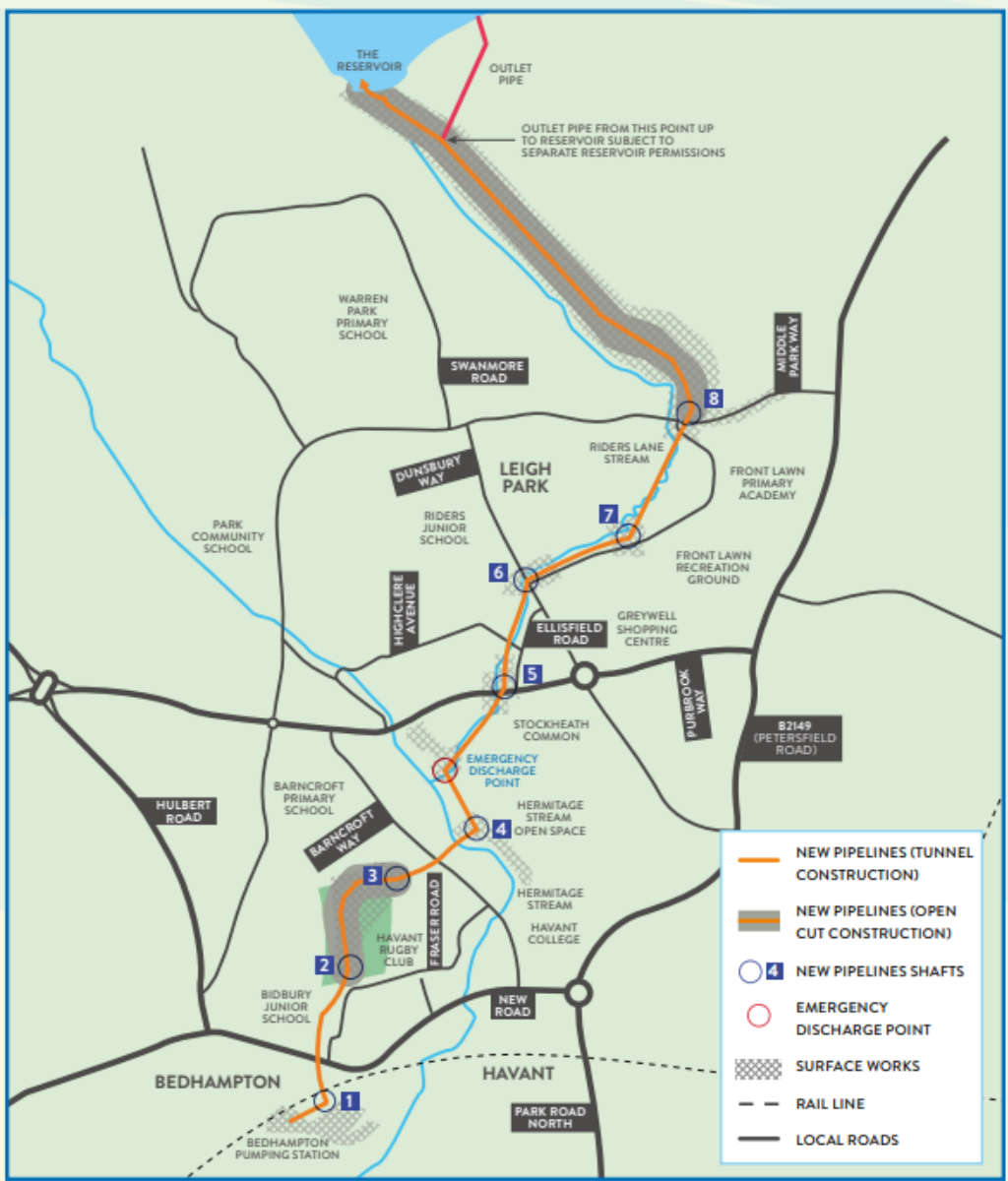




APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER

A Continuation of the HAVANT RESERVOIR Article from our March Newsletter.

Editor: I hope that your interest in this massive civil engineering project right on our doorstep (or under our doorstep!) will be such that the technical detail Tom Foster now details will intrigue you as it did me! In the last issue, he explained that the tunnel would start at Bedhampton Springs, go due north under Leigh Park and feed the new reservoir. The last article finished by describing the Micro-tunnelling method that is being adopted. If you wish to re-read the March article first, you can access this by going to our website, and click on March newsletter. Below, Tom continues:



Leigh Park and feed the new reservoir. The last article finished by describing the Micro-tunnelling method that is being adopted. If you wish to re-read the March article first, you can access this by going to our website, and click on March newsletter. Below, Tom continues:

Shaft Construction We will build the pipelines section by section via nine shafts, five shafts of around eleven metres diameter each, and four shafts that will each be approximately eight metres in diameter.

