YOUR u3a MAGAZINE

Artwork by Kathryn Shaw



Palmers Green & Southgate u3a

Autumn 2026

Chairman's Message

We have experienced an exceptionally sunny and hot summer which continues even now to be turning into an autumn of soft, golden days.



It is the time of year we all begin to think about what we might do when the weather does eventually turn colder. This is the natural time for more regular attendance at your usual interest groups, but maybe also to consider trying something new.

I shall be having a break from being Chair in the coming year but will continue to be Groups Coordinator and to continue to introduce new activities.

Recently, we have offered tasters in various sports, and we hope some of them will become regular groups. We encourage you to become involved in Pilates, women's golf, indoor bowls, padel and pickleball.

Our social events have been well supported, with record attendance at the Garden Party in August and a lively dance with a Latin American theme in September. We have a Quiz coming up on October 24th and our free annual Christmas Party on Friday, December 11th with seasonal music provided again by singers from Chicken Shed.

Our Meet and Mingle coffee mornings, held monthly at the Gryphon, are well attended, cheerful occasions. New faces are always welcome. Staying on for lunch is popular with a 25% off with an Ember Inns loyalty card.

A recent u3a national survey reported that 98% of 10,000 members said that their lives had improved since joining the u3a. I hope you are one of them. But remember, the u3a is about giving, as well as receiving, so please consider what you could give back to OUR u3a in the coming months. We are always looking for help, often in quite small, undemanding ways, but it makes such a difference!

Val Girling

Message from the Editors

In the Summer edition of the PG&S Magazine, we neglected to acknowledge the artist of the front cover, 'Carnival', Helen Billam; and the author of the article on Wren's Churches, Sheena Thorne. We apologise for this lapse in our usual professional practice.

Jennie Somerville and George Howard

Member Profile

Janet Barrand

Have you heard of Pan's People? Well, meet *Jan's* People. But first of all, meet Jan.

Janet Barrand was a student at Trent Park College of Education. When she retired after 50 years of teaching, she and her husband wanted to continue exercising the mind. The body was already being exercised – as you'll learn. So about three years ago Janet joined PG&S u3a. She enjoys Book Group (last month she read four books!), theatre, monthly meetings - and anything to do with dance, so she's looking forward to the new Line Dancing Group!

A war baby, Janet was born at Queen Charlotte's Hospital in Hammersmith, where her mother lived with her in-laws while her father, an electrical engineer in the RAF, served in North Africa and Italy. He had attended the Royal College of Art and had been commissioned to make several stained-glass windows for churches all over the country.

Her uncle was a fireman and wisely told Janet's mother that wartime London was not a safe place to be. When Janet was 6 months old, the family moved to Bletchley in Buckinghamshire, then to quite a small place adjacent to the village of Milton Keynes.

They rented an upstairs flat in an elderly couple's house, and Janet didn't see her father again until the end of the war, when she was 2½. A year later, her parents were allocated a newly built council house in Bletchley where they lived for the rest of their lives.

At school Janet did well, achieving 10 RSAs (Royal Society of Arts) and 6 'O' levels. As a little girl, Janet had always loved to dance and was highly imaginative, often choreographing her own routines. Her ambition was to be a dancer or to work with children. Her first job, aged 16, was as a supply teacher for Buckinghamshire Education Services, teaching a variety of subjects. This often gave her rather more responsibility than she had bargained for; in some schools she found herself in sole charge of a class! Ofsted would not have approved - but it was tremendous experience.

One day, a teacher pointed out an advert in a local paper for admission at age 18 to a two-year course at the Art of Movement Laban studios, in Addlestone, Surrey - now Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance at Greenwich - with a third year at Trent Park to study education, leading to the Laban Art of Movement Certificate. The Laban was founded by Rudolf Laban, a celebrated dance theorist who emigrated to England from Bratislava in 1938. He is famous for inventing Labanotation, a system of recording human movement, still used worldwide today. Look in any theatre programme, and you're sure to see that many dancers in the cast "trained at Laban". Janet studied anatomy, English, folk dance, dance drama and creative dance, and was trained to teach dance in schools.



Between the first and second years at Laban, Janet married Granville, after a three-year courtship. He taught PE and maths, and when he secured a post at Stationers Company Grammar School in Hornsey, they moved from South London to Cockfosters so Janet could complete her course at Trent Park.

