



# THE CRYER!

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live

The voice of Dronfield and District u3a

Issue 114 May 2023

## EDITORIAL

Morning and welcome to issue 114 of the Dronfield u3a newsletter. If any reader has just emerged from hibernation they may not be aware that next Saturday is a very important day. It is the first Saturday in May and therefore 'World Naked Gardening Day'! This is an International event celebrated by gardeners and non-gardeners the world over. It started in 2005 and has gained popularity every year since. It's founder claims, "Not only is it liberating, it is second only to swimming as an activity people are willing to do nude". ...and alone? Oh yes! The Coronation is also on on Saturday! Have a fun month. Jed (Editor)

## ART APPRECIATION AT THE GROUPS FAIR

At the Groups Fair last month, the Art Appreciation group offered the opportunity to take part in an on-the-spot art appreciation exercise. Six pictures were displayed on the stage in the hall, with the question 'Which one would you hang on your wall and why?'

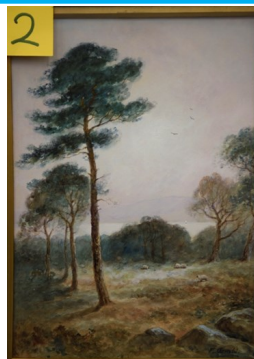
The hall was busy with so many other activities that only 36 members and friends managed to respond fully. Some individuals were shy, or said their spouse could do it instead! Others were persuaded to comment by whittling down the choice by a process of elimination. Those who claimed that they were not artistic rather missed the point. Surely it is not too hard to say what appeals to you! But among the onlookers too, there were a variety of responses and lively conversations.

The only 'famous' artist was the Post-Impressionist Pierre Bonnard, whose oil painting (No.1) '*Le Pont de Grenelle*' was painted in 1912. Although it was framed and labelled like a gallery exhibit, it was of course a print, probably part of a Local Authority scheme for lending reproductions of important



works of art to schools in some areas from the 1950s. In our survey, the picture was mainly chosen by people who had happy memories of trips to Paris, and a few who liked the peaceful atmosphere created in the image. No-one, however, was bowled over by it and one person claimed to be 'fed up with that style'.

A much smaller painting on show, (No.2), was an attractive watercolour from around the 1930's by F. Arnold (1888-1950). The skill shown by the



artist's painting technique in this delightful woodland landscape was highly praised. His work was well known is his day. The painter's style was more traditional and realistic than the other pictures. It was appreciated for the calm atmosphere it evoked, and the viewer was invited into the

scene. For many it brought back memories of country walks. Of all the pictures, it was ranked second in the choices.

Surprisingly, the most popular image of all (No.3), was of an exotic bird with long tail feathers. A batik from a workshop in Java. The colour scheme was the main feature that attracted people – a subtle



combination of green and pink with hints of dark red. The process of creating batik is hard to grasp, involving dying cloth with multiple layers of colour applied using a wax resist to mask chosen areas. The man

who created this one was an expert. Comments made were that it was 'distinctive', 'unusual' and 'well put-together'. Also that it looked like it was needlework. It was noted too, that the diagonal line to the design, (which always adds dynamism to a picture) gave life to the bird.

Without an obvious subject, the small abstract (No.4) was more difficult to assess. Screen-printed by an evening-class artist it was admired for its



sense of movement. (Screen printing is not unlike batik in that overlapping colours are pushed through a hand-held mesh screen with a squeegee.) It was agreed that in a room with appropriate décor, it would be a talking point.

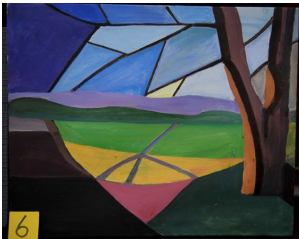
The jolly fabric collage (No.5) was inspired by a postcard from Turkey, and designed and stitched by my late mother, using scraps of material



from her remnants drawer. Again, it was the colours that impressed people most, but also the shapes and textures against the dark blue

background, as well as the interesting subject.

Strong opinions were evident about the bold semi-abstract painting (No.6). Some people simply



do not like abstracts, but many do. For those that do, this was 'food for thought'. The stained-glass window effect was admired and one person said 'the more you look, the more you see'. In

fact this painting, using acrylic paints, was based on a scene in our part of the world. Together with the collage (No.5) it came joint third in the order of preference.

