

Leicester Newsletter

September 2023



Picture by our member Sandra Levy

Please see our plea for help in the Chairs report. This means YOU

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

If this link does not open, just copy, and paste it into your browser.

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For news from the Third Age Trust, you can sign up for your own Trust newsletter at:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter#signup>

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR – Unfortunately due to ongoing family illness Karen is currently unable to respond personally but all messages to newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk will be dealt with. Please **do not** email Karen or Margaret personally with newsletter articles. **We would be particularly pleased to receive a few 'stunning' pictures for future front pages. Please name the photographer and any title or location.**

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: - Angie Barnes, Membership Secretary

Membership now stands at 390, an increase of 9 since the last newsletter.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR – Neil Taylor

I think it is fair to say that we should be rightly proud of the quality of the entertaining speakers at our monthly meetings. By turns fascinating, interesting and hilarious – and a little bit gruesome as well – they are brilliant. Every meeting is set up and staffed by members. In the hall we have to set out tables and chairs for the tea and coffee after the Speaker, and put them away afterwards. Refreshments have to be catered and then served. We have to set up the screen, laptop, projector and sound for the speaker. But these members' numbers are dwindling. My recent pleas for help have resulted in offers to do the audio visual, but simply put, if we haven't the people to set up the hall then we won't be able to have a monthly meeting.

This would be such a shame, as these meetings are the only opportunity for some members to meet others. They are popular, successful, and with a friendly atmosphere.

So, if you can help to move furniture please do get in touch – and all help and advice will be given by the present team of members. So over to you. Please contact me or any of the Committee for further details.

PROGRAMME

General meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month and start at 2:30 p.m. The doors open to members at 2:00 p.m.

JULY MEETING REPORT: Tuesday 11th July 2023

We remain cheerful, determined and positive... but we all need help from time to time. That is where Remap comes in – Making Things Possible for People with Disabilities.

In July's monthly Meeting Leicester u3a welcomed Martin Grant, a Leicestershire and Rutland Remap volunteer, to speak about the nationwide charity which operates locally to provide skilled engineers to design, develop and make bespoke devices free of charge.

Martin worked for BT in the UK and abroad for many years, before moving on to working with mentally ill children in a hospital setting, and teaching adults with learning difficulties. He has been active with REMAP for over 20 years.

The charity was the brainchild of Pat Johnson, ex Royal Engineers and ICI, and started in 1964. Pat's sister was disabled and house bound, and he designed ramps outside her bungalow, and hoists to help her get about the house. He decided he could be of help to a wider community, and thus the charity began. Leicestershire and Rutland Remap have been operating for 30 years – It is entirely free and you don't have to go through the National Health. They operate solely with the receipt of donations and grants.

We saw film discussion taking place with clients, and creation of devices such as a mouth tool to help a client write and paint with her mouth; tools for wringing water out of a towel, a lever to open a fridge door, and wheels on wheelchairs to aid a girl with cerebral palsy travel over sand and paddle in the sea. Child seats for wheelchairs, cots for babies, and fold away steps to aid getting into bed are some of their other developments. They even devised some specialist climbing equipment to help a client unable to walk up Kilimanjaro, a team lifting and putting the track in place ahead of him as he moved, under his own power, on a specially designed tricycle.

140,000 people have benefitted from Remap's help and ingenuity, with 850 engineers available, as Martin stressed, making things that aren't commercially available.

SEPTEMBER MEETING: (there was no meeting in August)

The speaker will be Jo Dale from Vista: Vista is a leading charity supporting people with sight loss.

OCTOBER MEETING:

Malcolm Riddle will talk about the history of Leicester trams

ALL MEMBERS COFFEE MORNINGS: *Sandra Barker – Hospitality and Wellbeing*

Coffee mornings continue to be well attended and enjoyable.

They are held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 10.00 am onwards at the Quaker Meeting House, Queen's Road. Why not join us for refreshments, friendship, and chat.

The Coffee morning in August was our summer garden party which went very well. Sandra, our refreshment fairy, was delighted to receive a thank you card from a member which she had painted herself and adorns the front page of this edition.

WELFARE

Just a reminder that if you know of a member who is ill or bereaved to let Elizabeth Hassall know at: cards@leicesteru3a.org.uk

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS COORDINATOR NEIL TAYLOR

Thank you once more for all your interest. We have many groups almost ready to start, together with those from our recent Initial Meeting a couple of months ago. Do keep signing up and suggesting new groups.

