

Syston and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

DEC
2024

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone

We are nearly there now. Hopefully, you all have written your Christmas cards and wrapped your presents ready to send to Santa.

I hope you enjoyed Peter Barret's talk about how he became a Punch and Judy man. The show he did at the end I thought was hilarious.

This year we thought we like to try something a little different. So, we have decided to have a social event and invite our brilliant singers and ukulele groups to entertain us. You are all invited to join in. It would be lovely to see you all in your Christmas jumpers and hats at the meeting. Doors will open at 10.00am.

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone A Very Merry Christmas and A Happy and Healthy New Year. I hope to see you all soon.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS – TIME HAS RUN OUT



This year's membership renewals should have already been paid by now. Our automated systems will have sent a variety of emails over the past few weeks, but we have no control over whether these might have been diverted to spam/junk mail boxes.

If you are seeing this newsletter, but haven't renewed, you are likely to be removed from our database very soon. Even at this stage we can still get you back on our systems provided you contact us.

If someone you know hasn't renewed and hasn't seen the renewal emails, do urge them to get in touch with Christine Gale our Membership Secretary.

HAVE A QUERY? WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

Occasionally, some members (or potential members) may prefer to speak to someone about an aspect of our u3a, rather than locating an email address or looking on our website.

So, we now have a contact number for Syston & District u3a, which is:



0300 102 1381

At the moment, this number goes through to Steve Kenney's (Webmaster) mobile phone, and if he is unable to answer the query, then he can advise who to contact.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP IDEAS

If you have any ideas for a new group please contact Barbara Sargeant our groups organiser sadu3agroups@gmail.com or speak to her at one of our monthly general meetings.

Alternatively contact her assistant Angie Baker email sadu3agroupsasst@gmail.com

Acting as a group organiser doesn't have to be onerous, it doesn't have to be down to just one person, and it doesn't mean you have to organise everything the group does.

Is the group you want to join currently full? How about starting a second group? Barbara and Angie are happy to provide support and guidance on how to get going.

WALKING GROUP

For our November walk, we covered the grounds of Prestwold Hall.



CRAFT GROUP

On November 6th the craft group met to attach the poppy display to the railings at the memorial entrance to the park. Once that was completed one of the ladies suggested attaching some of the surplus poppies to the top of the railings which I think set it off nicely. The group knitted and crocheted many poppies over the summer and we had many more donated from crafters among our friends and families and we still have quite a few left so maybe we will be able to come up with something to add for next year, who knows?

Pat Glover

(see photos on the next page)



LITTER PICKING GROUP

Thursday 17th October saw the first meeting of the newly formed U3A Litter Picking group in Birstall. We met on Whiles Lane, on a really nice day, and headed off towards Meadow Lane. Six of us, plus honorary member, Poppy, had a good walk round, and found quite a bit of litter. Although not as much as we expected, we still managed to collect several bags full, including a large noxious gas canister, 12p and a stolen wallet. Fortunately the dustbin lorry was in the area and they were able to take the canister and 1 bag for us.

Lyn scouted ahead and we had hot drinks and cake in the Methodist church cafe, which was a good ending to a very enjoyable morning. A big thank you to Maria for organising it.



Group news was a bit scarce this month, please do let me have contributions next month, especially from any Christmas events that take place. Even if your group is currently full, that may not always be the case, and it's still good to see what other members have been doing. *Ed*

EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED



The 'Mindfulness and Meditation' group members had expressed an interest in Tai Chi and, always willing to oblige, I arranged to extend this opportunity to all Syston and District U3A members. What a pity if you were unable to join us. Oh what fun we all had. On the last Wednesday of October at Syston Community Centre thirty-one of us learnt that the development of Tai Chi originated from China and was written of over three thousand years ago as a Martial Art. It is a slow, gentle form of

