

# Newsletter

*aka The LestFest*

## DECEMBER 2023

*Reluctant Editor: Colin Lester* 🐦

*Replacement solicited*

Contact

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*and for the time being use that email address to submit  
pictures, quizzes, funnies, reports  
and any other materials for inclusion  
in future issues (if any) of this publication*



Where do you think your Editor saw this handsome bird  
perching?

*Answers & photo credits on final page*

## Chairman's Page

- ❖ **Welcome to our December newsletter.** Thank you once again to Colin Lester for producing this excellent and informative newsletter.
- ❖ Our **Next Meeting** is on **Wednesday 20th December** at 2pm at St James Church Hall in Newbold Verdon.
- ❖ **Please join us for what we know will be a great afternoon of festive fun and food** as this month we will be welcoming you all to our annual Christmas party. We need **YOU** to bring **FOOD** to make it a party to remember and of course you can bring alcohol, after which your memory may not be as good???



To make the party even better you will be wonderfully entertained by Holly Reynolds with songs from the 50's, 60's and 70's

- ❖ I am sure you will all remember Mike Foley's highly illustrated talk about **Gopsall Hall** from its beginnings, through some neglect again rising "out of the ashes" and once more into its unfortunate demise.
- ❖ I know we ask every month for more & more volunteers to help the committee **to set-up the hall before the meetings** – this makes the monthly meetings go better and gives the committee members a chance to breathe, **especially this month** as there will be tables to set up for all members to pile their festive food on, and also the tables which will be laid out with the food you will be bringing. Thank you to those people who helped during the previous meetings, and all of the many members who helped to clear away after meetings, it really is greatly appreciated. **We still need more going forward!**
- ❖ **Upcoming outings** ~ although there are several planned for 2024, many of the early ones are getting booked up – January and February are both fully booked – it proves you must book early to join in the trips! There is great one on 7th March ~ the Tour of the Museum of Timekeeping ~ this is a fascinating guided tour of the museum in Newark-on-Trent, listening to many stories like the original speaking clock (I am sure you all remember that?).
- ❖ **Interest Groups** ~ there are currently 16 groups, with others planned for 2024, if you have an interest that's not covered, we could help you set it up! Have a look on our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/westleicestershire/welcome> which has lots of information about us, and where the GROUPS tab lists all the current groups.

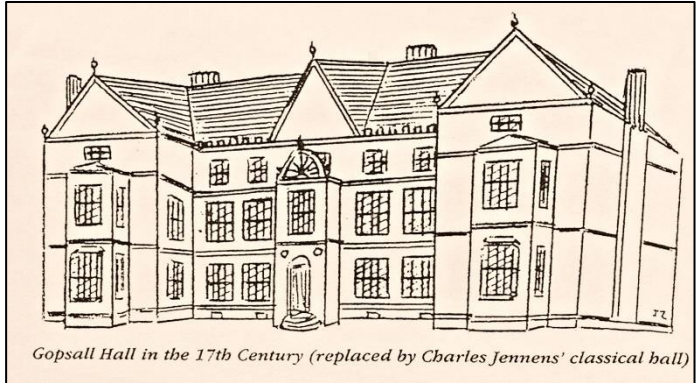


# Notes on our November Meeting

Yes, it really is the November one this time; your Editor apologises for that error in last month's Newsletter, and also in the lack of a written report this time (forgot to take pen & pad to Meeting), and thanks the Chairman for the pictures here, supplied from the Gopsall Park presentation slides by speaker Mike (not John as in last issue, Editor apologises again) Foley (to whom thanks for permission), with the title 'Gopsall Chronicles'.



