



Here & Now

Reigate & Redhill u3a Magazine



Spring into Action!

No 97

Spring 2026

Editor's Welcome



Welcome to the Spring edition of Here and Now. Despite the never-ending rain, Spring is on its way. My snowdrops, in the garden, look so delicate and the tiny daffodils opening up show me that better weather is definitely on its way. We thought 'Spring into Action' was a great title for spurring you on to do new things, try new things and enjoy the things you already do. Have you found a different fitness that's fun, tried new recipes and foods, tried growing new seeds or just appreciated what's around you.

I was really pleased to see how many people open the magazine on line. I hope they enjoy reading it this way. We deliver 98 copies to those who prefer to hold a paper copy, which I must say, I prefer to do. Old fashioned, I know! I'd love to have feedback to know what you particularly enjoy or what you think we could include or improve upon.

I can't believe that I've been the editor for 8 years. A role which was I was very much persuaded to do but actually enjoy. Following on from what Gillian was saying, you might actually really enjoy helping on the rru3a committee. I had no idea about printers, organising getting articles and about copyright but I learned along the way. Mind you, I wouldn't be anywhere without Shirley Harnett who works wonders with everything I throw at her. She is a star.

I am very proud of this edition which came together so well. I love including something about the various groups our u3a can offer. A big 'thank you' to those leaders who answered my call to be included. Would your group like to be included next time? Please just get in touch.

Tina Pankhurst

Spring Fever - a feeling of restlessness and excitement felt at the beginning of spring. Its symptoms include a flushed face, increased heart rate, appetite loss, restlessness and daydreaming. It's spring fever, that wonderful disease we all recognize come April and May. Bring it on!

Spring The story of a Season by Michael Morpurgo

When I was teaching, I was always looking out for a new Michael Morpurgo book to read to the children. The topics that inspired him were so different, from flamingos in France, a white lion in South Africa, to horses used in WWI. He has written so many fantastic books for children for which he has won many awards and accolades.

This time he's written a non-fiction book for adults. It's a gentle look at the season of Spring, the birds returning from their migration, the sheep giving birth to their lambs and the wild flowers awakening from winter. From his farm in Devon, he wanders the fields and lanes observing the changes. Michael for many years has opened his farm up for city kids to come and stay and to discover the joys of the countryside and to learn about where their food comes from. Being a



teacher in his younger days, he still loves reading and talking with the children and finding out what has sparked their imagination and curiosity that day. Dotted through the book are poems and simple lino cut illustrations of fauna and flora.



From the Chair

Hello!

I'm looking at our theme of Spring into Action from a mindset perspective. The well-known saying "Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today" emphasises the importance of taking timely action. Our committee plans ahead, both to properly meet the needs of the organisation and to ensure we can fit in our personal activities and commitments. That's why it's important to have enough committee members to share roles, and enough people helping with support functions.

Looking ahead to our AGM, we have identified committee roles and functions which will need support when people step down in June. We will have a lot of gaps and need new or longer-serving members to come forward to help with "people" or "administration" skills, as well as bringing new ideas.

I love being on committee - I've formed friendships with new people, learnt new things, and been challenged. Volunteering for u3a is obviously a different type of volunteering to that for St Catherine's Hospice (where I also volunteer), but to my mind, it's worthwhile in a different way, promoting interests and activities for our members. If you want to come along to a committee meeting to see what we do, please contact me or another committee member to arrange.

So as to provide the activities and service levels you've come to expect, support is needed in groups' co-ordination, data management, membership liaison and administration, outings and holiday organisation, audio visual support and finance. It's a long list!

Our committee look to you to "spring into action". Have a think about what your time commitments are, how you can manage to squeeze in a bit of time to help us? It doesn't necessitate a committee role and we hope enough volunteers can come forward to undertake functions on a shared basis. If you haven't already answered the survey we published in February and would like to help, please contact me - chair@rru3a.org.uk.

With your help, in addition to "business as usual" we can build our teams to offer more activities to meet our growing membership. That would be great!

Gill Haines



Social Cycling - Brian Lomas

The Cycling Group spring into action on a monthly basis to explore the lanes and byways in Surrey and Sussex. Often the best place to start is a pub as most of us can find that! The Beehive is a favourite (cheap meals on a Monday!) We then cycle off into the distance to find a place for a rest and coffee - and cakes! Some of the coffee stops we've used include Tanhouse Farm (Newdigate), Red Rum (Lingfield), Redhill Aerodrome and Rowfant business park on the Worth Way.

If the group leader has got it right, the coffee stop is hopefully half-way round the route. After an invigorating coffee stop we then push on with the incentive of getting back to the pub where we started, to rest and recuperate with a beer and a meal. Normally all this effort takes about 2.5 hours and covers approximately 20+ miles. This



The group at Hedgecourt Lake, Felbridge.

is because we ride at a speed suitable for all the riders and their types of bikes. These range from lightweight racing machines to rather heavy electric bikes.