Remember student grants before student loans?! Well, when Janet became pregnant with their first daughter and had to leave college, she was asked to repay hers. She could have gone back after having the baby, but she was impatient to use her knowledge of dance and keep fit, so she applied to Haringey and Enfield to run evening classes. She was given a daytime keep-fit class at Bounds Green School as well as an evening one. In later years, she took on Beginners and Intermediate Dance classes too. She also worked part-time for two or three years teaching a dance class at Wood Green School at a lunchtime club for 5th formers.

Around this period, a rather memorable success occurred at a youth club dance class where Janet taught. One boy stood out. He was really keen, came to every session and showed great potential. With encouragement from Janet, he applied for and got a place in dance college. He became a professional dancer and had a very successful career with many West End appearances. Rewardingly, he has kept in touch ever since. Janet found a Billy Elliot!

The next major move for Janet after all three children were safely at school, was a job at Oakthorpe Primary School in Palmers Green as one of the first classroom assistants in Enfield. She initiated gymnastics after-school classes as well as a children's dance class, until the Borough stopped extra funding for all but academic lessons.



Although some children can be a bit difficult, Janet found the satisfaction of working with a variety of young people to be very rewarding. She particularly loves the joy of teaching children with disabilities when it suddenly 'clicks', and they see what they are achieving.

While at Oakthorpe, Janet took the plunge and cut down her week to three days so she could study for a degree in English Literature and Education at University College London, the course duration reduced by the University due to the Laban Certificate.



So, Janet became a proud graduate in her 50s!

As well as the classwork at Oakthorpe, Janet was instrumental in organising many very successful fun events, including the annual Christmas dance displays at Alexandra Palace, with amazing costumes contributed by the dancers and a cast smiling broadly while twiddling their tails as Mr. Mistoffelees from 'Cats' the musical.

Janet has run a popular Keep Fit class for adults for many years. It even continued right through Covid. When the adult classes at the school were stopped, one of the members missed it so much that she booked the church hall close by and even collected the money from the ladies who attended! These are Jan's People! They love what Janet does. Some of the group had been going since the 1970s and even though a few had moved away, a lot of the ladies still meet up every week and go for a pub lunch or to each other's houses for lunch or tea. The power of Dance!

Janet passed on her talent and interest to both daughters; they attended ballet school and went on to dance professionally on the West End stage, Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and on television. Her eldest runs a Zumba class that her mum attends!

This year Janet and Granville celebrate their 62nd Wedding Anniversary and are cutting back a bit on cruises and avoiding the airport queues. Not that they couldn't do it - but there's plenty to see in this country.



Now in her mid-eighties, Janet still does four classes of Keep Fit and Zumba each week, putting this Strictly Come Couch Potato to shame! Keep it up Janet!

Edward Doff

PUZZLING DATES

If you look in your diary, you will probably see a page of notable dates listed, such as bank holidays and religious festivals, but probably every day of the year has been designated with some name, perhaps by the United Nations or a charity to highlight their work, or just for some witty reason. For example, 21st April is "National Tea Day", followed on 29th May by "National Biscuit Day".





The RNLI have made 25th July "World Drowning Prevention Day", possibly because it coincides with the start of school summer holidays.
And 19th September is "International Talk Like a Pirate Day".





Here are a few puzzling dates. See if you can work out the reasons for the following special days:

1. For some time, a date in the calendar has been named **"Star Wars Day"**. This is quite well known now, but do you know which day, and why?
2. I recently heard that 14th March had been named **"Pie Day"**, especially just before 2 pm, and some people eat a pie for lunch to celebrate it. Can you work out why this is? (A clue – our Science Group should be able to solve it).
3. On a certain day in July 1989, a few minutes after 1am, a rare situation occurred, relating to the date and time. Can you work out what this was?
4. Although the above situation was rare, it was repeated almost exactly 13 months later, in August 1990, around lunchtime. What was the exact time and date of this event? (A clue – look at your computer keyboard).
5. The two events of 3. and 4. won't be repeated for another 100 years. Why?

(Answers are on page 19 but try to work them out yourself before peeking!)

Colin Barratt

Centenary

Churchill and The General Strike 1926

The General Strike of May 1926 was probably the most dramatic industrial confrontation in modern British history. But its Centenary passed with surprisingly little attention: a couple of books and radio programmes, a podcast or two. But nothing like the national coverage that might have been expected for such an event.