movement, physical postures, meditative state of mind and controlled breathing. Combining these elements brings (we were told) harmony between mind and body and greatly improves balance. Nasser Butt and Colin who is a Tai Chi exponent from Australia, demonstrated a short programme of beneficial movements to help us improve our health and wellbeing. Despite being relatively easy to accomplish these, the hardest part was managing to complete the simplest exercises SLOWLY! Everyone was able to take part irrespective of their ability. Where necessary they used a chair for additional balance or sat on it as Tai Chi is very inclusive unlike most physical activities. From personal experience Tai Chi is highly effective for muscle strengthening and toning although resulting minor aches were temporary – thankfully. This was yet another one-off event which U3A members can choose to try and, I trust, enjoy. Next year I am sure there will be more opportunities to celebrate all the things we have always wanted to have a go at and never have. Never fear the U3A is here ! View our ongoing list of groups at www.systonu3a.org.uk, then provided work is less than full time, come and join us. If you require further help or information telephone 0300 102 1381. Next year we will also be on YouTube. You heard it here folks !

Must continue my Tai Chi sequence now. See you soon. Jill



PUNCH AND JUDY TALK

Did you miss the Punch and Judy talk at this month's General Meeting? Are you a member of our Facebook group? You can see a video of the speaker in action on our FB page. If you haven't joined our Facebook group yet, you can do so at anytime. It gives us the opportunity to get news out more quickly than the newsletter, and you can comment on the posts you see.

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks usually start 10.30am
Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am

Dec 11th, 2024

Join us for some Christmas style entertainment from our own u3a Singers and Ukelele Band. There will also plenty of opportunity to catch up with other members as we will have separate rooms for music performances and for people to sit and chat.



Jan 8th, 2025



Joanna Richart presents a talk on how nature can help us cure most common illnesses.

We all suffer from common illnesses. As winter strikes and our energy reserves get depleted just to keep us warm, our immunity system needs boosting up. This talk will show you which medicinal plants can be harvested to treat common colds, coughs and flu and how to get our immunity super boost for free from nature. Yes the cure is all around us.

We will also look at plants that help us with anxiety and stress, cancer, loss of hair, inflammation of joints and more. Which wild greens have the most vitamins to keep us healthy all year round?

You will learn all that and much more if you join this amazing talk "Forage for health"

Remember, Charnwood Foraging Ltd also organizes private and public outdoor foraging courses, some suitable for mobility scooters

and even small children. These help you to identify the plants from our talks in nature.

Feb 12th 2025

My Writing Journey' by author Stewart Bint: Novelist and magazine columnist, writing sc-fi, paranormal and satire genres.

He is a member of the influential international authors group, The Awethors, and as a former professional broadcaster, he has worked as a radio newsreader, current affairs presenter and phone-in show host.

Stewart Bint supports the mental health charity Lamp Advocacy.



FACEBOOK PUZZLE SOLUTION

A number lock has 3 digit key. Hint of these three digits given, can you crack the code



A couple a months ago I included a puzzle from Dave Palmer that appeared on our Facebook group. I forgot to include the solution last month for those of you that won't have seen it.

The answer is 042.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



Live Cookery Demonstration – Christmas Special

Chef Alex from 'Vegetarian for Life' demos his delicious Christmas recipes live on Zoom, especially for u3a members. Dressing up is optional!

Thursday 5 December at 10.30am

Free – online via Zoom



AI News: December – review of 2024 and looking forward to 2025

Our AI team will look back at the highs and lows of AI in 2024 and a look forward to what might happen in 2025.

Wednesday 18 December at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



Illuminating Hope: The Transformative Power of Christmas

Catherine Stevenson of Newcastle u3a looks at the Transformative Power of Christmas and Other Festivals of Light.

Friday 20 December at 10am

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Studies seeking volunteers

u3a is contacted by research institutions seeking volunteers for various studies they are carrying out. We will now be providing information about current opportunities for u3a members to participate in studies on this site, with a list of current invitations accessible on [this page](#) and via the "studies" link in the navigation bar at the top of pages in the site. There is now one current invitation, for the [WE-EngAGE study](#), which is about leisure activities, and how they may support wellbeing. The u3a Chair and Policy Manager are on the Advisory Committee of this project.

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



I am Secretary of the Leicester branch of the Society of Recorder Players. I would be most grateful if you could bring our group to the attention of your members.

