

Syston and District



# Vitality!

SEPT

2019

Official newsletter of the Syston and District University of the Third Age

## WATCHES AND THE U3A

From Michael Wherton Chairman Syston and District U3A

When I was a lad, I loved to take things apart to see how they worked.

I was especially fascinated by watches and their inner workings. How did all those springs and coils and tiny screws get me to the point when I could tell the time? Watches were, for me, one of the miracles of science.

As I grew older, I realised that organisations large and small are just like the inner workings of my boyhood watches. They only succeed when all the component parts are present and functioning, and our U3A is no exception.

So, what are our component parts? As I write, we have just under 400 of these, as every member is a valuable element for us. Without active participation and dedication, we'd have no U3A at all.

Every other month we have a meeting of the Executive committee, of which we have 17 members. Each member of Excom is a component part as a Trustee of our Charity and has a specific role to play. Six times a year we get together to initiate activities and manage the workings of this charity according to the rules that govern us.

We had an Excom meeting this month and made some big decisions about the running of our U3A. Most importantly, we discussed the safety of our members when we attend our monthly general meeting. With around 140 people in the room, we need to be clear about how we evacuate in the event of a fire, where we go to assemble, and particularly how we ensure the safe exit of any members with mobility limitations. Our Secretary has been consulting on our behalf with the Fire Service, and we'll be making some announcements at the start of each meeting so that everyone is clear about the drill.

Another vital component part is our group organisers, of which we currently have nearly 40. Yes, that's right. Each of us could be a member of forty different groups if only we had the time. These are the people who take the initiative in starting up and keeping the groups going, sometimes sharing skills and talents learned over a lifetime, encouraging other members in their efforts, organising premises for meetings, often in their own homes.

Recently, the group organisers got together, and I went along to that meeting in my role as Chairman and also as organiser of the Digital Imaging group. This meeting helps us with the communication I wrote about last month. It's a strand, along with Vitality and our website, in passing important information

between members. There's a handbook for group leaders that you can see on the website, and it contains answers to most of the questions we have to deal with. Any increase in the range of groups available to join will ultimately come from having a willing group organiser.

Not all of our component parts have an official title. Have you noticed the volunteers who put out all the chairs for our monthly meeting, or the people who greet us with a welcome as we come in, those who set up the picture and sound systems, or the ones who help with the refreshments? All present and functioning to make our organisation work.

Just as a watch needs maintenance to keep going, so does our U3A. With continuing energy and enthusiasm, we can continue to grow and develop our skills and talents. We can live laugh and learn as the motto of the U3A encourages us to do.

Thank you for being one of our vital component parts.

I'm off to buy a new watch.....where is that coil that I dropped on the floor?

## WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

### Christmas meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup>

The Malthouse, which is the venue for our general monthly meetings, has given us new guidance on the limits to the fire regulations and we can only have 150 people in the room. As we regularly attract around 140 people, for our Christmas meeting we've decided to make it a 'ticket only' event so that we can be sure of limiting the numbers for this special event.

If you want to come, please either buy or ask a friend to buy your ticket – cost is £3.00, at either October or, if we have any left, at November meeting.

### Theatre trips

Messages from Elaine Yarwood

Tickets have arrived for Warhorse so can be collected at September's meeting, in addition those on the NEC trip, please can I have £15 per person for the fare? We are to go from the Green in Syston at 9.30 and return from the NEC at 2.30.

Those people going to Warhorse on the minibus I will contact them separately to let them know the fare.

Tickets belatedly available

One of the U3A members Cynthia Tooth bought a pair of tickets, to see Warhorse on 2 October at 2.15pm. She is now unable to go and would like to sell them. The cost is £43 per ticket. She can be contacted on 0116 2602958 (she has no email).

