



February 2025 Magazine



The Third Age Trust

(Operating as the University of the Third Age)

Croydon u3a Registered Charity Number 1029466

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Croydon u3a Management Committee 2024-2025

** Please note at the time of going to press we are creating new email addresses for committee members. Contact the Chair when in doubt.

Chair Jenny Wilson jenny.wilson@croydonu3a.org.uk

VC, Venues, Archivist Joy Ellery

Treasurer, Gift Aid, Membership Paul Smith

Business / Minutes Secretary Trisha Holmes

Travel Team and Bulletin Linda Grigsby

Interest Groups and Publicity Maggie Chan

IT and Comms Steve May

Inclusion, New Members Sheree Yapp-Davis

New Members Cliff Brett

Interest Group Assistant Fenella Cardwell

Travel Team Karen Hook

To see photos of your Committee members visit website page:

https://croydonu3a.org.uk/imgs/committee_photos_25_26302.pdf

Croydon u3a has an army of volunteers apart from the eleven members above, who have taken on various roles to make our u3a run well. See some of them on the Off-Committee Volunteers page on the website:

https://croydonu3a.org.uk/imgs/off_committee_members_25203.pdf

We must include our Group Leaders and their assistants, for without them we would fall apart.

We are always looking for volunteers to discuss starting a new group or offering a taster session or a short course. Please contact Maggie Chan if you would like to discuss this. The guiding principle of the u3a is:

Run by the Members for the Members

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Foreword

Happy New Year!

As the days begin to get longer many of us will be looking forward to Spring by perusing gardening magazines and preparing to plant seeds or purchase new plants for our gardens. For those of us who don't have their own garden, don't forget that the gardening groups offer trips to gardens around the country, or if you would like to get your hands dirty, the Friends of Park groups welcome new volunteers to help with maintaining flower beds, community gardens, orchards, and woodlands. For more information see the London Borough of Croydon website or contact biodiversity@croydon.gov.uk

We also have lots of other day trips and longer excursions with other interest groups – please see the bulletin for details and make the most of your u3a membership.

If the current cold weather makes you just want to curl up on your sofa, then this copy of the magazine should provide some entertaining reading material for you with wonderful contributions from our members. I hope you enjoy it.

In order that the magazine does not clash with the publication of the bi-monthly bulletins we will be issuing copies in February, June and October each year.

All contributions for the next edition will be gratefully received. Please send to: tess.smith@croydonu3a.org.uk by 20th May.

Editor – Tess Smith

Letter from the Chair

Dear Croydon u3a Members,

We are all looking forward to Spring – the tree blossom, lighter evenings on the way and the bulbs popping up out of the ground to say hello.

Croydon u3a has again been of great assistance to the national office. Firstly, a request for some new photographs for the Image Library – many of the photos in the existing one are of Croydon members. The Image Library is a free service for other u3as who haven't got decent photos for their own local publicity purposes. We crop up all over the place, showing different activities, engagement, laughter and learning. u3as download an image(s) they think will be useful to paste into their own leaflets. It's a great example of u3a collaboration.

The second request was to film an active Interest Group, Line Dancing being the last one filmed and featured on the national u3a website. It contains an interview with Christina about the benefits she has enjoyed since becoming a member.

After filming the Tai Chi session recently, two members of the group – Chris & Paulette – were filmed discussing why they joined and the benefits. u3a score out of 10 = 20!

It is so flattering that we are asked to support and provide images for other u3as for their publicity drives and to showcase what we offer here in Croydon. It's a win-win.

Very best wishes to you,

Jenny

Jenny Wilson, Chair, E: jenny.wilson@croydonu3a.org.uk

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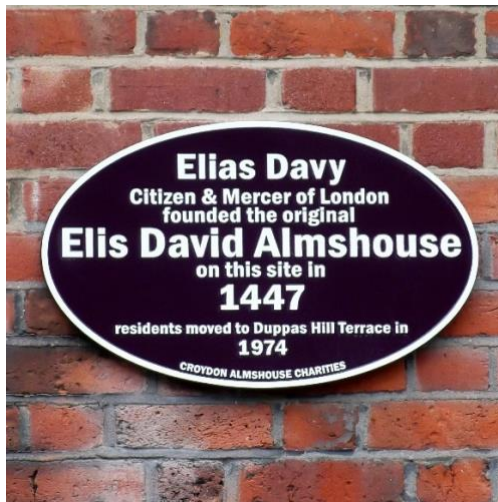


Chris and Paulette

News from the Groups

A gift for Croydon

This past year, the Local History group has been researching some of the 'Great and the Good' of our area who are commemorated on 'Blue Plaques' (and some plaques of other colours) around the neighbourhood. One of the people whom we found out about was Elias Davy, who lived in Croydon in the 15th century and founded Almshouses 'for the relief of the poor'.



