

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

NOV
2022

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

Autumn is really upon us as we put the clocks back on Sunday. It seems a long time ago when we were basking in the sun and now, we have to think twice about putting on the heating.

It was delightful to see so many people at the Community Centre for our monthly meeting. There were 66 members present which is the highest figure we have had since lockdown.

At our committee meeting we discussed emergency contact numbers, and it became apparent that some groups did not keep a record of them. Next time when you attend a group meeting could you please ensure your group leader has your up-to-date details.

Please stay warm and safe.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

DO WE HAVE YOUR UP TO DATE DETAILS?

Please tell us if you change your email or postal address. If you don't get email notifications about Vitality, (it's usually published on the 1st of every month with a link sent out to let you know it's on our website), this may indicate you haven't updated your details. Any changes notify sadu3amembers@gmail.com

A REMINDER THAT OUR WEBSITE HAS MOVED

Our old website has a link to our new one, but you can go straight to the new at www.systonu3a.org.uk We haven't ditched the "& District" part of our title, it's there on our header. We just have the shorter name for the website address.

Steve Kenney is now our Webmaster, so if you have anything for the website please send it to him at sadu3awebmaster@gmail.com

John Winter has now taken up the role of administrator for our new system.

A JOINT REQUEST FROM OUR GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR & PUBLICITY OFFICER

Dear All

As you will know, Jill has taken on the role as Publicity Officer. In order to spread the word about our organisation, she is reviewing posters and leaflets to encourage membership.

We would be very grateful if you could send 2 or 3 photos showing your group (s) having fun and learning new skills. Maybe finished products - maybe joyful moments !

Please do of course ask permission for publication from anyone in your photos .

With thanks

Jill and Sheila

email Jill: sadu3apublicity@g.mail.com

u3a 40th ANNIVERSARY

All Interest Groups

u3a 40th Anniversary Display

Don't forget to bring along any items you have to display at the November General Meeting.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP – RUMMIKUB

The new **Rummikub** group met on Wednesday 19th October.

After a few introductions we paired " experts " with "novices " and away we went.

Four tables of four soon settled down to play and seemed to get the hang of the game quite quickly, thanks to our "experts"!

Everyone was encouraged to share their knowledge and to swap tables after each game should they want to. This way the group made new friends and acquaintances. The morning went quickly with everyone agreeing it was most enjoyable.

We will be meeting fortnightly (but not Dec. as this coincides with the December general meeting)

If anyone is interested in joining the Rummikub group, we are happy to put your name on the waiting list where you will be contacted as soon as a place becomes free.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

We returned to the subject of DNA testing and new developments on the Ancestry site. We inherit half of our family DNA from each parent, but until recently it wasn't possible to determine which segments of DNA we gained from each of them, unless they had also tested. Ancestry have now worked out how to split a person's DNA between their parents.

How does that help with family history research you may ask? What it means is that the split DNA profile can be compared with that of the people who are identified as sharing DNA with you and, with at least some of them, can see whether they relate to Parent 1 or Parent 2, or in a few cases both. Ancestry doesn't know which parent is which, but, if you have managed to trace how some of your "matches" (those you share DNA with) are related to you, you may well be able to work out whether Parent 1 is Maternal or Paternal.

One of our members has tested, so has his granddaughter. She appears on this listings as "both sides". Some "matches" remain "unassigned", either because comparisons have not yet been made, or because the results are ambiguous.

Being able to label which side of the family at least some "matches" relate to means that you if you have a family history puzzle to solve, commonly referred to as a "brick wall", you can home in on the matches on that side of the family. For anyone who is adopted, or discovers that one of their parents or grandparents is not biologically related, this is particularly valuable.

BIRDWATCHING & WILDLIFE GROUP

Friday October 7th dawned bright and breezy, and 4 intrepid members of the Birdwatching & Wildlife Group set off at 8.30, destination Frampton Marshes. On the Lincolnshire coast at the head of The Wash, near to Boston, Frampton is a marvellous, marshy area managed by the RSPB, and a well-known birding location as it is remote and on the migration paths of many birds. It is also, as you might expect, rather exposed, so when I said "breezy" in the opening, it did not really do justice to the howling gale that greeted us when we arrived and got out of the car. But it was bright and sunny, the wind was not howling in from the North Sea, so at least it wasn't cold. The first thing that we spotted was the sight of the visitor centre surrounded by fencing as it was closed for refurbishment. So that scuppered our plans for a coffee after our journey, it also meant that the "facilities" consisted of 3 portaloos on the car park. So, if you're interested in what it's like to experience a portaloos, on a car park, in the middle of nowhere, in a gale, then "cold rattly and draughty" was the consensus.

What followed was a marvellous birding trip as we walked the paths and sea walls of the site. Hundreds of birds, waders, ducks, geese, hedge birds, raptors galore. The highlights were Little Stints (tiny waders who

drop in on their way from the Arctic to Africa), Marsh Harriers, a Hobby, and a Cattle Egret. We also got an unusual view of a kestrel from the sea wall as it flew beneath us (they're the ones usually seen hovering above you by the roadside) so we could look down on it as it drifted past and see its amazing colours in the sunshine.



Also a Red Kite that hung gently in the wind directly above our heads, again the colour of its feathers when we're so close are astonishing, and, with a wingspan of 6 feet, its size. It was so close that Elizabeth, who struggled all day to hold her camera still enough in the wind to get any photos, got this stunning shot.

These magnificent birds were almost unknown in England, but have been successfully reintroduced around the country, and can now even be seen from the streets of Syston. In all nearly 40 different species of birds were identified in 4 hours whilst we were there.

