



PARK NOTTINGHAM u3a

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024



www.parknottinghamu3a.org.uk

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Newsletter April 2024

Chair's note

Welcome to the April edition of the Park Nottingham u3a newsletter. I am especially pleased to welcome yet more new members – we must be doing something right!

The newsletter provides us with a rundown on the activities of our groups over the last few weeks – Long and Longer walks, garden activities (and feasting) at the Plants and Picnics Group, an outing to Leicester to see Richard III, another to Woodthorpe to enjoy a concert, and eating out at The Reindeer to name but a few. The monthly meeting attracted a record crowd for Nancy Appleyard's talk on Body Language. Apologies to those who had to stand, as despite reinforcements, we had insufficient seats. I hope we can overcome this for future meetings. All our other groups, including the Film Group, Book Club, Canasta, Photography and Science Seekers continue to thrive. The complexities of the English Language are still exercising the members of ELG. Rod Mitchell has provided us with an entertaining read on why it may be better to stay at home, rather than endure the indignities of European travel.

The forthcoming month brings us continued activity in all of our groups. I am particularly pleased that Short Walks look to be resuming, so I hope that Melissa and Jane's efforts will be well supported. The Yoga Group is now well established and will be meeting twice monthly.

It is also good to see an 'in-house' speaker at our monthly meeting. Adrian Hyde will be talking to us about Japanese Language and Culture, based on his firsthand experience.

To those of you who have renewed your membership for 2024/5, thank you. If you have not done it yet, please hurry up and do so; we would love to see you continue with us. The u3a system gives you another couple of weeks, after the 31st of March due date, and then you disappear into some sort of cyber oblivion!

Lastly, I would like to note that Ravi and Hema Sankaran are leaving us to return to warmer climes. Their involvement with the groups, the Committee, and particularly Ravi's editorship of this newsletter will be greatly missed. Let us hope they find time to pass back through the UK and drop in to see us.

Graham Edwards – Chair

January Monthly Meeting – Sarah Waites

On Tuesday 19th March, Nancy Appleyard gave us a talk entitled: **PEOPLE WATCHING: Body Language in Action.**

Although Nancy had sprained her ankle the day before, she turned up to give her talk about the universality and instinctual nature of bodily gestures. She used pictures of well-known people as examples of a range of body language conveying different emotions. Mammals too use nonverbal communication such as a dog tilting its head sideways to signal submission and attention. Such communication is thought to originate in our older 'chimp' brain driven by emotions, outside our awareness.



Body language is all about responding to threats, helping us attract a mate and bond with others – in other words, our survival as a species. Such gestures often have to be muted and more subtle when displayed publicly but are still unmistakable.

We were shown how men pose with elbows and arms wide to look bigger and more convincing as protectors of young. Women may tilt their heads to one side in a submissive gesture, such as the classic Princess Diana pose. It shows trust in exposing the jugular or carotid artery. We bond with others using smiles and, although we do not groom each other picking out nits, some of us love still having our hair done. As well as eye contact and smiling, another classic bonding behaviour is mirroring or copying the gestures of another person. Even neonates will do this. We saw a section of people in a football stadium copying the dismay of Michael Owen. Sometimes the copying or body synchronising is deliberate such as when we choose activities like marching, line dancing, singing and T'ai chi.

Sometimes our body language can conflict with what we say. This was obvious when we saw a photo of Theresa May's grim face while shaking hands with Donald Trump; Prince Andrew's expressions when interviewed by Emily Maitlis or Rishi Sunak and President Macron hugging and patting each other in friendship but really vying for domination. Meghan Markle's body language has been analysed to attempt to explain why she seems unpopular. It is suggested that her exaggerated gestures and variations in voice are more appropriate for children and make adults feel patronised.

In question time, Nancy said that people blind from birth use body language, though instinctive gestures do not come easily to those on the autistic spectrum who must learn them explicitly. Neuro Linguistic Programming techniques exploit nonverbal communication. More can be read in Desmond Morris's "The Naked Ape", Frans de Waal "The Age of Empathy" and "Our Inner Ape". All in all, the talk was what we wanted, informative and entertaining within the constraints of one hour.

On Tuesday 16th April, Adrian Hyde will talk to us about **Japanese Language and Culture**. Did you ever wonder how a Chinese or Japanese character dictionary would work? Does the Japanese language deserve the reputation of being one of the more difficult world languages? The talk will introduce spoken and written Japanese and how this is related to some aspects of Japanese culture.

Travel Notes, March 2024: by Rod Mitchell

Getting to or from the airport – the sequel.

In last month's newsletter I outlined my plan to use my bus pass to reach Birmingham Airport. It did not go well. After exiting New Street station, I quickly found the X1 bus stop. The flaw in my plan was exposed once I deduced this was not a dedicated airport bus service. Rather it was a local bus that went all the way to Coventry, the airport being one of the numerous stops enroute. I had plenty of time to rue my mistake as the bus trundled through the suburbs of Birmingham. Busy at first, it had largely emptied by the time it arrived at the airport. I think none of the few passengers who alighted there had luggage, apart from me.