Most of our routes are on quiet country roads where we maintain a gap between us to allow cars to pass safely. Sometimes we are on bridle paths, avoiding them during the winter when it's likely to be extremely muddy. Whilst our group has approximately 16 members, for safety we usually ride with 10 to 12 people as a group larger than this can be tricky in terms of cars overtaking. As the leader has normally no idea where he's going, he rides at the back to ensure everyone keeps up and is safe, with the co-leader being trusted to know the route and not get lost (as has been known to happen round the bridle-path maze of Thunderfield Castle, east of Horley!).



Springs

Springs are simple mechanical devices that store energy when stretched, compressed, or twisted, then release it when returned to their original shape. Despite their small size, springs have played a major role in technological development from ancient times to the modern world.

The concept of springs existed long before metal springs were invented. Early tools like bows used elastic materials to store and release energy. In ancient Greece and Rome, torsion-based springs made from twisted hair or sinew, powered weapons such as catapults.

Metal springs became more common during the Middle Ages, especially in clocks and locks. The invention of spring-driven clocks in the 15th century allowed timepieces to become portable, changing daily life. During the Industrial Revolution, improved steel production made springs stronger, cheaper, and more reliable, leading to their widespread use in machines and vehicles.



Types of Springs

There are several main types of springs, each designed for specific purposes:

Compression springs

- **How they work:** Shorten when a load is applied
- **Common uses:** Shock absorbers, ballpoint pens, mattresses
- **Key trait:** Resist being squashed

Extension springs

- **How they work:** Stretch under load
- **Common uses:** Garage doors, trampolines, screen doors
- **Key trait:** Have hooks or loops on the ends



Torsion springs

- **How they work:** Twist to store energy
- **Common uses:** Door hinges, clothes pegs, mousetraps
- **Key trait:** Work via rotational force, not linear motion

Leaf springs

- **How they work:** Bend under load
- **Common uses:** Truck and SUV suspensions
- **Key trait:** Often stacked metal strips

Volute Springs

- **How they work:** Nested cones compress into each other
- **Common uses:** Heavy shock loads, vibration damping
- **Key trait:** Very strong and stable under heavy loads



Spiral (Clock) Springs

- **How they work:** Store energy when wound
- **Common uses:** Watches, seatbelt retractors, toys
- **Key trait:** Flat strip coiled into a spiral



Gas Springs (Struts)

- **How they work:** Use compressed gas instead of metal elasticity
- **Common uses:** Office chairs, car hatchbacks
- **Key trait:** Smooth, controlled motion

Today, springs are essential in transportation systems, especially in vehicle suspension, where they absorb shocks and improve safety. They are also widely used in industrial machines, switches, and valves to control motion.

In electronics, tiny springs are found in buttons, battery contacts, and connectors inside smartphones and laptops.

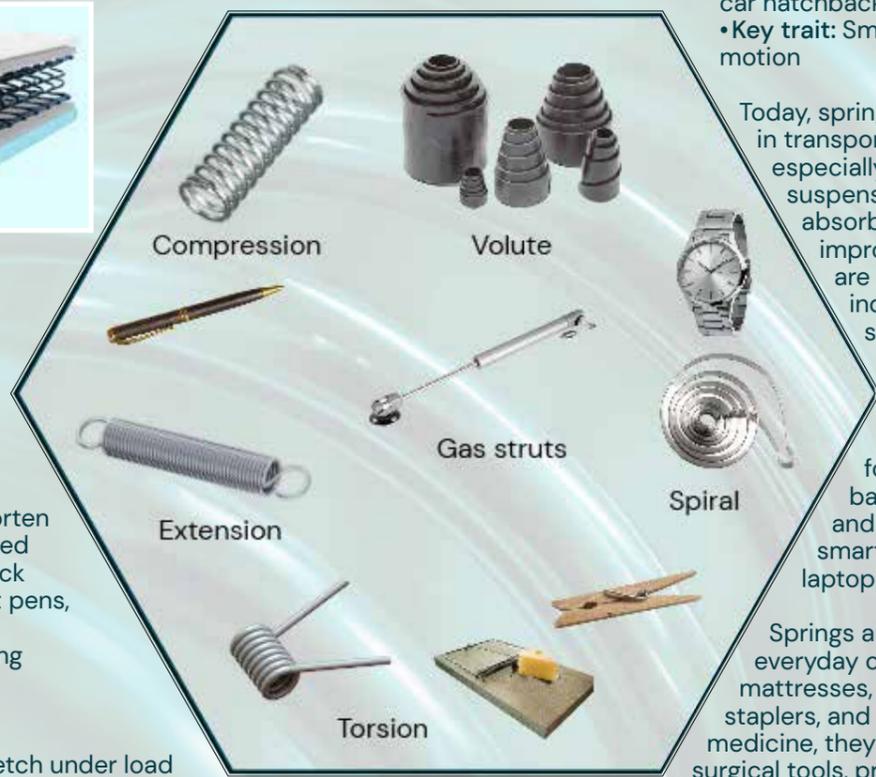
Springs are common in everyday objects such as mattresses, door handles, staplers, and watches. In medicine, they are used in surgical tools, prosthetics, and medical devices, where precision and reliability are critical.

Springs have evolved from simple elastic tools into vital components of modern technology. Their durability, efficiency, and simplicity ensure they remain essential across countless applications, making them one of the most important inventions in engineering history.

