



PARK NOTTINGHAM u3a

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to October's newsletter, crammed full of reports and interest and compiled for us as usual by Ravi Sankaran.

The past month seems to have been more busy than usual, with a lot of u3a activity. The most significant event, for some, was the Annual General Meeting, where we installed our new committee for the forthcoming year.

Chair	Graham Edwards
Vice Chair	Ian Henderson
Business Secretary	Jean Henderson
Treasurer	Melissa Long
Non-Officer Members	Jane Ellis Liz Gilder Jo Martin Richard Maxwell Angela Pratten Hema Sankaran Sarah Waites

Our new line-up, as you can see, includes many old faces, but encouragingly, plenty of new ones. Our long-serving treasurer, Liz Gilder, has accounted for her maximum six years, as permitted under u3a rules, and has had to retire. Thank you, Liz, for such service. Thankfully Melissa Long has stepped in. The other officers remain unchanged. Amongst the other posts, Andrew Martin has served his full term and was therefore ineligible to rejoin the committee. Thank you, Andrew, for your work and support over the past few years. I hope we can welcome you back soon. Meanwhile, we are pleased to welcome Richard Maxwell onto the committee, and also Angela Pratten, Sarah Waites and Liz Gilder who rejoin. This means we now have a committee of 11, which should lead to some lively discussion. We do still have a few vacancies if anyone is interested....

As, or perhaps despite, the fact that it followed the AGM, we had a record turnout for the Monthly Meeting with seating at a premium. The speaker, from My Sight Notts. described the need for support for those with eyesight impairment and impressed with the technological assistance now available.

The interest groups all seem to have had a busy month, with regular meetings for most. Canasta in particular is recruiting well, and now has room for more players at its new regular meeting place. The Science Reading Group held its first active meeting and is already starting to examine a lot of high-minded subjects. Plants and Picnics, Mah Jong, Photography, Book Club, Film Club and Local History meetings are all going well. Although the Long Walks have continued, the Short Walk and Longer Walk programmes have sadly been interrupted by Andrew's injury. He updates us in his article within.

The English Language Group, via its WhatsApp discussions found hilarity in media headlines. Both Music Appreciation and Dining have programmes for outings in October. Rod Mitchell spent time in Slovenia and reports that UK is not alone in having difficulty running a railway. The one-off croquet experience seemed to have been enjoyed by those who attended – a new activity for some for next year?

There you are; much to read, to look back on, and to look forward to. I hope you all enjoy it.

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Graham Edwards – Chair

September Monthly Meeting – Sarah Waites

The speaker for the monthly meeting on **20th September** was **Michael Conroy**, CEO of the Notts-based charity, My Sight.



My Sight's vision is for independence, inclusion and empowerment for people with sight loss. My Sight is not to be confused with the RNIB although there is liaison. The work of My Sight seems particularly "close to home" in our u3a with many of our members dealing with personal visual impairment or that of friends or family; or involved as volunteers with the charity. Not primarily a campaigning organisation, My Sight do lobby local authorities and private organisations about practical solutions to include people with visual impairments into full participation in society. In the city, street furniture and outdoor seating for cafes are added to pavements; and scooters and e-bikes are strewn on pavements, without considering guide dog users and long cane users. Many businesses, leisure venues and health practices are difficult for people with sight loss to navigate internally, with poor

lighting, poor contrast and many visual only instructions. My Sight provides access audits for a wide range of organisations, as well as Sight Loss Awareness Training for staff to improve customer or patient experience. Practices of healthcare professionals can be unhelpful, even in Ophthalmology – especially in Ophthalmology at the QMC!

My Sight helps to improve contrast and configurations of rooms for people with sight loss and teaches people to guide correctly. They have trained over 250 healthcare professionals in sighted guiding, effective communication with visually impaired patients and information on all the support that's available. This is not automatically provided after a medical diagnosis, which can sound brutal and final.

People with visual impairments are discriminated against in employment. Three quarters of employable people with sight loss are unemployed, the highest unemployment figure of any disability group, yet here are many technical solutions and other support available to enable people to remain employable. Access to Work will pay for equipment and software for magnification of large screens, speech software and various digital devices to assist the employee, as well as support for taxis in work time if someone's job requires travel. They run an employment project called *Works for Me* that helps unemployed people with sight loss to get work-ready, to improve their accessible tech skills, to learn their rights and to know how to ask for support.

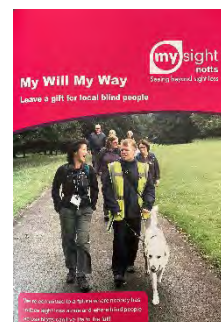
Accessible Technology is perhaps the biggest enabler for people with sight loss today. Expensive software has been replaced by cheap or even free apps, and since 2010 there has been a gradual increase in older people benefitting from assistive technology. Covid drove progress. In the first year of the pandemic My Sight enabled over 80 people to get online for the first time, mostly done remotely using team viewer or telephone, sometimes with friends and families assisting. Michael demonstrated one amazing phone app, which reads any text it is pointed at, even some handwriting.