Informative speaker Mike Foley indicating the Hall's grand staircase (Editor's poor photo)



Gopsall Hall in the 17th Century (replaced by Charles Jennens' classical hall)

As has often happened elsewhere, an earlier hall on the site was demolished and replaced by an owner with new ideas



Some of the owners over the years:  
(l-r) Admiral Howe, known to his crew as 'Black Dick, the sailor's friend';  
Richard William Penn Curzon-Howe,  
1<sup>st</sup> Earl Howe;  
and the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Frederick



Photos from the Hall's heyday: (l-r) The entrance hall; The green drawing room; and ornate plasterwork on the dining room ceiling



(l-r) The salon;  
Demolition begins in 1952; The remains of the temple in the park have been preserved



# QUIZ 1

## *Sports – Answers on final page*

1. In the 2010-11 Ashes series in Australia, which 5 English batsmen averaged 50 runs each?
2. In the 2010 golf Open, who broke the St Andrews 'new course' record in the first round?
3. What fate did the 1960 Olympic light heavyweight gold medal meet & why?
4. Up to the 2012-13 season, which 4 clubs had had only one season in the Premier League?
5. The first Formula 1 season and the 2008 one 50 years later used which three tracks?
6. In the 2012 London Paralympics, which teenager won the T44 100m and for which country?
7. At which three courses are the five flat horse classics run?
8. John Newcombe won 12 tennis Grand Slam doubles titles – partnered with whom?
9. 'Hands of Stone' was the nickname of which world boxing title holder?
10. What is the Venus Rosewater Dish awarded for?

## *TOPICAL MATTERS 1 – Scams*

Online purchases: Tesco has joined the ranks of traders offering advice on escaping scams, saying you should never pay by bank transfer and suggesting a visit to UK Finance's Take Five website which has a good overview of various forms of scam and avoidance procedures <https://www.takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/advice/general-advice/purchase-fraud/> .

Halifax: A relatively new scam targets their customers, sending authentic-looking text messages directing recipients to a fake website. For details follow the links on <https://www.which.co.uk/news/consumer-rights> .

Crypto currency: Scams involving these digital currencies rose by almost a quarter this year, say Lloyds Bank. If you've been encouraged to create a digital wallet on a real trading website like Binance or Coinbase then you may be in trouble, because the person who prompted you may be able to draw down from your holding. Always avoid following such promptings, going direct to the website itself to learn what to do to sign up.

Social media: Which? point out that social media sites and messages are vulnerable to scamming, with the villains seeking to obtain your personal data for nefarious purposes. Be sure your contact is genuine and not a scammer impersonating one of your friends or correspondents. <https://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-spot-a-social-media-scam-aMtwF3u1XKGt> has tips on keeping your details safe.

Energy scams: As Winter bites it might be tempting to take up an Ofgem offer for a new, more efficient boiler. Many of these are fake, and it's always better to check with that organisation direct what is genuinely on offer rather than following up what appears to be them contacting you. There's been cloning of pre-payment meter keys too, so if you or your friends or family have one of those take care to keep the details secure. Meantime, there's evidence that some people think they can lower heating costs by 'fixing' their meter or pipework as suggested by some social media sites, and though our Members are surely too savvy to do that we should all keep alert for signs that someone nearby might have done so – in 2021 a toddler was killed in a gas explosion caused by such tampering with pipework not by his parents but by their neighbour, who was jailed for 15 years. Keep sniffing!

Vehicle scams: Most of these scams aiming to rip off those wanting to buy a vehicle begin on Facebook, and they rose by very nearly three-quarters in the first half of this year. Those scammed lost an average of £998, so it's well worth taking extra care when aiming to change your car. The villains will put up fake offers for car or car parts sales, then want a deposit to clinch the deal, or else arrange collection or delivery dependent on bank transfer of the whole amount. Again, avoid making a bank transfer which, while easiest and quickest, is also the riskiest way to pay. Visit the Which? consumer rights advice page, or Lloyds Bank (where much of this information originated) website <https://www.lloydsbank.com/help-guidance/protecting-yourself-from-fraud/latest-scams.html> (other banks and building societies have similar web pages).

Nextdoor postings: A message from Nextdoor social medium noted a telephone number it said was making scam calls. Comments entered showed the call had come from Orkney, an unknown location for the person posting the message. To check an unknown incoming phone call, visit <https://www.unknownphone.com/> .

