

# Senior Moments



The Newsletter of the Bookham & District  
University of the Third Age

Issue 78

May

2023

## Chairman's Commentary

Welcome to the spring edition of Senior Moments.

If you are reading this, then you have survived the winter! Last October none of us really knew what to expect from increased energy costs for our homes except a big hit to our bank balances. It is no surprise that these energy costs are still contributing to a general increase in the cost of living. Apart from the very cold spell in December, we were fortunate with a relatively mild time. But that probably is as much as we can say on the good side about winter. As I write this at Easter, we have seen daffodils and very early bluebells have been reported at Polesden Lacey. So, although hesitant, spring is on its way.

Brighter, longer days generally encourages us to be more active and get out and about as much as we can. However, I know that this doesn't compensate for the ongoing concerns many have about inflation and the cost-of-living impact on their incomes. By the time you read this, you should have received your increased State Pension, which for some is their only income and which leaves some struggling. Surrey is seen as a rich county by the rest of the UK and in some areas it certainly is. But I know as an adviser for Citizens Advice that we also have pockets of extreme deprivation. Food banks and the Mid Surrey Community Fridge continue to be lifelines for some in Surrey. Bookham doesn't escape these realities. So your committee is making a small contribution of help by giving a discount on the annual Bookham u3a membership fee payable by the 31st July. This will be funded from our reserves. As I write, we are still working the numbers, but hopefully by the time you read this we will have declared a figure. It is going to be difficult to maintain the current £14 due to amongst other things Barn Hall hire and speaker costs increasing, but we aim to be as close as possible to this figure so that you can continue to enjoy u3a membership.

As summer approaches I hope you can get out in the garden, visit family and even perhaps squeeze in a holiday before I write my last commentary as Chairman for the August edition of Senior Moments.

I look forward to seeing you at Village Day on the 17th June. If you are passing our stall in the field do stop to say 'hello'. Until next time, take care.

Chris Middleton





# Bookham and District u3a

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### Editorial

There is plenty to read and see in this issue of Senior Moments and there have been so many contributions that for the first time the pages have extended by 4 so that 24 are now available to make up this issue and that has not happened before while I have been editor. Two things of particular note for me are the opening of Clandon House for a conducted tour of the building and not just to see the ruin caused by the fire but more importantly to see how this 18thc building was constructed. This I believe was a very wise and clever decision of the National Trust to preserve the building in this way.

I shall also be going on another Study Day to the Yehudi Menuhin School on 19th May to learn about the Dead Sea Scrolls and again on 16th June to find out about the Vikings. These Study Days are so worthwhile and we have enjoyed so many of them. I shall hope to see some of you there.

Finally, there is a new cover contributor, Derek Wisbey who often graces our pages with his wildlife photographs.

*Maurice Baker*



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## Bookham U3A croquet

### THANK YOU MARTIN!

To mark his retirement from twenty five years of running the Bookham u3a croquet group, I sent Martin some questions with the intention of writing an article. What came back needed no further input other than the photos we inserted.

Some things worth mentioning. Martin devised lesson plans for new players and advice and tuition was freely given to anyone who asked. Martin and Trudi introduced many of us to the wonders of Surbiton Croquet Club and arranged a day during the season where we could use their immaculate lawns. Excellent coaches from Surbiton came to Polesden on several occasions for a day of coaching arranged by Martin. (We were all on our best behaviour).

Martin arranged two tournaments every season for many years and as you see he and Trudi hosted lovely Sunday croquet picnics in their garden. Happy days.

Martin was our direct conduit to the National Trust without which we probably couldn't play, and hosted committee meetings in his home.

We thank Martin and appreciate his many years of directing the overall group. He and Trudi still run their own groups so we hope many happy hours of playing await and that Martin "retires" knowing he's left the largest u3a group in the very safe hands of David Snow, helped by Peter Jackson.

*Val Cross (on behalf of Bookham u3a Croquet)*



Thinking back, the first time I ran a croquet hoop was probably on my grandparent's lawn in Birmingham shortly after The War. The bug bit and I have played, whenever the opportunity arose, ever since then. I played as a teenager with family and friends at home in Abingdon and when I was confined to a rather long stay at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford I chose croquet for an occupational therapy and enjoyed passing time on their lawns with nurses and other patients.

Warp forward to 1970 when we moved to Bookham. We made sure we had a garden with space enough for a few croquet hoops which served as a good training ground for our three boys who soon learnt the basics and much time was spent in friendly competition.