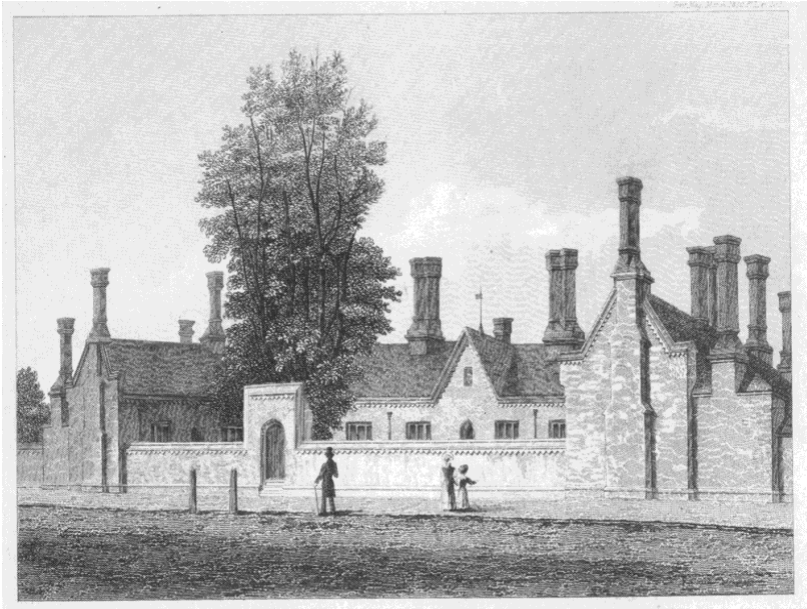
While most of us will have heard of the Whitgift Almshouses in North End, which were given to Croydon in the 16th century by Archbishop John Whitgift, not so many people are aware of the Elis David Almshouses which predate them by some 150 years – and yet this act of generosity deserves to be celebrated.

Up until quite recent times, getting old could bring great hardship for many. Without the NHS, state pensions etc, there was little provision for the elderly who could no longer work and hadn't got family to support them or the means to provide for themselves.

Older residents of Croydon were very fortunate that several benefactors set up Almshouses –the Whitgift Almshouses, the Elis David Almshouses and the Mary Tate Almshouses. Of these the oldest foundation is that of Elis David, which dates from 1447. The Whitgift Almshouses date from 1596 and the Mary Tate ones from much later – 1829.



The original Elis David Almshouses are in Church Street



A Victorian print of the Almshouses



Victorian residents of the Almshouses (in the front row)

The Elis David Almshouses are named after their founder, Elias Davy, a Citizen of London and a wealthy Mercer (a trader in luxury fabrics). His name became mis-transcribed to Elis David over the years.

He died on 4 December 1455 and was buried in Croydon Parish Church, now Croydon Minster. The date of his death is marked by the Elis David Almshouses' Residents and Directors with an annual service in the Minster, called the *Mynde Day Service*.

In 1443 Elias Davy bought a piece of land called "Delles" near to Croydon Parish Church. It was a marshy area, with the river Wandle running through it. He had the land drained so that he could build on it and provided accommodation for eight old people (men and women), and also built four cottages with orchards and gardens. To ensure the future of his Almshouses, Elias set up a generous endowment. Until the middle of the 19th century, it was referred to as 'The Great Almshouse'. The building was enlarged in 1875 to accommodate 12 people, and a new wing was added in 1887.

By the 1970s, building in Church Street was too small and old-fashioned to offer suitable accommodation and so the Foundation built a new Home on Duppas Hill Terrace which can accommodate 80 people in modern premises. This was opened in 1975. The original Almshouse building is situated in Church Street, near the Minster. It is now called Ramsey Court and is used as offices. Although the exterior is Victorian, there are probably some remnants remaining of the north wing of the original building.



The modern premises on Duppas Hill Terrace

And so, the generosity of Elias Davy continues to benefit the residents of Croydon, almost 600 years after his death. What a truly wonderful gift!

If you would like to learn more about Elias Davy and his Almshouses, there is a very good booklet called, 'The Land Called Delles' which was written by SR Turnbull who was a Resident of the Almshouses.

Maggie Chan (Croydon u3a Local History group)

Local History Group

Writing for Pleasure

The Writing for Pleasure group had the theme of “A Winter’s Tale” and below is a poem by Janet Stokes.

THE WINTER’S TALE.

In England they call it the Autumn, by some it is known as the Fall,
It signals the end of the summer, and I do not like it at all!
The clocks are put back in October, as we quickly turn day into night,
To help all those folk up in Scotland, who say they are lacking in
light.
Soon the trees are all bare, crisp leaves fall to the ground,
Then they bowl along pavements and make a rustling sound.
Time to put on the central heating, if the boilers not gone up the
spout,
Then stick up some draught excluder and seek those bed socks out.
Throw on that heavy tog duvet, that’s filled with organic goose down,
No longer sleep in my Birthday suit but dig out a fleecy nightgown.
The windows are frosty each morning, as winter is on the way,
The light levels dim by the afternoon and get shorter by the day.
I’ll look out my warmest jumpers, if moths haven’t chewed them in
holes.
My thermal gloves and woolly hat, the boots with the thick rubber
soles.
I must check on the tins in the larder, is the freezer stocked up to the
brim?
Buy soup and plenty of porridge oats; in case I get snowed up or in.