*Sources: Which? scam alert emails 26 October, 16 November, 23 November, & Ofgem webpage; Lloyds Bank webpage as above; [tescobank@mail.info.tescobank.com](mailto:tescobank@mail.info.tescobank.com) email 1 November; Nextdoor Newbold Verdon email 11 November*

## West Leicestershire u3a Wine Appreciation Group

*Report of the meeting on Wednesday 22 November by John Dexter, to whom many thanks*

A day of celebration – Sue, Pat, and Roger all celebrated their birthdays, together with mention of the American ‘Thanksgiving’ (not sure why). The birthdays were marked with celebratory comestibles cake, unusual cheese, even more unusual crisps, flags etc.

Our theme this week was ‘South American wines’. As always, some liberties were taken with the definition – is California in South America, or just southern America? Even more tenuous was South Africa which at least is on the Tropic of Capricorn.



Argentina seemed to us a good start, what with the beef being a major export. Your reporter obtained an Argentinian Malbec which apparently is ‘Intense and Rich, bursting with flavours of raspberry and plum, the perfect partner with BBQ steak or spicy sausage’. The rest of the label compounded the purple prose – bold palate, fresh plum and raspberry, aromas of black cherry, velvety soft.... well, you get the picture.

Now, contrary to widespread misinformation, relatively few of the bottles brought by our group for evaluation are actually finished, so we get to take home the residue to finish at home. This was something of a shame as ours was borderline undrinkable! With a strong spicy sausage – perhaps; add it to gravy – not really; drink it – hardly! The only real use we found for it was to steep raisins in to add to a dessert! One really should not judge a wine by its label. It was vegan though.

Fortunately most of the other wines sampled were much better. The Californian Zinfandel was ‘light, smooth, easy drinking’. The South African Chenin Blanc was deemed ‘light and fruity’. An Argentinian Malbec ‘Inverted Flamingo High Altitude’ – where do they get these descriptions – was actually lovely – smooth and produced above 1,000m.

A Camino de Sueños Icono blend entitled ‘Long and Winding Road’ – a blend of pretty well every grape produced in SA – was actually sublime – again, we should not judge by the label.

That said, the prize for the prettiest label went to a Chilean Carménère which did go down well.

Still on the South American theme we sampled a Chilli Cheese.....

Comedy cheese of the night was a Wensleydale with Cranberries, Orange, and Cointreau. Other cheeses were available. Further offerings included lentil crisps for the clean living amongst us (most were left over for return to the donor) as well as Pigs in Blanket crisps – who knew? Salt and Vinegar crisps had to be Chardonnay and Sea Salt while cheese and onion crisps were ‘Handcooked Mature Cheddar and Onion’. People wonder why we hanker for ‘the good old days’: remember the little blue bags of salt in Smiths Crisps (and why they were discontinued)?

Our meetings are developing as social and conversational events, with the wines taking a reduced presence, so scoring can be a fraught process with members unwilling to break off their discussions. This does make it difficult for your reporter to gather the more scurrilous subjects to tell you about, although I did overhear ‘Ethics in Local Government’ – apparently there is an effort to impose some. Christmas lights turn on – does it? The plethora of TV offerings, we would need 25-hour days to take full advantage of! However, many others were unheard for the reasons given.

We did all raise a glass to our friends unable to attend these events.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 7.30pm at Paul and Sue’s house. I can’t remember what the theme is but festive wear is a given.

We will bring and share, I will email all nearer the time to remind those who signed up and have forgotten what they agreed to!