Around this time Bookham U3A was formed and I joined the table tennis

and badminton group which played weekly in the old community centre opposite The Anchor from October to April. With nothing planned for the summer months a few of us got together with the intention of starting a croquet group, but first we had to find a suitable lawn on which to play. We looked at several possibilities including some garden lawns, too small, a nice big space at The Grange, too bumpy, and finally Polesden Lacey, close to perfect with space for four half size lawns, a management who were keen, and so Bookham U3A Croquet Group was born. I guess it was around 1998. There were about eight of us at the start with John Bedford as our leader and soon we were



playing for a couple of hours one day a week through the summer.

I took over from John a couple of years later and our numbers continued to grow. Wanting to know more about the game my wife Trudi and I joined a mainstream croquet club at Surbiton where we realised we were not playing to modern rules or tactics and we had a lot to learn. We were also introduced to a new form of croquet to us, Golf Croquet (GC) having only played the older form, Association Croquet (AC) up until then. GC is a game with fewer strokes, simpler tactics and is easier to learn than AC and today two of our six groups are dedicated to it.



To help pass on some of the new techniques and ideas we invited Michael Hague, the training officer from The South East Croquet Federation, to spend a day coaching our group leaders which helped to set us on the right lines. We also

introduced a beginner's section at the start of each season where dedicated members, in true U3A style, could run a series of coaching sessions to pass on their knowledge and expertise and prepare newcomers ready to join in with the more experienced players.

To allow for a bit of socialising we introduced an annual picnic. Initially held in my garden, where members and friends brought a packed lunch, played a bit of fun garden croquet and had the opportunity to meet members

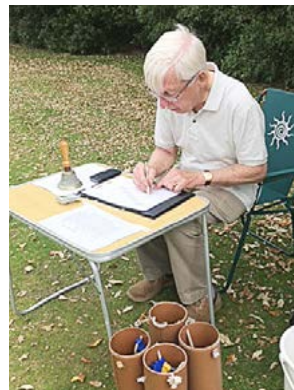
from other groups. After a few years this event was moved to Polesden Lacey where it is still a summer fixture.

Annual tournaments were started, not only for the fun and interest of competition, but also to allow members to play against others from different groups. The engraved names of winners date back to 2003.

Croquet is a game where, like many others, the precise position of boundaries is important. To begin with we had just corner pegs and had to squint along them to decide whether a ball was on or off. Disputes were not uncommon so we tried stretching a cord between

the pegs to mark the boundaries. This was better but still not perfect and a bit of a trip hazard. Then one keen couple, the Sheltons, offered us a white lining machine, ancient but still in good working order and Polesden management agreed for us to use it. Our thanks are due not only for the gift of the machine but also to Frank and Val Cross and others who refresh the white lines on a weekly basis. Boundary disputes are now a thing of the past.

We have continued to work closely with the National Trust at Polesden Lacey who now have four lawns and we have around 70 members playing on 4 days a week. I have passed the leadership baton on to David Snow but still look forward to playing the sport that has given me such enjoyment for so many years.



*Martin Pulsford*

### Art Appreciation 3

There once were three Art Appreciation groups in Bookham u3a but now there is only one. That was started and run for many years by Jenny Dennison who last year gave way to Jan Davies. Art Appreciation 1 was led by Pam North for several years but as the original members got older it became difficult to recruit new participants and current members were less inclined to do presentations. In fact all three groups have lost members in recent years and groups 2 and 3 decided to amalgamate with the first combined meeting lead by Jan Davies in January



JennyDennison



Jan Davies



2023 who talked about and showed some of the work of, Paul Cezanne, the great late Impressionist.

The meetings take place in members'



sitting rooms and while this keeps the costs down it also restricts the number of people who can be accommodated

It was some years ago that Jenny Dennison drew up a list of artists in date order and century by century. She asked the members to choose an artist, find out what they could and then talk for about 20 minutes on their life and work and illustrate the talk with a selection of the artist's paintings.

While you can always look for artists that particularly interest you there are times when nobody is particularly appealing. This may not always be a disaster because in my time, while I have been able to speak on Henri Matisse, Duncan Grant and Berthe Morisot (my favorite Impressionist artist) I was also confronted with the prospect of talking about Edwin Landseer, of whom I had heard of but had not particularly warmed to his style of art. I did however find out a great deal about him and the work he produced, not least of which were the lions in Trafalgar Square that we have all known and admired for many years. He was also involved with engravings which are another interest of mine and it was the only way to get copies of any work until photography took hold of this important aspect of copying and reproduction in the 19th century.

The combined Art Appreciation Groups 2 and 3 are now up to full strength and we are all looking forward to some interesting and informative art related meetings.