I made a similar mistake in Malaga on my way home. The final destination on my Iberian Odyssey was Cordoba. The train ticket from there to Malaga included travel on Malaga's underground, and the suburban trains serving the airport and resorts on the Costa del Sol. It looked good on paper, but in reality, a 10–15 minute journey became a living hell. The first train was rammed so I waited for the next one, which was also full to bursting. I managed to squeeze on with all the locals, the buggies, the bicycles, and travellers like me with luggage. A fork was almost needed to eject me from this sardine can.

I am all in favour of better public transport to airports, provided the needs of long-distance travellers are met. Most buses, trams or metro trains are designed to get lots of local inhabitants from A to B as quickly as possible. Luggage space is usually non-existent, and it is also very limited on some UK long-distance trains serving airports. Some airports (Stockholm, Oslo, Brussels, and Heathrow come to mind) have a dedicated non-stop train service into the city centre. This can come at a price: cheaper than a taxi, but more expensive than a bus, tram, or Metro. Larger airports (Frankfurt, Paris CDG, Berlin, Schipol) have their own mainline railway stations, allowing onward travel to other cities.

Most independent travellers, I guess, will prefer to take a taxi to their accommodation. Alternatively, your airline or [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) will bombard you with offers of a private transfer, an option I have used on several occasions. Whilst more expensive than a taxi, the added convenience justifies the cost. In most European cities, taxis are subject to some form of regulation by the local authority, but it is as well to take some precautions. Find the official taxi office or rank; avoid touts offering a cheap ride to town; make sure the name and address of your hotel is clearly written on a piece of paper and show it to the driver; make sure the meter is turned on. Or you can use Uber, Bolt, and other app-based taxi services.

The airport as cash machine.

The latest issue of "The New European" (a periodical I highly recommend) features an article by Francis Beckett on his flight from Gatwick to Rome. He argues airports no longer exist to help you on and off planes. Just as CERN's Large Hadron Collider splits particles, airports are machines whose purpose is "to split travellers from the contents of their wallets".

On 2nd March, this year a fatality on the railway line to Gatwick Airport caused all trains to stop running. Hundreds of people alighted at Croydon and jumped into taxis, resulting in a long queue of traffic. Gatwick Airport apply a drop-off charge of £5 per car, payment of which added to the delay. Francis Beckett abandoned ship and ran half a mile to the departures hall but missed his flight. He still had to pay the £5 plus taxi fare.

He believes he would have made it, but for the long and winding walkway past shops selling expensive perfume, designer watches, duty-free alcohol, and other luxury goods of no immediate use to passengers. Abandoned by Easy Jet, he booked into the Hilton Hotel which normally charges £150 per night, but it was also cashing in and had upped the price to £205 by the time he got to the reception desk. Kerching! as they say.

Sleepless to Lisbon: my turn for the Ryanair disaster flight.

So, all went well once I got off the bus at Birmingham Airport? I had an inkling that my luck with Ryanair flights would run out, but not today I prayed. My second mistake of the day was to assume I could check in early so I could relax and eat and drink my fill in the VIP lounge. No chance: Ryanair's bag drop-off starts 2 hours before flight departure time. I had just half an hour in the lounge before my flight was called.

Once on board, the 5.35 pm departure time came and went. After about 20 minutes the pilot announced a delay due to "a minor issue with the front cargo door". After another 45 minutes, this became a major issue requiring a change of plane. Believing this was a preamble to actual flight cancellation, I looked up Birmingham Airport hotels on Booking.com. Meanwhile, a disabled man was angry and weeping because ground staff had broken his wheelchair. All passengers disembarked and we were escorted back to another boarding gate which, apart from loos, had no facilities. Three and a half hours after the scheduled departure time (and five since I'd had liquid refreshment) boarding for the second plane started. Sardined into those wide transfer buses, we were ferried out to the aircraft, but kept waiting. Anxiety levels were off the chart. Was this aircraft faulty as well? Eventually there was a mad rush to board and shortly after 10 pm. we took off.

Once the plane reached cruising height, I bought a bottle of water and a limp baguette. A woman behind me spoke for us all by asking why no complimentary food or drink was offered to passengers either now or during the 4 to 5 hour period of delay. Cabin crew explained that Ryanair policy (as I well knew) is NOT to provide complimentary refreshments when flights are delayed or disrupted. I can well remember an early TV documentary on Ryanair during which a member of cabin crew remarks "they've paid **** all so they get **** all". No change then, apart from the fact you can no longer get a flight "from" 50 pence.

And did it get worse? Oh yes indeed! 90 minutes into the flight, the pilot announced that Lisbon Airport's runway was closed, and we were diverting to Porto. It occurred to me later that this information would likely have been known to the crew before take-off. So why wait until we were in mid-air? Landing at Porto after midnight, we were swiftly through passport control and baggage claim, and on to the buses that would get us to Lisbon. I had kept my hotel informed of my progress, or lack thereof, and eventually checked in less than 30 minutes before breakfast opened. Happy Days, eh?

Next time:

Lisbon's "eléctricos": the curse of YouTube. Sintra: overtourism again.

