

Newsletter

MARCH 2024

Final issue from Retiring Editor Colin Lester

New Editor still needed!

Meanwhile send any materials for the Newsletter to publicity@wlu3a.org.uk



Why are these people so very happy? Answer on p8

Chairman's Page

- ❖ **Welcome to our March 2024 newsletter.** Thank you once again to Colin Lester for producing this newsletter.
- ❖ Our **Next Meeting** will be on **Wednesday 20th March 2024** at 2pm at the St James Church Hall in Newbold Verdon.
- ❖ The talk this month will be by **Roy Moore** on "**The Air ambulance Service**" a medical emergency service which does an amazing job, which we have all heard about, but don't want to use. The service is a charity and is funded by voluntary contributions.
- ❖ Along with the many talks and presentations booked for your pleasure during this year, there is a long list of varied outings and even more interest groups for you to join in with, which will be described and displayed at the rear of the hall at the next meeting. Some of these are nearly fully booked, and some, that you have already booked, may need paying for at the meeting. We will share these with you before and during the meeting where you will again have the opportunity to book even more of them.
- ❖ The February meeting was a little different than most as the speaker, due to a sudden family concern, could not make the meeting but did not give us time to find another speaker ~ we will ask him back later in the year. When this happens, panic usually sets in, but I must congratulate the members of the committee and the group leaders for their response to the situation. Each group leader gave a small, entertaining, outline of their activities, poetry, language course / quiz (especially old English) and even some Anglo Saxon word that we had never heard before. I hope the translations by Colin were correct! After the meeting a number of members said how much they had enjoyed hearing about the groups, outing etc. So perhaps we could do this again later in the year (this time planned).
- ❖ **We hope to again see those of you who usually come to our meetings, and would really like to encourage those of you who don't normally manage to join us, to come along to the next meeting and see what we get up to! Please join us for what we expect to be another interesting and enjoyable time together.**
- ❖ **How about not just enjoying the meetings but become more involved and support the committee to provide help and information for the members. There are currently two areas on which we urgently need your help :**
 - **Vice Chairman** ~ as a 'stand-in' for me when I am not available (possibly a few times a year when I am on holiday!) ~ it should not take up a lot of your time.
 - **Newsletter Editor** ~ After Colin's presentation at the meeting on how easy the role of the editing of the Newsletter really is, we had a member volunteer but he's since had to withdraw as a result of continuing ill health, so please contact me or Colin if you can help.
- ❖ Don't forget you can bring along your own drinks (alcohol included) to meetings but please bring suitable non-breakable glasses etc. Also remember there won't be any tables to rest them, or you, on!
- ❖ The committee were once again very impressed, and relieved, by the number of you who turned up early and helped to set up the hall and stayed behind to stack the chairs after the meeting. We do still need volunteers to help the monthly meetings go well, so if you can please come along after 1.15 pm it is much appreciated.

February Meeting



Many people were politely attending to the chap with the microphone rather than puzzling over Peter Crowe's quiz sheets

Almost the whole of WLu3a's membership turned out on Wednesday 21 February to hear Your Retiring Editor speak, which he did at inordinate length thanks to the scheduled speaker having been swamped, not by the weather despite persistent rain and high winds, but by family problems. We surely wish him well in surmounting them with minimum trauma.

At first Your Retiring Editor gave a 5-minute diatribe on this Newsletter itself, emphasising how rewarding the role of Editor is and how simple the job, which he'd taken up reluctantly (not many people know that), is to carry out. He outlined some of the benefits, the few and easily-navigated requirements, and the power involved and kudos attained in working through the tasks involved. Chairman Lou had stressed the need for a Replacement

Editor to ensure that the publication continues to be produced, and seemed to have achieved success when a voice from the back row announced, to applause, that the owner of it was willing to give it a go. Unfortunately he subsequently had to withdraw his offer due to ill health. Would all readers please consider volunteering!