Maurice Baker





## Outing to Gatton Park

Gatton Park was designed by landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown between



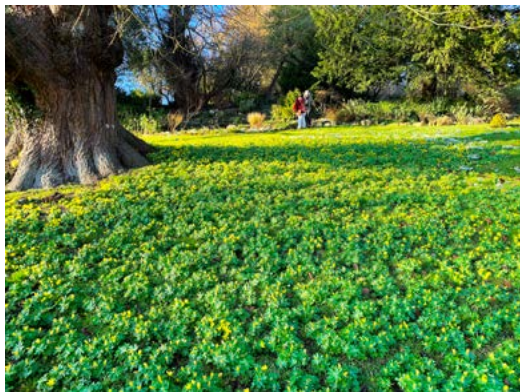
1762 and 1766. Gatton Hall was once owned by Sir Jeremiah Colman of Colman's mustard fame. The



house was destroyed by fire in 1934, and subsequently rebuilt. It is now used as a boarding school and for various events.

Following receipt of an email from Paul Harvey,

Events and Marketing Officer at Gatton Park, offering group visits to the Park to view the snowdrops, aconites and other spring bulbs, two group visits were arranged for the half term week. On arrival, we were greeted by Paul and offered tea, coffee and delicious cakes, before heading outside to stroll round the grounds and enjoy the spectacular views and beautiful displays of spring bulbs. On the first



visit we were lucky enough to enjoy a perfect day with mild temperatures and clear blue skies. For the second visit, the weather was cooler and cloudy, but this group benefitted from a guided



tour of the grounds. Here's hoping the visits can be repeated next year!



*Liz Looney*



## Facial Recognition

Facial recognition is an intriguing concept. We do it all the time, but how can it best be explained? If, for example, you were meeting someone at an airport terminal that you knew well but the person you were with didn't know them at all, how could you explain what the new arrival looked like in order that they could recognize someone they had not seen before?

Many of us believe our faces are symmetrical but in fact this generally is not so and may explain, to some extent, why some of us find photographs taken of us are sometimes very disturbing and quite different from what we expected to see. Everyday we see ourselves in a mirror but this of course is not how others see us.

It is sometimes said that all Chinese faces look alike but the curious thing is many Chinese think all European faces are the same. The more we look at faces the more we recognize the particular features everyone has.

In the days before photography was invented in 1839, artists were frequently employed to make portrait pictures. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) made a good living from portrait painting of the rich and often famous people but he would have much preferred to paint landscapes and always tried to introduce a landscape



whenever he could. His famous painting of Mr & Mrs Andrews was even painted in landscape format and it included a landscape that was no mere afterthought.

In another commissioned portrait of Mr & Mrs George Byam he was asked by the subject a few years later to make several modifications to the original picture so that his eldest daughter could be included, but he also wanted his wife's dress colour to be changed from pink to blue and to have his gold



braided waistcoat added, but I'm sure Gainsborough in accepting the fee for the work I imagine was not particularly pleased to make most of these changes.

I recently did a one day course at the Ashmolean Oxford on self portraits that was most interesting and informative and some very good examples were shown but I felt the speaker had missed out a fairly essential aspect to many artists—the subject for self portrait is always available when the artist wants to sketch or paint, each session can be



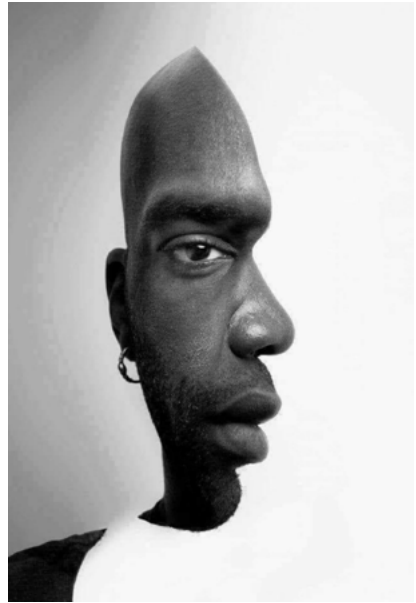
as long or as short as the artist wishes and of course no fee is involved which in the case of van Gogh, who painted many self portraits both with and without his left ear, must have been much appreciated.



Unusual portraits I have seen recently are Maggie Hambling's own self



portrait that is difficult to see through the cigarette smoke and a portrait that does strange things to your eyes in that it is both a profile and a facing portrait at the same time!



I did try this technique out on a self portrait of my own but without too much success.



Facial recognition is now used as a most effective security system to open smart phones and gain access to bank accounts and from my experience this works extremely well, quickly and faultlessly and saves that most annoying chore of having to remember a password.