And something more cheerful perhaps: The Alhambra! (no, not a cinema). The Mosque of Cordoba! Tapas! Flamenco!

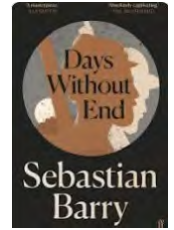
Bon Voyage

Rod Mitchell roderic.mitchell56@gmail.com

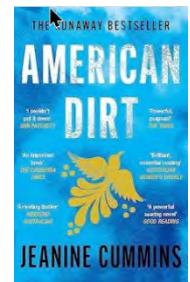
NEWS FROM THE INTEREST GROUPS

Book Club – *Convenor, Liz Gilder*

The Book Club met on **Thursday 14th March** to discuss “**Days without End**” by **Sebastian Barry**. After signing up for the US army in the 1850s, aged barely seventeen, Thomas McNulty and his brother-in-arms, John Cole, go on to fight in the Indian Wars and, ultimately, the Civil War. Having fled terrible hardships, they find these days to be vivid and filled with wonder, despite the horrors they both see and are complicit in. Their lives are further enriched and imperilled when a young Indian girl crosses their path, and the possibility of lasting happiness emerges, if only they can survive. Our group were divided in their comments. Some thought the prose was wonderful, but others did not enjoy the read. All agreed the violence was disturbing, particularly the final battle where the men became almost inhuman in their enjoyment of the killing.



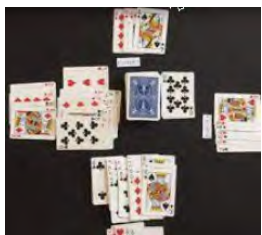
Our next read is “**American Dirt**” by **Jeannine Cummings**. Lydia Perez owns a bookshop in Acapulco and is married to a fearless journalist. Luca, their eight-year-old son completes the family. But it only takes a bullet to rip them apart. In a city in the grip of a drug cartel, friends become enemies overnight and Lydia has no choice but to flee North for the border with Luca at her side – whatever it takes to stay alive. The journey is dangerous – not only for them, but for those they encounter along the way. Who can be trusted? What sacrifices is Lydia prepared to make? American Dirt shines a beam of light into a world where a mother’s love for her son – and the kindness of strangers – might just triumph.



Our next meeting will be on **Friday 19th April** at **4.00pm.** at a member’s home.

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

Canasta Club – *Convenor, Jane Ellis*



Our meeting dates for **April** are on **Thursday 4th** and **Thursday 18th**, starting play at **4.00pm** (setting up from 3.45pm) and finishing at 6.00 pm.

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.

Dining Group – *Convenor, Adrienne Lee*

We ventured into the wilds of Rushcliffe in March for lunch at **The Reindeer** in Hoveringham hot on the heels of it being awarded a Bib Gourmand in this year's Michelin Guide. Eleven of us chose from a menu typical of a village pub – pies, fish and chips, croquettes etc but done with flair and extra twists. It has an unremarkable exterior but a very smart interior with comfortable seating.



It was 'Pie Week', so we had three to choose from which were individual pies in proper shortcrust pastry cases (not the usual stew with a pastry top, so extra marks). Quite a few of us went for those! The roast cod was a hefty chunk of well-cooked fish with a shellfish sauce. A starter of Pig Cheek croquettes (with a beetroot gel) were well-made and tasty. The Baked Camembert, for two to share, was another starter success. Overall, the food got high marks.



The menu changes with the seasons and market availability so do not rely on the website (I was hoping for the mussels starter and pork belly main but neither were offered).

Unlike our last venue the pub was not full but service was again very slow. It seems our venues struggle with large parties. Some declined dessert due to the time.

This was very well-done pub food of high quality. We rated it an average of **8/10**.

Our next outing is yet to be decided upon, but we will keep you updated.

Report by Ian Henderson

English Language Group – *Convenor, Margaret Wiedemann*

The ancient medieval festival of Mothering Sunday has nowadays been transformed into Mother's Day, with an equivalent for fathers later in the year. But why is it Mother's Day in the singular? Surely, we'd like to celebrate all mothers, in which case it should be Mothers' Day? Not for the first time, the Grammar Guerillas got quite worked up about the placing of an apostrophe.

Mother's Day appears to have originated in America in 1913, with the apostrophe explicitly in the singular position. Maybe that does imply continuity with the European institution of Mothering Sunday, when servants traditionally were given a day off to visit their mothers. After all, we only have one mother. Or do we? Increasingly there's a trend for Mother's Day to include everyone who has a nurturing role. The annual spate of emails inviting people to opt out of marketing if they find the concept of motherhood distressing is surely an indication that simply rejoicing in our mothers is no longer what it's all about.

The discussion of Mother's Day segued seamlessly into a mass fulmination against everyone's most hated contemporary expressions, including "to reach out" or "to share" meaning to tell somebody something. Your ELG convenor was recently present at a meeting where it was minuted that "the treasurer shared the cost of the repairs". It didn't mean she paid for them.

Other perennial irritants were “Are you all right?” and “See you later” as forms of hello and farewell from complete strangers.

