



Spring 2023 Magazine



The Third Age Trust

(Operating as the University of the Third Age)

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Foreword

Hello and Welcome to the latest edition of the Croydon U3A magazine.

Spring has finally sprung, the daffs are almost finished, tulips are budding and if it stops raining for more than five minutes, we may be able to cut the grass again! (Don't forget No-Mow May, though.)

Speaking of gardens, in this issue I have included some information on eco-gardening, some of which was available at one of our GMs. Also included are some of the contributions from the last GM, all about Wales.

The Summer issue of the Magazine will (hopefully) include your contributions on the Coronation. I already have some members' memories of the last coronation, but if you are taking part in any of the official or unofficial celebrations I would love to hear all about it and of course see your photos.

All contributions for the next edition will be gratefully received. Please send to: Tess.exlunn@gmail.com

Editor – Tess Smith

Letter from the Chair

Hello and I hope you are well.

One of the National u3a's initiatives centres around Ageing – to be more precise Ageing Well and Living Longer Better. I recently attended an on-line talk given by David Sinclair, CEO of the International Longevity Centre on 'The Future of Ageing'. A brief summary of the advice in this fascinating and informative lecture can be listed as:

1. Make sure you are **Socially Connected**;
2. People need **Purpose** in their lives;
3. Be as **Active** as possible;
4. Engage in **Informal Learning**;
5. Work on your **Digital Skills**

David Sinclair referred to a huge body of research which demonstrates that people who tick these boxes have fewer health issues, recover quicker from illness and live longer better, compared with people who are isolated, lonely, lacking purpose and very sedentary. He said having things to do (purpose), learning new stuff and keeping active are so incredibly important. It isn't just about living longer; it's about doing what we can ourselves to have a better quality of life as we age.

Sounds like an 'ad' for the u3a doesn't it?

The time we spend alone increases with age, and the time we spend with family and friends decreases. Getting out and about, belonging to Interest Groups, learning some stuff along the way and having a structure and purpose to the week will guard our physical, mental and emotional health.

So SHOUT ABOUT it – spread the word. We don't offer discount for finding new members but if you brighten someone's life that's even better!

Every good wish,

Jenny

Jenny Wilson Croydon u3a Chair

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Book Review

Hostile Environments

By John Bartholomew

This novel tells the story of Tariq, a refugee from Damascus in Syria, and an English couple who inadvertently bring him to England.

The story opens with Jim, from Balham, caught up in the terror attack on London Bridge. Jim is severely injured in the catastrophic events of that evening and takes a long time to recover from the trauma.

Meanwhile, Tariq's father, an English Professor, is "disappeared" by agents of the state and in due course his mother decides that the family must leave Damascus where the situation is becoming untenable.

The story continues, switching from Jim's battle to recover to Tariq's travails on his family's exile from Syria and his struggle to reach an uncle in England.

The two sides of the story meet unexpectedly in the middle of the English Channel.....

The book is well written and leaves the reader invested in the characters and wanting to know what happened next. A huge amount of research must have gone into this story, including a lot of technical detail in the sailing chapters, which left me knowing a lot more about yachts than perhaps I needed! Overall, an enjoyable read.

To buy, call Tall Trees Publications, 0208 764 6212
ISBN 9798356408717 £5.

Cut your Energy Footprints in the Kitchen

You may recall our article on Air Fryers in the last issue.

Jaqueline Harriot responded, below:

Someone recently asked me if I had an Air Fryer and how I found using it. I have resisted buying one for over a year but last year for my birthday I was bought one by my son. "I won't put pressure on you, Mum, but we can't live without ours and you'll never use your oven again" I enjoy cooking and have time for it but I wasn't ready to buy an Air Fryer, what would I use it for?

Air Fryers are not like an oven, Infra-Red grill, or a microwave; they have been around for ten years. It has heating elements positioned on the top accompanied by a very powerful fan that evenly cooks, browns, gives a crisp coating and juicy flavour to the food. They are more popular than ever now and offer us the benefits of a Deep fat fryer and Convection oven combined, a bit like a Hybrid car. They come in all sizes and the one I have is great for a single person.

