



# Senior Moments

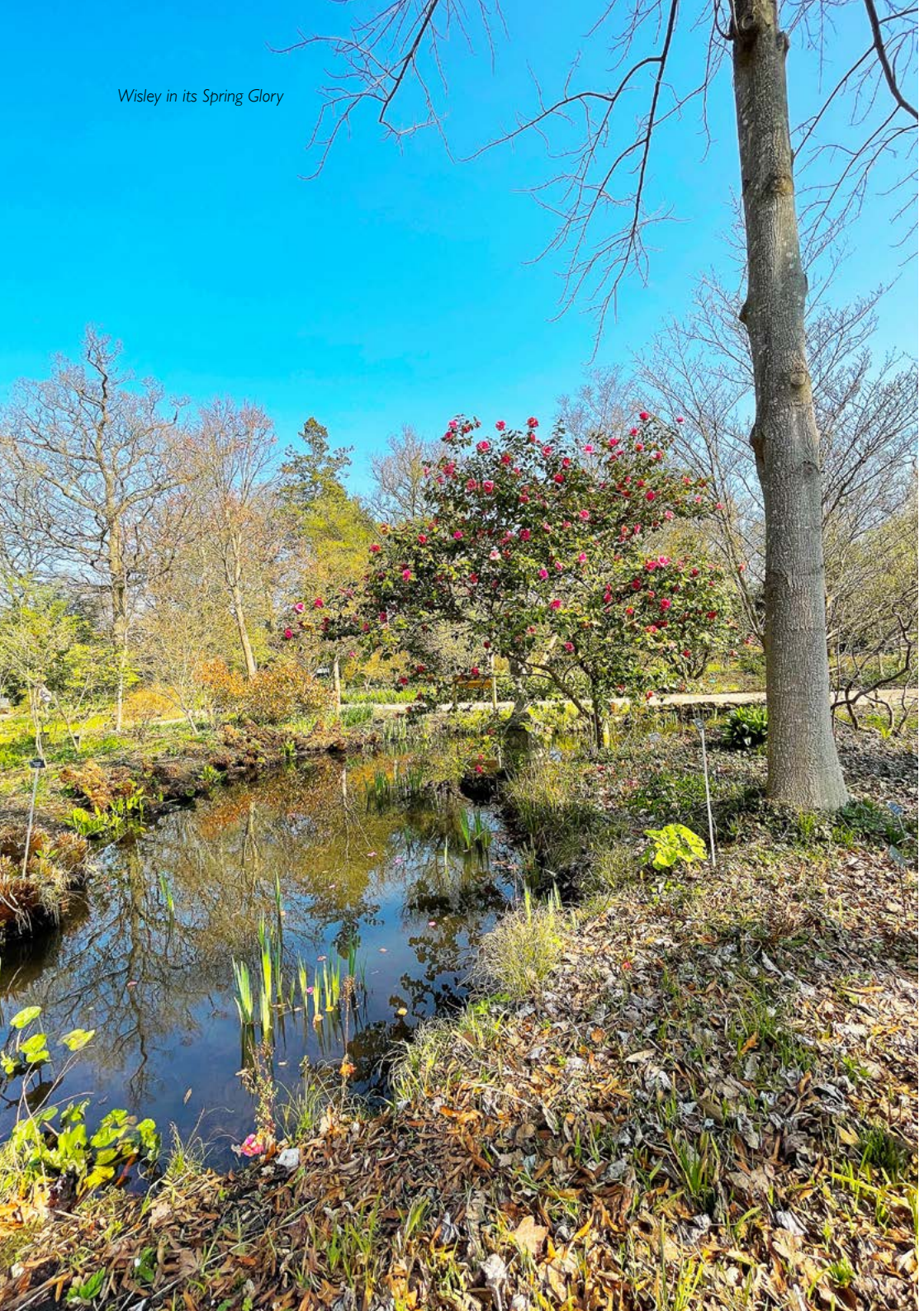
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University of the Third Age*

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*May*

*Wisley in its Spring Glory*



# Bookham and District U3A

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## Editorial.

Spring is here, Covid restrictions are easing and it's now time to be more optimistic, but still cautious. We have learnt a lot during these very restricting times and some of them to our benefit. Zoom meetings are an example that have both good and bad consequences—good when a Zoom meeting allows us to get closer to the presenter and understand more clearly what is the message they are trying to get across. My memory for names is helped no end by having the names attached to every participant, but Zoom meetings fall short of face to face meetings and we can get frustrated by seeing a person and not be able to have a normal conversation without every other member listening in.

