

Palmers Green & Southgate u3a

# YOUR u3a MAGAZINE



Artwork by Felicity Pegg

Summer 2025

## Chairman's Message

Dear Member,

As we approach the AGM, it's a good opportunity to reflect on my eight years in Palmers Green and Southgate u3a. Four years ago, I became Chair of the Executive Committee, and I look back with some sense of satisfaction at what has been achieved.

There was a real need to increase membership after the lockdown ended and in four years I managed to reach a membership of 570, an increase of 70%! To achieve this, I created an Outreach Team to arrange social events. This was a brand-new venture for us – having events which were at the weekend, in the evening and purely social!

We started with a small event but improved our systems and now operate like a well-oiled machine, managing to host the latest quiz for 113 guests with ease at our larger venue, Christ the King Church Hall. Quizzes are firm favourites, interwoven with other events such as our fabulous Bollywood evening and our Barn Dances. Our last free Tea Party was attended by 160 people!

Now we have TWO free Tea Parties firmly in the calendar at Christmas and in the Summer. Please keep bringing your non-member friends and encourage them to join us.

I introduced Welcome Teas to show new members what we have to offer and explain how we run. Many have expressed just how helpful these are and have been thrilled to sign up and join groups at this event, making new friends within weeks of joining.

Other measures such as improving the quality of the quarterly magazine have been instrumental in providing a sense of community, celebrating achievements and acting as a great vehicle for advertising what PGS offer. The quality of Speakers at our Monthly Meetings has improved and increased our regular attendance to over a hundred.

I feel I still have a lot to give to PG&S u3a and hope I can count on your support to allow me to continue my work as always with commitment and enthusiasm.

Val



## U3A Member Profile: Nigel Spencer-Knott



I done it, officer. I got to interview Chief Superintendent Nigel Spencer-Knott! It's a fair cop.

A relatively new recruit to u3a, Nigel was persuaded to join by friends, after he had sadly lost his wife two years ago. He enjoys the social events and is slowly finding his way around the various groups.

Nigel was born in Cape Town. His father was in the Navy in WWII and had been put in charge of Freetown Docks, stopping people from jumping ship on their way to India. Unusually for a woman, his mother had got a degree in the 1930s and the Foreign Office also posted her to Africa to work alongside Graham Greene as a Nazi watcher.

Back in the UK after the war, his father used his demob money to buy a 300-acre farm in Surrey. His mother wrote a book about the venture, called *Fools Rush In*, which pretty much gives away how they found farm life. The upside was that the book sold well and paid for Nigel's schooling. Never deterred, after two years on the farm, the Spencer-Knotts gamely bought another which was a bit more successful. Then, in a change of direction, Nigel's mother opened a launderette in Godalming, the first in the UK and, you guessed it, wrote a book about that too: *Keep It Clean* by Tina Spencer-Knott.

In 1954, Tina spotted a Government advertisement for somebody to manage the fast-developing Nigerian rice growing industry. So off they went, back to Africa. Nigel says, 'Mum was the brains and Dad did the practical stuff'. Nigel, his brother and his sister were sent to boarding schools in different parts of England. The Surrey farmhouse was let but vacated during school holidays to allow Nigel's parents to spend time with their children.

The Wind of Change sweeping across Africa from 1959 brought a new government to Nigeria and the Spencer-Knotts packed their bags again. Nigel left school and joined the newly founded Met Police Cadet Corps. He started part-time A levels in English, French and German at college in Hendon but there were too many other things to do – basketball, squash, hockey, girlfriends - and the police then didn't believe so much in further education. At nineteen, he gave up college to become a full time PC.

He worked in Bow Road in east London and later found that Judith, his future wife, was in preliminary nurse training about four doors along from the station! Nigel describes police work as fabulous for a curious person. 'The prevention of crime is so much more important than all the effort you put into catching somebody only for them to get a conditional discharge.' He's a firm believer in the bobby on the beat and more actual police stations.

After three years as a PC, he applied for the CID, joining Special Branch at Scotland Yard. This was more like it! Special Branch was 200-300 people working without supervision or clocking on and

off and doing all the foreign work for the whole country. Languages were vital for liaising with Interpol. Information on a person under investigation could come from Vienna, to Rome, to Paris and then to London and someone had to translate at each step. Later of course the same task could be done almost instantly online. PC vs PC!

Judith and Nigel married in 1966. They got a mortgage and bought their first house in Ilford. Judith worked as a District Nurse near home. She became a specialist breast care nurse and set up the Epping breast screening service and support group, the first in country, and was a major force behind the Macmillan coffee mornings.