From this small survey alone, we know that opinions about art differ widely. 'Thank you' to the people who took part: it was interesting and fun!

Maureen Greenland

## ALL INCLUSIVE PEAKY WALLERS

Does sex discrimination exist in our u3a!! Of course not you will all say, but at a recent meeting I had a different experience.

On 12 April Group Coordinators, me included, had



the opportunity to promote our Groups to expand our membership and perhaps grow the number of Groups we could offer. The meeting was very well attended and there was certainly a real "buzz" about the Civic Hall but next to me was

the Walking Group led (pardon the pun) by Martin Horn who certainly did a roaring trade. As a result of this the Peaky Wallers received a degree of attention which prompted me to pen this article.



It's a statistical fact that our total u3a branch male/female ratio is heavily biased towards women. I was somewhat surprised, however, when approached by a lady enquiring about attending dry stone walling saying "Oh there aren't any ladies in your group". You could have knocked me down with a



feather as I knew the truth to be different. I took the opportunity to show how we actively encourage both sexes to take part. I hope I have convinced her to come and have a go. You will see from the photographs arranged around this article that



we don't discriminate.

See who you can spot taking part, particularly our current Chair, who has been a longstanding group member.

Mike Baker

PS. This has been written very much "tongue in cheek"

so please don't lynch me next time we meet! It shows, however, that there is always an article hidden amongst many a comment, intended or not, and I'm sure the Editor will welcome your anecdotes about our u3a.

*(I may have to start a letter page! Ed)*





## GROUPS' FAIR

There was a great turnout at the Groups Fair on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March. Tables were set out so that members could engage with coordinators, who were standing by their display tables and able to discuss their groups' activities.



Near the stage the new Arts Appreciation coordinator displayed several pictures and asked people, "Which piece of art would you have in your home"? Close by the Social Studies, Maths for Fun, Computing, Climate Matters, and Art Activities were all on show as were many other groups. There was a lot of cheerful chatter and much discussion with so many people finding out about groups they had not thought of investigating before.



Twenty five visitors joined us at the Groups Fair. As many of our groups have vacancies there were openings available for the newcomers. Some of the other groups, though full, felt that they may be able to host a second group of the same type. For example the Discussion Group Coordinator is running a taster session with the purpose of finding out if there are enough interested people for a second Discussion Group to be formed.

The fair went on for two full hours and a lot of interest was shown in our u3a. It was a great success overall and this was only possible because of the time and effort put into it by several people especially our Group Coordinators.

Doug Emery

## GROUP NEWS

The Groups Fair generated several different members joining groups. Perhaps it is a sign of success that most groups are full but there are still opportunities to join many. These include Spanish Beginners, History, Scrabble and Canasta, Walking, Cycling, Garden Visits and International Dance.



This month the **WALKING** groups have three Bluebell walks at the beginning of the month. Then Bakewell, Wolfscote Dale, the Chesterfield Canal and Hartington.

The **SPANISH** language cohort now have another beginners group that has started up and the Coordinator has a clear programme for each of the three groups.

**CLIMATE MATTERS** are looking into farming and the methods used to grow our food; and are they affecting the environment?

**SOCIAL STUDIES** are asking members to bring an object that has a story.

**CYCLING** are visiting the Longdendale trail out at Hadfield on the western border of Derbyshire.

Some groups have changed the dates of their meetings because of the Coronation this month and the Bank Holidays. Please check the dates and times of your meetings.

Doug Emery

## MEETING 10th May

Speaker: Gareth Morgan

Subject: "The Princess and the Saw".



The story of the most expensive items Kelham Island Museum has acquired to date. These include items from royal weddings, looting in the Second World War and Sheffield's industrial past.

The meeting will be at the Civic Hall at the usual time of 10.00 - 12.00. You may attend in person or join on line. Instructions will be sent out on Tuesday 9th of May.

## MEETING 14th June

This Monthly Meeting is set to be a busy one. We will start with a fun Beetle Drive, followed by a general knowledge quiz with members of the Gardening Growers group providing a Plant Sale alongside. Refreshments will be served at mid-morning.