The thing I like about it is that I don't need extra fat for roast potatoes, butter or cooking oil to fry a steak, chicken breast, sausages, eggs, beef or fish burgers and vegetables etc to create satiety and value. Cooking with an Air Fryer, the same results are achieved in half the time using less energy, whilst decreasing fat consumption. There's minimal cleaning and the running costs can be lower.

I do love my Air Fryer; most kitchens are filled to the brim with appliances so anything new, versatile and

efficient is great for me. It can become your go to on counter appliance of choice; it will produce nicely cooked omelettes, bacon, sausages, cheese, or avocado on toast. Your lunch and dinner main dishes can be popped inside and let it do all the work, Cooking a whole chicken works well too. Don't forget desserts, it cooks a great Apple pie, biscuits and cakes. Have something which needs reheating? then pop it in your Air Fryer.



I recently experimented with making Light Cheesy Scones using my Air Fryer to cook them. They took half the time. Don't cook all of them at once, 3 or 4 at a time works better.

An 8oz mixture will give you 4-6 decent size scones. What you don't eat immediately you can freeze.

Recipe:

8ozs SR flour, 1 **level** tsp Baking Powder sieve together, 2ozs **COLD** margarine cut into small pieces. Rub fat into flour until like breadcrumbs. **DON'T OVER RUB.**

Stir in a good pinch of Salt, Mustard powder, Paprika, Curry powder, 3ozs strong Cheddar Cheese. Bind the dry mixture together with 2 to 3 tablespoons milk, try not to over mix the dough, it should not be **WET** but a **firm dough**. Squeeze gently together, **DO NOT OVER-KNEAD, OR THE SCONES WILL BE HARD.**

Pre heat the Air Fryer 190c/375F.

Roll out or pat flat with your hand on a floured surface to 1" thickness, cut out round shapes using a cutter or a glass. Place onto the Air fryer basket ensure they are not touching, brush gently with milk or beaten egg.

Air fry for **4** minutes each side or until golden brown and firm to the touch

The scones will be golden brown outside, inside will be gooey and cheesy. Allow to cool.

Jacqueline Harriott

Memories of Swansea - Jean Lanzetta

Swansea, Dylan Thomas's "lovely, ugly town", and my hometown, lies on the South Wales coast looking across the Bristol Channel to North Devon. It was built mainly on three hills, some of which are very steep, but the city centre is situated on the flat coastal land between the hills and the sandy beach, which sweeps for five miles along the shoreline to the rocky islands of the Mumbles, the beginning of the glorious Gower peninsula.

The town stands on the River Tawe, hence its Welsh name Abertawe (aber meaning mouth of). However, about 10,000 A.D. a Viking chief called Sweyn raised a fort on an island where the river forked. This was called "Sweyn's Ey, ey being the Norse word for island, which over time became corrupted to "Swansea" - so nothing to do with swans or the sea then.

I was born in Danygraig but around the age of three, my family moved into a house on a newly built estate in the neighbouring district of Port Tennant at the eastern edge of the town at the bottom of Kilvey Hill, where I spent my early childhood. When I was four the war broke out and my father volunteered for the Royal Navy. Later, he was posted for two years to Ceylon, as it then was, so we didn't see him for all that time. Back at home I didn't find the air raids all that scary as we had a joint air-raid shelter with our next-door neighbours and we did what all Welsh people getting together do, sing, so to my childish mind it was like a party. Everyone was provided with gasmasks, and mine was a Mickey Mouse one,

which I loved, but fortunately never had to wear. Then, in the February of 1941 Swansea suffered a 3-day blitz, during which the town centre was hit by 56,000 incendiaries and razed to the ground. We were lucky to suffer no damage; others were not so fortunate. Some, like my paternal grandparents, were bombed out of their house and many more were killed and injured.