The shafts will be spread out along the pipeline route at intervals of between 300 and 500 metres. The nine shafts across the 3.5 kilometre route from Bedhampton Springs to the reservoir are strategically positioned to enable

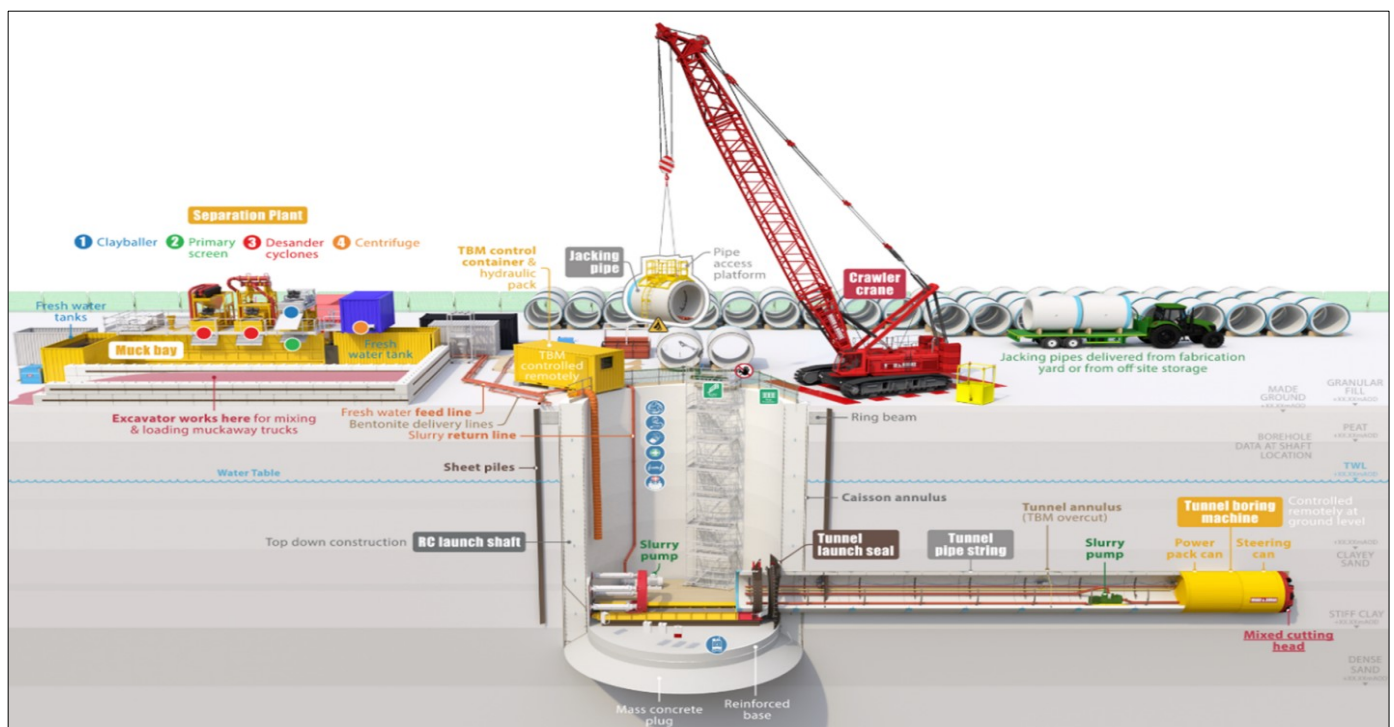
construction of the twin tunnels while avoiding most private land and navigating through the town with as little disruption as possible.

Tunnel boring machines can be steered and gently curved to navigate obstacles, but cannot take tight corners. Where sharper changes in direction are needed, shafts are used to realign the route. Shafts are also required where the pipelines transition from deeper tunnels to shallower sections, such as at Hooks Lane playing fields and within Staunton Country Park.

The tunnel boring machines operate in a single direction between shafts, starting at a launch shaft and finishing at a reception shaft. Launch and reception shafts are constructed using the same method, although launch shafts are typically larger. A circular mould, known as a shutter, is set up at ground level to form a reinforced concrete ring with walls up to one metre thick. Once the concrete has set, the ground inside the ring is excavated, allowing the structure to sink under its own weight. This process is repeated ring by ring until the required depth is reached. The base of the shaft is then sealed with a concrete plug, creating a clean, empty shaft ready for tunnelling.



Tunnel Construction Once a shaft is complete, tunnelling works can begin using a slurry tunnel boring machine. The diagram below shows a typical launch shaft with the type of tunnelling machine that will be used in Havant.



As the machine advances, excavated material is mixed with water to form a slurry, which is pumped back through the tunnel to the launch shaft. There, the material is separated from the water for removal from site, while the water is recycled and returned to the tunnelling machine, allowing the process to continue in a controlled loop. The operation is managed remotely from a control cabin at the surface.