In this edition we have some more interesting articles on a variety of subjects that hopefully will be of interest to you.

*Maurice Baker*



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Cover photo—Bluebells photo by Chris Edwards

## Chairman's Commentary

Welcome to the spring edition of Senior Moments.

In my message for the last edition of Senior Moments, I said, with just a bit of hope, that summer is coming. Well did you enjoy it towards the end of March and before winter returned? I'll boldly say there is more summer to come to lift our spirits and do we need it!

As we just about scramble out of a pandemic we are hit with the appalling events in Ukraine. If this has brought worry and fear, then may I suggest that a way to handle it is to deliberately moderate how much news you take in each day. Perhaps only watch TV news once a day or not at all but instead listen to a radio bulletin which can be more informative with less visual impact on the emotions. Added to the Ukraine situation are of course the challenges much closer to home of energy and food costs. We may not see them as anything like as serious, but they are nevertheless real and for some on low incomes, very concerning. Most of us no doubt lived through the inflationary 1970s when it peaked at 24% in 1975 but then we probably recovered with improved earning power. Today most of us are unlikely to have access to an income that really keeps up with inflation so that budgeting and careful consumption become very important. When a respected financial journalist like Martin Lewis expresses his frustration that he has run out of tools to help alleviate family budgets then you know it is serious. Bookham isn't escaping the effects, so we should be looking out for our friends and neighbours by helping where we can. It may be a little thing, but I am trying a lot harder this year to make full use of the expected bumper rhubarb crop when it arrives. There's only so much I can give away to family, friends and neighbours or put into rhubarb and ginger jam, so I'm looking more closely at freezing those extra stalks.

OK, these suggestions don't stop what is happening in the world, but they do allow us to create some balance in our lives by considering our community and giving time for activities that we love.

Hopefully some of these activities involve our u3a. After the disruption of the last two years, we have re-established some 70+ interest groups, details of which can be found on our website. We are also back to in person meetings in the Old Barn Hall so that overall, we have returned to some stability. We are experimenting with new ways to initiate outings and theatre visits so that your support is vital if we are to get them back to what used to be core attractions of the u3a offering. All of these aspects remind me of why our u3a exists; to 'learn, laugh and live'.

Now to my final point about the annual membership renewal process. In mid-June we will be sending out an initial reminder email with more detail in a subsequent email. (For those of you reading this in paper copy, you should have a paper renewal form enclosed.) The new membership year starts on the 1st August and again we will be asking for payment by bank transfer before the 31st July. Cheques are becoming increasingly difficult to handle with the closure of local bank branches, but will be accepted if unavoidable. Whichever way you pay, I am pleased to advise that the annual membership fee is not increasing but remains at £14 per person. I hope you consider this to still be excellent value. Until next time, take care.



Chris

## The Foundling Hospital – u3a transcription project

Established in 1741, Coram Foundling Hospital was London's first residential home for children whose mothers were unable to care for them, and it continued in this capacity until 1955. Meticulous records were kept of every child who passed through the institution. Now held at the London Metropolitan Archives, these records include entrance registers, medical records, letters from mothers and other documents dating back to Thomas Coram's campaign to establish the Foundling Hospital. They give unique insights into the problems and dangers faced by vulnerable children and their mothers across the centuries. Whilst children's needs remain the same, understanding of the best ways to meet those needs has changed radically over 280 years. The archives give a perspective on those changes, showing how Coram has reflected contemporary thinking and pioneered good practice in helping vulnerable children; work that continues under the Coram group of charities to the present day.

From 1763, the Foundling Hospital required mothers seeking admission for their babies to submit a petition letter, detailing the circumstances of their pregnancy, employment, and current situation. These letters give personal accounts of experiences of motherhood among the urban poor, but were rarely penned by the women themselves. Most petitioners relied on the goodwill of literate family, friends, neighbours or employers to help them produce their letters, and provide testimonials as to their good character:

The u3a has been offered its own distinct project transcribing the various documents that made up a mother's petition. As a follow-on activity, we have the option of using any skills and resources from our own family history research, to try and trace the mother, the child, and any other person named in the petition

we are working on, to discover and document their story. Our cases start in 1841, aligned with the first national census in England and Wales. The Bookham cluster comprises eleven u3a members, arranged in pairs and a trio to cross-check each other's work, and collaborating with each other to help discern words from the sometimes barely-legible handwriting. Between us we will piece together the fascinating story that emerges from the documents – our first petition providing 3-4 pages for each individual to work on, all concerning the same woman and her baby. As time goes on, we will move forward at different paces, being allocated new cases on an individual basis, but continuing to support

each other and share ideas, hints and findings. Michelle Howes is coordinating the Bookham cluster, and liaising with the local and national project organisers, who in turn liaise with Coram to ensure we are all on the right track. We'll let you know in future Senior Moments how we are getting on!

