



PARK NOTTINGHAM u3a

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024



www.parknottinghamu3a.org.uk

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Well, here we are already – Christmas over, the New Year upon us, and this is the last newsletter of 2023 (or first of 2024, depending how you look at it). Ravi has very kindly put this together for us through the festive season and despite not being in the UK. Thanks also to all those who have contributed to the newsletter, not just this edition but all the others throughout the year.

2023 has been a busy year for Park Nottingham u3a. Our membership has continued to increase – Ian, our membership secretary reports that we now have 120 members, which is the most we have ever had.

We are now firmly established at Castle Tennis Club, our new home for Committee meetings, the monthly meeting and Canasta. The Club is also available to rent for other groups who outgrow their current meeting places.

The new committee appointed at the AGM is working well. We still have vacancies and room to co-opt members who would like to get involved in the running of the u3a.

The Social Committee did us proud, with both a Summer Party and a Christmas bash. The raffles raised enough money to fund events for 2024, so thank you to everyone for their effort and generosity.

Our Groups offering continues to increase in variety – Science Seekers and the Music Appreciation Group have both launched to an enthusiastic response. Other more established groups continue to grow, with attendance increasing with almost every meeting.

Sarah Waites, our speaker seeker, has given us a huge variety of speakers, with talks ranging from *Unknown London* to *Lavatories in Developing Countries*, *Growing for a Michelin-Starred Kitchen* to *Eco-Housing*. Attendance is now such that we have had to acquire more chairs (Thanks Liz!).

The Local History Group continues to thrive under new management. Thanks to Anne and Jane for taking over. I would urge all members of the Group to attend the planning meeting to help shape the schedule for visits in 2024.

Lastly once again if anyone would like to help run the Short Walks group, please get in touch with Andrew Martin or me.

It only remains for me to wish you a Very Happy New Year, and I look forward to seeing you at our events through the year.

Graham Edwards – Chair

Speaker for January Monthly Meeting – *Sarah Waites*

The speaker for our January 2024 monthly meeting on **Tuesday 16th January** will be **David Young**, who will give us a talk on the story of **Nottingham Castle**.

David's talk brings the history of Nottingham Castle to life with the tales of eleven monarchs and consorts who were here. It covers six hundred years of the Castle's heritage from William the Conqueror to the destruction of the medieval castle in the 17th century.

Some of the (tentative) speakers for later in 2024 are:

20th February: Cathy MacAteer – Russia

19th March: Nancy Appleyard – Body Language

16th April: Adrian Hyde – Japan

Travel Notes, December 2023: by Rod Mitchell

Disaster Tourism.

The period from the mid to late 18th century in Western Europe is commonly described as the Age of Enlightenment. Religious dogma was superseded by reason and scientific analysis of evidence. In this context, visits to natural phenomena such as volcanoes become a popular pursuit for well-to-do Brits. A small tourist industry began to emerge around Mount Vesuvius, with guides, horses, and carriages for hire, and taverns opening up along the route. An early customer was a British diplomat, Sir William Hamilton, better known as the husband of Lord Nelson's amour, Emma Hamilton.

In our own time, Iceland has become the go-to destination for disaster "tourists". Iceland has the highest concentration of active volcanoes in the world, I gather. One of them is erupting as I write this, although the Iceland government has warned people to stay away, because there is a clear threat to life. A small town has been evacuated and infrastructure is at risk. Previously, in 2021 an eruption in the same region presented less of a threat. The lava was slow moving and YouTube videos showed hordes of people hiking up the hills to take in the scene. Nonetheless, I am baffled that people came from all parts (no doubt at enormous expense, bearing in mind Iceland's huge prices) to watch some molten rock cool down – very slowly. Stay at home and watch Geology Hub instead.

Back to train ticket university.

The announcement of a 4.9% increase in rail fares was slipped out before Christmas. It is no consolation, but this is less than expected as the formula for calculating the annual fare increase was not applied in full. The Department of Transport has backed down on the closure of station booking offices but has yet to take on a long-promised reform of the fares system.

Previous attempts at reform were kicked into touch by HM Treasury, which is opposed to the idea that cheaper tickets might attract more passengers. Nonetheless, evidence from consumer surveys indicate up to 30% of the public will not travel by train, because of the complicated rail fares system. As it is, passenger numbers are almost back to pre-COVID levels, although rail commuting has declined significantly, thereby reducing season ticket revenue. My personal experience is that trains are more crowded at weekends, often uncomfortably so.

It therefore defies logic that train companies are reducing services. For example, Trans Pennine is taking some of its new trains out of service, claiming they are too unreliable. Trains between Manchester and Leeds, assuming they run at all, therefore operate with three carriages which are usually crammed.

