

u3a learn,
laugh,
live
King's Lynn



KaLeidoSCOpe

Spring 2022

For members, About members, By members

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Definitions for the confused

Banker - *A fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining and wants it back the minute it starts to rain.*

Economist - *An expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn’t happen today.*

Lawyer - *A person who write a 10,000 word document and calls it “a brief”*

Front Cover Photo: Christmas Colour at Thursford, taken during the recent u3a Outing there by *Marilyn Prew*.

Editorial

It is hard to believe that another year has gone by since the last issue of KaLeidoscope, and yet as I write this we are still living under the threat of Covid. Although life is beginning to get back to something approaching normality, our u3a is still finding itself adjusting to the 'new normal'



Prior to Covid, I was preparing to announce that our membership had passed the 500 number, something which never actually occurred. Although we recently welcomed the 1000th person to join King's Lynn u3a, our total number has shrunk a little - but with a membership in excess of 400 and constantly rising we are still in fine fettle.

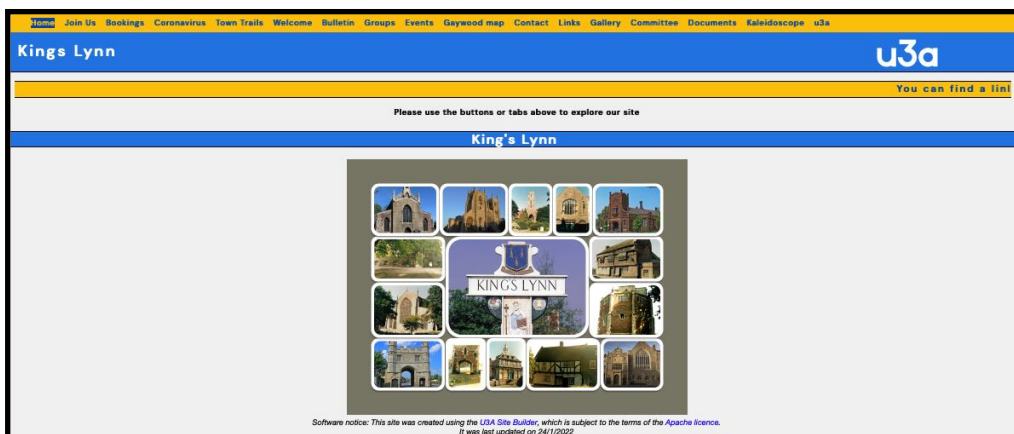
Although we have 'lost' a few of our special interest groups in the past year this is a process that takes place most years as the coming and going of groups is very much a natural process within any u3a. New ideas are coming along all the time, particularly as new members bring in fresh perspectives.



Whilst plans to celebrate our 30th anniversary last year were spoiled by lockdowns, this year brings the 40th anniversary of the u3a as an organisation in the UK, and we are aiming to play our part in the celebrations. Amongst these are a planned Grand Afternoon Tea coinciding with The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, and in September as part of u3a Week we will

be running an all-day event in the town centre at which we will be encouraging all our special interest groups to take part in.

The Third Age Trust are also organising several events, information on which can be found at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/40th-anniversary>



Please don't forget to check out our Website at -

<https://u3asites.org.uk/kingslynn/home>

for all the latest information concerning our u3a's events and group activities, along with links to the latest national newsletter and back issues of KaLeidoscope magazine.

Neil Prew

Speaker Reports

2021 saw our monthly meetings continuing via Zoom, kicking off in **January** with entertainment from the highly enjoyable folk duo “Fools Gold” - Carol and Steve Robson from Durham.



In **February** we were joined by Dr James Taylor who has enjoyed a career working in the fine arts as a curator, exhibition organiser and the Victorian paintings expert for Phillips Auctioneers. He also is an avid collector of picture postcards, and his talk was entitled “Brilliant British Humour in the Forgotten Art of the Picture Postcard: 1840-1950.”

Barbara Meyer was our guest in **March** sharing stories of her work in conservation, focusing on “Big Cats Around The Globe.” This talk was illustrated with her own photography - examples of which can be found on her website at:

<https://www.bigcatphotography.co.uk>

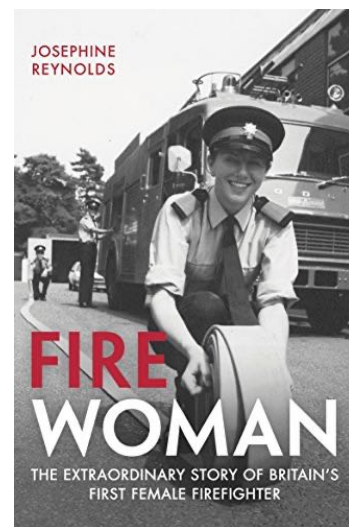
April’s meeting saw Helen Janku from Norfolk Library & Information Service speaking on “The History of Norfolk Libraries and their future”.

May on Zoom “Trailblazer: Fire Woman” by Josephine Reynolds

From her website:- *“Hailed as the first full-time female fire-fighter in the UK, Jo joined Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in 1982 at just 17. With the world watching, she was determined never to be the weakest link. Using determination and inner strength to overcome prejudice, she proved that women could make great fire-fighters.”*

Her training, in an intake of 6 with Jo the only girl, was very intensive and tough, lasting 15 months. It included learning the equipment, use of breathing apparatus, carrying 12-stone dummies, placements on ships, mock road accidents, industrial disasters, wrecked planes, in hospitals and nursing homes, even in the grain silos here at King’s Lynn docks.

On finishing her training, which included drill, and with the national press watching and taking pictures, Jo and the other cadets had their passing out parade. Jo was posted to Thetford in 1983, knowing nobody. The station was manned from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, with night shifts covered and with retained part timers on call. Her eventual acceptance was gradual, with even



some hate mail, but her chief was unerringly supportive and Jo loved every minute of her 7 years in the service there. It was, and is, a remarkably busy station, with lots of industry and busy roads in the area, meaning hideous road and industrial accidents to attend. She thoroughly enjoyed her time there, including gaining her HGV licence and driving fire-engines.