Social History – the real history, the story of the ordinary lives of everyone: the soundtrack and photo album of our time;
Join Leicester u3a's new group 20th Century Social History to look into, present and discuss our shared, recent past. The group's first meeting was at Knighton and Clarendon Park Club, on the corner of Queen's Road and Clarendon Park Road, on Wednesday 9th August, and it will meet every 2nd Wednesday in the month thereafter. It is still open for new members. Please get in touch with Convenor Ros Devine at socialhistory@leicesteru3a.org.uk to join.

Guitar Starters is beginning and if you are a total novice on guitar, but you're enthusiastic to try, this group is for you. Contact Ian Knox at guitarbeginners@leicesteru3a.org.uk to join. Mistakes allowed, laughs promised, guitar players – after excellent tuition – assured!

And we shouldn't forget Pop Up Ukulele where Convenor Sue Howard promises you will be able to play Ukulele in a few short sessions. Contact popupukulele@leicesteru3a.org.uk to join.

Possible New Groups: Many of these are ready for an Initial Meeting, so do put your name down if you are interested.

- Scrabble 2
- Whist
- Book Club 2
- Welsh Beginners
- Mah Jong Beginners

Wanting New Members

- Cryptic Crosswords 1,
- Gardening,
- Discovering Architecture
- Backgammon
- Cryptic Crosswords 2,
- Orienteering,
- Ten Pin Bowling

Looking forward to you signing up to any of these groups, through the contact details on our Website, at the Groups Table at the Monthly Meeting and the Coffee Morning.

Contact me on groups@leicesteru3a.org.uk to put your name down or to suggest more.

Best wishes, Neil

u3a ISLAND DISCS

Any member is invited to share their top three playlist, together with background stories. As well as **pop** and **rock** it would be interesting to get some **classical music, hymns, arias, country, folk, jazz, punk or any other genre**. This Month Andrea Davis shares three of her her favourite:

For your consideration my top 3 pieces of classical music used in films:

1. Piano concerto no. 2 by Sergei Rachmaninov. Written 1910
In the film 'Brief Encounter' 1945
2. Cavatina by Stanley Myers written 1970
In the film 'The Deer Hunter' 1978
3. The Firebird by Igor Stravinsky written 1910
In the film 'Shirley Valentine' 1989

Honourable mentions: The Warsaw Concerto by Richard Adinsell written 1941 especially for the film Dangerous Moonlight, but which has become a well-known piece in its own right.

Duetto Sull'aria from The Marriage of Figaro written by Mozart 1786, in the film 'The Shawshank Redemption' 1994

Many thanks Andrea If anyone would like to share your top three with fellow members please email: newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk

REPORTS FROM THE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

How Hard Can It Be

Julie Fish - member

SUP- Stand up Paddle boarding

Four of us from How Hard Can it Be tried our hands at SUP at Rutland water. We booked a taster session with an instructor at the water sports centre. His goal was to get us all standing up on our boards and we did it! We practised turning the boards and

improving our stroke. Rutland Water is a great place to learn SUP: it's sheltered with easy access to the water. We took a short trip to see a crested grebe and a coot's nest (while keeping our distance.) We'd encourage you to try it too!



ORIENTEERING

Dave Barnes - Convenor

Not quite Orienteering at Brocks Hill Country Park but we had a good time.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Anthony Matthew – Convenor

All that remains of the Leicester gasworks in Aylestone Road is the former gatehouse with its clock tower. It now houses the National Gas Museum (<http://www.nationalgasmuseum.org.uk/>) which contains a great variety of appliances that operated on gas from the 19th century until the 1960s. The collection is too large for it all to be on display and many items are in store elsewhere.

The Science and Technology group arranged a visit on 29th June and were introduced to the collection by the curator. There was a short video filmed at a small gasworks when it was still operating and the gas retorts were stoked by men with shovels. This was hard work in a polluted atmosphere so life expectancy was below average. As well as many models of gas cookers from early cast iron versions to those with electric ignition and several designs of gas fires, there are more unexpected devices. There was a shiny brass slide projector and a rotary fan. Opposite a large gas engine is a reconstruction of a kitchen of the 1920s with gas lighting, cooker, hot water boiler, laundry tub, several irons and a set of curling tongs. There is also a gas-powered refrigerator which in fact dates of the 1930s. On the upper floor there are devices for measuring gas flow, some history



of the gas company, models of ships used to transport coal (which reached the works by a rail siding) and a clock by which workers punched their time cards.



The museum is open to the public on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and at other times by arrangement for groups. There are trails for children to follow. There is no charge for entry but of course donations are possible.

