



# **Doncaster u3a Newsletter**

## **April - May 2025**

**Registered Charity Number 1074577**

# Report from the Chair

Hello and welcome to Spring! The daffs are out by the time you read this and perhaps the dank weather we are experiencing as I write in February will have given way to more spring-like weather to warm up the soil.

I look forward to welcoming you to the Special General Meeting in March, just before the members meeting, when we shall be voting on the acceptance of the new and revised constitution.



The major issue for this next couple of months is the Annual General Meeting, at which we re-elect a committee of Trustees to oversee the running of our u3a. All current members of the committee must declare if they wish to re-stand and must be elected by you, as well as any other members who wish to stand for a place on the committee.

If you wish to stand, it is a very simple process, with a simple form to fill in. This can be emailed to you or collected from either Felicity Thompson or me at a coffee morning on any Tuesday. The form requires you to have a proposer and a seconder (not current members of the committee) and to sign to say you are willing to stand for election. You then send it or hand it to me or Felicity at a coffee morning, a members meeting, or anywhere else you come across us!

Why should you be interested in standing? Because it gives you the opportunity to shape the direction of Du3a and to have your say on behalf to the membership. Just remember the national motto of u3a - BY the members FOR the members! The time to state your interest is NOW, as all proposals must be handed in by mid April, for consideration at the AGM on 19th May.

We have new groups that have started and one recommenced since January 2025 and our membership has risen to 420. We are certainly regarded as a thriving organisation. If you have not paid your subs yet please do so as a matter of urgency as it is now due!

I would like to thank Nancy Raynsford for another interesting newsletter, but as she will tell you, she cannot compile it if there are no items send in by you! The newsletter is a joint venture in which we can all take part!

Enjoy reading this newsletter,

Paula Harmer

## A Warm Welcome to all our new members

Janet Sergeant, Errol Jodoin, Lorna Watson,  
Caroline Appleyard, Jeannie Sanders. Phil Baston,  
Ann Baston, Linda Tonge, Jak Gurney, Andrea  
Jackson, Rita Hindley, Peter Bright, Alison Bright,  
Susan Stevenson, Diana Robinson, Richard Ward,  
Pauline Ridley, Roger Grey, David Hyde

## Upcoming Members Meetings

**March 17<sup>th</sup>** - As well as our SGM we have a very special guest - Paula Harmer - who will tell us about 'Signs and Symbols in Painting'.

**April 21<sup>st</sup>** - Judith Hedley will tell us about '1816 - The Year Without a Summer'.

**May 19<sup>th</sup>** - The AGM will be followed by a talk about 'the amazing animals of Costa Rica' by Phil Cooper. NOTE this meeting starts at 12:45.

**June 16<sup>th</sup>** - Paul Herrigan will talk to us about 'A Lifetime Capturing Moments in Motion'.

**June 30<sup>th</sup>** - We will have a talk on the lighter side of working in the NHS as Jeff Jacklin gives his talk 'It Only Hurts When I Laugh'.

All members meetings take place at Powerhouse with doors usually opening at 12:45 for people to have a drink and a chat prior to the talk starting at 13:30

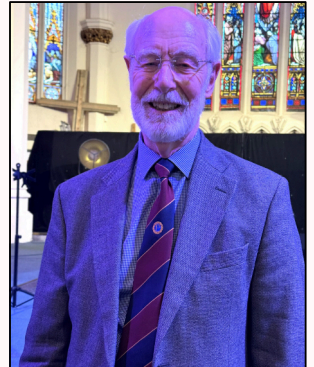
*Thanks to John Wheeldon for this issue's cover photograph of Water moving over a concrete edge moving from the Upper Lake to Middle Lake at Cusworth Hall*

# Members Meetings Reports

## **John Hope - 'Lasting Memories of Doncaster County Borough Police'**

John has been a member of Du3a for 8 or 9 years. He served as a police officer from 1962, when he started as a cadet, until 1995 when he retired from the position of Regional Detective Superintendent. His talk focused on his early years as a cadet and then a beat bobby serving Doncaster centre and the surrounding areas.

After taking his O Levels at school, John joined the police force as a cadet. Doncaster took on just three cadets in 1962, the year that he joined. He started his training and then his career based at Guildhall the main police station situated where the current M&S stands. The audience were delighted by the photographs that John was able to show us of the guildhall, inside and out, the magistrates courts, and the cells. There were plenty of oohs and aahs as people recognised the building and the area from the 50s and 60s.