It is difficult to convey wind in a photo, but at least Diane, Chris and John were all upright long enough for Elizabeth to capture this moment!

We do have room for a few new members, so if anyone fancies joining our group for some gentle outdoor exercise with a purpose then get in touch through the website <https://u3a.simplmembership.co.uk/Syston/Groups>. Most of our outings are more local than Frampton, and involve fewer portaloos!

John Winter, Birdwatching & Wildlife Group



AMERICAN HISTORY GROUP

At our October meeting we discussed some of the important issues of the 1940s and the part played by the USA.

Stephen brought Exodus 1947 to the table, and showed an example of governments taking a position, that was then undermined by individuals and interest groups as help was given to get Jewish refugees into Israel. Public opinion exposing the gap between policy and popular desires.

Rick, who has the additional insight of having visited Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, took us through the issues that led up to the attack and the subsequent actions following the Japanese actions.

Norma then showed us a consequence of that action for the people in the USA who were of Japanese descent, as they were interned and had all of their possessions taken by the US government.

How did it all end? With the Atomic bomb, which Mel had researched and helped us to understand both the science and the politics of it all – including the spies.

Thanks to all for these excellent research docs.

Looking to November we move to the 1950s.

An interesting time, as it shows the great contrasts of the war in Korea, the obsession with Communists, the Cold War, the amazing strides taken in technology, and the glamour of Hollywood at its height.

Regarding the future – I'll be finishing my work as group leader on American History with our December meeting. I want to have a break and do some more travelling whilst we're still fit enough for that.

If anyone else wants to carry on leading, I'll be delighted to see that, and I know there's been some interest in going in to European History.

If anyone is interested in continuing American History into its more recent era do get in touch with Pat Wherton, or for starting a European History Group, get in touch with Sheila Driver our Groups Co-ordinator. You can contact either of them via our Groups page [here](#)

FEELING CRAFTY GROUP

This month at the 'Feeling Crafty' group we have been making cards using the 'Tea Bag Folding' technique demonstrated to us by Carol. It doesn't actually use teabags! Maybe it did initially and they were found to be too soggy!!

We used some pretty wrapping paper and folded it in a particular way to make some nice Xmas tree and rosette cards. We were all happy with our results so will be making more next session.



PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The Photography Group enjoyed a visit to the 1620s house at Donington Le Heath last month. The morning started off very dull and grey, but by the time we arrived the sun had started to show itself!

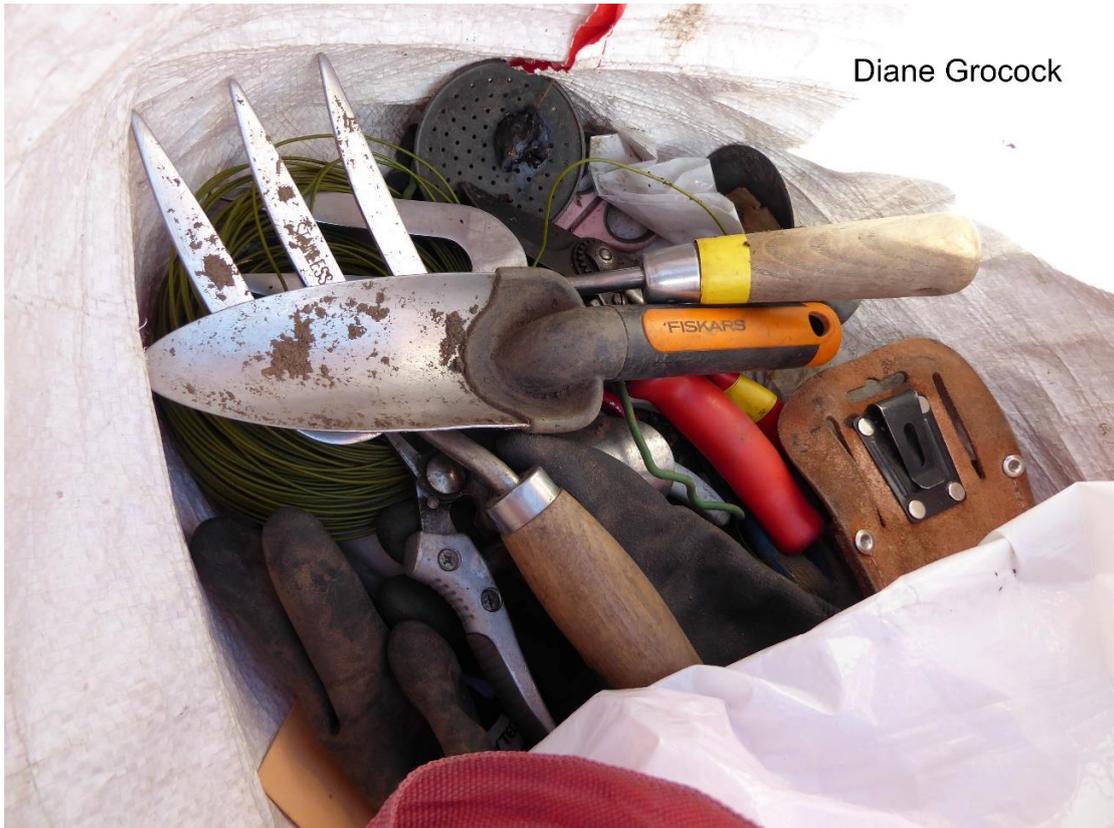
We had an interesting wander around the gardens, based on how they would appear in the 1600s and then had a hot drink and piece of cake in the cafe, before having a tour around the house with a very knowledgeable guide.

It was £5 to enter the site, which included a tour around the house, and the ticket is valid for 12months, so we hope to revisit in the Spring. It's well worth a visit (closed until Spring now).