The pavements are already quite dicey, underfoot so slippery and wet,

You can find yourself skidding round corners, into folk you've only just met.

From now on, I will only go shopping online, to stock up with any supplies,

I won't miss the supermarket carols or the samples of budget mince pies.

Icicles hang from the rooftops, and the birds have stopped singing of late,

But I have a plan to keep cosy and warm. I'm going to

HIBERNATE!



Janet Stokes

Looking at London

This group visited St Bride's Church in Fleet Street in September and Fiona Bowles wrote the article below about the visit.



We listened to an organ recital, reflecting on sad, serious matters that are affecting our world today in Europe and the Middle East. We were enthralled by a slide show given by the very passionate rector and then went on a tour round the church, crypt and museum.

The site of the church dates back 2,000 years and a succession of churches existed on the site for centuries but by the time of the Great Fire in 1666 the church was in ruins. It took nine years for the church to arise from the ashes under the guidance of Sir Christopher Wren.

For the next 250 years the rise of the British Newspaper industry took place in the shadow of the distinctive wedding cake spire. Fleet

Street had already assumed its role in the emergence of English printing, with Caxton's apprentice Wynken de Worde (yes, his real name) being the first printer to set up a site on Fleet Street in 1500.

After the war the church was again rebuilt and a series of significant excavations in the crypt were uncovered. Skeletal remains from mediaeval times have been identified, catalogued and boxed.

Until well into the 19th century the only official source for corpses for medical purposes was the public hangman. This gave rise to body snatchers who made £14 per body (over £1,000 today). In order to provide safety for the dead an iron coffin was designed with a flange, engaging with spring clips in the lid.



This was a delightful, informative and fascinating afternoon which was preceded by a lovely lunch at the Punch Tavern just round the corner.

Fiona Bowles

A Walk in the Hucking Estate with the Woodland Trust.

The u3a celebrated the movement's 40th anniversary by donating money for a new woodland area in the Brecon Beacons, and here in Croydon we have walked to raise money for trees to be planted in more deprived areas in the north of the Borough. We know how natural green spaces enhance our lives and we were delighted to accept an invitation from the Woodland Trust to visit, learn more and walk around part of the area which is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Trust bought the site in 1997 when two thirds was farmed, arable land with some separated areas of ancient woodland remaining. Then began the lengthy process of habit restoration and creation.

New woodland has been created with native trees, and non-natives are gradually being removed. The former arable land has been converted to grazing, hedgerows have been created and more ancient woodland and species rich chalk grassland acquired.

Looking at early photographs we could see how the woodland areas have grown and joined with natural regeneration forming new habitats and increasing the biodiversity that we now know is so important. The grassland is now rich in wildflowers and butterflies and birds which have been absent from Hucking for many years. Nineteen threatened bird species have been recorded including turtle dove, skylark, yellowhammer and corn-bunting, also bats are using the two disused chalk pits to roost.

The trees are mainly oak, hornbeam" silver birch, yew, sweet chestnut and wild cherry. Woody scrub is also important for regeneration, and we saw hawthorn, hazel, field maple, and brambles forming protection for young saplings as well as small mammals. Local volunteers also run an orchard with over 100 fruit trees.

We learned how oak trees are important habitats but don't like encroachment by other trees, so there is sensitive management of surrounding growth, often ring barking silver birch etc so that they

slowly die and rot down, forming a home for fungi and insects. The woodland has a shrubby undergrowth.



Sweet chestnut is being coppiced over a period of eight or nine years, leaving areas at different stages of regrowth. The timber is being sold for income, but conservation is always the primary objective.

The site manager, Sam, explained how he identified new seedlings that would be encouraged to grow naturally to replace the ancient mature trees so that there would be continuity.

We did see squirrel damage and even trees that had all the bark stripped. Deer are a problem in many woods, but here they are thankful that deer are not present as although the wood is very peaceful there are main roads surrounding it, the M20, M2 and A249 forming a sort of barrier.

We asked about diseases such as Ash Dieback, which is now evident in the woods. We saw dead and dying trees but also a beautiful Ash still in full green leaf.

There is a landscape trail with wooden carvings and information boards explaining how the Hucking site was used as part of everyday life throughout history. The Romans and then the Jutes (from Denmark) occupied the area and created farmsteads, villages and woodland clearance for farming. Grazing the chalk hillsides, which led to the mix of chalk grassland and woods that provide such a rich diversity of habitats. There was also iron ore to be found and ancient iron workings have been discovered on the site. We liked the wild boar family which looked as though children visiting had clambered over the backs of the animals.



Climate change is causing more extreme and unpredictable weather which can make trees more susceptible to other problems. The Trust is always trying to work with nature and provide a healthy environment as the best protection. One area is leased to a university for research into tree diseases and fenced off, and a local farmer uses regenerative methods to graze a small herd of Sussex cows and sheep on the grassland, which is gradually recovering from the years under crops and chemicals.



Beautiful view even on a dull November day. New growth can be seen extending from the edges of the ancient woodland and hedges joining up the different areas.