A degree in rail travel almost becomes a necessity if one's expenditure on tickets is to be affordable. As a regular traveller, I have a Senior Railcard which gives you a one-third discount. The 3-year version works out a bit cheaper. The initial cost can be recouped in the first year if you make a couple of long-distance journeys.

I always book online, either with East Midlands Trains (for journeys to and from London) or the National Rail Enquiries website if travelling elsewhere in the UK. However, the cheaper advance tickets can go quickly so it is advisable to set up a ticket alert on East Midlands Trains' website. You will get an email telling you advance tickets are on sale for your chosen date. If you can, download the East Midlands Trains' app to your phone, as this email can arrive at an

inconvenient moment, in my case whilst on a train in Austria. Despite losing signal in tunnels, I successfully completed the purchase.

Remember, there are no booking fees on tickets purchased through National Rail Enquiries or East Midlands Trains and other operators' websites. I strongly advise against using Trainline and other agencies. Some will offer cheap prices based on split ticketing (*) and other wheezes, but a fee will be charged. Besides, you can do split ticketing online yourself, or you can visit the booking office at Nottingham station.

Flying unashamed in 2024.

I am giving international train travel a miss in 2024, for most of it anyway. I have booked seven flights next year, five of which are with Ryanair (Yes, them!). There is a good reason for this. Some of my destinations (Lisbon, Andalucia, Bergen) would involve long and expensive journeys if I travelled by land and sea. I am also visiting Krakow and Wroclaw in Poland with two friends, who do not have the inclination or wherewithal to hack across Europe by train.

Stories of bad experiences with Ryanair are legion, but still their planes are full. A look at the airline's Wikipedia page suggests that a lot of the bad PR (the '£1 to use the loo' story comes to mind) is generated by the company and its trash-talking CEO, Mr. O'Leary. The customer service has been legendarily bad, with an absence of an email address or phone number for enquiries. In the early days, onboard staff could be rude and surly. A TV documentary recorded aircrew on a stranded flight saying "They've paid f*** all so they get f*** all" as thirsty passengers sweltered in the heat.

I believe there has been some improvement since then. I have encountered no issues with my flight bookings or the onboard experience. The key is to lower one's expectations and book as far ahead as possible. This gives the best chance of booking decent seats with extra legroom. I pay the extra for a checked-in bag and take on board a 20-litre bag or rucksack, compliant with dimensions set out in Ryanair's luggage policy, and this is stowed under the seat. Amazon can sell you such a bag for as little as £12.99.

My flight to and from Bergen is with Norwegian, whose luggage policy is a bit more generous than Ryanair's. Bergen is the departure port for ships to the North Cape. Known as the 'Hurtigruten' or Norwegian Coastal Express, these ships call at 32 places on a 6-day voyage to Kirkenes near the border with Russia. I am doing the full round trip of 12 days in August. My grandparents undertook this cruise-not-a-cruise in the mid-1960s when conditions on board were somewhat spartan, but there was a passenger ferry from Newcastle to Bergen. The ships are now a lot more luxurious but absent of cruise ship irritants such as cheesy entertainment, dress codes and mandatory tipping.

However, there is a ceremony for all those crossing the Arctic Circle for the first time - I cannot wait.

Bon Voyage Rod Mitchell roderic.mitchell56@gmail.com

* Split ticketing: dividing up a long journey into two or more legs and buying a ticket for each leg to take advantage of discounted fares. This can be useful if your journey starts in the morning peak when no cheap fares are available.

NEWS FROM THE INTEREST GROUPS

Book Club – Convenor, Liz Gilder

Our book for December 2023 was **"The Rainbow" by DH Lawrence**. It tells the story of three generations of the Brangwen family, a dynasty of farmers and craftsmen who live in the East Midlands of England, on the borders of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The book spans a period of roughly 65 years from the 1840s to 1905 and shows how the love relationships of the Brangwens change against the backdrop of the increasing industrialisation of Britain. The first central character, Tom Brangwen, is a farmer whose experience of the world does not stretch beyond these two counties; while the last, Ursula, his granddaughter, studies at university and becomes a teacher in the progressively urbanised, capitalist, and industrial world. This is vintage DH Lawrence.



Many members found the book hard going but the last sixty odd pages were more interesting. The text was quite dense and did not always make sense, but that may have been Lawrence in his poetic stage!!

Our next read for January 2024 is **"The Island Child" by Molly Aitken**. The book tells two stories of the girl who grew up watching births and betrayals, storms, and secrets, and of the adult Oona, desperate to find a second chance, only to discover she can never completely escape. As the strands of Oona's life come together, in blood, marriage, and motherhood, she must accept the price we pay when we love what is never truly ours.



We meet on **Friday 19th January at 4pm** hosted by one of our members. Happy reading!

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

Canasta Club – Convenor, Jane Ellis

A very warm welcome to the New Year and all new members of Park u3aand just in case you have not made any resolutions yet, how about having a go at Canasta!