Michelle Howes



## Oak Tree

When we moved from London 20 years ago the one thing we vowed was never to have any really large trees near us as we had suffered from structural damage to our London



home. However, the house we fell in love with had a very large oak tree in our neighbour's garden right on the fence line. It could be seen from Church Road and stood out as a landmark. It was in some of the pictures of the early 1900's "history of Bookham books".

It was a beautiful old oak and our, by then friends next door told us that the arborists said that it was 350 to 400 years old. Over the years we have sheltered in its shade and admired the changes over the seasons. Our only bugbear was the quantity of leaves that we were trying to compost each year and the inordinate amount of time it took for them all to come down.



It has been a great reminder of the value of the habitat to some many birds and animals. There was always something to watch from the usual squirrels racing up and down and then digging holes to plant acorns, the different birds from large to small: rooks,

crows, jays, magpies, blackbirds, parakeets, finches and tits. The less lovely but still interesting time was the processional oak moth tents and their removal and subsequent annual sprayings. However, our great joy was the annual ducking shower. In spring the ducks would come and start sitting our roof checking out the holes in the tree and then at the beginning of April, arriving without parachute but from a great height the ducklings started to jump out of the tree. Mother duck rounded them up and took them to our pond for a rest and feed before setting off down the road to their home. The largest number of ducklings was 13 and some years we had as many as three different broods. When

a new fence was erected three gaps were left at the bottom of the fence so that the ducklings could wander between the gardens

Then in 2021 disaster struck. We heard a whooshing noise followed by a thump. We went outside to look around checked the garden and looked out over the common but we couldn't see anything. We went indoors and a few minutes later our neighbour came round the tell us that a large limb had come down in their garden. Luckily no one was hurt and there was surprising little damage.



The arborists were called. All of them agreed that the tree was dangerous.

This had to be reported to the local authority as there was a TPO on the tree. They decided that something had to be done as quickly as possible. The first thought was that a crane would make it easier but road closures, licences and other difficulties ruled this out. After the leaves had mainly fallen in came the firm for three days to take it down. Most



of it was done by one man climbing the tree and removing it bit by bit to the ground by a team of men in the garden. The final piece was taken down using a cherry picker. Having been able to give the tree a very close inspection it was agreed that they would be able to leave a monolith; this would keep the holes that the animals like to use for their nests.

It was very sad to see it go but hopefully what is left will provide something for the wildlife for many years to come.

In the last 10 days (mid to end March) the ducks have been swimming on our pond so we hoping for the oak tree to be raining ducklings for Easter.



The official statistics of the tree were: Age: 400 years, with a diameter of almost 6 feet Originally it was approximately 60 feet high.

Lynn Farrell



## Bookham U3A Vegetable Growing Group

After a very wet winter and early Spring our group met once in March and again in April. This year we have also joined the National Vegetable Society who send seasonal magazines with lots of information and advice and hold talks in East Horsley and around the country. We have also purchased a book between us to keep costs down, 'Skills for Growing' by



Charles Dowding and share others we already have.

In March we discussed preparations and changes made to members' gardens and allotments with new greenhouses for some and soil nutrition and mulches. We talked about vegetables that were being harvested such as purple sprouting broccoli, leeks, parsnips, carrots as well as vegetables that were being planted which included peas, broad beans, garlic, shallots, and chitting potatoes in time for them to be planted out. Some indoor seed sowing included herbs, beetroot, peppers and various kinds of salad and spinach. Of course we are very mindful of the dreaded frost so most planting out is likely to take place later in April and May and even June.

In April we had a tour and a very informative

talk about the World Food Garden at Wisley with a young woman from the Edibles team there. Charles Dowding has been working with the staff at Wisley on the no dig preferred way of working in order to maintain soil and micro-organisms biodiversity. No chemicals are being used and on occasion, where warranted, nematodes are used, but by and large Wisley staff are seeing if plants can survive well on their own. There are lots of trial plants and different varieties of the same plants being planted to see how well they fare. The layout of planting beds at Wisley is comparable to how one might grow vegetables at home rather than in straight rows that would be on an allotment so there were lots of ideas for us to take away with us.