Following the wettest February on record in some parts of the country, perhaps it’s not surprising that headline writers have been having a watery time, with our attention being caught by “Firm behind water pipe damage calls in liquidators” and “Plans to build 40 houses on edge of village in the pipeline”. If you are inundated with things that could have been better expressed, join our tidal wave of protest by emailing mjwh57@gmail.com.

Film Group – *Convenor, Ian Henderson*

The group has grown substantially in size over the last year with fourteen regular attenders (and 3 more sending in views), leading to a tight squeeze in my lounge. We may need to reassess venue options! We also agreed to extend the session to 90 minutes, from our next meeting, to allow more time for members to express views and debate issues (see below).

Our film for March was *‘The Taste of Things’*, a French story set in the late 19thC country house of a renowned gourmand, Dodin, and his female chef, Eugénie. Starring Juliette Binoche and Benoit Magimel in the lead roles this was a sumptuously filmed paean to food and its preparation, with the first twenty minutes (largely wordless) taken up by the selection, preparation, and cooking of ingredients for a lavish meal.



It was not a film for the hungry or vegetarian, as it continued with a hands-on (and hands-in) approach to food with a romantic thread running through the action. The master of the house has a long-term sexual relationship with his chef, but she refuses to marry him, preferring her psychological independence. So, they express love through food as they cook together, and when she is taken ill, he cooks for her. How the characters all stayed relatively slim is a

mystery as some gargantuan meals were prepared and lovingly consumed. The cast and crew must have eaten royally.

This film would not have worked without the dexterous cinematography putting you in the centre of kitchen bustle and the commitment of the actors to convincingly play expert cooks. The renowned French chef Pierre Gagnaire was consultant on the film (and briefly appeared as a rival chef) and he did a wonderful job of creating a realistic environment. Binoche and Magimel (I cannot help thinking of a French kitchen appliance) were once married in real life, with a daughter, and their ease with, and affection for, each other (real or fine acting or both?) shines throughout.

Members liked the overall look of the film with exceptional lighting tracing the time of day and the seasons in the large rural kitchen. A few were put off by the perceived gluttony on display and slight ‘plot’, but it was generally well received as a gentle evocation of the love of food.

One member went as far as to cook one of the dishes from the film for her Bridge group (form a queue for membership) which was a great success.

The film was France's entry in the Best International Film category at the recent Oscars having won out over **'Anatomy of a Fall'** which we saw last year. Unfortunately, they may have made the wrong choice as it did not make the final shortlist. It did, however, get Trần Anh Hùng the Best Director award at Cannes Film Festival last year.

Our average score was **7/10**, which covered a 10, 9s and a couple of 5s.



Next up is another French film, **'Red Island'** set in 1970s Madagascar/Malagasy about the post-colonial period of French military presence. The lives of French personnel in a military compound serviced by locals, and increasingly unwelcome by them, are viewed through the eyes of a young French boy.

We meet on **5th April** at the earlier time of **3.15 for 3.30-5pm**.

Local History Group - *Convenor, Anne Hardy*

Have you heard the story about the English King found under a car park; the last King to die in battle, and the first King to be DNA tested? In Leicester we learned the story of one of England's most contentious monarchs; how he lived in Medieval England, died at the Battle of Bosworth, and was discovered in a car park.

We started with a cup of coffee in the White Boar café. The white boar was the personal Livery badge of King Richard III, an important symbol of political affiliation in the Wars of the Roses.



We then travelled back in time to discover the plot lines, birth rights and family ties that combined to create a story of a medieval mystery. Our knowledgeable guide, Matthew, talked us through the Plantagenet Family Tree, laid out to indicate the strength of the house of York.



DYNASTY ROOM

The Timeline took us through the significant births, deaths, marriages, and battles to see who did what, where and when Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York (1411-1460), was father of the Yorkist King Edward IV and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who went on to become King Richard III (1452-1485). Matthew explained the hostilities between the Yorkists and Lancastrians and the Tudors' weak claim to the throne and their Welsh connection.

Within a few weeks of Richard, Duke of York's death in the battle of Wakefield (1460), his eldest son Edward IV (1442-1483) ascended the throne and became King of England for more than 20 years. When Edward IV died, his twelve-year-old son reigned for 78 days as Edward V, until he was deposed by his uncle Richard, Edward IV's younger brother! Richard was appointed as Lord Protector of the realm, but not everyone acknowledged him, so Richard proceeded to protect his nephews, Edward V (1470-?) and Richard, Duke of York (1473-?), in the Tower of London (!) and declared that he was the rightful claimant to the throne. The princes disappeared mysteriously, and Richard III was said to be responsible for their deaths in the Tower, but a lack of evidence and conflicting contemporary accounts allow for other possibilities! No discussion of the Princes in the Tower and pretenders to the English throne is

complete without mention of Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel! Some authors have even claimed that Warbeck actually was Richard, Duke of York.

After Richard III was crowned in 1483, becoming the final Plantagenet King, he passed 33 Acts in Parliament, aiming for a fairer criminal justice system and for replacing corrupt and incompetent officials. Richard's own son Edward (1473–1484) died suddenly, followed by his wife (Anne Neville) in 1485.



