

# DONCASTER

**u3a**

Registered Charity No. 1074577



**February - March 2022**

# From the Chair



So here we are in 2022. How the years have flown by!

I hope you are all well and that the festive season lived up to your expectations. Like so many people I was unwell over Christmas, with a cold and sore throat. I tested myself for covid and was pleased to get a negative result, though it was little consolation when I was unable to taste and barely swallow my Christmas dinner, small though it was!

Thoughts now automatically turn to the year ahead, though it's difficult to see clearly through the uncertainties of the pandemic.

Our u3a has certainly been a lifeline for many of our members over the years, and although our opportunities for meeting have been severely limited, those that have taken place have been an absolute joy for most of us.

Our Christmas General Meeting was cancelled at short notice due to the uncertainties associated with the 'Omicron variant', though we were able to have a collection of clothing for our local refugees from Afghanistan, so thank you to all who contributed.

Looking forward, we will be planning our AGM in May and I hope that we shall be able to meet in the usual manner, rather than having our online version for the third year in a row.

It is a critical year for us as we have quite a few long serving committee members who are hoping to pass the baton on to others. This is my second time serving as Chair and my 2-year term will be completed this year.

I do have concerns for the future though. We really do need people to consider stepping up and joining us on the committee. Our Chair, Secretary and Treasurer posts all need to be filled. Without these 'Officer' posts, we will be unable to continue, as our charitable status requires a proper constituted management committee.

Being a committee member is not that difficult, but it is really a job for a younger mind. However hard I have tried over the past two years, I have not been as effective in this role as I was the first time I was Chair. I was 64 then, 72 now!

I do understand that some members may feel they have little experience that might prepare them for such roles, but I can assure you that it is not as arduous as you may think and there is plenty of support and advice available at both a local and a national level.

If you value our u3a, and want to continue to benefit from all that it offers, then please consider helping, especially if you are younger than I am!

So, I wish you all the best for the year ahead and look forward to getting back to normal as soon as possible. Fingers crossed!

*Chris Woolven*

# WELCOME

A warm welcome to our new members

**Jan Brackenbury, Andrea Charlesworth, Roy Goddard,  
John Grime, Peter Hallam, Gillian Harrison, Elaine Lindsay,  
Rosemary Millican, Heather Watling.**

## National u3a Events

Some upcoming free online Zoom events that might be of interest to members:

Holocaust Memorial Day	27th January	2.00 p.m.
Pastels with Pete	27th January	2.00 p.m.
Cryptic Crosswords	3rd February - 10 March	6 week course
U3A day - 40th Anniversary	21st September	(or between 18 - 26 September)

For more information go to: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

## u3a 40th Anniversary 2022

To see **40th Anniversary Events Programme - A Taster** go to:  
<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/40th-anniversary>

To sign up for the **National U3A Newsletter** go to:  
[u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter](https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter)

To find out about what is going on in the u3a around the country read the blogs. Go to: [sources.u3a.org.uk](https://www.u3a.org.uk/sources)

## FACEBOOK

To join Doncaster u3a Facebook page go to: [www.facebook.com/r.php](https://www.facebook.com/r.php) and click on 'Sign up'

Enter your name, email, phone number, d.o.b. and gender. Add a password. Click sign up. Confirm email and phone number.

Once you have an account, type DoncasterU3A into the search bar and it should take you to our page. If you have any problems contact Diane Woolven (contact number inside the back page).

## April - May 2022 Newsletter

Articles for the April - May newsletter need to be received by

**Wednesday 2nd March.**

Please send news of group activities, articles, photographs, etc. to  
[bthompsonu3a@btinternet.com](mailto:bthompsonu3a@btinternet.com)

Cover photo: Bentley park by Bill Dixon

Digital Photography Group

# GROUPS - UPDATES / NOTICES

## GENERAL MEETINGS

The meetings listed below may change if new Covid restrictions are introduced. Keep an eye open for emails informing you of any changes. Would members with email please let those without email know what is happening.

**17th January 2022** CANCELLED

**21st February 2022** 'Tales of an Ordinary Gentleman'  
Speaker: Tim Forman  
Venue - Frenchgate Concert Hall (used to be Trades)

**21st March 2022** 'The Curious works of Old Time Punishments'  
Speaker: Ian Morgan

**18th April 2022** 'History of the Northerners' Speaker: Brian Groom

## INTEREST GROUPS

Please contact group leaders **before** attending a meeting for the first time. Group leaders are now required to complete a risk assessment for their group. In addition, it is important for all Du3a members to consider their own personal health circumstances before participating in an activity or interest group. You can view the personal risk assessment on the Du3a website.

### **TENPIN BOWLING:**

Next Session: **Tuesday 18th January**

### **DINING OUT**

The first meeting of the Dining Out group in 2022 will be held on February 15th at Zest Bar & Grill at 19-20 High Street, covid rules permitting.