New Members will be invited to a bespoke New Members Meeting, where they will meet members of the Committee, learn more about our National organisation as well as Dronfield u3a and be able to ask all their burning questions. We hope you'll be able to join us and if you have a friend who'd like to come with you, all the better.

Julia Harris. (Event Coordinator).

## RENEWAL REMINDER

If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2023 – 2024, there's still time to do this. The official window closes on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup>, so after that date you should not be attending



groups, until you do renew.

Online renewals have now been reinstated but you will need to create a slightly different log-in for yourself in the Beacon system. This may look a little complicated but it can be done if you take time and follow the instructions. Do ask for help if you feel you need to though you can still renew by post, with a form and a cheque. Please contact me if you have any queries. Thank you,

Phine Wright

P: 01246 900201

E: [membership@dronfieldu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@dronfieldu3a.org.uk)

## FROM THE TREASURER

**1. Equipment for loan** Members borrowing DDr3a equipment are remembering to tell me when they pass on or receive loaned items. Great! This enables me to keep track of who has what. Thank you all. **Note-** *a reminder that if you borrow any item, unless you specifically ask me not to, I will assume that you consent to my giving your telephone number to the next person who would like to borrow it.*

**2. To all Group Co-ordinators holding CASH:** At the end of January Marion and I asked for updates on any group cash held by GCs at that time, so that the Beacon records could be updated accordingly. Money held is constantly changing therefore we are requesting this information on just a quarterly basis. **By Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May** can you please update your cash ledger on Beacon. (If you don't use Beacon then please let either Marion or I know what cash you have so that we can update it for you.) Thank you.

Chris Stone ([treasurer@dronfieldu3a.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@dronfieldu3a.org.uk))

## TRIPS AND VISITS

We still have a few places available for our trip to Port Sunlight on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May and our trip to Knutsford/Tatton Park on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Places can be booked at the May U3A meeting.

The trip to Port Sunlight is £19.50 which includes entry to the museum. The trip to Knutsford/Tatton Park is £12.50 for National Trust members and £19.50 for non National Trust members.

At the May U3A meeting you will also be able to book places on our day trip to Blackpool which is on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July and costs £16.00.



All our trips depart at 9.00am from outside Dronfield Sports Centre.

Glenys Sharman

## DRONFIELD GALA - 25th JUNE

Many of you will have attended Dronfield Gala over the years and know what a fabulous town event it is, especially when the weather's kind and people come out in their droves. We have booked a slot, so will be there with our gazebo, ready to extol the virtues of belonging to the DDr3a.

We will however need help from the general membership to man the stall. If you can spare 1-2 hours between 12noon and 5pm on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June (and/or help set up/take down) please contact me at [secretary@dronfieldu3a.org.uk](mailto:secretary@dronfieldu3a.org.uk) It's a great opportunity to showcase Dronfield u3a and we need YOUR help, please join us.

Julia Harris. (Event Coordinator.)

## NATIONAL U3A LEARNING EVENTS

### Online Events in May

There are many opportunities for joining learning events this month.

- a) Off the wall projects – Hadrian's Wall
- b) Family History – Accessing Births, Marriages and Deaths online records.
- c) Home Energy Savings.

And a lot more so why not visit

[www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events](http://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events)

to see what's coming up and to register

**All are free.**

## THE DRONFIELD IS WATCHING

To raise awareness about the U3A across the locality, we are choosing to place an article in 'The Eye', to explain what we are and what we do. One of the options might be to take 3 or 4 personal case studies explaining why our U3A has been a blessing.

Would you like to tell your DDr3a story? If so, please contact me on - 07985143942 or email

[steve1brad@hotmail.com](mailto:steve1brad@hotmail.com)

Steve Bradbury

## LOCAL FORUMS

To increase local awareness of our u3a we have decided to try posting on the 'local forums'. If you belong to a local forum and would be willing to post an occasional pre-formatted 'advert' please let me know at

[secretary@dronfieldu3a.org.uk](mailto:secretary@dronfieldu3a.org.uk).

So far, we have offers to cover Bradway and Holmesfield, can you help us cover other localities? Many thanks.

