



Senior

Moments

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

Issue 65

*February 2020*



Colin Jackson's November walk at Holmwood Common



The Phoenix Players taking a bow

# Bookham and District U3A

Registered Charity No 103686 U3A Membership No 4/239/93

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In another context 2020 refers to the way we see things. One definition is 20/20 vision is a term used to express normal visual acuity, which is the clarity or how sharp your vision is, measured at a distance of 20 feet. So lets hope we all see things more clearly this decade!

There are plenty of articles to read in this edition of Senior Moments and one is a carry over from the November issue where the Military History Group went to Biggin Hill and for some reason I managed to miss the second page in the submitted article, but here is the piece with additional information and photographs—it makes interesting reading.

The cover photograph shows the vegetables used to make French/English onion soup that is particularly welcome at this time of the year. I chose a Jamie Oliver recipe (<https://www.jamieoliver.com/.../english-onion-soup-with-sage-and-cheddar>) and he made a great point about sweating the chopped onions very slowly with the lid on the pan—the slower the better to retain their full flavour. I also remembered to chop the root end of the onions last to minimise the the weeping eyes as much as possible. Mind you weeping in this way does your sinuses no end of good!

*Maurice Baker*

*Cover photo—ingredients for French/English onion soup*

## Chairman's Report

Happy New Year to everyone involved in our U3A. I hope you all had a great time over the Christmas period and were able to enjoy it with family and friends. 2020 marks the start of a new decade and a time of many changes, particularly with our relationship to Europe. At a more local level I suspect we are more interested in the successful completion of the road works at the junction of Church Street and Lower Road! It seemed to go on forever but thankfully it is now over.

Hopefully you all enjoyed the programme of talks and events over the past year and, looking forward, we have a really good series of talks arranged for 2020. Frank Cross has booked a strong set of speakers and I am particularly looking forward to the talk on Donald Campbell in February and Fran Sandham's talk on A Solo Walk across Africa in July. As a fan of the Rough Guides it will be fascinating to hear their former editor talk about an area of the world I know well and really enjoy.

My visits to the various interest groups continue and the latest was Qigong – one of our newest groups, in fact so new it isn't in our printed programme, but all the details are on the website. The group meets weekly on a Monday in Little Bookham Village Hall. Qigong has its roots in ancient Chinese culture and involves meditation, coordinating slow-flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and generates a calm meditative state of mind. It is very relaxing, not physically demanding and I came away from my first session with the group determined to return. Qigong is thoroughly recommended.

In closing I would like to suggest a New Year's Resolution to you all. Try something different in our U3A during 2020. We have 90 Special Interest Groups covering a wonderful range of different subjects. Whilst some of them are full, there are vacancies and you might like to try something different. You never know, you might just enjoy it, learn new things and broaden your circle of friends. Wishing you all the best for 2020.

*Roger Mendham*





*Memories of 2019 photos by David Middleton*



## The Phoenix Players

The plot for this year's play involved a Christmas Fair in the mid 1970's has arranged for it to be opened by a celebrity who turns out to be a film star of years gone by in very risqué films who has recently made a comeback and is doing a promotional tour and the vicar's wife is terrified of what he will say when he finds out. Meanwhile the young lady who was going to be the gypsy fortuneteller is indisposed and the part has been foisted on a very reluctant more mature lady.

The cast find that they quite like the the actress after all and feel that they have all made friends. Hope that is clear enough so that you can sort it out!

Cast: Piano Janet Meyer, Ina Hawes, Kate Broad, Elizabeth Cross, Rae-Ann Wightwick, Jenny Gaskell, Marilyn Moss and Amanda Lee.





*Memories of 2019 photos by David Middleton*



## You may remember this from the November SM about a visit to Biggin Hill.



We were told that during one particularly heavy raid a local girl, WAAF Sergeant Elizabeth 'Joan' Mortimer left her post in the control centre, grabbed an armful of red flags that must have been close to hand and dashed out onto the runway. The bombardment was at its height but ignoring the falling bombs and bullets and her own safety she managed to place the flags beside each of the bomb craters and unexploded bombs she could find as a warning and a guide for the squadron of Hurricanes overhead when they returned from pursuing the attackers.