Concrete tunnel pipes are lowered into the shaft and jacked into place behind the machine, typically in four metre sections. This continues until the machine reaches the reception shaft, where it breaks through the wall and is lifted out ready to begin the next section. This process will be carried out between shafts in seven pairs of tunnels along the route over the coming years, creating

an underground network through Havant. Once complete, the water pipes will be lowered into the tunnels and connected, enabling water to be transported from Bedhampton Springs to Havant Thicket Reservoir.

You can learn more, if you wish, by visiting these websites:

Portsmouth Water: <https://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk/>

Ward& Burke: <https://www.wardandburke.com/>

Havant Thicket Reservoir Project: <https://havant-thicket-reservoir.uk.engagementhq.com/>

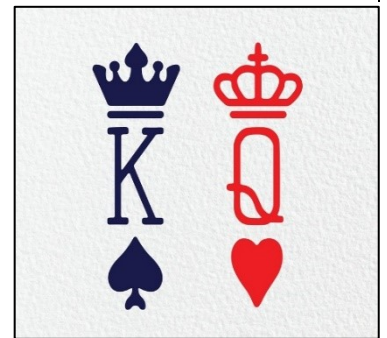
Tom Foster is a principle civil engineer from Ward and Burke Construction Ltd., constructing the new £41 million tunnelled pipeline, running to and from the new reservoir. Ward & Burke is one of Ireland's principal Civil & MEICA Engineering contractors and has built more than 130,000 metres of tunnels in the UK, Ireland and North America.

Do you play Bridge?

The Bridge Intermediate 2 Group will be running a second session in addition to its usual Thursday morning slot from May to September in the Emsworth Community Centre between 2 & 4 pm. This will be open to anyone in Ems Valley U3A who would like to play bridge for 2 hours. You do not need a partner to attend as we use whatever movement will fit the number of people present most effectively.

Please contact Nigel Miller via the U3A website at Bridge - Intermediate 2 - Ems Valley if you are interested and not already a member of the group.

Nigel Miller



CAMEO 25 get into stride at new venue!

We meet on the first TUESDAY of each month at 10.00am (Coffee time!) and Eileen Snow asks pertinent questions which leads to an amazing array of answers and surprise discussion!

When she started the group in June 2025, Eileen anticipated accepting new



members up to a maximum of 25. As you can see from the photo (by Kerry Eastwood), eleven attended the March meeting so don't hold back if you would like to become a member of this friendly group! What did we discuss at that meeting? Can't actually remember but each and every member knows a lot more about the others than they did before.....

And the new venue, Denvilles House on the Emsworth Road outside Havant is a very convivial venue with superb parking facilities!

Play Reading Group 2 have a vacancy – a rare occurrence!!

Colin Ottewell writes: Our long running Play Reading Group 2 is in need of another member, preferably a man if I'm allowed to say that these days. This is because one of our founder members, Jeremy Ball. Is sadly moving away from Emsworth to Alton very shortly.

We try to meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 2pm, here at 13 Park Crescent PO10 7NT. Our favourite plays are Thrillers and Comedies but we're up for anything as long as we have a good time. So if you'd like to give us a try, please give me a ring (01243 372924). I have a feeling you might be glad you did.



Thank you, Colin.

Ed. The photo Colin sent in depicts one of their thrillers I think, or it could have been a comedy, either way, no convictions arose.

STEM to learn “HOW THE HACKERS HACK!”

Geoff Whalley writes: Our topic for our **next meeting on April 2nd is Computer Hacking**. Graham Taplin is kindly giving us a talk titled “How Hackers Hack”. Everyday organisations, big and small, get hacked. The consequences have seen companies go into liquidation and even cause a huge hit on the UK's GDP. Hacks harvest personal data and that data is used to takeover accounts and commit fraud. But just how do hackers get access to those accounts and infiltrate organisations? The talk will take a look at some of the common methods and some past and ongoing hacks.

If you would like to attend this meeting on 2nd April, 2.00 pm Church Hall, Church Path, Emsworth, and are not a member of the STEM interest group, you would be very welcome, just give Geoff Whalley an email via the Ems Valley web site – click on **Science & Technology** – then **Geoff Whalley** – then send your message.



Listed below is a copy of the current plan for the rest of this year.

Date	Topic	Speaker
7 May	Food From Fossil Fuel	Graham Timms
4 June	Rare Earth Minerals - Results of Personal Research -	Pam Palmer, Bryan Lynch, Roger Keverne & Geoff
2 July	Physiology : Part 1 - The Central Nervous System (includes cause of Strokes etc)	Wendy Jones
3 Sept	Physiology : Part 2 - The Peripheral Nervous System	Wendy Jones
1 Oct	Rising Sea Levels	Richard Binks (Visiting)
5 Nov	GPS - How does it work ?	Martin Gebbett
3 Dec	New Zealand - A Tale of Two Islands - Geological Aspects	Roger Keverne



Spring-flowering Camellias

I know that some Camellias flower early but these Williamsii 'Les Jury' always light up my walk in March! They are among the best shrubs for early spring colour, and the R.H.S. tell us that camellias are upright or spreading, glossy-leaved evergreens, with white, pink or red flowers. Impressive in the shrub borders, they are also ideal for screening and growing in containers. You can also grow spring-flowering camellias more informally in dappled shade beneath deciduous trees. They certainly do well in some Emsworth gardens!