The group have plans for the rest of the year and we are thinking of alternating one month staying locally either at someone's garden or allotment and then another month doing an outing to broaden our horizons and gain further knowledge and ideas. Sometimes we will be able to combine visits with other groups, ie a gardening group.

Lee Saunders  
Group Administrator



## Claremont Estate, National Trust

Sir John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace, bought and began to develop the Claremont estate for his personal use in



*Sir John Vanbrugh*

1709.

He built the original house, which he referred to as a "very small box", and the Belvedere Tower, which remains today. In 1714, Vanbrugh sold the estate to Thomas Pelham-Holles, who was later to become the Duke of Newcastle and twice Prime

Minister of Britain. Claremont's name comes from the Duke's alternate title, "Earl of Clare". The pleasure garden was further developed under the Duke's commission. Assisted by Vanbrugh and landscape designers such as Charles Bridgeman and William Kent, he added the grass amphitheatre, lake and many other



*Clive of India*

key features. The Duke of Newcastle's lavish spending ultimately forced him to mortgage



*Claremont today, there is no longer a house*



Claremont to Clive of India.

Claremont passed to Robert, Lord Clive after the Duke of Newcastle's death in 1769. A famous commander of the burgeoning British Empire, Clive commissioned Lancelot "Capability" Brown to design a replacement of the original mansion, which remains to this day as Claremont Fan Court School. He also introduced Claremont's now-famous peacocks. Sadly, Clive never got to live in his



Princess Charlotte

new house, as he committed suicide the same year it was completed, in 1774.

Princess Charlotte, the boisterous but nationally beloved daughter of the Prince Regent (later George IV), moved into Claremont with her new husband Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg in 1816.

She and Leopold spent the happiest days of their lives here, but their bliss was cut tragically short when Charlotte died after giving birth to a stillborn son in November 1817. Leopold held Claremont for the rest of his life, erecting a mausoleum in his wife's memory on the top of the grass

amphitheatre. He was to enjoy a successful political career, becoming the first King of the Belgians in 1830 and arranging the marriage of his niece Victoria to his nephew Prince Albert. Yet Leopold continued to return to Claremont



Queen Victoria

every year, keeping the house almost exactly as it had been when Charlotte died.

The young Princess Victoria spent many happy days visiting her Uncle Leopold at Claremont. She loved the estate so much that she secured it for herself in 1866 to save it from breakup and development.

Victoria's children in turn enjoyed frequent visits to the leafy pleasure grounds, and in 1879 Claremont was passed to her fourth son Leopold, later the Duke of Albany and father of Princess Alice.

After becoming tainted by the second Duke of Albany's links to Germany in World War I, Claremont was sold in 1922 and subsequently broken up for development. The remaining 49 acres of the garden were acquired by the National Trust in 1949.

Source of information: Claremont NT.

Don Edwards

Walking Group photo by Liz Looney



## Cycling peril

*Pedalling along the cycle track,  
Burning sun upon my back  
And a raging thirst I can hardly hack,  
Can't wait to reach the refreshment shack.*

*Sweat in my eyes so I can't see  
Cycling will be the death of me.  
Oh, good heavens! Is that a tree?  
Too late, too late it's the end of me.*

*Lying flat in a hospital bed  
My pals all thought that I was dead.  
Dead lucky more like when all is said,  
Given the damage to my head.*

*So will I ride a bike again?  
Not bloody likely if I stay sane!*



David King



*Boy: Daddy, I've decided to be an MP when I grow up.*

*Father: Oh yes, what political party? Conservative? Liberal?*

*Boy: I've heard so much about it that I thought I'd join the GARDEN PARTY*

## West Horsley Place

June Davey gave us a fascinating insight into the history of West Horsley Place at our monthly meeting in February. I would also like to add how my mum Betty



Betty & Anita

and I along with a small group of friends have enjoyed visiting the house and gardens.

The house is on the Horsley Diamond Jubilee Trail through the Parishes of East & West Horsley and Effingham

using mainly public footpaths and bridleways to link up woods and open spaces with public easy access.

The Surrey Hills Society have published an excellent map detailing this walk, available for a small donation in the Courtyard. Ramblers and dog walkers enjoy walking through the estate and taking advantage of the pop-up café in the Place Farm Courtyard.

Marsha is the lovely lady who serves us locally brewed coffee along with delicious home made cakes and biscuits from 'Winnie' her 1960s vintage milk float. We have enjoyed several Friday mornings sitting in the sunshine or if wet in the Stone Barn Hall soaking up this historic tranquil setting.