The Hook and Hatchet provided a delicious lunch at the end of the walk and is perfectly situated in the centre of the site.

{Grid Ref OS Explorer Map 148 Landranger 188 : TQ843575}

The Woodland Trust is a charity close to my heart and we have remembered several friends and family members with donations. It is good to talk to those managing and developing the woods and see the enthusiastic professionalism they bring to their work and see first-hand the methods and progress.

Sheila Kemble

Members also belong to other voluntary organisations, and Barnaby Powell has submitted the following account of his residents' association recent activity.

Literacy and Litteracy

A merry band of Park Hill residents gathered at the corner of Park Hill and Chichester Roads on Sunday the 21st of January and set about clearing the litter from the surrounding areas.

The task was made much easier by the equipment provided to each of us: a mechanical finger-and-thumb and a big plastic bag with a hooped mouth like a butterfly net. Thus armed, we set out to capture our prey – and rich pickings there were: crushed aluminium cans, branded bottles and caps, bits of non-biodegradable plastic, sweet, chocolate and chewing-gum wrappers, little laughing gas cylinders, used condoms, cigarette butts, tissues, vaping tubes, playing cards and other colourful, assorted detritus all winking back at us in the merciless rays of the sun. The scrubby patch in front of Park Hill Court was vibrantly festooned with the stuff.

Many of these offending articles were heavily embedded in the ground and, unlike coins and domestic crockery, were unlikely to be of interest to later archaeologists studying the remains of 21st Century Britain other than as evidence of the wasteful packaging of luxury items of food and drink and foolish recreational habits.

Culture, as the Americans would have it, is 'The way we do things around here'. Under more rigorous regimes, such anti-social activity as discarding unwanted things at random in the open is curtailed by spot fines and public shaming. Here, it seems, anything goes. Such a libertarian mentality hardly adds to the gaiety of nations, particularly at a time of manifest despondency.

This admonition is not some prissy finger-wagging or the vain attempt to impose middle-class values or the maintenance of social

niceties. It is the recognition of the need to remind our children and grandchildren (and adults of an oafish and churlish disposition) of a basic standard of decency required to live happily and well in a law-abiding society. It is a splendid thing to be British, but not if we continue to let our heirs, successors and fellow citizens down by tolerating such inconsiderate and sloppy behaviour.

Thus, it is devoutly to be wished that they will in time come to share with us the keener sensations of disgust. This is a 'beef' worth having with others – it is no wonder that we are 'salty' about it. It is not a 'wet' issue and we are 'no cap' about it, sure that something 'peng' may come of our stand.

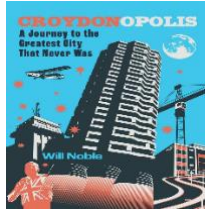


Fruit and Veg Quiz

Cherry Lewis

Can you identify the fruit and vegetables from the clues below?

1. A well-known London Hotel
2. Comedy 'Mr'
3. Cilla's were blind
4. William Tell practised on one
5. Where's he off to?
6. Not a pretty sight
7. Belgium city begins to grow
8. Score four score on the pool table?
9. Churchill's wife
10. A person who interferes
11. Spin round and pinch yourself
12. The fruit of a fir tree?
13. There's a hole in my bucket
14. Sounds like a proposal
15. Trim bushes
16. A very cold hat
17. A vehicular disease
18. Candy cereal
19. He's Scandinavian
20. Seasonal colours
21. Interrogate the relatives
22. Girls name
23. To the Aussies, this is English stone
24. A dog's got two sets
25. A circle on a stove
26. Urinate
27. This leaf covered Adam's embarrassment
28. Are you as cool as this?
29. Twist the letter
30. A badger twists the juice of the olive



Book review:

***Croydonopolis*, by Will Noble**

For anyone interested in Croydon's history, or anyone who just appreciates the town we live in and wishes it didn't always get such a bad press, I can really recommend this recently published book.

The author, Will Noble, is a resident of our town and in this book he takes the reader through its history; from its beginnings as a staging post for Roman soldiers on the road from London to Portslade and later as Crogedene - the Crocus Valley loved by the Anglo-Saxons, through its ecclesiastical past as the preferred Palace of successive Archbishops of Canterbury, to its transformation from market town to popular dormitory suburb when the coming of the railway put it in easy commuting distance of London.

This is not, however, a 'dry' history – it is written with wit and with a light touch – while reading it I have found myself laughing aloud many a time! It is full of anecdotes and amusing stories about Croydon's past which are entertaining while being informative.

Above all, the author's affection for our town shines through the whole book and is a welcome change from the derogatory way in which Croydon is too often described.