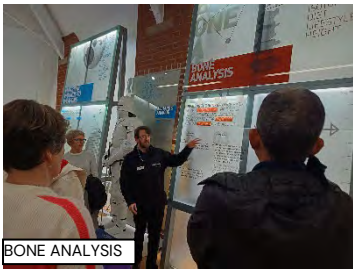
More problems were afoot in 1485. Richard's enemies were convinced that he had usurped the throne. So, Henry Tudor began to assert himself, raising finance for an invasion from Brittany, landing in South Wales! Richard rallied the troops. We saw the Battle of Bosworth (22nd August 1485) in film, with the roars of soldiers, the clashes of knights and the thunder of horses' hooves as Richard's Plantagenet army clashed with Henry's Tudor forces (including 2,000 French mercenaries) and battled it out until King Richard fell from his horse after it lost its footing. Richard's helmet was removed, and he was killed. This event brought an end to the Plantagenet dynasty that had ruled the country for more than 330 years and it marked the start of the Tudor age.

We saw how after the battle, Richard III's naked body was carried on a horse and displayed to the public for three days – to insult the memory of the defeated Yorkist King. The Grey Friars then quietly buried Richard III's body in the choir of the Greyfriars' Franciscan Friary church within a walled precinct. Ten years later, Henry VII commissioned a tomb to be erected over Richard's grave. During the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Franciscan order had to surrender their house and valuables and the buildings were pulled down. By the late 16th century, the Herricks family owned the land and built a mansion on the plot and a small pillar marked Richard's grave. In 1645, Leicester was sacked during the civil war, and it is believed that the pillar was destroyed and Richard's whereabouts was lost.



Richard's reputation had also been destroyed firstly by the Tudors, then one hundred years later by Shakespeare, who portrayed him as a villain, with a limp, a 'hunch-back' and a withered arm. We saw depictions of the title role of Shakespeare's Richard III by David Garrick (1717–1799) and memorably by Laurence Olivier in 1944 (currently available on BBC iPlayer!). Anthony Sher, who performed the role on black crutches, said *"I did a lot of research. I was trying to find a way of inspiring myself to play a role that had so famously been played by Olivier: the bastard had gone and put it on film as well, so people all round the world could do impressions of Olivier's Richard III."* We saw the 'fascist' uniform Ian McKellen wore in the 1995 portrayal of Richard III, set in the 20th century. Other productions of Richard III have included in the title role: Alec Guinness, Basil Rathbone, Christopher Plummer; Ian Holm; Kenneth Branagh, Marius Goring, Mark Rylance, and Robert Lindsay, to name but a few.

So many myths persist about the last Plantagenet King. Did Richard III murder the Princes in the Tower or did they survive? Did he want to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York? Was he a usurper? And where was he buried? After more than five hundred years, the location of his grave was unknown. In 1789, John Throsby had written about some skeletons being discovered when New Street was built, which he thought indicated the location of the Friary church. Philippa Langley, of the Richard III Society, used this and other historical records to piece together an excavation plan.



In Spring 2011, Philippa approached Leicester City Council and the University of Leicester to propose an excavation of the Greyfriars Social Services car park site. The 'Looking for Richard' project began 527 years to the day after King Richard III was killed at Bosworth. Just six hours into the two-week excavation, in the first trench dug,

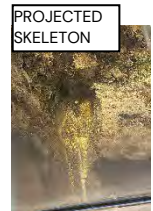


THE CAR PARK!

archaeologists uncovered not only the old Greyfriars church, but a skeleton with battle wounds and a curved spine! The bones were dated as from 1455–1540, and as from a man aged in his early thirties.

Scans revealed eleven injuries to the face, head, and base of the skull, consistent with those made by medieval weapons. Experts from the University of Leicester used DNA sampling to link the skeleton to Richard III's descendants. Only five months after starting, the University of Leicester confirmed that the skeleton in trench one, was Richard III with 99.999% accuracy! We were able to see, from a glass viewing box, the now famous car park where King Richard's remains had been undisturbed for 527 years.

We visited King Richard III's grave site to see the exact place where his remains had been originally buried. The contours of the trench were visible through a glass floor, through which an image was projected indicating where the skeleton was found.



In March 2015, there was a procession with a horse-drawn hearse to take Richard III's wooden coffin, containing his mortal remains, to be formally reinterred in Leicester Cathedral. People threw white roses as the symbol of Richard and the House of York. Over three days 20,000 people viewed his coffin pall and paid their respects at the cathedral.

Our guided tour of Leicester Cathedral was led by volunteer Eileen who detailed the symbolism of Richard's tomb, which is close to his original burial place. Deep cuts which form a cross are carved into the Swaledale limestone. The dark marble plinth is carved with Richard III's name, motto (*Loyaulte me lie* old French for '*Loyalty Binds Me*'), dates (1452–1485) and coat of arms. King Richard III of England was reinterred with dignity and honour.



The History Group is planning a visit to Stoneywell on **Thursday 25th April**. There are also plans afoot of an excursion in June to **Harlaxton Hall**.