John touched on the history of the police force throughout the UK, explaining that the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 had required 178 boroughs, including Doncaster, to form a local force. In 1838 this force consisted of 1 Superintendent, 2 sergeants, and 4 constables. By the time John joined in 1962 there were 144 officers and 3 cadets.

John showed us maps and explained the beats that the bobbies walked (beats 1-5) or cycled (beats 6-14) and explained the duties and responsibilities of a beat bobby. He explained that bobbies had to check in regularly using police phones or boxes. Photos of the boxes at the hospital and in Cantley reminded us that these buildings are still in use. He also took us through examples of incidents that he had dealt with, from a lady being run over right in front of him, through St Leger day duties, and on to his single handed capture of a couple of safe blowers.

He drew his talk to a close by explaining some of the changes that had taken place in 1967 with the introduction of cars and radios. No longer was rapid response dependant on the number of bicycles available.

All in all a fascinating reminder of how Doncaster used to be from the perspective of a young constable.

## **Are We Alone in the Universe? – A talk by Dr Brad Gibson.**

Dr Gibson was our guest speaker this month. As a prominent and renowned astrophysicist, he was able to give us his thoughts around some of the many and various factors to be taken into account when considering the possibility of life on other worlds.

Looking at the way our views have evolved historically, along with the sensational, misleading claims from some of our newspapers, he was able to dismiss much of the so-called evidence and approach the subject with reference to scientific actualities and logic.

His presentation ranged from the likely location of the chemicals need for the existence of carbon-based lifeforms, to the extreme rarity of the very special conditions we find ourselves in here on Earth. One example that particularly impressed me was the part that our moon plays in stabilizing the earth, and how this has played a big part in enabling the development of life on our planet.

He referred to conversations he has had with the late Dr Stephen Hawking and others on the topic and gently led us down a pathway to a likely but not inevitable suggestion that we may indeed be alone in the universe.

I found the talk fascinating, absorbing and very entertaining.

Chris Woolven



### **Important Information For Members**

We have been advised, by The Third Age Trust, in the strongest terms that non-members, be it spouse, relative or friend, cannot accompany members on visits of any kind. To do so would render our insurance null and void.

This does not, however, mean that you can never bring these people on visits - all they have to do is join Du3a. Our fee is very reasonable so presents an easy way of overcoming the problem.

Should you wish to join up a non-member so that they can accompany you on visits, please speak to the organiser. Please do not ask if your non-member can come along as a non-member - the answer will be the same : yes, if they have joined Du3a beforehand.

David Harmer, Groups Coordinator

# Strollers

## Highfields Country Park - 24th October 2024

Our walk for October was in the area of Highfields Country Park. The weather was dry and bright with a moderate breeze. Our leader was Jim Sambrooks. We met at the Highwayman and set off on the Great North Road turning up Green Lane where we had great views of the countryside. We paused at an interesting metal bench commemorating the Flying Scotsman complete with a model train under the seat. We then walked along Roman Ridge. This was particularly beautiful with the colourful autumn trees and the rustling leaves underfoot. We descended some steps to enter Highfields Country Park stopping briefly by the lake watching for occasional circles in the water made by the resident fish and enjoying the reflections of the sky and the trees. On returning to the Highwayman we enjoyed a generous lunch and good conversation at a particularly sunlit table. We had walked over three and a half miles.



*Margaret Craven*

## Sprotbrough–Cusworth - 28th November 2024



On a bright but cold November morning 21 Strollers departed from the Newton Arms in Sprotbrough at 10.30 am. We crossed Sprotbrough Road and walked along it to drop down to the newly laid Trans Pennine trail.

Although there was some frost on the trail everybody enjoyed the walk to Cusworth Park along the lightly wooded trail with some wildlife. At the park we walked around the lake and saw some swans and ducks.

We picked up pace for the walk back to arrive at the Newton Arms around midday having covered about 3.5 miles and there was a succulent carvery which most people enjoyed along with a nice chat before the Strollers break for Christmas.

*Ken Bradbury*

## January Walk - Lakeside

Lakeside is a lovely area of parkland and lake. Many species of bird and fish have established themselves here and the nearby Potteric Carr Nature Reserve (which offers bat, spider and other guided tours). Several species have been recorded at Lakeside, including among others – gadwall, Canada geese, moorhen, cormorant, mallard, tufted duck, Northern shovellers, gulls, coots, great crested grebe, mute swan, whooper swan.

Lakeside is home to a flock of mute swans which have the gene for leucism. Leucism is a wide variety of conditions that result in partial loss of pigmentation in an animal causing white, pale, or patchy coloration of the skin, hair, feathers, scales, or cuticles, but not the eyes.

