



Dawlish and District U3A Newsletter

October 2020 Issue 3

Chair's Chatter

Well, we just managed to return from 9 days visiting the family in Scotland before the tougher restrictions kicked in. Having had the 3 grandchildren down here in July we were the family bubble. Children under 12 were not included in Scotland, otherwise we would have been 7 and had to stay in a hotel. Our 7 year old granddaughter said to her Mum 'If Grandad and Grandma can't stay in the house, we can always let them sleep in the summer house or shed; with blankets it would be warm enough.' What a kind thought!

I think that many of us are missing seeing the family as we are perhaps used to. We have not been able to visit our eldest son and family in Madrid since the last Christmas and New Year period. With the present situation in Madrid, I don't think we will be able to visit this year at all 😞 Then we have our youngest son and family in the Portsmouth area but cannot visit them as we would be 7 in total. Happy days..

During this COVID 19 pandemic I am sure that we have all been realising just how important our family is and we miss the hugs from the grandchildren and even for some of you, the great grandchildren. Any one with great great grandchildren??

We all know the mother-in-law jokes but here is another one about shrewd

parents that you may have heard before (pre COVID days). 'A man calls his son in London on the 23rd December and says "I hate to ruin your day but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing; 45 years of misery is enough. Please let your sister in Leeds know". Frantically the son rings his sister and tells her about their Mum and Dad. "Leave it with me. I'll ring them up and sort them out" replies the sister. She rings the father and screams at him "You are not getting divorced. Don't do a single thing until I get there and I'll ring my brother and we will both be with you tomorrow. Until then do not do a thing, you hear me?". At that she put the phone down. The man turns to his wife and says "Sorted. They are coming for Christmas and both paying their way!".

Families.. I like the following quotes:
'Our family is a circle of strength and love. With every birth and every union the circle of love grows. Every crisis faced together makes the circle stronger'.

'No family is perfect; at times we argue. We even stop talking to each other at times but in the end family is family... the love will always be there'.

Talking about a family, I am glad that I am part of our Dawlish and District U3A family and hope that we will continue to have others joining as times goes by. We are all about 'Learning, laughing and living' but we are also about 'caring and sharing'. That is why Richard Warburton

has become our Welfare Officer and Anne Whitehead is setting up a 'Keeping in Touch' scheme; an opportunity to support and keep in touch with each other. May we look out for each other and do our utmost to ensure that we continue to be a happy band of U3Aers... Talking about happiness, I'll leave with you another anecdote:

Boy age 4 'Dad, I've decided to get married'. Dad: 'Wonderful, do you have a girl in mind?!' 'Yes', replies the boy 'Grandma. She says she loves me and I love her too. She's the best cook and story teller in the whole world.' Dad: 'That's lovely but we have a problem, she happens to be my mother. How can you marry my mother?' Boy: 'Why not, you married mine!' 😊

Take care - **Graham**

Sad News

It is with regret that we heard of the passing of Steve Thomson; he died in Derriford Hospital on Sunday. Our thoughts and hearts go out to Pauline his wife.

Steve was a former Chair of our U3A and then Secretary. He convened the original Wine Appreciation Group and had been a Convenor of the French Conversation group. He was also an active member of other U3A groups as well as being the Quizmaster at our Christmas event.

Steve was a caring and enthusiastic individual who will be sorely missed.

Graham Carey - Chairman

Coming up Soon

Monday 19th – weekly quiz at 7pm

Thursday 22nd – French conversation group at 10.30am. The subject will be 'Which thing would you find the hardest to give up?'

Monday 26th – Informal meeting on the Lawn at 2pm

Discussion Group

Sadly Barbara Lindley has decided to give up convening the Discussion Group. We thank her for all the hard work she has done in convening this group and building up the numbers so wonderfully (pre Covid).

If anyone is interested in taking on the convening of this group please contact Anne Whitehead. Barbara has offered to help with advice and information and you will have the full support of Anne and the Committee. Please think about it even if you have never attended the Discussion Group before or ever convened before.

Art Appreciation

Why is the Mona Lisa widely regarded as one of the world's greatest works of art?
by David Gearing

Recently this question was posed by Richard W to other members of the Art Appreciation group. This was my response.