# GROUP NEWS

## DISCUSSION GROUP

### Report on the Discussion Group meeting of Wednesday 21 August 2019.

There was a wide ranging and entertaining discussion, and the subjects included: -

Prince Andrew; Greenland; Philip Hammond; Harry & Megan; A level pass marks; The Police and Tasers; Hong Kong; The two Muslim USA Congress women & Israel; Wind farm subsidies; Argentina; The Homeless living in converted shipping containers; The result of slow waiter service in Paris; The controversy relating to the selection of the Women's Cricket Team; HS2 railway line; and the law of unexpected consequences occurring in Scotland and St Ives.

The Group meets at the Hub, on High Street, Syston at 2pm on the third Wednesday of each month, the next meeting being on 18 September 2019. If you would like more details, please contact Harold Betts on 0116 260 867

## GARDENING GROUP

### **Gardening Group Visit to Felley Priory and Renishaw Hall – 15<sup>th</sup> August**



Sandwiched between two days of torrential rain, the Gardening Group's reputation for sunshine remains intact! For our summer coach trip, our visit to two beautiful and contrasting gardens: Felley Priory and Renishaw Hall, was blessed with a lovely summer's day.



Felley Priory is just off the M1 in North Nottinghamshire, but it felt like another world. The house and its 2.5 acre garden are nestled in beautiful rolling countryside. The garden has been very carefully planted so that there is something of interest all year. There are stunning herbaceous borders, contrasting with clipped yew topiary and beds given over solely to one variety of plant, such as agapanthus or hydrangeas. In a field immediately next to the garden were horses, including a lovely mare and foal.



The house itself is privately owned with the earliest parts dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The warm brick makes a lovely backdrop to the garden. Other delights included an excellent tearoom and a plant nursery, which stocked rare and unusual plants as well as cottage garden favourites. The boot of the coach was pretty well crammed with our purchases!

At Felley, we also got chatting to a fellow visitor who was a keen photographer. He has very kindly shared some of his photographs both of Felley and Renishaw with us. These are used to illustrate this article.

Then it was back on the coach for a short journey further up the Motorway to Renishaw Hall, which is the home of the Sitwell family. This extraordinary family, collectors and patrons of the arts, have lived at Renishaw for nearly 400 years. Probably the most famed members were the literary trio of Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell who played a huge part in the artistic and literary world in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, our visit was to the gardens, where we had a guided tour of the stunning Italianate gardens laid out in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the eccentric 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet, Sir George Sitwell. His design divided the garden into “rooms” with yew hedges, linked by axes flanked with classical statues. It is wholly intact, though, in recent years, the “rooms” have been filled with an impressive collection of plants – trees, shrubs, roses, bulbs, perennials and climbers. There are beautiful trees and our guide spent some time outlining their history.

Just time for tea (and cake, of course) then back on the coach for a smooth journey back home.



*Please note that photographs are the copyright of Kevin Cooper and must not be reproduced elsewhere  
(What a stroke of luck for the group to meet up with Kevin and for him to offer his pictures.)*

## UKULELE GROUP

**A report from Len Abraham, Group Leader and Dave Houseman, Deputy Group Leader.**

The U3A Syston Happy Ukulele Band started about 18 months ago. Presently we have about 50 hardworking diligent members. The overwhelming majority had never played any musical instruments before they joined the band.



The band meets every Friday at The Brookside Club, next to the Brookside Café, near the blue bridge, otherwise known as the Millennium Bridge, Syston, at 1.45pm to commence at 2pm and finish at 3.30.

Over the last year we have performed at numerous venues. This photograph was taken when we played for the Friendship Group at Pork Pie Library Hall, in Leicester City. The audience enthusiastically joined in the singing and really enjoyed the show. Len, or Dave, offer personal one to one tuition in a member's home or elsewhere to enable brand new members to catch up.



If you would like to have an enjoyable weekly sing-along and lots of laughs why not pop in on a Friday afternoon. Any existing Syston U3A member is more than welcome to attend before they purchase a ukulele, as well as those that are considering becoming U3A members. No prior musical knowledge or prior musical ability whatsoever is required due to the innovative teaching methods used.