Julia Harris. (Event Coordinator)

## INTEREST GROUPS BY WEEK - MAY

Venues: - MH = Member's Homes / PC = Peel Centre / UN = Unstone Village Hall / CA = Coal Aston Village Hall / CM = Coal Aston Methodist Church / LB = Dronfield Library / DC = Dronfield Civic Hall / VA = Various Locations

DAY		WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MONDAY	am	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)
	am		Book Group 1 (LB)		
	pm		Bridge - Social 1 (MH)		Bridge - Social 1 (MH)
	pm		Art Activities (PC)		Gardening Growers (MH)
TUESDAY	am	Geography (PC)	Dry Stone Walling (VA)	Garden Visits (VA)	
	pm	Scrabble & Canasta (CM)	Scrabble & Canasta (CM)	Scrabble & Canasta (CM)	Scrabble & Canasta (CM)
	pm		Computing – Tablets (MH)	Book Group 3 (LB)	
	pm	German (MH)	German (MH)	German (MH)	German (MH)
	pm	Rummikub & Canasta (MH evening)	Rummikub & Canasta (MH evening)	Rummikub & Canasta (MH evening)	Rummikub & Canasta (MH evening)
WEDNESDAY	am	International Folk Dance (UN)	International Folk Dance (UN)	International Folk Dance (UN)	International Folk Dance (UN)
	am		Monthly Meeting (DC)		History (PC)
	pm	Bridge - Social 2 (MH)		Bridge - Social 2 (MH)	
	pm		Spanish Conversation (CA)		Spanish Conversation (CA)
	pm	Spanish Improvers (CA)	Spanish Improvers (CA)	Spanish Improvers (CA)	Spanish Improvers (CA)
THURSDAY	am	Discussion (MH)	Dry Stone Walling (VA)	Photography (PC)	
	am	Maths For Fun (MH)	Cycling (VA)		Cycling (VA)
	pm	French (MH)	French (MH)	French (MH)	French (MH)
	pm		Genealogy (LB)	Art Appreciation (PC)	Genealogy (LB)
	pm		Climate Matters (MH)	Thursday Lunch (VA)	Social Studies (PC)
FRIDAY	am	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)	Walking (VA)
	am	Book Group 2 (MH)			60's Music (last Friday MH)
	pm				
SUN	am				
	pm		Sunday Lunch (VA)		

Group's meeting days, times and venues are subject to change. Some groups may be full and operate a waiting list.

For further information please contact the group coordinator via the Groups page on the DDU3A website at

[dronfieldu3a.org.uk](http://dronfieldu3a.org.uk)

## TASTER SESSIONS

We're pleased to be able to offer the following Taster Sessions, please see me at the Monthly Meeting on 10th May if you're interested or phone 01246 900201, leave your name and number and I will phone you back. Many thanks. Julia Harris.

**Outdoor Bowls** - May - Weds 24th (pm) or Tues 30th (pm) at Cliffe Park

**Croquet** - May - Mon 22nd (pm) or Tues 23rd (am) at Parkhead Cricket Ground.

(Lift sharing to be arranged on the day.)

**Ten Pin Bowling** - June - Mon 19th (pm) or Tues 27th (am) at Chesterfield

(Lift sharing to be arranged on the day)

**Short Mat Bowls** - July - Thurs 20th (pm) or Weds 26th (pm) at Coal Aston



## GEOGRAPHY GROUP

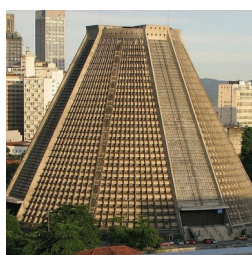
This month, our intrepid explorers landed in Brazil at Sao Paolo, frazzled after 36 hours of travel. From there they travelled onto the fabled city of Rio, where, on the way in, they did not fully appreciate the tatty theatre in a scary area, complete with carnival dancers, jugglers, and acrobats. However, they did appreciate their hotel on Copacabana Beach. The weather was fabulous, and the music kiosks were blaring out Bossa Nova music and they especially liked the Cairpinho cocktails they were given. Since they couldn't access their rooms immediately, they headed off into the tatty back streets to the Brazilian equivalent of our "greasy spoon" to assuage their hunger. This proved that you can't always judge the proverbial book by its cover....the home-made food and strawberry wine were delicious and very, very cheap.