There is a *Smart Space* at the My Sight Support Centre on Heathcoat Street in town, where a range of technology for the home can be demonstrated. Smart plugs and smart bulbs enable

people to turn lights, heaters, fans on and off by simply giving a voice command to an Alexa/Siri or Google device. They demonstrate the accessibility functions of a Smart TV set up to work entirely on voice commands for most things a sighted person would do. This support centre has a range of high and low-tech devices from standard illuminated magnifiers to digital magnifiers, from talking watches to talking microwaves, large-print playing cards to large-print scrabble. They have devices for just about every daily activity, to enable people to live independently and safely at home.

Many visually impaired people, after their adverse diagnosis, are at risk of losing confidence, becoming reclusive, developing low self-esteem, depression and sometimes becoming suicidal. My Sight Notts clearly fills that yawning gap between despair and a continuing satisfying life. The My Sight Eye Clinic liaison officer at the hospital gives information, helps people understand their condition and their treatment pathways, provides initial one to one emotional support and signposts services. The *Shared Vision* service, combining practical and emotional peer support, has provided 70 individuals with guidance, support and encouragement, helped individuals with sight loss to build confidence and overcome challenges. This can and does transform people's lives. Half of My Sight's service delivery staff has visual impairment as have many of their valuable volunteers.

My Sight Notts faces exceptionally challenging financial circumstances with its largest annual deficit ever. This has meant redundancies that have badly impacted their services. They rely on some notable funders and benefactors. Income from legacies provides a quarter to a third of their annual income. Legacy packs are available for you or a company you may know who might be interested in taking it on as their charity. We have spare brochures and legacy packs if required.



My Sight thanks the u3a members for their kind donations at our coffee morning. Some members asked if they could donate online. Here is the link: <https://www.mysightnotts.org.uk/> where there is a "donate" button. Also, the link to the legacy pack is at <https://www.mysightnotts.org.uk/legacies-2/>

Our next speaker on **Tuesday 17th October** is **Janina Wyzykiewicz** who is the Estate Planning Practitioner from Co-op Estate Planning and will give us a talk entitled: **Tax, Care & Toy Boys**. Janina is recommended by other u3a groups as a good speaker, not obviously trying to promote services.

She will talk to us on what you thought you knew about wills and more. It is aimed at encouraging people quite literally to think outside the box (if you pardon the expression), exploring what could possibly go wrong even with a will in place.

The next Monthly Meeting and talk will be at the **Castle Lawn Tennis Club, Tennis Drive**. We will meet at 10.30am for coffee, with the speaker at 11.00am.

Travel Notes, October 2023: by Rod Mitchell

Slovenia: Europe's hidden gem?

For such a small country, Slovenia packs in a lot of beautiful scenery, picturesque towns and villages, and several major tourist attractions, all within easy reach of each other. I say 'hidden gem' advisedly. Postojna Cave has long been a major tourist attraction, with a massive parking lot, hotels, bars, restaurants and shops. A pre-booked time slot for entry is now obligatory, putting tour companies at an advantage over the casual, individual traveller. Similarly, the 4 km walk through the Vintgar Gorge is now one-way and has to be pre-booked. I'll comment on Lake Bled later, but it's evident that Slovenia has had to cope with some over-tourism.

I travelled with PTG Tours (strapline "Railways and Culture") who have been running two tours for some years: Vintage Slovenia (Ljubljana and Lake Bled) followed by Hidden Slovenia (Maribor and the east). It was possible to book both tours as one package, but I chose the former and booked the ground-only option. I spent a couple of days in Vienna before joining the tour group. This was my third visit to the Austrian capital, but the first when it was warm and sunny. It also gave me an excuse to travel on the Semmering line, Austria's oldest main line railway, and one of the most scenic in the world. The journey into Slovenia is equally spectacular, featuring wild rivers running through wooded gorges, and the occasional white church atop a hill.

I arrived in Ljubljana on Sunday 10th September, the official start date of the tour. The joining instructions made no reference to a welcome gathering or meal, so I found a pizzeria close to the hotel. I did not meet the tour manager and the rest of the group until the following morning, when I learnt there had been a welcome dinner the previous evening and this was included in the tour price. The tour manager apologised profusely and refunded me €30, but my Google review had already lost one star.



Ljubljana's historic centre, including its hilltop castle, can be explored in a day. Our young Slovenian tour guide did his country proud, explaining how language has been fundamental in framing Slovenia's cultural identity (a subject for a revived Language and Culture Group perhaps?). After a short diversion to Revolution Square and its Communist era buildings and monuments, we boarded a boat for a cruise along the river. A full lunch had been promised, but this turned out to be few canapés but plentiful wine and beer. So, full liquid lunch perhaps.