Eventually Jo had the itch for change and went travelling with her partner, David, initially to S America, joining various scientific expeditions, then to Everest with a medical team monitoring the first Everest marathon, where she and David were guardians of the runners. She and David separated, and after 3 years Jo returned to Thetford, to a buying job, then to Lincoln and ultimately setting up her own supplies business with a female business partner. After 6 years she went to live in Thailand, in 2006 working as a, not-very-good, TV host. From there it was off to Cambodia with a pal to work as volunteers with children. Next moving on to the Philippines, Jo wrote about the devastation after Typhoon Haiyan, there being no food or money, and prisons were opened to release the prisoners to help their own families, so a place where things could easily have gone wrong for Jo. She lived there for a month and her writing was published, bringing in some much-needed cash. In 2015, back to Cambodia and thence to cover the earthquake in Nepal, again she was offered a contract to write and was published. At this point she had virtually no possessions, save a few tattered clothes and lots of cuttings about her time in the Fire Service; she was persuaded to write about her time as the 1st female British fire-fighter and, after pitching to various publishing houses, her draft was accepted and her book came out.

Her website, <https://www.josephine-reynolds.com>, has her complete biography, details of her several businesses and her book, 'Fire Woman', and she now lives here in King's Lynn, where she has just founded another company marketing tee-shirts, and is happy and settled with her new partner – for now! Jo says her dream is to travel the world, speaking about and being an ambassador for women in the fire service and carrying on her fundraising charitable works.

Sheila Burney



In **June** the speaker was Paul Barwick, who had spent 34 years working in the Police Service in a number of roles, mainly focused on intelligence. After retiring he started a walking tour company focused on London's rich history of espionage incidents and characters.

His talk was entitled "*The White Mouse, WWII spy Nancy Wake: the most decorated woman in England*"

His talk described the part she played, running escape routes, assisting the resistance, and being a general menace to the Gestapo, who nicknamed her 'The White Mouse'

July on Zoom “Mrs Coxon of King’s Lynn” by Rachael Williams

Following our AGM, Rachael Williams, Learning and Engagement Officer at Stories of Lynn, explained she had wanted to give a talk on the first female mayor of King’s Lynn in 2018, which was The Year of The Woman, but was unable to find any material online. By sheer good fortune she met Tony Bellars, a member of our u3a and Florence Ada Coxon’s great grandson, who made his treasure trove of photographs and memorabilia available to her, which formed the basis of her talk.



Florence Ada Coxon, née Neale, was born 31.03.1862 to William and Mary Neale in Emneth, near Wisbech. Her portrait in mayoral robes and regalia, by Fred Roe, hangs in the Stone Hall in the Town Hall, and we saw this photograph along with several of her during childhood and growing up, during her time as Mayor, and beyond. Many of the early ones were studio portraits, reflecting her family’s affluence in Wisbech. Her father was a master miller, and the photograph of their house shows the steam mill behind it. Wisbech and Upwell tramway (no longer extant) was the inspiration for Thomas the Tank Engine’s Bertie the Tram Engine! The family was part of the country ‘set’ at that time, riding to hounds and moving in society. Florence Ada married, aged 21, Stephen Arthur Thomas Coxon, (known as SAT) knowing each other through the same social circles. They had 3 children:- a daughter, Florence Beryl Aenid, (later mayoress to her mother) who married Arthur Bellars, later himself Mayor of Wisbech; a son, Stephen Howard, who was awarded the MC, invalided out of the army and eventually became District Commissioner in Tanganyika and died there, being buried in the Red Sea; and Arthur Cedric Mears, who was captured in Turkey by a German who took him as a POW, saving him from being beheaded by a Turk. Stephen died before his parents. There is a family memorial window in St Margaret’s Church.

Ada’s husband, SAT, was very distinguished in his time, becoming Mayor two years before Ada, with Ada as his mayoress. They had lived in York Row, Wisbech, before WWI, then moved from Emneth to Creswell House, 5 King Street, King’s Lynn. In 1923 she formed the Women’s Conservative Club in King’s Lynn, with 300 members by 1926. It is interesting to note that the female vote had only been granted in 1918. In November 1924 Ada was elected the first female Councillor of King’s Lynn, then in 1925 the first female mayor; her husband designed her staff and her gold badge of office. Among her many important roles were: Chair and Chief Magistrate of the King’s Lynn bench, Chair of the Women’s Unionist Association of King’s Lynn; Chair of Norfolk Men’s Conservative Association; she was on the Government Advisory Board and was chairman of the Board of Governors at KES. There were royal connections - Ada’s grandson Victor, born to her daughter Beryl one month after Beryl’s husband died, had as his godmother Princess Victoria, with whom the family were friendly, the daughter of Edward VII and Queen

Alexandra, and after whom the names Victor and Victoria appeared in the family offspring.

Upon her retirement Ada was presented with a blue enamel watch set with diamonds from the town and was subsequently awarded the OBE. There was a visit from the future King George VI, and protocol demanded that he be hosted by the incumbent mayor, Lt Col Woodward, but he couldn't be found. So, Ada and SAT, as a former Mayor and Mayoress, hosted him and showed him round. This caused an uproar as protocol had been breached and the council then banned SAT from entering the Town Hall. This made the national press, and the future king then wrote and apologized for having been inadvertently responsible for this gaffe, and SAT's ban was lifted. Ada took up studying the law and at age 70 was called to the bench. Her motto was 'Age is no obstacle!' This truly pioneering lady died in 1951. Her mayoral robes and regalia are on display in Stories of Lynn, and Rachael's pamphlet about her life and times is available there. She was the first of only 12 female mayors, among the almost 300 male mayors of King's Lynn.