CRAFT GROUP GET ALL TIED UP.....

Angela Blunden writes: We had a great time at our March meeting, We all learnt how to Macrame by our wonderful member Ronnie. She had kindly printed out instructions, so some of us made plant holders, some fisherman float holders & key rings. We did manage to finish a couple of things, otherwise it was taking it home to finish, but what a lot of fun it was, so a big Thank you to Ronnie & all her patience with us.

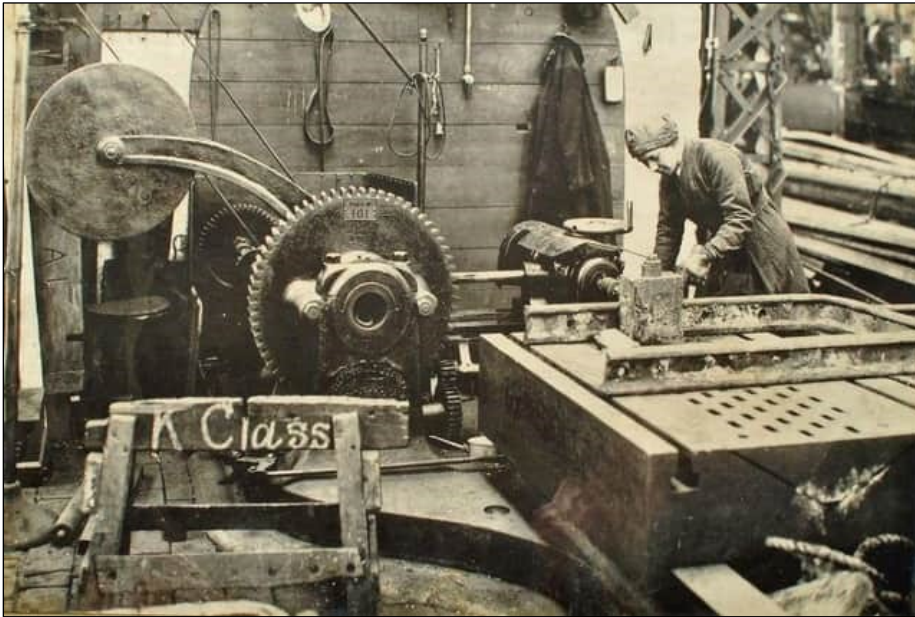


Ed: I need a wall tapestry for my lounge and sent Angela my template. I wondered if her group could do a bit of homework in decorative macramé and please a poor old newsletter editor.....



Local History learn about the TRIANGLE GIRLS!

We enjoyed a talk on the Triangle Girls at the March meeting. I think it is fair to say that none of us had heard of this group of ladies before! Women workers who took up jobs in Portsmouth Royal Dockyard during the First World War are now being celebrated for their contributions to that war effort.



We were told that the forgotten stories of the Triangle Girls, a name given on account of the triangular 'On War Service' badges they wore at the time, are now being uncovered!

Only a very small number of women worked in the dockyard prior to 1914, initially making flags, and then roles extended to including typists, tracers and copyists. But when war broke out, labour shortages on the home front meant many had to take on non-traditional jobs for their gender at that time.

These included welding, buffing, drilling, (see pic left), engraving, and

woodturning in the city's docks. In fact, over 1000 ladies were employed and this figure probably rose to near 2,000 by the time the war ended. The men largely enlisted to fight leaving these girls to fill the vacuum.

The Triangle Girls helped construct the super-dreadnought battleships HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Royal Sovereign, and the submarines J1, J2, K1, K2 and K5.

The Yard also repaired 1,658 vessels and refitted 1,200 ships, including 40 battleships and battlecruisers, 25 cruisers and more than 400 destroyers.

Researchers and volunteers recently explored this interesting story including the context of their employment during the First World War, the tasks they performed, their working conditions, attitudes of their male colleagues, their personal feelings and the legacy of their service.



One of the more surprising finds for the research team occurred when one of them discovered that she was related to a Triangle Girl. Cheryl Jewitt came across the name of her own grandmother, Clara Eliza Sillence, in the Portsmouth Dockyard Rate Books. "This was a family history I never knew about", Cheryl later said. "My father had been born during my grandmother's second marriage, and we didn't know much about her life with her first husband, James A W Sillence who Clara married on New Year's Day 1912. James was killed in action

on October 31st 1914 leaving my grandmother to care for and support my aunt who had not long been born."

Sadly, in 1919 the Restoration of the Pre-War Practices Act forced most women to leave these wartime roles when survivors came home to reclaim their jobs. One Triangle Girl when interviewed years later was asked if she had received a medal, she replied, 'no dear, they just gave us our cards'. Our leader Reg Newnham thanked Ray Perrett for arranging this presentation.