For this courageous act Joan became the first woman in World War Two to be awarded the Military Medal for bravery. Subsequently, two more young women also received the same medal and a photograph of the trio in their WAAF uniforms has pride of place in the museum.

Human endeavour and success in the most extreme times of crisis but rightly stressed throughout the exhibits by the machines that mattered most are not forgotten too and inevitably—as it always does at any WW2 memorial event—the Spitfire stole the show. Its familiar sleek image was everywhere, Yet, and it was one of the countless and fascinating statistics we picked up on the day—it was its rival the Hurricane that had a better result record when it came to downing enemy aircraft at Biggin Hill anyway. This slightly slower, wood frame and fabric fighter was more stable and in the early Battle of Britain days, at least, more heavily armed than the stylish all metal companion.

We discovered that according to Biggin Hill figures the Hurricanes recorded 60% of German "kills" while the Spitfires (so named after the wilful daughter of a member of the design team we were told) responsible for 40%.

For our Group it was a day packed with information and inspiring stories not only of valour but also a wealth of fascinating and often surprising facts. For instance Biggin Hill is one of Britain's oldest aerodromes. Its beautiful Chapel of Remembrance built in 1951 has some wonderful painted glass windows and a superb wooden floor throughout is made from the propeller blades of old Hurricanes.

The success of this visit was all down to Margaret Adam who researched the venue, escorted us on the day and arranged lunch at a local pub, demonstrating brilliant leadership all the while. In the parlance of the period in history we experienced that day it was a "Wizard Show".

Later invalided out of the WAAF, Mortimer became a poultry farmer eventually settling in Suffolk.

In 1974, three roads at RAF Biggin Hill, Kent were officially named after the three WAAFs, Sergeants Mortimer, Turner and Corporal Henderson,



*Memories of 2019 photos by David Middleton*







David Middleton



# Vincent Van Gogh & David Hockney

An art exhibition was held in Amsterdam at the Van Gogh museum last year where the works of Van Gogh and David Hockney were displayed side by side.

I had never consciously associated these two great artists together, but the curators of this exhibition have made me look again.

There is an excellent book for the exhibition that is still available. *The Joy Of Nature Hockney and Van Gogh* by Hans den Hartog Jager. It shows many examples of similarities between the works of the two artists. I knew that Hockney had a great admiration for Van Gogh's paintings that stems from the quality of Vincent's



sketching. In the very many letters Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo, who financed him while he concentrated on his artistic work. Many of the famous paintings showed up as sketches in his letters explaining to his brother just what he was trying to achieve.

Hockney has said you can judge the quality of any artist by the standard of his sketching and Hockney himself is a very fine



Hockney



Van Gogh

sketcher. I must say I find some of Hockney's sketches to be some of his very best work.

The most important quality shared by Van Gogh and Hockney is that they strive to look at the world differently. More piercingly, more intensely. It's not that Hockney is imitating Van Gogh, rather it looks as if the two painters discovered the same patterns in nature,

the same potential energy in geometry and composition.

Hockney has not only been recognised in his lifetime whereas Van Gogh never received any recognition outside a very small number of



Van Gogh

Hockney

friends and relatives but Hockney had access to so much more of all the technologies we have available today. He has particularly used photography to great effect, with his joiners where multiple photos of a single image are joined together and more recently with several cameras mounted on the front of a



Van Gogh



Hockney

vehicle driven down a tree lined lane in all four seasons, but not without recognising its short comings. The principle one being the single lens perspective in photography compared with our two lens vision. This fact is not always appreciated because if you close or mask one eye, what can be seen with one eye is very much the same as two eyed vision. It is only in



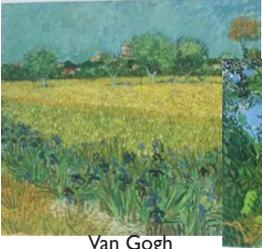
Van Gogh



Hockney

specific circumstances where normal binocular vision can be fully appreciated. If a sportsman

or woman loses an eye, then in many sports such as goal keeping in soccer and batting in cricket you can no longer judge distance