The menu is available online and if you would like to attend please let me have your menu choice accompanied by a cheque made payable to DU3A by Saturday 5th February at the latest. I will be in attendance at Wetherspoons Gatehouse pub in the Colonnades on Wednesdays, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. each week if you have any queries or need to see a menu.

*Joan Condron*

### **STROLLERS**

Next walk: **Thursday 27th January:** Around Lakeside

### **TRAVEL GROUP**

I have arranged for the Travel Group to meet at the Central Library for February and March. We will then see if we want to continue there.

*Wendy Hattrell*

### **BRIDGE**

This group will not restart yet.

### **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY**

Zoom meetings - monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 3.00 p.m. We will plan outdoor meetings when the weather improves.



## Ron Clark

With great sadness we have to inform you that Ron Clark, a long standing member of DU3A has passed away at the age of 90.

He joined us after his wife passed away 10 years ago and was grateful for the opportunity to meet people and make new friends. He has been a valued member of criminology, coffee quiz, discussion, history, local history, strollers and ten pin bowling. An ex-miner, in his spare time he enjoyed attending the gym and constructing a model railway in his spare bedroom. He was also an enthusiastic dancer. As well as being a real gentleman, Ron was a thoughtful and gentle man, highly thought of by all.

Our condolences go to his three children, his grandchildren, his great grandchildren and his very best friend Sonia.

He will be sorely missed.



## Clothing for Afghan Families

A chance reading of an email sent to 'volunteer organisations' alerted me to a request for shoes, toys and clothing for refugee families, including children. They asked you to let them know what you had and they would tell you where to take it! Presumably to filter out the 'wrong' sort of clothing. My husband and I did that with our own shoes and clothing but then I asked if they would like U3A members to contribute too. We identified the December GM as a good opportunity to gather everything together. When the GM was cancelled due to the Omicron variant the Priory Place staff were happy for us to still collect the clothing.

It was lovely to see the response from members – beautiful jumpers, winter coats, trainers, hats, scarves and toys. Some members chose to buy things for the families and donated those. Such generosity. Thank you.

In discussion with Sian from the council it became clear that in addition to the families in the Danum Hotel she was also involved with another hotel near Lakeside where it was exclusively single men, Afghans but also Somalis and Syrians. Most had nothing but shorts, T-shirts and sometimes flipflops. We sorted the clothing into Danum, Lakeside and other and she arranged for a car to come and collect the bags. She did say that she would take surplus women's clothing to either Phoenix or Changing Lives. These are both women's refuges where women and children can arrive at any time with just the clothing they stand up in. She said it is best to ring first to arrange to drop clothing off if you have things that could be suitable.

Phoenix WoMens Aid is 13 Priory Place phone 07932 069153

Changing Lives is 2-5 Prince's Street phone 01302 309800

Sian is impressed with the drive and enthusiasm all the refugees have shown – a number are well qualified, e.g. doctors and lawyers. Some have already secured jobs and are just waiting for the Home Office to agree they can be rehoused. They have set aside a play room in the Danum for the children to use. A new baby was expected before Christmas, so out of the £40 a week they are given by the Home Office they have to provide nappies etc. for the baby. They keep asking when will it be sunny!

I am still in touch with Sian and will keep you posted if there is news.

*Wendy Hattrell*

## GARDENING

Last summer, using plants kindly donated by our members, a small garden was created in Regents Square. Like all gardens it needs to be tended and planted for all year round colour and interest.

The gardening group have been keeping it weed free and this autumn have planted bulbs for a vibrant show in the spring. A big thank-you goes especially to Alan Whittaker, Ann Darby, Helen Smith, Angela Thew, and Val Grant (shown in photo planting iris) for providing bulbs.

Unfortunately, the woodland soil is lacking in organic matter so one of the first jobs in the new year will be digging in rotted manure and homemade compost. If you would like to help with this project, then please contact Val Grant or Diane Woolven from the gardening group for details.

*Diane Woolven*



## ART GROUP

Again we find ourselves homeless but I am hopeful that we are onto a new home for January, so by the time this reaches you we should be back in full swing!

We have had some successes with our exploration of acrylics and people are building their confidences in handling the medium. Next stop is my absolute choice of medium - soft pastels, which I hope everyone will grow to love!

If you would like to join us please get in touch with me, through my details at the back of the newsletter.

*Paula Harmer*

## CROWN GREEN BOWLS

No matter what the weather or covid has thrown at us in 2021, our merry band of bowlers make every effort to enjoy the fresh air on a Thursday afternoon. The consistency of our performances seems to improve month on month. We have 9 U3A registered members and enjoy occasional visits from others who want to see what we get up to. The attached photo was taken when we met for a Christmas brunch at a local hostelry, and there were no objections to the suggestion that it would make a good target for prospective darts players.