Postojna is a 90-minute train ride from Ljubljana. A coach picked us up from the station and took us to Predjama Castle, for a short visit and coffee/comfort stop. The castle is built into a sheer rock face and was a good warm-up for the main attraction, Postojna Cave, which is a 20-minute drive away. I can safely say it lived up to all the hype. The temperature outside was 25 degrees, inside 8 to 10, hence the advice to wear warm clothing. I had not packed any, but soon warmed up during the walk round the cave, access to which is by a little train.



The tour included trips on two of Slovenia's scenic railway lines. The Sava Gorge line to Dobova, on the Croatian border, includes much of the scenery I described earlier. At Dobova a

coach met us, and we drove into the hills nearby to visit a “repnice” or wine cave. This was the first of two wine tastings in the tour itinerary. Unfortunately, Slovenian wine is a bit ‘meh’, an opinion shared by many in the tour group, and inferior to the landscape in which it is grown. I skipped both sessions after a couple of sips and went outside to take some photos. However, the lunch on both occasions was excellent so one star is added to that Google review.

Our transfer to Lake Bled included a diversion to Lake Bohinj for a trip on the Vogel cable car. Lake Bohinj is probably the real hidden gem of Slovenia, being more beautiful and less crowded than Lake Bled. The views from the Vogel summit of the lake below and the distant mountains were breathtaking.



The tour itinerary allowed one day free to explore Lake Bled, which was about enough. The lake is 2km. by 1.4 km and it takes less than half a day to walk all the way round, allowing for photo/selfie/ice cream stops. A hike up to the castle (there’s no funicular) will take additional time. At the western end sits a small island with a church which is only accessible by ‘pletna’, a large rowing boat steered

gondolier style. I sat and watched as tour buses disgorged hordes of trippers, mobiles almost surgically attached to hand. A fleet of pletnas ferried them over to the island for a statutory half hour of Instagramming. Yes, Lake Bled is very, very pretty and I took selfies and lots of piccies. Tune out all the tourist hoopla and you find the lake itself is tranquil. Not one jet ski or motorboat disturbs the flat clear water – bliss.

The PTG Google review lost two stars the following day (that’s being generous). The tour itinerary included a steam-hauled private charter along the Bohinj Railway from Bled Jezero. This was later changed to diesel haulage as the steam locomotive was said to be ‘non-operational’. On arrival in Lake Bled we were informed that, due to infrastructure works, part of the line was closed and replacement buses operating. However, even without the partial line closure, no private charter, steam or diesel-hauled, would have been possible. As an ex-railwayman in our party pointed out, some basic research on Google would have confirmed that all private and heritage rail operations in Slovenia, including museums, had closed at the start of the year. Any steam locos not destined for the scrapyard, were stuck on plinths in various stations. Any decent rail tour operator would have checked this and devised an alternative itinerary for the day.

Arriving at Bled Jezero, our tour group crammed onto the single replacement bus, displacing some locals it appeared. At Bohinj Bistrica we boarded a two-car diesel train which also deserved scrapping. It was covered in graffiti. To see outside, we lowered the windows wide, only for some Germans to complain about the cold (It was 25 degrees!). At Kanal station, a coach met us, and we were taken to our second wine-tasting, in the Goriška Brda region close to the Italian border. This was followed by another excellent lunch in a small hilltop village overlooking a gorgeous landscape.

We were spared the replacement bus on our return journey and the final two days of the tour were very enjoyable. The walk through the Vintgar Gorge ought to be on most people’s bucket list, but beware the steep climb from the finish back to the car/coach park. Our final day featured a hair-raising drive up and down some



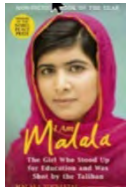
vertiginous mountain passes, ending at Most na Soci. This lies further up the Sava river. Here a silent electric boat operates cruises along the mirror-like river and lake which have been created behind a hydro-electric plant.

So, Slovenia gets 5 stars, but I'm sticking with 3 stars for PTG Tours. Despite the excellent lunches and the hard-working tour manager (who could not be blamed for the howlers), the non-existent rail charter was an epic fail. Nonetheless, I'd not rule them out when planning a visit to an unfamiliar country.

Rod Mitchell roderic.mitchell56@gmail.com.

NEWS FROM THE INTEREST GROUPS

Book Club – *Convenor, Liz Gilder*



We met on **Friday 15th September** to discuss the book '**I am Malala the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban**'. When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley, one girl fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday 9th October 2012, she almost paid the ultimate price when she was shot in the head at point-blank range. Malala Yousafzai's extraordinary journey has taken her from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations. At seventeen, she had become a global symbol of peaceful protest and is the youngest ever winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. The book is co-authored with Christina Lamb who is one of the world's leading foreign correspondents. She has reported on Pakistan and Afghanistan since 1987. Educated at Oxford and Harvard she has won a string of awards. She currently works for the Sunday Times and lives between London and Portugal with her husband and son.