Because the Mona Lisa is so familiar it's quite difficult to look at it with an open mind. If I was encountering it for the first time and didn't know it was so celebrated I suppose I'd conclude it wasn't anything that special when compared to other surviving portraits of the period. Of course it's by Leonardo, now considered one of the best painters of all time, but probably more worthy of admiration for his scientific and technological ingenuity and knowledge of anatomy as evidenced in his notebooks. Unsurprisingly not many of his paintings have survived, which makes it a rarity, something precious.

The famous ambiguous smile, which makes both the subject's mood and the artist's intentions uncertain, is achieved with subtly shadowed corners of the mouth and eyes. This technique, of which Leonardo was a leading practitioner, involves soft transitions between light and shade or between colours and was later termed sfumato, or 'Leonardo's smoke'. Art historians say that Leonardo perfected this technique through his research in optics and human vision, and his experimentation with the camera obscura. The result here makes the depiction of the

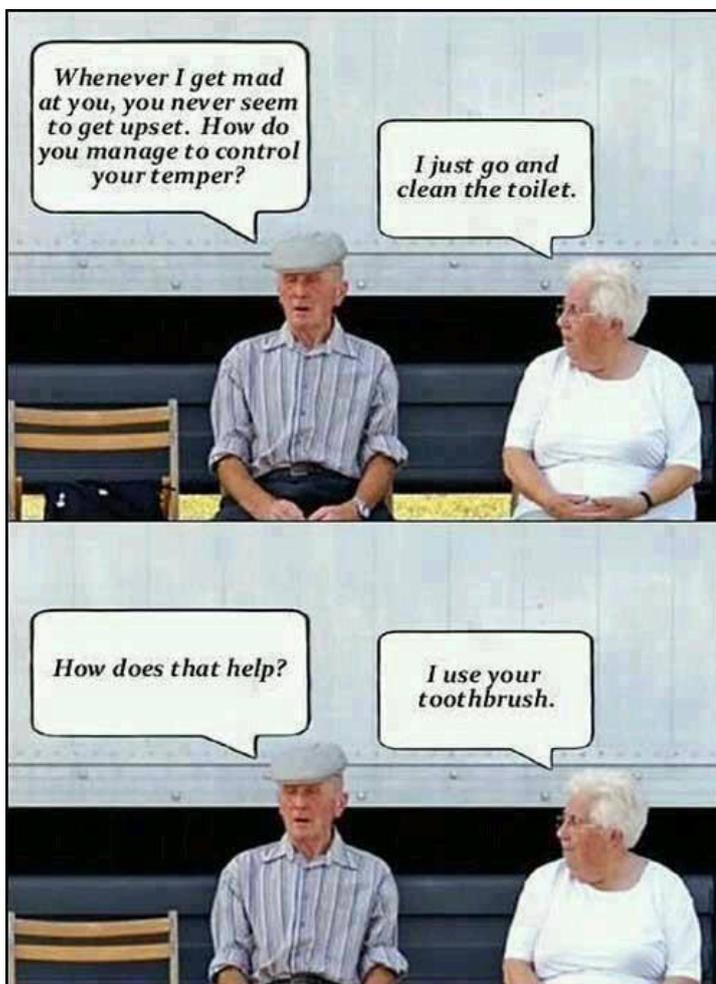
figure more atmospheric than in other portraits of the time, and also perhaps closer to what a spectator would actually see in relatively poor interior light, in contrast with the prevailing style of contemporary portraits, which were usually clearly delineated and with precise details of figure and costume. The whole thing is therefore rather mysterious and intriguing, which I guess adds to its appeal.

Apart from its artistic merit, I think the attraction of the Mona Lisa is partly curiosity, because it is essentially a small subdued portrait of an unexceptional woman and yet is probably the best-known painting in the world. (Indeed, I understand it's rather underwhelming in real life, being particularly dark and dirty, partly due to age and partly to the darkening of an old varnish that presumably now can't be safely removed. Most reproductions have been retouched to lighten the image in order to see the details.) I read somewhere that until the Coronavirus intervened the Louvre had been having record numbers of visitors year on year – over 10 million in 2018 - and according to someone in charge there 80% only want to see the Mona Lisa.