*Maurice Baker*



Some of the recent visitors to Bookham Common ponds photographed by Derek Wisby



*Grey Heron*



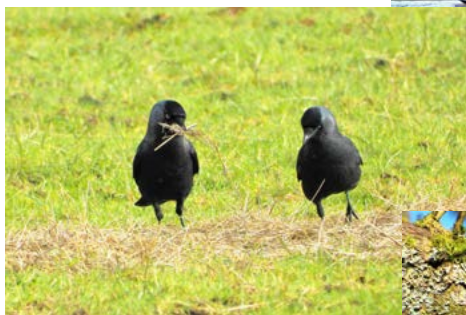
*Grey Heron*



*Group Coot and Grey Heron*



*pair of Mallards*



*pair of Jackdaws*



*Moorhen*

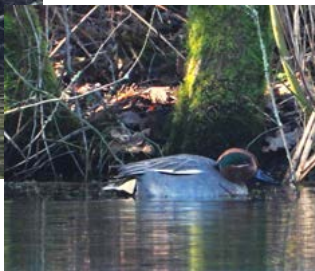


*Jay*





*Little Grebe*



*Drake Teal*



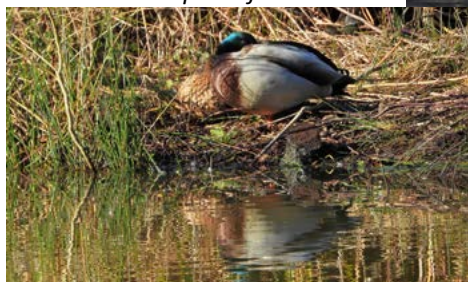
*one leg Robin*



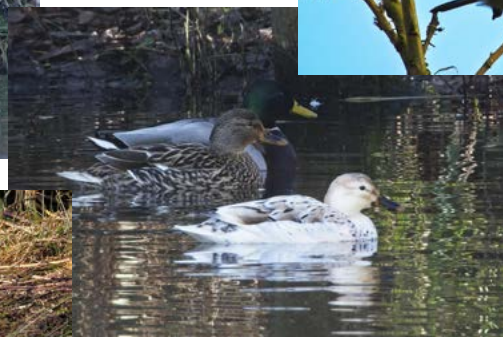
*pair of Teals*



*Blue Tit*



*Mallards*



*pair of Mallards*



*pair of Gadwalls*



*Carrion Crow*



*family of Swans*



*Derek Wisbey*



### Visit To Kew Green And Village.

It was a cold but bright morning at the beginning of March when London Walking Group 4 met at Leatherhead Station to travel to Kew Bridge Station via Clapham.

As is customary for our Group on arrival at our destination we had coffee and pastries. Fortunately there is an excellent coffee shop called 'The Roastery' immediately outside Kew Bridge station.



Having refuelled ourselves we set off across Kew Bridge. The first, mostly wooden toll bridge was opened in 1759. The third bridge constructed of Cornish granite was opened in 1903 by King Edward VII.

Having crossed the bridge we had a good view of Kew Green which had been the original centre of Kew Village. Starting to walk around the perimeter of the Green we passed the Cricketers Arms Pub which had been on this site since 1729. We continued on, passing a row of 18th and 19th century houses before arriving at Kew Gardens Herbarium House. This became the Garden's first on-site herbarium in 1852 and is a centre for scientific work also housing the magnificent library and archives.

Following round the perimeter of the Green we came to the first of several entrance Gates to Kew Gardens now called Elizabeth Gate in honour of the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Continuing on around the Green we passed numerous houses and buildings which were owned by royalty and now belong to Kew Gardens.

49 Kew Green became the residence of Sir William Hooker who had been appointed Kew Gardens' first official director in 1841 and has been ever since the home of every Kew Director during their time in office.

Cambridge Cottage (37 Kew Green) became the residence of the first Duke of Cambridge in 1904. Today this cottage and garden are leased out for functions.

Across the road, located within the Green, is St Anne's Church. We were fortunate to be allowed inside and were rewarded by a splendid interior. In the churchyard we found the tomb of Thomas Gainsborough and also those of Johann Zoffany and Jeremiah Meyer. Looking across the green from the church we could see houses where Camille Pissarro and Arthur Hughes had stayed.

Our walk continued to follow the walls of Kew Gardens passing the Botanist Pub 'once a butchers premises' with a wide corner entrance which allowed animals and carts to enter the yard. Continuing on along Kew Road we passed houses linked to other painters including Rossetti who painted the ethereal Lizzie Siddall whom he later married. Also Franz Bauer resided here and he was the first botanical illustrator at Kew Gardens.

Passing the original Maids of Honour Restaurant we came to Cumberland Gate, built in 1868 to give additional access to the Gardens but no longer in use.

Next came Victoria Gate opened in 1889 and the Campanile tower built in the 1840's to act as a water tower and chimney for the Palm House.

Turning away from the gardens and walking along a road lined with some fine Victorian houses we soon arrived at the area now known as Kew Village.

At the centre of the village is Kew Green Station opened in 1869 with electric trains introduced in 1906. It is the only London Underground station with a pub still attached and this proved an excellent venue for our lunch.