For anyone interested, the website address is: [Donington le Heath | 1620s House & Garden](#)



Candice Barker

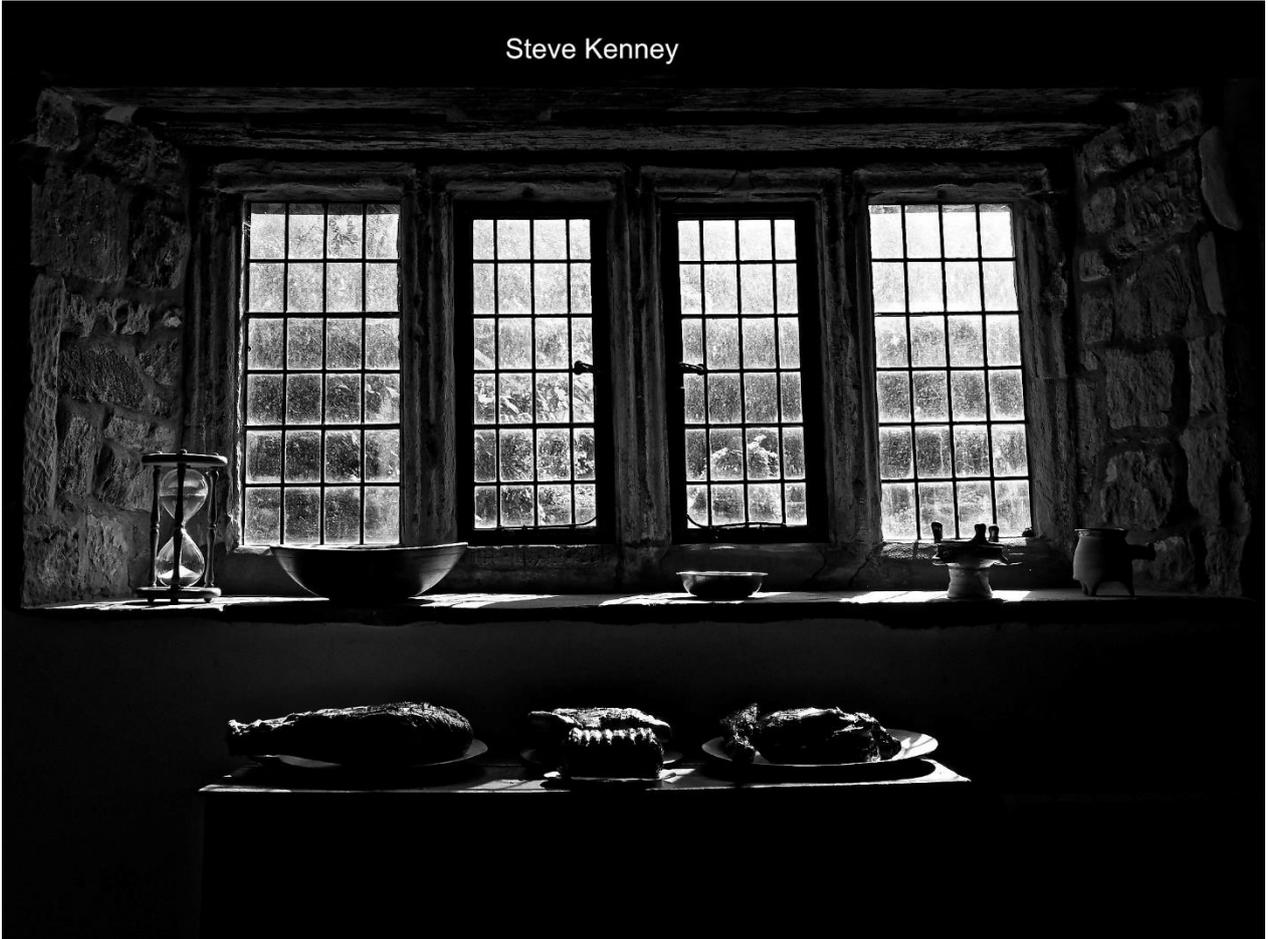


Diane Grocock



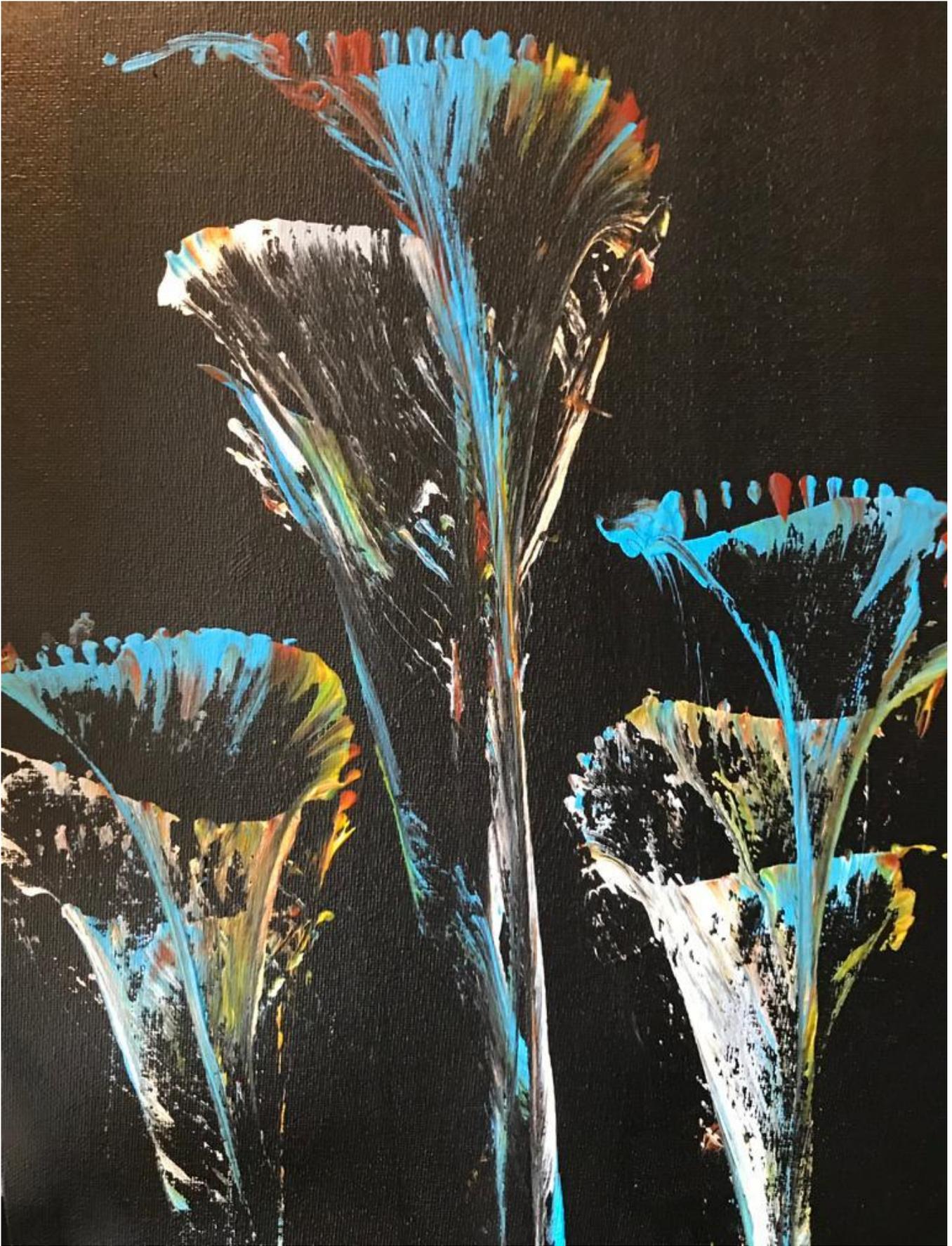
Barbara Sargeant

Steve Kenney



ART GROUP





These pictures were held over from a previous month, but I felt they were worthy of inclusion - Ed

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

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

Wed Nov 9th

Rod Axon - The History of East Goscote and surrounding area

From - An Unwanted Unloved Village ...

Jelson's 1960's concept for a self-sufficient community on the site of Factory 10, an eyesore, a derelict ordnance factory, caused a long and heated argument between the Council Planners and the developers. Tempers frayed and harsh words were exchanged!

Maturing over 5 decades the place that Jelson fought tenaciously to create from a post-war industrial landscape, became the start of a vibrant and solid community. An enviable place to live just 20 minutes from everywhere, but not by railway.

... to one of the Most 'liveable' Settlements in Leicestershire

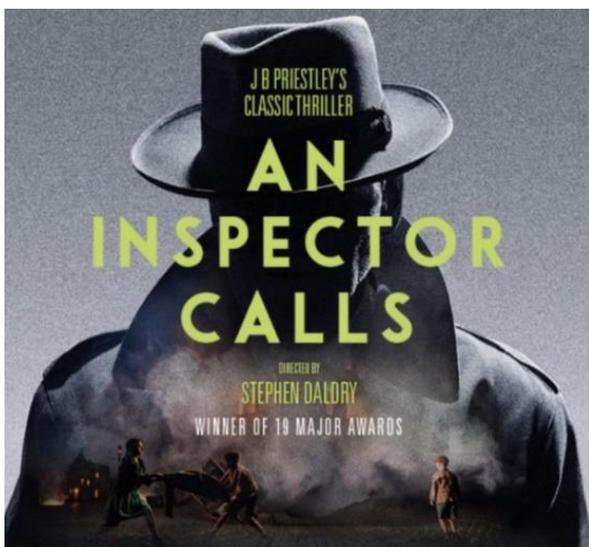
Wed Dec 14th

A Royal Christmas - John Whitehead

John Whitehead will talk us through how Royalty have celebrated Christmas through the ages in a variety of ways, with luxury and excess, with cruelty and frugality, with family and frivolity.

Which monarch would you wish to share the festival with?

THEATRE TRIPS