Despite the war I had a happy childhood and enjoyed a lot more freedom than is possible today. We children played out in the street unhindered by traffic and climbed the hill to the summit, where a rocky outcrop resembling a lion was called the Lion's Head, or we walked up the lane to a small valley, the hazel cwm, which had a brook running through it. The stream ran down through marshland, where we caught tadpoles, to a canal, on which my mother said she used to skate in winter. In the summer we would go down the sands, as we called them, to swim in the sea and play on the beach, where we delighted in going on the swing-boats. Although I was an only child, my mother's family lived close by, so I grew up alongside my cousins. I also remember playing with others of my cousins on the roof of the Cornish Mount inn, where my uncle was host.

After they were bombed out my grandparents moved down to the holiday bungalow my grandfather had built with his sons. A wooden construction, it was raised off the ground with a covered verandah running the length of the rooms to the kitchen, beyond which stood a much-loved swing. The lavatory stood next to a shed, which housed a tin bath, at the bottom of the garden. It was a large garden, where my grandfather grew flowers and vegetables and kept chickens. Also living with my

grandparents at that time was one of my aunts with her three children, a young cousin my grandmother was looking after, and another cousin evacuated from London. An uncle and his family lived out the back in the same field while another of my aunts lived a couple of fields away with her two young sons.

Every Sunday, rain or shine, and one winter in deep snow, my father used to take me down to visit his parents. From the bus stop in the village, we followed the path past the golf club, which I remember once watching burn down - it was later rebuilt - and across the "links", an extensive golf course covering the headland, to "Hawthorne" situated in a field above Three Cliffs Valley. On holidays at the bungalow, I can remember helping to collect the hens' eggs, picking caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly **off** the cabbages and stealing sweet baby tomatoes from the greenhouse. Or walking down the track over the fields to get fresh milk from Jones the farm. The front gate opened onto the fern-covered links, where my cousins and I used to play, clambering over the ruined castle overlooking Three Cliffs Valley and paddling in the stream below, which wended its way down to Three Cliffs Bay. This is named for its three lofty pointed rocks and is one of the most spectacular bays on the peninsula. However, it is dangerous for bathing, so we always swam in Pobbles, the adjoining bay, so called for the bank of pebbles at its entrance. Or we walked down through the woods to the village of Parkmill or further up the road to Ilston Cwm, where we picked primroses and bluebells in the spring and blackberries in the autumn. In the summer the entire family, parents, grandparents - my grandmother carrying a primus stove and kettle - aunts, uncles, cousins, and with babies in pushchairs, trekked across

the links down to Pobbles for halcyon days of swimming, climbing the rocks and beach games.



Soon after the outbreak of war I had started school in Danygraig Primary School at the bottom of Ysgol Street, (ysgol - Welsh for school). It was a traditional building of grey stone roofed with slate. The Infants were in the hall and were mixed, while in the junior school the boys were separated from the girls by a high dividing wall. I enjoyed school and particularly loved reading. Also, because I had, at that time, a nice voice, I was sent around the other classes to sing, my pièce de resistance, “Christopher Robin is Saying His Prayers” (with appropriate actions), which I remember to this day.

Soon after I left my primary school, the war came to an end and the whole country celebrated. There were street parties everywhere and at ours, as well as lots of food and drink, there was a parade, in which my, usually shy, mother was dressed as a bride and her friend, Auntie Lydia, the groom. Another neighbour played their baby!

When my father finally came home for good, he was presented, dressed in his demob suit, with a wallet containing money raised by the whole street. Then family life returned to normal. He went back to his job in the tinplate, and the voluntary post of Secretary to the local football team, the Port Tennant Stars. I was often taken to their football matches. At one away game, when I was eight years old, my father, thinking I had gone home with neighbours, left me behind at the ground miles away but a kind gentleman directed me to the bus and gave me the sixpence for my fare. And when I got home, no-one had even missed me!

After I had passed my (11 plus) scholarship examination we moved to Penlan, a housing development on a hill to the north of the town and I was admitted to Glanmor Secondary Grammar School for Girls. High above the Uplands, it comprised (supposedly temporarily) ex-Army huts around two separate quadrangles. These huts, which gave rise to its nickname "The Cowsheds", had folding doors on the sides facing onto the gardens. This was delightful in the summer when the doors were open but the huts could be very cold in the winter. The syllabus was wide-ranging and the teaching of a high standard in all subjects. Discipline was strict but most of the teachers were lovely, and, in fact, my German teacher kept in touch with me for the rest of her life.