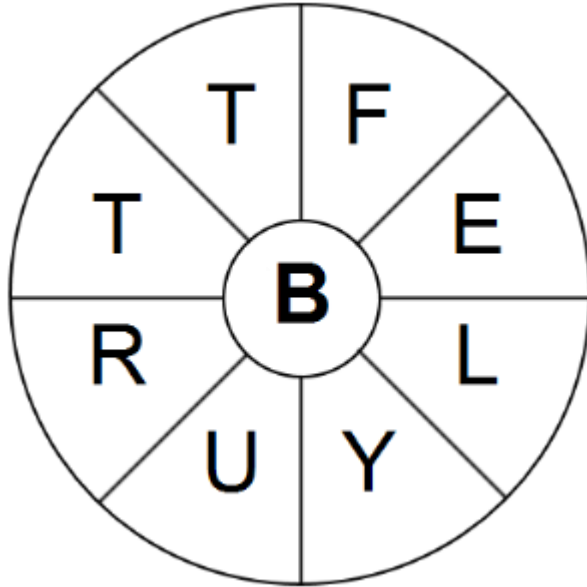
The book is widely available through bookshops and via Amazon:
Croydonopolis by Will Noble, Publisher: Safe Haven Books
ISBN: 9781838405199

Maggie Chan, Local History group

Puzzle Pages

Spring Word Wheel

During the Spring the Earth's axis starts to tilt towards the sun so the days become longer and warmer. It is the time when hibernating animals wake up and flowers start to bloom,



This spring themed word wheel is made from a 9 letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter **B**.

Sudoku

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| | | 5 | 3 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 5 | 3 | |
| | | | 8 | | 2 | 7 | | |
| 5 | 7 | 4 | | 3 | 9 | | 6 | 2 |
| | | | 6 | | 7 | 3 | | |
| | | | | | | 1 | 4 | |
| | | 6 | 4 | | | | | |
| | | 9 | | 1 | | 2 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
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| 2 | | | | 8 | | | | 9 |
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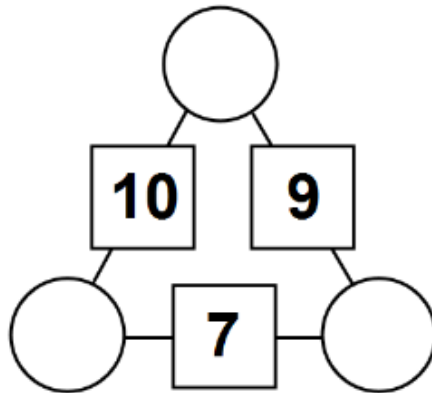
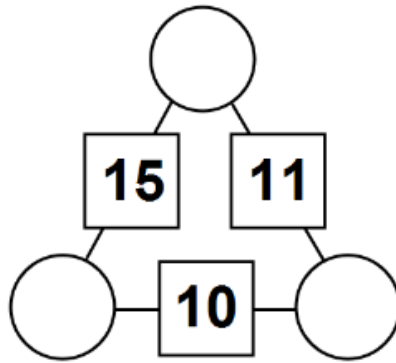
Word Sudoku

Continuing the Spring theme, here is a Spring "flower bud" Sudoku

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|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
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| | | o | | | | e | | |
| | e | | | | r | | | f |
| e | l | | | d | u | r | f | |
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| d | w | | | l | e | b | o | |
| | d | | | | o | | | b |
| | | e | | | | d | | |
| | | | d | | | | l | |

Fill in the grid with the letters F, L, O, W, E, R, B, U and D, making sure no letter is repeated in every row, every column and within each mini grid.

Triangle Arithmagons



The aim of an arithmagon is to work out which numbers go in the empty circles. The numbers in the square boxes are made by adding together the numbers in the circles either side. For example, if the number in the square box was 10 you could try 6 and 4, but the numbers must also add up on the other edges, making this more difficult than it first appears.

BARGAIN HUNT USA Colin Read

I'm sure readers will be familiar with BBC1's Bargain Hunt lunchtime programme, whereby two teams of two are given £300 with which to purchase three items, usually of some age, and then to sell them at auction. An expert buys an additional item with any cash left over. Any profit made is theirs.

I wondered how the series would fare if transferred to the current-day USA.

Presenter: "Well, we've come across the Pond for today's show and in a slight change to the format, the two teams have already made their purchases, so let's see what the two teams bought with their 300 dollars.

In the Red Team we have Hank and his wife Maisie from Tampa. Florida. They bought a rather nice Victorian figurine for \$60, a Murano vase for \$55 and a three-foot-high plaster figure of Uncle Sam himself – very patriotic – for \$25. That leaves no less than \$160 for their bonus buy, which we shall see shortly.

Now, turning to the Blue team, we have close friends, President Donald Trump and Elon Musk. Now Mr president, would you like to tell the viewers what you bought, because curiously I don't see anything here on the table?

Trump: Well, that's not surprising. Now see here, the measly 300 bucks you gave us was nowhere near sufficient for our purchases – nowhere near – so Elon – great guy – great guy - and I put \$100 on each as a down-payment. We don't give a fig if that's outside the rules but after all, I am the leader of the entire world so if you don't like it, take a flying jump!

Presenter: (taken aback) Well, it is a little unusual so do tell us what you've bought.

Trump: First up was General Motors. That cost us \$998 million but we thought it a snip at the price but now with me – don't you just love that word? – as 50% owner the price is bound to increase. Bound to increase.