Previous experience is not essential, and we offer taster sessions for £5 per session. We are a very friendly group and many of our more experienced players are happy to impart the rules of the game and for everyone to join in. We are going to have a couple of sessions in the near future to learn how to score – which will add a further layer to our learning of the Hand and Foot Rules of the game.

Our dates for January are **Thursday 4th and Thursday 18th**, starting play at **4.00pm** (setting up from 3.45pm) and finishing at 6.00 pm. We will be meeting twice monthly on the first and third Thursdays of the month – February 1st and 15th and March 7th and 21st – same times as above.

Once again, if you are interested in joining the group or would like to come along for a taster session, please contact Jane Ellis at jane.ellis21@outlook.com. Tea/coffee and excellent biscuits are included in the fee and are served at the beginning of the meeting.

Dining Group – Convenor, Adrienne Lee

In December, our 'Christmas Meal' was lunch at **The Plough Inn** in Normanton-on-Soar (not to be confused with The Plough in Normanton-on-the-Wolds!).

It was a very cold day, and we were looking for hot food and a warm atmosphere in this well-regarded gastro-pub. Unfortunately, the heating was not turned on and the temporary heater provided was inadequate to the task of heating our section. However, we fared better with the food.



We chose from a Xmas menu at two courses for £24 and three at £30, not bad given today's prices – if the food is up to the mark! The regulation turkey meal was there alongside lamb shoulder, salmon fillet, rump steak and a squash and spinach Wellington. Starters were ham hock terrine, wild mushrooms on sourdough, curried parsnip soup and fried squid. Desserts included a Christmas Pudding with spiced apple ice cream.



Overall, the food was well-received, bar the odd complaint about a cold starter (sense a theme?). The terrine was chunky and well-flavoured, lamb was delicious, and the soup got good reviews. Service was a little slow, but we were a large party of thirteen and allowed them some leeway.

The atmosphere was friendly (not just us!), the menu was good value, and we had a great time. Well worth a trip to sample their regular menus, we think. Our rating was **7/10**.

Our next meal will be at the **Air Hostess** in Tollerton (no, not at the airport but the village), a community-run pub gaining a reputation for good food. We visit on **Friday 2nd February at 12.30**. Contact Adrienne via happyadrienne@me.com.

Report by Ian Henderson

English Language Group – Convenor, Margaret Wiedemann

When we heard that the Word of 2023 selected by Oxford University Press was “rizz”, there was a scramble for the dictionary. Our initial probe suggested that it refers to attractiveness in women, much like “It” in the days of the Bright Young Things a hundred years ago. “Rizz” can also be a verb, as when a man is said to “rizz” a woman. We agreed it was depressingly sexist, an impression confirmed a few days later when the word was discussed on the Graham Norton show by George Clooney and Tom Hanks, both wearing black from neck to foot in full macho mode. Further research reveals that a man can have rizz, but in his case it is the ability to chat up rather than be chatted, so it’s still sexist. “Rizz” is said to be an abbreviation of the gender-neutral “charisma”.

The world of car hype is a new venture for the Grammar Guerrillas, but we were captivated by *What Car?* magazine's verdict on the Lexus LC sports car: “The Lexus LC is a flawed yet desirable GT car with a surprisingly soulful edge.” In other words, it’s got rizz. We hope to bring you more motoring madness in future issues.

Our preoccupation with the apostrophe was once again richly rewarded by a prize-winning restaurant whose “sample menu's” included “gourmet taco's” (three mentions, so someone actually thinks that's how the word should look), as well as “brussle sprouts”. No-one is volunteering to find out whether the standard of English is reflected in the food.

In festive mood, the flyer for a BBC2 Christmas Eve ghost drama offered an unmissable inducement: “Staring Kit Harington”. Kit's *Game of Thrones* role as 998th Lord Commander of the Night's Watch presumably requires a lot of eye-work. If you're eagle-eyed in the spotting of linguistic anomalies and absurdities join us in 2024 by mjwh57@gmail.com.

Film Group – *Convenor, Ian Henderson*

Fourteen of us squeezed into my lounge in December to discuss '**Anatomy of a Fall**', a French film garlanded with European awards and highly ranked in the year's top film lists in UK publications.

The story began with a depiction of a fraught relationship between a successful German novelist Sandra (played by Sandra Huller, pictured right) and her husband, Vincent. He is soon found dead under a balcony at their Alpine chalet and the French police suspect her involvement. There is an extended courtroom section in which the relationship between the couple, and their young blind son, Daniel, is picked over for clues as to what might have happened. Was it suicide, accident, or murder? If the latter, who did it?