Sheila Burney

August "King John's Wisbech" by Diane Calton Smith

At our first face-to-face meeting in 2021 at Gaywood Community Centre, Diane, a local historical author, described King John's journey from King's Lynn to Wisbech, asking us to imagine that we were one of the King's knights and to see what an eyewitness would have seen.

In October 1216 King John with his retinue was travelling northwards to Newark from Bishop's Lynn, which then was a very rich area with pastures, sheep, and a booming wool trade. The King was at this point very unwell, having fallen ill with dysentery while at Bishop's Lynn, and decided to return to Newark Castle via Wisbech, being the slower and safer route around The Wash. The King never spent more than a few weeks at any one of the many castles around the country, built, after the Norman invasion and conquest of 1066, along the coast, on the banks of rivers, and estuaries. Wisbech castle was situated on the tidal river Nene. The retinue, travelling behind the king, consisted of the barons, the knights, and the peasants, with the long, slow-moving wagon train carrying his many personal possessions, the contents of which were a closely-guarded secret. The barons would be housed in the castle, the knights housed in hostels around the town and the peasants would set up camp where they could. King John was not popular in the country as a whole as England was then at war with France, which meant that taxes were punitive. Also John had quarrelled with the Pope and had been, along with his kingdom, temporarily excommunicated from the Roman Church, which meant there could be no marriages, baptisms, or funerals. However this period had now passed and the Church had accepted John and the country back as communicants. At this point he was popular in Wisbech however, as the charter granted by Richard I, which gave commercial and legal freedom,

allowing the retention of tolls and local market rents, with the town in return providing the King with many ships and sailors, had been ratified by King John.

He, his barons and knights sped up their journey to Wisbech to cross the river to the castle, leaving the wagon train behind on the opposite bank. They received a huge welcome, with people lining the streets to greet him, and the great and good of the area massed in the castle to receive him with feasting and entertainments. The wagon train was following at a much slower pace as the heavily-laden wagons were pulled by oxen while the King and his immediate party travelled on Palfrey horses at a much faster pace, with the King travelling partly on a litter because of his poor health. The Nene could be forded at low tide or crossed by ferry at high tide. The ferry not being able to carry the many heavily-laden wagons, the masters leading the train would need to calculate the tide times with great accuracy as the train was perhaps a mile long.

Meanwhile, the Royal party was settled into their various rooms and apartments, the King being furnished with a bath, and then all were treated to a full banquet followed by entertainments of juggling, acrobats, and music. As the evening progressed a messenger came into the great hall of the castle and spoke to the King with great urgency.

The disastrous news was imparted that the river, being tidal, was very fast-moving on the falling tide and the wagon train's leaders had miscalculated this – with the result that most of the wagons and many of the hundred or so men travelling with it were lost in the waters of the Wash. Nothing has ever been recovered. We may never know what was lost, although metal detectorists are still searching!

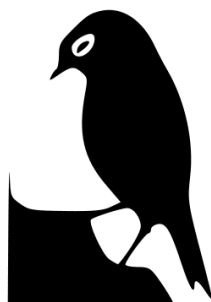


Sheila Burney

September

“The Birds of Ethiopia” by Patricia Alker

Patricia has visited Ethiopia several times and has taken pictures of the many birds there. She showed us over 60 colour slides of birds found in Ethiopia, of which there are 867 known species, some of which are now on the endangered lists. Many of the pictures we saw are professional ones, as Patricia's visits to Ethiopia are explained below, and not for holidays, although she took several of the pictures herself. Some of these birds, interestingly, migrate to the UK and can even be seen here in Norfolk, for example the white egret and the avocet.



We saw pictures of vultures, eagles, hornbills, goshawks, cranes, jewel-like kingfishers, guinea fowl, ducks, bee-eaters and many, many more. The list was huge, ranging

from tiny finches to 5-foot storks with their 12-foot wingspan! We saw wonderful pictures of fishermen on Lake Awasa, catching masses of fish in huge nets, then gutting them on the shore and throwing the offal into the water, where it was swooped on by flocks of hungry birds; also huge flocks of pelicans on Lake Tan, each of which eats 3lb of fish a day and the population on that lake alone eats an estimated 28,000 tons of fish every year. Sadly these birds are now being decimated for the trade based on them:- their beak pouches, used for tobacco bags; their skin for leather goods; their guano for fertiliser, and the fat of the young birds being used for Chinese medicines.

Patricia answered several questions at the end of her talk, mostly about her costume, an ankle-length, white cotton dress with a large matching stole, both embroidered in red, gold, and black, and the charity she founded: Project Dukem. Patricia's main reason for visiting Ethiopia is in support of this work, which, amongst other things, provides lunches every day for the children, who are all either HIV/aids orphans or otherwise disadvantaged or abused, in the primary school in Dukem, near Addis Ababa. Patricia's fees for all her talks go directly to this wonderful scheme, which, in feeding these children, enables them to get a primary school education, which in turn leads them to get a secondary education and so be fit for paid employment. The alternative for other such children who do not get this level of education is living on the streets and either begging or becoming sex workers.

She also gave us a brief insight into the economy of Ethiopia which is becoming increasingly dependent on the Chinese, who have built roads and factories and employ local workers at very low wages, to the benefit primarily of the Chinese businesses and their economy rather than that of Ethiopia.

More details of her work can be found online by Googling her name.