Stephen Daldry's multi award-winning **National Theatre** production of **JB Priestley's** classic thriller returns.

Winner of 19 major awards and hailed as the theatrical event of its generation, *An Inspector Calls* has thrilled more than 5 million theatregoers worldwide.

I have booked 20 seats for Saturday 25 March 2023 matinee performance at Curve Leicester, payment not due till January.

I'm not sure whether all tickets have been snapped up, but it's always worth putting your name on a backup list, someone may find themselves unable to attend -Ed

Contact Elaine Yarwood elaineyarwood@outlook.com

IF YOU MISSED THE OCTOBER GM

Sadly family issues prevented me from attending the October GM. The speakers subject of his life as an “extra” for film and TV was such a personal one. I did find some information online, but the blogs and stories from other “extras” were all so different. It’s clear that those in the industry have wide and varied experience, both positive and negative.

According to Wikipedia - A **background actor** or **extra** is a performer in a film, television show, stage, musical, opera, or ballet production who appears in a nonspeaking or non-singing (silent) capacity, usually in the background (for example, in an audience or busy street scene). War films and epic films often employ background actors in large numbers: some films have featured hundreds or even thousands of paid background actors as cast members (hence the term "cast of thousands"). Likewise, grand opera can involve many background actors appearing in spectacular productions.