## KURLING

Lena Findley is now the group organiser. Regretfully Dave Steadman has stepped down due to medical reasons until December.

I'm sure everyone would wish me to thank Dave for his sterling work with the group and wish him well.

## QUIZ GROUP

It is still the intention that this group will restart in October, but the when and where have still to be settled. Hopefully I will be able to confirm the details in the next newsletter

## WHAT'S ON NEXT?

### MACMILLIAN COFFEE MORNING

The Painting Group meets at the Community Centre from 10 - 12 every Monday. Last year we held an exhibition of some of our paintings at the library, this year some of our group decided to hold a Macmillan coffee morning, with support from the staff at the Community Centre - Hope to see you there.

Date for your Diary - 7th September 10am – 4pm

Where to go - Community Centre, School Street, Syston



There will be - Art and craft display and sale  
Tombola  
Tea, coffee and cakes

**The following trips may now be full, but if you would like to go on a reserve list, you might be able to step in if someone else drops out –**



NEC - A trip to the Christmas crafts fair on Friday 1 November  
Entrance is £5  
Transport cost approx. £14 depends on numbers.

### Phantom of the Opera –

Seats have been booked at Curve for 12 March 2020

Matinee performance £36.

30 Tickets reserved, as of going to press a few left

Contact Elaine Yarwood [elaineyarwood@outlook.com](mailto:elaineyarwood@outlook.com)



## NEXT MONTH'S GENERAL MEETING –

### WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>

#### East Midlands Ambulance First Responders –

Derek Wind explains the role of the community responders in the East Midlands Ambulance Service.

Doors open 10.00am meeting starts 10.30. Syston Conservative Club – loop systems are available to borrow should anyone benefit from using one.

### FUTURE ISSUES OF VITALITY!

Hopefully this issue of the newsletter will reach you all first time around. Unfortunately, I am no nearer knowing what caused the problem last month, where some people did not receive their copy when it was first circulated. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for this month and will be asking a sample of you if you have received it.

A reminder that I am looking for newsletter items from any Syston & District U3A member, not just group organisers, [sadu3aed@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3aed@gmail.com) is the address to use.

## IF YOU MISSED THE AUGUST GM .....

#### Passports, Assassins, Traitors & Spies,

Martin Lloyd told us of 3 people whose actions led to significant legal changes, or at least proposals for changes.

Felice Orsini was an Italian revolutionary who made an assassination attempt of Emperor Napoleon III (nephew of Bony) in 1858. He came to England and recruited accomplices for his plot. One of them was

Thomas Allsop, an English barrister, who was also something of a reactionary. Orsini wanted a united Italy, rather than the collection of states that existed at that time. The attempt on Napoleon III was aimed at ridding the Papal state in Italy of its detachment of French troops.

Orisini was well known as a revolutionary, so when he applied for a passport from Sardinian authorities that covered the area where he had lived, claiming he wished to visit relatives in Nice, they were suspicious. Nice was not part of France at that time. They agreed to provide him with a passport, but on condition that he sailed direct from Falmouth to Nice. What Orisini was seeking was a passport that would allow him to travel to Nice via France, not that he intended to actually go to Nice at all. He then attempted to obtain a passport through the Belgian and French authorities, but without success. You will note that at that time it was possible to apply to different authorities to obtain a passport. English passports were however difficult to obtain, requiring the applicant to know the foreign secretary, know someone who did, or be able to provide a letter of introduction from a bank.

Thomas Allsop provided a solution because he held a British Passport. His nationality was also used in securing manufacture of metal casings that were then filled with explosives and used as grenades in the attack in Paris. The attempt took place when Napoleon and his Empress were due to attend the Paris Opera House of the time. There were 3 explosions in all, the last beneath the Napoleon's carriage. 8 people were killed and over 100 were injured. The Emperor and his wife were not among the casualties. Orsini was quickly rounded up by the authorities, he insisted that he was Thomas Allsop, but gave himself away when asked how far away from London he lived, his reply was in kilometres rather than miles.