Some of us felt the writing was quite juvenile, but perhaps Christina Lamb documented in Malala's words rather than her own. It was very interesting to see how the Taliban gradually obtained control of North Pakistan, and reduced girls' education in particular, subjecting them to staying at home.

Our next read is "**The Ink Black Heart**" by **Robert Galbraith**. When a frantic, dishevelled Edie Ledwell appears in the office begging to speak to her, private detective Robin Ellacott isn't sure what to make of the situation. The co-creator of a popular cartoon, The Ink Black Heart, Edie is being persecuted by a mysterious online figure who goes by the name of Anomie. Edie is desperate to uncover Anomie's identity, but Robin doesn't think the agency can help her. A few days later, Robin reads the shocking news that Edie has been murdered in Highgate Cemetery. Robin and her business partner Cormoran Strike become drawn into the quest to track down Anomie. But with a complex web of online aliases, business interests and family conflicts to navigate, Strike and Robin find themselves embroiled in a case that stretches their powers of deduction to the limits and which threatens them in new and horrifying ways.



We meet on **Friday 20th October at 3.45 p.m.** hosted by one of our members. Happy reading!

To join the Book Club, contact e.gilder@peoplemarketing.co.uk.

Reported by Jean Henderson

Canasta Club – *Convenor, Jane Ellis*

Dates when we meet to the end of the year are as follows (all games played on a Thursday) :

- **5th and 19th October**
- **2nd and 16th November**
- **7th and 21st December**

Meetings are at Castle Lawn Tennis Club. All sessions will start at 4.00 pm and finish at 6.00 pm, unless otherwise notified.

As we will not be limited on numbers anymore, it will be much easier for anyone to come along for a 'taster' session or just watch us play, to see if you might like it. Please contact Jane Ellis ellisjane215@gmail.com if you would like to do this.

Dining Group – *Convenor, Adrienne Lee*

We are returning to **Fletcher's** at Nottingham College on **Friday 13th October**, for which we are fully booked. This is a training facility for Hospitality and Catering students, who are supervised by professionals and guest chefs. The new building is a light and airy contemporary space, a big improvement on the Adams Building in the Lace Market which housed it until 2020.

The menu is £14.95 for 2 courses and £16.95 for 3, which is outrageously good value given the high standards on display. The waiting staff are students as well, so the occasional blip is seen as a learning experience! We like to support the next generation of catering staff, particularly at a time when shortage of trained staff threatens an industry already beset by rising costs. However, this is no hardship if our last visit is an indicator of what to expect this time.

If you want to join us, contact Adrienne at adriennesuperade@gmail.com

English Language Group – *Convenor, Margaret Wiedemann*

As London's Mayor Sadiq Khan scales down his environmental commitments following the Ulez furore, a headline in the *Telegraph* prompted a puzzled question from one of our members. "Plan to charge all non-electric cars by 2025 shelved, says Khan." But surely non-electric cars don't actually need charging?

Another apparently superfluous headline announced: "Nurses drugged patients, Jury told." Just doing their job, then? In an expanded version of the same item, the nurses were accused of drugging patients "to make their life easier". Yes, that's frequently the purpose of medication. It was left to a Guerilla Grammarian to come up with an elegant and clear version: "It is claimed that patients are being drugged to make the nurses' lives easier". Right, got it at last.

In a month of one misleading headline after another, "GoCompare man Wynne Evans tells fans of suicide attempt after Masterchef win" caught our attention. Although of course delighted that the ear-splitting and moustachioed Wynne (aka "Gio Compario") is still in the land of the living, we were rather disappointed that it wasn't the Masterchef triumph that had plunged him into existential despair. In fact, the win provided him with an opportunity to share his regenerative journey from a few years previously.

Not a headline, but a Tesco label prompted perhaps the month's greatest hilarity. Always keen to benefit from the wit and wisdom of an even older generation, we were elated to hear that an elderly grandparent had parsed the mononymic vegetable "MANGETOUT" as "man get out". If you too like to home in on the essentials, you'll find a welcome at mjwh57@gmail.com.

Film Group – *Convenor, Ian Henderson*



The Film Club returned to familiar territory for our September film. A subtitled French film with a limited release, '**Paris Memories**' is set in Paris, and follows the story of Mia, who struggles to discover what happened in the terrorist attack in which she was injured and lost her memory

The brother of the director, Alice Winocour, was caught up in the Bataclan terrorist attack, which doubtless affected the way the film looked, felt and developed its theme.

