

News & Views



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Interest Groups

Details of Groups can be found on the Charnwood u3a website: www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk under 'Our Groups' menu.

Welcome

...to the December edition of *News & Views*, the newsletter of Charnwood u3a. We hope you'll find it both entertaining and informative. The content is written by members, and details for sending contributions can be found on the last page.



Our Next Monthly Meeting: That Band...



See page 2 for details.

A View from the Chair



Hello, it's me again. Of late, I have been leaving the front page to other contributors but, for this last edition of 2022, I decided to make a comeback – if only to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very happy (Covid free) New Year.

As you will see elsewhere in this edition, there is a musical treat on offer at the December monthly meeting. And, with its redecoration now completed, we will be back in the main hall at Emmanuel Church.

Will you be there? I do hope so. Over the past few months we have been lucky to see an attendance over 50 at these meetings. This represents just 5% of our membership! What, if anything, is going wrong? In an attempt to answer this question, you are invited to give us your thoughts via this survey: <https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk/siteb/MembersAreaPublic/MonthlyMeetQuestIntro.html>

It is short and simple: click on this link, then click on 'Start the questionnaire'. Answer the questions – there are only 5 of them – then click on 'send'. The whole process should not take more than a few minutes. A paper copy of the survey will be sent out to those members who normally get the newsletter in the post.

If you do not normally attend monthly meetings, you are perhaps wondering why we have them. Here are a few reasons:

- To be entertained by a good speaker on an interesting topic;
- To meet up with friends/other Charnwood u3a (Cu3a) members, and socialise over a cup of tea or coffee;
- To find out what is going on in Cu3a.

Regarding this last point, these meetings are a useful way to spread the word about our interest groups; in particular, start-up groups and groups looking to attract new members. There are a couple of ways that this can be done.

A few months ago, the Classical Music Appreciation Group had a table in the church foyer before the meeting, the topic being Sir Malcolm Sargent. From this they attracted several new members to the group. All groups are welcome to do something similar; if you are interested please contact me, or any other member of the Committee.

The other way is by advertising on our notice board. BUT for this to happen we need a volunteer to take charge of it – is that you? If so, please get in touch with me to find out what the task involves.

Once again, seasons greetings – see you on the 14th!

Our Monthly Meetings

The monthly meetings of Charnwood u3a are on the **second Wednesday afternoon, 2.15 for 2.30 pm in Emmanuel Church**, Forest Road in Loughborough. The main car park for the church is accessed via Ingle Pingle, to the west of the church. Our monthly meetings are free to all, and we welcome prospective new members attending a meeting as a 'taster'. If you think you'll need any assistance at the meeting, please contact our Chair in advance on chair@charnwoodu3a.org.uk.

Our Next Meeting Wednesday 14th December That Band: Music from the 1960s

Our monthly meetings are nothing if not varied. Stained glass last month, Stilton cheese next month and this month a pop group!

The meeting will have a group known as **THAT BAND**. All its members are drawn from a local u3a. They are made up of four instrumentalists and a vocalist. They will perform songs from the 1960s when we were all still working! Some more seasonal items will also be included.



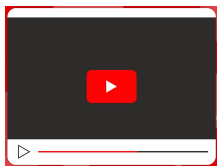
I do try to have "pure" entertainment at our December meeting and this year is no different. As always the monthly meetings of Charnwood u3a are free of charge to all members, members of another u3a and non-members. If you are a non-member or bring a non-member please let us know. We will of course meet at Emmanuel Church, 2.15 for 2.30 and we are back in the church this month after its redecoration.

Unless you are disabled **PLEASE do not park in the small car park** adjacent to the church, use the main car park a little way away. The band are coming in five cars with instruments and will need close access.