The first shops in this area appeared in the 1880's and there is now a wide range of independent shops. A cobbled cul-de-sac, beside the butchers shop, originally housed several engineering workshops and it was here that the viscose fibre patented as 'Rayon' was first developed in 1894.

Crossing over the railway footbridge, Hennebique Bridge, we came to 24 West Park Road which was used as a 'safe house' for suffragettes on the run.

Our next stop was opposite what is now a retail park but was an aircraft factory at the time of WWI. In 1923 it became a manufacturing site for Chrysler motor vehicles and in WW2 aircraft fuselages were assembled on the site. The site was badly damaged in 1944 by the second V2 rocket to land in Britain – it was reported as a gas explosion.

including a number of very interesting and original documents.

On leaving the Archives we came back to the River Thames and the Thames Path Way which we followed towards Kew Bridge. An island in the river known as 'Oliver's Ait' which is reputed to have links to Oliver Cromwell is now a nature reserve, across the river we had a nice view of The Strand on the Green famous for its 18th century houses.

After following the river for a short way we turned back towards Kew Green passing Westerly Ware where fishermen used to dry and clean their nets and sort their catch.

We then arrived at Kew Pond where King Henry V111's barge was moored when he hunted in the surrounding countryside. The pond fell into disrepair but is now maintained once a month by 'The Friends of Kew Pond'. The water is replenished via a tunnel and valve



Moving on we came to the National Archives which is the home of one of the oldest and largest collections of public records in the world, including the Domesday Book and Shakespear's Will. At the time of our visit we were able to visit an exhibition entitled *Treason: People, Power and Plot*

system linking it to the river.

From here it was a short walk back to Kew Bridge and the station for our return home.

*David Hyde*



## On the Brink

as we teeter on the brink  
wondering if we'll swim or sink  
as our savings start to shrink  
sooner than we like to think

as in the shops the prices rise  
practically before our eyes  
it will come as no surprise  
you cannot win however wise

you will be caught by every tax  
no point in calling out "help! pax!"  
If you've got money stashed in sacks  
be sure you don't leave any tracks

every bill arrives in red  
you think "I might be better dead  
I might as well just stay in bed  
my life is hanging by a thread"

turn off the heating dress up warm  
as if out walking in a storm  
don't worry if you don't conform  
no longer such thing as norm

turn off the fridge, the freezer too  
don't use the cooker, that's taboo  
just boil the kettle for a brew  
and pray you don't succumb to flu

the nurses say "get on your bike  
just go away, we're all on strike  
no one cares about our plight  
we're overstretched, it isn't right"

to see a doc would be a boon  
but they can see you "no time soon"  
not even for a meet on zoom  
not even if you were to swoon

life might seem a lot less stark  
if you could wed an oligarch  
live in a house in Regents Park  
that would be a helluva lark

dosh disappears in just a blink  
it's likely we'll all turn to drink  
as into bankruptcy we sink  
we face a stay inside the clink

Yes, it's true, we're on the  
brink!

*Gill Whitman*





## Clandon update

**A**fter the devastating fire in April 2015 it was eventually decided by the National Trust, along with the former owners, that a restoration of Clandon to its earlier glory would not be the best way to proceed, but rather to leave the shell of the house so that the construction of this fine 18th century building could be shown and appreciated by everyone who visited.

Having raged for much of the night, the fire was mostly out by noon the following day. A close inspection of the house revealed remarkable discoveries. Through the front door towards a smoking mass of charred timbers that was once the Marble Hall, two superb carved marble overmantel by sculptor John Michael Rysbrack, dating to the late 1720s, were untouched.

The Clandon Park project will bring Clandon back to life. Rather than a straightforward restoration, the unique circumstances at Clandon following the fire gave the opportunity to take a new direction.

The project team is working with award-winning architects Allies and Morrison, and a wider design team including Purcell conservation architects, to make sure this is done carefully and sympathetically.



Special walkways have been built among the ruins of the house to allow visitors a glimpse of what the inside looks like following the fire in 2015. Expert tour guides will take you on an intimate walk through the fire-damaged spaces, to explore the revelations and surprises that have been discovered.

The basement walkway leads you on an atmospheric journey, deep into the lowest and most fire-damaged spaces at the centre of this grand Palladian mansion. The basement corridor runs through the heart of the building and walking this route now gives you the clearest opportunity to view the contrasting levels of fire



You can explore the fire-damaged house on a pre-booked guided tour during the summer months.

## Patna to Varanasi – or slowly up the Ganges

In September 2022 we finally made a visit to India planned since 2019.

This included a seven day journey from Patna, the capital of Bihar state, 78 kilometers up the river Ganges to Chunar fort, just beyond the sacred city of Varanasi.