If you would like to join us, please reach out on annehardy18@icloud.com or jane.morrell57@gmail.com.

MahJong Group – *Convenor Graham Edwards*



Such is the pressure of time on many of our members, and the multiplicity of alternative activities available to them, that there were few of us able to attend this month, and our Mah Jong meeting was cancelled.

However we have all been able to use time to swot up on the rules of the game, and we will approach the meeting on **Tuesday 16th April** with renewed enthusiasm and expertise. We will meet as usual at 3.45pm at a member's home. Members on the MahJong mailing list will receive an email nearer the time, detailing the arrangements for the meeting.

If you would like to know a bit more about the game, why not come along to one of our meetings. If you are interested in joining us and have not already added your name to the mailing list, please drop me a note using the address below. I can also offer you a complimentary copy of the u3a rules for Mah Jong to help you learn the game.

grahamedwards542@gmail.com.

Music Appreciation Group *Convenor, Jacky Fisher*

Following a preview on **Thursday 14th March**, 20 members and guests of the group attended the concert at St Mark's church in Woodthorpe. The programme started with the overture to The Wreckers Opera by Ethel Smyth who is an English composer of the early 20th century. She was also an ardent suffragette who devoted 2 years to supporting the movement and was clearly a strong character. There was a mixed reaction to the music, with some of the group really enjoying it and others finding it rather too noisy and brash!

The star of the evening was Matiatu Kanneh-Mason, (age 14), the youngest of the highly musically talented family, who played the cello in Saint-Saens' cello concerto. Like her six siblings who have all played concertos with the Djanogly Community Orchestra, her performance was brilliant. The orchestra feels very privileged to have been able to help launch the careers of these remarkable young people.

The concert concluded with Dvorak's symphony "From the New World". This was a stupendous rendering of this great work, and the members of the orchestra and the audience all went home on a high!

Our next event will be a piano recital and talk by Gregor Vidovic, looking at pieces by Chopin and Liszt, on **Friday 12th April** at a member's house.

If anyone is interested in joining this group, please contact: Jacky Fisher (gandfisher23@gmail.com).

Photography Group – *Convenor, Rod Mitchell*

What with holidays, illness and other inconveniences, the Photography Group were not able to meet this month, and not able to select any images to appear in this edition of the newsletter.

We have all continued to take and collect pictures under the theme of "Nottingham in Plain Sight" and we will display a selection next time. We have also, in conjunction with the Film Group, some ideas for further images for our hugely exciting film title quiz.

On the subject of cooperation and sharing, several of our members also participate in *The Photography Club*, which has grown out of the Artspeak Photography Group. This was an arts-based social project for the over sixties which has run out of funding. The members are now running a self funded group, which meets fortnightly to share images and information of all aspects of photography. Some members of this group are very experienced and are adding to our knowledge of photographic techniques.

We will meet at a member's house during April, to decide on what to put in next month's newsletter and chat generally about matters photographic.

To join the Photography Group. Contact Rod Mitchell at roderic.mitchell56@gmail.com.

Report by Graham Edwards

Plants and Picnics – *Convenor, Marion Martin*

Just before the beginning of meteorological spring (if you accept that concept), and Leap Year Day (that rare event where we can propose ridiculous things), we all met up at Liz's. Having decided in advance it would be too cold to be sitting outside, we ended up round the dining table.

Liz had advertised she would be making a hearty Tuscan bean soup (more on this later), and this was enough to entice people, so it turned into a rather bigger meeting than we thought. Plant chat ranged far and wide, starting with fungus gnats, to grumbles about the quality of many peat-free composts. There was a useful tip to use coco/coir composts if you have to take your compost upstairs and/or through your house. One of our members is going to be developing a garden from scratch after her builders have finished, so we were all very interested to hear about that. We swapped recommendations for garden equipment, and revisited winter garden flowering shrubs (see last month). We are generally getting very excited about the prospects for our gardens this spring – the sap was rising!

The soup was a triumph! The recipe was in the latest u3a magazine, and Liz had decided this was a good opportunity to try it out. Everyone really enjoyed it – hearty beans and vegetables, it really was delicious, topped off with crusty bread. We would really recommend this one – check out your magazine!

After lunch some of us made it out to Liz's Garden. I do not remember us going in winter before, so it was really interesting to be able to see the structure and sculptures clearly. There were ranks of pots waiting to be filled, and as one member put it, we cannot wait to see what they get filled with.



Whilst every meeting is a delight, this one was particularly good, and I think will live in the memory for some time. A huge thank you to Liz for her hosting/culinary efforts.

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

Science Seekers Group – Convenor, Dr. Adrian Hyde

Fifteen of the group's eighteen members met at Newcastle Court on **Wednesday 20th March** to hear a presentation on earthquakes given by Adrian Hyde.



Starting with a brief outline of the cause and effects of the 2011 Great Tohoku Earthquake and tsunami he went on to a simple explanation of plate tectonics, faulting, shear and pressure waves and their use in locating the position of earthquakes and magnitude and intensity scales. This was followed by a discussion of resultant infrastructure damage and the phenomenon of liquefaction.