Garden Group visit to Highdown Gardens in Worthing

The U3A Garden Group's visit to Highdown Gardens in Worthing was a delightful spring spectacle, marked by perfect weather. Our group enjoyed exploring the grounds, with some of us relaxing over coffee and delicious fruit loaf beforehand, while others had coffee and/or lunch at the end of our visit.

Highdown Gardens, owned by the Highdown Gardens Trust since 1968 was a gift from Lady Stern to the people of Worthing following her husband Sir Frederick Stern's death. It is managed by Worthing Borough Council and has lots of volunteer gardeners. Entrance is free which is a bonus.

We were struck by a vivid display of spring blooms, with countless daffodils in various forms spreading cheer throughout the gardens. Soft blue and white hues from swathes of Scilla complemented the scene, along with clusters of Leucojum, often called Summer Snowflakes for their snowdrop-like appearance.

Remarkably, some tulips, (identified on a Google images search as *Tulipa agenensis*) were already flowering, adding bursts of colour in an early spring display.



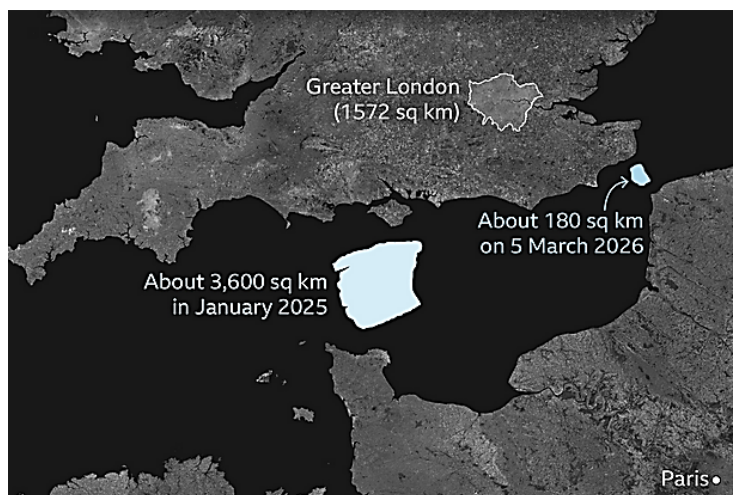
The Chalk Quarry, a historic part of the garden is currently undergoing renovation using old records and had certain parts roped off. Whilst still dormant, the shrubs and climbers were being carefully pruned to allow light for the rock plants below.

Highlights included the Peony Trees, renowned in Highdown, which were bursting with buds and should be stunning when in full bloom in a few months. The gardens also showcased a fascinating variety of trees, such as a Chinese Stachyurus with its delicate, catkin-like sprays.

June Lineham and Diana Faithfull

A23a HAS NEARLY VANISHED....

If we go back to 1986, the year that the nuclear reactor exploded at the Chernobyl power plant in what is now northern Ukraine, right away from the world's gaze, **the Filchner Ice Shelf in the Antarctic was changing dramatically.** This was a massive floating tongue of ice extending from the Antarctic continent and into the Weddell Sea – and it has been changing dramatically. One of the icebergs to break off - or calve – **was named as A23a**, then about 4,000 sq km (roughly 1,540 sq miles), much larger than our county of Hampshire!



It soon became anchored (wedged) in the muds of the Weddell Sea, where it remained stuck for more than 30 years. It wasn't until 2020 that scientists noticed signs that A23a was on the move again. Today, it is now north of the Falkland Islands but disappearing fast. The illustration below shows it in relation to the English Channel 14 months ago, and then again wedged between Dover and Calais just three weeks ago. No, it is not actually there – I am just trying to recreate this floating melting ice sheet in relation to size! **Ed**

GMT – WE CHECKED IT OUT!

In 1675 King Charles II commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to build the Royal Observatory on the site of Duke Humphrey's medieval watchtower. It was named Flamsteed House in about 1720, after John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer Royal. It was situated on top of a hill at GREENWICH overlooking the Thames.

On Monday 9th March, Emsworth and District u3a arranged a coach trip to view this Observatory and invited members of Ems Valley u3a to “make up the numbers”! When we arrived at 10.30am, the foggy weather that had followed us northwards, was trying to disperse. The fabulous view from the hill? Honestly – it's breathtaking. Laid out below us was Inigo Jones' Queen's House, Wren's Old Royal Naval College, the Thames winding around Canary Wharf, The Cutty Sark, the O2 building – it was like seeing past, present and future all at once. And yes, the sun was doing it's level best to break through! (It did, beautifully just an hour later!) The photo (right) shows the viewpoint and you can just make out a semi shrouded Canary Wharf at the top of the illustrated board.

But the real icing on the cake that day was our guide - Paul Miller. He was quite amazing and no one objected when the one hour slot went by the board and we finished his tour after an hour and a half!