Presenter: (astounded) And the other two items?

Donald: The British chemicals firm ICI, I think they call it. That was \$500 million. Then came a job lot. The deeds to The Pentagon, The Capitol Building and the White House - that's gonna be renamed Trump Musk House by the way – which were on the market for just short of 800 trillion big ones. I may be wrong – I was once – I think it was 1958 - yes 1958 – but that won't leave much over for the bonus buy!

At this point the presenter is carried out on a stretcher!



The Wild Atlantic Way, *Barnaby Powell*

After sixty years, it is time to celebrate my first trip to Ireland which also resulted in a first piece of published writing. To retrace that journey around the island's southern extremities is to discover how grandly things have changed since then.

This time we ferry from Holyhead to Dublin rather than taking the direct route from Fishguard to Cork. The crossing is no less rough. Several passengers have already turned forty shades of green even before setting foot on the Emerald Isle to receive the blessed benediction that awaits us. The Irish Sea is no mere strait between Wales and Eire, but a heaving mass of storm-tossed water which quickly settles into a lurching pitch and yaw.

The mouth of the River Liffey is a broad avenue of welcome into Dublin. We drive straight to the centre by Trinity College and clamber off the coach to sup of the Liffey-water based Guinness on tap in the nearest tavern to settle our tums, then head directly for Killarney.

On the Monday, we batter around the Dingle Peninsula clockwise to avoid jousting with oncoming traffic on the perilously narrow roadway. At Dunmore head, the westernmost tip of Ireland, this is little more than a gash in the cliff face above the roaring ocean below.

The Heights Hotel stands on the edge of Killarney by its National Park and Lough Leane, surrounded by fabled 'fairy-circled leas'. This whole region has now been re-branded as 'The Wild Atlantic Way', an AONB (area of outstanding natural beauty) renowned for its treatment as the backdrop for so many Hollywood 'filums'. But this perfectly captures the driving rain and wind-swept drama of its rugged great outdoors.

On the Tuesday we set off around the Ring of Kerry. After a 'full Irish' of the kind consumed by the legendary giant, Finn McCool, himself, we stop at the Red Fox for an obligatory Irish coffee and visit the

Kerry Bog Village. This is a cluster of rustic dwellings from the era of the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s. A million poor sharecroppers died after eviction and a further million emigrated to the US and the UK. It is a chilling reminder of the terrible harshness of that hard-scrabble existence.

We speed past the old bridge at Killorglin with its goat statue, which honours the beast celebrated by over 100,000 seasonally-adjusted revellers every 12th of August at Puck Fair. This 'Poic' or 'Puck' was a wild mountain billy-goat which unexpectedly left its herd and raced through the town one day in the 17th century. This was taken as an omen of an imminent attack by Oliver Crowell's Roundheads and is credited with saving the townspeople who took cover in the hills.

Along the way each village has its pitch for hurley, the national shin-whacking hockey game. The mountains of MacGillycuddy's Reeks stretch for miles inland. The cleft mid-way in the range, known as the Dunloe Gap, is chiefly remarkable for having caused Charlotte Brontë to be thrown off her horse on her honeymoon here in 1854. Might she have been challenged for trespassing by a leprechaun or a bogtrotter?

At Waterville, the seafront is lined with 'cable' cottages, which housed the workers who laid the great transatlantic chains of telegraph cables to link Ireland to Newfoundland. It continues to rain heavily over the 'mist-wreathed bogs' known elsewhere, more prosaically, as 'foggy (or soggy) bottoms'.

The most famous sons of Sheem are both prodigious athletes honoured with statues on the green – Steve 'Crusher' Casey, a World Champion Wrestler, and John Egan, the legendary Kerry Gaelic Footballer. At a high point on the Ring of Kerry lies 'Ladies View', the spot where Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting stopped to picnic and be ravished by the 180-degree panorama of valley, lakes and bald, 'purply-black' mountain tops still scarred by the Ice Age which covered the island some 12,000 years ago.

Back in Killarney, it is the May Bank Holiday weekend, and we set out in jaunting carts to explore the National Park. The ponies trot us

briskly in our traps through the beech and alder woods, slishing over the soggy ground with soft snorts and a chorus of sighs from passengers. The town is quiet on our return, but an enterprising draper offers a special deal akin to 'car scrappage': a 'Suit Scrappage Scheme', whereby he offers 100 euros off the price of a brand-new suit, if you trade it in for a new model. We don't quite feel ready to do a 'George Bernard Shaw' and adopt new 'plus four'-trouserered personas just yet.

There is gold at the end of this rainbow at the southern tip of the island. It lies not in seams deep in the mountainsides, but in the charm of the rumpled, craggy terrain, the wind- and wave-ravaged shorelines, the unearthly gleam of the sunsets, the plaintive gulls' cry and the *craic* of the local voices.



Biography of DH Lawrence - Margaret Siudek



D.H. Lawrence by
Elliott and Fry

© [National Portrait Gallery](#), London
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David Herbert Lawrence was born in 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of Arthur Lawrence and Lydia Beardsall. His father was a miner in the days long before the mines were nationalised. These mines were small and privately owned, and the work was basic and hard. A team of men would take on work in a particular seam- often narrow and claustrophobic.