*Transferring to ABN Rajmahal by tender*

Transport was the ABN Rajmahal, a small, 22-cabin cruise ship operated by Assam Bengal Navigation. The Ganges is extremely wide with numerous sandbanks, and even this special shallow draft ship can only travel so far upstream for a few weeks after the monsoon rains.



*lined the banks*

From the river we had a view of rural India and everyday life - small villages, traditional fishing boats, vast open fields and herds of buffalo. We were particularly delighted to see several river dolphins along the lower reaches where they hunt in the muddy water using echo location. Elsewhere huge modern bridges

spanned the river and industries such as numerous brickworks with tall chimneys lined the banks.

Trips ashore were planned to visit places of interest along the way and learn about the political and religious history of the region. For centuries the Ganges was the main transport route for produce to and from the port of Kolkata on the Bay of Bengal, and was particularly important for the British East India Company.

Amongst the places visited were the battlefield at Buxar where East India Company forces defeated the Indian Nawab and took control of the region, the East India Company and European cemeteries, and the impressive memorial to Lord Cornwallis, twice Governor-General of India.



*East India Company cemetery with buffalo grazing*



*Mogul tomb*

Other notable excursions included a Mogul tomb, Saranath where Buddha first

preached in India, the massive fort at Chunar, and the magnificent Ramnagar fort, palace and museum.

In between historical excursions we experienced the noisy market at Ghazipur and a rural village where life continued much as it had for centuries – mud walled houses with cows tethered in the courtyard, water hand-pumped from the Ganges, and colourful graffiti celebrating a wedding. Inevitably the 21st century had intruded - at least one young man had a mobile phone and plastic litter was all too evident.

Our boat attracted much attention as tourism had been badly hit by Covid and we were the first 'cruise' visitors for nearly 3 years. Wherever we disembarked, news reporters wanted photographs and interviews to promote the re-opening of India as a tourist destination.

Now for the highlight of the trip – Varanasi itself. This wonderful city built right up to the edge of the river, is an amazing sight with multi-coloured buildings in every shade of yellow, orange, pink and red, beautiful temples, many boats and numerous people washing and bathing in the water. The main function of the city is still for Hindus to be cremated on the ghats, the steps leading down into the sacred river. Many cremations were in progress with the wood fires blazing and clouds of smoke rising. The old part of the city is a maze of narrow streets only negotiable on foot or by tuk-tuk and packed with market stalls selling everything imaginable. Exceptionally high water levels had deposited thick mud on the ghats and left some temples half submerged. Unfortunately this meant that we were unable to see the Ganga Aarti ceremony of light held on the river bank

at sunset, as spectators were banned due to overcrowding. We did, however, float lighted candles in the river, though it was amazing that nobody fell in going down the slippery steps to the water.

This is only a fraction of the things we saw on this visit. Even a hundred pictures would not do it justice. India is a vast and diverse country and never fails to deliver a truly memorable experience.



*Varanasi from the river*



*Varanasi old city at night*

Why not join the U3A Travel Experiences Group to hear more about trips and adventures both at home and abroad, and share your own traveller's tales.



*Jenny Wilson*



## Hampton Court Palace

We saw many diapers on our outing to Hampton Court Palace and not an American



baby in sight. More later. We're lucky to see them as in 1353 Edward III's court accidentally set fire to the manor house (as it was then) and in 1689 William III and Mary II planned its complete demolition which fortunately didn't happen.



The downpour had stopped by the time twenty nine u3a members left home and boarded the coach so we arrived dry and remained so through a rather

dull (but only weatherwise) day. We were then free to wander, having been advised what parts of the palace not to explore as our guide would take us there after lunch.



Coffee was the first stop for most, then a walk round the gardens and palace. The exhibition of thick paper costumes, so beautifully made, were among many objects to admire. A room guide told us that when lockdown happened, original clothes on show had to be left as they were for almost two years. They are now too frail to display so exact replicas



were made and bear the names of the original owners. Many comments were made while looking at the series

of paintings of the Windsor Beauties. (Google has lots of interesting info).

After lunch we met our guide, Sarah Slater, who is a White Badge Guide meaning she is an expert on a specific site. Sarah has previously given us an excellent talk at a monthly meeting. We were taken to the front of the palace where she explained its history and pointed out the diapers - the famous diamond shaped brickwork and the term for a small pattern of



repeated geometric shapes, later used to describe white cotton or linen with this pattern, hence diapers or as we call them nappies (from the nap of the cloth). Sarah told us that when bricks do need replacing they are very careful to match the colour. Originally they were all painted, as were the stone animals on the roof, in garish colours, hard to imagine now.