The French authorities were up in arms at the use of a British passport by Orisini. Lord Palmerstone the then PM fully understood this, having served as Foreign Secretary before becoming PM. Much to his embarrassment, it was he who had signed Allsop's passport. Both France and Belgium withdrew passport facilities for British citizens, and France withdrew a relaxation that allowed Brits to make "day trips" to French ports without needing a passport. Palmerstone proposed the introduction of an offence of "conspiracy to murder" as a consequence of the affair, but he was defeated in parliament and the government resigned. Orisini was tried and executed for murder.

Fast forward to 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914 when Germany declared war on Russia. This led a number of foreign nationals in Germany to seek to leave the country. Among them was Charles Inglis who was of American birth. He needed an exit permit from the German authorities. On visiting to obtain this, he was persuaded to leave his passport and return later to collect it and his exit permit. When he did so, that passport had gone missing.

A man using Charles Inglis passport appeared in Rosyth, an important navel base. He sent a telegram and letters to Sweden, acquired a bicycle and went riding. He then went on the Ireland where he was arrested as a German spy. Unbeknown to him, his letters had been opened and found to contain information about the British Navy. The man posing as Charles Inglis was in fact Carl Hans Lody. He had not wanted to get involved with spying for Germany in both Britain and America, claiming ill health, including failing eyesight and hearing. He was tried and found guilty, sent to the Tower of London and shot by firing squad. The upshot of his use of Charles Inglis passport was the inclusion of photographs on these documents.

We then move on to May 1945 and the aftermath of World War II. Flensburg in Germany, near the Danish border, and British intelligence officers scouring for firewood came upon a dishevelled man. That man turned out to be William Joyce, better known as Lord Haw Haw. They apprehended him and handed him over for questioning. William Joyce was born in Brooklyn. His parents were Irish, but had moved to the US,



where his father had become an American citizen. The family later moved back to Britain. He obtained a British passport, but stated that he had been born in Ireland, thus his application had been fraudulent, but the fraud was not picked up at the time. He was charged with treason, but not before legislation had been changed in 1945. The existing law required 2 witnesses to an act of treason, the change amended the requirement to one. This was important as one witness, Albert Hunt, testified that he had heard and recognised Joyce during a radio broadcast claiming that British ports had been destroyed.

He was found guilty but appealed claiming that the court had no jurisdiction as he was in fact an American citizen. The appeal was lost, it being successfully argued that in having a British passport Joyce had effectively put himself under the protection of the crown and was therefore subject to its laws. He was executed in January 1946.

## U3A Treasure Hunt - 18<sup>th</sup> August 2019

As last year, the event started off with an excellent optional Sunday lunch, this time at the White Hart Pub in Quorn (but don't go to have one yourself as they provided this especially for us!) and then the Treasure Hunt itself took place afterwards. Once again this seemed very popular with the majority taking the lunch option.

29 people met up and we split them up into 8 teams to tackle our set of cryptic clues. Once again, the weather was kind to us, and we had everyone away promptly starting from 2pm onwards in 3-minute intervals. Teams took a little longer this year, but all returned safely to the pub without getting lost, so we then began the task of marking the answers. There was just one clue that none of the teams solved!

We were soon ready to announce the results. Lyn read out the answers, accompanied by the usual light-hearted moans & groans. It was very close at the top, with only 20 points separating the first 4 teams (10 points for a correct answer) - there was a tie break for 3<sup>rd</sup> place based on time taken.

First prize went to Tricia Russell, Kate Hill, Sue Blaxland & Lesley Campton. Come on fellas....a team of four ladies won last year as well....there's a challenge for the next one! We hope the booby prize of tubes of Smarties had the desired effect.....but we won't say who needed to be smarter.

Thanks to everyone who took part and made it a very enjoyable day for us as well.