A cable car transported them to Urca, with its amazing views, and inevitable cafes and tourist shops. (A scary ride of about 4 minutes. )Then a 2<sup>nd</sup> car took them right up the iconic granite and quartz Sugar Loaf mountain, where even more stunning views, cafes, and shops awaited them. By now they were up in the clouds and admiring lush green scenery and other mountains all around. (As an aside, sugar accounts for over 15% of Brazil's agricultural production.)

The city itself has a lot of Portuguese colonial architecture, much of it badly-maintained, and complemented by loads of horrible new buildings, and falling-apart "corner shops". Graffiti and homeless people, mainly sleeping under trees, were everywhere. (*At no point would you suspect I'm working for the Brazilian tourist board*).

The metropolitan cathedral of San Sebastian (Rio's patron saint) is conical, contains 4 enormous



stained- glass windows, and seats 5, 000 (cf. Westminster Abbey 2, 200). The nearby Benedictine monastery was modest in its outside appearance but very ornate within with intricate gold leaf carvings. They also visited the

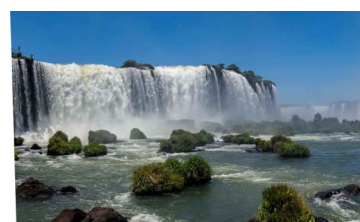
not much advertised Royal Portuguese Library of Reading, home to c. 35,000 antique books, mainly about the history of Portugal and Brazil.

A highlight of the trip was the sanctuary of Christ the Redeemer on Corcovado



mountain. Built in 1922-31, this statue can be seen all over Rio and is the highest art deco statue on Earth, and is considered to be 1 of the 7 man-made wonders of the modern world. It is lit up at night, colours decided by what events are going on. This magnificent structure has, in the past been struck by lightning, causing slight damage to the back of the head and right thumb.

The Iguazu river helps form the border between Argentina and Brazil. It flows along a narrow chasm known as the 'Devil's throat' (which is a site of occasional suicides) and then forms the Iguazu Falls ("Big Water") which is the largest



waterfall system in the world. The area is the home to diverse and multitudinous flora and Fauna, including really noisy Macaws and is also a Unesco site.

The number of the falls is well in excess of 100, all named, very stunning and extremely noisy. The volume of water (and possibly the noise) varies according to the season and it is challenging to see the bottom of the Falls due to the amount of spray. Walkways and platforms abound to afford tourists exceptional views and a sense of belonging to this amazing site. Our visitors got phenomenally wet as it had already poured down for two days and the falls provided a further supply of sprayed water.

Despite "technical hitches" to our equipment during the talk (it wouldn't be a Geography group meeting without those), we enjoyed a brilliant talk and pictures thanks to Celia and her attractive assistant, Lyn. Thank you very much, ladies.

Jan Bradbury

## DID YOU KNOW?

In Antarctica there is the 'Blood Falls'. The colour of the water is red due to the iron content of the water. Its source is a lake hidden under a 400 metre layer of ice.



## CHARACTERS FROM THE CIVIL WAR

### 3. Prince Rupert (1619-82)

It is perhaps surprising that Prince Rupert, who was born in Prague (Czech Republic) would become one of the central figures of the English Civil War fighting on the side of the King by leading the Royalist cavalry. The English connection that led to this was Rupert's mother who was the daughter of James I. She had been married to a German prince who made a blunder and lost a war with the Holy Roman Emperor. The family left Prague so fast that baby Rupert had to be literally thrown into a moving coach. They found sanctuary and financial support in Holland.



Brought up a strict Protestant, Rupert was given a wide education. He looked like a warrior, being 6' 4" tall at a time when 5' 6" was the average height. As a teenager he gained minor commands in the army of the House of Orange and demonstrated fearless leadership. In 1637 he visited England when his uncle, Charles I, organised finance for his Rupert's older brother so he could raise a force to win back the lands lost by their father.

When the attempt to regain the family territory was made Rupert, then 17, was given command of three cavalry regiments. Confronted by a much larger force, Rupert immediately led an all-out charge and routed the enemy. However, in later fighting he was captured and placed in genteel confinement. His captors hoped to convert him to Catholicism. In the end, by promising not to fight against the Emperor again, Rupert was released at the end of 1641.