Graham Cooper, Programme Secretary

To attend this meeting:

If you wish to attend the meeting in person, no pre-booking is required - just turn up on the day, with your Cu3a membership card. **Please do not arrive before 2 pm.**



If you are unable to attend in person and would like to follow the meeting online (via YouTube), please go to the meeting page on our website at:

<https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk/siteb/MonthlyMeetingDec2022.html>

where full details of how to join will be given.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The EDI team welcomed Joanne Talbot, Senior Social Prescribing Link Worker for Charnwood, to their November meeting. Joanne explained that the Social Prescribing initiative had been operating mainly via Charnwood GP practices since 2020, to support people with non-medical issues, for example those experiencing loneliness or isolation and to connect them with groups like the u3a. The approach was designed to be 'holistic', based on empowering people as individuals, rather than doing things for them. Like all members, people referred to our u3a by this route could 'taste' up to three group sessions before officially joining and could bring a carer if they wished.

The session then broadened into a discussion about the u3a ethos of managing groups in a non-cliquey and welcoming way. Linked to this was the importance of keeping group information up to date on the website, including what costs and equipment might be involved, as well as the level of knowledge or experience expected. The team looked forward to sharing ideas with group leaders on how to promote inclusivity in Cu3a in the new year.

The next EDI meeting will be on **January 9th, 2-4pm at Gorse Covert**. All welcome. If you'd like more information, please contact Pam Upton, pam.upton@btinternet.com

View From Our...



Programme Secretary: Graham Cooper

I have been your Programme Secretary since January 2021, having previously served on the committee. The role requires anticipation and planning; booking speakers for monthly meetings must be done in advance, but not too far in advance, to minimise last minute changes. In practice I work about 4/5 months ahead.

The position of Programme Secretary has a large element of flair and imagination. That flair is the most rewarding aspect of the job. However it can be very time consuming identifying a speaker covering a particular subject, and it is difficult to accurately gauge the “quality” of a speaker beforehand. A very good speaker can make a tedious subject interesting and vice versa. I always adhere to the ethos of u3a, i.e. no partisan politics or religion, but we have had a bishop and a senior Muslim talk to us, both with open minds. Politicians or political scientists may follow... watch this space! I always aim to provide presentations that fulfil the learning aspect of u3a, informal learning but learning nonetheless. Speakers must also be entertaining and retain the audience’s attention. We all knew more about parrots after that talk a few months back didn’t we? Well I did! An exception is made for the December meeting when we have entertainment.

The Programme Secretary is not a committee position but in practice I attend a good number of their meetings. I present speaker plans a few months ahead, but in cases of late cancellation I have to be nimble; the replacement may not be referred to the committee due to lack of time. I rightly have the restraint of an annual budget but it never follows that a paid-for speaker is superior to one without a fee – far from it, in my experience.

Fellow members, we are a large u3a with a current membership of around a thousand. Our monthly meetings are the only formal chance for ALL members to meet up. Do please use that chance. There is no charge; even the cup of tea afterwards is free. Do please feed particular speakers or subject areas through to me for consideration. Also do feed back to me your views on speakers, good or bad. I am at all meetings wearing a badge; pin me down afterwards. programmesecc@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Our Support Team

As well as our Programme Secretary, we are grateful to the people below, who ensure our monthly meetings at Emmanuel Church run smoothly. We couldn't manage without their efforts, which are much appreciated. Thanks to them all!



Sue Young *New Members Welcome*

Sue leads the Welcome Team at the desk in the foyer of the Church, to greet new members.

newmemwelcome@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Patricia Drake *Refreshments*

Pat ensures we are supplied with plenty of tea, coffee, milk and biscuits.

You will see her at the kitchen serving hatch, ably assisted by Doris Bowerman.

refreshments@charnwoodu3a.org.uk



Andrew Rick *Audio*

Andrew is in charge of the microphones and sound system, to ensure we can hear everything clearly.

audio@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Garry Rigby *Visuals*

Garry works the computer so we can see the speaker's slides and organises live streaming.

memsec@charnwoodu3a.org.uk



Group News

Not STRICTLY Dancing

But if you enjoy watching it. . .

Why not **come** and try it for yourself at the

SOCIAL DANCE GROUP

Much easier, more fun and better for your health!



Our next session is on

Tuesday 13th Dec 2pm – 4pm

At the Good Shepherd Church Hall,
Park Road, Loughborough.

Everyone is welcome!