We meet every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month at Evington Village Hall, on the outskirts of Leicester. We play a wide range of music and are a mixed ability group, although none of us are beginners. It may be that some of your members played the recorder when they were younger and would like to start again. We would very much welcome anyone who would like to come along and give us a try.

I can be contacted at diane.gee2@btinternet.com or 07775890033 for further details.

Thanks,

Diane Gee

Secretary, Leicester Recorder Players

ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH SYSTON CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Friday 6th December 4pm - 8pm
Saturday 7th December
10am - 4pm
Sunday 8th December
1pm - 4pm
Advent Carol service 4pm

MULLED WINE IN CHURCH FRIDAY

CAFE AND STALLS IN THE CHURCH
CENTRE SATURDAY

Suggested
donation £2.00
Children free

w.hardy147@gmail.com

Door Wreath Festival – Syston Methodist Church

December 13 @ 15:30 - December 15 @ 17:30

Friday 13th to Sunday 15th December
Syston Methodist Church Christmas Door
Wreath Festival

The festival will be open on
Friday 13th December from 3.30 – 5.30pm,
Saturday 14th December from 10.00am – 4.30pm
Sunday 15th December from 2.00pm – 4.30pm.

Visit Father Christmas on Friday afternoon and
Saturday morning.
Refreshments will be available to purchase when
festival is open.

Wanlip Christmas Fair

Festive food
& drink

Crafts & Gifts

Visit Santa

Saturday 7th December 2-4pm
at Wanlip Church & Community Hall
Share the magic of Christmas with
us!

A Right Royal Christmas

WITH

CAROLINE ASTON

**SATURDAY 14TH DECEMBER
AT 7PM
ST MARY'S CHURCH
QUENIBOROUGH**

Caroline, of Majesty Magazine, will delight
and amuse us with stories, traditions and
gossip on a Royal theme.

TICKETS £10

(To include a welcome drink and seasonal refreshments)

From Ann Hurt
0116 260 6380

Proceeds will go to support our Church

Celebrate the magic of the season with LOROS Hospice at our enchanting

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

at Leicester Cathedral
Wednesday 18th December 2024
Concert at 7pm (doors open at 6.15pm)
Music provided by combined choirs of Simon Lubkowski

Sponsored by
wilson browne
SOLICITORS

BOOK NOW
Tickets: £20
Under 16: £15

BE A SHINING STAR FOR LOROS

loros.co.uk/christmasconcert

FR Fundraising Regulator



Belvoir Castle Christmas Village

SAT 23RD NOV - WED 1ST JAN



More info [here](#)



The Great Central Santa Express

The Great Central Santa Express is back again for 2024!

23 Nov 2024 to 24 Dec 2024

Where: Great Central Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 1RW

Contact details: +44 (0)1509 632323

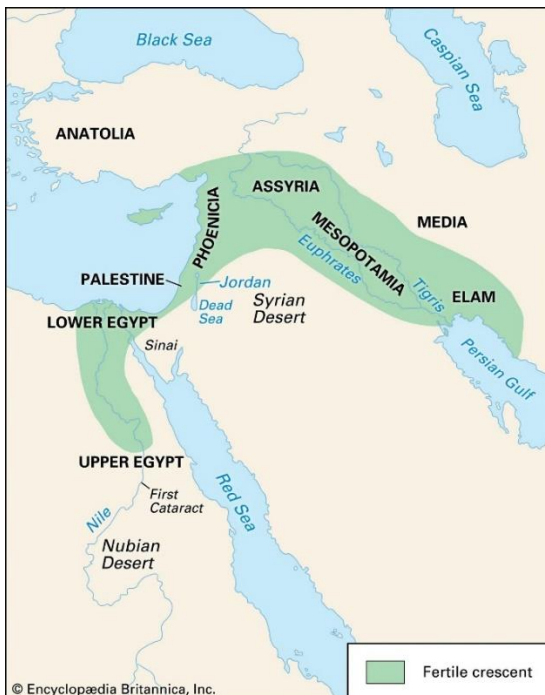
FROM OUR MEMBERS

Beans!