Nigel passed the Sergeant's exam, gratified to have the pay rise even though it meant late nights again and leaving his enjoyable post in the CID. Nigel sighed, 'Of course shortly after that, the rules changed and I could have stayed in Special Branch as a Detective Sergeant!'

Nigel's career was progressing apace and he was selected for the Accelerated Promotion

Course to Inspector after two years - at the age of twenty-five, the youngest in the country.

Promoted to Superintendent at Kentish Town Police Station, he took responsibility for coordinating all the emergency services for the areas covered by London's six main rail stations.



Another major achievement as Superintendent followed the conviction of a man who had killed his second wife. He had attempted to murder his first wife by pouring Friday night's fish fat over her but his family succeeded in moving him away from London to Bradford. He returned after about five years, re-married and murdered wife number two.

Nigel was then Chair of the Superintendents' Association, and this case became his stimulus to set up a nationwide network of domestic violence units. Within months, every police division had a domestic violence unit with at least two operational officers, who investigated each report of domestic violence and closely monitored every situation as a preventive measure. At that time 24% of assaults were domestic so

women's safety and security improved with this early police intervention. Nigel is justifiably proud of what he achieved. Paul Condon, now Lord Condon, was then Commissioner of the Met and he told Nigel, 'We can't spare two officers per division.' But, Nigel says, 'I had to tell him that it was happening already!'

Nigel Spencer-Knott retired with the rank of Chief Superintendent. At New Scotland Yard, he had become adept at assessing the character and checking the background of people for their danger to this country or to others, so he decided to apply these skills to personnel recruitment. He started *Personnel Screening Services*, which became incorporated in 2002 as *Who's Really Who?* He recalled one applicant who was operations head of a security company and tried to beef up his CV to get the chief executive job. 'He claimed he had MBA honours... but there is no such thing! He said he had military medals ...never ...all made up!'



Nigel is an enthusiastic sportsman, playing hockey since his twenties, with what he modestly describes as 'just better than average' abilities. A member of Southgate Hockey Club, his hockey has taken him to Europe, South America and Australia, playing for LX England in the over 60s, over 70s and over 80s. 'You've got to be competitive or there's no point!', he says.

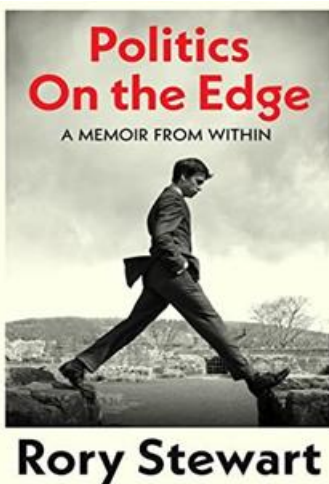
With his two children living nearby, and two grandchildren and a great grandchild, he is always busy. He says that he used to admire the work of investigative journalists and at one time he fancied being one but, 'They're workaholics and I'm not. I'm too lazy.' Somehow, I doubt that!

Interviewer - Edward Doff

## Book Review

### Politics - a Review at the Edge

I've never quite understood reviews: book, cinema or theatre. Are they meant to be the outpourings of someone's opinion or a BBC-style assessment of all points of view? Just to say that my review of *Politics at the Edge* by Rory Stewart was inspired by my disappointment at finishing the book. It left me turning the pages at the end as if I was reading a Jo Nesbo crime novel.



Rory Stewart is a former Conservative MP, government minister and party leadership contender and this autobiography can either be described as 'refreshing candour or 'Rory's revenge'. After he lost the leadership election to Johnson, Rory seems to have been booted out of the party for expressing views about Brexit that departed from being 'on message'. Personally, I enjoyed the candour and the genuine insight he provides into why governments (regardless of party) struggle to achieve anything worthwhile.

Unlike some in politics, Rory Stewart became an MP after a varied career including foreign service in Iraq, Indonesia etc and head of a

successful NGO (a voluntary organisation) in Afghanistan. He worked hard to achieve this first rung on the political ladder as the then Prime Minister, Cameron, made it clear that Rory was not on the favoured candidate list. That is the first thing to say about the writer. He is not a man to give up and this is reflected throughout his political experiences including the bitter end where he alone stands up and gives his genuine opinion whilst other PM candidates hedge their bets with a view to a post in the Johnson government.

From the get-go Rory had to work hard to gain the nomination as Conservative candidate in Penrith and then be elected as MP. He is actually from north of the border and literally walks the constituency to get his face known. Fortunately, he is from a rural area and has a very good understanding of the wide range of rural issues from dodgy broadband connections to the challenges of the farming community. Arrival in Parliament presented Rory with his first shock. He thought he would be using his international background to contribute to policy discussions but quickly learned that MPs are just lobby fodder. He isn't there to take part in discussion – just to vote for the Government line.