Meanwhile, Charles I was locked into war with Parliament. He desperately needed competent army commanders and welcomed Rupert. Things went



well at first. At Edgehill, Rupert's signature all-out cavalry charge swept Parliament's right wing away. However, Rupert's men kept going, chasing

the enemy and did not turn back to help their Infantry. Edgehill was a messy draw. Not long after, Rupert led a bloody but successful infantry attack on Parliamentary forces at Brentford.

Actions such as these, where the tall, flamboyant Prince who could inspire men to fight hard and cause significant losses to the Parliamentary forces needed some explanation. As Rupert was lucky not be killed on several occasions he was portrayed in

Parliamentary newsletters as being protected by the Devil. His little pet dog, Boy, fitted in as a kind of witch's familiar. Within the Royalist camp, Rupert also had a number of enemies. Many thought he was arrogant and the Queen resented the influence this foreign newcomer had with the King.

Rupert was not invincible however. The King's orders for the relief of the siege of York were confused and led Rupert to confront a larger Parliamentary army on Marston Moor. The Royalist commanders were caught off-guard. Cromwell, who understood cavalry training even better than Rupert, was able to charge, defeat the Royalist cavalry on one wing and then turn and attack the other wing. Legend has it that to escape Rupert had to hide in a bean field. His dog, Boy, who had been left in camp was killed. Rupert stayed in favour with Charles, continued to lead his cavalry and was promoted.



The sides came together again at Naseby, near Leicester. Once again Rupert's cavalry defeated the opposing cavalry but this time, got busy looting Parliament's baggage train. Meanwhile, Cromwell not only routed the cavalry in front of him, but turned and attacked the rear of the Royalist infantry thus winning the battle. The war was not over, but it was won at Naseby.

If any of the many shots fired at Rupert had killed him, he might posthumously be described as a high class mercenary. He, however, survived the war and had a complex and lengthy post-war career. He was a navy commander for Charles II, conducted scientific experiments and was a founder of the Hudson Bay Company in Canada and has a town in British Columbia named after him. He died on the 19th of November in 1682.

Steve Wood

### FACT OR FICTION?

During the time of the Civil War 'Humpty Dumpty' was a nickname for a large or heavy person. In the siege of Colchester, the Royalists installed a heavy cannon on the roof of St Mary's by-the-wall church. It inflicted great damage on the attacking Parliament army until they concentrated their fire on the church and brought the cannon crashing to the ground. It was too heavy for the King's men to put back into position. Hence the poem 'Humpty Dumpty'. It was Lewis Carroll in 'Alice through the Looking Glass' that changed him from a cannon to an egg.



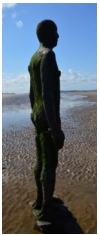


## TRIP TO LIVERPOOL

We set off with a full coach on our first day trip of the year, to Liverpool on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April. It was a cold start but the weather was kind to us and we enjoyed a lovely sunny day in Liverpool.



Chris our coach driver dropped us off at the Albert Docks and then members set off to explore the city in their own way. Liverpool is such an interesting and vibrant city with lots to see and do and at the moment is gearing up to host the Eurovision Song Contest.



Some members went to museums, others went on an open top bus tour of the city. One group travelled to Crosby to view the Gormley figures in the water. All members said they had an enjoyable day out. I am looking forward to our future trips.

Glenys Sharman

## CLIMATE MATTERS



At the April Climate Matters meeting we closely examined our food supply. One member gave us an enthusiastic view of her shared allotment in Dronfield and details of how the system works. Allotments are very popular with about 250,000 people in the UK.



Another member fed us information about Ethnic Foods in particular Asian entrepreneurs who import many foods and are large food producers in the UK. They make up about 10% of our food production and are major exporters of oils and soft drinks.

We looked at Food Miles - should we import (mostly by air) much of the fresh produce out of season? It may be more environmentally friendly to bring tomatoes by truck from Spain rather than heating massive glasshouses in the UK? We could even consider if supermarket home delivery in a few vans is better for the environment than each of us driving to the supermarkets and local shops.

Food banks started in 1967 in the USA and 1984 in the UK by the Trussel Trust. They are mostly in areas where there are high numbers of Universal Credit claimants. Our local Oaks Church receives



supermarket overstock and short dated items but also fresh food from some allotment holders.