Churchill and Baldwin

No one person played a larger role in the dispute than Winston Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time of the strike. In fact, it has been argued that his decision to rejoin the gold standard in 1925 was one of the causes of the strike, as it raised prices and worsened conditions not just for coal miners but for all workers.

Coal was at the heart of the strike. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, the importance of coal to the economy cannot be overstated. The entire British economy still depended on it. But the industry was chaotic: fragmented ownership, wildly varying conditions, and a long history of bitter local strikes. Everything depended on coal, but the industry itself was a mess.

Churchill had been involved in mining disputes long before 1926. As Home Secretary in 1910–11, he authorised troops to be sent to South Wales during violent clashes. To this day, that decision still rankles in parts of Wales. But Churchill did understand the importance of coal and recognised that miners needed to be paid a living wage, so in 1912, after a national strike, he introduced the Minimum Wage Bill. He argued that the market alone could not regulate an industry where one side (the mine owners) held overwhelming power.

But in 1914 the miners, railwaymen and transport workers formed a 'Triple Alliance', an agreement that if one set of workers were to strike then the other sectors would join them. Churchill was not alone in fearing that if this alliance took industrial action, 'it could pose a straightforward challenge to State power.' In other words, a general strike would become more than an industrial dispute; it would be a threat to the constitution.

By 1925 the crisis in the coal industry came to a head. Mine owners demanded wage cuts and longer hours. A.J. Cook, the fiery and charismatic general secretary of the miners' union, came up with the slogan 'Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day'.

When the TUC threatened an embargo on coal movements, the government backed down and offered a subsidy for 9 months until May 1926. This was seen by many as a victory for the miners and the day became known as Red Friday. But Herbert Smith, the miners' president, was more realistic and warned that it was an armistice, not a victory. He was right; the government had effectively bought itself a nine-month breathing space which it used to prepare for the inevitable showdown. The unions, on the other hand, were unable to use the time to prepare for a strike. They were not as well organised, there were too many conflicting interests, and as Ellen Wilkinson put it in her novel, 'Clash', which was set against the background of the general strike, "Imagine the headlines in the Daily Mail: 'General Council prepares foul blow at the Nation'." By spring 1926, confrontation was inevitable.



The government appointed a Royal Commission under Sir Herbert Samuel. It was thorough, fair, widely read and called for reform of the mining industry. But the mine owners didn't go along with it, and the Commission's recommendations for wage reductions made it difficult for the miners' leaders to accept it. The government should have brought pressure to bear on both sides but ducked the issue by refusing to endorse the report unless both sides accepted it, which it knew they wouldn't.

On 1 May the miners were locked out, and the TUC reluctantly called a general strike to begin on 3 May. But negotiations continued until an incident at the Daily Mail derailed everything. Printers refused to set a leading article denouncing the unions as 'disloyal and unpatriotic'. Baldwin regarded this as a 'challenge to the constitutional rights and freedom of the nation' and broke off talks. So although both Baldwin and Churchill later claimed that the strike had begun while talks were still underway, this was not true.

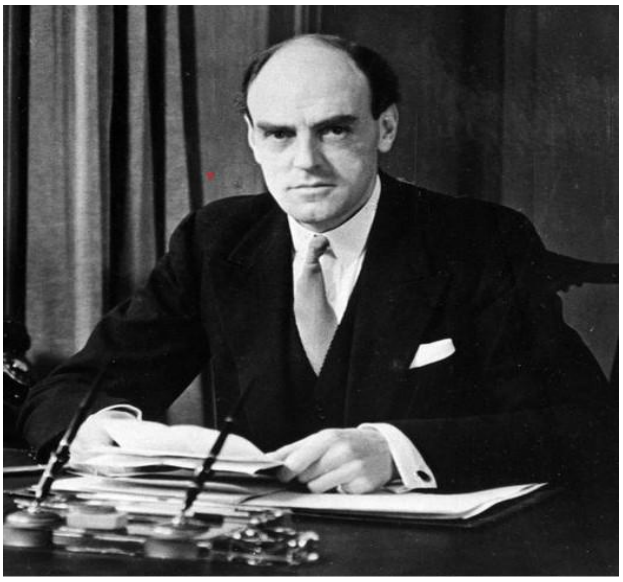
Churchill's most visible role during the strike was as editor of the government's emergency newspaper, the *British Gazette.* Baldwin appointed him partly to keep him occupied: 'It will stop him doing worse things'. But Churchill relished the task. He micromanaged the paper, insisting on changing commas and full stops, and filled it with inflammatory rhetoric and dubious statistics, for example, claiming that over twice as many buses were running in London as actually were and encouraging people to take the tube to work as he claimed it was running a near-normal service (which it wasn't). Later the *New Statesman* called the Gazette 'one of the worst outrages which the country had to endure'.