As is often the case, our group of seven (plus a further three who saw the film but were unable to attend the meeting) was split in its opinion over the film. The handling of the attack, which was itself quite short, was on the one hand thought to be terrifying, but conversely underplayed. The acting of Virginie Efira, who played Mia, and who was on screen for much of the time, received a lot of praise. Her performance was often expressed through her face rather than words, and was quite engrossing. However, the way the story evolved – the way she was able to track down other victims of the massacre, those who helped her, and the way her romantic relationship developed – was rather implausible and less well accepted.

The range of scores was therefore quite broad but averaged 7. This was significantly lower than the critics and audience figures which were generally around 9.



Our next film is rather more mainstream – '**A Haunting in Venice**', Kenneth Branagh's latest instalment as Poirot, based on Agatha Christie's Halloween Party. As well as directing, Kenneth Branagh stars together with Michelle Yeoh and Kelly Reilly.

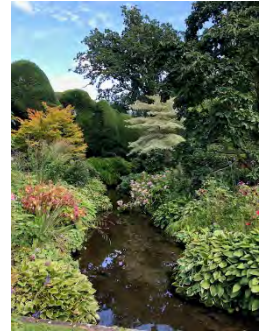
We meet to discuss the film on **Friday 6th October at 4pm**. If you are not on our circulation list, contact Ian Henderson on ianhenderson73@gmail.com

Local History Group – Convenor, Anne Hardy

Melbourne Hall

Our last visit planned by Stephen Hyde, a visit to **Melbourne Hall**, took place on **Thursday 24th August**.

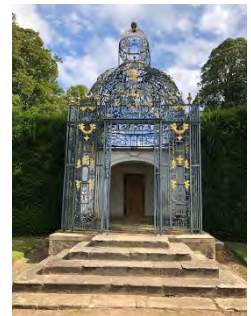
My father used to say that the sun shone on the righteous, which is very comforting as our last two visits have been in perfect weather. It was just the right temperature for sitting outside in the spacious courtyard for coffee or huge hot chocolates when we arrived. It was perfect for walking down to the mill pond: in fact, so perfect that most of the party decided to do the circular walk. It wasn't too hot for exploring the garden and the sun obligingly kept peeping out for taking photos.



The garden layout has mostly remained untouched since the early 1700s when it was initially laid out. The baroque style of Le Notre influenced the creation of the garden. There are wide lawns, avenues, pools, fountains and lead statues. The landscaping around the bog garden and stream is more informal and colourful.



Overlooking the lake is an imaginative wrought iron gazebo entitled "the Birdcage" (see photo). I have visited the garden in the past and strangely there has always been just one solitary swan on the lake. It was the same on Thursday, just one lonely looking bird.



In the house, on display, were some beautiful paintings of the garden painted at either dawn or dusk to capture the special ethereal quality of the light. The artist was Marie-Claire Kerr, the chatelaine of the house, who had also displayed portraits of her children in the house. Most were of a son, who according to our entertaining and knowledgeable guide, was not restless or fidgety and enjoyed sitting still.

At the end of our allotted time for the visit to the house we did feel we were experts on the history of the hall and its inhabitants, not just the formal facts but the quirky stories which brought the past to life. I could not possibly summarise what we learnt. Instead, here are three facts, in no particular order, which interested me:

- The house has been in the same family for over 600 years, sometimes passing through the female line.
- The political associations of past owners
 - 🚩 Sir John Coke (1563–1644) Secretary of State to King Charles 1st
 - 🚩 2nd Lord Melbourne (1779–1848) was Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister.
 - 🚩 Melbourne's sister Emily's second husband, Lord Palmerston, was also one of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers
- Melbourne (Australia) was named after Queen Victoria's 1st Prime Minister

At the end of our visit the sun was still shining. I think our members had enjoyed themselves and I would like to thank them for their kind comments.

Rushcliffe Country Park: Bombs To Butterflies

Yet again our group was blessed with perfect weather for our visit. This was on **Friday 29th September**, meeting at **Rushcliffe Country Park** for coffee at 10.30am, enjoyed outside in the sunshine. There were ten of us who had come to listen to Rosemary, whose knowledge and enthusiasm were unlimited, and she was able to explain the connection between bombs and butterflies.

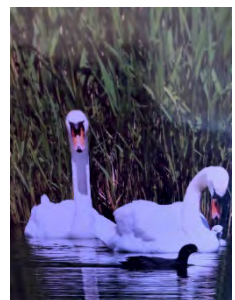
The area covered by the modern Country Park was once farmland, but in August 1940 with the Battle of Britain being fought in the air over Southern England, heavy earth moving machinery moved into Ruddington and to quote a local farmer, Jack Bagguley, *"There was corn standing this high you know, but it didn't make any difference, they went straight in, there was no arguing, they just tore into it and then it was gone"*. Life changed for ever! A huge Ordnance, Supply and Disposal Depot was quickly built to supply bombs and shells. The high risk of explosion and the devastation that would follow meant that the filling factories could not be built in urban areas. Miraculously, unlike at Chilwell Ordnance depot, there were no accidents.