When you have read this article you will understand what beans are, how the word has different meanings either side of the Atlantic and the importance of beans in the development of civilisation. You will also know why they cause 'wind'. About 8,000 years

ago a group of our ancestors had a marvellous idea. Instead of walking many miles a day in search of food they would settle down and grow their own.



This took place in a region of the Middle East which was later named **The Fertile Crescent**.

Our ancestors grew barley, beans, dates and squashes (melons, cucumbers etc.). They built themselves permanent dwellings close to their farms forming the first villages, towns and later cities. Civilisation had arrived.



Found in the author's larder

Beans and peas are a really important food for two different reasons.

Their seeds are dry and can be stored without decaying so can provide food between harvests. Beans are rich in protein, an essential part of our diet required for growth. Most people in the world get most of their protein from eating beans. Only very wealthy people eat lots of meat.



Runner beans, French beans and Peas

We Europeans know that beans are valuable. If someone '*hasn't a bean*' we mean they have no money. People who count and keep track of money (accountants) are nick-named *bean-counters*.

If you meet a female relative who looks as though she is full of the joys of spring you could say to her "you are full of beans" and she would take this as a compliment. Be careful with Americans. 'Full of beans' has a completely different meaning in the USA. Someone who is full of beans is a liar! They are full of stuff that smells – and we will leave it at that.

Americans see beans as stuff of little value. A 'whole hill of beans' means 'worthless'.

Beans (and peas) belong to a family of plants called the **fabaceae**. Members of this family are called legumes. How do you recognise a member of this family?

How to recognise a legume

There are about 19,000 different species in the bean family of plants.

Members of the bean family (Fabaceae) can be recognised by the shape of their flowers

Radial symmetry



Daisy family

Bilateral symmetry



Bean family

Most flowers have a spoked-wheel shape – which we could call radial symmetry, but botanists prefer to use the different term **actinomorphic** which is derived from Greek meaning ray-shaped. Bean family flowers are **zygomorphic** they, like you, have two sides. (One of everything down the middle or one of each down either side. Such as one nose, but two eyes)

The second defining feature of the bean family is the shape of the seed pod, called a legume.



Legume of a 'legacy' pea variety

If you buy peas or beans in the greengrocery section you are buying fruit!

Spilling the Beans

Revealing a secret is known as 'spilling the beans' – where did that saying come from?

Athens, in the time of Ancient Greece, was a democratic city-state. Free men of that city (not slaves of course) would vote for councillors by placing a bean in a jar with their name on – all done secretly so no one would know who had voted for whom.

After the vote someone would examine each jar and then declare the winner.

If someone tipped over a jar, spilling out the beans, it would reveal how many votes someone had received – against all the rules!

Poisonous beans

Not all beans are edible. Most are too small to be considered as a food source but some are very poisonous.



Red kidney beans

Red kidney beans contain a poisonous protein known as a lectin. It is destroyed by heat during the cooking process. The invention of the 'slow-cooker' caused an outbreak of severe poisoning cause by red kidney beans because the slow cooker did not heat the food to a higher enough temperature to break down the toxic lectin.



Laburnum tree flowers in the author's garden

Laburnum trees were planted to brighten up our streets during the 1950s. Their poisonous seeds are very bitter to taste and there were no reported cases of anyone becoming ill from eating them. However a Daily Mail type health scare caused most of them to be removed to avoid small boys using their seeds in pea-shooters.

Clover



Clover – a member of the bean family

Clover is an important crop that provides food for sheep and cattle and increases the fertility of soil.

The story of how clover and other members of the bean family benefit agriculture is becoming more and more important because of increased energy costs and global warming.

The largest agricultural crop in the world is wheat. The wheat plant takes in a mineral called nitrate from the soil and converts it to protein. When the wheat is harvested and taken away the nitrate in the soil has to be replaced otherwise the next crop of wheat will lack the nitrate for a large harvest.