Gardening group

Picture from the convenor Angie Barnes



The gardening group visited the Framework Knitters museum in Wigston where there is also a lovely garden.

French Conversation Advanced 2 *Joe Goddard – Convenor*

This cheerful and chatty group meets regularly in the Knighton and Clarendon Park (conservative) Club, and enjoys a lively unprepared and impromptu afternoon of informal chat. The members really make the character of the meetings which I for one always look forward to.

The thoroughly pleasant and friendly welcome from Rebecca at the club (with tea/coffee) really adds to a great afternoon. Our fluency ranges from "competent average" (such as me) to flawless bilingual --a joy to learn from!

One of our number, John Sandford-Smith, has just produced a brilliant memoir of his life as a general surgeon and above all as an ophthalmic surgeon working in Leicester and around the world.

Intended for family and friends, it was a privilege to receive a copy. With the title "Against the Stream?", this has to be one of the most fascinating and inspiring books I have read for some time. It takes us into hospitals and care centres run by astonishingly selfless and dedicated staff around the emerging world. A real page-turner.

As a number of us are gardeners, our meeting for Thursday 27th July was at Coton Manor Gardens. A fortuitous window in the weather gave us a beautiful day and a great gathering in the gardens and the cafe. Conversation was in French and English!"

Bookworms *Tony Locke – member*

I don't think it needs a commentary; its decaying state speaks, not just for itself, but for many other forlorn attempts to keep books available to the communities. This one is tucked in the corner of a hedge in Walberswick, Suffolk. Some villages still have the red telephone boxes packed with books on sturdy shelves, but they too risk mouldering and giving way to housing defibrillators. Whilst, in this case, the timber is rotting, the books look crisp, neat and loved and, so far, not chewed by rodents and insects. There didn't appear



to be any young goats or children sleeping or reading in the bottom tray. That would have been magic and a surprise.

NaturalHistory Group *Steph Smith – Ex Convenor*

About 2 years ago, I took over as Convenor of the Natural History Group, having the huge boots of Richard Edwards to fill. It has been a delight to meet up with similar-minded people to explore the various wildlife areas of Leicester and sometimes further afield. We kept going during lock-down, with Zoom sessions on a particular wildlife topic (e.g. Rodents) with a different aspect presented by each attending group member, and quizzes. We've visited most of the nature reserves locally, several times, through different seasons, as well as venturing further afield into Warwickshire and outlying regions of Leicestershire. We've had group sessions in people's homes, again looking at just one topic e.g. insects, and we've even been pond-dipping. We've even had a session walking through the streets looking at 'pavement plants'. However, as some of you may know, my life has taken a rather unexpected turn, and I'm now in a (for want of a better phrase) rock band*. This takes up a huge amount of my time, and I no longer feel I can do justice to the role of Convenor. I have resigned from the position, indeed, from the group. I don't think there are many groups in Leicester u3a that couldn't do with more members, and such is the case with the Natural History group. There are currently 9 members, it would be great if people with an interest in local wildlife and the environment generally would come along to join the group. It would be even

better if one of them, or indeed any of the current members, could take over the mantle of Group Convenor. I have left with no notice, so I suppose, they are a bit adrift atm. If anyone is interested in becoming Convenor, please let Neil Taylor or Dave Barnes know, as they are sharing the role of Groups Co-ordinator. So, thank you to everyone in the group, present and past, who have shared my interest in nature, and who have allowed me to bore them to death going on about plants!

POETRY CORNER – poetry by individual members

Blackberry Picking (after Seamus Heaney) *Sue Howard - Member*

We always went blackberry picking
(A reminder too that other creatures also enjoyed them)
'Grandma, grandma, look, look a black one!'
He'd call time and time (and time) again...
Yesss... my reply, I see it.

'I can't reach that one grandma, lift me up!'
So, (he was really heavy now he was 3) I did
Straining and forcing myself to lift a small boy high up to
Reach his one blackberry (just *that* one)

That glistened in the sunshine
Its fullness so pronounced
Pregnant in its ripeness and perhaps, who knows?
Its desire to be picked by a small enough hand
Desperate to have it, pluck it, for his pot

'I've got it grandma!' he'd yell
Triumphant, jubilant, success in his achievement
As a picker, of blackberries

They'd have to be taken home
But, of course, the occasional one popped into a small, waiting
mouth
'Just one grandma' he'd say

The telltale inky stains on his fingers, his chin or cheek
Or teeshirt, or shorts
And lips, of course
Black or deep red juice, sometimes more powerful in its colour than
its flavour
Evocative, knowing, always a sign of taking what should have been
in the pot
A clue to their whereabouts (if we ever needed one of course)

But it was OK because the lanes were full of them
Hundreds and hundreds of them
Competing seedlings and dogged saplings
Defying dryness, poor earth, wind, rain, sweltering sunshine (as the
earth changed)
To produce this globe of such juicy richness
That was worth, to him, a small boy with his pot,
More than gold.

CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE & NATURAL HISTORY

NATURAL HISTORY

Steph Smith – Convenor at the time



Tuesday morning
saw 6 members of
the Natural History
Group at
Cossington
Meadows for our
June meeting. The
Meadows is a
nature reserve run
by the
Leicestershire and
Rutland Wildlife
Trust. While we
were there we saw
trees, flowers,
bugs, few
butterflies or birds

(though we did hear lots of birds) and an extremely poisonous plant. The photos show some of what we saw.

Then

Live, laugh, learn, the motto of u3a. Well I'm still here, so I've got the first word covered, I do my fair share of laughing, and even on a routine walk round Aylestone Meadows with the Natural History Group, it seems I'm still learning. I've walked round the meadows dozens of times, it certainly was a favourite spot during lockdown and I love taking the group there. Despite this, I still managed to find several plants which I had never seen before. Here they are on this photo collage, their names are: Cotton Thistle, Conopodium acanthium; Viper's Bugloss, Echium vulgare; Agrimony, Agrimonia eupatoria;



eupatoria;
Hemp
Agrimony,
Agrimonia
cannabinum;
Garden
Loosestrife,
Lysimachia
vulgaris.
More detail, if
anyone is
interested, is
on the
Leicester u3a
Facebook
page.

COOKERY CORNER

Please do let us know if you have a favourite recipe that you would be happy to share <mailto:newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk>

PUZZLE CORNER

A Quiz (from Henry Paulinski's Pub Quiz Group)

General Knowledge

- 1 Which commonly used French phrase means "A relatively light perfume"?
- 2 What are the official colours of the coats of Ayrshire dairy cows?
- 3 How many Olympic Gold Medals has Chris Hoy won?
- 4 Who was the Lancashire-born comedian who wrote the 1981 novel "Mr. Lonely"?
- 5 You've seen 10 Downing Street on TV numerous times, but the number wasn't originally 10: what was it?
- 6 In which English county would you find Hengistbury Head, a sandstone promontory with human habitation dating from 10,500BC?
- 7 Which former Chancellor of the Exchequer was appointed editor of the London Evening Standard in 2017?
- 8 Billie Jean King played Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match in 1973. In which city?
- 9 Which conductor became Music Director of the London Symphony Orchestra in 2017?
- 10 You'll be familiar with the HMV records logo of dog and record: name the dog.

Solution on page 18

A Sudoku (created by Cliff Ault – Member Cryptic Crossword Group) **Solution on page 19.**

						3		
1	8							
			3		4		7	8
3	2				8			
				6	1			7
	7	6		5		4		
						7	9	6
	9				2			
5				4				2

CARTOON CORNER – MEMBER TONY LOCKE



ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

Delivery

The newsletter is printed for those who prefer a hard copy. It is available on a first come first served basis at the monthly meeting and coffee morning. If you would like a hard copy but cannot make these events the secretary is happy to send a copy by post to anyone who sends her a supply of stamps and their full address. It will, also, continue to be delivered to members by email as a pdf file before each monthly meeting.

Photos

Please remember to get permission from any people in your photos for us to publish them. This permission will be assumed if you send them to the editor.

The deadline for items to be included in the October newsletter is Friday 22nd September 2023. Contributions should be sent to the Editor at: newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk If you want to submit your entry as hard copy, please contact the Editor or Membership Secretary for the postal address.

QUIZ SOLUTION

- 1 Eau de toilette
- 2 Red and white
- 3 Six
- 4 Eric Morecombe
- 5 Five
- 6 Dorset
- 7 George Osbourne
- 8 Houston
- 9 Sir Simon Rattle
- 10 Nipper

SUDOKU SOLUTION

7	4	9	1	8	6	3	2	5
1	8	3	5	2	7	9	6	4
2	6	5	3	9	4	1	7	8
3	2	1	4	7	8	6	5	9
8	5	4	9	6	1	2	3	7
9	7	6	2	5	3	4	8	1
4	1	2	8	3	5	7	9	6
6	9	8	7	1	2	5	4	3
5	3	7	6	4	9	8	1	2