Text - ChatGPT (with edits)



'One of the most important inventions in engineering history'



Hostas - John Cousins

I do not remember when my interest in growing hostas first started. However, I do recall the many subsequent losing battles I had with marauding slugs and snails. So why did I persist – surely it would have been better to switch to other types of perennials which are not on their a la carte menu? Seeing the fresh set of hosta leaves unfurling like flags in early Spring, and transforming empty pots and beds into rich tapestries of green, gold, glaucous blue and white is one of the highlights of the gardening year. Furthermore, they are hardy, drought tolerant, grow well in the shade and easy to propagate by division with a stout spade. The challenge, of course, is keeping them pristine!

Allegedly one of the most asked questions on gardening programmes is "How do I protect my hostas from slugs and snails?" None of the deterrents on the marketplace worked for me and I refuse to use slug pellets (which are still a hit and miss solution in any event). Then on a visit to the Hampon Court Flower Show one of the owners of a nursery advised me that she went out around midnight every night and inspected all the pots of hostas in their nursery. This is prime feeding time for slugs and snails, and she successfully lifted all the unwanted guests who had come out of their nooks and crannies and sent them on their way elsewhere. From this discussion came my mantra for hosta care "Location and Predation".

No, I do not not go out predated at midnight but in Spring I do go out after dark on virtually every evening with a head torch. Now I know that you are thinking that I am mad to do this but it has made a significant difference. Thinning the population has helped me grow hostas on to maturity (when they are tougher and more resistant to attack) and enjoy their beauty throughout the summer and early Autumn. Surely, you say, this is not necessary? One (bad) year recently I lifted between 5000 and 6000 slugs and snails in and around the hosta beds and pot areas. If I had tried to spot them during the day

I would have been lucky to have found a hundredth of this total, and would probably only have had stalks left.

Location is also important. Pots are easier to inspect and manage than flower beds and borders, and I try to keep my hostas away from my hedges and other densely planted areas. It is also worth considering placing a section of old tights inside your pots over the drainage holes beneath the crocks. Slugs in particular cannot burrow their way in to hide away. Also use rimless pots to remove another common hiding place.



Hosta Glade

"How do I protect my hostas from slugs and snails?"

I also consider that hostas advertised as slug resistant are misleading. When they are leafing up in spring all hostas are at risk of attack. However, you can improve the resilience of these plants by selecting tetraploid varieties which have thicker, fleshier leaves.

In the past three years I have also started growing hostas from seed gathered from the flower spikes of my plants. Subject to variety chosen they are relatively easy to grow BUT do not come out true to the parent plant. So far, they are showing plain green but there remains the possibility that a new interesting hybrid form could emerge from natural cross pollination so the experiment continues in hope and curiosity.

And, finally, a note on a few of the varieties that I grow. Gold Standard and Francee are great "doers", grow vigorously and can be divided every two years or so. El Nino is fantastic lighting up a shady corner with its cream and green leaves, and is one of the longest lasting hostas going over in mid to late Autumn. Empress Wu (grown from two root cuttings bought online during the Covid pandemic) has outgrown all my pots and now dominates one of my flower beds producing leaves close to a metre long. A true colossus – only my banana plants produce bigger leaves!



Gold Standard



Stained Glass Hosta



Empress Wu



Holidays

12 Apr – 8 days from £2,099 (+ single room supplement £299) Hidden Northern Greece

This trip, exploring Greek culture, includes 2 hotels, one in Thessaloniki (5-star) and one in Ioannina (4-star), with all evening meals included. An early departure from Gatwick ensures that we have an entire afternoon in Greece to settle into our hotel and recover. The return flight arrives Gatwick mid afternoon.

27 Sep – 5 days from £859 The Historic Houses and Heritage of Norfolk and The Sandringham Estate It is planned to include Ely Cathedral, a guided city tour of Norwich, a cruise on the Norfolk Broads, Blickling Hall Garden & Park, Felbrigg Hall, the Sandringham Estate, a scenic drive along the North Norfolk coast road, Anglesey Abbey Garden and Lode Mill.

Contact Diana Cooper for details, email holidays@rru3a.co.uk, tel 07982 606943. All participants are expected to undertake scheduled visits unless they choose to remain at the hotel for the day, having informed Diana in advance. Please contact Michael English at Tailored Travel michael@tailored-travel.co.uk if you have any mobility concerns before booking.



Coffee mornings

Coffee Mornings are usually held in the lounge of The Light in Redhill meeting once month on alternate Tuesdays and Thursdays. They are a great way to meet with other members. Computer support is always on hand so bring your laptops, tablets or phones. Coffees and teas are available for purchase.

We will meet from 10.15 to 11.15 on the following dates: Thursday 12 March, Tuesday 14 April (followed by a meeting for new members), Thursday 14 May (our plant swap coffee morning on the lower level of Reigate Park Church), Tuesday 9 June, Thursday 9 July. Do check our website **What's On** calendar and under **Coffee Mornings** for the latest information, as there could be a revision to date or venue.