Rory was ambitious to, as the cliché goes, 'make a difference' and applied to join the Foreign Affairs Committee to put his extensive overseas experience to good use. He doesn't use the phrase but clearly some of his Tory colleagues thought he was 'a jumped up little upstart' from an Outback constituency. Rory makes a valiant attempt to stand up for his views over a vote for reforming the House of Lords and is promptly informed by Chancellor George Osborne that he has just scuppered his chances of promotion for 5 years. It wasn't a lie.



Promotion eventually comes his way, and Rory held several government posts in just 4 years under David Cameron and Theresa May. This gives the first clue about the ineffectiveness of government. He just about finds his way to the coffee machine and then gets moved on and

not necessarily to a job relating to his background or interests.



This was the case when he became Prisons Minister. He was clearly appalled at the life experienced by both prisoners and prison staff and was determined to improve it by specific actions, not wishy-washy policies built on meaningless jargon. He visited prisons and generated concrete proposals for improvement.

But to civil servants and prison professionals the thoughts of Prison Minister Stewart were about as welcome as a prison breakout. They worked hard to frustrate the ministerial wishes and Rory was transferred to yet another job before a final showdown. Those ministers that

you see interviewed on TV with their earnest claims: are they really just hot air and window-dressing? Is it 'Yes Minister' or, as the French have it: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

Conservative, Labour, Lib Dem etc. are just badges of convenience and behind each sits a spectrum of opinions. Rory Stewart sees himself as a One Nation Conservative: someone who might have all the hallmarks such as private school, Oxbridge etc. but with the ability to encompass the breadth of our diverse society. He is also an academic (currently a professor at Yale University) and addresses issues from an evidentiary rather than ideological perspective. So voting for the 'party line' regardless is not his way. How refreshing. But that means, in the view of a former PM, not being a team player and hence you are a w\*n\*er. Not a book for the faint-hearted, although Rory does a lot of people favours by not attributing names – such as the MP who told him to f-word off. Is this what they call a 'candid expose'?

Rory Stewart is a lively and engaging writer. I read an earlier book about his walk across Afghanistan with a Kalashnikov-clad Afghan on every corner. I was drawn in immediately I started to read about this amazing yet apparently crazy journey. Doubtless, a professional reviewer would employ a lexicon for words to talk about Stewart's writing, but by page two of some Booker prize-winning titles, I have been dragged to the point of needing that lexicon to understand what I was reading! We are not talking about dumbing down here. Rory is well-educated and the occasional word slipped past my vocabulary but it was like stumbling over a pebble on a well-maintained pathway. It made no difference to my progress and continued enjoyment.

Although our politics are different, I have only admiration for someone who refuses to take the easy option. This is book about integrity; something that seems like an endangered species in the world of politics. Does this book just add another level to the cynicism that many people feel about their politicians? Arguable. I'd prefer to see it as a message of hope that there are some genuine people in politics not simply for self-serving reasons. I'm sure they remember Rory Stewart in his constituency, Penrith, where he seems to have been successful. But his ambition was to make that difference at national level and in the end he was thwarted. I thoroughly enjoyed his journey and couldn't put the book down right to the final pages.

Rory Stewart may have been consigned to the pile of political memorabilia, but some might suggest he was the best PM we never had. Perhaps his next book might be a counterfactual history about Brexit, the final deal, and the COVID years with himself in a leading role. I look forward to reading what might have been.

Robin Charnley



## Lost in Translation The Culture Wars come to New Zealand

Last year I went to New Zealand for the fourth time to spend Christmas 2024 with my son, Dilip, and daughter-in-law, Imani, who live in Auckland. Dilip moved there with his work in 2009 and has never looked back. Not surprisingly, because New Zealand is a beautiful, clean and peaceful country with a small population, where you can enjoy excellent home-grown food and wine, lovely beaches, and a healthy, outdoor lifestyle. The tropical climate allows exotic flowers to grow, such as bougainvillea, gardenia, agapanthus, hibiscus and flowering trees like the jacaranda and the Pohutukawa. Huge agapanthus flowers self-seed everywhere, and can be seen even along motorways. We visited the beautiful themed gardens at Hamilton, the botanical gardens at Wellington and the Zealandia conservation site, also in Wellington.