But those pondering the question about why many consider it the greatest ever work of art look back at its history. I understand that Leonardo began to be revered in the 19th century, but until the 20th century the Mona Lisa was just one among many highly regarded works, and not that well known by the general public. Its elevation to the 'world's most famous painting' was the result of the worldwide publicity of its theft from the Louvre in 1911 and its eventual recovery, both in peculiar circumstances. It was taken by Vincenzo Peruggia, a handyman who had helped construct the painting's glass case. Some reports say he had the help of two accomplices; they hid overnight in a cupboard, waited until the gallery opened on a quiet Monday morning, removed the painting from its case and frame and walked out with it concealed under a blanket. Bizarrely, the theft wasn't notice until the next day. Peruggia may have

been an Italian patriot who believed the Mona Lisa should be in an Italian museum, but he was also interested in selling it, or at least getting a reward for bringing it back to Italy. Apparently he wasn't suspected, because he kept it hidden in his Paris apartment for two years. Then he moved to Florence and, tired of waiting, offered it for sale to an art dealer, who took it to the Uffizi gallery for authentication. He was immediately apprehended and eventually served a short jail sentence, but apparently the Italian authorities had some sympathy with his motives as the Mona Lisa went on a tour of Italian galleries before being returned to the Louvre.

Clearly that incident has faded from memory, but its status has remained, and now all these people crowding into the Louvre are just ticking it off their 'things-to-do' list, also perhaps checking out whether the eyes really do appear to follow you as you move – assuming that's possible given the usual scrum of people in front of it jostling to take photos with their phones.



Answers to Last Week's quiz - Guess the following 20 phrases

1. 1 DAAT - **1 DAY AT A TIME**
2. 2 S to ES - **2 SIDES TO EVERY STORY**
3. 3 C in a F - **3 COINS IN A FOUNTAIN**
4. 4 M with TD - **4 MONTHS WITH THIRTY DAYS**
5. 5 GR - **5 GOLD RINGS**
6. 6 FU - **6 FEET UNDERGROUND**
7. 7 WOTW - **7 WONDERS OF THE WORLD**
8. 8 M a M - **8 MAIDS-A -MILKING**
9. 9 P in the SS - **9 PLANETS IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM (ALTHOUGH SOME SAY THERE ARE NOW ONLY EIGHT)**
10. 10 Y in a D - **10 YEARS IN A DECADE**
11. 11 F in a C - **11 FATHOMS IN A CHAIN**
12. 12 D of C - **12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS**
13. 13 in a BD - **13 IN A BAKER'S DOZEN**
14. 14 D in a F - **14 DAYS IN A FORTNIGHT**
15. 15 M on a DMC - **15 MEN ON A DEAD MAN'S CHEST**
16. 16 O in a P - **16 OUNCES IN A POUND**
17. 18 H on a GC - **18 HOLES ON A GOLF COURSE**
18. 20 C in a P - **20 CIGARETTES IN A PACKET**
19. 21 GS - **21 GUN SALUTE**
20. 26 L of the A - **26 LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET**

Fascinating Facts

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador did not join Canada until 1949.

Albert Einstein's brain was secretly removed by the doctor who performed his autopsy. After the theft was discovered in 1978, scientists studied the organ to find explanations for Einstein's genius. To date, nothing special has been discovered.

This week's Quiz - English Bank Notes

1. 2007 £20 - Economist who wrote 'The Wealth of Nations'
2. 2011 £50 - Scottish steam Engineer
3. 2011 £50 - Business partner of above
4. 2017 £10 - Woman novelist
5. 2011 £5 - She made prisons more humane in the Victorian era
6. 2000 £10 - Author of 'On the origin of species'
7. 2007 £20 - Scottish philosopher and academic; father of modern economics
8. 1999 £20 - English composer
9. 1990 £5 - He is called 'the father of railroads'
10. 1992 £10 - Writer born in Portsmouth
11. 1991 £20 - Scientist who experimented with electromagnetism
12. 1994 £50 - The first governor of the Bank of England
13. 1978 £1 - Scientist who wrote "Principia Mathematica"
14. 1971 £5 - Famous English General
15. 1975 £10 - The founder of modern nursing
16. 1970 £20 - English playwright
17. 1978 £50 - English architect
18. What was on the front and back of the 1957 £5 note?
19. From 1945 what were three banknotes that you could spend in the UK?
20. Before the Second World War, the Bank of England issued notes for denominations up to how much?

Answers Next Week

Some Funnies

Why don't skeletons ever go trick or treating? Because they have no body to go with.

The shovel was a ground-breaking invention.

Don't trust stairs, they are always up to something.