Group news

Spring is the time for new beginnings so why not try joining a new group? With 110 of them on offer you can choose to exercise your body or your brain, explore your creative skills, improve your fluency in another language or just simply socialise with other members in a variety of ways. Hopefully we already have the group for you but if not, with your help, we can explore the possibility of setting up a new one.

There are several ways you can get in touch with us: Email: groups@rru3a.org.uk or complete the online groups enquiry form which is on the groups page of our [website](http://www.rru3a.org.uk). **Nikki Stoddart & Jill Flower** Groups' Coordinators

Outings

Tuesday 28 April 2026
Walking with History Tour of Faversham - Fully Booked
Departing 9am by coach to A full-day visit to the Heritage Town of Faversham comprising a 1.5 hour guided walk of Faversham, lunch break,

then a visit to the Fleur de Lis Museum followed by an opportunity to visit the small exhibition of Faversham Town Charters.

At time of going to press, plans have not been finalised for subsequent outings this spring / summer. When a new outing is available for booking, all details will be published in our monthly bulletin and on the [rru3a website](https://www.rru3a.org.uk/post/) What's On page <https://www.rru3a.org.uk/post/> outings, including link to the booking form.

For bookings, a form should be completed (help can be given for this at a Friday meeting). Advance payment must be made. In case of queries, contact the Outings team email outings@rru3a.org.uk, or telephone Richard on 07929 715198



Monthly Meetings - 2pm

We are currently holding meetings with most people present at Reigate Park Church and others watching at home.

Friday 10 April 2026 *Hydrogen – Energy Transition presented by Phil Millette*

There are many announcements of projects and developments on what hydrogen can and may do as part of Energy Transition, and what applications are possible. Phil, who is a retired Chemical Engineer, takes a look at the basics and the claims made. This helps us to see what is actually possible and what are likely developments.

Friday 8 May *National Trust – A Great House Laid Bare: Clandon Park, The Fire and the Future presented by Anne Howers and June Davey*

A talk about the history of Clandon House and the exciting plans for its renewal following the devastating fire. Its history and family

was not obliterated by the fire, and the Onslow family have provided three Speakers of the House of Commons: a record in English history. The talk comprises some wonderful images of the discoveries about the house post fire and how it will look after the project is complete.

Friday 5 June AGM *followed by The River Mole Watch Charity – the work undertaken by the charity and the successes achieved so far presented by Simon Collins*

Flowing 80km (50 miles) from Sussex to the Thames, the River Mole is a treasured part of the landscape, enjoyed by local communities for recreation and nature. However, pollution from various sources threatens its health. River Mole River Watch runs an ambitious water

testing program to gather crucial data on pollution and highlight key issues. The Charity is dedicated to restoring the river to a thriving ecological state – for wildlife, plants, and people. As awareness of river pollution grows, so does public determination to make a change. The Charity seeks to protect and revive the River Mole for future generations.

Friday 3 July *The Seaside Piers of the British Isles presented by Graeme Payne*

There are more seaside piers in Britain than in the rest of the world put together. Starting with Britain's first pier on the Isle of Wight, we will enjoy a colourful tour of these historic icons of the British seaside, from Aberystwyth to Yarmouth and Gravesend to Blackpool, the birthplace of Sooty.

STUDY DAYS

Surrey u3a Network Study days are open to all u3a members and guests are very welcome. They are held in the Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon; starting at 9.30am with registration and running from 10am to 4pm. The fees, including coffee/tea and biscuits, are £12 for members attending and £15 for guests. To watch online at home cost is £7. Attendees should bring a packed lunch. Prior booking is necessary. All details, including how to book, can be found on the Surrey Network website. Booking forms are also available in the hall after Friday meetings.

Details of forthcoming study days are below. If details are missing at time of going to press, visit www.surreynetwork.u3asite.uk/events.

Friday 17 April 2026
"England's Glory":
Development of British Battleships, 1860–1945
Presented by Andrew Choong Han Lin, Curator at The National Maritime Museum

Friday 15 May
Truth, Lies, Risk & Reason
Presented by Philip Harris, Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of Sussex (this Study Day includes a lunch-hour recital by Menuhin School Pupils)

Friday 19 June
300 Years of English Theatre: From the Rise of the Elizabethan Playhouses to the Fall of Oscar Wilde
Presented by Giles Ramsay, Independent theatre producer, director & lecturer (This Study Day includes a lunch-hour recital by Menuhin School Pupils)

The Study Day Programme then breaks for the summer and recommences on **18 September with The Bayeux Tapestry: Its Creation & Its Interpretation** presented by Imogen Corrigan BA MPhil FRHistS FRSA, Lecturer on medieval history.

Crossness Pumping Station

PER ARDUA AD ASTRA— —a triumph of Victorian engineering

In medieval times, the shout of “gardy loo” meant slops and excrement being jettisoned from above, through the open window of the adjacent house. “Gardy loo” is an Anglicised version of “gardez l’eau” but it was certainly more than water showering the passersby. In addition, streets were littered with offal from local butchers. All this ordure eventually drained into the Thames.

Moving forward to the 1800s, there were now water closets and cesspits which drained by channels into the river.

‘Parliament was almost postponed because the air was so foul!’