She returns in late April

until late October and is open Wednesday to Sunday 10am to 4pm. Look on her Facebook page for regular updates through the season as she sometimes cannot open due to private events.

We have also enjoyed a couple of tours of the house. You need to book and pay online between £10-£20 but all the money helps to restore this historic place. Look on their website to see what is available throughout the year.

We previously visited about four years ago when West Horsley held their Summer Fayre in the grounds. Little restoration had been done but the Opera House and the Ladies toilets (amazing!) had been completed. On a tour in October last year a huge amount of essential work had been carried out. Hilary and I also attended their Christmas Fair in November and 'Winnie' was also there!

We were sad to hear that Bamber Gascoigne had died shortly after our main meeting but very grateful that he worked hard to preserve this medieval house he inherited.

Anita Laycock



'Winnie'—the vintage milk float

## The Science Of Ageing

### Why do we age and die, what controls ageing, and what, if anything, can we do about it?

There is a huge cosmetics and supplements industry devoted to preventing or reversing the signs of ageing, as well as groups of scientists trying to extend the healthy phase of our lives, increase average life expectancy, or even increase maximum lifespan beyond the current 100-120 years.

Perhaps a few definitions would be helpful here. **Lifespan** is the time from birth to death. **Maximum lifespan** is the longest time that anyone has lived. **Life expectancy** is the average time that we may expect to live.

Just to make it more complicated, **chronological ageing** is the length of time you have been alive: **physiological ageing** describes the state of your body, and can be divided into:

*Primary ageing* which is the progressive deterioration in your body that occurs with advancing age e.g. changes in body composition (decreased bone mineral density, decreased muscle mass, abdominal fat accumulation), and progressive decline of heart, lung, kidney, and immune function.



*Secondary ageing* which is the accelerated deterioration caused by diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, or by harmful environmental and lifestyle factors, such as excessive sun exposure, obesity, lack of exercise, smoking and alcohol consumption.

Lifespan varies enormously between species

|               |           |                  |              |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|--------------|
| nematode worm | 23 days   | dog              | 10-15 years  |
| fruit fly     | 30 days   | budgie           | 25-30 years  |
| bee (worker)  | 40 days   | horse            | 25-30 years  |
| bee (queen)   | 5 years   | African elephant | 60-70 years  |
| mouse         | 1-2 years | human            | 80-100 years |
| hamster       | 2-3 years | parrot           | 75-90 years  |
| humming bird  | 5 years   | giant tortoise   | 100+ years   |

|        |             |                    |            |
|--------|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| slug   | 6 years     | rough eye rockfish | 200+ years |
| cat    | 15-20 years | red sea urchin     | 200+ years |
| rabbit | 8-12 years  | ocean quahog clam  | 50+ years  |

Human life expectancy has increased steadily during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, mainly due to reduced infant and child mortality, improved sanitation, improved working and living environment, better diet, and modern medicine.

Over the same period many more people are living into their 80s and 90s but maximum lifespan has remained at approximately 100 years.

The oldest recorded human was Jeanne Louise Calment (France, 1875-1997) who lived to be 122 years and 164 days.

As Jeanne clearly experienced some negative lifestyle factors, maximum human lifespan probably exceeds 122 years.

However, Jeanne is just 1 of the estimated 108 billion people who have ever lived on Earth so very few of us can expect to live as long as her.

[The oldest living person is Kane Tanaka (age 119), a Japanese woman]



### Why does ageing happen?

Various ideas have been suggested but no one really knows. Are we 'programmed' to age?

Programmed theories propose that our DNA contains a 'biological timetable' for ageing [possibly the same one that regulates growth and development from fertilized egg to maturity] that switches genes on or off, controlling the body's maintenance, repair and defence mechanisms.

This may involve telomeres, short piece of DNA repeated many times (2,500 in humans) at the ends of each chromosome. These are important in cell division. For some reason, the enzyme that copies the DNA cannot reach the end of the chromosome. If there was no telomere the last gene on the chromosome would not be fully copied. Instead, the enzyme can keep going into the telomere region and it is only part of this bit of DNA without genes that is lost each time the cell divides. After 50-70 cell divisions, the telomere is too short and the cell cannot divide properly. There are some types of cells which do not age in the usual way and can be considered 'immortal'. These include cancer cells, germ cells (eggs and sperm), and embryonic stem cells. Germ cells and embryonic stem cells produce an enzyme called telomerase which can make the telomeres longer again. Cancer cells can switch on telomerase or use an alternative pathway to lengthen their telomeres so they

can divide continuously. Drugs that inhibit telomerase are being investigated as potential cancer treatments. But there is evidence from some species which does not support the telomere theory of ageing so it still remains to be proven.