We then toured the palace with Sarah, there were too many things to see and hear to cover here but the royal apartments, the view of the chapel from the Royal Pew, the tapestries and the great halls (where over three hundred people could eat), Henry VIII's wine cellar, the kitchens, the Council Chamber and much more were brought to life by Sarah's knowledge



and passion for her subject. Two hours talking to us with not a note (or indeed a coat!) and answering many questions were enjoyable and informative. Most of us had visited the palace previously but I'm sure we all learned new facts.

During the return journey Brian Williams and David Middleton thanked Frank for organising the trip, mints were munched - and the rain held off until everyone was home.



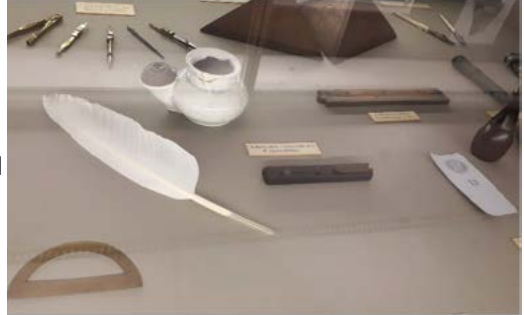
*Val Cross*



## Sir John Soane's Museum & The Charterhouse

One day in February, the London Walking Group visited two unique and fascinating venues: Sir John Soane's Museum & The Charterhouse. Our jam-packed plan was initially foiled by missing our train, through a combination of roadworks jamming up the roads all the way from Fetcham, and Leatherhead station introducing an app as the ONLY way to pay for parking! First you had to download it, then fill in all your details, wait for a confirmation code...well, never mind, there was another train half an hour later, and we just had to forego our coffee break to get back on schedule.

Sir John Soane's Museum is set in his former home (3 houses knocked together) in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Born in 1753, the son of a bricklayer, Soane was an English architect who specialised in the Neo-Classical style. He rose to the top of his profession, becoming professor of architecture at the Royal Academy and official architect to the Office of Works with responsibility for St James's Palace, Whitehall and The Palace of Westminster. His most famous work was the Bank of England, which had a widespread effect on commercial architecture (little of his original design remains). He also designed Dulwich Picture Gallery which, with its top-lit galleries, was a major influence on the planning of subsequent art galleries and museums. He received a knighthood in 1831 and died in 1837.



The John Soane's museum is in his former home and office, designed to display the art works and architectural artefacts that he collected during his lifetime. It's described in the Oxford Dictionary of Architecture as "one of the most complex, intricate, and ingenious series of interiors ever conceived".

The museum is maze-like with not just the main rooms but every ante-room and corridor, crammed from floor to ceiling with a fantastic assortment of items. It is an intense experience spending an hour there, with so much to see, you can't possibly take it all in. Admission is free and visitors can just turn up, so it would be a good idea to drop in whenever one is in the area, and take it one section at a time.

A theme running through the house is the clever way that light is maximised through domed skylights and mirrors.



Particular highlights are the sarcophagus of King Seti I (1303-1290BC), its hieroglyphics being the text of 'The Book of the Gates' narrating the passage of the soul through the underworld; a full-sized cast of the famous Roman statue of Apollo Belvedere; and three large paintings of Venetian scenes by Canaletto.

We were also intrigued by a





Hogarth painting with many strange things going on at once, some of them explained by the room guide, including a protest 'Give us our 11 days' from an era when people believed they had a set number of days to live (literally, 'your days are numbered'). The change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 moved the date forward 11 days, effectively depriving people of 11 days of their lives and resulting in 'The English Calendar riots'.



After lunch, a short bus ride brought us to Smithfields, where we walked past the Port of London Authority building and cold storage warehouse, recalling this area's importance in the meat trade for 800 years. Smithfields market closed late last year and is relocating to Docklands, whilst this site is re-purposed to accommodate the Museum of London, relocating from next to The Barbican.



Canaletto painting

Then we arrived at Charterhouse Square, a pleasant little park built on top of a Black Death burial ground created in 1348 just outside the walls of the City of London.

A chapel was built, and then a monastery established at Charterhouse in 1371, with monks from Chartreuse (from which its name derives) living in poverty, silence and solitude in cells along a cloister, which we visited on our tour. Our guide told us about St. Hugh's Charterhouse monastery near Horsham, where present-day Carthusian monks live according to the same strict rules (after a mental health assessment to ensure that they can survive that regime!).



Over 160 years, Charterhouse became the largest and richest Carthusian monastery in England. London's citizens gave money and goods in return for prayers by the monks, who lived as hermits, spending their time in prayer, contemplation and copying manuscripts. As well as 26 monks, the monastery employed up to 40 priests and lay brothers to look after their daily needs.

Henry VIII's dispute with the Catholic church brought about the violent end of the monastery, with executions and starvation in prison killing 16 men and persuading the rest to leave. By 1538 the monastery had been seized by the Crown and the main building left in ruins. Sir Edward North bought it in 1545 and turned it into a grand mansion. Subsequent nobles improved the property until it was fit for a Queen.