The family lived in a row of miners' cottages but the third son, David, was never suited to mining. He was too frail for the work, and after attending the Board School he won a scholarship to Nottingham High School. He attended the Pupil-Teacher Centre in Ilkeston in Derbyshire from 1904 and then received a teacher-training

scholarship at University College, Nottingham. Also training to be teachers were several young women with whom he formed strong relationships- but they were constrained by the mores of the time. If it were to become known that any of them (but particularly the women) were having premarital sexual relationships, they would undoubtedly lose their scholarships and their chances of escaping the poverty of their childhoods through education, would be over.

The characters in the novel and the film '*Sons and Lovers*' (his second novel) essentially focus on this- the story of his life, up to this point in time... The mother of the main character, {Paul Morel}, Gertrude is miserable in her marriage to the miner, Walter, who drinks heavily and sometimes shows his bitterness in violent ways. She has placed her hopes on her sons; The first, Walter, goes to London to work, promises to send her money and make her rich - but fails her. Her second son, like his father, wants to be a miner. It is the third son, Paul, who has the talent and ambition to become an artist, a dream that is mocked by his father.

In real life, DH Lawrence himself wasn't an artist, but wanted to be a writer. After qualifying to teach in 1908 he took up a teaching post at the Davidson School in Croydon, remaining at the school until 1912. He lodged in a couple of houses on Colworth Road, which backed onto what is now the Addiscombe tram stop.

In those days, there was no tram, but the yellow locomotives of the [London, Brighton and South Coast Railway](#), which rushed by "as if suspended in the air... bright and yellow". This is how Lawrence described the road in a letter, and soon enough, his surroundings were working their way into his short fiction: in *The Fly in the Ointment*, Lawrence took the family house as a setting, with its "hand's-breadth of garden backed up by a railway embankment". The family he lodged with during term-time, Marie and John Jones, had two girls (a 5-year-old and a new baby) - and marital problems- which both confided in him!

He found the schoolchildren 'rough', especially those who came from institutions- such as the Gordon Home for waifs and strays, and the local Actors School. Poverty was a more serious problem in

Croydon in comparison with Eastwood. He told Louie Burrows (one of his Nottinghamshire women-friends) that “80 boys and girls sat down for free breakfasts at his school – half a pint of milk and a lump of bread- and children limp to school crippled with broken boots.” One night in the shared house he caught a thief in the kitchen.

He also found the work difficult - the head, Philip Smith, had a “very enlightened approach to experiments in education,” and allowed a high degree of autonomy and responsibility to teachers, but was unwilling to apply the discipline he (Lawrence) thought necessary. This meant Lawrence had a free hand to try out his ideas – but was responsible if they didn’t work! He had 50 or 60 children in his class, and he had to fight to assert his authority. It took five months to gain control over his class - and many of the older teachers were unimpressed, but by February he said that he had ‘tamed his wild beasts’ and could teach with ease!

Inspection reports about his classroom say that:

- he refused to teach the children moralistic poetry.
- the inspector arrived as the class was reading the chorus from *The Tempest* aloud, Lawrence would not allow him to interrupt the exercise – rushing towards the inspector to stop him speaking until the class finished.
- when he taught the battle of Agincourt (whether in history or literature, is not clear), the boys “pretended to shoot arrows at me, drawing back the bow with vigour and fought the battle of Agincourt over school forms and all”.
- His art lessons were a great success – the whole class acquired his own free, vigorous style and painted boldly and with huge enjoyment.

While teaching, he continued working on his first novel- called on publication, *The White Peacock*. His social life at first consisted of solitary visits to concerts, lectures, art galleries, theatre, opera, cinemas. He started to write poems about the city. He cycled long distances- exploring Surrey, even as far as the south coast.

From Croydon he was able to travel easily to London to meet other writers and critically- publishers. Not all the meetings went well... He sent something for GK Chesterton to review, but his wife said he was too busy to read it.

He did begin publishing short stories - a Nottinghamshire friend, Jessie Chambers, sent some of his poems and writings to Ford Madox Hueffer (later [Ford Madox Ford](#)), editor of the influential *English Review* when he would not. Hueffer was thoroughly impressed by the fiction – such as that set in a miner’s household- *A Collier’s Friday Night*.

He reworked and reworked his earlier writing. He mentions The Swan and Sugarloaf in *The Witch à la Mode*, a short story written later, but reminiscing on Croydon days.

During the Easter holidays, in 1910, he spent a lot of time on *The White Peacock*. He wrote poetry and, at first, he submitted no work for publication, perhaps unable to bear the certain (in his mind) criticism that would come. Hueffer advised him to send the novel to Heinemann and provided a letter of recommendation. Through Hueffer he met HG Wells, Ezra Pound and WB Yeats.

During the period he was in Croydon, there were some personal problems. He also had a relationship crisis with his ‘childhood sweetheart’ Jessie Chambers. She came down to visit him in Croydon and stayed at Colworth Road (in a separate room) in late 1909. The next year he and Jessie did consummate their relationship – away from the Colston Road house, but it was not successful.