Finally we looked at the Economics of food production and distribution. 50% of UK farms are in co-operative ownership such as ARLA for dairy and cheese products. (They also own the Danish Lurpack butter.) We often hear that British farmers don't get paid enough. In the UK contracts with wholesalers and supermarkets are negotiated seasonally whereas in Europe a more flexible system is used based on short term demand and availability. The largest farm owner in the UK is the National Trust (and NTS) with 1500 tenant farmers, and the largest individual owner is possibly James Dyson. Food for Thought!

Steve Pyke

## STORIES FROM THE OPERA

### How Times Change

Many years ago my wife, Ann, and I attended a performance of "Carmen" at Covent Garden. I had paid a good deal of money for this performance as I was keen to see Ramon Vinay as Don José but I hadn't been too interested in who was singing



Carmen. It turned out to be a young American soprano who was established enough to dress in a more modern fashion than was usual. Ann was not impressed by her style choice though I found it refreshing though exceedingly distracting.

After the performance, the lady received a far more enthusiastic applause than Vinay did. As the noise died down the old gentleman sitting at the side of me, leaned across and said, "Years ago, young man, I saw Calvé sing this role, and she was clothed from her neck to her feet, in a dress that rested on the floor. No display of unnecessary flesh at all, but if she had snapped her fingers, 300 men would have immediately invaded the stage." What magic Calvé had!

### Sorry Your Majesty!

On another occasion, Ann and I were late setting off for the opera. When we got off the tube the place was deserted. The crowds of theatre goers had gone. The tickets had cost fortune, and we weren't going to miss a note of the performance if we could help it. We set off for the Opera House, in the rain, practically running, with me half dragging Ann along. As we reached the theatre I suddenly



ran into a big chap, who placed a large hand on my chest. I stopped so suddenly I dropped our umbrella. As I retrieved it I saw a man on my left, wearing knee breeches, and silk stockings. He was propping open a theatre door while holding a huge black umbrella in his other hand.

As I rose unsteadily to my feet, the big fella pushed me to the right and another big bloke pushed me towards a large black car standing by the kerb. I staggered and he muttered a few obscene words before shoving me round the back of the car. I thought I was being mugged, but the car just drove off and the men quickly disappeared inside the building. I was totally confused but quickly recovered and grabbed Ann, and we ran around the corner, and into the entrance lobby of the theatre.

We were just in time and were escorted through a door into the stalls, where a man indicated the



row where there were our empty seats were. I sat down, then realised that everyone else was standing up! I quickly stood up, and everyone sat down again! Totally confused, I gazed around, and saw the

Queen Mother in the Royal Box. She seemed to look directly at me before turning to speak to Lord Harewood who was seated next to her. I spent the whole of the first act wondering if she had said to Lord Harewood, "Look there. That's the idiot who nearly ran into us as we arrived!" Very embarrassing and now, I can't remember anything else about the opera!

*Sam Copnell*

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH

*Blyth Post Office, Notts 31/4/23*



**KING CHARLES III & QUEEN CAMILLA**

## GARDEN VISITS GROUP

Our April visit was planned for the York Gate Gardens. Our first surprise was that the venue is not anywhere near York but at the village of Adel, north of Leeds.

The second surprise was who owned and ran the gardens. The ownership had come about by unusual means. In 1839, (which was the year the first bicycle was invented), some men met at the Crown and Anchor pub near 'The Strand' in London. They met with the purpose of



establishing a charity which could provide financial assistance for workers in the horticultural industry, and their families, who had fallen on hard times. This seasonal occupation often resulted in the workers suffering periods of unemployment. This lack of



regular work and the isolation of this type of employment, could also cause bouts of mental illness. The charity that resulted from the meeting, now carries the name of

'Perennial' and although small in the beginning its funding has grown over the years so that in 2018, it had four million pounds at its disposal. It now owns three gardens, one near Bury St Edmunds, one at Hereford (bequeathed by Sir Roy Strong) and the one at York Gate.

This venue was a new one for us. (It was suggested by a member after seeing an advert.) So our third surprise, was the beauty of the garden. So much so, some of our members expressed the opinion that this was one of the finest gardens that we had visited over many years.

