isn't close.

He leans over the warning sign and lowers the cat carrier to the deck. The ferry lurches as it's hit by a huge wave, causing the cat carrier to slide sideways, coming to rest against one of the cabinets. He straddles the barrier and stumbles over to the other side, losing his balance and thumping against the rail at the edge of the deck. The hull below him is a vast featureless metal cliff. He backs away, fearful that the gale will blow him over the rail.

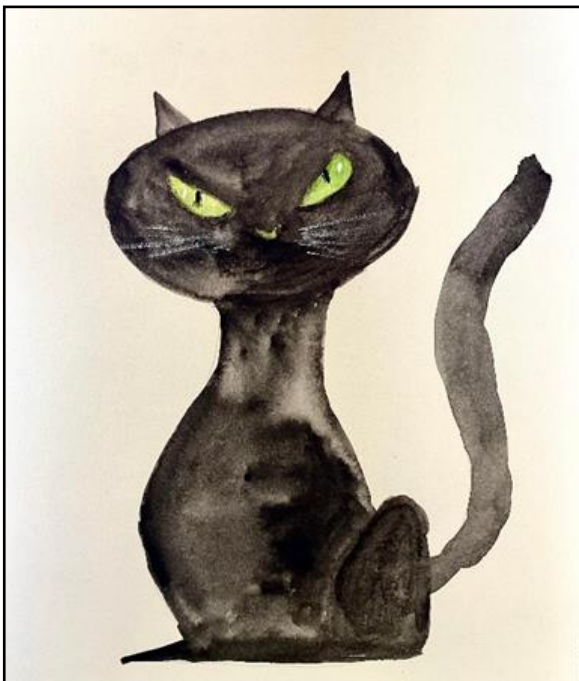
A blast from the ship's horn reverberates through his bones.

He picks up the cat carrier. Where to hide? The cabinets are lower than he'd realized. He crouches behind the nearest one and peers over the top. A flash of light a few yards away, and a smack as a bullet hits the cabinet to his left.

His plan for a new life is in tatters.

'Time to say goodbye' he says, his voice swallowed by the din of the storm. He wipes his eyes and twists open the catch. The cat bounds out of the carrier and disappears into the night.

He crawls along the slippery deck to the cabinet on his right and lies down behind it, making himself as small as possible, praying that help will arrive before the killer finds him.



But there she is, towering above him, holding a bulky pistol.

As she points the gun at his head, a black shape darts up the front of her coat. She screams and jerks back, trying and failing to pull off the cat that's clawing at her eyes. The gun tumbles to the deck. As he scrabbles for it, she stumbles to the edge of the deck and disappears backwards over the rail with a piercing shriek.

He slumps on the deck, panting, then heaves himself upright and peers over the rail. He sees nothing except the hull disappearing down into the blackness.

The ferry's bright, noisy café is crammed with passengers intent on enjoying the journey despite the storm raging outside. They stare and offer help as he pushes through them to the

corridor where the cabins are located. He's filthy, soaking, and shaking with cold and shock. His relief at escaping is overshadowed by grief for the cat.

As he fumbles in his suitcase for fresh clothes, he hears scratching and thumping outside the cabin door. Oh God, could it be the killer, somehow still alive? He grabs the gun and edges the door open.

The cat shoots in, jumps on the bed and starts to clean herself.

Elliott Finer

Illustration by Jai Rafiq, Art Group 4

The artist who illustrated the mogey in *A Furry Tale* was Susan Younger, Art Group 4

u3a Monthly Meeting 27th March

Victorian Street Life

This talk was given by Ben Harrison who some members may remember from his u3a talk on Victorian medicine some years ago. It was based largely on the work of Henry Mayhew, a journalist and social reformer who documented the lives of the working people in London with the aim of bringing about improvement in their conditions.



Henry Mayhew 1812-1887

"It is easy enough to be moral after a good dinner beside a snug coal fire."

Supporting a family in a comfortable middle-class lifestyle in London in the mid-19th Century is estimated to have required an income of at least £300 a year. By that definition, only about 1% of the population of London could be described as middle class. The middle classes patronised shops, but most people conducted their business - and many lived - on the streets which were accordingly noisy, crowded and smelly.