Now jump forward to the end of the war, and the years that followed, and imagine the problems of what to do with this huge site and equipment. Tanks were cut up and destroyed, buildings reduced to rubble and equipment auctioned off. Two cars which were sold became famous, (or should I say infamous) as they were used in the Great Train Robbery.

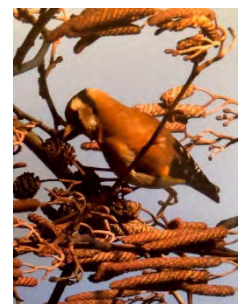


Now jump forward again to the 1990s and the Country Park is born. A lot of the inspired work is done by the 60+ volunteers of the Park, or Friends of the Park as they are called and to which our guide and speaker belonged. We saw slides of the fauna and flora, all carefully identified, and the different

areas and habitats we could explore. This we now did. Chairman Graham walked round the perimeter, whilst some of us just walked round the lake trying to identify the different species of water birds.



As it was pleasantly warm some of us purchased a light lunch to eat outside and to reflect how lucky we are to enjoy such lovely facilities for the cost of a pound parking fee, and to see the butterflies, birds and bees.



If you are interested in the activities of this group, please reach out on annehardy18@icloud.com.

MahJong Group – *Convenor Graham Edwards*

The group met for coffee, cake and a few hands of MahJong in the afternoon following the AGM on **Tuesday 19th September**, with some new members too. It was a convivial, interesting and educational time – the spirit of u3a.

The next meeting will be on the afternoon of **Tuesday 17th October**. Members on the MahJong mailing list will receive an email nearer the time, detailing the arrangements for the meeting.

If you are interested in joining us, and have not added your name to the list, please drop me a note at grahamedwards542@gmail.com.

Previous experience is not necessary.

Music Appreciation Group *Convenor, Jacky Fisher*

There were no meetings in September, but plans are now in place for meeting on **Wednesday 25th October** for an introduction to the music that will be played in the Royal Concert Hall on **Friday 27th October**. Also planned is a trip to Peggy Skylight for a jazz concert at 12:30 on **Sunday 29th October**.

Further details of time and venue will be provided to members of this group.

If anyone is interested in joining this group, please contact: Jacky Fisher (gandjfisher23@gmail.com).

Photography Group – *Convenor, Rod Mitchell*

The Photography Group will be meeting on **Monday 16th October** to review our images on the theme of “Heat” and choose up to a dozen of the hottest. Expect some ingenious responses to this challenge in November’s newsletter.

Through Ian, Graham, and soon your convenor, group members have been active in the Artspeak Photography Club. Club activities alternate between outside visits (the National Forest and Matlock Bath being recent destinations) and sessions at Cafe Sobar on Friar Lane. The Club continues to attract new members and has a busy WhatsApp group. Despite the withdrawal of Artspeak’s funding, the professional photographer, who previously worked with the Club, has continued to offer support and input.

I previously gave some tips about taking better photos on your mobile phone. Even a basic smartphone has some form of software which allows you to edit your photos on the hoof. Top of the range phones allow you to do even more, including shoot and edit 4K video or take photos in RAW format. The latest iteration of the iPhone has a capability to zoom up to 120mm. comparable to a lot of DSLR cameras. Every member of the Photography Group uses their mobile phone for all or a significant part of their photography. On my recent trip to Slovenia, I believe I used my iPhone about 50% of the time, commonly when my compact DSLR’s battery died. However, I do not expect this ratio to change anytime soon.

Plants and Picnics – *Convenor, Marion Martin*

September – and a very busy month in our gardening year, as many growing efforts come to fruition and we're busy harvesting it all.



For our meeting, a good turn-out enjoyed exploring the garden of Marion and Andrew. Having moved house in April, following a fairly hectic year, this was sold as a masterclass in how not to do it – these plants, mostly in containers, have had to look after themselves. It has been a good thing they haven't needed much watering! In the usual way though, having visitors makes you tidy up, and having put a few dead things in the bin, many couldn't see the neglect. This was another

occasion, as I have written before, where we can only see the jobs and failures in our own gardens, but visitors see the successes. It being September, a Dorset Apple Cake just had to happen...

Our WhatsApp group has been very busy this month too. There was discussion about 'mast' years, when trees produce a bumper crop of seeds (acorns, beech nuts, chestnuts) and whether this year is one. There was a spontaneous visit to Liz's allotment to harvest plums, advice about preserving apples, discussion re bees/pollinators (or lack of them), and successes and failures in the veg beds.

So now it is October, and the garden winds down? Oh no, where are those bulb catalogues...

If you are interested in this group, please contact Marion Martin at PNu3aPandP@gmail.com.

Science Reading and Discussion Group – *Convenor, Dr. Adrian Hyde*

On **Wednesday 20th September**, our first foray into the world of science took us into the mysteries of the ever-changing or 'plastic' brain, hosted by Beth and Barrie and with the discussion led by Hema.