In around 1800 some swans were brought to Britain from Poland and were called Polish swans. At first, they were thought to be a new species, which was named 'cygnus immutabilis'. Compared to normal mute swans, these swans are whiter, and their legs are pinkish, not dark. Later, modern science discovered the variant in the swans' DNA and confirmed that it was not a new species but a different allele. (An allele is one of two or more versions of DNA sequence at a given genomic location). Some of the mute swans at Doncaster Lakeside have lighter pinkish hue feet.

To walk around the lake is about two miles, but we took a diversion and went to Bessacarr and then took the red route path back to the lake. It was a dull day but the sun did come out for some of the route. When we got back to the lake the umbrellas had to come out for a short distance. The walk took in so many different looks of our countryside and housing area which made for an enjoyable walk.

Celia Griggs

## The Gentle Strollers

met up on the second Sunday of January to have a stroll around Cusworth Hall country park. This was a second attempt as we had scheduled this for December but the weather was so windy and possibly hazardous. This time the weather was kind, if a bit chilly. After leaving the car park we walked down the right side of the park towards the lake. This was a little steep & rough under foot but everyone coped ok and from then on it was easy footpath. A gentle stroll up the path & we were ready to enjoy a hot drink & snack in the café.



With the weather improving you may like to explore Doncaster and the surrounding areas - these links suggest a range of walks

[www.alltrails.com/en-gb/england/south-yorkshire/doncaster--2](http://www.alltrails.com/en-gb/england/south-yorkshire/doncaster--2)

[www.komoot.com/guide/674631/hiking-around-doncaster](http://www.komoot.com/guide/674631/hiking-around-doncaster)

[www.visitdoncaster.com/news/the-best-places-to-walk-your-dog-in-doncaster](http://www.visitdoncaster.com/news/the-best-places-to-walk-your-dog-in-doncaster)

[www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/culture-leisure-tourism/parks](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/culture-leisure-tourism/parks)

## Remembering Ann Darby

Ann was born on Northamptonshire the daughter of a Steelworker. She worked in the Civil Service and lived in Scotland for about 30 years later to move to Sprotborough due to ill health and also to be near her daughter. Ann was a member of the WI she also attended the Methodist Church as well as meeting friends regularly for coffee in the village.

I first met Ann when I joined U3A after covid and liked her immediately she was a warm friendly person who told it as it was but someone who was always happy and made me laugh.

She liked to travel and enjoyed visiting new places and was part of the Travel and Trips group at U3A as well as the Coffee Quiz and Gardening groups. Ann loved her garden and she passed on her excellent knowledge of plants to other members of the group. She was the Leader of the Local History and was very interested in the history of Doncaster.

Due to her health two years ago she decided to leave Sprotborough and moved to Armthorpe to live in a flat attached to her daughters house. She settled very well and started to redesign the garden to her liking. About this time she left the WI so Hilary and I suggested she might be interested in joining us at Barnby Dun Ladies Circle which she did and also a small group of ladies who meet once a month for Sunday lunch



Those of us who knew Ann were shocked and saddened by her unexpected death as we had enjoyed her company at the Christmas Members Meeting and we all will miss her very much.

*Denise King*

# Enjoying Poetry

As ever, we continue to enjoy a wealth of poetry and some fascinating discussions. Our chats cover a lot of territory and we talk not simply about the poems but where they can lead us and what help they can give us in our day to day lives. There is a great deal of laughter and a lot of respect and care for everybody's views. All poetry is welcomed, from Pam Ayers to 14th Century Welsh bardic work, from very contemporary poetry to John Donne, from Robert Frost to Bob Dylan. The following poem, by Frost, is one of his greatest and is deservedly well know.

## Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

# Theatre Trips

## A Christmas Carol - Nov 2024

Twenty-two of us travelled to The New Theatre, Hull to enjoy a staging of the ballet: A Christmas Carol.

The brochure welcomed us to an "enchancing programme" and it truly was. The whole audience seemed enthralled when the first scene was set. A hush fell over the theatre as we watched poor Bob Cratchitt crouched on his stool, trying his hardest to please his boss: Ebenezer Scrooge. I'm sure I wasn't the only one, who, from the start, was taken back to the story I'd heard when I was little.

Then the dancing and music started. Throughout it was amazing how the story was told with no words, just by the expressive dancing. The young, slightly, built young man, who danced the part of Bob Cratchitt quickly brought some humour to the scene with his quirky, athletic dancing which quickly got him a clip round the ear from Scrooge. All through the ballet the dancing and the music by Carl Davis, changed the mood from dark and sombre to bright and cheerful.