Mayhew divided the London poor into three types:-

- > those who will work
- > those who cannot work - the old, the frail, the sick, wounded soldiers etc
- > those that will not work - con men, criminals etc

Mayhew interviewed large numbers of the working poor about their work and living conditions and published their stories first in periodicals such as *Punch* (of which he was co-owner) and then in his book "London Labour and the London Poor" (1851). The talk was based on Mayhew's work accompanied by etchings from the book.

Both children and adults worked on the streets. Some of those highlighted in the talk were:-

The Flower Seller.



This orphaned girl of about fifteen years old bought flowers wholesale from Covent Garden in the morning and sold them in small bunches on the streets throughout the day. She made enough money to pay for food and basic lodgings for herself and her brother and sister. The alternative for these children would have been the workhouses where the brothers and sisters would have been separated.

The Costermongers

These traders lived a less hand-to-mouth existence. They sold fruit, vegetables, fish and poultry bought from the wholesale markets and sold retail from carts pulled by donkeys. They were loosely organised and patrolled the streets at night guarding each other's carts. Many of them were supporters of the Chartist movement.

The word costermonger is derived from "costard" - an ancient variety of apple - and "monger", an old word for a trader (fishmonger, ironmonger etc). Both the origins of cockney rhyming slang and the traditions of the pearly Kings and Queens have been attributed to the costermongers.



Other things bought and sold on the streets were all sorts of food, often adulterated, spices, quack medicines and toothache remedies and coffee from mobile stalls.



Other people made their living on the streets by scavenging, collecting waste products such as rags, dung and dog poo, or by the provision of services such as road crossing sweepers, mobile photographers and street entertainers. Mayhew estimated there were more than 1,000 street musicians in mid-Victorian London, among the more exotic of which were bands of minstrels known as "ethiopians" who performed in blackface. A favourite trick of street musicians was to seek out better-off houses with drawn curtains - signifying illness or death - and play loudly outside until one of the servants was sent to pay them to go away!

Living conditions of the labouring classes were generally poor, crowded and unhygienic with several households sharing one outside privy. Many could not afford even such housing and Mayhew estimates there were tens of thousands of homeless and rough sleepers, both men and women. A system of informal segregation appeared to operate whereby men tended to congregate in city squares while women preferred to sleep in the London parks where they had access to water in lakes and streams.

This was an interesting and well-illustrated introduction to the condition of the poor in Victorian London. One street trade not mentioned in the talk was prostitution which we know was very common in 19th century London. Perhaps Mayhew did not consider this to be "work" - or perhaps our speaker considered the subject too delicate for the ears of u3a members.

Androula Joannou

PG&S 10th Anniversary



Jenny Wilson (Speaker u3a Region) & Val Girling (Chair)



The Tea Ladies
Sarah Brandi, Jenny Silver



The Four C
Sue Cook, Val Girling, France

The Venue & Audience



Celebration



The Celebration Cake



Frances Halliday (Deputy Chair) and Val Girling (Chair)

Chairs
Frances Halliday, Mike Bleach -

Basil Clarke, Pat Bleach, Mike Bleach, Claudette Woolfson,
Sue Cook, Jenny Silver, Frances Halliday, Brenda Bond



DO YOU KNOW THESE FAMOUS ENFIELDERS?

The area around Enfield was the Royal Deer Hunting Park of Tudor kings, commemorated by the names of some of our major thoroughfares such as Chase Road and Chase Side. They could have been named Disraeli Avenue or William Pitt the Elder Lane, two illustrious Prime Ministers, who were former residents of the area. Or even John Keats Close after the poet who lived here too.

More recently, it's been the world of popular entertainment that has been populated by Enfielders and Southgateans. These include Reg Varney.



While playing Stan Butler in 'On The Buses', Reg famously opened the world's very first ATM at Barclays Bank in Enfield Town in 1967! Incidentally, in Reg's stand-up comedian days, his straight man was the young Benny Hill.