Churchill also pushed for a far more aggressive use of force. When pickets blocked newsprint deliveries, he demanded that foot guards be deployed with live ammunition. This led a senior civil servant to say to him, "I would beg the Chancellor of the Exchequer to stop talking

nonsense". Churchill was so taken aback that he did stop talking nonsense. But not for long.

Churchill also put a lot of pressure on the BBC, which he wanted to be taken over outright. Its director, John Reith, was determined to preserve its independence but, with the real threat of a government takeover, frequently had to give in to Churchill's demands. The result was that too often the news bulletins were simply what the government wanted the people to think.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury offered to broadcast a peace message urging compromise, Churchill opposed it, and Reith allowed only a toned-down sermon to be broadcast. No Labour voice was broadcast until the strike had ended.



John Reith, Director-General BBC 1927-38

The government had prepared well: they'd signed up volunteer labour, prepared for food and fuel depots in Hyde Park, and even deployed the navy to major ports, as well as ensuring there were enough stockpiles of fuel. Their preparations paid off; the unions were not in a position to hold out for long and after nine days the TUC conceded defeat, leaving the miners to continue an unwinnable fight on their own. The aftermath was grim: wages fell; militants were blacklisted; thousands never worked in the pits again.

For many, Churchill's actions during the General Strike make him the villain of the piece. Using his immense energy to produce inflammatory journalism, put pressure on the BBC, and call for military force, no one could claim that he calmed the situation. On the contrary, he did much to harden attitudes. But he saw this as a war and genuinely believed the strike was a revolutionary threat. We should remember that the aftermath of the Russian revolution was still playing out at the time, and fears of revolution were widespread among the upper classes.

A century on, the Centenary was marked mainly by organisations on the left: the TUC, museums, local history groups. They weren't celebrating victory but solidarity. The government of the time had a resounding victory, but very few Conservatives celebrate it or Churchill's role in it.

The General Strike was a national drama with no heroes. Churchill, more than any other figure, determined how it played out over its nine days and beyond.

Stuart McGowan

Gardens in Drought

Like our gardens, the drought has taken its toll on the world-famous Kew Gardens. The 2022 drought and extreme heat were particularly damaging: Kew reports that around 400 trees died, compared with an average annual loss of about 30.

They have adopted a specific priority-watering system to cope. Rather than trying to keep everything green, staff prioritise vulnerable and important plants—particularly young trees and species from cooler, wetter parts of the world. It expanded its use of drought-tolerant planting. Lawns are allowed to turn brown because they can recover naturally.



They also:

- **Water in the evening/night**, reducing evaporation.
- Use **mulch** to keep moisture in the soil.
- Reduce competing grass and weeds around trees.
- Stop non-essential water-consuming work such as power-washing glasshouses.
- C**ollect rainwater** from the roofs of the Palm House, Princess of Wales Conservatory and Temperate House for irrigation.



POEM

In fields where the rain has grown scarce,
The earth still whispers, “Be kind.”
With water saved and hands held steady,
We garden for a greener tomorrow.

Every drop is a promise, not wasted,
In mulch and soil, life learns to last.
Drought may test, but hope is growing
In every seed we plant and cast.

We choose hardy plants, wise and strong,
And save the water, rain or none.
Small changes make a very big difference
When the sun beats down and skies are gone.

So let us garden, even in the drought,
With patience, skill and a hopeful heart.
For green is more than just a colour —
It’s a healthier, kinder place to start.

The earth is still worth tending,
Even when the rain is few.
Because every plant that survives
Brings life, beauty and a brighter view.

Peter Lewinson



U3A Visit

London Palladium Theatre

The London Palladium offers theatre tours only at very limited times during the year, so 18 of us were lucky to be on the U3A outing on 5th August.

We started our tour in the main entrance lobby in Argyll Street, where we met Kevin, our guide.



The London Palladium is the world's most famous variety theatre. It opened its doors on Boxing Day 1910 and has hosted some of the most famous performers in the world, including Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, the Beatles, and Bruce Forsyth. As the home of variety, the performances have included singers of all genres, magicians, comedians and dancers.