The costumes too were something to behold, especially in the scenes when the ghosts visited Scrooge. The Ghost of Christmas Past appeared almost as a fairy, with twinkling lights in her hair. The Ghost of Christmas Present was a tall dancer in a stunning green cloak which flew out, behind and around him as he led the old miser up the stairs to show him how others celebrated Christmas. The best of all was, of course, The Ghost of Christmas yet to Come - a terrifying skeletal figure with a fantastic costume. All the dancers managed to perform with such grace and vigour in all of these elaborate costumes.

It was a spectacular ballet which gave us a lot to laugh and chat about on the bus coming home. I'm looking forward to the next trip out - thanks Karen and Felicity for a very enjoyable afternoon - *Carol Waddington*

## An Inspector Calls – Hull New Theatre February 2025

What could be better on a cold, damp Saturday afternoon than boarding a warm minibus, with good company, and heading out to see a play.

The theatre was packed, which made for a good atmosphere, and as the curtain went up the special effects provided great opening drama. A fantastically lifelike rain storm, smoke machines, lighting and sound came together to create an oppressive mood on what appeared to be a bombed-out street (though the play is set in 1912). Impoverished children scavenged below a house on a hill (cleverly constructed on stilts). This was the home of the Birling family, celebrating their son's engagement. We are down below 'looking up' at their scene: a pompous Mr Birling espousing his views in the belief his wealth and status make his family untouchable. That is, until 'An Inspector Calls', with news of a young girl's suicide. As he begins his questioning, their parts in this event unravel. The Birling's (cleverly designed) residence opens up like a dolls' house, and one by one the occupants are brought down to our level – literally and metaphorically, in the very human story of how our behaviours impact others' lives.

There was plenty of dramatic irony, themes of class, society, social responsibility and how we treat our fellow human beings. Plus a good twist on the inspectors' name at the end, (no spoilers!).

Great staging, good acting and a charismatic lead character – this was my first outing with the theatre group, and a reminder how enjoyable and thought provoking a live performance can be. A big thank you to Karen and Felicity for such a well organised and enjoyable day out! - *Lynn Raper*

Please check the website of live updates on future theatre visits and contact Karen or Felicity if you wish to make any bookings.

# The Crown Green Bowling group

approaches the end of a playing year that has

not been kind in terms of the weather. We have enjoyed our social get-togethers on Thursday afternoons, despite the wind and showers that have threatened to disrupt our vocal and competitive outings. The number of members has increased beyond the maximum that might safely and enjoyably participate on the size of the playing surface if everyone turned up, but because of absences through personal commitments etc and holidays, no-one has yet missed the opportunity to join the friendly banter of our meetings. As associate members of Haslam Park Bowls Club we independently arrange our own internal competition, and an occasional game against opposition from any other Club willing to test our competitive qualities. We currently have started a waiting list, and if there is an influx of more interested members, we can start another group on a day and time that is suitable to HPBC, but newcomers are strongly advised to bring a sense of humour. Bowls can be provided. The group is pictured here, as is the trophy handover by Ray to Peter for leading our competition in 2024.

If interested please contact me through the Du3a website, or just turn up and give us the once over.

*George Kirk*



## Garden Group January Meeting

It was great to see so many faces on our first meeting of the year. I challenged everyone to a quiz on gardening which was well received. There were a few puzzled heads but it was all taken in good humour. It doesn't do to make it too easy.

In February one of our group has kindly volunteered to share her experiences in developing a wildlife pond in her garden



# Meet the members - Ralph Taylor

Well, this month's member has had some hair-raising adventures! I most definitely won't be copying anything that Ralph has done!

## ***When did you join the U3A and what groups are you attending?***

I joined U3A in autumn 2023 following the death of my wife Heather.

I belong to the following groups (in no particular order): Film, Enjoying Poetry, Exploring Self, Travel (trips only), History, Theatre. I belonged to Move to Music for a few sessions until I received a pretty scary letter from DRI!

## ***Before you retired what did you do for a living?***

Having initially decided to join the Army, I ended up serving 32 years in the RAF. I initially decided to join the army for the simple reason that one day I happened to come across an army recruiting office in Bournemouth. I went in, spoke to an NCO who gave me a bus ticket to go to Salisbury and meet a General. On being asked which section of the army I wished to join I informed him "The Paras!" His reply was to the effect that I would be a complete idiot to join them and that I should aim for the Intelligence Corps. I, though, wanted to be with the hard guys (too many films and not knowing anything about the army).