Our first visit was in 2011 when Dilip was living in Mount Maunganui in the Bay of Plenty. We travelled all around the South Island, visiting Christchurch just before the earthquake, Queenstown, Milford Sound and Mt Cook. During our stay we did the usual tourist things, like going to a Māori show and spending a day with the Tamaki Heritage Experience at a simulated Māori village, where we were met in the traditional way with a challenge of peace ('Te wero'). Once accepted into the village, we were treated to a delicious meal cooked underground for several hours in a 'hangi', followed by a show and talks.



That was all very entertaining, but during this last visit I became aware of a change in the attitude to the 914,400 Māori people who make up 17.1% of the current population. As you go through the airport you notice that all public signs are written in the Māori language first, then in English underneath. New Zealand is called 'Te Aotearoa'. This change came after my last Christmas visit in 2016 and is mostly down to Jacinda Ardern, the Labour Prime Minister from 2017 – 2023. She championed the cause of the Māori people in their quest for a higher status in society.

It all began with a protest about the misunderstanding of the terminology in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Until then Māori history was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when they arrived in New Zealand from Eastern Polynesia in 'wakas' (longboats) and settled in both islands, establishing their unique and spiritual culture, trading locally and overseas and generally making the islands their homeland. Their language was only spoken at that time, but British missionaries came and developed a written version. Chiefs had authority over their own areas, but there was no central ruler over the country. The word 'sovereignty' had no direct translation in Māori, so the translators of the English text used the Māori word 'kawanatanga', meaning 'governance', which was in current use. By signing the Māori text, Māori leaders gave the Queen 'te kawanatanga katoa' or complete government and sovereignty over their land. There can be little doubt that the chiefs who signed the Treaty

expected to enter into some kind of partnership and power-sharing in the new system, but they didn't. It is also not certain if the Maori text clearly conveyed the implications of exclusive Crown purchase either, but much of their land was subsequently bought up by the Europeans.



The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 recognized the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand law for the first time and established the Waitangi Tribunal. Under this act, any Māori can bring a claim to the tribunal about a Crown policy or practice that is inconsistent with the principles of the Treaty.

This was the start of the reparations, and in 1987 Māori became an official language; seven seats out of 120 in Parliament are reserved for Māori Party politicians. Since then the Māori have continued to seek redress for what Jacinda called 'horrific and needless acts of war and land confiscation' by past NZ governments. In December 2022 she delivered an official apology, granted 155m NZ dollars for financial and commercial redress and the return of 36 sites of cultural significance to the Māori. They pushed to get the official name of New Zealand changed to Aotearoa, but that hasn't happened yet. What has happened, though, is the introduction of various pro-Māori policies such as sensitive healthcare, (this allows a Māori patient the right to be seen by a Māori doctor), positive discrimination and the requirement for staff in public sector organisations to learn enough Māori to be able to introduce themselves in the language when in an official meeting. Jacinda also wanted the Māori language to be taught in all schools by 2025, but that hasn't happened yet.



Things have changed a lot since Jacinda said she was burnt out and moved to the USA, where she works as a Fellow at Harvard in the Kennedy School's Centre for Public Leadership. The present NZ government is a coalition of 3 conservative and centre-right parties, led by Christopher Luxon, the Prime Minister. He has a very different approach. He recently tabled the Treaty Principles Bill to reverse at least 12 of the pro-Māori policies and initiatives, but this has been vigorously rejected by the opposition and by the Māori themselves, of course. There were demonstrations and a week-long protest outside the 'Beehive', i.e. the new Parliament building in Wellington, soon after I got back. Some people are of the view, however, that positive discrimination has gone a bit too far, given the relatively small proportion of people with genuine Māori heritage. They suspect also that some people are jumping on the bandwagon and making very tenuous claims to Māori heritage.



The Treaty Principles Bill went through Parliament and was defeated after the second reading by 112 votes to 11. Only ACT (The Association of Consumers and Taxpayers), which has the same values as the National Party, voted for it.

## A Poetic Fantasy

### Summer's Time

Summer watched with envy from the sidelines as Spring revelled in spreading daffodils and crocuses along wayside hedgerows and town parks thirsty for colour.

Spring excelled herself when huge creamy pink magnolias bloomed and hugged herself with delight as avenues of almond and cherry blossom festooned suburban London with swathes of pink.

But Winter was spiteful and sharp frosts nipped at fat buds that rotted on the bough before they could bloom. Petals rotted quickly, slimy underfoot, swept roughly away. Camellias dripped like used teabags on their glossy-leaved bushes.

Spring tried hard to rally but soon lost her grip and beaten, wept amid spring blooms, her tears creating a rainbow in the sky - a last flash of defiance.



Summer saw her chance. As Spring languished, defeated among rotting petals, Summer's bonds faded away. She'd show Spring what she was capable of!! She strained against her bonds until at last they gave way and Summer burst forth in an exuberance of colour and perfume.