On a film or TV set, background actors are usually referred to as "junior artists", "atmosphere", "background talent", "background performers", "background artists", "background cast members", or simply "background", while the term "extra" is rarely used. In a stage production, background actors are commonly referred to as "supernumeraries". In opera and ballet, they are called either "extras" or "supers".

A wide range of people appear to be involved with this work. They are not all aspiring actors, or actors seeking income when they are “resting”. Students and others looking to earn some money to supplement their income, also sign on with the various agencies who supply the background people we see, but don’t really see, on film and TV.

Here are the names of some now famous actors who started out as “extras”

Brad Pitt

Back in 1987, before Brad Pitt was a household name, he had a blink-and-you’ll-miss-it cameo in *Less Than Zero* starring Robert Downey Jr.

Megan Fox

Before she scored the leading role of Mikaela Banes in Michael Bay’s blockbuster *Transformers*, Megan Fox worked with the director on another project four years earlier — *Bad Boys II*. In that film, Fox played an uncredited club dancer sporting a red hat.

John Wayne

We now associate John Wayne as America’s cowboy, but before he was a star, his brimmed hat was replaced by a football helmet. All the way back in 1926, John Wayne appeared as an extra in the silent film *Brown of Harvard*.

Renee Zellweger

Richard Linklater’s *Dazed and Confused* was shot on location in Austin, Texas, where Renée Zellweger was just getting her start as an actress. While still in college — and working as a cocktail waitress on the side — Zellweger appeared as an extra in the ‘70s-set hangout movie.

Sylvester Stallone

Long before Sylvester Stallone was Rocky or Rambo, he was picking up extra work in movies including *Downhill Racer*, *M*A*S*H*, and *Lovers and Other Strangers*.

Daniel Day-Lewis

At just 14 years old, Day-Lewis played the uncredited role of a child vandal in John Schlesinger's drama *Sunday Bloody Sunday*. Day-Lewis can be seen scratching the side of a blue car with a broken bottle.

Bruce Willis

Bruce Willis began his career on the off-Broadway stage, slowly transitioning to on-camera work. But before he was cast as John McClane in *Die Hard*, he appeared as an extra entering a diner in *The First Deadly Sin* and sitting in a court scene in the 1981 movie *The Verdict*.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

Members Help Shape the Future Design of Everyday Items

Earlier this year, more than 2,000 u3a members participated in a survey with Design Age Institute on the most frustrating everyday objects as we age.

The compelling findings have been compiled in a report, and show the biggest stress factors identified in homes were packaging-related, with over 60% of all respondents choosing packaging as their main frustration.

Things such as struggling to open a carton of orange juice, or peel back plastic wrapping on food, can cause enormous frustration.

Other everyday household items which were identified as causing significant frustration and annoyance include:

- Duvet covers 13.3%
- TV remotes 5%
- High cupboards 5%
- Keys and locks 3.5%

Sam Mauger, chief executive of u3a, says: "The results of the report will not come as a shock to the many members of u3a who have struggled for years with everyday household objects in packaging that seems only to make their lives more difficult.

"Something as simple as trying to open a carton of orange juice can cause enormous frustration.

"But it does not need to be the case. This is an opportunity for businesses to sit up and take notice, and ensure future designs are inclusive and fit for purpose."

You can read the full report on [our Social Impact page](#).

An Insight into the Early u3a

A conversation between Eric Midwinter, one of the co-founders of the u3a movement, and Liz Thackray, its current Chair, has just been released.

Eric Midwinter helped set up the u3a movement in the UK in 1982 and Liz Thackray has been Chair of the Third Age Trust since 2021. The conversation explores how the u3a movement came to be, its original purpose and how it has since developed.

Within the conversation, Eric discusses how u3a was always intended to give older adults a voice. He says, "The starting point was the sense that older age should be looked on more positively, and obviously less negatively."

"I find it difficult sometimes now to believe how bad the imagery of older age was in the 1970s, even amongst medical people. There was a sense of older age being over the hill and oldness was very much identified as illness."

Liz Thackray responds, "It really was stark how much differentiation and lack of awareness there was that, the fact that people were a given age did not mean they had no contribution or nothing to give or to learn or to do."

Watch the full conversation on [the u3a YouTube channel](#).

U3A TALKS



Live Cookery Demonstration – Winter Warmers

Chef Alex from 'Vegetarian for Life' demos his delicious winter recipes live on Zoom, especially for u3a members.

Thurs 17 Nov at 10.30am

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



The British Royal Collection – Japanese Art

Discover hidden gems of Japanese art in the British Royal Collection – acquired over four centuries of courtly interaction

Tues 8 Nov at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



Exploring World Faiths – All Souls Day

The Day of the Dead is a major event in many Latin American countries. We explore this with three different faith speakers in this webinar

Mon 14 Nov at 10am

Free – Online via zoom

Book [here](#)

NETWORK NEWS ITEMS

The following items come from the Newsletter of the Leicestershire and Rutland Network. The full content of the latest and past editions can be accessed on their website [here](#)

CHRISTMAS QUIZ **u3a**

MONDAY 12th DECEMBER 2022
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Open to all u3a members in the East Midlands

Singles – Couples & teams of up to 4

No limit on the numbers from each u3a

Handicap system so fair for all

To Register send:
Your name
Your email address
Name of your u3a
Team name (if any)
to:
u3achristmasquiz@outlook.com

You'll receive confirmation within a couple of days

The quiz will start promptly at 7:00pm – login from 6:45pm
We aim to finish around by 9.00pm
There will be a 10-minute comfort/drinks top-up break after Round 4
Answers will be given after Rounds 4 and 8

Merry Christmas

u3a learn, laugh, live
East Midlands Region



Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, Sutton Cheney, CV13 0AD
<https://www.bosworthbattlefield.org.uk/whats-on/>
 e: bosworth@leics.gov.uk
 t: 01455 290429 (10am - 4pm)

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



Christmas Fair

Sat 19th Nov, 10am – 4pm.