Once a year, for the week around St. David's Day, the school held its own Eisteddfod. Other school activities included Christmas celebrations, always with a play - I remember in the first form portraying David Copperfield, because I was the smallest girl in the class - and in the Sixth form we had to write and stage our own production. Many excursions took place including field trips and holidays abroad. I once went to France and Belgium with my French class.

Eventually we had to face our O-level examinations as they then were. We were allowed a period of revision, which we spent mainly down the bays with our books, usually left untouched. My friends and I promised ourselves an ice-cream at Di Marco's, Swansea's famed ice-cream parlour, as a reward for passing our exams. When the time came, I ordered a Knickerbocker Glory which turned out to be so huge I've not been able to look at one ever since. Two years later came our A-levels but this time we forswore the ice-cream. Our school was universally loved so, when the time came to leave, we wept one and all. Before it was, eventually, demolished, two of the girls climbed up onto the roof and painted in large white letters "Parting is such sweet sorrow". And, finally, the Cowsheds were no more.

Down in town the large market continued to trade throughout the war years, even when its roof had been blown off. Here there was displayed fish aplenty and Welsh lamb, pork and chickens and rabbits hanging up in their furs. The country people brought in their wares from Gower; eggs, butter, fresh fruit and vegetables. And there was laverbread, made from a particular seaweed that only grows around the peninsula. In

earlier days the cockle women used to bring in their cockles, carried in flat baskets on their heads, from Penclawdd flats out on the North Gower estuary. They would walk barefoot until they neared Swansea then wash their feet in the spring at Olchfa, (from golchi - meaning to wash) where they put on their shoes before continuing their journey. There were still elegant buildings in Swansea which had been left untouched by the bombing.

Near the beach stood the old Civic Centre, a beautiful white thirties Art Deco style building with a tall, graceful clock tower and heavy bronze ornamental doors. It housed a large concert hall containing a great organ and the Brangwyn panels.



These huge works of art, painted by the Belgian/Welsh artist Frank Brangwyn and depicting the flora, fauna and peoples of the British Empire, were originally commissioned for the House of Lords but were considered too innovative for its setting so were acquired by Swansea Council. Then there were at least six cinemas, including the very grand Plaza, which had a splendid organ.

We also had two theatres, the Grand, where I used to be taken by my mother to pantomimes and where the Welsh National Opera held its annual season, and the Empire. Other Swansea institutions included the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, the Museum and the Central Library, which I knew and loved.

From the dock we used to take the Mumbles train, which was actually the first passenger-carrying train in the world, right round the bay to Mumbles Head, where we walked along the pier or played in the amusement arcade there. Or we alighted at Oystermouth, once famous for its oyster beds but then a seaside resort and sailing centre. The ruin of the impressive castle was strategically situated on the hill overlooking it, commanding a glorious view, on a good day, over to Ilfracombe, to where the ferry sailed.

Swansea was also blessed with spacious parks. There was Singleton with its trees, broad swathes of lawns, flower gardens, pond and stream and a café in a mock Swiss Chalet. Across the lane was Brynmill which had a boating lake and a miniature zoo. Then there was Clyne Valley with its castle and its grounds, a particular delight in springtime when the rhododendrons and azaleas were in bloom. Victoria Park was another open space with flower beds, a pond with a fountain and the Patti Pavilion. This last is named after the renowned soprano Adelina Patti, who so fell in love with South Wales that she bought a castle at Craig-y-Nos (Rock of Night) in the Swansea valley. It was bequeathed to Swansea Council and the Pavilion, its former conservatory, was removed and installed in the park. My friends and I used to go to dances there. The Mumbles had a dance hall too, and Oystermouth, where

we also went, as well as the university, where I heard jazz for the first time and became a lifelong aficionado.