The script is less concerned with these questions, though, than exploring the marital relationship and how it can be perceived from the outside. The police have little direct evidence of a crime but press on by inferring Sandra's guilt through character attacks. It is an opportunity to look at how relationships can be judged by others. Huller's performance is a triumph of repressed anger which only finds an outlet towards the end (although in a flashback scene). Was her coldness a sign of guilt or a coping mechanism? Was Vincent gaslighted by his wife or just a whining wimp? What has the son's blindness got to do with the story? Not all questions are answered, leaving our group with lots to work with. We had a fascinating discussion with at least one member raising their score as a result!

The film divided the group (again!) with some finding various characters unlikeable and an unrealistic storyline, but the majority were very positive overall, with particular praise for Huller. All the main characters were hard to warm to, but that seemed one of the central points of the narrative – leading the police, and audience, to make value judgements and question them as the story unfolded.



We were unsure about the trial scenes which were procedurally unfamiliar and often chaotic, with the prosecutor acting as a pantomime villain at times. Maybe French justice is really like this, in which case try not to get arrested on your next trip.

The film is advertised as a 'mystery' and a 'thriller'. It is certainly not the latter and, as the former is not completely resolved by the end, do not expect a traditional neat denouement. It will make you think, though, about how you assess others' relationships.

We gave it an average **7/10**, which hid a marked disparity in the scores.

We next meet a week later than usual, on **Friday 12th January**, to allow for the Christmas festivities. The film will be announced at the end of December.

If you want to join in contact me using the email address at the end of this newsletter.

Local History Group – Convenor, Anne Hardy

On **Wednesday 29th November**, thirteen of our group visited Papplewick Pumping Station. The sun shone, the sky was blue, but it was bitterly cold. Fortunately, from Ashley Smart, the museum director, to the trustees and the volunteers, we were utterly impressed by their enthusiasm, knowledge, and desire to help us understand the processes that we forgot our red noses, chilly fingers, and toes.

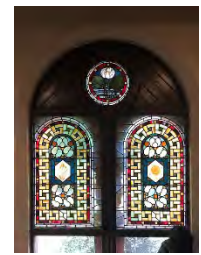
We met for coffee at 10am, then upstairs to the lecture room for an overall presentation on the history, modern times, and possible future of the pumping station, before being greeted by John (another keen member of team whose patience was limitless). To my delight (and I probably should not say this) the ladies equalled the men in their search for knowledge and explanations. I need not have worried that the visit would not have universal appeal.



I am not going to attempt to paraphrase what we learnt. Suffice it to say that the Pumping station is Britain's finest working Victorian water works built to provide Nottingham with fresh water from a two hundred feet well. It is possible to view the six mighty boilers and the original twin beam engines built by James Watt (that prominent figure in the Industrial Revolution).



What amazed me and, I would guess, the entire group was the creativity and desire to make everything the best and most pleasing to the eye as possible. When the project was found to be under budget(!), stained glass windows were constructed with no purpose but to beautify the building (please see photos).



Our visit concluded with lunch at "The Griffin's Head", just down the road. Thank you, Jane, for organising this so efficiently and my grateful thanks to Jaba for taking the photos for this visit.

The last visit of the year took place on **Thursday 14th December** when twelve of us visited Emmanuel church (affectionately called the Chapel in the Woods). In time honoured fashion, the visit started with hot drinks and biscuits. The refreshments were served by the Reverend Christine Little and the speaker, Brian Miller, was there to greet us too. We met in the church hall. The atmosphere was relaxed as we sat at long trellis tables where the children would sit for "messy church" and later the adults would join them for a Christmas meal for eighty local people. Interesting smells wafted out of the kitchen as the cook prepared a gigantic savoury pie.



Just before 11am, we had a brief guided walk through the church yard. It was hard to believe that in my lifetime this area was all forest. Now it is covered by houses, so the back of the church is surrounded by forest and the front by houses. Once inside the church we were seated, and Brian spoke to us from the lectern using the

microphone, so hearing was not a problem. Initially he talked about the history of the forest in the times of the restoration of the monarchy, the fine deer, the thousands of rabbits (as reflected in



modern school and street names, e.g. Warren Hill). We learnt that the first Duke of St. Albans was the natural son of Charles II and Nell Gwynn. Throughout his talk the vicar added personal reminiscences as she is in touch with the family. She officiated a few years ago at the wedding of the heir apparent, Charles Beauclerk, Earl of Burford. When filling in all the relevant forms she was stumped by the question of occupation of the groom. Upon enquiring she was told to just write "Peer of the Realm," which as she said made a change from bus driver, dustman or, in the past, miner!!

Brian then talked about his real interest, the little church. It was designed by the architect Teulon and built in 1869 for £1,000 in the early English style. Out of all the beautiful features, the windows, domed apse and altar frontals were especially appealing. The windows in the apse were originally by William Morris but the vicar explained that they have been removed and excellent copies replace them. The original windows are with the recently married duke and are safe. The domed apse is most unusual and has roundels, mostly inspired by the Creation psalm, the Benedicite. The beautiful altar frontals were originally created and embroidered by Sybil wife of the 10th duke.