Whether your interests are Sailing and Navigation, Astronomy, Maritime History, Horology, the Prime Meridian line, Space Exploration, History & Architecture, Paul catered for it! And he had a manner and delivery which made each subject so interesting that – even if it was not your favourite – you still hung on his every word!

Yes, we stood astride the Meridian Line, one foot in the West and the other in the East!

That Astronomer Royal, Flamstead, was appointed to make a map of the heavens. It was hoped that this would solve the 'longitude problem' that bedevilled early navigation. But it fell to John Harrison, a self-taught English carpenter and clockmaker who would solve this problem. It was one of the greatest scientific challenges of the 18th century: determining longitude at sea. Accurate latitude could be found from the sun or stars, but longitude required knowing the precise time difference between a ship's location and a fixed reference point.

Without this, ships frequently became lost, sometimes with disastrous consequences.



In response to these dangers, the British government passed the Longitude Act 1714, creating the Board of Longitude and offering a prize of up to £20,000 for a reliable method to determine longitude within half a degree (about two minutes of time). It was a lot of money in those days!

Harrison proposed a mechanical solution: a highly accurate sea clock that would keep the exact time of a reference location such as Royal Observatory Greenwich while a ship was at sea. By comparing local noon (when the Sun was highest) with the clock's time, navigators could calculate their longitude. Between 1735 and 1761 Harrison built four increasingly precise marine timekeepers—H1, H2, H3, and the revolutionary H4. We were shown all four in their glass cases! The first three were large experimental clocks designed to resist the motion, temperature changes, and humidity of the sea. The fourth, H4, resembled a large watch and proved far more accurate. Despite initial scepticism from the Board of Longitude, Harrison's work eventually gained recognition. **After years of testing and a good deal of pressure—including support from King George III—Harrison received most of the £20,000 prize.**

We were told that his marine chronometers transformed navigation, greatly improving maritime safety and enabling more reliable global exploration and trade.

The photo right, shows Paul Miller at one stage of the tour, explaining the beautiful Dolphin Sun Dial and, if you look carefully, you will see that it is working well – the sun was out - this clever dial used the tails of the two dolphins to cast the shadow (the gnomon) onto a curved, equatorial dial plate to indicate the time.

This Dolphin Sundial was designed by Christopher Daniel, quite recently in 1978.

Our thanks to Maureen and Brigit from Emsworth and District u3a who arranged the trip and kept us all in order!

Your Editor



TRAVELLING CONTRASTS: JAPAN AND MALI!

Our travelling gurus met at "TRAVELLERS TALES" in March with another total contrast! Firstly Adrian Fox recounted his visit to TIMBUKTU in Mali and then Steve and Carolyn Joy took us to Shanghai and Japan! Yes, contrasts indeed! Adrian Fox very ably recounted his "expedition" to Timbuktu in 2002!

I suppose many of us would have said at one time or another "I am going to Timbuktu", not knowing where on earth it is! But it's definitely a destination, Adrian took us there and told us it is a Islamic learning place, and has been so for a long long time so there are museums and very old mosques. Mud brick building abound! Adrian brought it all alive, but warned that if we ventured there today, we would probably end up as a murder victim! So now we know, and everyone will recognise the place name Timbuktu, even if they once thought that it was mythical, far away, and at the end of the world! When asked why he chose Timbuktu as his chosen destination, he kind of shrugged and said we put a pin in the map, and that's where it landed.....



Steve and Carolyn had a different story – They flew to Shanghai to start a cruise. Then a Cyclone blew up and ruined everything! (Cruise cancelled!) Being resourceful people and not wishing to come off their "high", they decided to stay, see Shanghai and fulfil a lifelong ambition and visit "Royal" Japan. But purchasing an airline ticket for Japan, in China, was not easy and they had to proceed through a Chinese resident to avoid money laundering regs! He wanted cash, of course so Steve had to raid multi cash machines to come up with the required payment! In his words: "finding £800 cash (8000 Yuan) in large wads is not the easiest thing to do but we managed it, and booked a flight for the following Tuesday, allowing time for the airport to reopen after the cyclone had passed. A 4.30pm flight looked easy for a two and a half hour flight but we had not built in the hours delay and loss of another hour on time zone. Arriving nearer 9pm, our last train to Kyoto looked very risky so we had to pay for a £150 taxi ride which, like Cinderella, just got us to the hotel on time - at midnight!"

Steve told us that he wanted to see KYOTO because of it's history and culture. Japanese emperors, who were the symbolic heads of state and religion, each had their SHOGUN who was the real leader and the military dictator and de facto ruler of Japan. They led a feudal system where Samurai and Daimyo served them, effectively ruling while the Emperor was just a figurehead.



I think that Steve and Carolyn had a great time and turned what was potentially a disaster into a triumph. The real proof of their success was the new SHOGUN pictured above on the right.....or perhaps he was just the SAMURAI???

WINE ONE GO TO UNUSUAL COUNTRIES.....