Sheila Burney

October: "Murder, Sex, and Mayhem in English Churches" by John Vigar

John, an ecclesiastical historian and author, told us most church depictions of murders are of saints meeting grisly ends, and his many slides showed truly dreadful deaths. Images of saints, such as St Catherine, were popular in the Middle Ages. Popular myth has us believing that she died strapped to a wheel, however the wheel broke, and Catherine was subsequently beheaded, as shown in many stained glass windows in England. We remember her martyrdom when we use Catherine wheels on Bonfire Night. We also learned of the martyrdom of medieval St Agatha who had her



breasts chopped off; St Edmund who died by arrows shot into his shackled body rather than raise an army to fight Ivan the Boneless, as seen in a C14th church in Kent; St Christopher, similarly shot with arrows which, when they hit, bounced off him, so he was despatched by beheading. A church in Brighton has a very rare medieval wall painting of St Thomas a Beckett being murdered at the altar of Canterbury Cathedral and this is similarly depicted in stained glass windows throughout the country. Other saints to have met ghastly deaths include St Uncumber of Portugal, a fictitious bearded lady, who, according to legend, prayed to God to save her from an unwanted marriage. God answered her prayers by blessing her with a beard that made her so ugly no one wanted her, and so her furious father crucified her.

Mayhem is depicted in many of our churches and churchyards with memorials to hideous deaths, such as the group of 340 Levellers, persecuted under Oliver Cromwell and imprisoned in Burford Church. The ringleaders were taken out and shot while others were driven onto the church roof to watch their fate. In a C14th church in Northamptonshire there is a carved depiction of Judas Iscariot hanging from the Judas Tree. There is a memorial in Kinson church to a man shot, in the dark of night by customs officials, who may have been fishing, but may also have been smuggling, a common enterprise in the area! He was pardoned by George III and continued smuggling for the rest of his life, showing his written pardon whenever he was apprehended in his activities! Another memorial in a churchyard in Clifton on Salisbury Plain depicts the death of a man who survived ten chimney pots falling on him but died of old age later. And again, in Yarm Minster churchyard, a group of people who drowned when they fell into the river when the suspension bridge collapsed under their weight when they were watching the local circus!

Sex in churches is shown in several places, notably on misericords, with many fine examples of erring wives being punished, husbands being caught, and people of both genders displaying their 'downstairs arrangements,' to quote John! These also appear in gargoyles, over church doors, in choir canopies and screens, in fact here, there, and everywhere. They are a warning against the presence of evil spirits waiting to pounce, and also against adultery and fornication. John's talk was as fascinating as it was informative, as entertaining as it was wide-ranging, and warmly greeted with applause.

Sheila Burney

November "From Horse and Cart to the Moon in one generation"



Tony Smith introduced his talk by saying he thought of himself as a time traveller, having been born in the Middle Ages (Coventry, 1937), worked through the Jet Age, and retired during the Space Age.

Much of what he saw in his childhood would have been familiar to a medieval person, not just things, but social

attitudes. Horses were in the streets pulling carts, towing barges on canals, or being used for many tasks on farms. You could still find blacksmiths workshops, and there was plentiful manure to scoop up to fertilise rhubarb. Houses for the majority were small and cramped, poorly lit, with no indoor toilet. Work was done by hard manual labour with little mechanisation. Health care was expensive, with people resorting to herbal & traditional remedies.

Children were influenced by the attitudes of their Edwardian parents and Victorian grandparents. One of Tony's grandfathers was a postman, who delivered mail in a horse & cart, even in the worst weather. During a heavy snowfall, his path turned out to be the top of a hedge! His other grandfather was a butcher, who worked 12 hours a day, including butchering the animals himself in the yard behind the shop. They died at 50 and 65 years old respectively.

Both had produced 6 children and lived in terraced, two-bedroomed houses, sharing a communal tap and toilet. They did have gas lighting, but only in one room. An aunt worked in service and, pregnant by the master of the house, was dismissed without references. The child was taken away for adoption and, unable to get paid employment again, worked in her own brother's home.

World War II signalled many changes, but the old ways weren't changed overnight. When Tony started school, he was in a class of 50, with ages ranging from 5 – 10. They used chalk on slate boards. A large iron stove was inefficient, and in winter they had to keep their outdoor clothes on.

During the Coventry air-raids, his family sheltered under the stairs. One house in their street received a direct hit. Everyone, including youngsters, helped in the rescue and recovery of victims, and clearing the rubble. Children were expected to help in the harvest and in collecting rose hips towards the manufacture of vitamin C syrup. Many families kept pigs or chickens in their backyards.

With so many men away in the military, marriage no longer precluded women from paid employment and also meant the birth rate dropped.

Improved British fighter planes deterred German bombers, so Hitler turned his attention away from places like Coventry to the Russian front. However, being still mainly infantry or horse-based troops, the harsh weather was against them.

British Lancaster and Halifax bombers able to fly high were ordered not to bomb civilian targets originally, but the Germans had no such restrictions. However accuracy was not good. There were still old-fashioned bi-planes in service, Fairey, which were simply armed but good for reconnoitring. The jet engine was invented by Whittle, but the first plane to use one was German. They also developed V2 rockets. War meant technology was changing fast, leading to radar and more accurate navigation equipment. Alan Turing helped break the Enigma code with a huge computer. The nuclear technology of the bombs that were dropped on Japan became useful in power generation.

After being demobbed, servicemen no longer felt obliged to kowtow to "toffs".

A Labour government was voted into power. Married women could still work outside the home, taking advantage of family planning. A National Health Service helped not only injured servicemen.

Brick factories near Peterborough went into overdrive to help with the rebuilding programme. Pre-fabs were also pioneered to fill the housing shortage. They had all mod cons unlike the missing terraces. There was a baby boom which meant extra schools needed.

With the Cold War stand-off, there was National Service for the next generation; originally 3 years, reducing to 2 later. Tony opted for the RAF, Bomber Command, and so began his career as air crew in increasingly more sophisticated aircraft. His navigator training included both older propeller-driven and jet-engined ones, with practise bomb drops over the Wash area.