We have a good mix of male and female members, and hope to increase our numbers in 2022. May I remind all newcomers that you do not have to bring your own bowls - they can be provided - but bringing a sense of humour is essential.

*George Kirk*



## ENJOYING POETRY

The Enjoying Poetry group managed to meet a couple of times to enjoy our usual mix of poetry. Old and new, funny and serious, rhyming and not rhyming, it all counts! Not everybody likes the same thing of course but there is always the joy of reading and discovering new writers as well as revisiting old favourites. We postponed our final meeting just before Christmas and hope to meet again in January, if by then it is reasonable to do so given the current surge in Covid.

*David Harmer*

## WALKING CRICKET

Twenty seven happy Walking Cricketers gathered for a Christmas lunch at the Lakeside Beefeater for a very well received get together. The atmosphere was brilliant as we all enjoyed the company whose presence we had so often shared and enjoyed at the wicket over the past year. We were fortunate to have fitted the event in early December before the dreaded Omicron Variant began to make its presence felt. The food and service were excellent too. We went there for our last Christmas meal back in 2019 and it certainly lived up to our expectations.

Now that the festive celebrations are more or less over we are back to our regular bi-weekly Thursday sessions at the Dome 1p.m. – 3p.m.

If any members are interested in coming along for a “Not-Too-Serious” game of walking cricket, please contact me. It doesn't matter whether or not you have ever played before, as we tend towards a competitive attitude of ‘Who cares who wins?’.

It is good fun and fairly safe as we use lightweight bats and soft(ish) balls. See the calendar for details.

*Chris Woolven (Contact details at the back of this newsletter)*





Out and about with my camera



Photos by John Coe Digital Photography group

# LOVE OF NATURE

## 2nd November – Autumn in Sherwood Forest

The theory behind a trip to Sherwood Forest at this time of year was (obviously!) to take advantage of the autumn leaves. However, it turns out that changes in weather patterns are playing fast and loose with our seasonal expectations, and we arrived to find much of the forest foliage greener than we'd hoped.

Sixteen of us congregated outside the snazzy new RSPB visitor centre, and set off to follow the circular Greenwood Trail, one of four waymarked



Love of Nature group with the Major Oak



Tree girdles

walking routes through the ancient woodland. Our chosen trail included a loop around the iconic Major Oak in the centre of the forest, thought to be between 800 and 1,000 years old. Folklore tells us that Robin Hood and his chums used to camp beneath its branches and hide inside its massive trunk, a practice that is, apparently, frowned upon by modern day RSPB wardens.

We enjoyed a leisurely walk of approximately 2 miles, giving us plenty of time to stop and look at things along the way, and for photographers to get creative. Even without a stunning display of russet, reds and gold, there was plenty just asking to have its photo taken.

Part way round, some heavy-duty metalwork caught our attention. Two massive braces had been bolted around a dead tree trunk (see image). It turns out that the cores of ancient trees are amazing microhabitats teeming with organisms including insects, fungi, lichen, birds and bats, and we learned that the girdles were there to protect the ecosystem within the trunk for as long as possible.



Fungi and ferns

Ideally, these organisms would move through successive generations of trees as they age and rot, but what we didn't realise was that ancient forests like Sherwood have managed to lose an entire generation of trees, largely due to the demands of wars and shipbuilding prior to the use of iron. One by one, the truly ancient trees are disappearing, and there are not enough 'newly ancient' ones ready to take over.

Enter 'veteranisation', the intentional damaging of younger trees to speed up the ageing process and create habitats that properly ancient trees offer. This includes sawing or drilling holes that woodpeckers, mammals and insects might have created, and removing bark from lower trunks and surface roots to mimic the damage caused by horses and other animals. Natural branch breakages from storms and lightning strikes are replicated using chainsaws. All this aggression is believed to initiate internal decay sooner than would occur naturally, thereby recreating the kind of habitats that rare organisms need to prevent them dying out forever. Truly a case of tough love, but hopefully the end will justify the means. Time will tell.

On a cheerier note, a spot of light lunch and a look around the adjacent craft village rounded off a very good morning for our band of merry men (and women).

*Lesley Bassett*



Seal pup by David Bryan

## December – Donna Nook Seal Sanctuary

Donna Nook is a coastal nature reserve north east of Louth in Lincolnshire, best known as a seal watching paradise. In the two months leading up to Christmas each year, thousands of grey seals come ashore to breed and give birth to more than 2,000 exceedingly cute seal pups.

We had to choose the date of our visit carefully, for the window is small. On the 28th October, there were just 3 bulls and 5 cows, but no pups had been born. One month later, wardens counted 520 bulls, 1,599 cows, and 1,589 pups. Numbers would rise a bit more, but by Christmas most will be gone. Our only option was Tuesday 7th December.