New Canasta Group

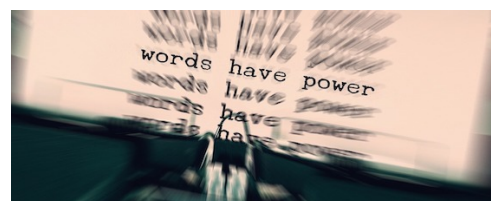
A new canasta group for Charnwood u3a will start on **Thursday 5th January at John Storer House, Loughborough, 7 - 9 pm.** It will be held on the first Thursday every month.

Beginners and experienced players are welcome. Tuition can be given. Contact annhawley1@hotmail.co.uk if you are interested.



ETHEL GETS LOGOPHILIA

Are you a *cuddy wifter*? A *blatherskite*? Did you ever get called a *mardy bum*? These are some of the words that a new campaign is aiming to save from extinction.¹ And as inveterate logophiles (lovers of words), ETHEL members are doing their bit. In their own version of Call my Bluff, they giggled and gaped at the infinite weirdness of English words, some of which have made Collins Dictionary's Word of the Year list.² *Permacrisis* (the feeling of living through a period of war, inflation and political instability) is one of the less jolly ones, but *splooting* (lying flat on the stomach with the legs stretched out) could be an appropriate posture for the festive period.



Over Christmas ETHEL members will be (silently we hope) saving up their expletives for a session on Bad Language, where they are hoping to experience *lalochezia* (the emotional discharge gained by uttering indecent or filthy words). In the meantime, if you have any favourites that Ethel could add to her own Dictionary of Weird Words, do let her have them or send them in to Readers Comments so everyone can have a chuckle.

Wishing everyone a very merry Christmas – without getting *polrumpitious* (unruly, behaving in an obstreperous manner) or experiencing *borborygmus* (intestinal rumbling caused by gas).

¹Podcasts plan to save endangered dialects - The Observer, 20 Nov 22: <https://tinyurl.com/4sfd5w6f>

²Permacrisis declared Collins Dictionary word of the year - BBC News: <https://tinyurl.com/4rf5rhrk>

Pam Upton

Saturday Walks

Unfortunately Mick Voss has decided that it is no longer tenable to run this group due to lack of attendance and he has resigned. Over 25 years it provided a great number of Charnwood members with a friendly means of exploring the local beauty spots and good exercise into the bargain. We thank Mick for all the work he has put in especially during the difficult post Covid time. Would anyone like to take over running this group or start another walking group on a different day? Currently there are no walks on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. You would receive help and support from myself.

Please contact Mike Hill, Walking Groups Coordinator, WalkingGroups@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

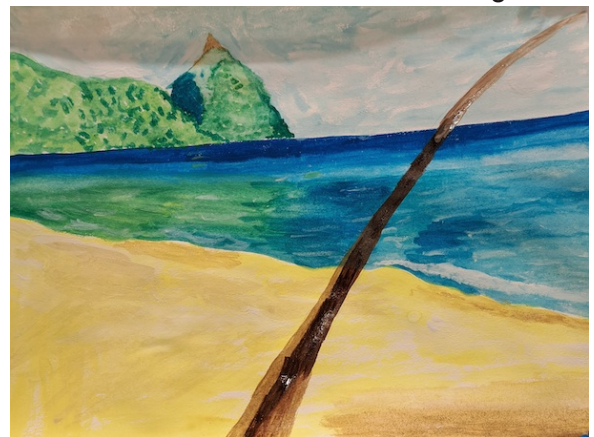
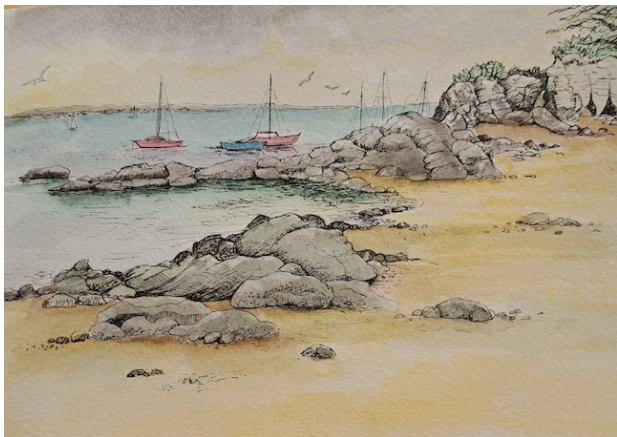
More Group News

Painting Group

We are a mixed ability group who enjoy drawing and painting and we meet once a month to paint and chat. We still have a couple of spaces left so if you enjoy drawing and painting please email me at the address below. If you would like to take part but for various reasons you cannot attend the monthly meeting you can join our online group by taking part in the monthly themes via email and our Facebook group. If you are interested or require further information please contact painting@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

The theme for November was *Seaside*. Below are some paintings from our current members.