Following this chat I saw a large ad in a national newspaper for RAF aircrew. The ad contained a photo of aircrew descending the steps from a Britannia aircraft and said that you could join as a pilot, navigator or air electronics officer. I have VERY slow reactions which ruled out pilot and I never understood even simple electrics at university hence I decided to be a navigator (never having been in a plane)! After 3 days of tests and interviews at Biggin Hill, the RAF agreed with my assessment and I was invited to join and left 32 years later, having had an interesting and mostly enjoyable time. At least I survived, unlike quite a few of my fellow aircrew on Shackleton aircraft, who died in accidents.

## ***Why did you volunteer to join the paras in particular?***

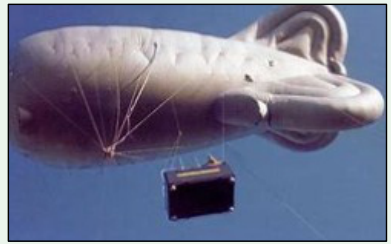
My interest in parachuting started during training as a navigator when we were shown film of people free-falling. I thought WOW I would love to have a go at that, but I thought no more about it until almost the end of our course when one of my friends (Tom) said that he was going on a parachuting course and would I like to go with him. Naturally I replied in the affirmative! However, I then found out that my Fiancé had delayed her birthday party until I got home on leave so I told Tom that I was sorry but that I could not go on the course. On leave in Bournemouth I read in a daily paper that an RAF Hastings had crashed killing all 41 people on board. The list of those killed included my friend Plt Off Thomas Adams. Had I gone with him I would have died at the age of 24. "The Road Not Taken" (Poetry Group)



When I was at one of my RAF stations (Boscombe Down), I looked out of my office window one day and saw parachutes in the sky. I have always been scared of heights and applying logic (and stupidity) I reasoned that if I learnt to parachute I would overcome this fear! Following extensive research (one phone call) I ascertained that what I saw was as a result of a free fall parachute course only a few miles away at Netheravon airfield. Before teatime that same day I was on the next course and over the following months I achieved more than 400 free fall descents.

Did I lose my fear of heights - NO!

During my next posting to RAF Bawtry, I heard about a posting to the paras which a friend had refused and based on my 400 + jumps I saw the officer responsible for postings, pointed out my parachute experience and asked for the posting. Thus it happened that my subsequent parachute jumps were from Hercules flying at about 150 mph at 600 ft, or from barrage balloons, static at 800 ft. I learned the balloon jumps were one of the most feared actions the paras had to undertake!



***Paula said that she had heard that I had told "amazing tales" about my working life (thanks David) and asked me to elaborate:-***



I ended up a category 10 free fall parachutist and together with a couple of other idiots we decided to fall out of a Cesna 180 at 7,000 ft and then move together and try and all hold hands! Two of us got together and at about 3,000 ft then we separated, tracked apart and I opened my parachute. Shortly afterwards I felt a bang on my back and was groggy for a second or so. Once my brain had started to work again, I looked down and it was all blue! I then looked up and it was all green!

Applying the knowledge gained studying for my physics degree plus the experience of several hundred jumps, I realised that I was falling head first.

Fortunately, I am sometimes a great believer in being prepared for bad things to happen and as a result I frequently practised my parachute emergency drills. As a result, almost automatically both hands went up to my parachute release clips and pulled them both. Then my left arm automatically was brought in close to my body and my right hand pulled my emergency parachute release handle. I then came round enough to see that one of the other jumpers had got 3 parachutes out: his main parachute was just hanging down below him, my main parachute was somewhat entangled with him and he was actually descending with his reserve out.

We both landed and on examination of ourselves, I was physically ok and all he had was a slight bruise on his upper lip. I informed him that in a recent report in the monthly parachute magazine of a similar incident the jumper that had fallen into a main parachute had had quite a lot of his face torn off as he fell through the rigging lines of the parachute.

For years at the RAF School of Navigation, Finningley, my students were told this tale with the admonition to learn their emergency drills. Had I not done this we would both have hit the ground at a fair speed and been killed (mid thirty for me – too early to go).

One case of flying close (literally) was during an exchange visit to an American squadron flying early warning aircraft. Some of us were invited to join a training trip and readily accepted the invitation. Once airborne it transpired that we would practice airborne refuelling. You now need to know that the Americans use a completely different system from us. They refuel by the tanker aircraft flying an extending boom into the receiving aircraft. Out of



interest, I asked how long the boom was and was informed that about 12 ft was typical. As we had found out that the main pilot flying our aircraft was a reserve pilot I was somewhat concerned. However, the smiling face of the boom operator at the end of the tanker, (we were that close), assured me that all was going well.