What did Rabbie Burns say about the best laid schemes? In the week before the 7th the forecast



Cow and pup by David Bryan



worsened, with heavy rain, high winds and low temperatures as good as promised on the day of our visit. Further, storm Barra might be heading our way. For those who don't know, Donna Nook is on the exposed North Sea coast, with no available shelter. With weather conditions not just looking unpleasant but potentially dangerous, the group agreed to call the trip off, at least for that day.



Catching up by Lesley Bassett

We tried, but it wasn't possible to get everyone together again for a rescheduled trip before it was too late in the pupping season. However, as soon as the weather improved, a number of us made the journey individually or in small groups, and were glad that we did so.

Arriving at the reserve, a low wire fence separated us visitors from the beach where the remaining grey seals of the season were reclining, and in some cases mating, fighting, or a combination of the two. In peak season, numerous newly born pups are just a few feet away from the viewing area, but this late in the year most were older and further out on the mudflats, piling on the last of the fat needed for their survival at sea.



Ropeneck by Richard Croft (creative commons)

One celebrity presence was a cow named Ropeneck, so named due to a scar left by fishing line, which had been cut away by rescuers some twenty years ago. Ropeneck has returned to Donna Nook to give birth every year since then, and the first sighting of her in mid-November this year caused widespread delight.

For some, this was their first visit to Donna Nook, so it was a shame that timing and the weather were against us. Time it right, and it is one of nature's great spectacles, and one that is a real privilege to witness right up close. However, the photographers among us were still able to record some stunning images – and the pub lunch at nearby North Somercotes rounded the trip off nicely for others! Must do better next year, though.

*Lesley Bassett*



# STROLLERS

## November - Walk Round Tickhill

It was a bright sunny day when we set off to visit the Tickhill Alpacas. Walking to the west from the centre of Tickhill we passed the newly restored church and continued walking out of the village under a disused mineral railway and turned left down an unmade road. About a mile out of Tickhill we came to the farm where Tickhill Alpacas reside. There is quite a large herd – they are available for trekking or you can stay on their glamping site. We climbed up the track to the side of the field to get closer to the alpacas – who soon lost interest in us!

Continuing on round a field edge we rejoined the road we had left a short while before. As we had time to spare we diverted across the A631 to catch a glimpse of the Friary before walking through Lindrick past the Mill Pond and the Castle and returning to the car park where we started. Some of us then went to Roccas for an Italian lunch. A very enjoyable morning with plenty of time to chat and enjoy the fine weather.

The next Strollers walk is at Lakeside – as is traditional for January.

*Wendy Hattrell*



## Just a thought.....

Like writing a will, it's probably not something that we like to think about but have you ever thought if or how your relatives could contact people you would wish to be informed if anything should happen to you. They may know how to contact the obvious but what about the rest of your acquaintances/groups etc. that you feel you would like to be informed?

I gave it some thought and typed out a list with phone numbers, e-mails, addresses and passwords where appropriate. I have told my sons that there is a list with the rest of my important documents. This is not only for my benefit, but also so that letters and messages from people only known to me wouldn't come through for them to have to then deal with.

*David Bryan*

## New Year Customs in other cultures

Hoping for love, luck or money in the new year? There are a multitude of ways to pursue them, depending on which culture you were born into.

In Spain, eat one grape in time with each midnight chime of the clock, to secure 12 months of happiness in the new year. The origins of this Spanish tradition date back to 1909, when there was a huge grape harvest and the King decided to give the surplus to the people to consume on New Year's Eve. It is now believed that whoever can finish the 12 grapes before the chimes end will be rewarded with luck and happiness in the coming year.

Give an offering to the Goddess of the Sea, Yemanjá, in Brazil by throwing white flowers into the ocean's foaming waves. Every year thousands of Brazilians carry out this custom, hoping that she will grant their wishes for the coming year. Other offerings can include objects such as perfume, jewellery, combs or lipstick, often sent out in small wooden boats.

Break a plate in Denmark. If you're thinking about getting rid of those chipped old plates sitting in your kitchen cupboard, set them aside and save them for the new year. When the big night arrives throw your saved up kitchenware at your friend's and neighbour's doors. It is believed that the more broken dishes you find outside your door in the morning, the more friends and luck you will have in the new year. These days this tradition is rarely practised, but why not have some smashing fun? Or, also in Denmark, you could stand on a chair and jump into new year to bring good luck and banish bad spirits.

Invite a handsome man into your home in Scotland, to ensure the best luck for the coming year. Make sure the first person to set foot into your home is tall, dark and handsome. This age-old tradition of 'first-footing' suggests the first person to enter your home in the new year, determines the luck for that household over the next 12 months. Tall, dark and handsome men are considered the luckiest – and it's an extra bonus if they come bearing the gift of whisky. "Auld Lang Syne" is often credited to Scottish poet Robert Burns, who sent it to the Scots Musical Museum in 1788, but the writer himself admits that he didn't create the lyrics, he was just the first to transcribe an old folk song. But no matter who wrote them, the words are beautiful, and singing them out as the clock strikes midnight is a time-honoured tradition. If you really want to impress the other members of your party, learn the other verses (there are ten).