There is some evidence that the speed of ageing is affected by the production of hormones, particularly insulin and growth hormone, see calorie restriction, below.

Error theories, or damage theories, are the opposite of programmed theories. They hypothesise that ageing is caused by cellular changes that are random and unplanned. Over time, cells accumulate damage to their DNA and proteins from things such as heat and free radicals, leading to reduced efficiency, and eventually to cell death.

### **Can ageing be slowed or lifespan extended?**

This has been a human goal for many centuries.

Traditional 'elixirs of youth' include:

- garlic – used by the Romans, now shown to prolong life in mice and rats
- gold or mercury – used to prolong life by treating disease rather than reduce ageing

- blister beetles – active ingredient cantharidin, which may block certain proteins and have anti-cancer properties

- mandrake root – contains powerful alkaloids used as a hallucinogen and aphrodisiac

- Injections of procaine hydrochloride anaesthetic (Gerovital H3, novocaine) promoted in Eastern Europe as a 'fountain of youth' – banned by FDA in 1982 and no scientific support for anti-ageing claims.

- injections of 'monkey glands' to rejuvenate fertility. Trans-species transplants do not work owing to rejection.

- None of these can be recommended and most are potentially dangerous.

Current ideas include:

Severe calorie restriction (30% restriction from a young age) can increase lifespan by up to 25% in yeast, rats, mice, Rhesus monkeys, and can delay age-related diseases. This may be due to increased levels of growth hormone and decreased levels of insulin. The long-term effects of starvation in humans are not known and very few people want to live on a starvation diet all their life. However, starving for short periods may have some health benefits, but it is very difficult to study, as many other factors (e.g. genetics, environment, other lifestyle choices) can affect the results.

Embryonic stem cell infusion has been proposed, as these stem cells can differentiate into any type of tissue and may be able to repair damage. Cells can be harvested from spare embryos from *in vitro* fertilisation, or from umbilical cord blood.

The company SwissMedica offered autologous (your own) stem cell transplants claiming *'Anti ageing stem cells treatment is a real opportunity to look young, to be young and a unique chance to turn back time'*. Stem cells are harvested from your fat (don't try this at home), activated, and infused back into you.

Blood from young individuals may contain a substance that can rejuvenate an older recipient. This has been demonstrated in mice. The anti-ageing benefits of transfusion with teenage blood have given variable results but a protein called GDF-11 (Growth Differentiation Factor 11) has been implicated. While some limited studies suggest that these transfusions might fight off diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, heart disease, and multiple sclerosis, the US Food and Drug Administration has warned that these claims are not proven.

### **So what can we conclude about ageing?**

Your maximum lifespan depends on your species.

Genes and DNA are definitely involved.

Environmental factors and poor lifestyle choices can make your body age faster and/or shorten your lifespan.

Prolonged semi-starvation or genetic re-programming with stem cells may extend maximum lifespan or reverse age-related changes in some species.

Overall, we know very little about what controls lifespan, why we age, or how we age.

**And sadly, nothing has been proven to slow or reverse ageing in humans.**



*Jenny Wilson*

## London walks



**O**n a mild, sunny March day, Martin Slatter introduced us to Blackheath where he used to live. Blackheath was known in the 11th century by its old English name of Blackhedfeld meaning dark or black heath field. This could be a reference to either the colour of the soil or to the bleakness of its situation. An urban myth exists that the name Blackheath derived from the 1665 Plague or for the Black Death of the 14th century. No longer bleak today, Blackheath is a lively, thriving village complete with numerous coffee shops, a butchers, a Conservatoire and estates of elegant houses. It was populated in the late 18th and 19th centuries by wealthy Londoners seeking healthy places in the country and has some of the finest Georgian residences in London.

The walk began at Blackheath Station. The station building is the only one remaining in the style adopted by North Kent Railways for stations along this line. The station master originally had his house and extensive garden behind the London bound platform and the current location of the minicab firm used to be the Gentlemen's toilet! Continuing up Tranquil Vale, a number of the buildings predate the station and form the oldest part of the village. The weatherboard houses of Collins Square (1798) were typical domestic buildings of the time and included the first village post office (1809). Tranquil Vale follows the old drovers road used to take livestock across the heath on the way to Smithfield.