## QUIZ 2

(with thanks to Jean Johnson)

### General (Answers on final page)

1. What's the name of the road from Westminster to Blackfriars on The Thames north bank?
2. *A Counterblast To Tobacco* was written by which King of England?
3. In TV's *Oliver's Travels*, who was Oliver?
4. Moscow and Anaconda are towns in which US state?
5. 'It's a funny old world – a man's lucky if he gets out of it alive,' said who?
6. Should you eat, sleep on, wipe up, or wear, a kaki?
7. *Every Time You Go Away*, *Come Back and Stay*, & *Senza Una Donna* were Top Ten hits for whom?
8. What's your problem if you're scorbutic?
9. Does Golden Bay Air operate in Australia, USA, Canada, or New Zealand?
10. How many times would the Moon fit into the Earth?

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### TOPICAL MATTERS 2 – u3a Festival '24

Thursday 18 - Saturday 23 July will see next year's national u3a Festival at the University of York, centring on its exhibition centre. With talks, sports, music, and workshops, it will have something of interest for many of us. The organisers are particularly keen to have involvement from local Group musicians and singers, so those of you who belong to any of our musical interest groups and their spin-offs do consider getting in touch to see what's involved. Contact is by email to [festival@u3a.org.uk](mailto:festival@u3a.org.uk). For more details of the venues visit <https://yorkconferences.com/venues/exhibition-centre> and <https://www.york-sport.com/centre>.

Separate ticket prices apply to each day but there's a whole-event offer at £35 including buffet supper on Day 1 that saves £5 (the one-off price for the 23<sup>rd</sup> which is a half day). En-suite single rooms on campus are £61.80 per person for bed & breakfast; the Festival organisers are compiling lists of other accommodation nearby that is on the York Tourist Information list. Full details are on <https://us9.campaign-archive.com/?u=656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed&id=b806ff1867>, and you can get updates through the <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter> by setting your preferences to receive them.

Source: u3a Network News 18 November and attached PDF flyer which your Editor will send you if asked

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### TOPICAL MATTERS 3 – Wheels falling off?

A report from the Association of Public Service Excellence shows that the Meals on Wheels service is 'on the point of collapse, with only 29% still in operation across the UK, and fewer than 18% in England'. The British Association of Parental and Enteric Nutrition estimate that malnutrition costs UK taxpayers £19b a year in support services, with 35% of those entering care homes suffering depleted nutrition.

The Meals on Wheels service is thus literally a lifeline for many elderly and/or disabled people, especially those living alone; yet local authorities are not obliged to provide it, and it often falls to cuts in funding that councils find essential to avoid raising Council Tax further.

At this year's Meals on Wheels Week (30 Oct to 3 Nov), the National Association of Care Catering called on central Government to provide funding to ensure that those services that still exist can continue, and to consider making it a statutory responsibility of local government to provide them. It also pointed to the need for help with fuel and food costs for the service, which as we all know have risen recently.

Along with Age UK, Care England, and other groups, the Association wrote to MPs pointing out the potential disaster for the elderly and vulnerable in local communities throughout the land should the Meals on Wheels service disappear altogether. No doubt some if not many of us will know of those who benefit from the service in this area, and can appreciate the harm to their health should it have to close.

Sources: National Pensioners Convention email [info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org) 30 October and webpage link therein, and webpage [https://www.facebook.com/UKBAPEN/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/UKBAPEN/?locale=en_GB)



## November Outing – Bletchley Park

A cold day greeted the 19 WLu3a Members congregating in the café (where else?) prior to taking a fairly brief wander in small groups, then regrouping at the 'Chauffeur's Hut' (named for a bus driver who had taken code-breaking staff to & from outside billets & hotels) to join about six members of the public in a guided tour that it had been arranged for us to join at midday. Our well-informed guide Andrew gave an illustrated presentation of the history of the estate and manor as well as of the code-breaking operation, before taking us outside to cold wind & drizzle where he described the various huts & other sites on the big estate and what went on there.