To continue with the Meeting report: following extended outlines and details of



Andy Elton talks Events

special interest groups and forthcoming visit and other events, some old git stood up and spouted poetry, of all things. Not very well either, as he failed to complete a rendition of William Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' (not 'Daffodils', note); didn't, as he might have done, draw the obvious contrast between the guttural sound of Anglo-Saxon (AKA Old English) and the softer Middle English, the latter showing the influence of the Norman invasion

and settlement in this country; didn't repeat the guesses shouted from the audience as to the nature of some of his shockingly-pronounced foreign-language poetry (*as he'd asked Margaret, at a previous Meeting, to do with audience answers to her Quiz questions, so that people at the back of the hall could know what the right answers were*); failed to remember the right place in Chaucer's 'The Nun's Priest's Tale' to properly describe the poet's dietary advice to his audience and the dire consequences of failing to follow it; and was no doubt guilty of other weaknesses of recall and rendition that Your Retiring Editor can no longer bring to mind from his failing memory.

It would be out of character for your Modest and Retiring Retiring Editor to identify the bloke, whose activity at the Meeting is described in the paragraph above, to the Patient and Discerning Readers of this Newsletter. Suffice it to hope that no future speakers will find it necessary to cancel their talk at the 11.75th hour and so subject the audience to any such performance again. *What would Leonardo have made of it all? Alas, we shall never know.*



Peter gives the answers to his quiz

TOPICAL MATTERS 1 – Loo Rolls

Did you know that VAT is charged at different rates on different products? Your Retiring Editor's vague knowledge of this was given a shock when reading that while HMRC considers helicopters, caviar, and gingerbread men as essentials for VAT purposes, toilet paper is taxed at the rate for luxury items. An email from his recycled-paper loo roll providers (who donate half profits to build toilets & improve sanitation in the developing world) requested support for their appeal to the Chancellor to change that policy which they call The Roll Tax – surely a good idea; or in straitened times should we just revert to using dock leaves instead of indulging in luxuries like soft paper?

Source: 24.2.24 email from *Who Gives a Crap?* wedo@whogivesacrap.org <https://www.change.org/p/scrap-the-roll-tax-toilet-roll-is-not-a-luxury>

QUIZ 1

Sports – Answers on final page

1. With which team did Michael Schumacher return to F1 in the 2010-13 seasons?
2. Which Netherlands player is the highest scorer for them in World Cup finals?
3. In 2011 Mark Cavendish became the first British cyclist to do what?
4. What is Rhona Martin best remembered for in sport?
5. Who is the only man to have scored a triple century at Lords?
6. The three successive Cheltenham Gold Cups from 2002-2004 were won by which horse?
7. With a world ranking of 95th, who took the 2007 Australian Women's tennis singles?
8. Solve this puzzle: In 2003-4, 26-12-0.
9. In 1956 who became the youngest heavyweight champion of the world?
10. In the Rugby World Cup of 2011, where was the southernmost New Zealand venue?

TOPICAL MATTERS 2 – Driving

More changes are coming for motorists this year. Car tax (Vehicle Excise Duty or VED) will rise on 1 April, with Retail Price Index inflation being taken into account in future. This applies to cars, vans, and motorcycles, and how much is charged will depend on how green the vehicle is deemed to be.

More Low-emission Zones will come into force in Scotland: from 30 May in Dundee, and 1 June in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Unlike the Clean Air Zones in England, these North of the Border absolutely ban non-compliant vehicles, with a heavy fine for those who disregard the warning. If driving to and in Scotland this Summer, then, check the websites of any cities you mean to visit to find the rules.

Since the beginning of this year, vehicle makers have to ensure that at least 22% of their car sales and 10% of their van sales must be of fully electric ones. However, the ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles has been moved from 2030 to 2035.

The eyesight requirements rule is subject to a current consultation, so look out for any changes to come in the Government's good time.