Tentative spring greens matured into full-blown rich verdancy. Carpets of bluebells bloomed as she set out to paint the woods. Star-shaped wood anemones and wild garlic globes gleamed in the dappled shade. Trees responded gladly to Summer's call and horse chestnuts waved their bright green hands and raised huge, creamy candles in her honour.

Summer sprinkled daisies and sweet clover in lawns, quietly cursed by keen, over-zealous gardeners. Bright dandelions cheered up wayside verges and forget-me-nots bloomed between, in a sumptuous blue froth.

She coaxed foxgloves to throw up their trumpet towers- they had to hurry – time was of the essence – Summer's time so brief.

Summer appealed to Rose's vanity and Rose rampaged over hedgerows and pergolas alike, reaching up to the sun and bursting forth in a riot of carmine, scarlet, vermillion and gold.

Perfume from starlike jasmine and honeysuckle drifted heavily on the evening air as lovers dallied in the dusk.

Fat, furry bees loved Summer and dripped warm, sweet honey for her delight. Fluttering butterflies brought nectar for her to drink, and she thrived and spread her glories.

Cerulean sky was reflected in her eyes and honeysuckle twined around her golden head.

She lay back in the warm sunshine and was happy.

So happy in her glorious summer's time – but oh, too short ...



Text by Val Girling

Illustrations by AI

## British Summer Time

If I were to say the word, 'Summertime' to you, I wonder what thoughts it might provoke. Sunshine? Ice cream? Holidays at the seaside? The sound of a lawnmower? The Mungo Jerry hit in 1970 or perhaps the aria from Gershwin's opera 'Porgy and Bess'? For me, it would certainly be The Great Game of Cricket.

If I were to follow up with "British Summer Time", then it might suggest long warm evenings dining outside with family and friends, and high humidity making sleeping at night uncomfortable. Alternatively it may generate a feeling of, "Oh no, this piece is going to be a bit dry." Hopefully, this will prove otherwise.

British Summer Time (BST) applies in the UK and is when civil time is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). This means our mornings have one hour less daylight, and our evenings one hour more. It is also known as Daylight Saving Time (DST). Every year, BST begins at 01.00 GMT on the last Sunday of March and ends at 02.00 BST on the last Sunday of October.

I'm sure everyone remembers their parents telling them as young children that the easy way to remember how the clocks change is that in March clocks "Spring" forward, and in Autumn they "Fall" back.

It seems that adapting time to respond to seasonal daylighting changes goes back to Roman times, but the idea of a 'summer time' or a 'daylight saving time' came to more prominence when documented in 1784 by Benjamin Franklin, the American inventor, scientist and statesman in a light-hearted essay. George Hudson, an English-born entomologist who lived most of his life in New Zealand, is acknowledged as the first to push for modern-day DST. In 1895 he presented a paper to the Wellington Philosophical Society proposing a two-hour daylight saving adjustment.

In 1907, a serious proposal was suggested by William Willett, a Master Builder from Kent. So strongly did he feel about the under-use of daylight on summer mornings that he self-published a pamphlet, pointedly entitled "The Waste of Daylight". This proposed that clocks in Britain should be advanced by 80 minutes in four equal stages of 20 minutes each Sunday during April and then reversed in the same fashion in September. A young Winston Churchill promoted the idea, but it was not until the First World War, when pressures on development, productivity and testing accelerated lateral thinking that it was looked into much more seriously.

Sadly for Willett, he did not see his hopes materialise as he died just a year before Germany, in 1916, became the pioneer in adopting the principle. Britain and other countries involved in the War followed very shortly afterwards, and soon many nations followed suit. Willett is commemorated in Petts Wood, Kent, by a sundial (appropriately set permanently to DST) and a pub – *The Daylight Inn*. Furthermore, he would no doubt have been very proud of his great, great grandson being Chris Martin of Coldplay.

During the Second World War, to increase productivity, British Double Summer Time was temporarily introduced, while in Winter one hour ahead was adopted. After the war, BST was reinstated, and has applied ever since, apart from in the summer of 1947 (due to severe fuel shortages the previous winter) and briefly in 1968 – 71 when the clocks were put forward, but not put back in Autumn (known as British Standard Time). No benefits were identified so it was returned to normal.

The British Summer Time Act itself was in fact passed as recently as 1972, stating that clocks be put forward in late March, subject to the date of Easter, and back in late October. From 2002 to try to establish a consistency for clock changing, the EU required all member states (except Iceland which has particular climatic characteristics) to adjust clocks on the last Sundays of March and October.

So that is a brief synopsis of good old British Summer Time. I am now heading to Lord's for the cricket and hoping they don't go off for bad light.