Burn an effigy in Ecuador. As midnight approaches on New Year's Eve gather your family outside your home, and set light to a scarecrow. It is believed to destroy all the bad things that took place over the past 12 months, and to scare away any negative energies, bringing only luck and happiness for the new year. Each family builds their own scarecrow, stuffing it with newspaper and pieces of wood, before burning it outside their homes.

Looking for romance in the new year? Place mistletoe, ivy or holly leaves under your pillow if you are single, with the hope you will find your future wife or husband.

While lots of countries have food-related traditions, Ireland's most interesting tradition doesn't involve eating. Instead, the Irish bang on the walls of their homes with Christmas bread, in the hope this action will chase out any bad spirits or influences, to start the year with a clean slate.

Celebrate at a cemetery in Chile. It is a quite new tradition to welcome the new year in the company of your deceased family members in your local cemetery. This tradition isn't so much for luck, as it is the chance to be reunited with lost loved ones. This 15-year old Chilean tradition began when a family in the small town of Talca, jumped the

cemetery fence to spend the New Year near their father's grave. Now over 5,000 people head to the local cemetery every year, ambient with dim lights and classical music.

Throw furniture from your window in Italy. Toss your old possessions out of the window to symbolise your readiness to accept the new year and all that comes with it. In Naples people have been known to throw items ranging from old toasters to retired fridges from their balconies.

Tossing potentially harmful belongings probably isn't the wisest idea, and is unlikely to bring you much luck, so keep to small, soft items. If you plan on walking around after midnight in Italy, be sure to keep an eye out for falling objects!

Wear polka dots in The Philippines, to guarantee wealth in the coming year. Roundness is thought to signify prosperity, so on New Year's Eve locals surround themselves with round shapes, by wearing polka dots, filling their pockets with coins or by eating circular fruits. Stock up on oranges and dress up in dots if wealth is your new year wish.

In Russia Christmas was banned so New Year's Eve was a big present giving time, delivered by Father Frost and his granddaughter. Champagne gets an extra ingredient on New Year's Eve, when revellers write a wish down on a piece of paper, burn it, and add the ashes to the drink. Cheers!

Wear white in Brazil, or head to the beach and jump seven waves, making a wish on each wave.

In Germany and Austria, there are a few different lucky symbols that you'd gift to friends and family to bring them good fortune. These include pigs, mushrooms, clovers and chimney sweeps. You can buy little tokens of these lucky charms at a Christmas market - or get edible ones in fun combinations made out of marzipan.

Crowds have been gathering in New York City's Times Square to watch the ball drop since 1907. While the first one was just iron and wood, today you can watch a 12-foot, 11,875-pound geodesic sphere covered in 2,688 Waterford Crystal triangles and 32,256 LEDs make its descent, even from the warmth and comfort of your own home. Or, you can see something else fall as a visual countdown to the new year as in Plymouth, Wisconsin, which hosts a Big Cheese Drop. Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, uses a giant mushroom and New Orleans drops a fleur-de-lis (formerly a big gumbo pot). No matter what symbol is used, it does make for a dramatic countdown.

Decorate your door in Greece. To Greeks, onions are a symbol of good luck and fertility, because they sprout even when no one is paying attention to them. On New Year's Eve, families in Greece hang bundles of onions above their doors as a means of inviting that prosperity into the home. It's also said that, on New Year's Day, parents wake up their children in the morning by gently hitting them on the head with the onions that were outside.

Making resolutions is a very old tradition, certainly believed to be more than 4000 years old. Historians believe the Babylonians, one of the first cultures to celebrate the changing of the year, made promises to pay debts or return borrowed items. Instead of burning the wishes as in Russia, you can have everyone write down a resolution, goal, wish or note to their future selves, put it in a jar, then save it for the year. On the next New Year's Eve, you can retrieve the jar and read the notes to see how far everyone has progressed.

I have made my resolutions for this year .....paint often, swear less and don't go hang gliding!

From David and me, we wish you all a very safe and happy New Year!

*Paula Harmer*

## Eating in the 50s

- 1 Pasta was not eaten.
- 2 Curry was a surname.
- 3 A takeaway was a mathematical problem.
- 4 A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.
- 5 All potato crisps were plain; the only choice we had was whether to put the salt on or not.
- 6 Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding.
- 7 A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
- 8 Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
- 9 Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
- 10 Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.
- 11 Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.
- 12 Fish didn't have fingers.
- 13 Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi.
- 14 None of us had ever heard of yoghurt.
- 15 Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
- 16 People who didn't peel potatoes were regarded as lazy.
- 17 Indian restaurants were only found in India.
- 18 Cooking outside was called camping.
- 19 Seaweed was not a recognised food.
- 20 "Kebab" was not even a word, never mind a food.
- 21 Prunes were medicinal.
- 22 Surprisingly, muesli was readily available, it was called cattle feed.
- 23 Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have become a laughing stock!
- 24 And the things that we never ever had on our table in the 50s and 60s: elbows or phones!