At the top of Tranquil Vale we arrived at the Heath itself which is one of the largest areas of common land in Greater London with 211 acres. The Heath is managed by Lewisham and Greenwich councils and nowadays is best known for being the start of the London Marathon. In the 18th and early 19th centuries mining for gravel, sand and chalk left many pits which have now been filled in mostly with rubble from WWII bombing. In 1381, the Heath was a rallying point for Wat Tyler's notorious Peasants Revolt and also for Jack Cade's Kentish Rebellion of 1480. In 1415 the Lord Mayor of London and his scarlet clad Aldermen processed to

the Heath to meet Henry V on his triumphant return from Agincourt. More redolent of present times, in 1701 army tents were set up to house a large number of the 15,000 or so German refugees from the Palatinate and others who had fled to England.

On the edge of the Heath, All Saints church, opposite Cote Brasserie our watering hole for the day, was built in 1857 to the design of Benjamin Ferry and is unusual in having no graveyard. Margaretta Lemon, one of the founders of the RSPCA began her campaign against ladies wearing hats with feathers and sometimes even whole stuffed birds by slipping notes to her fellow churchgoers at this location. The area of the Heath by the church used to be known as Washer Woman's Bottom as the laundresses from this side of the village used the bushes to dry their washing. This practice was stopped in 1893, presumably with the gentrification of the area.

Adjacent to the Heath, there is a handsome circle of houses, including Lloyd's Place built in the 1770's. Grote's Buildings and Place were a largely speculative development by City Merchant Grote in the 1760's following the success of the Duke of Bedford's development of his land at Covent Garden.



Before reaching Elliot Place, we passed the Hare and Billet Pond considered to be the most natural and probably the best wildlife habitat of the three ponds on the Lewisham side of the Heath. The houses in Eliot Place were built between 1795 and 1892 on land belonging to the Eliot family, Earls of St Germans, who took their name from a Cornish village. No. 6 became the home and private observatory of merchant and amateur astronomer Stephen Groombridge and No. 2 was the home of polar explorer Sir James Clark Ross after whom Ross Island and Ross Sea in Antarctica are



named. Next door is the grand Heathfield House built for Rotherhithe shipowner John Brent sadly now divided into apartments.



Before going down the hill into Elliot Vale, the brick Ranger's House can just be seen on the other side of the Heath. A Georgian

mansion, built in the Palladian style, it backs directly onto Greenwich Park. By Royal appointment, it was the Ranger's official residence for most of the 19th Century. It now houses the Werner Collection of Art. Neighbouring Montagu House, demolished in 1815, was a royal residence of Caroline Brunswick who also stayed at the Pagoda House in Pagoda Gardens. This very unusual house was built in 1760 as a summer house for the fourth Earl of Cadogan and legend has it that this was where Caroline, wife of the Prince Regent conducted her various affairs and housed her illegitimate children! A more charitable report tells of her running a nursery school in the house. We do know that Pagoda house appropriately became a home for Tamil refugees before reverting to the very well presented home it is today.

The walk then took us down a footpath into the former Kid Brook Valley and up to St Margaret's Lee church where Edmond Halley is buried. After passing a number of very large impressive houses we made our way back to the south end of the village before exploring the grandeur of the Cator Estate, the most select part of Blackheath after the fine houses round the Heath itself. Its old name was Wricklemarsh, and it was owned by the Blounts and Mordens until 1721 when the land passed to the Page family and finally to Beckenham timber merchant John Cator. Blackheath Park, which runs between the Kid and Quaggy river valleys has some of the estate's earliest and finest houses. It is also home to St Michael's Church which has a fine spire known as the Needle of Kent.

At the end of Cator Estate we approached the almshouses known as Morden College said to have been designed by Sir Christopher Wren. The almshouses were founded in 1695 by Sir John Morden who after being apprenticed to his uncle Sir William Soame was sent to Aleppo to work as a factor. Sir John became a trader



and member of the Levant Company and the East India Company. He returned to London in 1660 having amassed a substantial fortune, then married before buying the Manor of Wricklemarsh. Morden College was built to provide lodging and a pension for traders who had fallen on hard times. Today all beneficiaries pay a financial contribution towards the running of the charity in return for the home they are given, rather than a weekly or monthly contribution. Applicants must have had managerial/ leadership responsibility and be in need whether it be financial, loneliness, etc.