Trevor Smith took us EAST to Romania and Lebanon and WEST to Uruguay for our March wine tasting! And a very interesting tasting it was! Members enjoyed both the red and white wines from the BEKAA Valley, Lebanon, and we wondered how these vineyard owners were coping with yet a new war looming. I read, when I returned home, that

these Lebanese winemakers were faced with a similar problem in 2023. That year they were focused more on Israeli air strikes than the year's vintage. How do these family-run businesses cope in war times?

In the September 2023, Elias Maalouf and his father were in Chateau Rayak, the family winery in this Bekaa valley, when they decided to head home for a lunch break. Five minutes later an Israeli jet dropped a bomb on a house across the street, crushing the three-storey building and destroying much of the winery.

"If we hadn't left we would have died," said 41-year-old Maalouf, sitting in the winery as repair workers replaced a shattered television five months later. The doors had blown in from the force of the blast and shattered glass had rained down on the table where he now sat, the wood of the furniture still pockmarked from shrapnel. An hour after the bombing, Maalouf returned to the winery and started repairs. He swept up broken bottles, some of them more than 20 years old, removed a severed foot that landed in front of his storage room and collected up his broken equipment. "All I could smell was wine. "You always enjoy the smell of your own wine, but that day it was the worst smell I could imagine. It was the smell of my loss," he said. Maalouf lost about 40,000 bottles and £158,600 in damages. Because of the bombardment, he had to leave 60 tons of grapes to wither on the vine. Maalouf has little hope



of receiving any compensation from Hezbollah, which promised funding to those affected by the war but, as an Islamist group, would not fund the reconstruction of a winery. **Unknown to him, the building Maalouf had seen across the street was a Hezbollah drone production facility, a prime target for Israel.**

Alan Borrow

BRICK BUSINESS GETS BACK TO EMSWORTH!

Brick architecture in Emsworth, Hampshire, is characterized by a blend of historic charm, particularly from the Georgian and Victorian eras, plus modern, sensitive residential design. The town's aesthetic is deeply tied to traditional brickwork, with many structures featuring red brick and flint, frequently restored or updated by local architectural firms to meet modern living standards while preserving historical character. This was highly evident when we looked at our own town again at the March meeting.

If you ask "AI" about "Emsworth and Bricks" it will mention: A town featuring quaint seaside cottages and grand Georgian homes, with many older buildings being restored using traditional techniques like lime repointing to maintain structural integrity and appearance. Also Distinctive Garden Walls: using a mix of local brick, stone, and sometimes flint. These walls are considered a vital part of the town, and often feature climbing plants like wisteria.

As we saw at our March meeting, there is a high level of activity involving the renovation and extension of existing, characterful properties, and under the "AI" title "EMSWORTH - Material Heritage Focus" our "BRICKS BUSINESS" receives a mention - I quote: "Local groups, such as the Ems



Valley u3a 'Brick Business' group, study the history of local brick, terracotta, and clay tile usage in the area." Hey Ho - we've arrived! It's only taken eight years..... (PHOTO shows house in Tower Street)

Alan Borrow

Monthly Meeting – March

The main speaker at our March Monthly Meeting was Ken Fowler, a retired Air Traffic Controller. Aided by a comprehensive slide show he spoke fluently, without notes, covering all aspects of air traffic control. It was both informative and entertaining. Ken worked at both Heathrow and Swanwick, so we heard about the different responsibilities depending where in a flight the aircraft is at each moment. Amongst other things, we learned the reasons why our flight might need to wait for a slot and how air traffic controllers actually work. We also heard of the problems pilots meet and air traffic controllers deal with, but he countered this by explaining flight safety has improved vastly over the years. There was humour too, with examples of banter and misunderstanding between pilots and controllers. There was general consensus that this was an excellent presentation. . **Rod Lipscombe**



Wine Appreciation Two celebrate in style!

On the 18th of March Wine Group 2 celebrated the arrival of spring with its Wine and Dine Dinner at the Emsworth Sailing Club. The evening began with an informal reception where we enjoyed a welcoming glass of Crémant and lively chat as we caught up with other group members, particularly those who have been away in sunnier climes, Who can blame them, the winter has been particularly wet and miserable. The weather, which on the day had been warm and sunny which helped everyone get a spring into their step. The reception was followed an evening of excellent food prepared by skilled hands of the Sailing Club's very own talented Chef Ollie, a real foodie super star. Each course was accompanied by a carefully selected wine which paired perfectly with each course and was a true delight enjoyed by every single one of us. Wine Group 2 is



indeed a very friendly and sociable group, and the room was full of chatter and good humour. The evening flowed as easily as the wine and all too soon it was time to take our leave. It was the perfect end to the 2024/2025 wine group year and we are so much looking forward to the new season that begins 1st April. Many thanks to Group leader Sheila Redman ably assisted by David Sawyer and Vince Lavender for organising such an enjoyable and convivial evening. **TREVOR REDMAN**