The garden themselves are spread over a single acre of land, and appear to form a set of interlinked rooms with different trees and plants in each. The



first room we encountered was a sunken pool apparently created out of an old orchard. To one side was the Pinetum with many varied specimens of pine trees. At the far end was The Dell with a covered seat for visitors to shelter, although with the sun

shining this was not needed on our visit. Attention to detail was so evident. Beside pillars on either side of a path were two water-filled stone bowls strewn with newly placed fresh coloured petals. Other stone bowls contained vertically positioned pieces of slate

between succulent plants. We learnt that because the garden was a charity that most of the gardeners are volunteers. Then peering into the greenhouse, it was noticed that the garden implements were carefully stored and the floor -



well you could have eaten your dinner off it. Many visitors were enjoying food overlooking yet another sunken pond, by an open area by the café, giving them a relaxing

environment. One really dramatic feature was that one side of the main house was covered with layers of an esplanades bush.

The fourth surprise will be for my wife, who had been unable to attend on this visit. The surprise is a ticket that I have purchased for her. A ticket for a return visit to this amazingly beautiful garden later this year, I would recommend anyone else to pay it a visit also.

Ramsey Hertzog

## NEW DISCUSSION GROUP

Given the amount of interest in the formation of a second Discussion Group shown at the Group Fair, there will be a meeting to set up a new group. I am inviting any interested members to register their interest via the Beacon website, or speak to me personally.

The purpose of this inaugural meeting will be to set a model for the running of a new group. I will explain the context of the meeting in line with the membership guidelines of the D&DU3A, and the role of the coordinator. The meeting will also hold a sample series of discussions so that a real situation can be experienced. This newly formed group will then be able to conduct their own subsequent meetings as best fits its membership.

The date and time of this initial meeting is provisionally set for 10:00am on 18 July 2023. Those interested and who provide contact details (email preferred) will be provided with the Dronfield house address for this initial meeting."

Many thanks for your anticipated actions over this.

Rob Barron Discussion Group coordinator

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



"The only thing that scares me more than the thought of space aliens is the thought that there are no space aliens!! If we are all that there is we are in big trouble!!"

Ellen de Genares

## HISTORY GROUP

### THE HIDDEN NECROPOLIS

Tucked away on the hillside just off Ecclesall Road, lies a hidden 'City-of-the-Dead'. Sheffield's General Cemetery. A Grade II listed location with 87,000 residents and ten listed monuments.

Within the limits of this Victorian landscaped garden cemetery are soldiers, steel barons, aristocrats and an elephant trainer.



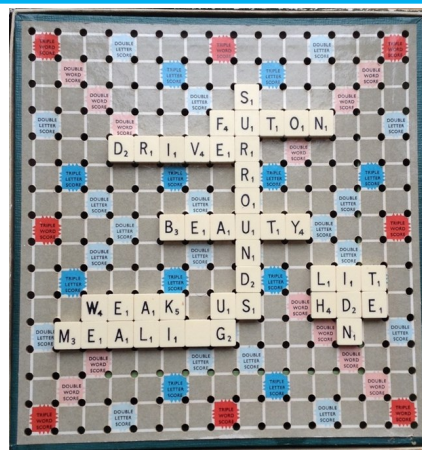
Janet Ridler is a professional historian who knows the cemetery well. Her illustrated talk will take you back to 1836 and bring alive this hidden area, exposing the treasures it hides and revealing the secrets of Victorian Sheffield.

Come to the meeting in the Thomas Taylor Hall on May 24th to learn more. There is a £2.00 entry fee and everyone is welcome.

For more details, contact me on 01246 900201, or at [history@dronfieldu3a.org.uk](mailto:history@dronfieldu3a.org.uk)

Phine Wright

## U3a TELEPHONE SCRABBLE



U3a telephone scrabble? "Never heard of it", you cry. It's really quite simple. Fit the given letters onto the diagram above and then phone me on 01246 414847 and leave a message. I will notify you of the highest scoring word and some new letters to use the following next week.

In the last Cryer we started a new game. The letters to be used made the word FUTON. Several words have been added since then and this week's letters are - L I T H D E N.

Send your highest scoring word to me by Thursday 4th of May.

Sylvia Thompstone