Lyn & Dave Palmer

## DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our groups be able to use it? Might one of your fellow members be able to use it?



If you have something that you are prepared to give away – **strictly no items for sale!** Let me know and I'll put it in declutter den and hopefully we can help each other free up some space, whilst giving others something they have a use for, even if we don't.

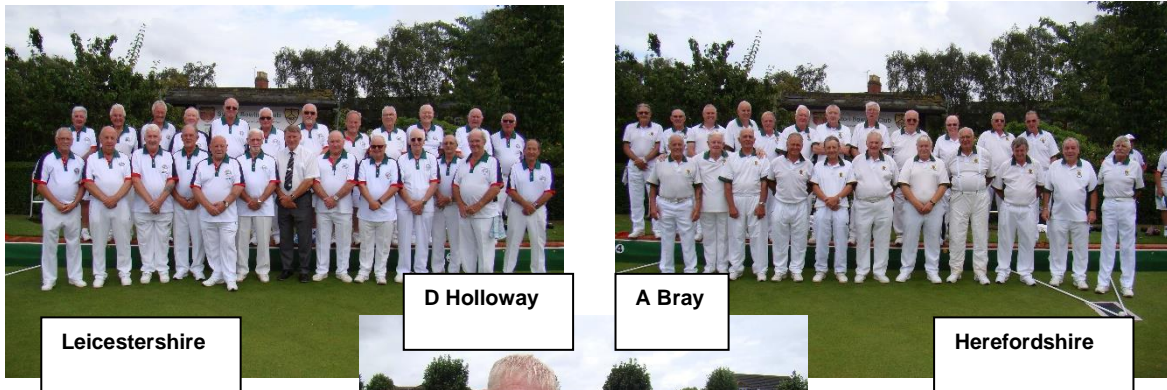
Let me have details at [sadu3aed@gmail.com](mailto:sadu3aed@gmail.com)



Not U3A but something you might be interested in .....

## SYSTON BOWLS CLUB

### SYSTON ATTRACTS HIGH PRAISE



In spite of heavy rain representing the Counties complete a close-run Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> July. 113 shots against

Both Captains (*David Holloway, Herefordshire, and Alan Bray, Leicestershire – pictured*) were full of praise for the quality of the Syston green which had enabled the match to be concluded in spite of the heavy showers.

Lavish praise, too, was expressed for the smooth organisation of the day's programme and for the warm hospitality provided by Syston bowlers. The post-match meal provided for all visitors came in for special praise.

On behalf of the Syston Club, President Pete Murray thanked the County for selecting Syston to host a County fixture after a gap of many years, expressing the hope that the day's experience would lead to more County fixtures being played on the green of which Syston players were now justifiably proud.

showers throughout the afternoon, teams of Leicestershire and Herefordshire managed to fixture on the Syston Bowling Club green on Leicestershire emerged as narrow victors with Herefordshire's 97.

oooOOOENDOOOooo

For further information please contact: **Colin Grimes**, Development Director, Syston Bowling Club  
T: 0116 2608412 E: [systonbowling@btinternet.com](mailto:systonbowling@btinternet.com)



I haven't been mown down in the rush of remanences, so here's one of my own. Please don't be shy. As I said last month, we all have memories, interesting stories, so let's share some of them. Even if you don't consider yourself a storyteller, that doesn't matter, if you supply the basic details, something can be woven around them, something that you can check out before it is included. Alternatively, you might have a photo

or two, now they don't need a lot of words. So come on, let me have some items to make this section a regular feature!

## THE OLD BAKERY

I'll bet I'm not the only one who remembers spending part of their school summer holidays staying over with grandparents, without parents being around. In my case it was my maternal grandparents, as I lived in the same village as my paternal set.