After university, I met and married my husband, whose father was Italian, hence my surname, and left Swansea for good with him and our baby daughter. But I still go down as often as I can.

Last August I spent a gloriously sunny couple of weeks there and my granddaughter, her husband and my 5-year-old great-grandson joined me for a few days. I wanted to introduce him to a “proper” beach so I took them all down to Pobbles. He absolutely loved it, running up and down in the surf, bathing in the rock pools and building a sandcastle. He didn’t want to go home - so that’s a new generation of fans of Abertawe.

I do get twinges of hiraeth (untranslatable) from time to time and particularly miss the sea in all its moods. So, I look forward to the next time I return to my lovely, now not quite so ugly, hometown of Swansea.



Bara Brith



Recipe:

Ingredients

500g mixed dried fruit

1 large dessert spoon of apricot jam

125g soft dark brown sugar

375ml freshly brewed strong tea, made with 3 tea bags

315g self-raising flour sieved with 1 tsp baking powder

1 generous tsp mixed spice

1 large egg

Method

The day before baking:

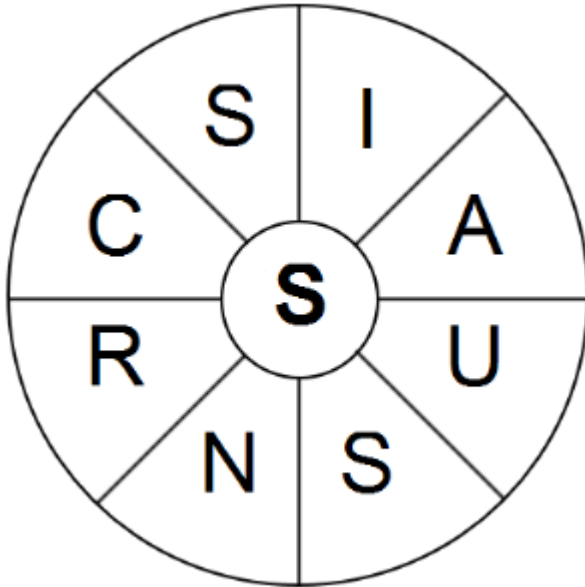
- 1) Into a medium bowl, pop 500g mixed dried fruit
- 2) Add the apricot jam, the soft dark brown sugar, and 375ml freshly brewed tea. Mix well
- 3) Cover with cling film and pop into the fridge overnight

The next day:

- 4) Preheat oven Gas 4/ 180°C or 350°F
- 5) Pop the fruit and the juices into a large mixing bowl, sieve the self-raising flour and baking powder into the mix with the mixed spice and stir well to combine
- 6) Add one large egg and mix until well incorporated
- 7) Pop into a lined 2lb loaf tin, level the top with a knife and bake for 1 ¼ hours or until a wooden skewer pushed into the centre comes out clean
- 8) Leave in the tin to cool completely then remove from the tin but leave the baking paper on and wrap well in tinfoil
- 9) Leave to mature for 2 days, then slice thickly and add plenty of butter to serve with a hot cup of tea.

Puzzle Page

Some more puzzles for you to try this time, perhaps with a cup of tea and a slice of Bara Brith!



This Spring themed word wheel is made from a 9 letter Spring themed word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of three letters or more as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter **S**. No plurals, foreign words or proper nouns.



Word List

See if you can find the Spring related words in our word search.