In the 18th century, the site was the London home of the Duke of Argyll, hence the name of the street. After the home was demolished, a temporary exhibition and trading hall called the *Corinthian Bazaar* was built, which later became Hengler's circus, opening in 1865. The Corinthian featured horses, pantomimes, and even an aquatic spectacle in a flooded ring! However, traditional circuses went out of fashion with audiences in favour of variety shows.

The site was briefly an ice rink before a financial syndicate put up the money for a new music hall and hired the famous theatrical architect, Frank Matcham, to design it. He had a budget of £250,000 (about £30 million today), with the aim of building the biggest music hall in Europe. The auditorium held 3000 people. The columns on the front façade came from the Corinthian Bazaar. Last year in the production of *Evita*, Rachel Zegler sang *Don't Cry for Me Argentina* from the balcony to the crowds in the street below.

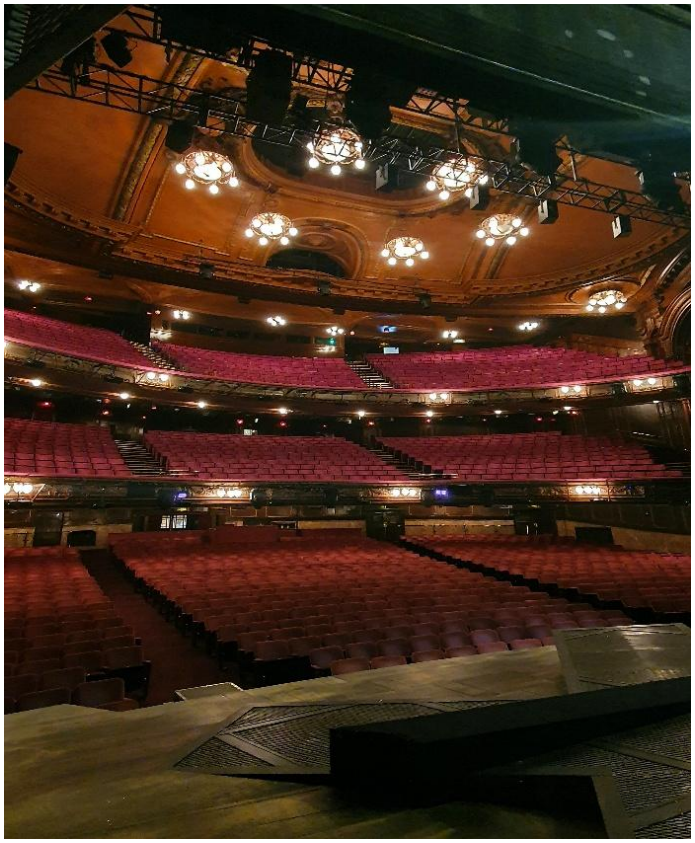
The Palladium opened on Boxing Day 1910 to great reviews. They ran two performances back to back, with the second show ending at 1:30 am. There were so many performers that they were numbered in the programme and on the stage, so the audience knew who was who. The programme price varied depending on where you were sitting. The theatre had a restaurant serving high teas, in an attempt to make music hall more respectable and to encourage more ladies to attend. The variety shows included readings of Shakespeare and opera stars. But eventually this was not what audiences wanted, and 18 years after opening, the Palladium was closed. However, George Black, a British theatrical impresario, saw the opportunity to make the Palladium into the UK's number one variety theatre. It re-opened in 1928, featuring all the most popular stars of the period from the UK and the USA.



We were taken into the Hall of Fame, which has posters of many shows from the 1950s. In this decade, variety and music hall were falling out of fashion, competing with radio, cinema and TV, and lots of theatres were closing or scaling down.

Val Parnell, who took over from George Black, bucked this trend by bringing in the highest-paid stars from Hollywood. Mickey Rooney was the first star, and he completely misjudged the British audience and got bad reviews – so he quit. Next came Danny Kaye; in 1951 he was the world's highest-paid star. He turned round the Palladium's fortunes – every house was sold out. Frank Sinatra apparently didn't like to travel, but he needed money for a tax bill! He got a great reception in London that set him up for the rest of his career. Judy Garland performed in 1953, when her confidence had gone. She was a bundle of nerves and fell after her first song because her heel got stuck. She took off her shoes and did the rest of the show to great ovation.