Source: IAM RoadSmart Member e-newsletter 13.2.24

West Leicestershire u3a Wine Appreciation Group

Report of the meeting on 28 February by John Dexter to whom many thanks

What do aluminium, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, iron, manganese, nickel, lead, and zinc have in common? Answer – they are all found, in varying concentrations, in our tippie of choice – wine!

Referencing Mr Google we find some appropriately long words to explain this phenomenon, many of which I cannot spell. The metals are not actually added to the mix, rather they are present in trace amounts, usually originating from either the ingredients or the wine-making equipment. They affect the characteristics of wine including flavour, freshness, aroma, colour, and taste. In other words, most of the metals found in the wine serve both functional and regulatory purposes, contributing to the wine-making process as well as the overall character of the product.

So far so good, most of us can ignore the facts and accept that wine quality is subjective and personal preferences will vary – unless you are sensitive to one or more of these elements. One of our members has, after a lifetime of study, narrowed down some unpleasant aftereffects of having a drink. Not to colour – red or white, not to ABV, nor even to quantity, but rather to the presence of trace metallic elements. As she says, she is allergic to metal – not sure which one though. The study continues...

To return to the u3a mantra – 'Learn, Laugh and Live' – we embarked on a geographic odyssey. Our subject this month was Antipodean Wine. We had wines apparently from the Spanish, Italian and South African enclaves of Australia. We even had a Merlot from that well-known wine making concern – Morrisons. This we were assured is in Eastern Australia. Most of our samples, though, actually came from Australia and New Zealand.



Our first tasting was a very nice Prosecco, admittedly from Italy but to celebrate Hazel's birthday which she topped off with a smorgasbord of cheeses, crisps, crackers, and grapes. The rest of us will have to up our game – thank you Hazel and Happy Birthday.

Speaking of cheese, ever the master of the obscure, Roger brought some Shropshire Blue which was originally called Inverness-shire Blue but renamed for commercial reasons – apparently Inverness is not the epicentre of Stilton-style cheeses. This one was made in Long Clawson.

We moved on to a set of three Brancott Estate Sauvignon Blanc wines – a posh 'reserve', a more run-of-the-mill pouring wine, and a 'Flight' version which is apparently good for you, having just 58 calories per glass and only 9% ABV. An interesting comparison but all very palatable. Staying on the 'good for you' tack we tried a Banrock Station Merlot which was presented in an interestingly shaped plastic bottle and was 100% Carbon Neutral. We all felt much better after this.

A Kooliburra Sauvignon Blanc from Margaret River scored highly on its name alone, a later Shiraz from the same region in Western Australia was also highly regarded. Looking at the scores for the various wines sampled, the standard was very high – or did our decision to delay judging them to the end of the evening affect the scores?

This may seem a bit perverse but illustrated the power of our collective memory.

Nearly all of us could remember our parent's Co-op dividend number, the posh ones among us who had a telephone could remember that number – even our first car registration. We proceeded down memory lane to laugh (or, to be realistic, not) about the seeming privations of the '40s and '50s and how conventions and expectations have changed. The uses and protocols of potties and even toilet paper were discussed. Izal came in for specific mention – good as tracing paper or for musical combs – not so good for its specified use.

As so often, talk turned to holidays, travel, and restaurants. It is interesting how a good or a bad experience of a restaurant can influence and even blight that establishment for years. One restaurant in rural France did sound good – perhaps a venue for the lunch group?

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 27 March, 7.30pm at Alan's Way – Theme: Iberian Wines.