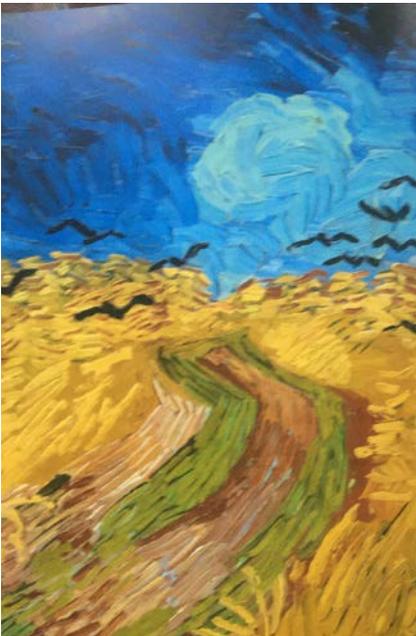


Van Gogh

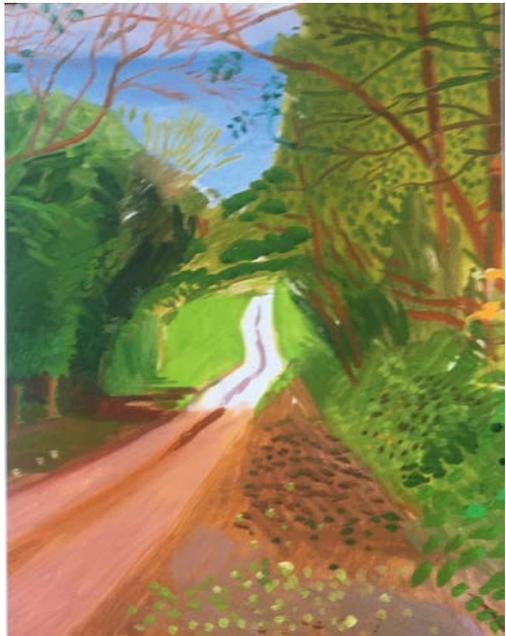


Hockney

sufficiently accurately, particularly of moving objects, to play with the necessary skill to continue. In art appreciation the advantages of binocular vision are far more subtle and Hockney often points this out to all of us in his



Van Gogh



Hockney

excellent writing.

Hockney has said "I've always found the world quite beautiful, looking at it. Just looking. And that's an important thing I share with Vincent Van Gogh: we both really, really enjoy looking at the world." Vincent said "I myself almost don't know which season I like best; I believe all of them, equally well."

Hockney makes pictures all the time, he said real artists have to work. They can't be hedonists. Really good painters are always working. The world is such a marvellous place. You have to look and to work. That's exactly why Van Gogh was such a great artist: total commitment. That's what you need.

The names have been placed under each of these pictures because in some cases it is easy to see which artist is which but in several I found I had to look again at the credit bar—just to be sure!

Hockney always stresses the necessity to look and keep looking. He said when he was an art student at Bradford Art School in the 1950s you had to draw a model sitting there. And you would draw and somebody else would come

around and they would maybe draw a shoulder and then I would see that shoulder looked better than mine. So, I went back and looked harder, harder and harder. That's how you learn to draw and learn to look. And if you don't know how to look, how can you make exciting paintings?

*Maurice Baker*

## Wine Group 2 of the U3A summer visit to Chapel Down Vineyard and a NT house.

Wednesday, 28th August saw eleven of our twenty strong wine group members waiting to board an excellent Haines' Group 16 seater mini coach outside St Nicolas Church. Our journey took us through some delightful Kent countryside, going past Lamberhurst and Sissinghurst



before we finally came upon Smallhythe Place tucked away in a small hamlet. We followed a footpath round an ancient church and then emerged into the pretty garden of Smallhythe Place where tables and chairs were dotted about under the trees. We ate splendidly off



freshly cut ham platters and sandwiches as we basked in sunshine. The 16th Century National Trust house, though small, was full of interest. Its final owner was the late Ellen Terry who graced the London stage from the late 19th Century through to the early 20th. She often accompanied Henry Irving in many hugely popular plays. The creaking stairs and floorboards added to the charm of

this quaint property with its many paintings and memorabilia of the actresses's life. Most of us were loathe to leave the house but were eager to begin our tour of Chapel Down vineyard and estate.