He was also involved with a local teacher Helen Yorke- a local musician and teacher. She was not open to a physical relationship with Lawrence-after a disastrous affair of her own, but he took her to concerts and discussed literature with her – she was one of the friends who helped him with the final rewriting of *The White Peacock* - a long task as it had 800 pages! The two women – Jessie and Helen- later became friends and holidayed together.

In the summer of 1910 after he broke off his relationship completely with Jessie, his mother became critically ill with cancer. He returned

to Croydon but travelled to Leicester (where she was staying with her sister) as many weekends as possible- starting his new novel which would become *Sons and Lovers*, while nursing her. He was talking to his mother about her marriage - the topic of the novel. He eventually got leave of absence from the Croydon school authority to return to Eastwood to share the nursing and death-vigil with his sister. She died in December, and he returned to his classes in Croydon two days after her death.



As well as the blue plaque on the house where he lodged, there was one on the wall of the classroom he taught in, in what later became the Davidson centre

The White Peacock, his first novel, was published in 1911. It was very successful – he got £50 immediately for the novel – but it had taken 4 years to write, so he was still dependent on his teacher's salary.

Also in 1911 he began to suffer more seriously from ill-health – the weak chest that had prevented him from joining his father and brother in the pit, would affect him for the rest of his life. The doctor said that staying in school teaching would court TB. He also accepted that teaching was a temporary thing- and that he did not want to rise socially via that route. He wanted to be a writer!

Edward Garnett, who was a publisher's reader, suggested he could send some stories to the American magazine *Century*, and

reinvigorated his contact with Heinemann, who decided to publish some poems and the new novel *Sons and Lovers*. He restarted work on that and then developed double pneumonia- after staying in wet clothes on a journey back from Kent. Ada came to nurse him- with a paid nurse to help, and he was in bed for a month in Croydon.

First, he had to get well... he spent Christmas 1911 in Croydon- and with Louie and friends in Redhill. Then he went to Bournemouth for a month to convalesce.

His aunt Ada had suggested he go to Germany, where the cousins of her husband, a scholarly German merchant, could help him gain fluency in German and get work. Lawrence saw the sense in this and contacted the professor of modern languages at the University- who was a fluent German speaker and had married a German wife. Professor Weekly invited him to lunch and the next half hour changed his life completely- as he and Frieda Weekly (the professor's wife) launched an immediate relationship.

Professor Weekly and Frieda had three children- but she was an unconventional woman, and Lawrence was not her first extramarital lover. They quickly consummated the relationship- which she probably thought was just an affair (it would not be her first). The relationship developed very quickly and for Lawrence an affair was not enough. She initially had no intention of leaving her husband or children but agreed to tell Weekly about the importance of this new relationship {though she didn't - she only told him about her previous lovers} and that she was leaving for Germany with Lawrence. Just the news of the previous lovers must have been a shock to her husband - one was an anarchist named Ernest Frick who was in prison for bombing a police station.

The elopement caused a huge scandal and many difficulties. They travelled together across Germany and into Italy. Frieda mourned the loss of her children as Professor Weekly, when he eventually learned the truth, prevented Frieda from seeing her children until the late 1920s - when they were each in turn old enough to make the decision to see their mother without their father's permission.

Lawrence and Frieda returned to England in 1914 prior to the outbreak of war and were married at Kensington Register Office on 14 July. Confined to England during the war years, the Lawrences spent much of this time at Tregerthen in Cornwall, causing great suspicion that they were spying for the Germans on coastal shipping - partly because of Frieda's distant relative Baron von Richthofen, the German air-ace. In 1919 they left England once more, embarking on a period of extensive travelling within Europe and then further afield to Ceylon, Australia, Mexico and New Mexico.

Lawrence's health continued to deteriorate – he had TB- and Lawrence returned to Europe with Frieda in 1925. During his last years Lawrence spent much of his time in Italy making only brief visits to England, the last in 1926. They separated, but she returned to nurse him in his last months.



Lawrence had wanted to be buried in New Mexico but was unable to return there because of his ill- health.

He died on 2 March 1930 at Vence in the south of France and was buried locally in the old Vence cemetery- though his ashes were later moved to a shrine in New Mexico where Frieda married her lover, Angelo Ravagli.

There is a memorial to Lawrence in Westminster Abbey and he is also named on the family grave in Eastwood.

Quiz Answers

1. Savoy Cabbage
2. Bean
3. Date
4. Apple
5. Mango
6. Ugli fruit
7. Brussel's Sprout
8. Potato
9. Clementine
10. Medlar
11. Turnip
12. Pineapple
13. Leek
14. Lettuce
15. Prune
16. Blueberry
17. Carrot
18. Sweetcorn
19. Swede
20. Spring Greens
21. Pumpkin
22. Olive or Cherry
23. Pomegranate
24. Paw paw
25. Orange
26. Pea
27. Fig
28. Cucumber
29. Spinach
30. Broccoli