Free Admission.

Join us this festive season for our wonderful Christmas market. We'll have your Christmas gift shopping sorted in no time with a range of artisan, boutique style homeware, gift, and handmade craft stalls.



All the Queen's Jewels 1445-1548: Power, Majesty and Display – Dr Nicola Tallis Talk

Sun 11th Dec, 2:30pm – 3:30pm.

£6 per ticket. Pre-booking Essential.

In this fascinating talk, Dr Nicola Tallis will discuss her latest publication: *All the Queen's Jewels 1445-1548: Power, Majesty and Display*. From Margaret of Anjou to Katherine Parr, the ten queen consorts of England from 1445-1548, played an essential role in royal life: they were wives, mothers, patrons, and intercessors.



The Medieval Christmas – Toni Mount Talk

Sun 18th Dec, 2:30pm – 3:30pm.

£6 per ticket. Pre-booking Essential.

Best-selling author Toni Mount will explore the origins and traditions of the Medieval Christmas in this entertaining, illustrated talk.



Stir Up Sunday

Sun 20th Nov, 11am – 1pm.

£20 per person. Pre-booking Essential.

Begin Christmas the right way and learn how to make a Traditional Christmas Pudding in our relaxed and beautiful Barn. Take home the pudding you've made along with a jar of vegetarian mincemeat to

share with all the family.



Wreath Making Workshops

Sat 3rd Dec, 10:30am – 12:30pm.

Sat 10th Dec, 9:30am – 11:30am & 1:30pm – 3:30pm.

Thurs 15th Dec, 6pm – 8pm.

£25 per person. Pre-booking Essential.

A fun and relaxed workshop to make and customise your own Christmas wreath in the nostalgic surroundings of the medieval barn at the 1620s House & Garden.

November National Events Calendar

World Vegan Month <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/events/world-vegan-month>

Men's Health Awareness Month <https://uk.movember.com/mens-health/general>

National Novel Writing Month <https://nanowrimo.org/>

1 National Author's Day

2 Stress Awareness Day <https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/awareness-days-and-events/stress-awareness-day/>

5 Bonfire Night/ Guy Fawkes

7 to 11 Lifelong Learning Week <https://www.festivaloflearning.org.uk/get-involved/lifelong-learning-week/>

7 to 11 International Stress Awareness Week <https://isma.org.uk/isma-international-stress-awareness-week>

7 to 11 Talk Money Week <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/talk-money/talk-money-week>

9 British Pudding Day <https://nationaltoday.com/british-pudding-day/>

9 Social Media Kindness Day <https://www.socialmediakindnessday.com/>

14 to 20 Book Week (Scotland) <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-week-scotland>

19 International Men's Day <https://ukmensday.org.uk/>

21 to 27 Road Safety Week <https://www.brake.org.uk/road-safety-week>

22 to 25 International Leadership Week <https://www.institutelm.com/whats-on/int-leadership-week-listing.html>

27 to 5 Dec National Tree Week <https://treecouncil.org.uk/seasonal-campaigns/national-tree-week/>

30 Computer Security Day <https://www.cybertalk.org/national-computer-security-day/>

30 St. Andrew's Day

NOT U3A BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



BELTON HOUSE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Visitors to a National Trust property just over the border in Lincolnshire will be able to enjoy a trail of incredible light installations this [Christmas](#). The festive trail will be at Belton House from November 24 2022 until January 1 2023.

New for 2022 will be a sprawling artistic illumination named The Rose Garden, made by international cultural event creators Mandylights. It will feature thousands of handmade roses crafted using petals of white silk, which

will look pretty in the daylight, and then once darkness falls, the animated colour-changing lights will burst into dazzling patterns.

Visitors will also be able to discover Italian lighting collective Aether and Hemera's nautically inspired Voyage. Look out across the pond and you'll see a flotilla of oversized origami paper boats floating on the water.

GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY WINTER FAIR & CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Leicestershire's Great Central Railway is introducing a new event later this year mixing steam and ice. The first Woodhouse Winter Fair will take place at the [Quorn and Woodhouse Station](#) from Wednesday, November 30 until Friday, December 23.

The event will feature a synthetic ice skating rink, fun fair and festive food stalls. You'll be able to get your skates on from November 30 and then every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday until December 23.

Sessions will last one hour and will be limited to a maximum of 30 people per session. The rink will be open from 10am until 9pm, with sessions starting on the hour.

Prices for a skating session start at £7 per person. Group discounts are available for bookings of 12 people or more, and if you've got a large group, you could even book an exclusive session.



Other seasonal events to look forward to at Great Central Railway include the Santa Steam Trains, which will run from November 26 to December 24. You can enjoy a ride on the steam hauled train, and little ones will receive a gift from Santa.

The Winter Wonderlights event will also be returning, on selected dates from November 30 to

December 29. This year, the Winter Wonderlights trains have been inspired by Tom Fletcher's *The Christmasaurus* and you'll be able to see Charnwood's picturesque countryside lit up with a myriad of lights sequenced to the music of *The Christmasaurus* - and there may even be some special guests on the train.