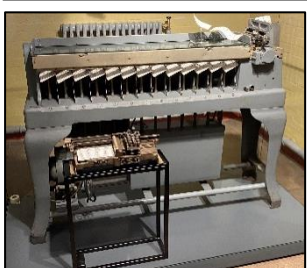
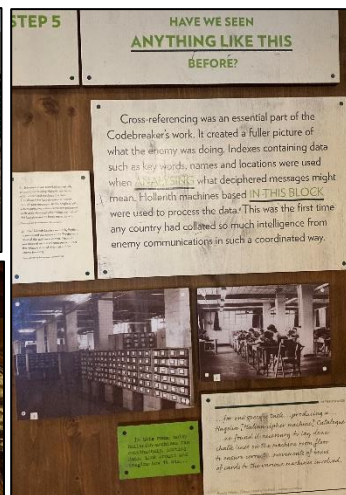
After warming up over lunch we wandered off in small groups or on our own round the very extensive displays in various huts and the manor itself. The latter is a magnificent building both inside and out, and



suffered barely a scratch from its temporary inhabitants. Indeed, we were told that those taking part in the intelligence operations there – so vital to the winning of the War – mixed freely together, so

that a maintenance worker could for instance be found seated at lunch next to Alan Turing.

Displays are not limited to Wartime operations though these are covered extensively, but include Cold War and modern intelligence work against nefarious regimes and criminal gangs, with a whole room showing artistic ways of displaying data retrieved. Your Editor had to leave before the site closed for the day and so didn't go through the museum in Hut 8(?) for instance, but will return for more some day.



Attempts at captions made the stupid software send photos all over the place: Editor regrets

# Your WLU3A Committee

Lou Grice Chairman ( <a href="mailto:chairman@wlu3a.org.uk">chairman@wlu3a.org.uk</a> )	Jane Smith Treasurer ( <a href="mailto:treasurer@wlu3a.org.uk">treasurer@wlu3a.org.uk</a> )	Andy Elton Secretary ( <a href="mailto:secretary@wlu3a.org.uk">secretary@wlu3a.org.uk</a> )
Kathy Elton Membership Secretary ( <a href="mailto:membership@wlu3a.org.uk">membership@wlu3a.org.uk</a> )	Paul Bannister Committee Member	John Dexter Committee Member
Sue Hough Committee Member	Pam Grice Committee Member	Margaret Proctor Committee Member
Jon McGregor Committee Member		

TBC – Vice Chair

## Quiz 2 answers:

1. The Embankment
2. King James I
3. Alan Bates
4. Idaho
5. W C Fields
6. Eat – it's a fruit
7. Paul Young
8. You've got scurvy (you knave!)
9. New Zealand
10. 80

## Quiz 1 answers:

1. Ian Bell, Alistair Cook, Kevin Pieterston, Matt Prior, Jonathan Trott
2. Rory McIlroy with 63
3. Winner Cassius Clay (as he then was) threw it in the Ohio R. after being refused service in a segregated restaurant
4. Barnsley, Blackpool, Burnley, & Swindon Town
5. Silverstone, Monza, and Spa-Francorchamps
6. Jonnie Peacock for Britain
7. Newmarket, Epsom, and Doncaster
8. Tony Roche
9. Roberto Duran
10. Wimbledon Ladies Singles



Your Editor was fortunate enough about a month ago to snap the handsome bird shown on p.1 perching on its short pediment on top of a flat-roofed garage in Gilberts Drive, Newbold Verdon. A hint as to its nature: it hasn't flown away yet.

Is it there to scare off pigeons? Could be – there are plenty in the village aforementioned, which have given problems by a tendency to nest beneath solar panels, occasioning the expense of having netting installed around them (the panels not the pigeons) on your Editor among others. There's also a theory that they hog the bird-feeders, scaring off smaller yet more attractive birds that have more melodious songs than 'croo-croo, croo-croo' all the damn time.

At what number Gilberts Drive, you might ask, can this well-made statuette be seen? Not saying, nor whether near one end of that road or in between

the ends, nor at which end (whoops!) – don't want the owner to be upset by hordes of u3a members turning up to stare at the unusual sight, or knocking on the door to ask inane questions about it. You'll just have to walk along the road yourself, keeping your eyes open.

*Original Source: Your editor of course*

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