Between 1800 and 1850, London’s population swelled from one to two and a half millions. By the 1850s, newly formed water companies were beginning to supply water directly to houses and there were also public water pumps. Unfortunately, some companies took water directly from the Thames and outbreaks of cholera were a regular occurrence, and that is another story (Dr. Snow and the Broad Street pump). Matters came to a head in 1858, the year of The Great Stink, when Parliament was almost postponed because the air was so foul.

Something had to be done, so the newly formed Metropolitan Board of Works asked for engineers to submit plans for improved sewage removal. The winner was Sir Joseph Bazalgette. He built a network of drains feeding into vast sewers built of



bricks secured with the new Portland cement. The present Embankment was built, with the consequent narrowing of the river and increased flow.

The sewage flowed by gravity to the new sewage pumping stations downstream, at Crossness on the south bank of the river, and Barking on the north.

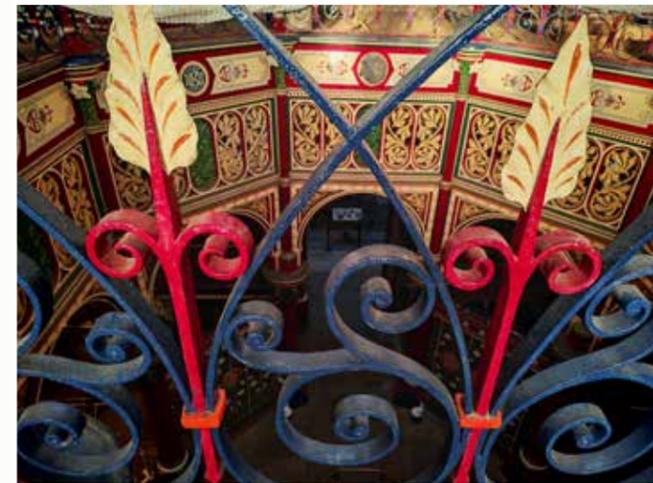
Construction at Crossness, a site on the Erith Marshes and within yards of the Thames, began in 1864. Buildings consisted of an engine house, boiler house, engineering workshop and valve house, the latter needed to control the flow of the effluent.



There was also a huge, covered reservoir, capacity 25 million gallons, which held the effluent and storm water until emptied on the ebb tide to flow out to sea. There were houses for the workers and a school.

The exteriors of the buildings were decorated in Venetian Italianate style with decorative brickwork, pillars and carvings. There was an extremely tall, strikingly ornately decorated chimney, more of a campanile, which unfortunately has been demolished.

The interior of the engine room contains four steam engines built in Birmingham by James Watt & Co. These are named after royalty, Victoria, Prince Consort, Albert Edward and Alexandra. They are the largest serving rotation beam engines in the world. The engine house is 150 feet long, has two floors, and the engines were powered by 12 Cornish boilers



in the boiler house. In turn, these were powered by Welsh coal. The interior cast iron walls of the engine house were intricately worked, with the MBW logo for the Board of Works and leaves and fruit, all brightly painted as are surrounding cast iron pillars. Pevsner described it as “a Victorian cathedral of ironwork”.

The engines lifted liquid up by 30 to 40 feet and moved 6 tons per stroke.

Edward, Prince of Wales, and Victoria’s son, declared the station open on the 4th of April 1865 in a grand ceremony including a huge banquet.

Later, in 1882, a Royal Commission ruled that solids had to be separated out from raw sewage. Sedimentation tanks were employed, and the sludge loaded onto steamboats for ferrying downstream to the sea.



By 1956, a modern new plant was being constructed, and the old system decommissioned. About 100 tons of sand were then tipped over the machinery to decrease the risk of methane release and the site left to rust and looters.

Luckily, in the 1970s, it became Grade 1 listed and put on the Heritage at Peril Register. In 1985, the Crossness Engines Trust was formed, and the site opened to the public in 2016 after years of restoration.

The Prince Consort engine was the last to be operative and the first to be restored, with Victoria next on the list.

The Architecture Outings Group visited the site on a freezing November day. Access is via a small railway previously used for supplies and one of us could not resist climbing on board the engine and sounding the hooter! It was an incredible tour, and we had an extremely knowledgeable guide, one of the many volunteers helping to keep the site open to the public. Unfortunately, our visit did not coincide with a steam day, when the engine can be seen working. Another time, preferably in warmer weather.

Denise Moseling





Brighton

Parking in Brighton

I parked at the kerb over double yellow lines on Madeira Drive in Brighton. Smooth tyres with no tread pattern, straight-through exhaust, no silencer, the engine barking as I warmed it up at 2,000 rpm. No tax or insurance of course. All that would be against the law if it wasn't the day of The Brighton Speed Trials!

2nd in class in the 1975 Brighton Speed trials

During the first practice run the engine wouldn't fire cleanly, not giving full power. Ian, the driver, stormed off to find refreshments. I began to remove the main carburettor jets one by one, blowing or sucking through them to remove any obstructions. Eventually as I sucked, something tiny went down my throat! I've no idea what it was as I swallowed it!

The engine fired cleanly after that and a crowd of spectators cheered from above. The clock was ticking, so I jumped in the car and joined the queue for the start line. Still no sign of Ian. His helmet was on the passenger seat but I didn't have a competition licence! Dare I?