*Shared by silversurfers.com*

*Submitted by B Thompson*

## FEBRUARY

The name February comes from the Latin Februa, the ancient Roman celebration of cleansing and fertility on the winter's last Full Moon. The day was known as dies februatius (day of atonement) or Lupercalia. Roman priests sacrificed a ram. Its blood reminded of the days of human sacrifice, its hide was regarded as a symbol of fertility.

The old Roman calendar had only ten months, starting in March and ending with December. When the two winter months January and February were added, February became the last month of the year and was given 28 days to fit into the calendar. To keep up with the seasons, the Romans introduced a leap month they



called Intercalaris. The extra month was added every couple of years after February, which was shortened to 23 or 24 days to make room for the thirteenth month.

In the year 46 BC, Julius Caesar introduced a new calendar system - the Julian calendar. He abolished the Intercalaris and instead introduced what would become the leap year, where every fourth year, February had 29 days instead of 28. This was the beginning of the modern leap day.

February is the second month in the Gregorian calendar and has 28 days in common years and 29 days in leap years. However, February has, in the past, actually had 30 days. February 30th was a real date.

Sweden (at that time Finland was part of the Swedish realm) planned to change from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, beginning in 1700 by omitting the leap days for the next 40 years. Thus 1700 was not a leap year in Sweden. However, both 1704 and 1708 were leap years contrary to the plan. This brought the Swedish calendar one day ahead of the Julian calendar but still ten days behind the Gregorian calendar. This confusion was reduced when, in 1712, two leap days were added, thus giving this year a February 30. That date corresponded to February 29 in Julian and March 11 in Gregorian counting. The Swedish final conversion to the Gregorian calendar was finally done in 1753 when an 11-day correction was applied so that February 17 was succeeded by March 1 that year.

In 1929 the Soviet Union introduced a revolutionary calendar in which every month had 30 days and the remaining 5 or 6 days were monthless holidays. In 1930 and 1931, it thus had a February 30, but in 1932 the months regained their old lengths.

According to tradition, the birthstone for February is the amethyst, representing piety, humility, spiritual wisdom, and sincerity and its birth flowers are the viola and the primrose.

[http://www.fact-index.com/f/fe/february\\_30.html](http://www.fact-index.com/f/fe/february_30.html)

<https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/months/february.html>



## MARCH

The meaning of March comes from ancient Rome. In Latin, it was called martius mensis or the month of Mars, the Roman god of war. March used to be the first month of the year in the early Roman calendar. Around the year 700 BC, the Roman king Numa Pompilius introduced January and February into the calendar, pushing March to the third position.

March is still the first month of the year for at least one billion people:

In most regions of India, the new year in the Hindu calendar starts on the New Moon before the Sun enters the zodiac sign of Aries (Meṣa) -on or around the day of the March equinox.

The Persian new year, Nowruz, is celebrated on March 21 around the world - from Iran and the Middle East to the Balkans, the Black Sea, and Central and South Asia.

The orthodox Jewish calendar starts the new year with the month of Nisan, which falls in March or April in the Gregorian calendar.

*Continued on page 19*

# PUZZLE PAGE

## CODE CROSSWORD

The numbers in the grid squares stand for the letters of the alphabet. Once you have figured out the letter that matches a certain number, place that letter in every square containing the same number and in the grid below the crossword. Every letter of the alphabet will appear at least once in the completed crossword grid.

5	1	15	26	26		8	4	20	22	5	26	2	4	15
1		17		2		21		22		22		17		9
21	17	22	16	26	15	9	22	18		17	6	23	5	5
26		16		18		11		15		7				26
15	17	5	8	17	2		14	17	15	7	9	1	17	22
9				22		5		11		23		17		
8	4	18		8	4	17	3	26	5		17	25	2	5
17		9		26		6		24		5		26		26
2	17	10	26		17	6	12	20	8	11		12	9	14
		26		8		17		2		17				26
14	9	5	19	20	4	11	26		17	12	17	18	26	5
9				1		9		17		9		15		11
18	26	8	16	4		8	4	22	13	20	18	17	11	26
21		17		2		17		4		14		24		15
11	17	15	1	17	20	2	9	22		5	9	11	26	5