Next came the Pantomime Suite. The first British pantomime was performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1702. At the Palladium, the 1914 pantomime was *Dick Whittington*, and in 1915, *Cinderella*; both had casts of over 100. In the 1930s, *Peter Pan* was performed; apparently, J M Barrie wrote it for performance at the Palladium. In this period, the pantomime was run for charity. Later, it attracted many stars, including Frankie Howard and Basil Brush. Julian Clary has been the star of recent pantomimes, and there is a fantastic Cinderella costume in the suite.



We then went into the auditorium. The capacity now is 2,298, the second highest in the West End. There are 10 boxes, including the Royal Box, and when the theatre opened there was a box-to-box phone system. The design of the balconies was new – they are supported by struts that come out from the walls, not by columns, as in other theatres. So the balconies could be larger, and there are no obstructed-view seats. The Royal Variety Show is always held here. In 1981, the first Children's Variety Show was put on. Our guide had stories about many stars, including Bing Crosby, Harry Houdini and Liberace. One evening an old lady went into the Royal Box and sat beside a young Prince Charles. After some time, staff came to remove the old lady – it was Dame Edna Everage!

Tour groups are not normally allowed on to the stage, but we were! Underneath the sub-stage area is hallowed ground. The ashes of Des O'Connor and Bruce Forsyth are interred in a wall. Bruce, of course, performed here many times and hosted Sunday Night at the London Palladium. In its heyday, the show was watched by 84% of the viewing public. As well as variety shows and pantomimes, the Palladium has put on many musicals, including *Hans Christian Anderson* and *Singing in the Rain* with Tommy Steele and *Barnum* with Michael Crawford. *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, with a revolving stage, was the longest-running show.

This year the musical is *Jesus Christ Superstar* with Sam Ryder in the lead role. We passed by his dressing room on our way outside to see the Wall of Fame opposite Liberty's on Great Marlborough Street. It is on the gates to the backstage area, easy to miss.

Thanks to Louise for organising such an interesting tour at very short notice.

Trish Talbot

U3A Visit

London Transport Museum

On 4th August, a small group of us braved the intense heat and travelled with our leader, Gail, to view the celebrated poster collection at London Transport Museum's Acton depot, larger but lesser-known than the Covent Garden venue.



It's a massive site, accommodating hundreds of former buses, trams and carriages, plus a multitude of old signs representing 200 years of London's transport history. We had visited the site previously with U3A for a fascinating guided tour of these old vehicles, but this was a complete contrast, as the collection of posters was confined to just two rooms. They did, however, contain a multitude of original and copy posters, some displayed on walls and on large storage drawer units and others on vertical tracking systems. Apparently, about 1,000 original posters and over 30,000 artworks altogether are housed here, including maps, roundel and font designs and even mosaics. This fantastic art collection is designated 'Outstanding' by Arts Council England

Our excellent guide, John, had worked for LT for over 20 years. He explained that the LT Museum holds about 350,000 items, ranging in size from a single ticket to several train carriages. The Covent Garden museum only has 10% of the exhibits.

In the early days of the underground system (in fact, up until 1933 when they were effectively nationalised), the lines were all privately owned, and they often extended deep into the countryside. For example, the Metropolitan Line ran from Windsor in the west right across to Southend on the Essex coast. An early poster encouraging city dwellers to venture to the beach showed "The Canvey Lady" (a large steel framework rather like an electricity pylon) with the coastline in the background. The Lady was a famous landmark, sadly dismantled towards the end of World War Two, presumably for the metal to be used in armament production. This typified the raison d'etre for posters, showing an area outside London as an attraction for Londoners in their leisure time, in order to "get bums on seats" outside commuter hours, the mantra of the early and dynamic commercial director, Frank Pick.

The very first poster was produced in 1908 and was primarily advisory. It showed, in a rather cartoonish style, a lady confronting a policeman, who was waving his thumb over his shoulder towards a large map on the wall behind him. The caption read "You no longer need to ask a Policeman".

Posters became an increasingly popular means of conveying information. They needed to catch your eye and transmit a clear message succinctly. And of course they helped to reduce the tedium while waiting on a platform for the next train.

Many famous artists produced work, for example Man Ray, Horace Taylor and Dora M. Batty. The golden period of posters was probably between the wars, including the Art Deco period, encouraging the public to go into Theatreland, winter sales, sports events such as The Boat Race and Wimbledon, as well as Museums, London Zoo and Kew Gardens. We also saw early examples of the iconic tube map by the great designer Harry Beck, as well as the first font, produced in 1916 by Edward Johnson. The "New Johnson" was produced in the 1970's and the "Johnson 100" in the 1990's, which is used to this day.