As for low flying, one never to be forgotten incident took place at the end of a flight as we came back to base in Madagascar. For some reason the captain decided that he wanted to "beat up" (fly low) along the local beach. I will not say that we were low but we pulled up to get over the breakwaters! The locals were so impressed that they ran into the sea with arms waving – they obviously appreciated flying skill when the saw it. The local RAF commander was not impressed however and had a few words with the captain!

***What else do you do when you are not being a U3A member?***

When I am not participating in U3A groups I attend church and a Monday morning and Wednesday afternoon group held in the church building. On my Monday morning table we have 3 ex-RAF men and up to 7 widowers! Apart from going there, I have hundreds of books that I have bought and never read. I have lately made the decision to watch less TV and read more. I also undertake assorted MOOCs especially about how to study. The bad news is that I quite often repeat the same course (sometimes more than once) because I forget all the good advice on how to study and remember the information.

***What else would you like to know about you?***

I think that I have bored you enough, but I would like all members to know that I appreciate the education, entertainment and support I have received since joining. I am now in a much better place than I was following the death of my girl and a major contribution to that improvement is thanks to the kindness of members. Thank you all!

***Ralph Taylor***

**The ukulele groups** made their first public appearance with a jam session at The Hallcross Pub Beer Festival in February. We played a variety of songs and those who watched enjoyed our playing (well they said they did!). We got some applause. We played everything from Run Rabbit Run to Bad Moon Rising by way of Meet Me On The Corner. I think we all enjoyed the Festival.



# Pins and Needles

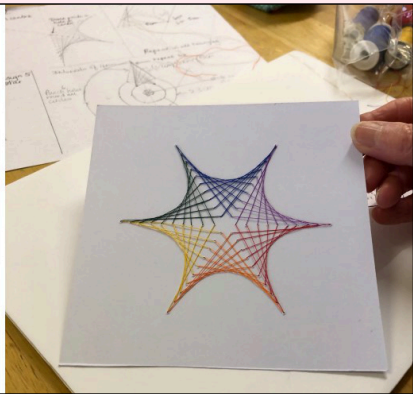
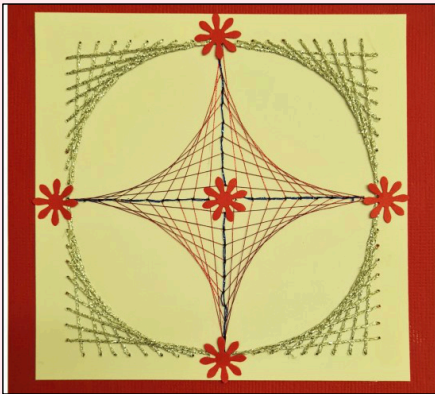


Following on from the last newsletter article which outlined one of our projects ie silk painting, one of our members, Claire Chantry, decided to frame one of her silk painted designs instead of making it into a card. We were all impressed!

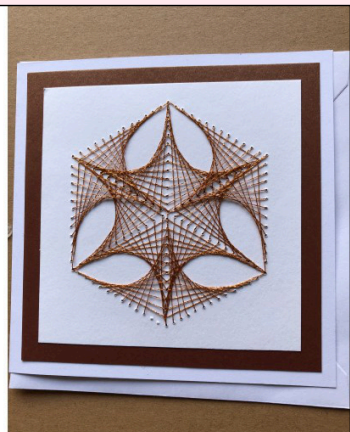
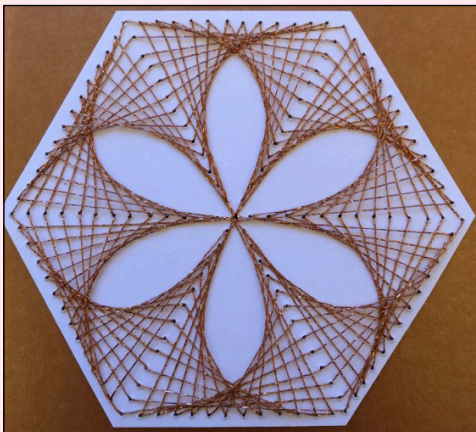


At the last meeting we decided to do some Curve Stitching, which is the art of creating smooth curves through the use of straight lines. We learned how to create a basic curve (parabola ) and then how to add multiple curves to create a design. Designs can be simple with a repetition of the same shaped curve or made more complicated by overlapping curves and adding embellishments. On the left, Claire and Janie are engrossed in their stitching.