He progressed to the Canberra, with a top speed of over 400mph, but it still had a radio beam navigation system that only worked in northern Europe. A simple, ancient device, christened a "dangleometer", was used for the Mediterranean and beyond. Posted to Malta, he took part in dummy air raids over Libya, from which the locals collected and sold the scrap metal.

Tony was promoted to work on V bombers, i.e. those progressing through the names Valiant, Victor and Vulcan. These could fly even higher, faster (600mph+), and had more capacity for weaponry and for an on-board computer, which weighed $\frac{3}{4}$ of a ton, about the size of 7 dustbins, made by Hotpoint in Peterborough.

The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis put the RAF on full alert and it was soon over. By then, Tony was in a training role, and had no nuclear weapons with which to participate anyway. Increased rings of Russian rocket defences around Moscow and its Baltic borders meant the development of aircraft-launched rockets to replace simple bombs. On-board radar could be detected so navigators had to switch it off and resort to old-fashioned navigation by the stars.

Eventually the Royal Navy took over the nuclear defence role with its Polaris missiles, and then Tony retired.

The Space Age had USSR and USA in competition, with the Russians launching the first successful satellite, Sputnik; first animal to go into space and return safely, Laika, and in 1961, the first man, Yuri Gagarin, closely followed by Alan Shepard for the USA. Both countries had access to German rocket technology developed during WWII, famously with Werner von Braun in the US. President Kennedy issued the challenge to be on the Moon by the end of the decade. A huge undertaking as rockets and computers had only 8 years to be perfected. Computing power was needed to calculate the differences in spin and orbit speed, allowing for the 3 day journey to reach the target. Following exploratory flights, man finally stood on the Moon in July 1969, with the on-board computer capacity of a child's school calculator.

Truly a transformation in one lifetime!

Norma Chaplin

December

“A Tudor Christmas” by Hexachordia

After partaking of refreshments including mince pies, we were royally entertained by the early music group, Hexachordia. The Norwich-based trio, Tony & Jane Scheuregger and Sarah Doig, gave us music from the Royal courts and from the lower echelons of Tudor & late Medieval society too. Introduced as “Not a concert; not a talk” it was a melding of both, giving us an insight to that wintry world.

The instrumentals and songs were used to illustrate the customs of those days. Some of the tunes were familiar as still used in carols heard today, eg the tune “*Branle d'Officiel*”, we know as “Ding dong Merrily on High”. We were soon tapping our feet to their dance rhythms. However we left the singing to the professionals, as in Latin and old French. They also did readings from writings of the time, including from Shakespeare.



As the wintry weather progressed, thoughts turned towards the jollification at Christmas. There have been pagan winter solstice celebrations since antiquity, leading to their fusion with the Christian ceremonies. We still have the same seasonal customs, like bringing greenery into the home. The Yule Log was brought in for the fire with the idea it should be big enough to burn throughout the 12 days of Christmas. Afterwards its ash would be scattered onto the land.

In charge of the revels was the Lord of Misrule, and the tables were turned; masters served servants, men & women cross-dressed; a boy was chosen to be a bishop for the day. Remember the Christmas celebrations then were spread over many feast days so folk looked forward to food, drink and socialising. Even Henry VIII, known for his bonhomie in his early reign, wrote “Pastime with good company”, which we heard sung *a cappella*. The famous Paston letters gave us an illustration of how preoccupied the lady of the house was in getting the celebration right, and to have a modest celebration with just table games, avoiding the ribaldry of the Lord of Misrule. The poor were provided with food and drink by the lord of the manor.

Gift giving was popular in Queen Elizabeth's court. When a courtier presented her with a set of gut lute strings, it was not disdained; they cost the equivalent of a man's annual wage. Contrary to popular belief, “Greensleeves” was not written by Henry VIII, but is from that time. In the court, the Master of Revels was in charge of organising play acting in the form of masques, or *maskes*.

We were told the story of the origins of the Boar's Head ceremony still held in Oxford University. A scholar managed to defend himself against such an animal's attack by thrusting a book of philosophy into its maw at the last moment and choking it, carrying its head back in triumph to his fellow students.

New Year's Day was another excuse for feasting and exchanging gifts. Shakespeare may have written "Twelfth Night" for the enjoyment of Queen Elizabeth. It contains many of the elements instigated by the King of Misrule, for example, women dressing as men. In Shakespeare's time it meant a boy playing a woman dressing as a man, which made it even more of a joke.

Twelfth Night, Epiphany, was more important than Christmas Day itself. It could have been celebrated on either January 5th or 6th. One Twelfth Night tradition was the Queen of the Pea & King of the Bean. Whoever found the relevant pulse in the Twelfth Night cake was in charge of supervising games that day. This persisted, in an altered form, as the hiding of a sixpence or charm in a Christmas pudding, now less common due to Health & Safety concerns.

On Plough Sunday a plough was taken into the church, blessed and left there for anyone to borrow.

The last seasonal event was the Wassail, a West Country blessing of the apple trees with cider, and the consumption of the same. The non-concert, non-talk ended with a rendition of "Here we come a Wassailing" and warm-hearted applause.

Hexachordia played 13–14 replica period, string and wind instruments, counting the different types of recorder, plus a folk bagpipe strung with Christmas lights. I was amazed how they could switch from wind instruments to singing in a couple of seconds. A talented trio indeed!



It's a
Crumhorn!



*Norma Chaplin
(Photos by Julia Paul)*

January “True Stories of a Lorry Driver and a Furniture Removal Man”

by Leonard Priestley



Behind a table full of model vehicles and other souvenirs of his working life, Mr Priestley began to regale us with his mainly humorous tales. Based in the Wisbech area, he started his career in his parents' grocery business, eventually driving one of their mobile shops. Tiring of the routine, he announced he would become a lorry driver to follow a life-time interest, much to his father's disapproval.