Frank Pick was very fair when he commissioned artists. He paid them even if their work was subsequently unused. He was happy to take on art students as well as established figures if he liked their style and thought it appropriate. And many different styles were used. He also employed women artists and, rarely back then, allowed them to sign their works.

The Acton Depot has Open Days three times a year, but booking is essential. As indeed is a jumper/coat if you are going into the Posters rooms – the air conditioning (to keep the exhibits at a scientifically required temperature) seemed unnecessarily fierce, making them like fridges – far colder than any of us had ever experienced in other museums/art galleries, so be warned. However, a visit to see this fantastic collection is highly recommended.

A big thank you once again to Gail for arranging this wonderful visit.

John Atkinson

U3A Visit

Chiddingstone Castle – A Day to Remember!

The coach picked up about 40 of us from various points around Palmers Green and Southgate on a hot, sunny day in mid-July, and we set off on the M25 to Chiddingstone Castle.

This neo-Gothic family seat of the wealthy industrialist Streatfield family is in Kent, 35 miles SE of London on the River Eden, between Tonbridge and Edenbridge. Arriving at the castle, you drive through Chiddingstone village, which, apart from the church, is owned by the

National Trust, which describes it as 'the best example of a Tudor village left in the country'. The castle itself is owned and managed by the Denys Eyre Bower Bequest. The village and castle nestle amongst narrow lanes and fields, not really suitable for a large coach to negotiate, especially when confronted with farm vehicles like wide tractors. Our driver did very well, managing to avoid low bridges and squeezing through an entrance gate that was never intended for a modern-day coach. I noted that ours was the only coach in the car park! However, we arrived safely at the castle at about 10.40am

Richard Streatfield, an iron master and wool merchant, first built a timber-framed house in Chiddingstone High Street in the early 16th century, but it was rebuilt by Henry Streatfield in 1679 in red brick in the Restoration style. In the early 19th century, various members of the Streatfield family remodelled the house in the Gothic style with turrets to look like a medieval castle to claim 'heritage', but it is in fact a manor house. None of the Streatfields lived there after 1900, and in 1938 it was sold to Lord Astor. During WW2 the castle hosted members of the Canadian Forces before becoming Long Dene School until 1954.



In 1955 the castle was bought for about £6,000 by Denys Eyre Bower (1905 – 1977), a former bank clerk turned art dealer and avid collector of Japanese lacquer, ancient Egyptian artefacts (although he bought most of the items from auctions), Stuart and Jacobite documents, Buddhist statues, mandalas, etc. Denys was a colourful and rather eccentric character. He was imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs in 1957 for the attempted murder of his fiancée with an antique revolver after she decided to break off the engagement. Thinking he had killed her, he turned the gun on himself, but both of them survived the incident despite injuries. His devoted lawyer, Ruth Eldridge, managed to get him released in 1961 and helped him to get the castle ready to reopen to the public. After he died in 1977, he bequeathed it to the nation. It remains an independent charitable Trust because the National Trust could not take it on as it did not come with an endowment.



We were split into two groups and given an interesting tour of the various rooms of the castle, including the Great Hall, the Victorian kitchen, the White Rose room, the collection rooms and Denys Eyre Bower's office, which has been preserved as it was, although in a tidy state. He was, apparently, extremely untidy. After the talk we went to the very pleasant open-air café and had a welcome snack. The guide had promised us a couple of bonus short talks about the Egyptian artefacts and the Japanese collection. Unfortunately, the Japanese room had suffered damage to the roof earlier in the year, which meant that it was not available to show to visitors, but we were allowed to go in small groups to the storeroom where they were

keeping the exhibits, and given a viewing of some of the most interesting. There were elaborate warrior helmets, a Samurai sword, an innovative articulated wrought iron lizzard and a warrior's iron breastplate, as well as some Haniwa terracotta figures from the Kofun period (250 – 538 CE). These were found in and around burial mounds.



Returning to the Egyptian room, the guide talked in more detail about the exhibits, a few of which were fakes, others replicas and some genuine, such as this wooden coffin lid, dating back 3,000 years. After many centuries of trying to identify the deceased, researchers from UCL using infrared photography, eventually deciphered the name of 'Irethoreru', written in hieroglyphics on the feet. It means 'The eye of Horus is (directed) against them', meaning his enemies. He would have lived and died during Egypt's 25th Dynasty (c.760 – 656 BC).