We now had time to wander, explore and reflect. Hopefully at this busy time of the year our group enjoyed this short, relaxing visit in beautiful surroundings. The people I spoke to assured me that they did. Our last memory of the visit was of the vicar locking the church for fear of vandalism (see photo!). However, it was good to know this little church is in safe hands for future generation.



We look forward to welcoming you to a **Local History Group Planning Meeting on Friday 12th January 2024** at the **Castle Tennis Club** at 10am. Coffee, tea and biscuits will be available. Please bring all your ideas for interesting places to visit in the forthcoming year.

If you are interested in the activities of this group, please reach out either on annehardy18@icloud.com or jane.morrell57@gmail.com.

MahJong Group – *Convenor Graham Edwards*

Our MahJong group met on the afternoon of the Christmas event and attracted enough interest to run a couple of tables. We are all becoming more familiar with (some of) the rules of the game. Our target for 2024 is to learn a lot more about the scoring procedures.

The next meeting will be on the afternoon of **Tuesday 16th January**. We normally meet at 4.00pm at a member's home. Members on the MahJong mailing list will receive an email nearer the time, detailing the arrangements for the meeting.

Several members have approached me, wanting to know a bit more about the game. The easiest way to find out is to come along to one of our meetings. If anyone is interested in joining us and has not already added their name to the mailing list, please drop me a note using the address below.

Previous experience is not necessary – we help each other to learn and interpret the rules.

grahamedwards542@gmail.com.

Music Appreciation Group *Convenor, Jacky Fisher*

At present we are planning the following meetings:

Sunday 14th January at 12 noon: Peggy Skylight for The Nicola Farnon Trio.

Sunday 18th February at 7.30pm: Malcolm Evans will present an introduction to the music to be played at The Royal Concert Hall on 20th February – Mozart Clarinet concerto, Prokofiev Classical symphony, and Beethoven's Eroica symphony.

Thursday 14th March at 7.30pm: I will introduce the Saint-Saens cello concerto which will be performed on 16th March at St Mark's church Woodthorpe by Mariatu Kanneh-Mason. Mariatu is the youngest of the talented Kanneh-Mason family, and she will be playing with the orchestra which I play in – the Djanogly Community Orchestra.

I will provide more information nearer the time of each event.

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

Photography Group – *Convenor, Rod Mitchell*

The Photography Group met on **Tuesday 19th December** to select some favourite photos of the year. These are published below for you to enjoy. I stress they are favourites, rather than being the best shots in technical terms. The selection reflects the fact that we do a lot of our photography when travelling to places near and far.

The Household Objects file is filling up with images, a selection of which will be presented in the New Year. The 'Film Titles' and 'Nottingham in Plain Sight' projects are also making progress. We discussed several of my designs for the e-Christmas card. The one we chose was based on a photo I took on my mobile at last year's Park Garden Trail, when it was a sweltering 30 degrees!

If you have an interest in photography, you are very welcome to join us. Possession of any sort of camera equipment (e.g., your mobile phone) makes you eligible to join the Photography Group. Contact Rod Mitchell at roderic.mitchell56@gmail.com.



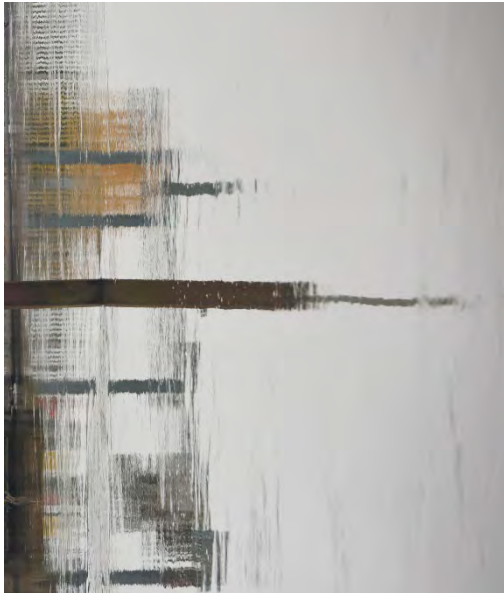
2024 Favourite Photos:

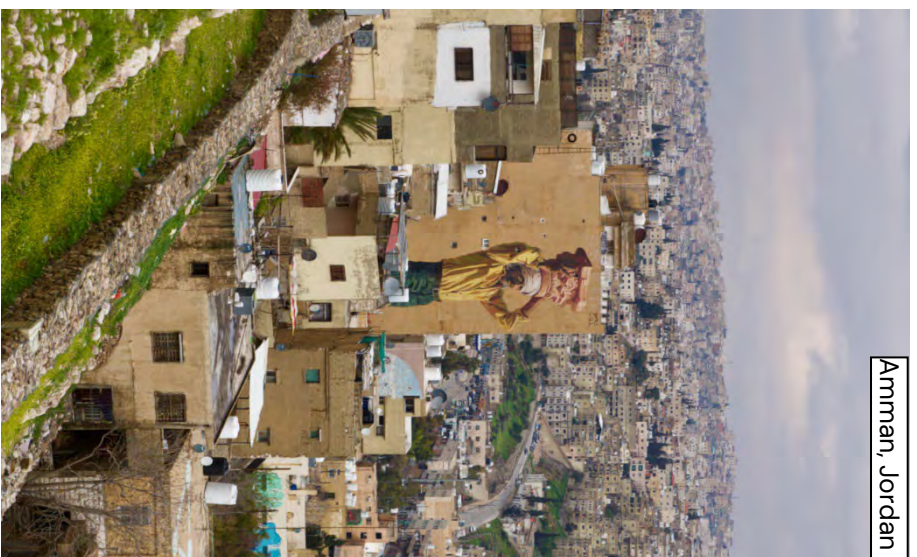


lake Bled

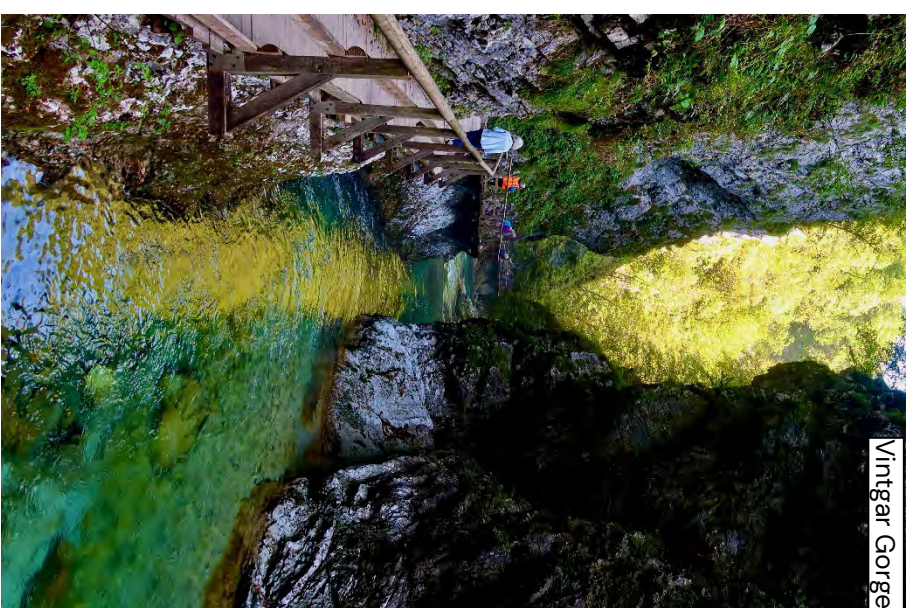


Sheringham





Amman, Jordan



Vintgar Gorge

Plants and Picnics – *Convenor, Marion Martin*

December brings a turning point in our gardening minds as we passed the Solstice on 22nd December. So, daylight hours start to increase again, and we can start to anticipate the excitement of finding plants emerging in our gardens and planning our gardening experiments for the coming year.

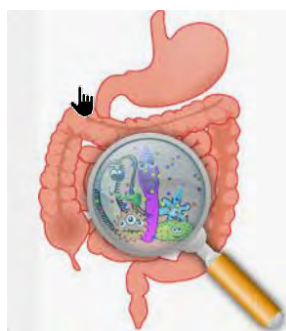
Not so much activity in this group this month, but we had a very convivial meeting at Angela Parmar's, celebrating the season (although our numbers were slightly depleted by the seasonal viruses too!). The conversation ranged far and wide, distracting us from our currently gloomy, messy, and very wet gardens, and the emphasis was more on the lovely seasonal 'picnic' than the plants – but that is the delight of this group.

We are looking forward to the year ahead, and many more meetings with plant anecdotes, hints, and tips to share as we go along – we are always learning something new.

If you fancy joining this group, please contact Marion Martin at PNu3aPandP@gmail.com.

Science Seekers Group – *Convenor, Dr. Adrian Hyde*

The Group met on **Wednesday 20th December** when Jane Morrell gave a presentation on the importance of the **human gut microbiome**, followed by Jo Martin who talked about measures to keep the gut microbiome healthy.



The human gut microbiome is a vast, unique, interacting network of biological molecules (bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other microbes). It varies according to genetics and environmental exposure and changes over time. It is involved in the digestion of food; degradation of substances; maintaining the integrity of the gut mucosal barrier; and regulating the immune system and inflammatory processes. The gut microorganisms and the central nervous system communicate via neural, endocrine, nutrient and immunological signals known as the gut-brain axis.