Armed with knowledge from a variety of sources, academic papers to lay-science articles, we plunged into a stimulating discussion on some of the latest findings on the subject, noting that many studies report strong correlation as opposed to causation, and that technology is only just beginning to provide methods of measuring neural activity with a degree of accuracy. A few interesting bits from our collective reading efforts:

Drivers of London black cabs have larger hippocampi than the average population due, it is believed, to having to hold that complex map of the city in their heads for the famous licencing test, known as The Knowledge.

Some studies indicate that learning music or a new language, as well as abstract learning, increase cortical thickness, and this appears to provide 'cognitive reserve' and thus more protection against developing dementia.

Areas of our brain are capable of swapping tasks if required: for example, if one area is damaged due to accident or illness. Indeed, as we age, our 'plastic' brains begin to use both hemispheres for tasks that used to take place in only one hemisphere.

As active members of the u3a, we were mighty pleased to see that the research supports the value of an active lifestyle and lifelong learning in maintaining and increasing brain plasticity.

For our October meeting, we bravely venture into more abstract territory, seeking to get a grasp of the frontiers of physics from the very small to the very large: from quantum theory to architecture of the cosmos. We will be reading the Italian physicist **Carlo Rovelli's** acclaimed book **'Seven Brief Lessons in Physics'** by way of preparation, and Paul Stapleton will lead what will no doubt be an engrossing discussion.

If you suspect that you'd enjoy dipping a toe into diverse matters scientific, then please email Adrian Hyde at a.f.l.hyde@sheffield.ac.uk for details.

Hema Sankaran

Walking Groups

Short Walks

After six years as convenor of the Short Walks, Andrew Martin has decided to step down. As yet, we have not heard from anyone who wants to take over. The role would suit a small group of two or three members who could share the responsibility of organising and setting up the Short Walks. If you would be interested in being part of this small group, please contact either Andrew, Jane Ellis (Groups Coordinator) or Graham Edwards (Chair).

Long Walks – Convenor, Graham Edwards

Our Long Walk this month on **Tuesday 26th September** was a circular route around the Derwent Valley near Ambergate in Derbyshire, a rerun of our September 2022 walk.

The day of the walk started with thunder, lightning and heavy rain. However, 11 of us had great trust in the veracity of the BBC weather forecast and we set off by car to Ambergate Station (some by a more direct route than others). Sure enough, by the time we reached the start of the walk the rain had stopped and the sky had begun to clear.



We set off across the A6 to climb the long track up the west side of the Derwent Valley, and through the top end of Shining Cliff Woods. The route then led us along quiet roads and tracks towards Alderwasley School. There was an opportunity to stop for coffee at a convenient carved log seating layout, whilst taking in the views over the valley



towards Crich. The weather by this time had settled to warm and partly sunny, a major contrast to earlier in the day.

We then continued downhill to the A6, taking the coward's (cowherd's?) route down the road avoiding the field of lively cows and their young. At the bottom of the hill, The Family Tree restaurant and cafe provided us with a much-anticipated but perhaps overly leisurely lunch.

After lunch, there was just a short climb up to the Cromford canal and a couple of miles of flat walking to Ambergate along the towpath. The canal at this point is being dredged and de-weeded, an essential, welcome but odorous development, which will eventually restore boating to this section of the canal.

Overall, an unexpectedly lovely day, and a fine walk of about 6½ miles.

The next Long Walk will be on **Tuesday 24th October**. This will be a walk near East Bridgford, accessible by bus. We will utilise footpaths over the hills above the River Trent giving us views over the Notts countryside. I will also try to ensure there is somewhere for us to find refreshments.

I will be sending out full details during October to those on the Long Walks mailing list.

If you are not on the list and would like to join to receive update on our walks, please let me know: grahamedwards542@gmail.com.

Longer Walks – Convenor, Andrew Martin

Our Longer Walks will resume in October now that my injured ankle is feeling better. However, we will start with a shorter Longer Walk. This will be on **Friday 20th October**, and I am calling it **“Lost in the Woods”, Blidworth**. It will follow a new circular route of about 8 miles, mostly on good paths and bridleways with some short road sections.

Transport will be by car. The length and timing of the walk will be designed to allow members of the Book Club to get back in plenty of time to discuss *The Ink Black Heart* at their meeting on the same day. If you are not already on the Longer Walks email list, please contact me on u3aparkwalks@gmail.com for further information.

Croquet Experience

John Young had very kindly arranged for us to be invited for an afternoon’s croquet taster at the Nottingham Croquet Club. Thus it was that 13 of us found ourselves at the Club’s beautiful grounds on University Boulevard on a cool damp September afternoon.



The Club had arranged 4 of its members to show us the basics of Golf Croquet including the techniques, tactics and etiquette of the game. It was a very hands-on experience with each of us having our own weapon (mallet). We were split into four groups, each with its own instructor, and under their tutelage were soon into playing games, some more competitive than others, and some from a higher skill base!