Eventually, my wife delivered him to the car just in time and he tackled the standing start ¼ mile course with gusto. We drove home (towing the Lotus race car on its trailer) with a large trophy for 2nd in class in the 1975 Brighton Speed trials. A good day!

The 'photo is at Brands Hatch, not Brighton

Brian Pankhurst



Art Appreciation Group



Vincent van Gogh Almond Blossom, 1890
Photo (c) Tate, Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND

The Art Appreciation group has been established for about 20 years. Over that time members have shared their appreciation and knowledge of art through a variety of approaches. The current model, which allowed the group to remain active during the pandemic lock down, makes use of digital technology. Every month we choose a theme for the next meeting and members find one or two art works that relate to the theme in some way. Examples of themes from last year are Fire, Self Portraits, and Shadows. The pictures are sent, attached to emails to the group leader. They are shown on a large screen television and information about the artist, the style of painting and any interesting facts that have been discovered through research either in art books or, more often, online is then shared and discussed. The theme for our most recent meeting was Spring and this allowed us to revisit old favourites and search for new or unfamiliar artists.



Sandro Botticelli, Primavera 1470, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0

William, Henry Hunt, Bird's Nest and Primroses,
Photo (c) Tate, Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND



There were seven members and the some of the paintings we discussed were very well known such as Primavera by Sandro Botticelli and David Hockney's Arrival of Spring in Woldgate - both very large paintings and members recalled the impact of viewing these paintings full size. There are 500 different plant species identified in the main painting. We looked at almond blossom paintings by Van Gogh and David Hockney and talked about the influence that Japanese paintings had on European artists.

However, we also discussed some paintings that we had never seen before, in particular The Coming of Spring by Edward Hornell one of the group of painters known as The Glasgow Boys, Printemps by Tamara Lempicka an American artist, Iris Seedlings by Cedric Morris and, Daffodils and Celery by Lucian Freud.

We all came away having learnt something new and especially enjoyed listening to a short interview with David Hockney as he explained how he has learnt over the last few years to use the ipad to create his pictures.

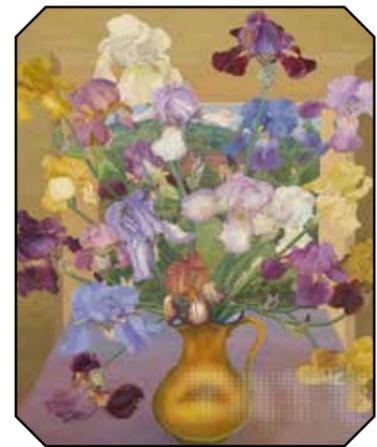
As he summed up;

'There is no such thing as oil painting art, or digital art...There's only art, actually.'

Pat Cockett

<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/video-david-hockney-interview-arrival-of-spring-exhibition-2021>

Sandro Botticelli, Primavera 1470, Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0



Sir Cedric Morris, Iris Seedlings, 1943
© The estate of Sir Cedric Morris



Lucian Freud, Daffodils and Celery,
© The Lucian Freud Archive



Edward Harnell, The Coming of Spring, 1899 Photo © Glasgow Life Museums CC-BY-NC-ND



Spring Walk

Think of Spring and what comes to mind?

Crocuses, snowdrops, tulips and daffodils coming into bloom; a broad canvas of greens and browns on the vegetation as nature wakes up from its winter slumber and heralds the new season. The scent of wild flowers, birdsong, blossom on the trees, newly born lambs gambolling in the fields, lighter evenings and lengthening daylight hours, jetting off to an exotic warm clime to escape the last cold winter evenings, Morris dancing, the Spring solstice and ancient fertility rights, Easter church service; the end of the soccer and rugby and start of the cricket season... plus gorging yourself on chocolate eggs and buttered, toasted, hot cross buns. Surely that is what Spring is all about?

All these things went through Mary and Martin's mind as they set off for a walk after work one Friday evening in early April from the picturesque 17th century Abinger Arms pub on Abinger Common, which is located yards from the ancient village pump. It turned out to be truly magical, so why don't you join them in your imagination?

Turning down Donkey Lane, they crossed the road to Leith Hill and followed the meandering footpath with its grassy banking with its clusters of bluebells in various hues of blue, that led down to the old stone bridge over the Tillingbourne River and then continued along the partly muddied track under the steep slopes of Bushey Wood, where, glancing sideways, they could glimpse the river, wildfowl and waterfall. Up the steep slope. Over the brow of the hill and down the other side, meant, as they climbed over the old rickety wooden stile at the bottom, they had the perfect view of two deer drinking from the clear waters that flowed along Pipp Brook plus several pheasants in the coppices nearby. Now it was time to ascend, but not stop at, the Wooton Hatch Inn. As they climbed the slope and spotted the ancient facade of Wooton Manor, with the only sound being that of birdsong, they wondered whether they really were in suburban Surrey or whether a magic carpet had transported them rapidly to Exmoor in Devon.