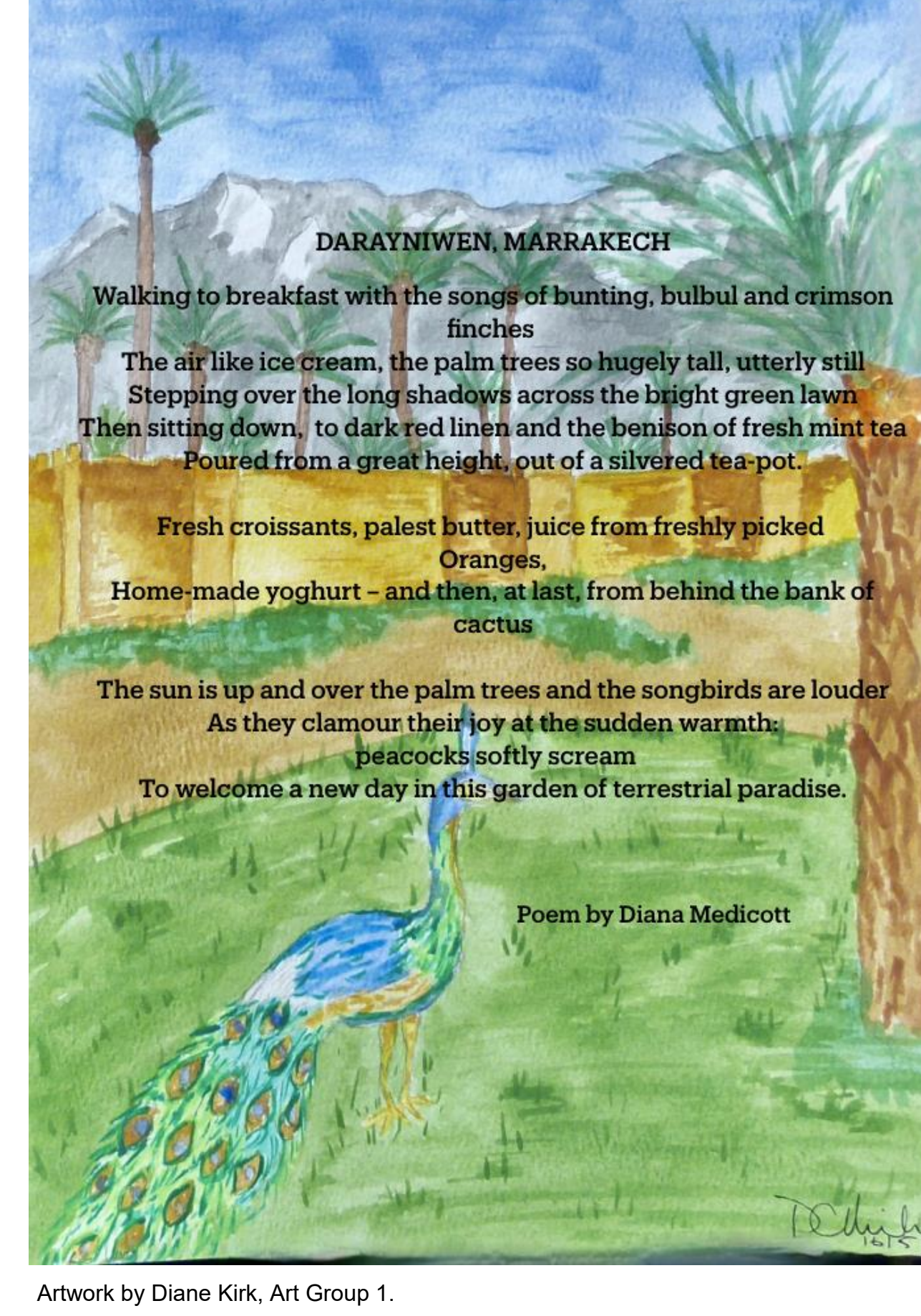
Warren Mitchell grew up in Southgate and was a song and dance man prior to gaining fame as Alf Garnet in 'Til Death Us Do Part'. The loud-mouth Cockney role was originally written for Peter Sellers who backed out at the last minute when offered a small part in the film 'The Ladykillers'. Ron Moody, alias Dickens' Fagin lived next door to The Cherry Tree pub on Southgate Green. Martin Shaw's home was just round the corner in The Mall while he starred in TV's 'The Professionals'. His daughter attended Latymer School.