Below are designs completed by Anne Windell and Jean Walker.



Here are some more complex designs based on equilateral triangles and hexagons.



# 'My life in China' by Andrew MacArthur.

My new life with Meixia (May-see-ah) started on Monday December 16th, 2024, when I left Heathrow to fly to Beijing, landing at 7:25pm Tuesday in Dalian and on to her home on the outskirts of Jinzhou (金州) by taxi. Jinzhou is part of Dalian.

Landing at Dalian, I discovered my case had been opened by customs as a security check and two handles were broken - they were checking for contraband but found none. A Didi, which is like an Uber, took us home after a long wait and busy traffic.

Wednesday 18th: Foreigners must register, so we took a taxi to the police station to do that, followed by a second visit to correct the errors made during the first!

Thursday 19th: A LONG day to Beijing and back by train to get an affidavit stating that I was free to marry. The day went well, though exhausting, and we returned with the document in hand and smiles all round.

We subsequently had a couple of trips into Jinzhou, which is the same distance as Askern to Doncaster, to get me a SIM card and open a bank account. I now have 15 days to wait for the account to be opened and a bank card issued but I came equipped with a wad of cash to cover this problem.

The biggest difficulty I faced from arriving on the 17th until 10:30pm Christmas night was getting a Virtual Private Network (VPN). China blocks everything to do with Google (and associated companies) so one can hardly do anything without a VPN. However, VPNs are illegal in China but fortunately they are tolerated at present. I tried (with the great help of a friend) to get one, which was in itself a nightmare but I was eventually successful, so could resume contact with various friends.

At the time of writing, Meixia has been ill for the past week, and is only now finally feeling somewhat better. We are now on the cusp of getting married, Hoorah! This is set to take place in mid-January, all being well. Once married, we go to apply for my family permit so I will then be good to live in China for one year and this permit is renewable.

Strangely, I am eating more fresh vegetables every day here than I ate in a month in England. Life is lovely here - ignoring recent hassles!



The screenshot shows Beijing and Dalian for context. All the bottom half of the peninsula is Dalian, including up to the picture cutoff. Not all of the peninsula is shown. Dalian embraces smaller cities like Jinzhou...

Coincidentally, the blue dot is where Jinzhou is. Dalian city is everything from the blue dot to the very tip of the peninsula.

In sight of where I am living is the development of the largest island airport in the world. We can see the early construction of this from the bottom of our road, looking out to sea. It is likely to be up to three years before this new airport is completed and in operation.

# News From Groups

## German Beginners

Do you know that learning a language is regarded as one of the best ways to keep your brain active?

If you would like to give it a go, our new group, German Beginners, is for people with absolutely no knowledge of German at all. But you do need to start as soon as possible .... The current members of the group are speeding ahead! In the very first lessons they have learned about pronunciation, learned the alphabet, times of day and days of the week, months of the year, greetings, numbers, some basic vocabulary and had simple conversations!



If you'd like to join us, do get in touch with Paula.

## Bridge for Beginners



The people who joined the Bridge group at the very start are becoming more confident with bidding and playing - some have even moved on to scoring. We do have new players joining us all the time so every session has a table that is in beginner teaching mode. So - if you are interested in learning how to play bridge please contact Nancy.

## Cryptic Crosswords

Another new group with people starting from scratch, the cryptic crossword group meets once a month to learn about clue types, indicators, and techniques. We work on crosswords in between and discuss them on WhatsApp. This month we took a step forward and actually created some clues of our own. Solving cryptic clues is a great way to keep the brain active so please get in touch with Nancy if you are interested in joining us,



## Art Group Venture Out!

As part of our study of acrylics, we met at DGLAM to look at an exhibition by two local artists. One of these used mixed media and the other oils and we were there to look at the oils, which present themselves in the same way as acrylics do.

Reducing the colour palette to one or two colours, we recorded the structure of two paintings with a view to using our sketches back in Prego to produce our own version of a landscape.

It was an interesting exercise and we have yet to complete the pictures so watch this space!

Information about all of our groups can be found at [doncaster.u3asite.uk/groups-new](http://doncaster.u3asite.uk/groups-new)

# National u3a News

The new u3a brand shop will have a refreshed image library, with photographs that u3as can use locally. This is especially helpful for smaller u3as or u3as who are just starting out. You could contribute by sharing photos you have taken of groups at your u3a. We are looking for candid and organic photos showing one or two members doing activities. Please make sure that you have the permissions of anyone who is in the photo.