## Monthly Meeting Talk

### The Life and Crimes of Double Agent Zigzag

The speaker was former police officer, Paul Barwick, (who had had an interesting career himself). He gave us a fascinating account of the life history of double agent Eddie Chapman, the only British citizen to have been awarded an Iron Cross.



Edward (Eddie) Arnold Chapman was born in Burnopfield, County Durham in 1914. He had little formal education and was a rebel from an early age. When he was 17, he joined the Second Battalion of the Coldstream Guards but soon became bored with his duties and went AWOL after nine months. The army quickly caught up with him, he was arrested, sentenced to 84 days in Aldershot military

prison and, on release, received a dishonourable discharge.

Seemingly attracted by its “seedy” reputation, Eddie then moved to Soho where he initially undertook a number of casual jobs before turning to petty crime and serving several prison sentences. Later he became a member of the “Jelly Gang”, named for their use of gelignite to open safes, and was arrested in Scotland for safe-cracking at the headquarters of the Edinburgh Co-operative Society. Let out on bail, Eddie fled to Jersey with his then girlfriend, Betty Farmer, but was spotted by plain-clothes police while the pair were dining in style at the Hotel de la Plage. He is said to have told her, “I have to go now,” before making his escape by jumping through a closed window. He was later arrested for burglary and began a two-year sentence in a Jersey prison – ironically sparing him the much longer term he would have served on the mainland for absconding. During the time he was in prison, the Channel Islands were invaded by Nazi Germany and Eddie wrote to the head of the occupying forces offering his services as a spy. Once accepted in this role, he was moved to France and placed under the control of Captain Stephan von Gröning, head of the German Secret Service in Nantes.



The two men were to become lifelong friends. Eddie was given the codename *Fritz* and trained in the use of explosives, radio communication and parachute jumping. He also became a fluent German speaker.

The plan was to dispatch him back to Britain to commit acts of sabotage and, in December 1942, he was given the task of blowing up the de Havilland aircraft factory in Hatfield where

Mosquito bombers were manufactured. He was flown from Le Bourget but missed the intended landing site when he became stuck in the hatch as he tried to leave the aircraft with his bulky parachute. Finally detaching himself, he landed some 25 miles away near Ely, surrendered to the local police and offered his services to MI5.

Eddie was sent then to Latchmere House in Surrey, the British interrogation centre for captured German agents. After hearing his story, MI5 decided to use him as a double agent, he was given the codename *Agent Zigzag* (a reference to his erratic history) and assigned Ronnie Reed as his case officer.



Chapman filed by MI5

During the night of 29<sup>th</sup> January 1943, a team of camouflage experts set up an elaborately faked scene made from wood and papier-mâché showing the aftermath of a major bomb



explosion at the de Havilland factory. Photographs of the “devastation” taken by German reconnaissance aircraft were sufficiently convincing to indicate that Eddie had successfully carried out his mission.

He was then instructed by his German handlers to make his way to the neutral port of Lisbon. So, with the assistance of Ronnie Reed and the Captain, and armed with a false identity, he joined the crew of the Merchant Navy ship *The City of Lancaster* bound for Portugal. As arranged, Eddie jumped ship on arrival at the destination and reported to the German Embassy. He was subsequently sent to Nazi occupied Norway

where he taught for over a year at a spy school in Oslo. During this time he was extensively debriefed about the damage he had supposedly done to the de Havilland factory and awarded the Iron Cross for his services to the Third Reich.

In June 1944 Eddie was sent back to Britain to report on the accuracy of the German bombing raids on Central London. Although many bombs fell short, landing in South London and the Kent countryside, Eddie always confirmed that the intended target sites had been hit. As a result of this disinformation, the Germans did not correct their flight plans and probably less harm was done than might have been the case.



Once back in Britain, however, Eddie returned to his former criminal ways. Ronnie Reed’s successor did not trust him and in November 1944 he was dismissed by MI5. He was given a

severance payment of £6,000, allowed to keep £1,000 of the money he had been given by the Germans and granted a pardon for all his pre-war “activities”. Although subsequently arrested on a number of occasions, he never went to prison again – allegedly because MI5 always supplied a confidential reference confirming his contribution to the war effort.

Eddie was a notorious womaniser, known to have had many affairs and at least one illegitimate child. After the war, however, he was reunited with Betty Farmer, the woman he had so spectacularly abandoned in the dining room of the Hotel de la Plage in Jersey. The couple married and had 50 rather turbulent years together before Eddie died in 1997. It is said that a special guest attended their daughter’s wedding – Eddie’s old friend Stephan von Gröning.