Restoring soil fertility with ammonium nitrate

Ammonium nitrate is very expensive. It is made in a chemical plant by burning natural gas in a special way to make hydrogen and carbon-dioxide (a greenhouse gas). The hydrogen is combined with nitrogen from the air at high pressure to make ammonia. Some of the ammonia is then burnt in a special way to make nitric acid which combines with the ammonia to make the fertiliser.

Clover, and other beans, can do this without using expensive oil or natural gas and without producing vast amounts of greenhouse gases. The secret lies in their roots.



Clover roots showing root nodules

Root nodules in bean plants contain bacteria that live in harmony with the bean plant and perform a valuable service. The bean plant provides the bacteria with sugar made by photosynthesis and the bacteria uses the energy in sugar to combine

nitrogen from the atmosphere with some of the sugar to make the ingredients needed to make proteins. When bits of the plant die, they break down in the soil (more bacteria at work) converting protein to nitrate.

Instead of spending a huge amount of money on expensive fertilisers, a farmer can plant clover or beans.

The next time you walk in the countryside and come across a field of beans you will know why the farmer planted them.



Bread beans growing in a field in Barkby

These fava beans can be harvested as cattle food and the remains ploughed into the soil to increase its fertility without spending a huge amount of money on fertilizer.

One day, someone will discover a way of encouraging the nitrogen fixing bacteria used by legumes to take up residence in wheat. This would be an enormous benefit to humankind – and a well-earned Nobel Peace Prize would be a just reward.

Each year, nearly 50 million tonnes of ammonium nitrate are used world-wide. The UK price in 2022

was £870 a tonne giving a UK expenditure of £1.42 Billion.

Pythagoras and his triangles

Pythagoras was an Ancient Greek philosopher best known for frightening young children with a theorem involving a hypotenuse. What fewer people know is that he founded a religion whose beliefs were to be kept secret.

One of the rules of the religion was never to eat beans! Being a secret, no one knows why.

Diogenes a lesser known Ancient Greek philosopher proposed that the Pythagoreans rejected favas because they cause thought-disturbing flatulence, saying, “One should abstain from beans, since they are full of wind and take part in the soul, and if one abstains from them one’s stomach will be less noisy and one’s dreams will be less oppressive and calmer.”

The later sect known as the Orphics believed that Pythagoras had forbidden the eating of beans because they contain the souls of the dead.

“Eating beans and gnawing on the heads of one’s parents are one and the same,” went one of their sayings.

Relatively modern research has shown that some people have allergies to beans and just perhaps this was known to Pythagoras and is the reason he imposed the ban.

Why beans cause wind

Beans are rich in proteins, fibre and a variety of different sugars which makes them so valuable as a food. However, some of the sugars are indigestible to humans and these sugars will then pass down the gut to the large intestine where numerous bacteria will break them down forming various gases, known as flatus, in the process.

The secret of speaking about intestinal gases without sounding vulgar is to use medical terms!

Avoid the words burp or belch and use **eructation** instead.

Rumbling tummy? – **borborygmus** almost sounds posh.

The ‘F’ word of intestinal gases? - **Flatulence**

As an added bonus to reading this article, you have learned to speak in a refined and genteelperson way about the pint* or so of flatus a normal adult human produces a day.

* 0.56 Litres for those of you who have become metrically inclined!

DECLUTTER DEN



Would anyone like a set of DVDs “The Story of Tractors” plus “Farming When I was Young”?

Working Tractors

Leyland Tractors

David Brown Tractors

Tractors at Work

Call me on 0789 6016719 if you would like either - Julie Johnson or email my editor address.



If you have something that you are prepared to give away – **strictly no items for sale!** Let me know and I’ll put it in declutter den and hopefully we can help each other free up some space, whilst giving others something they have a use for, even if we don’t.

Email: sadu3aed@gmail.com

POETRY CORNER

At Christmas by Edgar A Guest

A man is at his finest
towards the finish of the year;
He is almost what he should be
when the Christmas season is here;
Then he's thinking more of others
than he's thought the months before,
And the laughter of his children
is a joy worth toiling for.
He is less a selfish creature than
at any other time;
When the Christmas spirit rules him
he comes close to the sublime.