Tickets for all events can be booked via the Great Central Railway website [here](#)

FROM OUR MEMBERS

THE OLD HORSEMAN

He sat on the garden bench in front of his cottage. His gnarled hands resting on the walking stick that stood between his knees. The veins on the back of them stood out, as they did on his forearms. His shirt sleeves were rolled up above his elbows, and the first two buttons were open at the throat. He still wore the same style of shirt that he had in his working days, but he had adopted the wearing of braces, instead of a belt at his waist. The only time he could be persuaded to wear a formal shirt was for hatches, matches and dispatches, as he referred to them. He wore a suit and tie for such events on sufferance; and would constantly be slipping his finger between his neck and shirt collar, until he could cast off the noose with relief. Such events were the only time he dispensed with wearing a cap out of doors, adopting a trilby instead, worn at a jaunty angle. Otherwise it had always been a tweed flat cap, until a few years ago when one of his great grandchildren had presented him with a baseball cap. He'd initially worn it just to avoid causing any upset; but had then decided he preferred it. He wasn't so stuck in his ways that he wouldn't

try something new. Wife Sally was the only one who saw the white hair that surrounded a pale bald patch, apart from the mobile hairdresser that trimmed it every few weeks.

He had been retired for more than twenty years, but the exposed skin had not lost the permanent tan of working out in the sun for more than 50 years. The drying effects of wind, and scorching rays, had etched their mark upon his face. His cheeks were always rosy, the skin toughened like leather, and criss-crossed by lines and furrows. His arms and legs were thinner, weaker now than in the days when he hauled sacks of corn and potatoes on his shoulder, with little effort. Not so weak that he could not lift his great grandchildren onto his knee, at least the smaller ones. God willing he would have a great great grandchild in his arms before the year was out. Those he was no longer capable of hoisting up, considered themselves too old to sit on grandpa's knee anyway. Instead they would settle at his feet whilst he recounted stories of his youth, when horse power on the farms literally meant the four-legged kind. Days when, if asked to give his occupation, he would have said he was a "horseman on a farm", it sounded so much better to him than the "farm labourer", or even worse "tractor driver", that he had become in later years.

He had been good with horses, and proudly held the title of county ploughing champion several years in succession. Sally had grumbled each time, at the extra chore of cleaning the trophy he brought home, whilst happily tucking the prize money into her purse, and proudly telling her friends and neighbours of his success. He hadn't kept her short, not like some of the others he'd worked with. He didn't go down the village pub, and hand a goodly portion of his wage over to the landlord for golden or brown liquid, that would only run down the urinal wall before the night was out. He hadn't cared that workmates dubbed him henpecked and, under the thumb, he'd loved his Sally dearly then, as now. He had courted her with care; and had not sought out other female company when she had withheld from him the full measure of her love until the marriage bed. He forgave the sometimes sharp edge to her tongue, and never doubted for a second that he was her one true love, just as she was his.

Raising ten children on farm pay had not been easy, but Sally had the knack of stretching food and filling their bellies. He couldn't remember them ever going hungry. Sometimes the fare was basic. Many a morning he'd gone to work on bread and dripping. She plucked pheasants, skinned rabbits and hares, but didn't have the stomach to disembowel them, leaving that task to him. Truth be told, the smell of the innards of well hung game did not sit well with him either, but this free fare was a valuable supplement to their diet in winter, they could not afford to turn it down. Although not entirely free, his well-tended vegetable plot led to them eating more than the "5 a day" many struggle to consume these days. Not that he ever regarded gardening as a chore, especially during the years when he spent much of his day with his backside on a tractor seat. The work was easier, but somehow less satisfying than working with a shire horse. In contrast, the physical effort of digging the ground and growing from seed, was far more pleasurable.

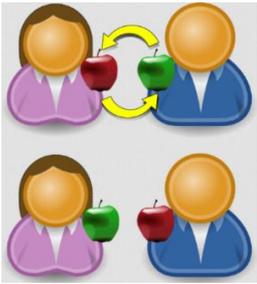
A few chickens had been confined to an otherwise unproductive area at the bottom of the garden, with a lusty cockerel amongst them, so that they could rear their own chicks, rather than buying in new stock. Indeed, they were able to sell surplus pullets on to neighbours. That supplemented their income a little more. A sty had stood next to the chicken pen, it had housed a succession of pigs whilst they were being fattened on whatever scraps could be gathered together. Sally carefully saved the money needed to pay the man from the local slaughter house, when the time came for it to be killed. She had the skills to ensure that little of pig or fowl was wasted, skills that had she had learned from her mother, and had in turn passed on to her daughters. Their granddaughters had not acquired the same knowledge, they didn't need it. Gone were the days when people raised a pig at home. There was no room for sentimentality over the

dispatch of Monty, or whatever the kids called him, or Hetty the hen, when her egg laying days came to an end. Though he was a gentle man, and hated the task of wringing necks, but it had to be done. Even the tough meat an old bird provided was better than no meat at all. He would shake his head ruefully, you couldn't buy bacon like they got from their pigs these days. He despised the current supermarket offerings, with the unnatural milky residue left in the pan after cooking, but on state pension they couldn't afford the traditional bacon sold at the local farmers market. Sometimes one of kids treated them, but it still wasn't as good as their own had been. The supermarket jams, pickles and the like, weren't a patch on the stuff Sally used to make. Her hands were too wracked with arthritis to peel and chop and slice; and had been these last few years. He used to keep an eye out for when the hedgerow brambles were ready, and crab apples ripe for picking. There was an old orchard with apple, pear and plum, the farmhouse it had been associated with had long gone, knocked down after one farm had been merged with another. When the kids were young, they went on picking trips. They loved the task of gathering nature's bounty, coming home with purple-pink tongues and fingers, from brambling sessions, and stains on their clothing that Sally sometimes struggled to remove. By the time Summer had faded into mid-Autumn, the pantry shelves were groaning under the weight of preserves, including some of those big old sweet jars packed with salted green beans, and other surpluses from the garden. Many of the kids were grown up and married by the time they had a freezer.