Very versatile comedian Bruce Forsyth was born and bred in Enfield. They said he was 89 when he died, but no one was sure. They were still carbon-dating his birth certificate. I actually attended one of Bruce's birthday parties and there were 79 candles - on the slice that I had. Enfield-born David Jason's fame came as a comedy con man, Del Trotter, before he turned to straight acting as Detective Inspector Jack Frost. Though David has since moved from the area he still remains patron of Enfield's local amateur Dramatics Incognito Theatre.

Comedian Ted Ray and singer Frank Ifield enjoyed rubbing shoulders with their wealthy neighbours in Southgate's Broad Walk. Goonish musician George Chisolm, heavyweight actor Ray Winstone and Love Island presenter Caroline Flack were also from our section of North London. The amazing 'Back to Black' singer Amy Whitehouse and more recently multi-award winning Adele, were very proud of their Enfield background.

Simon Cowell claims Britain's Got Talent, but Enfield, Southgate and Palmers Green have certainly made a great contribution.

Brad Ashton.



DARAYNIWEN, MARRAKECH

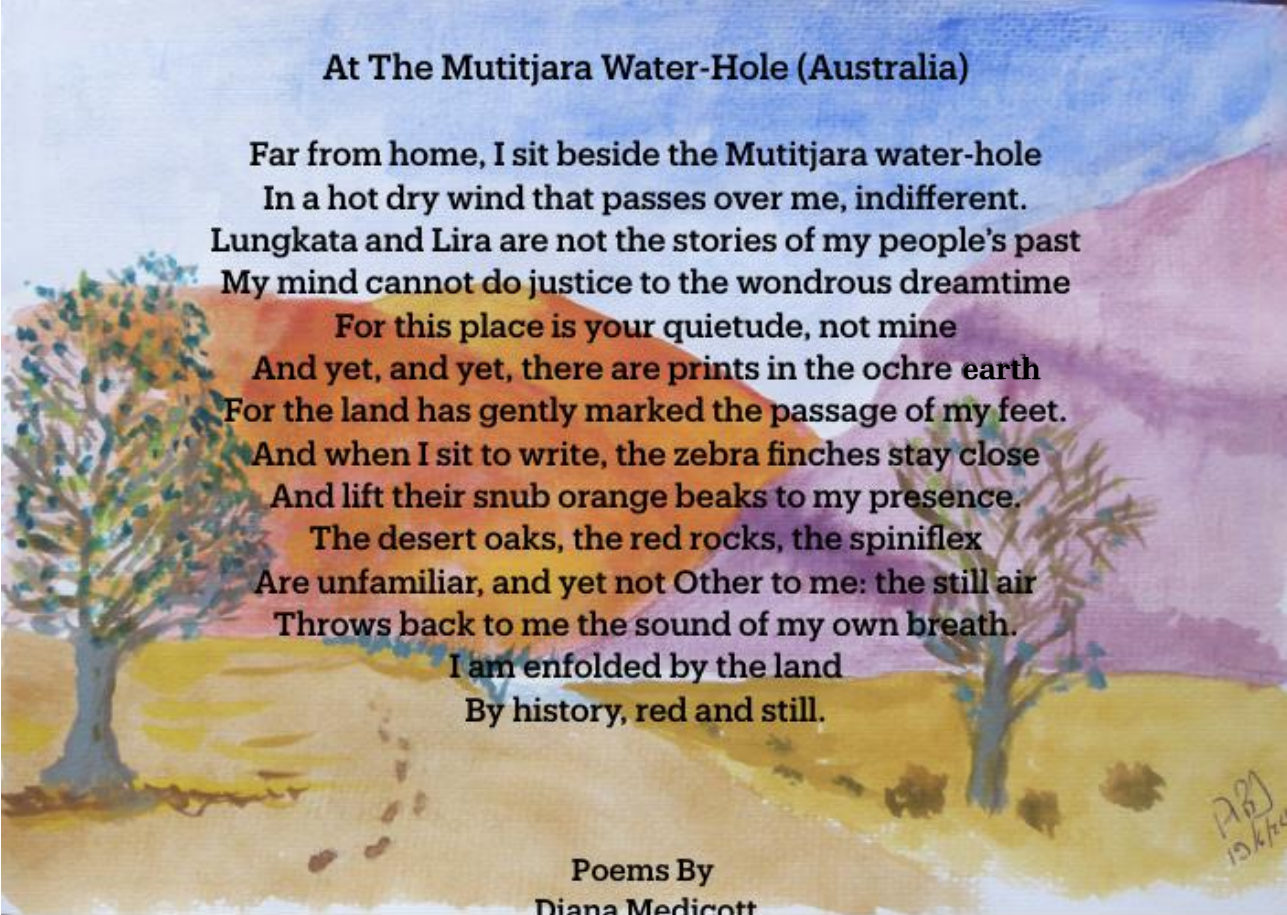
Walking to breakfast with the songs of bunting, bulbul and crimson
finches