The games were interrupted by a break for refreshments which also gave us the opportunity to exchange (tall) stories about our performance.

The afternoon concluded with an invitation to join the club and to take part in a course of lessons. Members who would like to play regularly should contact the Club via their website for details. The website will also provide details of open days and other playing opportunities.

Graham Edwards

Potential New Group – Cribbage

Those of a card-playing disposition may be interested in Sue Ayres' suggestion for a new group to meet regularly to play cribbage.

If so, please get in touch directly with Sue (sue.ayres19@btinternet.com) or with Jane Ellis our Group Coordinator (jane.ellis21@outlook.com)

Nordic Walking

Iain McGrath from Newark and District u3a has asked us to see if anyone is interested in starting a Nordic Walking Group. If so, in the first instance please contact Iain for any help and advice at macraitho2@gmail.com

You may also like to discuss this with our Group Coordinator, Jane Ellis.

Learning Opportunities available to Members

If you look on the national u3a website, u3a.org.uk, you will be able to see many online talks, workshops and courses which come free with your membership. There is a wide range of talks on offer from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution. All on-line courses are hosted on Zoom.

[Take a look here](#) to see what is on offer. [OBJ]

Jean Henderson

Computer Help!

Some members may feel that their computer skills are not sufficient to do all the things they want to on their laptops, tablets etc. Age UK is offering FREE local Digital Skill Training on a one-to-one basis. Full details are available on the website, under their Digital Inclusion Programme. Alternatively, you can contact them by phone (0115 841 4470) or email digitalinclusion@ageuknotts.org.uk.

For those of you who have a specific problem with your technology (computers, tablets, emails, WhatsApp, etc.), or know a member who does, we may be able to help internally. Please contact Graham Edwards at chair3.parknottinghamu3a@gmail.com in the first instance, and we will try to help. [OBJ]

Edwards

Graham

Park Nottingham u3a Calendar for October 2023

One way to contact group leaders is to visit our u3a website (link at the top of this newsletter) and clicking on the bluebird at the top of the relevant group page. You can then type a message that will go straight to the inbox of the convenor.

Date and Time	Event	"Venue"	Contact
Wednesday 4 th October	Plants and Picnics	Member's Garden	Marion Martin
Thursday 5 th and 19 th October 4PM	Canasta Club	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Jane Ellis
Friday 6 th October 4PM	Film Club	'A Haunting in Venice'	Ian Henderson
Monday 9 th October 2PM	Committee Meeting	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Graham Edwards
Friday 13 th October	Dining	Fletcher's	Adrienne Lee
Wednesday 18 th October	Science Group	Member's Home	Adrian Hyde
Monday 16 th October	Photography	Member's Home	Rod Mitchell
Tuesday 17 th October 10:30AM	Monthly Coffee Morning and Talk	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Sarah Waites
Tuesday 17 th October	MahJong Group	Member's Home	Graham Edwards
Friday 20 th October 3:45PM	Book Club	Member's home	Liz Gilder
Friday 20 th October	Longer Walk	Blidworth	Andrew Martin
Tuesday 24 th October	Newsletter Deadline	parku3anewsletter@gmail.com	Ravi Sankaran
Tuesday 24 th October	Long Walk	East Bridgeford	Graham Edwards
Wednesday 25 th October	Music Appreciation	Member's Home	Jacky Fisher
TBA	Short Walk	TBA	Andrew Martin
TBA	Local History	TBA	Anne Hardy

In addition to these meetings, the following groups are also "meeting" on-line:

Group	Activity	Contact
English Language Group	Discussion using WhatsApp	Margaret Wiedemann
Film Club	Discussion using WhatsApp	Ian Henderson
Photography Group	Discussion using WhatsApp	Rod Mitchell
Plants and Picnics	Discussion using WhatsApp plus visits and picnics	Marion Martin

USEFUL EMAIL ADDRESSES

Graham Edwards, Chair:

chair3.parknottinghamu3a@gmail.com

Ian Henderson, Deputy Chair:

ianhenderson73@gmail.com

Ian Henderson, Membership Secretary:

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Jean Henderson, Business Secretary:

bizsecjean@gmail.com

Ravi Sankaran, Newsletter Editor:

parku3anewsletter@gmail.com

Editor's note: If you are reading the newsletter on your computer, tablet or phone, you will find that all email addresses in blue *italics* are live and can be clicked to send a message. For example, the email addresses above are live, but the one in the box below is not. Similarly, where a link to an internet web page is offered, the blue italics indicate that this is a live link and will take you straight to the page.

Contributions for the **November Newsletter** should be sent to the editor,
Ravi Sankaran, by **Tuesday 24th October**, preferably by emailing:

parku3anewsletter@gmail.com