Len saw an advert for a driver for Smedley's, the local canning factory, and applied. At the interview he admitted to never having driven an HGV nor possessing a knowledge of London's geography. Despite this he was given an eventful trial drive in a 10-ton lorry, which he survived, and was taken on. The

delivery journeys often lasted a week at a time when it meant sleeping in the cab without the mod cons today's drivers enjoy.

At the end of one week, when he only had 6 cases of canned peas left to deliver to a Tesco corner shop in London, he had a contretemps with the manager who refused to accept the delivery and emphasised this with a punch. It resulted in fisticuffs and Len's smart uniform ended up stained with blood, not to mention his injuries and a damaged stock room. The police were called to intervene, and the outcome was that the delivery was accepted. Later both were hauled over the coals by their employers, but Len was vindicated and the manager was dismissed. Len told his wife never to shop at Tesco again! He kept a running score of whenever he could get one over on them, eg by overcharging for some staff removals. Eventually he considered it had turned sufficiently in his favour so that she could.

All the Smedley's drivers went to Northampton for the Lorry Driver of the Year competition, in which they did well, and went for a celebration drink in Wisbech before going home. A prize cup was filled with a miscellany of alcoholic beverages and passed round. He hadn't rung his wife to let her know what was happening, so when he was dropped off at their doorstep in a state of inebriation at 2am, she was not pleased. He was sent to Coventry, and otherwise deprived of home comforts, for 3 days, until he made a peace offering by buying a fridge/freezer she had admired.

In 1971, Smedley's made all the drivers redundant, around the time his daughter was born, so Len decided to set up on his own. With a second-hand bread van, he delivered flowers from local growers to Brighton's market. As news spread that he was coming back empty, people asked him to pick up

goods, including furniture. He invested in a proper furniture van and a store, becoming Priestley Removals.

He told us several funny anecdotes about his experiences. He helped a mother & daughter moving to Rotherham, who being car-less, faced a complicated journey by public transport. He allowed them to sit on their sofa in the back of the removal van, which had a translucent roof, along with their 2 caged parrots, making 4 “birds” altogether. It wouldn't be allowed today.

One of his commercial deliveries ended up with him being stuck under a railway bridge, which in theory should have had 2” spare for his vehicle to pass. He realised the load, half of which had already been delivered, was heavier at the front with the back higher. Letting down the tyres would not have been the solution – too many to blow up again. He persuaded the drivers in the jam behind him to leave their cars and add extra weight to the rear. Then as this wasn't enough, a further batch joined, making about 24 people altogether. So relieved was he to get through that he drove off until halted by banging from the rear; he had forgotten to let them out, and they had to run back to their abandoned cars. The problem with railway bridges is that when the road is resurfaced the height signs are not altered, so don't always blame the vehicle drivers.

He also specialised in removing more delicate items, like grandfather clocks and pianos. He was once asked to move an upright piano from one room in a house to another, the couple not realising it would be taken apart to do so. The embarrassed wife had to rush to retrieve the erotic photos they had stored in it.

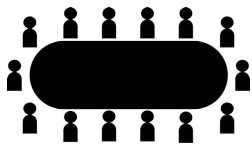
In his long career, he had only one serious accident. He has received many letters of recommendation from his customers, and related a tongue-in-cheek exchange with one of them. He also received a knitted medal from one lady. He retired from removals in 2003, and sold his business, still going strong today. But Len couldn't give up driving for long, and had a minibus business for another 14 years, including taking tourists on trips to European wartime sites. Then he had a spell driving school buses. He gave emotional thanks to the NHS for his successful treatment for bowel cancer.

He finished with a poem from a satisfied removals customer and a joke. His humorous presentation was just what we needed to cheer us up at the beginning of the year.

Norma Chaplin

**Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you
make a living; the other helps you make a life.**

Sandra Carey



Groups Updates

We have had a very difficult and challenging last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We thought that after the first Lockdown in March 2020, everything would go back to normal. But that was not to be! But two years on, the situation has improved somewhat!?! We have managed to keep the majority of groups going finding new ways of keeping in touch. We have learnt to live with Covid.

Out of the original 70 groups in 2019, we still have 55 groups running, meeting mainly in person.

Several group leaders have unfortunately stepped down for various reasons. Other groups have just run their course, which has often been the case in the past.

The following groups are the ones either without group leaders and therefore closed down or have run out of ideas and/or enthusiasm to continue:

Apple Friendly, Art Appreciation, Book Clubs 2 & 3, Bridge Refreshers, Card Making, Drama, Film, On the Buses, Opera Lovers, Philosophy, Shakespeare Appreciation, Snooker, Spanish Beginners, Stitchery, Sunday Lunch, Table Tennis, Understanding Technology and Writing for Pleasure 2.

But technology has helped us to keep in touch via Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet.

In February 2021 the following groups were meeting via Zoom:

Classical Music, Climate/Environment, Cryptic Crosswords, Digital Photography, French Basics, German Basics, Italian Beginners on Mondays and Tuesdays, Lockdown Book Group, Opera Lovers, Play Reading and Theatre Appreciation, Recorders, Shakespeare Appreciation, Spanish Beginners Plus, Ukulele and Understanding Technology.

We had monthly meetings via Zoom, at times joined by members of other u3as from the WAFF region. We were also able to attend meetings of other u3a groups, Sutton Bridge especially, who invited us to join their Monthly meeting with very interesting speakers.

On the positive side, despite various difficulties, three new groups formed in 2021 -

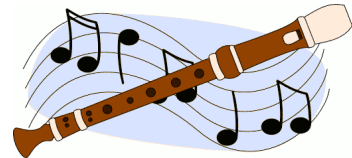
Croquet, Environment and Sequence Dancing.