The air like ice cream, the palm trees so hugely tall, utterly still
Stepping over the long shadows across the bright green lawn
Then sitting down, to dark red linen and the benison of fresh mint tea
Poured from a great height, out of a silvered tea-pot.

Fresh croissants, palest butter, juice from freshly picked
Oranges,
Home-made yoghurt - and then, at last, from behind the bank of
cactus

The sun is up and over the palm trees and the songbirds are louder
As they clamour their joy at the sudden warmth:
peacocks softly scream
To welcome a new day in this garden of terrestrial paradise.

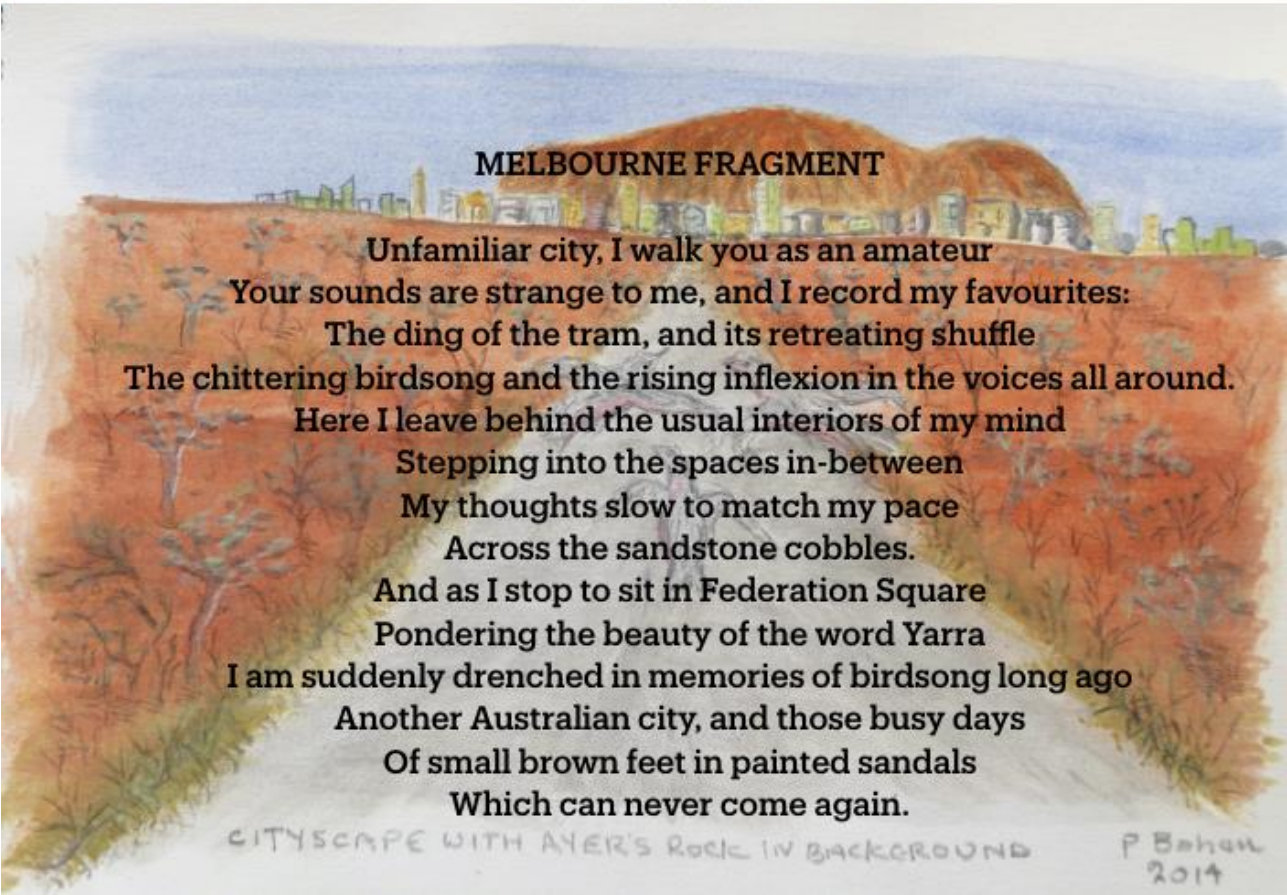
Poem by Diana Medicott



At The Mutitjara Water-Hole (Australia)

Far from home, I sit beside the Mutitjara water-hole
In a hot dry wind that passes over me, indifferent.
Lungkata and Lira are not the stories of my people's past
My mind cannot do justice to the wondrous dreamtime
For this place is your quietude, not mine
And yet, and yet, there are prints in the ochre earth
For the land has gently marked the passage of my feet.
And when I sit to write, the zebra finches stay close
And lift their snub orange beaks to my presence.
The desert oaks, the red rocks, the spiniflex
Are unfamiliar, and yet not Other to me: the still air
Throws back to me the sound of my own breath.
I am enfolded by the land
By history, red and still.

Poems By
Diana Medicott



MELBOURNE FRAGMENT

Unfamiliar city, I walk you as an amateur
Your sounds are strange to me, and I record my favourites:
The ding of the tram, and its retreating shuffle
The chittering birdsong and the rising inflexion in the voices all around.
Here I leave behind the usual interiors of my mind
Stepping into the spaces in-between
My thoughts slow to match my pace
Across the sandstone cobbles.
And as I stop to sit in Federation Square
Pondering the beauty of the word Yarra