He'd been frustrated that they hadn't been able to afford a washing machine until several years after they were readily available due to mass production. He'd hated seeing Sally exhausted, with her hands red raw, after a Monday wash day in mid-winter. He had worked as many hours overtime as he could, but during winter, the shorter days curtailed what was available. The younger kids had whined at wearing their older siblings cast offs, or those of others, picked up at village hall jumble sales. Sally tried to ensure each child had at least one brand new outfit for summer, and another for winter. That was only possible because she was a good dressmaker. The used singer sewing machine they'd bought on tick from the local second-hand dealer had paid for itself many times over. In times when money was too short to buy new fabric, jumble sale purchases were unpicked and re-fashioned. Sally kept a sharp eye out for quality items donated by the well-off households, whilst he tried to make sure they had a decent toy for Christmas, and on birthdays. These were often made by his own hand. His carpentry skills came into play, fashioning items from wood picked up around the farm, or offcuts sold cheaply by the local timber merchant. There was the year he had made a dolls house for the girls ; he'd only been able to work on it in the evenings after the kids had gone to bed. It had been a close-run thing; the final coat of paint was applied on Christmas Eve. He'd been proud of his handiwork. It had been worth the effort, the girls had played with it for hours, and it still came out of the cupboard to be used by great granddaughters.

He'd been luckier than many, all his children had been born healthy, and had grown into healthy adults. Sally had been one of those women who bore pregnancy easily, and went through labour quickly, often before the mid-wife could get there on her bicycle from the next village. Even after more than 60 years of marriage, he could still wind his Sally up, keeping a such a poker face, that she always failed to realise his game, until he allowed a mischievous grin to cross his face. Maybe he and Sally should have curtailed the number of children they'd had. It would have made life easier. But large families were the norm back then, and thinking about them all, which ones would he have forgone seeing the light of day, not one of them. They'd all been cherished, never harshly punished for their misdeeds, that was not his way. Soft, some would have called him, but they'd all grown up knowing right from wrong, and there was not a bad apple among them. It had been a hard life he'd lived, but not so hard that the twinkle in his eye had been extinguished, or his sense of humour quashed. Now, in his remaining years, he could sit back, watch the world go by, and smile. It had been a hard life, but a good one.

SWAP STOP



Maybe you don't have something you are willing to give away, but how about swapping it with something from another member?

Are you a jig-saw fan looking to exchange with another jig-saw fan and give both of you a new challenge?

Do you have books you've read and would like to swap some with another bookworm?

Gardeners, how about swapping your surplus plants for ones you don't have, but would like to have?

Let me have details of what you have and what you want and we'll try and connect you with another member who wants what you have, and has what you want. The usual email address applies.

REHOMING REQUEST SPOT

Are you looking to give something in particular a home? Is there something you are looking for that another member might have sitting doing nothing when it could be doing something for you?

Why not let me know and I will put it in the newsletter as a "Rehoming Request". The same email address as Declutter Den applies.

DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our groups be able to use it? Might one of your fellow members be able to use it?

This exercise/yoga mat is unused and surplus to requirements. We will happily pass it on to any member who can make good use of it.

If you are interested please contact Colin Grimes
colin.grimes2@btinternet.com



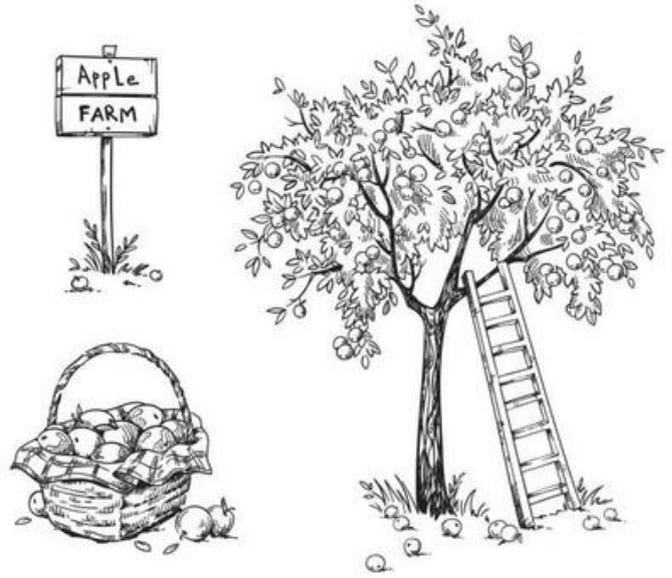
If you have something that you are prepared to give away – **strictly no items for sale!** Let me know and I'll put it in declutter den and hopefully we can help each other free up some space, whilst giving others something they have a use for, even if we don't.

Email: sadu3aed@gmail.com

POETRY CORNER

AFTER APPLE PICKING by Robert Frost

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.



There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

And finally.....

Old Wives Tales

Bulls hate the colour red – despite the use of the red flag in bull-fighting, this is fiction. Bulls, like all cattle, are colourblind.

Don't go outside with wet hair, you'll catch a cold – colds are caused by a virus, not by cold weather. Viruses do thrive in cooler temperatures, which may be where this piece of fiction developed.

Feed a cold, starve a fever – this is in fact a mistranslation of a saying, "starve" was actually "stave" (ward off) in the original saying. Fasting will weaken you at a time when to should be preserving your strength.

You'll sleep better after a nightcap – sadly the opposite is true, alcohol can disrupt sleep and keep you awake.