New group ideas are also in the pipeline, including ***British Sign Language Chess Classical Guitar Motorcycling Winemaking***

Dana Gower, Groups Co-ordinator

Our u3a Recorder Group

None of us can really believe that it's 10 years since I started to lead them! Ann Smith had ably and enthusiastically got the group going and found a teacher. While there has been some coming and going of members over the years, there is a core of loyal stalwarts who remain to this day.



At first there was an imbalance in the parts with too many descants, so several members volunteered to learn the treble, which is the next size up in recorders and has a pleasant mellow tone. They obviously enjoyed the new instrument and it meant that a greater variety of music could be played. Now we have descants, trebles, tenors and a bass and the balance is excellent.

The pandemic has not stopped us. During the summer and autumn of 2020 we met in our garden, then carport as the weather cooled. Zoom came to the rescue when it was just too cold to sit outside. Not everyone likes to use this technology but enough of us decided that it was definitely better than nothing and also had a social advantage in that we could see and talk to each other. Charlotte Hill, who leads 'Simply Sing', provided some mp3s for Christmas and this year Tessa Seaman's son, Richard, made more audios with a mixture of new and familiar music. It works as each person is muted and plays their recorder of choice at home but can hear the full score on the mp3.

I'd like to thank all the members of the group who are so supportive and also interested in developing their music skills. Ten years deserves a celebration and I hope that later in the year we'll be able to do just that! Meanwhile we look forward to meeting in the garden once the weather is warmer.

Ann Higgins

Pétanque 1 is 21!

Pétanque 1, as it is known today, was formed as a u3a Group in 2000 when Bob Rawlings and his wife Dorothy joined King's Lynn u3a. Bob had been playing pétanque for some time and belonged to a club in King's Lynn called the Gladiators which had its terrain at Lynnsport. However, Bob had noticed the suitable terrain at Knights Hill close to the Farmers Arms and, with permission from the hotel management, was keen to establish a u3a Pétanque Group there. A group of friends had played pétanque on his lawn before 2000.



So a u3a Pétanque Group was formed and by the end of its first season had a

suitable trophy donated by Ann Bolton after buying it while on holiday in France. It has always been awarded to the best pétanque player of the current season. Among familiar names are Ann Bolton and Margaret Eyre from the early days, and later David Wren and Pam Rowe who are still playing today.

Brian and I were attracted to playing pétanque after we sampled it at Lynnsport at a taster session in 2009. We joined u3a in 2010 as a way of meeting people after moving to Lynn in the previous year. At the time we joined there were vacancies in the Pétanque Group where Bob took us under his wing and taught us the basics of the game. We were made very welcome by all the players. Pétanque 1 has always had a reputation for its friendly atmosphere and so the pleasure we experience from playing doubles or triples. We have a lot of fun and laughter on Friday mornings.

In West Norfolk, there is a Pétanque League which runs various tournaments during the season which runs from the beginning of March to the end of November. Bob encouraged u3a Pétanque players to take part and occasionally one of our group members might return home with a cup or medal from one of these events. Eventually the Pétanque Group decided to enter a team to take part in the West Norfolk Pétanque League winter and summer matches. This team is known as the Knights because of its venue. With maroon sweatshirts with its distinctive badge, the players enjoyed meeting other teams at other venues.

Bob Rawlings remained the lynch pin of the Pétanque Group until 2016, but felt the need to hand over the job of Group Leader at the beginning of that season to Brian Smith. Bob became Life President of the Pétanque Group but sadly his health deteriorated, and he died in October 2017. The Pétanque Group owes a great debt to Bob who set it on its way all those years ago and with his kindly and steady leadership helped establish the style and tone of the Group which it still has.

By the spring of 2017 however the pressure of the numbers wanting to play pétanque had grown to such an extent that there was obviously a need for a new Pétanque Group. Not just one, but two new groups emerged - one in May 2017 and another in March 2018. Hence the original Pétanque Group added 1 to its title, followed by Pétanque 2 and 3, both helped to get off the ground by players from Pétanque 1.

With the passage of time membership of Pétanque 1 has changed due largely to age or ill health. Sadly some members have died. A small bequest to the group from Frank Gallagher was used to enjoy a tournament in his memory followed by a lunch at Knights Hill. The tournament winners were Gerald and Mary Cross.

David Cassidy was remembered by the group on the day of his funeral by the Pétanque Group coming together in the Family Room of the Farmers Arms. The actual funeral was held in David's home county of Essex.

After Bob Rawlings' death, Dorothy Rawlings indicated that she would like to donate a trophy for an annual tournament to be played for by members of the

Pétanque Group. There have been two such events in 2018 and 2019 well supported by members. In 2018 the winners of the Bob Rawlings Memorial Trophy were Valerie Chapman and Ron Graham. In 2019 the winners were Julie and Ken Harpley. Dorothy kindly presented the trophy on both occasions.

To bring the story right up-to-date, what can one say about the Pétanque season 2020! The Group Leader was in contact with Pétanque England and the u3a Pétanque Advisor almost every week for the latest guidance and regulations to limit the spread of Coronavirus. Finally, with the concerns about risks, regulations, and restrictions, he decided that safety of the group was paramount, so play was stopped, and the Group suspended in mid September, having completed only eight weeks of games from a planned 37. Subsequently the management of Knights Hill closed the terrain for all, and Third Age Trust nationally stopped such group activities.

After five years as Group Leader, Brian Smith has now handed over the reins to Brian Hillman for the new season 2021. We all wish him and the group well. Long may it continue to thrive!

Ann Smith February 2021

Pétanque 2

After a disrupted season in 2020, some of our group managed nearly a full year of play, initially by meeting under the 'rule of six' at several different venues in the local area, and then later at the larger Pétanque Piste at Heacham Social Club. We finally returned 'home' to Knights Hill in August. Although the planned annual doubles competition had to be postponed due to the logistics of managing it combined with social distancing, by the end of our season in early December we were once again able to gather (along with members of Pétanque 3) for our annual Christmas dinner and awards ceremony.