Finally, Colonnade House, built for William Randall the shipbuilding partner of John Brent whose fortunes emanated from building warships at the time of the Revolutionary Wars with France, and the elegant Clarendon Hotel. Mention must also be made of the Princess of Wales pub named after Caroline of Brunswick where the English team for the first ever rugby international was selected including four players from Blackheath Rugby Club—one of the oldest in the country. Royal Blackheath Golf Club is regarded as the oldest in England. Both Clubs moved to Eltham in the 1920's.

A most successful day was had by us all especially memorable being our first post Covid walk!

*Jacquelyn Hodgkinson*





Meet here  
today at  
**11am**  
for a free  
garden tour

*Cherry blossom at Wisley*

When we all joined the U3A, we made a commitment to uphold the guiding principles of the U3A movement, one of which is to recognise that we are a self-help group in which volunteering is essential for the organisation to function.

We now have a need for new volunteers to support the committee in running our activities. A number of the current committee are retiring soon, having served for several years. So we need some new committee members to continue offering the range of activities you all enjoy and potentially to contribute new ideas.

Could you make a bigger contribution to our U3A? If so, please let any member of the committee know. Alternatively, do you know another member who you think could do a good job on the committee?

We have potential vacancies across a variety of roles on the committee and some positions are more urgent than others. So please talk to any member of the committee to find out more as we try and match your interests and skills with the roles. Role descriptions are on our website.

If you are concerned about the level of commitment required, please talk to any committee member so that they can describe their experience.

Our contact details are on the website and in this Senior Moments.

From your Management Committee

# 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.

## Tuesday, 3 May: Howard Smith Picture Post

Picture Post, the first photo-journalism magazine published by Hulton Press, was selling two million copies a week in the 1940s. In the 1950s, editor Tom Hopkinson detailed post-war life in Britain with a message of the need for regeneration and social reform.

## Tuesday, 7 June: Fran Sandham My Walk across Africa

Author Fran Sandham walked solo across Africa from Namibia's coast to the Indian Ocean near Zanzibar; a 3000-mile trek taking nearly a year.

## Tuesday, 5 July: John Griffiths-Colby Emily Connell's Autograph Book

Emily Connell was a staff nurse at the 3rd Western General Hospital in Cardiff when World War I broke out. She kept an autograph book in which her patients drew and wrote messages. This is Part 2 of the story of her own highs and lows and struggles with the system.

## Tuesday, 6 September: Ian Keable The History of Cartoons

Cartoons became standard in Punch magazine from the 1840s but Hogarth and Gillray employed satire, caricature, speech bubbles and captions long before then. Masters of the craft have since included John Tenniel, John Leech, David Low, Vicky, Ronald Searle, Heath Robinson, Giles, Gerald Scarfe, Steve Bell and Peter Brookes among others.

## Tuesday, 4 October: Paul Barfield The mysterious death of MI6 spy Gareth Williams

In August 2010 Gareth failed to return to work at MI6 HQ in Vauxhall after annual leave. Police found him dead in his flat inside a large sports bag, padlocked from the outside and placed in his bath. The flat was locked from the outside. The speaker delves beneath the media headlines into the world of international espionage. Who would want to kill this mild-mannered maths genius? A former policeman, Paul recalls how events unfolded to a disbelieving world. We ask if this was a tragic accident, a deliberate act by Gareth or something a lot more sinister. We look at the part played by MI6 and the police enquiry and ask whether international agents had a hand in his demise.

## Tuesday, 1 November: Neil Hanson Ghostwriting

Author Neil Hanson has led an extraordinary life but as a professional ghost-writer of over 60 published books, he has also worked with a remarkably diverse collection of fascinating people. His clients include household names, among them an American showbiz legend, England's most famous cricketer; a famous actor; one of Britain's most decorated soldiers and an England football manager. Others include SAS men, fast-jet pilots, explorers and adventurers, a treasure diver; a kidnap negotiator; a hugely successful businessman, a spy, a notorious gangster; an around the world walker; a submariner; a maxillofacial surgeon and many more.

## Tuesday, 6 December: Jacques Arnold The House of Windsor

Jacques Arnold, author of the Royal Houses of Europe series of genealogical books, draws on a lifetime interest initially encouraged by Lord Mountbatten when Jacques was a school-boy 40 years ago. He is now one of Her Majesty's Deputy Lieutenants of Kent. He will provide a wealth of interesting anecdotes, drawing on European history with all its dramas and personal triumphs and tragedies.

## Study Days at Yehudi Menuhin School

20 May Talks on Science: — Andrew Hanson & Dr Kathryn Harkup

17 June Understanding Turner — Maria Chester

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