Arts & Crafts Group

with thanks to Jean Johnson for the photograph

This month the Group covered notebooks, like these attractive items:



QUIZ 2

(with thanks to Jean Johnson for some of these)

General (Answers on final page)

1. What American anti-terrorist force is based at Fort Bragg?
2. What Morse Code letter is indicated by three dots and a dash?
3. Who played Emma Harte between the ages of 15 and 80 in *A Woman of Substance*?
4. Soldering joins 2 bits of metals by melting an alloy; the same process but hotter is
5. Whose cavalry charge captured 14 Dutch warships in the War of the First Coalition?
6. At how many degrees Celsius/Centigrade does pure water usually freeze?
7. What local connection did Lettice Knollys (1543-1634) have with our area?
8. What is the national sport of Mongolia?
9. What sort of things are these: an atropa; an argali; a wagtail; a grackle; and a makor?
10. What is the shortest complete sentence in English?

February Outing – Pie-making in Melton

with thanks to Angela Roberts for text and photos and to Jane Hill and Norma Smart for the last 2 photos

A very enjoyable morning at the Harboro Hotel in Melton Mowbray, pie-making with Claire from Brockleby's Bakery. Not only did we have excellent guidance shaping and making our pork pies, but we also had an insight into why Melton became so important for pork pie making.

We had to shape our pies over a form (dolly) which some achieved better than others, but with Claire's help we all ended with a perfect shape. The biggest challenge was getting the pastry off the dolly without cracking it, and this we were all able to do very satisfactorily.

It was good fun and a bit of a laugh, with the bonus of a very tasty pork pie to take home and bake.



Top Row: far left: Dough on the dolly; centre left: Chefs in action; centre right: What do I do now, Miss?; near right: A touch of finesse.....



Middle Row: far left:makes for a good shape; centre left: The finished article; centre right: All ready to eat; near right: But each one individual.

Bottom Row: So many fine piemakers – surely an auspicious number in this case.

TOPICAL MATTERS 3 – Scams

Bank and ISP communications: You might get a phone call or email apparently from a national bank saying your account has received or made a payment the size or nature of which the bank thinks suspicious. Scammers posing as Virgin Money, HSBC, and Barclays seem to have been particularly active recently. These messages may arrive even if you don't bank or have never done so with the financial institution concerned. If you do bank with them, however, best follow up what might be a genuine warning, but don't phone or click on any contact details in the message, instead contact your bank online or by phone in the way you normally would, to check the authenticity of the message. If assured that nothing has been taken into or from your account, ask for your concern to be flagged there, specifying the sum quoted in the message (your Editor was scammed last year by a rat who delayed taking the money until after the bank had said it hadn't left his account; the bank later restored it and log-in details were changed). Where at all possible, make any online contact from a different electronic device than the one on which you received the message, to avoid complications from any backdoor 'sleeper' code that might have compromised your device just waiting to steal your bank logon details when you enter them online. Your phone provider's name may be adopted for this sort of scam too, with PlusNet one such offering repayment of surplus subscription funds recently. Emails are the most dangerous: a survey shows they try to fool nearly half of UK adults at least once a week.

Unsolicited phone calls : Many cold calls or scam attempts have been received on your Editor's landline this month. He has found that leaving the phone to ring at least four times before answering it results in silence in scam cases, as the caller will phone several 'prospects' at a time and answer the one that picks up first. If silence persists as you say 'Hello' three times or so then the call's almost certainly a scam, so hang up.

Romance Fraud : People being scammed out of money after apparently finding romance online is on the rise among those over 50, with 49% more among 55- to 64-year-olds last year than in 2022. It was the next age bracket up that lost most money, though, with the 65s to 74s defrauded of an average £13,123 each. Action Fraud, Metro Bank, *Which?*, and Saga Finance are some of the organisations offering advice on avoiding becoming a victim, or helping those who have already succumbed to the fraud.

Insulation : Adverts for spray foam insulation appear in various places, but could be scams: one old chap paid £3K for a bad job, then another £2K to have it taken off so that he could sell the house. Indications of dodgy dealers can be found here [Beware of scammers peddling dodgy spray foam loft insulation - Which? News](#) .

