

Unbelievably, we are halfway through the year! Although, we're only two months into collecting memberships. After this month, if you haven't renewed, we'll stop bothering you and you won't receive any more newsletters.

Currently, we're organising a trip to Hestercombe Gardens. It takes place on September 10th, there are only 15 places and some have already gone. The cost is about £12 for the transport and entrance will be on top of that. If you'd like to see if there's still a place, please contact Keith on 01363 773940 or email him on keithbarker999@yahoo.com. Three groups are looking for new members, they are Spanish Conversation, Current Affairs and Board Games. You can find out more about these on our website, or chat with one of us at the next open meeting.

Some members have opted to take the Third Age Magazine at an additional cost to their membership. If you have subscribed to the magazine this year, you should receive the first magazine for this year's subscription in June, please let us know if this doesn't arrive. We had some issues with submitting our orders for the magazine last year, so if you ordered copies for last year (2024-25) but did not receive them, please let us know and we will organise a refund.

Our next talk is by Prof Peter Edwards on Leonardo da Vinci. We've all heard of Leonardo. As an Artist, Sculptor, Theorist, Scientist, Architect, Engineer and Draughtsman, he was unique. However his painted works were few, he is probably best known as the Artist of the Mona Lisa or Last Supper. This presentation concentrates on his paintings, looking at his early influences, including his Tuscan upbringing, and his artistic contemporaries. Several of his paintings are investigated for his style and innovation, especially the developments made when compared with earlier, medieval art. Lost Leonardo's seem to turn up from time to time, Peter speculates whether they are genuine and if there are any more Leonardo paintings out there waiting to be found.

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)

Important dates

June 17th Coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

June 18th Open Meeting at the Boniface Centre: Prof. Peter Edwards – 'The Life of Leonardo De Vinci and Selected Art'. Refreshments from 9:30am. The talk will start at 10:20.

July 15th Coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

July 16th Open Meeting at the Boniface Centre: Air Commodore Andrew Lambert – 'The Use of Aircraft in War and Personal Experiences'

May's Talk: The British Honours System and Some Lesser-Known Awards by Ashley Jones

Ashley gave us an excellent and entertaining talk about the Honours System. We've all heard about the British Empire (BE) medals. Perhaps, like me, you were unsure of the sequence. The BEM is the lowest award and is given for short term, local service. Next is the MBE (M=member), then OBE (O=officer). CBE (C=commander) is given for high levels achievement in a particular field. KBE/DBE (K=knight, D=dame) is the highest level normally awarded. However, rarely, a GBE is awarded (G=Knight or Dame of the Grand Cross.) These awards make up 95% of the honours given out.

Some awards have only a limited membership. The Order of the Garter has only 24 members. There are only 24 members of the Order of Merit and 65 Companions of Honour. Both are awarded for sustained excellence in a field. If you have an OM, you get to have lunch with the monarch once a year. Another lesser-known award is the Order of St Michael and St George. These are awarded to people who work for the UK abroad. Often those who work for the secret services are given one of these. James Bond was a Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George! And in real life, Sean Connery was given the same award.

If you know of someone who you think deserves an award, it's easy to nominate them. There is an online form to fill in (<https://www.gov.uk/honours>), and you will need letters of reference. The nomination will go through a series of committees and about 50% of nominations are successful. To conclude, Ashley told us about the people who had many awards. Perhaps it's not surprising that David Attenborough is our most decorated citizen, with a total of 11 titles.