Crossing the main road, they continued past St John's church at the head of the Coombe valley, then via Park Farm, Deerleap Wood and Abinger Roughts, where there is a memorial to William Wilberforce of anti slavery fame, who died there in a hunting accident. Just past here they stopped at the old stone Shepherd's hut, which is still believed to be in

use, and took in the magnificent vista towards the crest of the North Downs, which changes according to the seasons. Onwards and upwards they went, along the wide track that is known locally for its proliferation of rhododendrons that provide a myriad of colours when they bloom in June. Unbelievably at this point, they spotted a small deer with newly born calf still uncertain on its spindly legs, with a backcloth of bluebells in the trees behind them.

After re-crossing the main road by Paddington Farm, they spotted a confused, and utterly bemused fox in a field surrounded by rabbits. Whenever it moved, they mirrored its actions. Clearly salivating at the mouth, it must have been thinking 'all that potential food but how do I catch it. I'm hungry'. Passing a lake where fish occasionally leapt out of the still, mirrored surface, Mary suddenly pursed her lips and pointed, as she had caught sight of a flash of bright blue and red that was a Kingfisher catching a tiny fish before settling on a leafy branch to devour it. Having climbed up the slope to Rakes Farm, where, near the entrance to a field containing cattle, they espied a lamb with a smug expression on its face, sitting in a plastic bowl, whilst its twin was making unsuccessful attempts to join it. It was the king of its own domain and it wanted the world to know it.

By then Mary and Martin were hungry and thirsty, so they made their way past the ancient Mesolithic burial mound and grade 2 listed Abinger Manor, then through St Jame's timeless churchyard with its moss covered gravestones, in front of the three person stocks (have you ever been put in the stocks? What for?), to the traditional English pub with its oak beams, flagstone floors, inglenook fireplace and even bench seated garden where ducks and geese are known to scavenge food from indulgent or unwary customers.

Suitably refreshed, with twilight falling fast, they reluctantly decided to leave, but there was one last surprise in the offing. As they stepped outside they spotted a group of people in a trance like state... at the sight of a line of three badgers making their way down the middle of the road before disappearing in the nearby woods.

What better fitting climax to an unforgettable Spring evening?

John Williams
Narrative Writing Group

Spring Heeled Jack

Spring Heeled Jack was an English folklore character of the Victorian era. He was, allegedly, first seen in London in 1837, the year that Victoria came to the throne, and the last reported sighting was in Everton in 1904. The first reported sighting was by Mary Stevens, who was returning to her home in Lavender Hill from Battersea. She was walking near Clapham Common, when from a dark alley, a dark figure leapt out at her. He held her fast and kissed her face, whilst ripping her clothes, touching her with 'cold and clammy hands'. Mary screamed, and Jack fled the scene. Concerned local residents searched for him, but he couldn't be found.

Jack reappeared the very next day using his soon to be trademark method of attack leaping into the path of a carriage, causing the coachman to be severely injured and to later die. Witnesses reported that Jack escaped by jumping over a nine foot wall, 'cackling as he went'.

News of Jack's exploits spread, always with the description of red eyes and clawed hands, and because of his leaping abilities the public dubbed him 'Spring Heeled Jack'. The sightings continued across London and further afield.

In January 1838 The Lord Mayor of London revealed in a public meeting that he had received an anonymous complaint from 'a resident of Peckham' that individuals of the 'highest rank' had entered into a wager with a mischievous friend, that he would visit villages near London in various disguises, one of which was the devil. The correspondent continued that 'the villain has succeeded in depriving seven ladies of their senses, two of whom are not likely to recover, but to become a burden to their families'.

Many more reports of attacks were made and Jack became a popular character in newspapers and penny dreadfuls. Jack even became a character in Punch and Judy shows. These sightings continued sporadically throughout the 1800s reports ranging from Devon to Northumberland and beyond, with all the reports focusing on his trademark leaping and jumping to evade capture.

The urban legend or myth of Spring Heeled Jack influenced many aspects of Victorian life. Children were threatened with Jack as a 'bogyman', they were told that if they misbehaved Jack would leap up and peer at them through the windows at night.

The penny dreadfuls and newspapers continued to feature him, firstly as a villain and then in increasingly heroic roles. By the early 1900s he was being portrayed as a costumed do-gooder, an early inspiration for later super heroes perhaps?

Jack was never apprehended, not surprising, given the length and breadth of his attacks and nobody was ever identified as the 'mischievous individual' who had accepted the wager. One theory was that Jack was in fact the Marquess of Waterford, who was said to do anything for a bet. In fact his irregular behaviour earned him the nickname 'The Mad Marquess'. Another questionable theory, was that Jack may have been an alien with red eyes and phosphorescent breath, with his agility coming from life on a high gravity world. We will never know!

Deb Chapman



Do you pass on your family history?

I remember when I was teaching the children in Year six, we studied WW2. The most popular homework was to interview grandparents about the war. They came back to school with lots of anecdotes and recollections and had really enjoyed spending time asking questions. Sometimes we asked an elderly volunteer into class to be interviewed about the war and the questions the children asked were always amazing.