Google Searches : More and more 'sponsored' entries seem to be showing up at the top of the results of Google searches. Google has a verification process, but some scammers have fooled it and so are included in these adverts where they have a prime place to target victims. One such, noted in *Which!* Scam Alert Service last month, was named Vodaphone Finance Management and came up from a search on Lyca Mobile. If any sponsored entry interests you, avoid making contact through the search entry but go to the parent company's website in a separate search or through your online account log-in.

Broadband providers : Scammers are sending messages to some broadband hub users about overdue payments with or without penalty charges. Don't be fooled! Delete the message & check with your provider.

Social Media Alerts : Some social media users are posting notes about scam attempts they've received. Last month a Nextdoor Neighbourhood subscriber noted a TV Licensing scam email, while others posted phone numbers as sources of a BT scam, or just as the number used by a scammer; but you should be aware that unscrupulous companies might post such a message to try and damage a genuine business rival. One of the scams watchdogs that have been mentioned before in these columns could clarify. More general social media scams are outlined on [How to spot a social media scam - Which?](#) .

Terminology : You might know what 'phishing' means, but how about 'quishing', 'smishing', 'vishing', etc. These are more recent scam terms that you can see on *Which?* [jargon buster](#).

Finally, folks : Whether or not this item continues under any new Editor who might be found, don't forget to check **everything** for possible scams. Several tools are available online including the *Which?* suite (*note: your Retiring Editor receives no payback from this organisation*) [scam toolkit](#) , [scam tracker](#) , scam alert service via [sign up, too](#) , and (for we who love puzzles) [Test your scam detection skills with our quiz](#) . Good luck & keep safe!

Sources: various scam emails & phone calls received by your Retiring Editor 24.2, 25.2, 27.2.24; Which? scam alert service emails 15.2.24, and 8.2.24, and 22.2.24; various Nextdoor Neighbourhood posts Feb 24; Which? info email 20.2.24

Your WLU3A Committee

Lou Grice Chairman (chairman@wlu3a.org.uk)	Jane Smith Treasurer (treasurer@wlu3a.org.uk)	Andy Elton Secretary (secretary@wlu3a.org.uk)
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Sue Hough Committee Member	Pam Grice Committee Member	Margaret Proctor Committee Member
Jon McGregor Committee Member		
	<i>TBC – Vice Chair</i>	

Quiz 2 answers:

1. Delta Force
2. V (for Victory in WWII)
3. Jenny Seagrove
4. Brazing
5. The French, on the frozen Zuiderzee
6. Down to -38°C (impure water: 0 °C)
7. Countess of Leicester from 1578
8. Bökh (Mongolian wrestling)
9. flower; sheep; bird; bird; sea dragon
10. 'I am'

Quiz 1 answers:

1. Mercedes
2. Johnny Rep
3. He won the Green Jersey
4. Leading British curlers to win gold at the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics
5. Graham Gooch against India in July 1990
6. Best Mate, trained by Henrietta Knight & which was never lower than 2nd
7. Serena Williams (her low ranking being the result of a long injury break)
8. Arsenal's undefeated League win-draw-loss totals, 2003-4 season
9. Floyd Paterson
10. Invercargill



Photos here & p.1 by: nobody worth mentioning

The people shown on p.1 think they have just won the Lottery (the poor deluded fools). Here's how they looked after being informed of their devastating error – and though the message obviously hasn't got through yet to three of them, another has become so distressed as to be asking please to be excused. Mops were brought by the management for the pools of tears on the table.

Important note: Unable to sleep the other night, your Retiring Editor tried think up cryptic crossword clues, like THIS: 'At the end of the happening there'll be a squeak' (10 letters). The ANSWER to that, & the reasoning behind it, will be sent by your Retiring Editor to the kind, helpful, capable and wholly admirable person who we hope and trust will come forward to ensure this Newsletter continues to appear.

UNLESS somebody takes over editing this Newsletter, therefore, none of you will ever know! (except for those who might have worked it out for themselves – the smartarses).

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