If you have photos you could share with us, or if you would like to know more, please email [communications@u3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk)

## A milestone for Islington u3a's walking group

When the Longer Walks group at Islington u3a completed their walk around Dollis Valley Greenway, it marked a significant milestone - the group had now officially gone on 500 walks since it started in 2014. Altogether, this makes up nearly 5,000 miles.

Speaking about the group, one member said: "I joined for the exercise but keep going back for the chance to chat with such an interesting bunch of local people."

## Enjoy a summer of learning

Every year, u3a members travel to local universities for regional summer schools. Here are some of the ones to watch out for...

- > South East Summer School, 1-4 September, at the University of Chichester.
- > North West Summer School, 12-15 August, at Manchester Metropolitan University
- > Yorkshire and the Humber Summer School, 18-21 August, at The Hawkhills.
- > The London region of u3as is running a summer programme which includes guided walks and visits.

Find out more on the [u3a website](#).

## Meet Reigate and Redhill u3a member Maggie

The u3a radio podcast has a new presenter, Maggie, who has joined the podcast team of Trust Volunteers. Her radio experience started with volunteering at East Surrey Hospital where she plays requests on Radio Redhill. Maggie says, "To bring a little pleasure into people's lives is such a joy! I thought I'd extend my voluntary work a little further and offered to be the new presenter when Peter Clift decided to pass on the baton."

"In my 'other world' I'm a trainer and deliver customer service training. That's where my passion comes from - helping people learn new things to enrich both their own lives and others."

Listen to the [February episode](#) to hear Maggie's presenting debut.

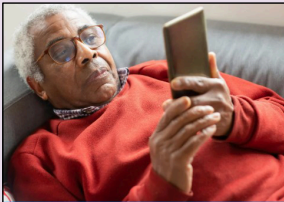
## Last months solutions

39, 59, 68, 60, 76, 25, 63, 65, 36, 66, 49, 74, 73, 53,  
79, 78, 77, 40, 67, 32

										31
6	3	4	1	3	2					19
6	7	2	5	9	5					34
5	9	7	1	8	9					39
5	8	4	7	5	8					37
8	9	1	4	1	8					31
6	9	7	4	2	5					33
3	6	4	5	2	2	2	8	3	7	33

u3a Online Learning provides zoom lectures and activities throughout the year - you can find all the upcoming ones [here](#).

Below are just a few examples



### Making your smartphone or tablet easier to use as you get older

Caroline and Dean from AbilityNet will take you through an interactive session to show you features that can help you to tailor your device to your needs.

Tuesday 18 March at 2pm



### Laughter Yoga with Judith: March

Laughter Yoga combines hearty laughter exercises with deep yogale breathing (pranayama). Hosted by Judith Anne Walker of Edinburgh u3a.

Wednesday 19 March at 10am



### How Many Letters in the Alphabet?

A look at the main writing systems of the world, in a grand tour starting in the UK and finishing who knows where - the final frontier?

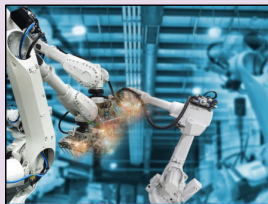
Monday 24 March at 2pm



### Lung Disease in advancing age: identifying new treatments

Professor Andrew Fisher and Dr Lee Borthwick discuss lung disease and lung transplantation as a treatment in this Science Network event.

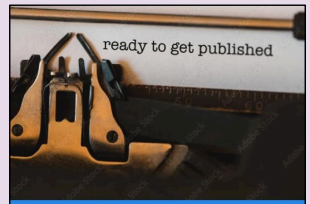
Tuesday 25 March at 11am



### Robotics and Automation

Explore both the practical and fun element of robots, robotic machines and production automation, with John Butler from u3a Let's Talk Tech.

Wednesday 2 April at 1pm



### How to Get Published with Writers & Artists

James and Clare from the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook Team at Bloomsbury will be sharing expert advice on how to get published.

Tuesday 2 April at 2pm

**Thanks to :**

**Prego Cafe - the use of your upstairs room  
is invaluable and your food and drink are  
always a treat for our members**

**Chris at CJS Print**

**The Hallcross Pub**

**Our friends at Powerhouse**

**Thanks for all the contributions to this  
newsletter - articles for the next issue should be  
sent by April 16<sup>th</sup> to**

**[Nraynsford.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:Nraynsford.u3a@gmail.com)**