The group meets on the third Wednesday of every month and the next meeting will be held at in a member's home on **Wednesday 17th April at 15.45 for 16.00** when the topic for discussion will be "**A history of codes and code breaking**" led by **Vicky Hyde**.

The May meeting will be on the life of Einstein led by Reg.

If you suspect you would enjoy stimulating discussions on areas of science and technology, please email Adrian Hyde at a.f.l.hyde@sheffield.ac.uk for details.

Walking Groups,

Short Walks *Joint Convenors: Melissa Long / Jane Ellis*

We are looking to re-launch the Short Walks Group with a programme of planned monthly walks of between 2-4 miles in length and lasting approximately 2.5 hours. The date and time for the walk will be on the Second Tuesday of each month from approximately 10.00am – 12.30pm and starting in May 2024. The walks will be centred around Nottingham and the surrounding area within a 30 min drive time.

All walks will be on flat/undulating ground and ideal for those who might not want a longer walk – but are none the less fit and able to manage the planned length at a reasonable pace. It is intended that each walk will start and finish at the same place where parking, refreshments and toilets may be available. We do not plan to rest or stop for refreshments enroute.

An email has been sent to existing members of this Group seeking to ascertain their continued interest in participating in these walks. If you are not in this list and would like to join the Short Walks Group, please email Melissa.snowdenlong@gmail.com or jane.ellis21@outlook.com

Long Walks – *Convenor, Graham Edwards*

The walk this month on **Tuesday 26th March** was a linear one, from Radcliffe on Trent to Gunthorpe. This was a repeat of a walk we last did in September 2021, but in the reverse direction. The new direction allows us to finish at a pub (The Unicorn in Gunthorpe) rather than the gastronomic desert that is Radcliffe.



An uneventful bus ride took eleven of us to Radcliffe on Trent, on a bright warm sunny spring morning. We were all grateful for this unexpected bonus, given the period of cold wet weather we have just experienced.

Our route took us up onto Radcliffe Cliffs, on a paved path high above the River Trent, before descending through fields, which became increasingly muddy in places. We then strolled along the flood embankment into Shelford for a quick rest and drop of refreshment.

The village, incidentally, was named after the nearby ford across the Trent. I would not recommend walking it now!

The second part of our walk involved an exercise in logistics – how to get eleven senior citizens across a section of muddy path without anyone getting hurt, embarrassed, or too caked in mud. We manage that, then walked up on to higher ground which was firmer underfoot.

On the outskirts of East Bridgford (another ford?) the A6097 Doncaster Road appeared to present another uncrossable barrier, until a kindly driver stopped to let us across. From there, on it was downhill all the way to Gunthorpe Bridge, across the Trent, and into The Unicorn for a latish lunch.

The lure of the pub was such that some of our number decided to miss the bus (a once per hour service) rather than hurry their lunch. A relaxing way to finish a strenuous but worthwhile outing of about six miles.

Our April walk should enable us to take advantage of early Spring weather, and perhaps travel a bit further afield to see more of the countryside.

I will devise a walk of about six miles, travelling by car. Hopefully, there will be somewhere to find refreshment during or after the walk.

Anyone is welcome to join if they let me know (grahamedwards542@gmail.com)

Longer Walks – *Convenor, Andrew Martin*

Our Longer Walk on **Friday 22nd March** was a repeat of the first walk undertaken after the group started up in July 2020. Our group of eight walkers met up on the western edge of Loughborough to explore some of the highlights of this area of **Charnwood**. We started with a short climb up to The Outwoods and headed south through the woods towards Woodhouse Eaves and Broombriggs Farm Country Park. Here we paused for some refreshment and to remove a layer of clothing. The forecast for overcast conditions with possible heavy showers turned out to be wrong, and we spent the day under blue skies and sunshine, though the wind cooled us quickly when we stopped walking.



Breaking for Lunch
– War Memorial

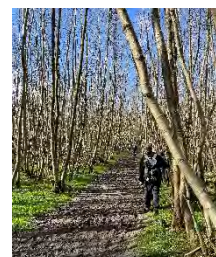
We also encountered more mud than expected, especially as we crossed Lingdale Golf Club. It was clear that many walkers had followed the right of way across the course. Continuing on through more woodland, we soon reached Bradgate Country Park and climbed to the top of the hill to see the Old John monument and to rest for lunch on the lee side of the summit away from the wind. There were glorious views across Leicestershire, with the city of Leicester to the south-east. We watched the deer grazing

below us and heard skylarks chattering above our heads.

BEACON HILL



We descended to the pretty village of Newtown Linford, the most southerly point on our walk, and turned back for the return journey through more fields and woodland. We passed the ruins of the priory at Ulverscroft, before beginning the climb up to Beacon Hill, the highest point on our walk. We took another rest break



Navigating the Mud

here and enjoyed the views across Loughborough and could see Nottingham in the distance.

Back at our start point, tired but with a real sense of achievement at completing a tough walk of nearly fourteen miles, we tried out some stretches, suggested and demonstrated by Melissa. That must have been quite a strange sight for the dog walkers using the same car park.