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	R		A									

## Solutions to December - January puzzles

### Christmas Anagrams

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 – Travel and Dance (2)                | Advent Calendar                 |
| 2 – Rich Star Meets (2)                 | Christmas Tree                  |
| 3 – Smashing tricks cost (2)            | Christmas Stockings             |
| 4 – Wean again Mary (4)                 | Away in a manger                |
| 5 – Vicars Themes (2)                   | Christmas Eve                   |
| 6 – The magic swiftness heart-throb (5) | Twas the night before Christmas |
| 7 – Spice in 'em (2)                    | Mince Pies                      |
| 8 – Modestly switch after-shave (5)     | The Twelve Days of Christmas    |
| 9 – He's Fat, Smart, Rich (2)           | Father Christmas                |
| 10 – Scathing mud drips (2)             | Christmas Pudding               |
| 11 – Red Ernie (1)                      | Reindeer                        |
| 12 – Let in Things (2)                  | Silent Night                    |

### Target Number Puzzles

- |    |                              |                              |                            |
|----|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | $(5 \times 5) + 8 = 33$      | $33 \times 25 = 825$         | $825 + (6 \div 3) = 827$   |
| 2  | $2 \times (50 + 7) = 114$    | $114 \times 7 = 798$         | $798 - 3 = 795$            |
| 3  | $6 \times 100 = 600$         | $(2 \times 7) + 1 = 15$      | $600 - 15 = 585$           |
| 4  | $(8 \times 6) - 9 = 39$      | $39 \times 6 = 234$          |                            |
| 5  | $(9 - 3) \times 100 = 600$   | $600 + 3 - (8 \div 8) = 602$ |                            |
| 6  | $9 + 8 + 8 = 25$             | $25 \times 25 = 625$         | $625 + (7 \times 2) = 639$ |
| 7  | $5 \times 9 = 45$            | $45 + 3 + 9 = 57$            | $57 \times (7 + 5) = 684$  |
| 8  | $8 \times (75 + 9) = 672$    | $672 - 50 = 622$             |                            |
| 9  | $9 \times 9 \times 10 = 810$ | $810 + (10 - 8) = 812$       |                            |
| 10 | $9 \times (25 - 1) = 216$    | $216 \times 3 = 648$         |                            |

continued from page 17

The Ides of March was either on the 13th or the 15th day of the month and used to mark the day of the Full Moon.

According to tradition, the birthstones for March are aquamarine and bloodstone, symbolizing courage. March's birth flower is the daffodil. In some cultures, it represents spring and new beginnings. In Persian culture, for example, the daffodil symbolizes the New Year (Nowruz).



# Tomatoes - from poisonous plant to gardener's obsession

Last year I grew forty five tomato plants. A bit obsessive, I hear you mutter .... But there was a good reason, or at least there was a reason. I was told by a gardener friend that the seeds are difficult to germinate so I planted the whole packet and EVERY seed germinated. That sealed my fate - I could not jettison my babies, now could I? So I grew them all. I only grew two of the ten thousand known varieties. Well we do like tomatoes! And it did mean that I could ensure the squirrels didn't steal them all as there were far too many. (They take them over the road and bury them in a neighbour's big pots!)

All I knew about the history of this plant is that in the Middle Ages in Britain they were called Love Apples. Anyone seen eating them was regarded as a person of flagrantly low morals! But with a bit of research I found out that they were originally thought to be poisonous and were not eaten at all. That is because they are of the same family as deadly nightshade, as are potatoes, aubergines, tobacco and chillies. Oh, and it was the French who first called them pomme d'amour, or Love Apple, for their belief that the exotic tomato had aphrodisiacal powers. Tomatoes might not be responsible for romance in people, but eating tomatoes does seem to spark a lust for more tomatoes!



The tomato is a vegetable whose road through history was not easy and was filled with numerous misconceptions and roadblocks. Finally in the last few centuries this South American plant managed to spread all across the world, becoming one of the best know food ingredients and one of the most beloved vegetables (even though technically it is classified as a fruit). Today's

tomatoes began as wild plants in the Andes, growing in parts of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. During 500 BC, the Aztecs managed to domesticate those wild tomatoes and integrate them into their cuisine. From that point on, tomato slowly spread across central and south America, somewhere being used as a food, but somewhere also being used as an hallucinogenic (a use that will later on be a cause of many misconceptions about this vegetable).

Although its history has origins back to the early Aztecs around 700AD, it was not until Christopher Columbus, who possibly encountered it in 1493, that Europeans were introduced to this fruit. But it was Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, who first saw the potential of this plant in the sacked Aztec city of Tenochtitlan and took its seeds back to Europe. There, seeing that tomatoes could easily grow in a warm Mediterranean climate, the Spanish government encouraged its production in both Europe and its distant colonies. As early as 1540, tomatoes started being produced in Spanish fields, and were used regularly as a common food in the early 17th century. Other European countries did not adopt tomatoes immediately. For example, even though Italian nobility and scientists found out about tomatoes from 1548, they used them only as a fruity table decoration until the late 17th and early 18th century. Either



way, by 1548, the tomato was to be found in Cosimo's botanical gardens in Pisa. They cherished their beauty, and experimented with selective breeding, managing to create tomatoes of many colours and shapes. Tomatoes received a similar fate in England, where they were introduced in 1597, but it remained labelled an unhealthy, poisonous fruit, unfit to eat in both England and its North American colonies.