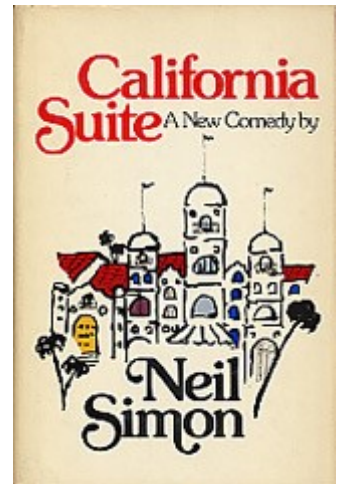
A 'Play Reading One' production at the Monthly Meeting

Play reading group one were surprised to receive a request from Rod Lipscombe reminding us that we were due to be on stage after the tea break on 26 March! We had planned to perform next month during the April meeting. But, being true troopers and muttering 'the play must go on' we managed, with only one rehearsal to entertain a small audience (many U3A members having left after the tea break - can't think why) to read an act from 'California Suite' by American playwright Neil Simon, written in 1976.

The Group had found this play very funny as we tried to read with American accents, about two couples who go away on holiday together with disastrous results. One of them, Beth is injured on the tennis court and accusations fly as well as bad language (we did warn those of a delicate nature in advance) and the two men end up having a fight - the end of a beautiful friendship!

More hilarity when one of our readers got the pages of the script muddled and we found we were unexpectedly nearly at the end. This caused some confusion not only for the other three readers but also for the person reading the stage directions! However, our audience was very patient - after all we are all older and tend to be easily confused! The cast was as follows: Beth - Anne Gains, Stu - Keith Davies, Gert - Mary Mumby, Mort - John Gains, Stage directions- Hazel Willard, Introduction - Jackie Oiler. Produced by all of us!

Hazel Willard



A 98 year old woman in the UK wrote this to her bank. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the Times. We publish her letter below:

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my Pension, an arrangement, which, I admit, has been in place for only thirty eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank. My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant



financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person. My mortgage and loan payments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by cheque, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate. Be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Solicitor, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof. In due course, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

- 1 - To make an appointment to see me.
 - 2 - To query a missing payment.
 - 3 - To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
 - 4 - To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
 - 5 - To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.
 - 6 - To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.
 - 7 - To leave a message on my computer (a password to access my computer is required. A password will be communicated to you at a later date to the Authorised Contact.)
 - 8 - To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through to 8.
 - 9 - To make a general complaint or inquiry. Uplifting music will play for the duration of the call.
- May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your Humble Client

An Arab Sheikh was admitted to the hospital for heart surgery, but prior to the surgery, the doctors needed to have some of his blood type stored in case the need arose. As the gentleman had an extremely rare type of blood that couldn't be found locally, the call went out around the world.

Finally, a Scotsman was located in Fife – he had the same rare blood type. After some coaxing, the Scot donated his blood for the Arab.

After the surgery, the Arab sent the Scotsman a BMW, a diamond necklace for his wife, and \$100,000 US dollars in appreciation for the blood donation.

A few months later, the Arab had to undergo a further corrective surgery procedure. Once again, his doctor telephoned the Scotsman, who was more than happy to donate his blood. After the second surgery, the Arab sent the Scotsman a thank-you card and a box of Quality Street chocolates.

The Scotsman was shocked that the Arab did not reciprocate his kind gesture as he had anticipated. He phoned the Arab and asked him:

"I thought you would be more generous than that. Last time you sent me a BMW, diamonds and money, but this time you only sent me a lousy thank-you card and a crappy box of chocolates?"

To this, the Arab replied: " Aye, laddie, but I now have Scottish blood in ma veins."

QUOTATION CORNER – THIS MONTH’S SUBJECT – CONVERSATION

“I’m not a fan of small talk, but if you want to get into the big questions of life- your deepest regret, your greatest joy- then we’re going to have a great chitchat.” —**Anh Do**

“Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.” —**Dau Voire**

“That’s all small talk is – a quick way to connect on a human level – which is why it is by no means as irrelevant as the people who are bad at it insist. In short, it’s worth making the effort.” —**Lynn Coady**

“I love it when someone starts a conversation- romantic, platonic, small talk- as long as it’s related to food.” —**Rohit Saraf**

“Good conversation is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.” —**Anne Morrow Lindbergh**

“You can keep your small talk, give me deep conversations. I like riding trains of thought to unknown destinations.” —**John Mark Green**

“Teas, where small talk dies in agonies.” —**Percy Bysshe Shelley**

“Let’s clear one thing up: introverts do not hate small talk because we dislike people. We hate small talk because we hate the barrier it creates between people.” —**Laurie Helgo**

“Gone is the era of small talk and deep conversation. Emoji and internet slang is ruling the world.” —**Nadeem Ahmed**

(Inviting George Galloway onto newsnight, after his eviction from the BIG BROTHER house)

Whenever you are ready ... with or without your leotard. **Jeremy Paxman**



**Contributions for the next newsletter please to:
alanborrow1@gmail.com**