When it's Christmas man is bigger
and is better in his part;
He is keener for the service
that is prompted by the heart.
All the petty thoughts and narrow
seem to vanish for awhile
And the true reward he's seeking
is the glory of a smile.
Then for others he is toiling and
somehow it seems to me
That at Christmas he is almost
what God wanted him to be.

If I had to paint a picture of a man
I think I'd wait
Till he'd fought his selfish battles
and had put aside his hate.
I'd not catch him at his labors
when his thoughts are all of self,
On the long days and the dreary
when he's striving for himself.
I'd not take him when he's sneering,
when he's scornful or depressed,
But I'd look for him at Christmas
when he's shining at his best.

Man is ever in a struggle
and he's oft misunderstood;
There are days the worst that's in him
is the master of the good,
But at Christmas kindness rules him
and he puts himself aside
And his petty hates are vanquished
and his heart is opened wide.
Oh, I don't know how to say it,
but somehow it seems to me
That at Christmas man is almost
what God sent him here to be.

What Truly Matters by Caroline Pulsifer

In this special season, let faith be our guide,
With gratitude in our hearts, let's set the tides.
For Christmas is about giving and forgiving,
In all that we do, let kindness be our living.

As we gather together with family and friends,
Let's embrace the love that this season sends.
And as we exchange gifts and share laughter,
May we find solace in what truly matters.

A Christmas Long Gone by Eric R Harvey

I lie here awake, afraid to sleep.
I've prayed the Lord my soul to keep.
My stocking is hung on my bed,
Really brother's long sock instead.

But Mum said it would do for now
As she kissed my cheek, kissed my brow,
She tucked me in on Christmas Eve
When I was young and still believed.

Was that a footstep on the stairs?
My brother's snoring really scares.
Will he get down that chimney tight?
Will I get my first glimpse tonight?

I lie awake, for ages and ages,
Skimming last year's Beano pages,
Under my blanket torch alight,
Getting sleepy, losing the fight.

Woke next morning, screams of glee.
Missed him again; how could that be?
A bulging sock suspended there,
An apple, an orange, maybe a pear.

Cadbury's chocolate! What a delight!
Three new pennies: shiny and bright,
A piggy bank with its own key.
It wasn't much but meant all to me.

The front room always looked divine,
A roaring fire, the smell of pine,
Tinsel draped on the real fir tree,
Foil wrapped chocolates just for me.

Silver baubles' reflections revealing,
Paper chains strung on the ceiling,
Needles dropping on linoleum
Swept up daily by tidy Mum.

Lone present 'neath the Christmas tree,
Wrapped really well, was that for me?
This was as good as it could get,
I've got a new Meccano set.

Ripped off wrap all over the floor.
One present each, but that was more
Than we could expect; times were hard,
Some mates didn't get a Christmas card.

So ten young children eat the grub
Which cooked while Dad was at the pub.
He'd already had a drink or two,
But then, it was his holiday too.

Poor Mum would have to slave away,
No fun for her on Christmas day.
Times were tough, yes, I agree,
But at six years old, it worked for me!

The Funniest Face ~ Anon

The funniest face
looked out at me
From a silver ball
On the Christmas Tree!

At first I thought
It was Santa's elf,
But I looked again and
It was just myself!

And finally.....



What kind of music do elves listen to while shopping?
Wrap music.

Why are Christmas trees like bad knitters?
They both drop their needles!

What do you give a train driver for Christmas?
Platform shoes!

Why did the turkey refuse dessert?
He was already stuffed!

What do you call a bankrupt Santa Claus?
Saint Nickel-less.

**What do you get if you cross a Christmas tree
with an iPad?
A pine-apple!**

Why don't you ever see Santa at the hospital?
Because he has private elf care.

Why was the snowman looking through the
carrots?
He was picking his nose.

Why did the turkey join a band?
Because it had drumsticks.

Why couldn't the skeleton go to the Christmas
Party?
He had no body to go with!

***I hope everyone has a happy and peaceful
Christmas and a good New Year - Ed***