Angela Cantrill



Architecture

The Architecture Group welcomes new members to come and enjoy our varied programme for 2023. We've got a host of excellent speakers to explore sustainable architecture: Nevill Holt, a great Leicestershire house; how the local planning process works; European windmills and the restoration of Kibworth and Swannington windmills; and a virtual tour of Loughborough through the ages. We also love doing group activities, so members will be choosing: a building I'd like to visit; a favourite medieval building; discussing what might be the seven wonders of the modern world; and we'll even be using blocks and lolly sticks to figure out how to build a bridge!

So do email us at: Architecture@charnwoodu3a.org.uk to join us, and have a year of architectural wonder and fun.

Char March

English Parish Churches

English Parish Churches are meeting on **Tuesday December 13th, on Zoom only at 2 pm.**

Topic: Creation Stained Glass, from medieval to modern, a meditative journey.

Anyone interested is welcome to join the session. Please email EngParishChurches@charnwoodu3a.org.uk for the Zoom access information.

Roger Willson

Roving Reporters

Thursday 6 Milers Walking Group

After days of unremitting rain, it took a mammoth effort for 18 members of Thursday 6 milers to take a chance on what was underfoot at Watermead Country Park.

“You won’t get up to King Lear’s Lake” a fellow walking group told us as they tramped past the other way. They were right. We stopped and clapped as a runner splashed through the knee-deep flood over our tarmac path (as pictured below).



So we turned back and made our way uphill to the Mammoth landmark.

It overlooks the spot where real mammoth bones were discovered, now covered by one of the many lakes left by exhausted sand and gravel pits.

The walk was shorter than usual, but everyone was glad to be out in the fresh air - most enjoying a good pub lunch and home before the heavens opened once more.

Kate Watson

A heron seen at close quarters on the walk at Watermead Country Park



Days of Interest November Trip

November is the month in which the Days of Interest Group makes its Christmas trip. This year we travelled to Blenheim Palace, and this year the weather was kind to us. Last year was both wet and windy. We had a crisp dry day, which made the views of the Blenheim estate look even more spectacular.

The house itself was decorated for Christmas in a Snow Queen theme. Each room represented a part of the story, from Kai getting the splinter in his eye to his rescue from the Snow Queen by Gerda. In every room there was a red rose and a mouse to spot – surprisingly difficult to find sometimes. There was also a “real” Snow Queen on hand to entertain us – she seemed to enjoy ruling her snow world and loved having her photograph taken.



In addition to the decorated house there was also a Christmas fair. The fair offered lots of gin and cheese for us to sample, plus stalls selling jewellery, sweets, Christmas decorations and toys, together with lots of options for a walking lunch. Purchases were made. We did not stay until the evening when the Christmas lightshow began, but we were able to walk through the grounds and get some sense of what it would look like when the lights were put on.

Our next trip will be our annual lunch at Longcliffe Golf Club on Saturday 18th February. This will be advertised formally at the end of December or beginning of January.

A very happy Christmas to all our members and others who have joined us on our trips.

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Pauline May at ppc.wat@ntlworld.com, 01509 552834 or 07455 167929 for details.