Birth Blossom Bud Bulbs Cleaning

Daffodil Easter Eggs Flowers June

Lamb March Nest Rabbit Rainbow

Rebirth Robin Showers Thaw Umbrella

Sudoku

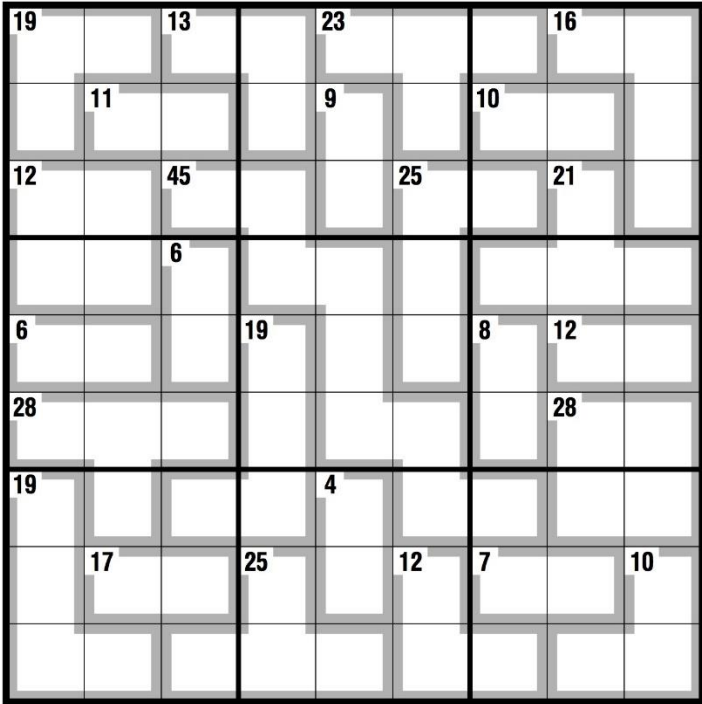
5		7	2				9	
		6		3		7		1
4							6	
1			4	9				7
			5		8			
8				2	7			5
	7							9
2		9		8		6		
	4				9	3		8

RD

Each row, column and small 3x3 square must contain the numbers 1-9

Killer Sudoku

Normal sudoku rules apply, but additionally each shaded area adds up to the number in the top left of that area.



To The Top of Croydon

The Architecture Group does not usually meet in December as the third Thursday in that month gets very close to Christmas, but Norman pulled off a blinder in arranging a visit to “*10 Degrees*”, better defined as 100 George Street. The name is derived from the angle at which Amy Johnson’s first flight from Croydon Airport took off. As to why this is relevant to a building opposite East Croydon station, there seems to be no straight answer. At the time of our visit, in December 2022, this was the tallest inhabited building in Croydon.

In my view the main advantage of being inside this building is that you cannot see it – though you can still see its even uglier twin next door. Other than the lift / stair shaft and the ground floor, the building is constructed from box-like units fabricated in Bedfordshire and trucked in their entirety to Croydon during the night. This method is well established in the building of passenger vessels where cabins are manufactured in a similar way and delivered fully fitted to the shipyard. The method of construction required a substantial crane on top of the lift shaft which took them off the trucks and lifted them into position.

My own professional background is in the Container Shipping industry and we carried a stack of nine to 11 containers under deck and up to five on deck, depending on their weight. The idea of a stack of 45 boxes just gives me the creeps even when they are obviously not subject to the same stresses and movements than a rolling ship. You will have guessed by now that the chances of my moving into one of their

flats is on the far side of remote. However, the views from the top floor were amazing and the efforts undertaken by the building managers to encourage community spirit admirable.

The building consists of two separate towers of 44 and 38 storeys, linked to reduce the wind effect between the two large structures. It provides 546 new homes, all are rented, not owned and the building is more than 90% let. Many will recall the 1960s HQ of BR Southern region which stood on the site, this was demolished many years ago leaving the site vacant and hidden by hoardings. The site is within an area of Croydon designated for intensive building as it is close to amenities and transport services, in some way reducing pressure on our leafier suburbs. Provision for parking is minimal, mainly for disabled. Included in the design is a public accessible covered Winter Garden on the North side and provision at ground level for possible cafe/ art gallery/restaurant use. On the eastern side a public walkway is provided which should eventually link up with other developments connecting George Street and Barclay Road. Some readers may recall this existed many years ago through Croydon Art College.