I am suddenly drenched in memories of birdsong long ago
Another Australian city, and those busy days
Of small brown feet in painted sandals
Which can never come again.

CITYSCAPE WITH AYER'S ROCK IN BACKGROUND

P Bohun
2014

u3a Travel

Dorset – the Jurassic Coast and Brownsea Island

What a splendid holiday we had in the beautiful county of Dorset!

Departure day started with clouds and drizzle and by the time we reached our first destination, the historic town of Eton and its school favoured by Britain's elites, the rain



was making itself felt. However, undaunted, we went on a guided walk and learned much about the history and college life of the town.

Back on the coach we arrived a few hours later in Bournemouth and to our very comfortable and friendly hotel.

Day Two and the weather had perked up and the sun was shining. Our first stop was in Christchurch for a guided tour of the town's places of interest, after which we journeyed to the busy harbour at Poole, which is the second largest natural harbour in the world. There we boarded the ferry to Brownsea Island where the first ever Baden-Powell Scout and Guide camp was held and where we were hoping to see red squirrels as well as some of the many other

species of wildlife found there. The very knowledgeable and friendly ranger took us to see a recently discovered footprint of a dinosaur which had been authenticated by the Natural History Museum as being that of an Iguanodon, which lived 140-110 million years ago. Wow!! We were very fortunate to have lunch in the beautiful Castle dining hall as it isn't usually open to the public. Afterwards we carried on with the tour of the island and did see some red squirrels scampering about amongst the trees. Time for tea and an ice-cream before boarding the ferry for a pleasant and calm crossing to the mainland.