December 2022 Meetings

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
			1 Dec 10.00 Sci & Tech 10.00 Spanish Conv 10.30 Amble/Strollers 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.30 French Conv	2 Dec 09.00 Badminton 10.00 German: RTC 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mah Jong 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Photography 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Lunch Club 1 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1
5 Dec 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Latin* 11.00 Table Tennis 1 13.30 Canasta 2 14.00 Chess 15.00 Current Affairs	6 Dec 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 10+ Walks 10.00 Spanish 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.15 Pilates 3 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Sing4Pleasure	7 Dec 09.30 Golf 10.00 Classical Greek* 10.00 German 10.00 JigsawBookEx 10.00 Mini Tennis 10.00 Scottish Dance 11.00 Table Tennis 3 13.00 Scrabble 2 13.30 Cribbage 2 14.00 Sustain Planet	8 Dec 10.00 Les Sportives 10.00 Thurs 6 Milers 10.30 Amble/Strollers 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.00 Making Music	9 Dec 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Classical Civ* 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mah Jong 10.00 Needlecraft 1 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1
12 Dec 09.30 Yoga 10.00 Poetry 1 11.00 Table Tennis 1 13.00 Quiz group 14.00 Archaeology 14.00 Digital Imaging	13 Dec 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 Scrabble 3 11.00 Table Tennis 2 11.15 Pilates 3 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Eng Parish Ch* 14.00 Social Dance	14 Dec 09.30 Golf 10.00 Committee 10.00 Mini Tennis 10.00 Poetry 2 10.30 History 11.00 Table Tennis 3 14.30 Monthly Meet	15 Dec 10.00 Parish Walks 10.30 Amble/Strollers 11.00 Table Tennis 4 14.00 Bowls Indoor 14.15 Scrabble 4 14.30 French Conv 18.30 Supper Club 2	16 Dec 09.00 Badminton 10.00 German: RTC 10.00 Line Dance 10.00 Mah Jong 10.00 Table Tennis 7 10.30 Photography 10.30 Tai Chi 11.00 Table Tennis 5 12.00 Table Tennis 6 13.30 Pilates 1 14.00 Art Apprec'n 15.00 Mac Users*
19 Dec 09.30 Yoga 11.00 Table Tennis 1 13.30 Canasta 2 14.00 Chess 14.00 Painting	20 Dec 09.30 Pilates 2 10.00 6+ Walks 10.00 Spanish 11.15 Pilates 3 14.00 Canasta 1 14.00 Philosophy 2 14.00 Sing4Pleasure	21 Dec 09.30 Golf 10.00 Mini Tennis 11.00 Table Tennis 3 13.00 Scrabble 2 14.00 Classical Music 14.00 Family History	22 Dec	23 Dec 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Table Tennis 7
26 Dec	27 Dec	28 Dec 09.30 Golf 10.00 Mini Tennis	29 Dec	30 Dec 09.00 Badminton 10.00 Table Tennis 7

Note: those meetings marked with an asterisk will be via Zoom only

For more information, visit our **website** (<https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk>) for the interactive calendar, which is regularly updated, with direct links to the group pages for more details, including names of group leaders and how to contact them.

Please send any amendments to the Editor at newsletter@charnwoodu3a.org.uk for inclusion in future months' calendars.

Group Leaders Meeting: Notes from the recent Group Leaders meeting, held at Emmanuel Church on 31st October, can be found at: https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk/siteb/MembersAreaPublic/pdffdocsPrint/GL_Meeting_22_10_31_notes.pdf

Upcoming Local Events

Christmas Tree Festival

All Saints with Holy Trinity Church, Loughborough

Sparkling Christmas trees, gift stalls, refreshments, children's festive crafts activities. Entrance free:
Saturdays 3rd, 10th, 17th December, 10 am - 4 pm.

On **Tuesday, 6th December, at 11 am**, there is a free lunchtime **Christmas Festival Concert**, a festive edition of the free monthly concerts held at All Saints, featuring talented local young music scholars.

There are also concerts at All Saints on 8th and 17th December (tickets £10) and the **Mayor's Community Carol Concert on 19th December** (entrance free but by ticket only).

For details of the above events, see:
<https://allsaintsloughborough.org.uk/whats-on>



Loughborough University Events

For Disability History Month, there will be a free presentation, film showing and Q&A with award winning **Richard Butchins** on **Thursday 8th December at 5 pm in James France, CC029A**. Richard uses his own experience as a disabled person to make work which addresses disability through television documentary and in his personal art practice, celebrating disability as an identity rather than as an impairment to be overcome. He will discuss his work and show extracts from his TV documentaries.