Elizabeth I was the owner from 1589-1601 and held court here, as did her successor James I. An original piece of ceiling in the Great Chamber includes a thistle emblem possibly representing the Duke of Norfolk's admiration for Mary, Queen of Scots, which led to his execution for treason.

The mansion was richly furnished with tapestries (some 17th century originals are still on view), silk wall hangings, carpets and upholstered furniture, and was one of the great houses of London by the time Thomas Sutton, the Earl of Norfolk, bought it in 1611 for £13,000.

A self-made man, Thomas Sutton amassed a fortune from property and money-lending. It was said of him "It seemed that he only had to sit still and let his money multiply". The talbot dog was his symbol, appearing throughout Charterhouse.

With no heirs, he left his entire fortune to good causes, turning Charterhouse into the largest charitable foundation in 17th Century Europe. He founded Sutton's Hospital by Act of Parliament, as alms houses



and a free school for poor boys. A Master of Charterhouse was appointed (we saw the house of the current Master and his family), and 16 governors including King James I, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chief Justice. As well as overseeing the institution, they were tasked with managing the property portfolio which provided its income.

The first schoolboys arrived in 1614, forty Foundation scholars whose education, board and lodging were provided free. By 1872 when Charterhouse school moved out of London to its present site at Godalming, it had outgrown its space as it was now taking fee-paying day-boys 'Oppidans' and boarders alongside the Foundation scholars 'Gownboys'. Pupils were often left to fend for themselves, establishing their own codes of conduct, rituals, games and punishments. Some enjoyed the freedom and camaraderie this

afforded, others found it harsh and cruel, with ex-pupil William Makepeace Thackeray calling it 'the Slaughter House school'. Another famous ex-pupil was Lord Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, who was in his second year when the school moved to Godalming.

Since 1614, many thousands of men have lived out their final days at Charterhouse, where the almshouses still accommodate about 40 Brothers, seven of the current occupants being women (they declined the term 'sisters'). Originally, the hospital required the 'Poor Brothers' as they were





called, to uphold Protestant sobriety, to attend chapel daily or pay a fine, and to wear a uniform of a black cloak and top hat when

out in public. These rules were loosened in the early 20th century. Nowadays they must be single, over 60, without property and of limited means to be admitted, and are expected to live the rest of their lives at Charterhouse, where they are accommodated in apartments, some in historic parts of the building, others in new purpose-built flats. They eat meals in the communal dining room, where they are addressed by the Master and say prayers, although they can be of any faith or none. On-site are an infirmary, art studio, library, common room, and care home.

We were shown around the entire site by a Brother, an unexpected but welcome upgrade to the standard tour which we had booked, as the volunteer guide hadn't turned up. Over the course of 90 minutes, we explored the buildings, courtyards and exquisite gardens, with some shrubs already in flower or full bud. They also offer garden tours on summer afternoons, as well as candlelit tours on winter evenings.

We ended our tour in the chapel, dating from around 1512 and serving as a chapel for owners of the Tudor mansion, before being extended in 1614 to accommodate an elaborate monument to Thomas Sutton and the enlarged congregation of Poor Brothers and Scholars. A fire-damaged door to the chapel is a reminder of the inferno resulting from a direct hit by an incendiary bomb in 1941, that damaged parts of the main building including the ceiling of the Great Chamber.

There is a small museum which, along with the chapel, is free to enter – although the £12 we paid for the full tour was very well spent as there is so much more to see and a knowledgeable guide to walk us through 675 years of history. He even showed us through a secret back gate, a shortcut to our bus stop. Back at Waterloo station, we caught a quick glimpse of the Windrush Monument before catching our train home, after a full and fascinating day out.

*Michelle Howes*

London Walking Group





# Bookham u3a future events

The table below shows upcoming meetings open to all members. For more information on these meetings please refer to the Bookham u3a website. You will need to be logged in to see the additional information.

Group events are shown either on the appropriate group page or on the Diary page.

**02 May 2023      14:30 Paul Whittle - The Venetian Connection**

**01 July 2023      08.30 Winchester Annual Hat Fair All day**

**Study Days at Yehudi Menuhin School  
Always on a Friday 10am to 4pm  
Bring your own lunch  
£12 u3a members**

Fri May 19th      The Dead Sea Scrolls - What They Are & Why They Matter  
Presented by Professor Hugh Williamson, University of Oxford  
Places are available in the hall or for on-line viewing

Fri Jun 16th      The Vikings & Their Influence in the World  
Presented by Imogen Corrigan, Lecturer with The Arts Society  
Places are available in the hall or for on-line viewing

Bookable on line [surreyu3astudyday@btinternet.com](mailto:surreyu3astudyday@btinternet.com)