Day Three found us journeying again by coach to Swanage where we boarded a steam train to Norden. The train runs on an award-winning standard gauge preserved heritage railway. Very impressive! At Norden we took the coach to Corfe where we had lunch at a café that had a miniature model of the town in the garden.



There was then plenty of time to wander around the town or, for the more adventurous, climb to the top of the wonderful Corfe castle where the views are spectacular especially on a lovely sunny afternoon.

Then after a restful ride back to the hotel, we assembled for dinner and later a glass or two of one's preferred beverage served by a delightful and entertaining young lady.

Day Four saw us travelling by coach to Lyme Regis driven as always by Richard, our most cheerful, helpful and obliging driver. Here we visited the Dinosaurland Fossil Museum, which is owned and run by Palaeontologist Steve Davis. What he didn't know about fossils could be written on a postage stamp.

It was a most interesting visit made enjoyable by the humour and knowledge of a man



passionate about his subject. In the afternoon we had a very pleasant drive through the lovely Dorset countryside to the Jurassic coast where we had the opportunity to walk along the beach hunting for fossils. Unfortunately none were found but it was fun looking.

Day Five, was departure day. We left the Hotel Collingwood for the last time.

Our final stop was at Kingston Lacy, a National Trust property that houses many paintings by renowned artists. There we had plenty of time to explore the extensive and beautifully kept grounds surrounding the house and then time for a refreshing cup of tea and an ice -cream before we climbed aboard the coach and were homeward bound.

It had been a very enjoyable and interesting trip. Thanks to Shirley all went smoothly but a lot of hard work went into making it so.

I for one had a great time.

Ann Case.



u3a Visits

Bank of England Museum 25th March 2024

We received a friendly welcome from our guide who gave a very interesting talk about the history of the Bank of England and its main functions and roles today. The bank exists to ensure monetary stability so that there are stable prices and confidence in the currency and to also ensure financial stability so that it can detect and reduce threats to the financial system. It was founded on 27th July 1694 as a private bank to manage the government's debt. Its motto was 'to promote the public good and benefit of our people'.

The bank opened on 1st August 1694 in Mercer's Hall, Cheapside, before moving to Threadneedle Street in 1734. It was designed by architect George Sampson in the Palladian Style. The bank acquired adjacent properties over a period of a hundred years, and it was extended by the architect Sir John Soane to cover a 3.5-acre site. The bank remained more or less unchanged until it was demolished, and the architect Sir Herbert Baker designed a new one between 1925-1939. The museum shows the history of its architecture in the displays.

Banknotes have been produced since the 1600s. The bank's collection includes examples of every banknote that the bank has ever made. It holds historic artwork designs of bank notes, machinery and equipment relating to the production of bank notes and counterfeit and imitation notes, some of which you can see in the Banknote Gallery.

We were able to see and hold banknotes which were contained within large sheets of see-through wallets. Bank notes are now made from polymer, a thin and flexible plastic material. The bank has incorporated a number of anti-fraud designs within the notes to make them more difficult to counterfeit. They have intricate designs, serial numbers and portraits which are hard to forge and foil metallic holograms to make them hard to reproduce with colour copying machines. Different parts of the bank notes are printed in different ways, such as raised text, to make them harder to copy too.



The bank looks after 400,000 gold bars worth billions of pounds in nine underground vaults. In the museum, visitors can try to lift a gold bar. Gold is an important asset of foreign exchange reserves so the bank supports financial stability by providing central banks with access to the liquidity of the London gold market.

The display on the modern economy explores the bank's role in this. We were also able to look at 'The Future of Money' temporary exhibition. With digital and card payments on the rise will we still need cash? In 2011, 55% of payments were made in cash. However, in 2022 this fell to 14% and it is estimated that by 2032 it will drop to 7%.

Louise Woodford

The Supreme Court 12th April 2024.