If the overall microbial diversity is disturbed by infectious illnesses, certain diets, or the use of antibiotics or some other medications, dysbiosis results. The body may then become more susceptible to inflammatory bowel conditions, metabolic conditions, psychological, neurological and neurodegenerative conditions. With age, the microbiome changes in richness, diversity and composition, linked to various age-related tissue dysfunctions. Dietary factors, including plant-based diets, probiotics and prebiotics, along with exercise help to nurture a healthy microbiome. Recognising the importance of the gut microbiome has spurred the development of innovative therapeutic approaches, such as faecal microbiota transplantation to manipulate the composition and function of the gut microbiome to restore balance.

As scientific understanding progresses further to isolate microbial genome sequences and to determine the relationship between disease and changes in the human microbiome, we can play our preventive role in considering a diverse diet, caution in antibiotic use, and other lifestyle choices.

Meetings of the Group for 2024 have been arranged as follows:

Wednesday 17th January: "What is Cancer and How Can it be Cured" by Reg Dennick

Wednesday 21st February: TBA

Wednesday 20th March: "Plate Tectonics and Earthquakes" by Adrian Hyde

Wednesday 17th April: "History of Codes and Code Breaking" by Vicky Hyde

If you suspect you would enjoy delving into diverse matters scientific, please email Adrian Hyde at a.f.l.hyde@sheffield.ac.uk for details.

Walking Groups

Short Walks

We have not yet heard from anyone who wants to take over as Convenor for the Short Walks group. 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 Jane Ellis (Groups Coordinator) or Graham Edwards (Chair) or any member of the committee.

Long Walks – Convenor, Graham Edwards

Members will be aware that there was not a Long Walk in December – the 4th Tuesday was Boxing Day, and many members were otherwise engaged.

As some compensation, for those who would like a bit of outdoor activity during the festive season, with some gentle exercise, fresh air, and company, I am planning a local walk of about six miles through Wollaton Park and the University on New Year's Day. I will be sending out a note as usual to those on the Long Walk list. Anyone is welcome to join if they let me know (grahamedwards542@gmail.com)

Long Walks proper will resume in January (**Tuesday 23rd January**). I will devise something appropriate for the time of year and let everyone know nearer the time.

Longer Walks – Convenor, Andrew Martin



In December, with the Book Club meeting to discuss 'The Rainbow' by D.H. Lawrence on the same day as our walk, the route for our Longer Walk focused on the area between **Eastwood and Ilkeston** where the novel is set. It is difficult now to imagine the landscape as it was in the mid-19th century, but Lawrence describes how the building of the railway and the new Nottingham Canal divided off the countryside from the grey town of Ilkeston. We began the walk by following the disused Great Northern Railway line from Kimberley to where it crosses the Erewash valley via the Bennerley Viaduct. This line was built to connect the coal mines of the valley to Grantham in the east and Burton on Trent in the west. The railway turned out to be a very profitable enterprise.

The importance of this for our walk was the connection to Nottingham, with the daughters of the Brangwen family in the fictional village Cossethay (based on Cossall) travelling to study at 'the Grammar School' (Brincliffe Grammar), 'the High School' (the Girls' High School at its original site on Wellington Circus) or 'the university' (then at the Arkwright building on Shakespeare Street). Standing on the Bennerley Viaduct, we could get a good sense of the division of the terrain described by Lawrence. The relatively recent demolition of the mining industry to the north of the viaduct has left its mark. The two canals that took the coal to the River Trent and to Nottingham are still there (and our route took us along both). The River Erewash winds its way under the viaduct through a more pastoral scene, with cows and horses grazing the edges of the flooded river. We saw an egret and a heron amongst the birds at the water's edge.



Longer Walkers near the Bennerley Viaduct

We continued, firstly along the Erewash Canal and then crossed to the Nottingham Canal and followed it to Cossall. It is the Nottingham Canal that forms the most significant boundary in *The Rainbow*. The road to Ilkeston from Cossall Marsh ('The Marsh' in the novel) passes under the canal where the water used to flow over an aqueduct. On one side, there are farms and small villages. On the other side is the town with its industry and business. Lawrence describes this almost as a portal from one world to another. By the time we got to Cossall it was lunchtime, and we sat on a bench next to three buildings that feature prominently in *The Rainbow* – Church Cottage, St Catherine's Church, and Cossall Community Hall. The cottage was the home of the Brangwen family. Lawrence knew it well as he was engaged to marry the daughter of the family who lived there. He based the central character of Ursula Brangwen on his fiancée.