Paul Barwick completed his talk by saying that Eddie Chapman remained an enigma to the end of his days. Which side was he really on? Probably only his own....

Pam McAthey

### **u3a Visit**

## **Highgate Cemetery Tour**

On a wonderfully sunny day, the u3a group met at Archway Station and strolled through the lovely Waterlow Park to the West side entrance of Highgate Cemetery on Swain’s Lane. We entered via the lovely Colonnade Courtyard. There were tables and chairs and a refreshments van.



Highgate is one of the earliest private garden cemeteries in England. Our guide began by explaining the need for cemeteries during the 1800s as church graveyards became overcrowded and unsanitary, with outbreaks of cholera and typhoid making action more urgent. The idea of garden cemeteries was taken from and inspired by the world-famous Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.



The London Cemetery Company set up seven such garden cemeteries of which Highgate, opened in 1839, was the third to open. Garden cemeteries became especially attractive to the middle classes and so Highgate became a much sought-after location for people who could afford to pay for their loved ones to be buried in such beautiful leafy surroundings with views across London.

Highgate Cemetery was designed by the architect, Stephen Geary and is Grade 1 listed. It consists of West and East sites, totalling 37 acres, mainly woodland, occupying a

spectacular south-facing hillside down from the top of Highgate Hill, with the West site being the more prestigious. There are approximately 170,000 people buried in around 53,000 graves across both sites.

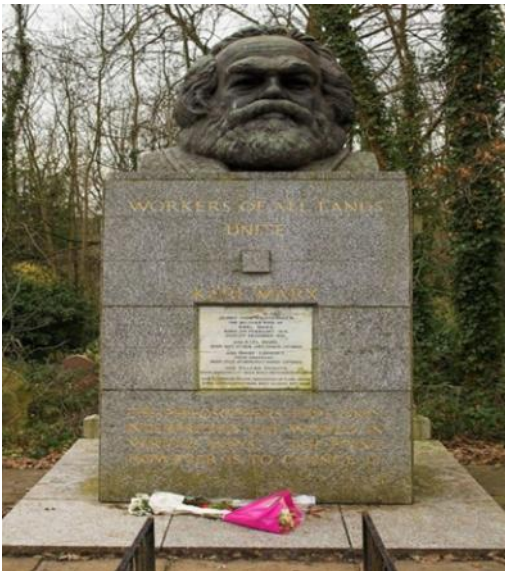


Our group were shown such impressive features as the Egyptian Avenue, an example of the Victorian fascination with the archaeological findings of ancient Egypt, complete with obelisk and lotus-topped columns and grand family vaults. The avenue leads to The Circle of Lebanon with more family tombs in Egyptian, Classical and Gothic styles, which featured in the 2017 film *'Hampstead'*, starring Diane Keaton and Brendan Gleason. In the past, access to the site was given to filmmakers such as the Hammer House of Horror, but we understand that this is no longer the case. Our guide was able to take us into the Terrace Catacombs, spookily locking the gate

behind us so no one else could wander in!

We were shown the resting places of some very notable people and some sadly very recent, such as George Michael and Alexander Litvinenko, former Russian intelligence agent, who famously met his demise, poisoned with Polonium. The Faraday Path, led to the grave of Michael Faraday, the chemist and physicist, one of the greatest scientific discoverers of all time, who discovered the principles behind the electric motor and that light and magnetism were connected.





After our guided tour of the West site we were free to wander over to the East side where we saw most notably the grave of Karl Marx, the German political philosopher and revolutionary socialist.

Highgate Cemetery is owned and operated by Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, a registered charity formed in 1975. The trust acquired the freehold of both East and West sides in 1981.

The cemetery is very well worth a visit. One of our party was even able to find the names of several relatives buried there with the help of site staff and will be able to follow up and even book a visit to their respective gravesites.

Laura Sorrell

## Focus on u3a Groups

### Lunchtime Concert Group: The Joy of FREE Lunchtime Concerts

I had no idea that there were so many free weekday lunchtime concerts in London before I joined the Palmers Green and Southgate u3a concert group.

Our convenor, Stuart McGowan, learnt of these musical events when he was working in central London. He was told about two lunchtime recitals being given at the same time in different locations. Beethoven or Schubert? He chose Schubert's "Winterreise" and was glad that he did.

Stuart started the PG&S u3a lunchtime concert group nine years ago. The group has attended concerts in 31 locations all over London. Since I joined the group three years ago, I have been to 15 of these places. Apart from enjoying the music, they are a wonderful way of



discovering Central London's churches, where most of the free concerts take place.