What is the Supreme Court? Where is it located? What cases does it hear? How does it relate to the other UK Courts? Which judges sit on it? Does it have a jury?

All these questions and many more were answered for the 27 members of the PG&S u3a by our guide, Daisy Snooks.

The Supreme Court was created by the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005 which completed the separation of powers – the legislature from the judiciary – in the UK. Its function is different from other legal courts in that its focus is the interpretation and development of law. Cases are referred to it from other courts across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, when there is uncertainty about how the law should be applied in cases of public importance, and what precedent the lower courts should follow whether civil or criminal. Among the most publicised cases it has heard are: in 2017 when it ruled that invocation of Article 50 to withdraw from the EU had to have Parliament's permission, in 2018 when civil partnerships to heterosexual couples were extended, in 2022 when it ruled that the Scottish Parliament did not have the power to legislate for a second independence referendum, and in 2023 when it held that the Government's Rwanda Scheme was unlawful.



The Supreme Court is located in a very impressive neo-Gothic building in Parliament Square opposite the Houses of Parliament. Designed by James Gibson and originally built in 1913 for the Middlesex County Council, it subsequently became home to quarter-session courts and then a Crown Court. Extensive renovation and restructuring took place for its new function as the Supreme Court. However, care was taken to retain and restore many of its original features, like the huge relief frieze at the front, depicting historical scenes of legal importance, the beautiful stained glass windows and its art collection.

There are 12 Supreme Court justices. Generally, cases are heard by a panel of five justices, but always an odd number. Justices have previously held high judicial office, but in the Supreme Court sittings, they wear ordinary business suits, as do the lawyers presenting the case and the court officials.

Each of the three comfortable courtrooms has its own unique interior architecture and design features, united by symbolic representations of the four nations that are unified under the Crown. All are suffused by light, from large windows and interior glass etched screens instead of solid walls. The extensive art collection is distributed around the building. It mainly consists of traditional legal portraits, but also has many contemporary artworks, including colourful textile wall hangings, vibrant paintings and glass sculptures. In Courtroom 2 there are four very large photographic prints on the back wall, commemorating the first 100 years of women in law.

There is no dock, no witness stand, and no jury box. The 'facts of the case' and issues of 'guilt' and 'innocence' have been dealt with in lower courts. Supreme Court Justices discuss points of law, so the courtrooms are designed to encourage learned debate among scholarly practitioners. The courtrooms are also designed to promote the principle

of open justice – ‘Justice should not only be done but should be seen to be done’. So considerable efforts have been made to communicate to the public what the Court does. There are numerous cameras and recording facilities in every courtroom. Sessions are filmed and routinely broadcast, including live footage and live stream. The website is replete with documentation about and recordings of cases.

Thought has also given to physical access to the building. There is a comfortable public seating area behind the lawyers in each court for about 28 people to observe a case.



Our 27 u3a members did not restrict themselves to this area, but spread themselves about, even taking over the Justices’ chairs!

There is access for wheelchair and other mobility needs, assistance dogs, and a built-in hearing loop system.

A final treat was a visit to the magnificent triple-height library, not normally open to the public.



Below the striking vaulted fan ceiling, dark wood shelves are offset by red leather reading surfaces and a circular wood and glass balustrade is engraved with pithy quotes chosen by the Justices themselves. It houses some rare legal books and documents.

Certainly, the Supreme Court has none of the intimidating, authoritarian atmosphere of the lower courts, but is a rather beautiful, comfortable and harmonious building. But maybe that is because it has no potentially guilty felons that it needs to frighten!

You needed to concentrate, but it was a most stimulating, educational and enjoyable excursion.

LIST OF GROUPS

Arts and Crafts

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

Games and Puzzles

Board Games
Bridge for Beginners
Bridge for Improvers (2)
Bridge Introduction
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 Course
Science, Nature, Technology (2)

History

Historical Pub Walks
History
History - A Sideways Look
Remember When

Out and About

Bowls
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 (5)
Creative Writing - Reading
Play Reading (2)
Poetry

Theatre and Film

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



To find out more about these groups and to contact the group convener, visit the website at pgs.u3asite.uk

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