Some of the winners are pictured. From left to right are Chris Taylor (*highest percentage of wins*), Gill Collier (*most improved player*), Marilyn Prew (*players' player of the year*) and Jane Hindry (*highest average scoring player*)

Neil Prew

Crochet Group



The crochet group are continuing to meet every couple of weeks for a crochet and chat session. The recent afternoon included a YouTube tutorial on joining squares and Mozaic stitch. We are all fairly new to crochet but YouTube makes it all look so easy...well worth a look.

Please contact *Judith Gough*, on [redacted] if you would like to come along.

In Great Taste



Our group gathered at the home of one of our members for our Christmas Lunch, with the repast (naturally) provided by the group.

The Menu -



Starters:

Chestnut, bacon & parsnip soup or Truffled mushroom paté with crisp cheddar biscuits.

Main Course: Poached salmon, Dauphinoise potatoes, red cabbage with apple, honey roast carrots & parsnips with sherry

Dessert: Cherry & almond parfait. Fruity choux ring.

Drinks: Homemade alcoholic & non alcoholic drinks.



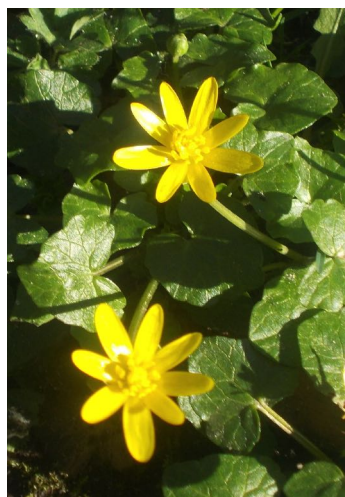
Nature's Calendar

During "Lockdown" many of us have been entertained by the wildlife in our gardens and watched many species of wild birds feeding avidly on sunflower seeds. During the cold spell in February there have been many residents such as Great, Long Tail, Coal, Willow and Blue Tits. A pair of the latter was busy enlarging the entrance to a nest box. Other visitors have included Robins, Blackbirds, Dunnocks, Chaffinches, Tree Creepers, Nuthatches, Siskins, plus a Greater Spotted Woodpecker and a pair of Bullfinches. At night Tawny Owls could be heard and early in the morning the dawn chorus was enriched by the sound of a Song Thrush.

There is a new science on the block called Phenology. This is the study of the life cycles of flora and fauna and how they relate to climate change and the seasons. Examples are the dates of Spring flowers emerging and the appearance of Acorns. The Woodland Trust has produced a site called "Nature's Calendar" and anyone can send in their records of up to 69 species at their different stages. You can also send in your records to Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The origins of Phenology go back to 1736 when a naturalist, Robert Marsham, kept records at his home in Norfolk.



We have noticed the early appearance this year of Aconites and Snowdrops in South Wootton, and the appearance of Hazel catkins and their small red female flowers in the park. After the floods in the Walks (see photos) in February we saw Lesser Celandines flowering there along with a Squirrel munching on Crocus flowers! On February 28th we espied a pair of Bullfinches eating the buds of Blackthorn and later, on a walk at Roydon, we saw Blackthorn flowering



at least two weeks earlier than normal. And finally, at twilight, Pipistrelle bats were flying round the garden after hibernation. The scent of Wych Hazel was replaced by the wonderful scent of Winter Box, which "knocks" you out. It reminds me of the heady aroma of Honeysuckle in summer and that is something to look forward to as we regain our freedom from "Lockdown".

Alistair Milner 28/2/2021

Thoughts During the Cold Snap

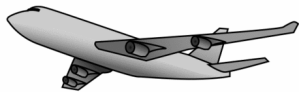
In warmest thanks our hearts are beating
 Because we all have central heating,
 And "Glory be!" our voices humming
 To praise the gift of indoor plumbing.
 No treks with buckets to the pump
 And sloshing wetly homeward stump.
 No salted fish or sacks of flour -
 The Tesco van comes every hour.



So never mind the frost and ice
 Our lives are really very nice!

Pauline Phillips

Overhead and Overheard: A few snippets of Air Traffic Control Conversations.



Tower: "TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees."

TWA 2341: "*Centre, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?*"

Tower: "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

Tower: "Eastern 702, cleared for takeoff, contact Departure on frequency 124.7"

Eastern 702: "*Tower, Eastern 702 switching to Departure. By the way, after we lifted off we saw some kind of dead animal on the far end of the runway.*"

Tower: "Continental 635, cleared for takeoff behind Eastern 702, contact Departure on frequency 124.7. Did you copy that report from Eastern 702?"

Continental 635: "*Continental 635, cleared for takeoff, roger; and yes, we copied Eastern. We've already notified our caterers.*"

From an unknown aircraft waiting in a very long takeoff queue: "*I'm flamin' bored!*"

Tower: "Last aircraft transmitting, identify yourself immediately!"

Unknown aircraft: "*I said I was flamin' bored, not flamin' stupid!*"

Who's Who: 2021-2022 Committee Members

 <p><i>Sylvia Cliffe</i> Chair</p>	 <p><i>Maggie Orage</i> Secretary</p>	 <p><i>Linda Creed</i> Treasurer</p>	
 <p><i>Neil Prew</i> Vice-Chair & Website Admin</p>	 <p><i>John Duncan</i> Membership Secretary</p>	 <p><i>Dana Gower</i> Groups Co- Ordinator</p>	 <p><i>Tricia Bailey</i> Speaker Co- Ordinator</p>
 <p><i>Julia Paul</i> Social Media</p>	 <p><i>Norma Chaplin</i> KaLeidoscope Editor</p>	 <p><i>Val Sparkes</i> Publicity</p>	

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