The **Loughborough University Choir** present their Christmas Concert 'A Christmas Carol' on **Wed 14th December at 7:30 pm in the Cope Auditorium**. (Tickets £7, £5 students)

See <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/events/> for details of these events and booking details for the carol concert.

Charnwood Orchestra

Charnwood Orchestra's next concert is a New Year celebration, **Vienna and Beyond**, on **Saturday January 14th 2023 at Humphrey Perkins Community Centre, Cotes Road, Barrow upon Soar, starting at 7:30 pm.**

The concert will be a mix of Viennese waltzes and polkas mixed with classical favourites, including amongst others:

- Sibelius: Finlandia
- Ravel: Pavane pour une infante défunte
- Smetana: Dance of the Comedians from 'The Bartered Bride'
- Blue Danube
- Thunder and Lightning Polka
- Radetzky March

Tickets (£14 adults, £12 concessions, £5 18s and under or NUS members) are available via the Orchestra website:

www.charnwoodorchestra.org.uk

and / or may be reserved via email:

tickets@charnwoodorchestra.org.uk



The Charnwood Orchestra

Music Director
Nic Fallowfield

Saturday 14th January 2023 7:30pm

**Humphrey Perkins
Community Centre, Cotes Road,
Barrow upon Soar LE12 8JU**

Conductor **Nic Fallowfield**

Vienna and Beyond

Borodin	Overture: 'Prince Igor'
Sibelius	Finlandia
Ravel	Pavane pour une infante défunte
Brahms	Hungarian Dances No.5 and 6
Smetana	Dance of the Comedians from 'The Bartered Bride'
Suppé	Overture: 'Poet and Peasant'

Tickets:

- The Orchestra website
- tickets@charnwoodorchestra.org.uk
- Taylor's Florist, 17 High Street, Barrow upon Soar LE12 8PY
- Members of the Orchestra
- At the door, cash payments only

£14.00 (£12.00 concessions)
£5.00 -18s and under or NUS members

[/charnwoodorchestra](https://www.facebook.com/charnwoodorchestra)
[/charnwoodorch](https://www.facebook.com/charnwoodorch)



Nic Fallowfield

Next Concert: 25th March 2023 - please see website for details

www.charnwoodorchestra.org.uk



More Upcoming Local Events



Christmas Carols at Grace Dieu Priory Sunday 4 December 2022

Starts at 3.00pm



Car parking at the rear of The Bull's Head Thringstone
10 minutes walk through the woods.
Don't forget to bring a torch

Entrance is free.

Mulled wine and mince pies available.

www.gracedieupriory.org.uk

www.facebook.com/gracedieupriory

Meals available at The Bull's Head 01530 224327

1620s House & Garden

Events at the 1620s House at
Donington le Heath in
December include:



Christmas at the Manor, Sun 11 Dec, 11 am – 3:30 pm

Discover how Christmas was celebrated in times gone by. The 1620s House & Garden will be beautifully dressed in Jacobean style decor. See how preparations were made to celebrate the full twelve days of Christmas. £2 per person + Normal Admission. No booking needed.

Candlelit Carolling Fri 16 Dec, 5 pm - 8.30 pm

Singing around the ancient house in the atmospheric dark of the evening, with tunes on a lute, and a traditional mummings play.



Booking in advance essential.

Tickets £6 per person, available online or by calling 01455 290429 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Further information on these events can be found at:

<https://1620shouse.org.uk/whats-on/>

News from the National u3a



u3a National Poetry Competition - Open Now

Poems should be a maximum of 16 lines (plus title), on any topic, and be submitted by **12 noon on Friday 27 January 2023**. The three winning poems will be published in Third Age Matters and on the u3a website. Competition rules are at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/poetry-competition-2022>

To spark some inspiration, you are invited to join author Sophia Blackwell on **Tuesday 13th December at 2 pm** for a free 2 hour masterclass **'Writing Poetry for Publication and Performance'** via Zoom. This can be booked on the u3a's national online events webpage, where details of various other upcoming free on-line events offered by the National u3a can also be found. Go to: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

National u3a Newsletter and More:

To register to receive the National u3a newsletter regularly, go to: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter> where you will find a link to recent issues (also see our Cu3a website under 'News' - National u3a Newsletters...).