The exterior is clad with terracotta tiles, chosen partly because they are non-flammable with good fire resistance. The colour has been chosen to reflect surrounding buildings such as Croydon College's green roof, AMP house diagonally opposite and the green used on the facade of Fairfield Halls. As the day progresses and the light differs, the shade of green changes, however this isn't immediately noticeable and

the end result is mainly dark and foreboding. An attempt has been made to differentiate the two towers, if you look closely the eastern most tower uses a two-storey grid and the western, a single storey. At ground level the scale of this patterning is reduced so it can be appreciated. Each tower has only one set of emergency fire stairs although the rules have recently changed and future buildings of this type will probably need two. Smoke detectors and fire sprinklers are installed in all communal areas and flats.



We assembled in the ground floor foyer which as you can see is rather cosy and even includes a dog bed. Dogs are well looked after, there is a dog wash area on the ground floor and a dog bed in the foyer, but they are

not allowed in the communal areas further up except the lift lobbies and corridors.

We were met by our guide Michel and were taken in rather swift lifts to the 45th or top floor. This consists entirely of common rooms. This includes dining rooms to take more guests than individual flats can accommodate.



However, for us the main attraction was outside the windows:



The view East with more but smaller new buildings racing up around East Croydon station. You can just make out the Threepenny Bit on the left and Whitgift School playing fields in the right distance.

The view North, with East Croydon station prominent. Note another new development to the East of the station. In front of it are the remains of the old Royal Mail Sorting Office which has temporarily been taken over by Network Rail for the development of an additional platform at East Croydon.

In the background you can make out Selhurst (or more accurately Windmill) Triangle which is also due to see construction work to further untangle the crossing



railway lines from East / West Croydon on one and Victoria / London Bridge on the other side.



The view to the West with Croydon College at the bottom, the old Nestle building opposite and the new complex replacing Taberner House further left. There's another new tower next to the flyover on which you can just make out a considerable traffic jam.

And finally, the view South with Fairfield Hall in the foreground and the old Croydon Airport in the far right



On the left is our building's new twin with its method of construction more visible on this thankfully smaller



picture. That building is to be run in a similar way to “10 Degrees” and at the time of our visit, Michel was hopeful that his company would also get the Management Contract. It was amusing to hear that under his employment contract, Michel was not allowed to live in the building

himself, so that he could not do favours to particular fellow residents. He had to find a flat in a competitor's building five minutes' walk away.

We then returned to the ground floor only to walk across to a second bank of elevators which would take us to the top of the other, slightly shorter tower. This has a Gym on the top floor which is free to use for all residents, including two free classes per week.

We then went down to look at two show flats and learnt how closely living in this building is controlled. Residents are strictly forbidden to put nails or screws into any walls as that may affect fire integrity. If they want to hang their

own pictures (furnished flats come with pictures ready installed but there are unfurnished flats too) they must ask the Manager to fix them.

This is the Kitchen/Diner in one of the larger, two bedroom flats.



Interior design is quite clever with many space saving ideas.

This is one of the bedrooms. Perhaps it is in the nature of a show flat that they look more like hotel rooms than a



home. Only a few flats have a bath, the majority are shower only.

I came away impressed with the community spirit which the managing company are doing their best to support. We were there only a few nights before the World Cup Final and residents were encouraged to watch these together on large screens installed in most of the communal rooms on the top floor and they were allowed to bring in outside guests. Michel was a bit apprehensive over how many of the 650 residents would take up the offer as that could severely test the capacity of the common area.

We also discussed fire precautions and there is inherent safety in the modular construction method. The weakest point is considered to be each flat's entrance door, these are certified for 45-minute fire resistance. Should there be a fire on one of the communal floors, the entire floor would be evacuated immediately but with a fire in one of the flats, those in other flats would be advised to stay put unless and until instructed to evacuate by the Fire Brigade.

All in all, a positive and encouraging visit. Just a shame the building looks cheap and nasty from the outside ...

Christian Kuepers

Architecture Group

Eco Gardening

How **Green** is your garden?

Take a look at the tips below to improve the sustainability of your garden.

1. **Water use:**

Light green

- Fix leaky taps, gutters and dripping hoses as soon as they break.
- Use a hosepipe with a trigger on it, not a sprinkler system.
- Water your garden in the evening to reduce loss from evaporation. Don't water your lawn.
- When using paddling pools, reuse the water on your plants.