As an only child it was strange to find myself in a household with quite few other people. You see my mother was the oldest of 11 children, only one of whom died in infancy, the rest all lived well into adulthood. Although some of her siblings had also married by the time I went to stay, there were still several around, including the youngest 3, all girls, who were more like big sisters than aunts. The youngest was only 3 years older than me, with about 2 years between each of them. As the oldest grandchild by some 8 years, I was the only one who had the privilege of staying with Granny Clarke at that time.

Some people live in unusual places, places that don't fit the norm. My grandparent's home was a little unusual because they lived in what had been the village bakery. I don't mean they lived in the house that was part of the bakery, someone else lived in that. They quite literally lived in what had been the bakery. As a result, the layout and the room sizes were quirky to say the least. Their kitchen was a long room that stretched almost the width of their half of the building. At one end was a walk-in pantry that was as large, if not larger, than many kitchens (especially those in today's starter homes). For many years the bakery ovens sat unused at the other end. These were eventually ripped out and a bathroom built out into part of the garden. Before then bath time was tin receptacle in front of the range, in one of the two rooms that served as living accommodation. Daily washing was at the kitchen sink. My grandfather had this weird notion that a toilet in the bathroom wasn't hygienic. So, even after the bathroom was added, a visit to the loo still involved a trip outside to one of the outbuildings, and after bedtime, the use of the old guzunder (now I don't think I need to explain that term, I suspect most SAD U3A members will have heard it, unlike my twenty and thirty-something colleagues before I gave up the 9-5, and many of the forty-somethings as well come to think of it). But I digress, the old range was also taken out and a cooker took pride of place in the kitchen. The front room had an ordinary coal fire installed and became the sitting room. It was a square room, quite a cosy place when it had a fire roaring away in the grate. When we visited in winter, we toasted bread over it with a brass toasting fork and slathered it with pork dripping that ran down our chins as we ate it. Oh, the cholesterol, the dieticians of today would shudder!

The other main living room was larger, it had a huge dining table. In later years, as offspring married and left home, extending sections were removed and its size shrunk. Except that on Boxing day as many of them and their growing families as could, gathered there. Even fully extended, it took two sittings for everyone to have their food. But there was still room for sofas and chairs. Just as well with all the bums that were looking for seats, though on Boxing day the younger grandkids occupied laps and the older ones the floor. There was another small room downstairs that was used as a cloakroom and for storage of various items that were needed on a regular basis.

Upstairs there were two large rooms that served as bedrooms and a long thin space tucked into the eaves that could only be used for storage. To give an idea of their size, in one, two double beds, two chests of drawers and a wardrobe sat, and still allowed room to move. In the other, two double beds, a single bed, two chests and a large wardrobe didn't fill the room. The smaller bedroom was the male sleeping area, the

larger was the female dormitory. Yes, I know, that does pose an interesting question – obviously where there's a will!

Even though my grandfather was a farm foreman, his pay wouldn't have been that much better than the farm hands he managed. Yet, my grandmother managed to feed her brood, my mother never remembers going hungry and there was always plenty to eat when I stayed with her. Although on Sundays, Yorkshire puddings were served before the roast and, whilst vegetables were plentiful, the portions of meat were not. There was plenty of make do and mend, clothes handed down, sheets split down the middle when they wore a little thin, the halves turned and sewn down the middle, but I always remember it as a happy place to be.

*I was going to include a photograph, but unfortunately, I couldn't find it.*

## And finally .....

Pat Glover came across this amongst her mother's things and thought it captured the U3A ethic .... Has anyone else something to share?

Enjoy all life has to give  
Don't wait until tomorrow  
Fate can turn it upside down  
Fill each day with sorrow.  
Don't make plans and say  
Just wait 'til I retire  
Fill each precious moment  
With vim and zest and fire.  
Life can be unkind  
And steal your dreams away  
make each moment precious  
Each and every day.  
Don't keep a lovely thought  
Locked away inside  
Share that thought with someone  
Make them glow with pride.  
If you want to give a kiss,  
A hug, a warm embrace,  
Do it now and see the joy  
Etched on a loved ones face.