The u3a National programmes page has more learning initiatives to get involved with, including new programmes, as well as ongoing themes like mathematical challenges, sharing photos and artwork - and the monthly radio podcast. Go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes> for details. Also, the u3a learning blog **Sources** has recently been revamped and includes a large collection of articles, posted by u3a members, covering a wide range of topics. This can be found at <https://sources.u3a.org.uk>.

A Better Beacon

What Is Beacon?

Beacon is the online membership management system that Charnwood u3a has been using for over three years now. Without it, it wouldn't be possible for our Membership Secretary to process nearly 1000 renewals each year in a timely fashion. It also helps the Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Groups Coordinator and leaders of our larger interest groups to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

The Benefits

- **Security:** Beacon holds information about our members and interest groups on a secure server, managed by a technical team of Third Age Trust (TAT) volunteers and a private software company, responsible for both the hardware and software. So we don't have to worry about our computers being stolen or hacked, or losing precious data.
- **Reduced Workload:** Using the information on the server, Beacon automates many of the day-to-day procedures that u3a officers and group leaders have to perform, saving them time and effort.
- **Available Everywhere:** Because the server is on the Internet, Beacon is available on any I.T. device, anywhere you can get an Internet connection. You can use it at home, in libraries and cafés, while waiting for a bus or a train, or even when you're on holiday on the other side of the world.
- **No Duplication:** Because all the data is in one place, you don't need to keep your own copy or send copies to other members of the management team. So there can never be conflicting information in the system.
- **Access Control:** Beacon has a flexible system of privileges that prevents unauthorised users from accessing information. Only the Membership Secretary can see the full details of every member; only the Treasurer can see the central accounts; only the Groups Coordinator and the group's leader(s) can change a group's details.
- **Changing Roles is Easy:** When a u3a officer stands down or a group leader hands over to someone else, this change can be recorded with a few clicks of a mouse.

The Weaknesses

TAT identified a number of shortcomings in Beacon more than 3 years ago. They felt those flaws were too deeply rooted to be tackled by incremental improvements and commissioned a software company to create a replacement for Beacon. Unfortunately, the "Beacon Upgrade" project failed

and we have had to live with a creaking software product ever since. The main problems with Beacon as I see them are:

- **Code Rot:** Beacon was written a long time ago. Over the years, its code has become untidy and difficult to update. Consequently, bug fixes sometimes create more problems than they solve and new features come slowly, if at all.
- **Unfriendly Interface:** Visually, Beacon is old-fashioned and unattractive and moving around the Beacon website is not as intuitive as it could be.
- **No Website Integration:** Some information held in Beacon is published on the Charnwood u3a website. This is mostly group details: description of the group and how to contact the group leader(s). Unfortunately, Beacon allows a u3a website almost no access to the data, and what little it does provide is presented in a less than friendly format. So we duplicate the information on our website and lose the benefits that should come from eliminating duplication.

The Future

Although TAT is currently carrying out a wide-ranging Digital Strategy Review, I understand this does not cover Beacon. The only plans for Beacon that have been announced are relatively minor improvements, e.g. changing the Members Portal to use an email + password login process.

The Charnwood u3a Committee is disappointed that the biggest weaknesses are still not being tackled and, at the November committee meeting, it was decided to switch from Beacon to a broadly similar system called Simple Membership.

Like Beacon, Simple Membership is specifically designed for u3as. It has a more modern design, it has all the essential functions that our u3a needs, and it has a built-in website builder. A website built with Simple Membership automatically has access to the information in the membership database.

Simple Membership is already in use by more than a dozen u3as across the UK.

Change Is (Probably) Coming

The Charnwood u3a committee believes that Simple Membership is a "better Beacon" and our u3a should take advantage of the benefits it offers. Provided we can resolve a couple of practical issues, and subject to ratification by the committee after the March 2023 AGM, we hope to transition to Simple Membership in June next year.

Phil Bass, Beacon Site Administrator
beaconadmin@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Poetry Corner

NEIGHBOURS



Daniel is brave.
Daniel is bold.
Daniel is now just three years old.

Sometimes he shouts.
Sometimes he cries.
Sometimes he raises loving eyes.