In the early 19th century tomatoes finally arrived in Asia, under the guidance of the British consul in Syria, who directed the first cultivation efforts. By the mid-19th century, tomatoes gained much popularity and started being used widely in Syria, Iran and China.

The tomato varieties that existed when tomatoes were first cultivated were yellow or orange. Through breeding, the standard colour of tomato plant varieties is now red, but that doesn't mean that there aren't other colours of tomatoes available. Heritage varieties have become very popular of late and are available in green, yellow and every type of stripe!

So, who do you think consumes most tomatoes, as a nation? I'd have put good money on Italy ..... but no! Based on a comparison of 152 countries in 2013, China ranked the highest in tomato consumption, eating almost 30% of all the tomatoes in the world, followed by India and USA - and together these three consume half of all tomatoes grown. Total tomato consumption in the world is up 25% higher than 10 years ago. Italy, by the way, is sixth on the list of tomato consumers!

Now in addition to all this, something very tomato based happened in the 1800s .....First, and most significantly, was the mass immigration from Europe to America and the blending of cultures. Many Italian-Americans ate tomatoes and had brought that food with them. But also, and perhaps equally as important, was the invention of pizza. There is no pizza without tomato sauce, and pizza was invented around Naples in the late 1880's. The story goes that it was created by one restaurant owner in Naples to celebrate the visit of Queen Margerite, the first Italian monarch since Napoleon conquered Italy. The owner made the pizza from three ingredients that represented the colours of the new Italian flag: red, white, and green. The red is the tomato sauce, the white was the mozzarella cheese, and the green was the basil topping. Hence, Pizza Margerite was born, and is still the standard for pizza. And what could have led more to the popularity of the tomato than pizza!

And finally, the perennial question .... Fruit or vegetable?

An interesting aspect of tomato history is this classic debate. And that depends on who you are asking. Botanists claim that a fruit is any fleshy material that covers a seed or seeds, whereas a horticulturist's point of view would pose that the tomato is a vegetable plant. Until the late 1800's the tomato was classified as a fruit to avoid taxation, but this was changed after an American Supreme Court ruling that the tomato is a vegetable and should be taxed accordingly. You make up your own mind.

And absolutely finally .... The Aztec name is TOMATII, meaning "plump thing with a navel" and the scientific name is *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, meaning 'wolf peach'.

This year I shall grow far less wolf peaches!

*Paula Harmer*  
*Culture Page editor*

**Group Leaders** can be contacted by telephone (see below) or by clicking on the Blue Bird on their group page on the DU3A website. Go to: <https://u3asites.org.uk/doncaster> then click on the 'GROUP' tab. Go to the bottom of the group page to select the group that you require. Click on the Blue Bird in the top right-hand corner and a form will open for you to write your message.

**Committee members** can also be contacted via the DU3A website by opening the 'Contact' page and then selecting the appropriate member.

**Page 5: Facebook:** contact Diane Woolven

## Contact Numbers

### DU3A Committee Members

<b>Chair</b>	Chris Woolven
<b>Secretary</b>	Diane Woolven
<b>Treasurer</b>	Derek Marriott
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Christine Curtis
<b>Group Co-ordinator</b>	Diane Williams
<b>Publicity</b>	Jane Bowser
<b>Beacon Administrator</b>	Wendy Hattrell
<b>Welfare</b>	Jill Laming
<b>Committee</b>	Paula Harmer
<b>Committee</b>	David Bryan

### Activity Groups & Other: Contacts

**Contact Group leaders - see printed Newsletter for telephone numbers, or DU3A Website**

<b>Newsletter Editor &amp; Website Manager</b>	Bridget Thompson	bthompsonu3a@btinternet.com
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Help the environment and save money by receiving the email version of the DU3A newsletters.

## **Deadline**

Thank-you to all the members who have sent articles for this issue. Articles for the April - May 2022 newsletter need to be received by

**Wednesday 2nd March**

Please send news of group activities, articles, photographs, etc. to  
[bthompsonu3a@btinternet.com](mailto:bthompsonu3a@btinternet.com)

## **Monks Printers**

We are grateful to Monks the Printers for their help in printing and distributing this newsletter.

## **Prego Café**

We would like to thank our friends at the Prego Café for their help over the past years. Not only is the tea, coffee and food excellent, but the free use of the upstairs room for meetings has been a great help to many of our groups. If you haven't been there yet, give it a try!

## **DU3A Website**

<https://u3asites.org.uk/doncaster>

Visit the DU3A website for information about all the current interest groups, latest news/notices, membership information, meetings, social events, monthly calendars and newsletters, help/advice links, links to regional and national u3a and more.....