Some, for example, are linked to professions or people. St Bride's is the journalists' church, St Paul's Covent Garden is the actors' church, with famous names on plaques on the walls. The Holy Sepulchre is the musicians' church. Sir Henry Wood, founder of the promenade concerts, is buried there. St Olave's was Samuel Pepys's church. Many of these churches are within a stone's throw of each other, hidden in small London back streets.

Other venues include the London School of Economics, which hosts top professional musicians every Thursday between October and April, and music academies, including the London Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Royal Academy.

After the concerts we go for coffee or, for some, a beer or a meal if hungry. The location may be a ubiquitous Wetherspoons or Pret, or a more unusual place, such as the four storey Chilean cafe that we found after a recital at St James, Paddington, which served Chilean pasties. We discuss the concert, and talk about anything else that takes our fancy, including other PG&S activities. Over coffee we may decide on future concerts, having gleaned information online.

The group also meets in a local pub, in Southgate or Palmers Green, usually after the Christmas and summer breaks, to discuss potential concerts over the next period. The music we choose is, on the whole, the staple repertoire of classical music - Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert etc., but we are also often introduced to works less familiar to us, from the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as by Debussy, Elgar, or Britten, and also from the distant Middle Ages, as in a carol concert in Southwark Cathedral. Sometimes we choose more unusual recitals, for example the whole of Beethoven's ninth symphony, transcribed as a piano duet.

Stuart meets people at the exit of the nearest tube station, or you can make your own way. The numbers attending vary enormously. At concerts I have been to there have been anything from three to 18. While it may depend partly on the weather, some of the concerts have been well attended despite heavy rain. It does not necessarily depend on the music being played, or the calibre of the musicians.

The musicians may be top-of-the-range postgraduate students or well-established professionals. Most have won prestigious prizes, and some have played at concert halls such as Wigmore Hall and King's Place. Their age range is from 20 to mature musicians, including the Greek pianist Martino Tirimo, now in his 80s, who taught my aunt at Morley



College 50 years ago, and who still loves teaching. The musicians come from all over the world. They recognise that London is a hub of classical music education and opportunity. Many choose to remain in Britain after they have completed their studies, for this reason.

As far as the instruments go, the group by mutual agreement choose a variety: piano, woodwind, strings, brass and voice. The concerts may be solo piano recitals, chamber concerts, a small band, a lieder recital, or a large choir. The most unusual concert that I attended was a piccolo concert in the

Guildhall School of Music, which included a band of seven playing classics at an extremely high octave!

What is unusual about the group is that there is no regular commitment. Once you join Stuart's email list, you are sent the list of concerts and venues for that term. He then sends emails about the date and location of the next concert, then a reminder a week before. He informs you of the nearest tube station, and at what time he will meet people if they wish to go as a group. He also gives the all-important information on accessibility: the number of steps in the tube station or at the venue, and the location of toilets, usually available within



the church. BUT you can make up your mind on the day!

The joy of these concerts, apart from some beautiful music, is that they are free, though a £5 donation is gratefully received at the venue to support its music programme. You do not have to book in advance, and there are always seats. If you arrive early enough you can sit at the front. You can sometimes talk to the musicians at the end, to ask a question, or to thank them. As these are public events, you can bring along a friend, spouse or relative if you wish.

So, if you are a member of the PG&S u3a and like classical music, why not join the mailing list for free lunchtime concerts? You will expand your knowledge and experience of the classical repertoire, hear very talented musicians, and, of course, get to know other members. It's a welcoming group and always a very friendly occasion.

At the end of this year, Stuart McGowan will be stepping down as the music group convenor, passing the baton on to another willing member. Hopefully he will continue to contribute his extensive knowledge of classical music, and of recital venues, at future event planning meetings. Thank you, Stuart, for all your hard work and enormous enthusiasm.

For further information contact Stuart McGowan via the PG&S u3a website at [pgs.u3asite.org.uk](http://pgs.u3asite.org.uk)

Maxine Elvey

# LIST OF GROUPS

## **Arts and Crafts**

Art (2)  
Art Appreciation  
Floristry  
Improving your Photographs  
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  
Current Affairs  
Discussion  
Healthy Eating Club  
HEROES  
Mindfulness and Meditation  
Members on Their Own (MOTO)  
Retiring with Attitude  
Science, Nature, Technology (2)

## **History**

History  
History for Pleasure  
Remember When

## **Out and About**

Bowls (Seasonal)  
Gardening  
Museum Visits  
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 Review Club  
Free Lunchtime Concerts  
Fringe Theatre  
Theatre



To find out more about these groups and to contact the group convener, visit the website at [pgsu3a.org.uk](http://pgsu3a.org.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.