



## HINCKLEY U3A JULY NEWSLETTER

On Tuesday June 18<sup>th</sup> Hinckley U3A celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Mary Forryan Centre with music, speeches cream teas and two iced fruit cakes. John Whitehead, our chairman, opened the afternoon by introducing some of our special guests, one of whom was the new Mayor of Hinckley, Linda Hodgson. Linda spoke for a few moments claiming she had never heard of the U3A and had to look us up on the internet. Linda realised then what a brilliant organisation she was about to visit and if only retirement age could be dropped she would join us. Next to be introduced was the East Midlands Regional Director of the U3A Jean Hogg. Jean said she was very pleased to be invited to such a successful group and then praised us for integrating so well within the local community.

John then said a few words about the history of the Hinckley organisation. The local U3A was formally recognised in 1994 when Carla Clarke was the membership secretary and although 90 years old she is still an active member. In the early days this U3A met at the Cedars in Barwell and there were just 3 main groups, music, walking, chat and a cup of tea plus the main meeting. Today there are nearly 40 different groups to choose from and participate. Carla was then asked to cut the celebratory cake. John then introduced the entertainment for the afternoon, the Fools Gold acoustic music. This amazing couple played their guitars and flute, sang and told a story all related to Victorian times. There were moving pictures on a screen while they sang and also lively audience participation. Their title "Bang up to the Elephant" could either mean brilliant or blind drunk. So ended the music and on to the cream teas and special anniversary cake thus concluding our celebratory afternoon.

The meeting next month is on July 16<sup>th</sup> we will be visited by HenryV111 in person! An afternoon you must not miss!

## Trips in August

1<sup>st</sup> August As You Like It at Stratford

8<sup>th</sup> August Church Visiting with Pat Crane

19<sup>th</sup> August a visit to Abbey Park ruins and Mount St Bernard Abbey with Tom Berrie and the Architecture Group

29<sup>th</sup> August 'Cats' musical at Kilworth

## Information

Ellen Samdeman is now in charge of Scrabble but to get in touch please phone Margaret Pickering

Petanque 2 the leader now is Wendy Barker telephone 01455610406

Several months ago we ran a creative writing competition. Here follows the winning entry.

### **The Oak Tree** by Sandra Bates

The oak tree stood proudly in the landscape just as others had for the millennia, but this one was different. It is said that an oak tree grows for one hundred years, lives for another hundred, and then takes a hundred to die; if so, this one was still a child, but it wasn't its age that made it stand out but that it was alone in the middle of a large field. The tree was only visible from the attic window of the cottage when we moved in; the view from the lower windows was obscured by the thick hedge that formed the boundary between our garden and the field.

As a child the tree intrigued me, was it the survivor of a squirrel's cache that had somehow missed being eaten by the deer, was it marking an old field boundary long since disappeared, or was there a more interesting explanation? For over twenty years I watched that tree grow until curiosity finally got the better of me and I started to ask questions of the longest lived village inhabitants. No-one seemed to know the answer – "I've no idea" "It was there when I was a child" "It's a witch tree" "It marks an old murder" – the answers became more fanciful the more I asked. Visits to the local museum and library were equally unenlightening so I abandoned my quest.

The tree was forgotten, I moved away, only returning briefly for family anniversaries, Christmases and the like. By chance in my fifties I returned to the village – I had recently decided to take early

retirement and shortly afterwards my parents died, so I moved into the cottage. The old hedge had gone, a victim of Dutch elm disease, and there was the tree beckoning to me when I stood at the sink – it was time for more research.

The “great storm” beat me to it and the tree was uprooted to reveal a grave and a few bones – perhaps there had been a murder! But no, there was no mystery, there was no murder. Now visible, having previously been hidden amongst the low growth around the base of the tree, there was a stone inscribed “In memory of my beloved Charlie who died aged 20” – the bones were those of a small horse.

The last of the “oldsters” in the village told me that Charlie was the favourite pony of the little girl who had grown up in the cottage. She had been present when the foal was born, had ridden the pony until she had grown too big for him and then, instead of selling him on, had kept him in happy retirement for the rest of his life. The oak tree was his memorial!

(Winner of Hinckley U3A 2019 Creative Writing Competition)