Literally, no more than 100 yards up the road was the entrance to the vineyard and we were almost immediately able to begin our tour. Our wine club had visited here over 10 years ago under the lead of the much-lamented Peter Hudson. All had been pretty rustic and small scale. Nothing could have prepared us for the transformation we now



witnessed. A hugely increased acreage in other parts of Kent and Sussex has multiplied their output by many times. Our most enthusiastic guide showed us two different fields of vines. One containing Bacchus grapes and the other Chardonnay. She showed us how the vines



are protected from the many viruses which can attack the young vines. She also said that the sea air helps to keep the vines aerated and healthy. Amazingly, in the early to middle ages, the sea came right up to the bottom of the fields on which we were standing. Over the years, the sea has receded here, as well as many of the coastal areas of Britain. However,

stainless steel containers for fermentation and also the machinery for the initial pressings of the grapes, plus the ensuing two or three more presses. As the sunshine gave way to rain, we hurried to the wine tasting room which was beautifully laid out to receive us. Overall, we tasted seven different wines ranging from their Classic Sparkling Brut and Rose Brut, to four



the breezes off the water; even though several miles away now, still have a very advantageous effect on the vines.

We were then shown the many high tech

other whites. Tasting was rounded off with a most unusual dessert wine which was neither too sweet nor too heavy and which found favour from many of the tasters. On balance the Rose Brut sparkling wine was the most popular. However, many of us balked at the high prices being charged which was a disappointment.

Our coach driver brought us safely home to Great Bookham where we bade farewell.

If you would be interested to join our wine group for our fourth Wednesday in the month presentations and tastings do contact me on 01 372 452090.

*Jane Bishop – Group Leader.*



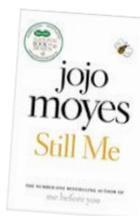
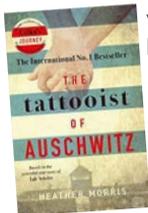
## The Book reading Group I



On December 5th Book Reading Group I (pictured here) assembled at Paula's house for its Christmas lunch with tasty contributions brought by all members.

After a delicious meal and refreshed by a glass of wine, we all read poems we liked on the theme of 'Winter'. These varied from traditional ones by authors such as Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost to modern ones, often bringing back memories of poems learnt as a child.

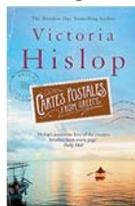
We have had a very successful year with the books read illustrated here, ranging from 'the Tattooist of Auschwitz' by Heather Morris to Jeffrey Archer's 'Not a Penny More, not a Penny Less'. Those rated most highly included 'The Great Alone', a fascinating story of a family's move to the barren wastes of Alaska, and 'Gone' the story of the young South Korean violinist, whose life was almost ruined by the loss of her precious



Stradivarius violin. For a full list of marks, please refer to the Book Reading Group I page on the U3A website.

We will begin our monthly meetings again in February, when the book chosen by Jean Parker will be 'The Cut Out Girl' by Bart Van Es, the 2018 Costa prize winner: However varied the opinions of this book turn out to be, we know that we will have a lively discussion!

Paula Reglar



## Vegetable Gardening

In October we enjoyed a trip to Winkworth Arboretum. This was my first visit and the leaves were just starting to turn into their



autumn hues. We were amazed at the size of some of the fungi and perhaps we could join one of their organised fungi walks another year.

Some of us stayed on for a sandwich but were disappointed that we were unable to

join one of the tours to look round Oakhurst Cottage, also National Trust, about 10 minutes away. Advanced booking is required due to limited admission. Perhaps we could also do this another time.

We had a lovely morning seed swapping and giving each other tips and ideas at our November meeting kindly hosted by Liz. Broad Bean 'Masterpiece', Mange Tout 'Oregon Sugarpod', Yellow Courgettes and Poppy seeds were among our favourites.

Liz's homemade Victoria Sponge filled with plum and orange jam was divine.