Afterwards, we wandered around the grounds of the castle, where a large tent was obviously being prepared for a wedding on the following day. The wedding ceremony would be conducted in the Orangery, a very picturesque backdrop, which is also used for concerts, plays etc.

After that we walked to Chiddingstone Village, just outside the entrance to the castle. It covers a very small area but boasts a village shop and Post Office, a pub (see photo below), a church (mentioned in the Doomsday Book of 1086), and a busy primary school. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to look for the 'Chiding Stone', which gave its name to the village. It is a large, naturally formed sandstone rock, dating back 135 million years, which was used as a seat of judgement to publicly shame and chide gossips, nagging wives or other local wrong-doers.



After a visit to the café and the gift shop, we headed home at 4 pm, only to be confronted by two more low bridges too low for our coach. Our intrepid driver, however, managed to negotiate several hundred yards of reversing in the face of the oncoming tractors, local buses and other vehicles. Foiled by heavy, slow traffic on the M25, he turned off and returned via Greenwich and Stratford. We arrived in Palmers Green at about 7 pm.

It was a very stimulating day. We learned a lot about ancient artefacts and enjoyed being with our friends in a lovely rural setting on a beautiful day, thanks to our organisers, Shirley and Sheena.

Coral Datta

Answers to Puzzling Dates

1. Star Wars Day

The date of 4th May has been named Star Wars Day, as in the alternative format, with the month first, this date is May 4th, Hence the quote, almost like a prayer, from the film Star Wars "May the force be with you" becomes May 4th be with you!

Pie Day

If 14th March is shown in the alternative format, it can be written 3/14. If you add the time 1:59 (i.e. just before 2 pm), line them up and replace the slash with a decimal point, you end up with the following: **3.14159**, which is the mathematical constant **pi**, (the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle), to 5 decimal places. So, **pi** becomes **pie** and hence **Pie Day**.

3.**1989 Rare Situation**

On 6th July, at 1.23am and 45 seconds, the time and date can be written with the numbers in order from 0 to 9, as follows: 01.23:45 6.7.89

4.1990 Rare Situation

Standard keyboards have numbers 1-9, followed by 0, and 13 months later, on 7th August, at 12.34pm and 56 seconds, the exact time and date can be written again with the numbers in the order of the keyboard, as follows: 12.34:56 7.8.90

5. This situation only occurs when there is an 89 or 90 in the year, so the next time will be 2089, 100 years after the previous one.

We love to get YOUR contributions to the Magazine!

There are four editions a year. The deadlines for submission in 2026-27 are:

- **30th December, 31st March, 29th September & 30th June.**
- **The maximum length is 1,000 words, but fewer is fine!**
- **Text should be in WORD, in Aptos 12p.**
- **Photographs need to be high resolution, ideally but not essential 300 dpi.**
- **Send your copy as an attachment to an email to magazine@pgsu3a.org.uk**

Looking forward



to your material!

Jennie and George

LIST OF GROUPS

Arts and Crafts
Art at Home
Art (2)
Art Appreciation
Floristry
Improving your Photographs
Photography

Games and Puzzles
Board Games
Bridge for Improvers (4)
Cryptic Crosswords
Magic
Mah Jong
Rummikub
Scrabble

General
Come Dine with Me
Current Affairs (2)
Discussion
Healthy Eating Club
HEROES
Mindfulness and Meditation
Members on Their Own (MOTO)
Philosophy
Retiring with Attitude

Science & Technology
Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Science, Nature, Technology (2)

History
History
History Discussion
Women in History

Out and About
Bowls (Seasonal)
Gardening
Strollers
Travel (Day Trips and Holidays)
Natural History Walks
Walking 3 to 5 miles
Walking 5 to 8 miles
Walking 8+ miles

Languages
French Advanced
Brush Up Your French
French Intermediate (2)
Italian Conversation (2)
Spanish Intermediate
Spanish Conversation

Literature
Book Group (6)
Creative Writing
Play Reading (2)
Poetry

Theatre and Film
Film Review Club
Free Lunchtime Concerts
Fringe Theatre
Theatre

Geography
What a Wonderful World
Around the British Isles

Sports and Exercise
Padel
Pickelball
Cycing
Pilates

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 0300 102 1756 and leave a message.