Lunch by the cottage and church at Cossall

As we continued out of Cossall across 'The Marsh', we speculated on the possible site of the Brangwen family farm (described at the beginning of the novel). As we climbed the hill, we met a woman who was busy planting hundreds of hawthorn saplings to form a new hedge across the vast open fields. We asked her if she knew which of the farms might be the one we were searching for. She replied that this was unknown, but "when they came to make the film, they used our farm" pointing across the field. She went on to describe the chaos of filming with the release of hens, donkeys, and cows into the street for filming. We congratulated her on her hard work in reinstating the hedge (a rare exception these days) and made our way back to our start point in Kimberley via a comfort break at Strelley Hall.

The walk certainly brought the novel to life, and the three walkers who attended the Book Group later were able to convey this in our discussions.

The next Longer Walk will be on **Friday 26th January** and will follow a circular route of about 8–9 miles between **Pleasley Country Park and Hardwick Hall**. Travel will be by car and details will be sent out about a week before the walk.

If you would like to be included on the Longer Walks email list, please contact me on u3aparkwalks@gmail.com.

u3a Christmas Gathering 2023



Once again, we got the season off to a fine start with the u3a Christmas Party on **Tuesday 19th December** at the Tennis Club. We had a really good turnout with over fifty members enjoying sausage rolls, mince pies, Christmas cake and mulled wine! That's before we even got into the

chatting and catching up with neighbours and friends and before we all disappeared into the deep dark recesses of the kitchen, only to reappear days later plumper and with a glazed look in our eyes (or is that just me?).



Our entertainment this year was firstly provided by Ruth doing one of her fabulous renditions featuring young Albert who avoided the lion's jaws on this occasion only to be almost drowned by a father too mean to pay the ferry man and dragging the poor boy through the river! Christmas doesn't seem quite right without Ruth's wonderful poems these days

And we then had the brilliant addition of a performance by David who played guitar and gave us a couple of songs to get us all in a singing mood. Hearing *The Streets of London* in this day and age was very moving in light of our current homelessness crisis and reminded us all of just how lucky we truly are. We all joined in with *Leaving on a Jet Plane* and I'm sure it brought back many memories for all of us.



Many thanks to both Ruth and David for really lovely performances and I wonder if other u3as are lucky enough to be able to provide "in-house" entertainment.

Thanks also to Ian and Graham for the mulled wine which was a very potent little number indeed. I took a few sips and had to eat a mince pie to stop myself feeling quite squiffy. Well, that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it.

And, last but not least, thanks must go to the social committee members who organised everything so seamlessly and allowed everybody to simply turn up and have a great time.

We look forward to seeing you all in the near future.

Jo Martin

Croquet Experience

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

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. 

Jean Henderson

u3a Podcast

You may not be aware but u3a has its own national podcast. That is, a radio programme on the internet.

Aimed at publicising our organisation at first, it has developed into a way of sharing knowledge and activities between u3as and is well worth seeking out.



It is in a radio magazine format with thirty-six episodes so far with a wide range of topics covered so far including Hadrian's Wall, The Vatican, Creative Writing and Maths for Fun. Click on this [this link](#) to take you to them.

You can also find them by searching YouTube or a podcast app for 'u3a podcast'. Developed and run by members with BBC experience it is always on the lookout for stories to tell via interviews and presentations. Give it a go!

Ian Henderson

Park Nottingham u3a Calendar for January 2024

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
Thursday 4 th and 18 th January 4pm	Canasta Club	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Jane Ellis
Monday 8 th January 2pm	Committee Meeting	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Graham Edwards
Friday 12 th January 10am	Local History	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Anne Hardy / Jane Morrell
Friday 12 th January	Film Club	TBA	Ian Henderson
Sunday 14 th January 12 noon	Music Appreciation	Peggy Skylight	Jacky Fisher
Tuesday 16 th January 11am	Monthly Coffee Morning and Talk	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Sarah Waites
Tuesday 16 th January 4pm	MahJong Group	Member's Home	Graham Edwards
Wednesday 17 th January	Science Group	Member's Home	Adrian Hyde
Friday 19 th January 4pm	Book Club	Member's home	Liz Gilder
Tuesday 23 rd January	Long Walk	TBA	Graham Edwards
Wednesday 24 th January	Newsletter Deadline	parku3anewsletter@gmail.com	Ravi Sankaran
Friday 26 th January	Longer Walk	Pleasley Country Park and Hardwick Hall	Andrew Martin
Friday 2 nd February 12:30pm	Dining	Air Hostess, Tollerton	Adrienne Lee
TBA	Photography	Member's Home	Rod Mitchell
TBA	Plants and Picnics	Member's Garden	Marion Martin
TBA	Short Walk	TBA	TBA

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

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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 **February Newsletter** should be sent to the editor,
Ravi Sankaran, by **Wednesday 24th January**, preferably by emailing:

parku3anewsletter@gmail.com