We rounded off the year with our annual



Christmas Lunch at The Anchor in Lower Road. Organised by Wendy this was another very enjoyable lunch with delicious food and excellent company.

No meeting in January but we will watch a DVD in February and discuss ideas for the start of the growing season.



Anita Laycock



## I don't want to fly anymore

Many people are considering the alternatives to flying these days and not only for their holidays and if it's Europe where you want to go the rail service throughout the European continent is well worth considering.

I have been getting really fed-up with flying. It is surely the only means of travel that has deteriorated over the last 40 years. Train, coach, car and ship have all improved over this time but flying has definitely got worse—the waiting time at airports, the cramped space on many flights (I am sure the leg room and seat width have been reduced over the last 40 years). Travel by train is much less stressful but it does of course take longer, although even here if you are only travelling to Paris there is not much difference when you take in the time spent getting to and from the airport at both ends. The train goes from city centre to city centre.

Mind you, the travel to Paris by train used to be so much easier when Eurostar was first introduced and all you had to do was get to Waterloo to pick up the train, but even getting to St Pancras need not be as bad as when you follow the normal route that entails getting across London with all your luggage. My good friend Leslie Shelton (a long standing U3A member) told me not to bother with the trek across London, but take the Victoria train, get off at Sutton with all your luggage and stay on the same platform until the Thames Link train arrives. There are two an hour. This train takes you through London on its way to Bedford or wherever and it stops at St Pancras. You can of course do all the booking on line, but we used the services of Railbookers.com.

Last year we wanted to go to Amsterdam and Paris to see two important art exhibitions and we went by train. Amsterdam is four

hours from London and we stayed one night then we took a train from Amsterdam to Paris to see the Berthe Morisot exhibition before returning to London.

In the Spring we went on a short holiday to Sorrento and took the usual route by flying to Naples, but we would like to go back and Railbookers have said they can offer a rail service with overnight stops in Geneva and Florence and while that sounds intriguing it might just be too costly and an overnight sleeper train seems a much better way to get there.

The big journey we have been making each year is to see and stay with our family in San Francisco but the 10+ hours flying time is just getting too much and then there's the jet lag, but I have just read a piece in the Guardian where



*“get off at Sutton with all your luggage and stay on the same platform until the Thames Link train arrives.”*

a woman in Germany booked a cargo ship to take her from Hamburg to Canada and then a train across the country to Vancouver. It was a 15 day sea crossing and four days rail journey, but what an experience! Now cargo ships to San Francisco from Europe would have to go through the Panama Canal and I am not sure how long that would take but I might try to find out!

*Maurice Baker*

## what3words

Whilst walking in Norbury Park John and I came across a man needing medical attention. So what do you do? – phone 999, but how do you tell the emergency services where you are? In the middle of nowhere is pretty difficult to describe! However, whilst John was on the phone, two young ladies came along and we started talking about our whereabouts and we then remembered recently reading about the ‘what3words’ app. One lady then downloaded it onto her phone and lo and behold 3 words appeared. These were then given to the ambulance service on the phone and within a quarter of an hour help arrived. So if you walk out in the countryside, do download this app - you never know when you might need it!

Jan Dicker



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# Out & About with Bookham U3A

OUTINGS & THEATRE VISITS

## The new arrangements for organising outings in Bookham U3A

Individual members are now expected to come forward to arrange “one off” trips and a number of members have arranged some very good outings.

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### U3A SURREY NETWORK STUDY DAYS

- Fri Feb 21st Astronomy - Moons of Solar System & Debunking Moon Landings Controversy  
Presented by David Fishwick & Graham Bryant
- Fri Mar 20th Results of Research on Food & Nutrition  
Presented by Professor Susan Lanham-New, Department of Nutritional Sciences,  
University of Surrey
- Fri Apr 17th The Most Famous Pharaoh of Them All: Tutankhamun, the Boy King  
Presented by Clive Barham Carter
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## U3A Tuesday Monthly Meetings

- 04 Feb 2020 Phil Holt talking about Donald Campbell
- 03 Mar Janet Diamond, Ancient Egypt history in six objects
- 07 Apl Sheila Willis beside the seaside



*Memories of 2019 photos by David Middleton*