“Where’s Ronnie?” he asks.
They’re friends, right true,
And need to have a word or two.

Ronnie is home.
Ronnie is free.
Ronnie is now seventy three.

Ronnie loves Dan.
Daniel loves Ron.
Seventy years between have gone.

When they’re apart
It’s just the same,
They often speak each other’s name.



If they’re quiet,
Without a peep,
We know that they are fast asleep!

Copyright, Louie Carr, 1989.
Published in *Northern Voices*
Arrival Press, 1992.
HB ISBN 1 85786 051 9

Quiz Time: (answers in next month's News & Views)

- 1) Which Jewish festival falls in December?
- 2) Which of the Magi's gifts represented kingship?
- 3) What shape were traditional Lancashire mince pies?
- 4) What was Tiny Tim's surname?
- 5) In which year was *Do They Know it's Christmas* released?
- 6) What is Wassailing?
- 7) When did Rudolph first get his red nose?
- 8) When did my true love give me 5 gold rings?
- 9) Who was the previous Archbishop of Canterbury?
- 10) Who was the first Christian martyr in Britain?
- 11) Which carol contains a verse which technically should be sung only on Christmas Day?
- 12) When is Twelfth Night?
- 13) Which gospel refers to the Shepherds visiting the baby Jesus?
- 14) Who wrote the Christmas Oratorio?
- 15) Who invented the Christmas cracker?
- 16) When did Queen Elizabeth broadcast the first televised Christmas message?
- 17) What is a capon?
- 18) What does 'Epiphany' mean?
- 19) According to Christian teaching who told Mary she was expecting a baby?
- 20) Which Australian city always has a Test Match on Boxing day?



Network Zoom Quiz: 12th Dec.

A reminder that there is still time to register for the Network Quiz, being held via Zoom on **Monday 12th December at 7 pm**, as advertised in last month's *News & Views*.

To register, send your name, email address, name of your u3a and team name (if any) to: u3achristmasquiz@outlook.com



Items for News & Views

Do you have an announcement, story, poem - or even a short comment - to share with your fellow Cu3a members? All contributions are very welcome, and we can preserve your anonymity if you prefer that your name does not appear in the newsletter.

There is a limit of around 500 words per item, and photos are very welcome.

To enable the newsletter to be compiled in time for delivery to members at the start of each month, the deadline for receiving items will normally be the last day but one of the previous month. The deadline for the **January** issue of **News & Views** will be **Friday, 30th December (12 noon)**.



Please send your contributions to the Newsletter Editor at: newsletter@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Please make sure you include your contact details with your item, and try not to leave it until the last minute if at all possible.

The Editor reserves full editorial rights as to length and suitability and the Editor's decision is final.

News & Views is sent to all Charnwood u3a members by email link (or, for those without email, by post) before the monthly meeting. It is also available to read on the Charnwood u3a website each month at www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk under the News menu.

Thank You!

Helen Reid
Newsletter Editor
Charnwood u3a



Committee and Group Leaders' Details

Names, photos and generic email addresses ending @charnwoodu3a.org.uk of all the current Committee members - along with links to their role descriptions - can be found on our website at: <https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk/siteb/CommitteeContactsNew.html> and those of other members of our Support Team are at: <https://www.charnwoodu3a.org.uk/siteb/SupportTeamContacts.html>



The names and generic email addresses of Group Leaders for each group can be found on that group's dedicated website page, accessed via Our Groups - Groups Listed...

Telephone numbers of Group Leaders can be accessed from the Members area of the website, using login details previously supplied.

Note: Where personal contact details appear in News & Views, these are included with permission.

Committee Meetings

Don't forget that members are always welcome to attend any of our Committee meetings on the **second Wednesday of the month** (10 am - noon), by prior arrangement, as observers. If you would like to attend one of these meetings and see what we do, please contact our Chair on chair@charnwoodu3a.org.uk

Some other useful u3a web addresses:

National u3a: <https://www.u3a.org.uk>

The Association of East Midlands u3as: <https://www.eastmidlandsu3as.org.uk>

Leicestershire and Rutland Network: <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=764>

Beacon: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/beacon>