I have old photo albums of my parents and I didn't ask enough questions, so now they are long gone, I have no idea who many of the relatives are or why the places in the photos were relevant. My father, who was a navigator in the RAF did make a scrapbook of many photos he took in India and odd items like a menu from an RAF Christmas dinner and his answer sheet to a test to identify 20 or more different aircraft from their silhouette. We did spend time together talking and discussing the scrapbook which I valued so much and still have.

I know the war is long gone but do you spend time with your grandchildren remembering old times? The houses you lived in, what school was like, your favourite sweets and the snazzy clothes you wore. Those little chats are precious times together and bring history to life.

A few years ago I went to the Imperial War Museum to see a special exhibition of clothes worn in the WW2. I particularly remember reading the letters or notes that people had written when they had worn the clothes. A wedding dress, a party frock or a recycling of something special. For me clothes have always been a fascination and I wish I'd kept my Biba outfits and some of the shoes I'd bought in the 60's!

Talking with relatives who have dementia can be hard work, but asking them about songs they remember or music they can still play can be astonishing. It might be fleeting, but for that moment it was great.

Tina Pankhurst

Redhill Library Renovation



Have you been to Redhill Library recently?

It really is worth visiting. Forced to close when RAAC defective concrete was found in the roof, the staff were given just 24 hours to clear all the books and equipment. They relocated into the Belfry, a much smaller space, where they continued their services.

Surrey Libraries took the opportunity to bring forward their plans to renovate their space in the Warwick Quadrant and it reopened at the end of last year.

The old library has been transformed into a bright and welcoming space with improved lighting, a new children's reading area, updated study areas and new moveable and comfortable seating. Upstairs is the local history reference library and new public conveniences. There's even free tea and coffee!

But the library is not just for books! Every Thursday there is 'Knit and Natter', a chance to improve craft skills and make new friends. You can join two monthly reading groups and a new poetry and writing group. There is digital support every week day and monthly talks on a wide range of subjects on the first Thursday of the month, plus lots activities for children of all ages to encourage them into reading. More details at the library!

Sally Baker



Back Cover Spot the spring:

Column 1

Greenhouse automatic opening vent
Biro
Train leaf springs
Car seat belt housing
Bike brake handle
Soap dispenser
Car suspension

Column 2

Farm implement link
Clock spring
Door opener
Sewing snippers

Stapler
Flask lid spring

Column 3
Anglepoise lamp
Clothes peg
Umbrella
Kitchen scales
Front bike brake

Column 4

Wind up watch
Door lock
See-saw
Bike suspension
Mattress

Swing into Spring!

Our group listen to various tracks of jazz (all types from trad to fusion), swing, and blues. Big bands, small groups, great sax players, talented pianists, and vocalists. Members bring along CDs or tracks on their phone or ipad to play on a smart speaker.

We try to keep alert for up-coming live events. Some of us get along to the Watermill Jazz Club, (near Dorking). Among the talented musicians we have listened to were... Jacqui Dankworth, Alan Barnes, and Elaine Delmar (still going at 86!). Dorking Halls was another popular venue. The Old Barn Hall in Great Bookham on Sunday afternoons offers Varied jazz and comfortable atmosphere: and it's worth keeping an eye on the events offered at G-Live in Guildford eg, Jules Holland, Ronnie Scott. Other venues to explore are; The Dog House, at Walton-on-the-Hill, The Hatch in Redhill, and Stepping Stones at West Humble.

We're always on the lookout for good jazz, cool or hot!!

A different listening experience was at a rehearsal of the Redstone Big Band. Hearing the sections being rehearsed separately enhanced our appreciation when finally the whole band played the full arrangement. We hope to see the band at the Carrington School on 9 May. I gather the programme will include some Glen Miller, and Count Basie plus 2 vocalists with songs covered by Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra.

Our monthly session has been a most pleasant way to spend a dull winter's afternoon... and now Spring is on its way we'll continue to take pleasure in hearing an eclectic mix of tracks. So let's Swing into Spring!! Google gives a list of songs related to Spring; some of which will be familiar to you.

Agnes Vennard
Jazz & Swing Appreciation

April in Paris - Count Basie

It might as well be Spring... - Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan

Spring is Here - Nina Simone, Billie Holliday

Up jumped spring - Freddie Hubbard

You must believe in Spring - Bill Evans

Joy spring... - Clifford Brown

Some other spring - Billie Holiday

Swing spring - Miles Davis

Spring can really hang you up the most - Ella Fitzgerald, Irene Kral

Spring fever... - Joachim Kuhn

Spring shuffle - Kenny Dorham

Suddenly it's Spring Stan Getz - Frank Sinatra

Spring in Central Park... - Dave Brubeck



Reigate & Redhill

u3a
learn, laugh, live

Published by Reigate
& Redhill u3a

rru3a.org.uk

Registered charity
No 297529

Editorial Team:

mageditor@rru3a.org.uk

Tina Pankhurst

Sally Baker

Angela Austin

Deb Chapman

Photographer:

magphotos@rru3a.org.uk

Carol Hicks

Design & Production:

website@rru3a.org.uk

Shirley Harnett

Print:

www.printformation.co.uk

With thanks to Adobe and

Canva AI software

Pixabay images

ChatGPT



***How many
springs can
you identify?***