The next Longer Walk will be on **Friday 26th April** and will be a bit shorter and involve less ascent than the last two walks. I am grateful to Graham Edwards for agreeing to lead this walk

in my absence. Graham has chosen a linear route starting in East Leake and ending in Nottingham. Transport will be by bus to East Leake. Following this, the next Longer Walk will be on **Friday 24th May** and will be the promised repeat of the 9.4-mile circular route from **Breedon Hill to Staunton Harold Hall, Staunton Harold Reservoir, Calke Abbey and Melbourne Hall.**

As with all Longer Walks, full details will be sent out to members 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.

Yoga Group – *Convenor, Melissa Long*



A new activity, the Yoga group is led by Melissa Long, a certified Hatha yoga teacher. A biweekly class on Mondays is being held at The Castle Tennis Club, £5 per hour class, covers the hire of the hall. Time: 10 –11am.

Yoga is an ancient teaching, combining breath, mindfulness, and movement (asanas) which focus on bringing harmony to the mind and body. The exercises were introduced to allow the body the strength and flexibility to sit in meditation for long periods of time. The poses can assist the body to become stronger and more agile, improving joint mobility, flexibility, and balance. The breath work can have a positive effect on the mind, calming the nervous system and increasing the lung capacity.

The first class took place on Monday 4th March at the Castle Tennis Club attended by nine willing students. The hour-long class combined meditation, breathing exercises, warm up poses, strength, balance, and agility routines. Two further classes took place in March, building on the classic Hatha yoga beginner routine.

Members are contacted by email one week before each class when they can book their place. Complete beginners encouraged; you do not have to be “bendy” to do Yoga!

A very encouraging start for the Park u3a Yoga group, supported by enthusiastic and appreciative members.

Dates for April u3a Yoga sessions: **Monday 8th and 22nd April.** Note that booking is essential as places are limited (by available space).

If you are interested in joining this new group, please contact Melissa (melissa.snowdenlong@gmail.com)

Croquet – Open days and Coaching.

We were lucky enough to be able to arrange a taster session at Nottingham Croquet Club last September. We are unlikely to be able to repeat that, but David Brydon at the club has now written with details of their open days and beginner courses for 2024.

1. Open Day on Sat 6 April
2. Open Day on Sun 7 April:

We are very welcome to come and have a go at any time from 10 am to 4 pm. There is no charge, and no need to book any particular slot. All you need is flat shoes and warm clothing but do bring waterproofs in case it rains.

Learn to Play Courses: NCC are running two courses for beginners:

- **Sunday Mornings:** over eight weeks **starting 14th April (9.30 to 12.30)**. Coach Viv Staley + helpers.
- **Midweek Evenings:** eight early evenings over four weeks on Tuesdays & Thursdays **starting Tuesday 16th and Thursday 18th April (5.30 to 7.30)**. Coach Roger Watson + helpers.

Each course is limited to twelve participants. NCC will supply all equipment (apart from your flat-soled shoes). If you know now that you will want to enrol, I suggest you do not leave it till the Open Days.

Cost: Costs will get decided at the Club's AGM on 23 March.

What next: If you are interested, please reply to David Brydon (davidbrydon@btinternet.com) stating that you are a member of Park Nottingham u3a and which of the of the four options you are interested in.

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

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.

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.

Graham Edwards

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 Social Lunch

Although this is not a u3a event, we thought there may be some of our members who would be interested in attending.



Park Nottingham u3a Calendar for April 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 April 4pm	Canasta Club	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Jane Ellis
Friday 5 th April 3:30pm	Film Club	Member's Home	Ian Henderson
Monday 8 th and 22 nd April	Yoga	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Melissa Long
Monday 8 th April 2pm	Committee Meeting	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Graham Edwards
Friday 12 th April 7:30pm	Music Appreciation	Members Home	Jacky Fisher
Tuesday 16 th April 11am	Monthly Coffee Morning and Talk	Nottingham Castle Lawn Tennis Club	Sarah Waites
Tuesday 16 th April 2pm	Photography	Member's Home	Rod Mitchell
Tuesday 16 th April 3:45pm	MahJong Group	Member's Home	Graham Edwards
Wednesday 17 th April 4pm	Science Group	Members Home	Adrian Hyde
Friday 19 th April 4pm	Book Club	Member's home	Liz Gilder
Wednesday 24 th April	Newsletter Deadline	parku3anewsletter@gmail.com	Ravi Sankaran
Thursday 25 th April	Local History	Stoneywell	Jacky Fisher (Anne Hardy / Jane Morrell)
Friday 26 th April	Longer Walk	East Leake	Andrew Martin
TBA	Dining	TBA	Adrienne Lee
TBA	Long Walk	TBA	Graham Edwards
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

Graham Edwards, Chair:

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ianhenderson73@gmail.com

Ian Henderson, Membership Secretary:

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Jean Henderson, Business Secretary:

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Newsletter Editor:

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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 **May Newsletter** should be sent to the editor,
by **Wednesday 24th April**, preferably by emailing:
parku3anewsletter@gmail.com