Greener

- Use a watering-can to water your garden, instead of using a hose or sprinkler.
- Install a water butt to collect rainwater for watering the garden – they now come in many different sizes and styles.
- Use mulches to reduce the loss of water from your garden.

Dark Green

- Plant drought-resistant plants, eg. hebes, lavenders, or rosemary, especially if you live in a part of the country that will become much drier in summer, such as southern England.
- Purchase a water recycling system for your home—which recycles rainwater or grey water—use it for watering the garden.

2. Gardening:

Light Green

- Reduce your use of pesticides and weedkillers in the garden, as these will eventually make their way into rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Don't use slug pellets as poisoned slugs can be eaten by other wildlife. Nematodes will give a natural solution to pests and are available on-line.
- Be careful with the disposal of pesticides and weedkillers – don't pour them down drains but dispose of them carefully at official sites.
- Allow your lawn to grow longer between cutting so it is more resistant to drying out - don't cut the grass too short.
- When pruning trees and shrubs, keep sturdy sticks and use them as rustic poles for climbing plants like beans or peas.
- Use a garden refuse service – you could club together with a neighbour if your garden is too small to justify the cost.

Greener

- Buy or build a composter and compost your kitchen and garden scraps. Or buy a wormery.
- Buy only peat free compost and plants.
- Buy timber for decking, borders or other features from a reclamation yard, not brand new.
- If you have to buy new wood, make sure it is FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified.
- Pull up a paving slab, or two and have plants instead.

Dark Green

- Don't cut your grass during the month of May, this will allow daisies and other wild flowers to bloom to attract pollinators.
- Plant a wildflower patch in part of your garden.
- Get rid of petrol driven mowers etc and switch to electric, or better still, hand powered.
- Create a pond, even a small one helps.
- Provide a home for insects and mini beasts. Leave logs to rot naturally or build a bug hotel.
- Plant a tree – or two!

For more information on these and other ideas see www.rspb.org.uk , www.rhs.org.uk, and www.theecological.co.uk

A day out for all the senses

If you don't have a garden you may enjoy visiting heritage sights and gardens. A deterioration in our senses due to age should not prevent us enjoying such places.

The article below was originally in the magazine for the Macular Society "Sideview" which caters for people with visual impairment.



Spring is the perfect time to plan some days out in the countryside and at heritage properties across the UK being a VIP (visually impaired person) shouldn't prevent you from being able to plan a spectacular day and enjoy what these properties have to offer.

Many heritage properties are managed by organisations that are realising the need to appeal to a much wider and more diverse audience, including people with

accessibility needs. This has included putting in a lot of work to make visits to their properties as enjoyable and inclusive as they can, including for people with visual impairments.

Some of the improvements that have been implemented are pathways that are level and free from obstruction, large print guides alongside any exhibitions, and gardens that are designed to appeal to a wide range of senses.

Michael Terwey, head of heritage services and consultancy at the National Trust for Scotland, explains: *“We want every visitor to leave having had a really special and memorable experience with Scotland’s heritage. As a sector, heritage is moving away from traditional approaches of static text on cards. We’re definitely heading towards a more engaging, hands on and sensory approach to telling our stories which will benefit all of our visitors.”*

This can be seen at Falkland Palace for example, where the National Trust for Scotland has recently opened an apothecary room that provides a range of sensory experiences for visitors. The palace also has a garden designed to provide tactile and olfactory features to experience.

There may be ways you can improve your experience of the properties and exhibitions as well, through the use of gadgets, tools or technology. As a reader previously advised through our ‘Tips for VIPs’: *“Although I no longer go birdwatching, I use my binoculars to read*

signs and look at flowers, paintings, exhibitions, or just the scenery.”

With so much happening at Heritage properties around the country, there should be something for everyone to enjoy.

For more information, you can contact the National Trust for Scotland on 0131 458 0200, and the National Trust (for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) on 0344 800 1895

Also see: [7 of the best sensory gardens in the UK \(motability.co.uk\)](https://www.motability.co.uk)



Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire.

