

Ravenshead U3A Magazine



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



Ravenshead



Shirley and Fred Wright, who as part of the Ravenshead U3A group, attended the NEC Christmas Show which included crafts, food and drink!

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Welcome from the editor.

In this Winter 2015 edition we welcome back John Rollinson with his Indian Cookery page, catch up on some U3A visits and group activities and find out about more of the interests, hobbies and early memories of our members.

For those of you wondering who wrote the report of the visit to the Houses of Parliament in our last magazine it was Alan Paul, whose name disappeared sometime between the proofreading and final print version. Apologies to Alan.

Please remember that as soon as one magazine goes to print we are looking for contributions for the next. We are looking as usual for a range of articles representing the many talents of our members! Please submit your articles, preferably in word processed form to the editor at XXXXXXXXXXXX

Deadline date for the next edition: March 2nd 2016

Can't believe I've just written 2016 and that will be our tenth magazine. Well done everyone! Judith

**Judith Moore (editor) Philip Jones, David Morton (proof readers)
Terry Moore (desktop publishing)**

Ravenshead U3A Committee

Judith Moore	Chair
Lesley Green	Vice-Chair
Keith Adams	Treasurer
Maria Gabrielczyk	Business Secretary
Ivan McNulty	Membership Secretary
Phil Asquith	Groups Coordinator
Kate Asquith	Speaker Finder
Sue Owen	Minutes Secretary; Welfare Officer
Alan Walker	Visits Coordinator
Alan Wilson	Committee Member
Mike Salmon	Committee Member
Paul Craddock	Co-opted Member

By invitation: Val Ford, Groups; Terry Moore, Publications; Alan Paul, Web Editor.

Contact Ravenshead U3A committee members via the CONTACT page of our website.

Freephone: 0300 030 2990

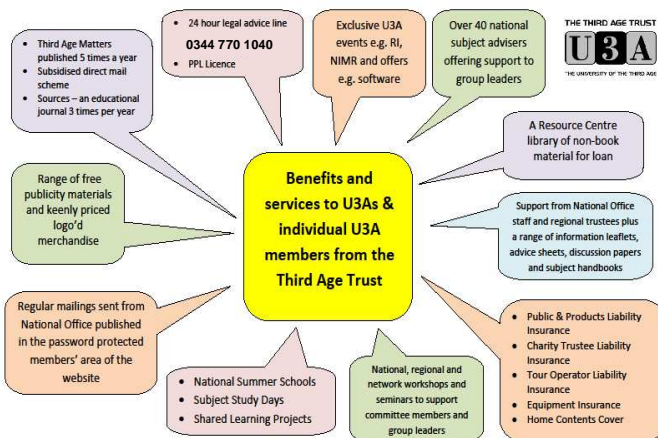
Thoughts from the Chair!



We are almost at the end of another successful year for Ravenshead U3A where we have seen membership grow to around 380, several new groups have been set up and we have been able to reduce our annual subscription to £15. Various trips and visits have taken place including our first “residential” and these are enjoyed by many of our members.

Our committee members attend regional and network meetings relevant to their roles and have fed back information at our regular committee meetings. We have also formed links with other local U3As, indeed some of our members are associate members of nearby U3As and vice versa.

As I mentioned at our November meeting, being a member of the U3A also brings additional benefits at national level. We all receive our copies of Third Age Matters magazine which keeps us up to date with regional and national initiatives as well as news from many U3A groups around the country. We have recently found out about a free 24 hour telephone legal advice line which is funded by U3A insurance and is accessed via telephone number 0344 770 1040. This service is free at the initial contact and trained legal advisors will help members with their questions and concerns. If things need to be taken further members will be advised of any potential financial implications and will be helped with applications for grants or claims if appropriate. This and other opportunities available to U3A members can be seen in the poster reproduced below.



reproduced below.

I am sure that all of us who have joined the U3A enjoy it for different reasons, first of all at a local level, but it is interesting to know that we are a part of such a successful and steadily growing organisation.

Finally, I would like to wish all our members a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE ABOVE PLEASE CONTACT THE NATIONAL OFFICE ON 020 8466 6139

OR VISIT THE NATIONAL WEBSITE AT www.u3a.org.uk

Judith Moore, Ravenshead U3A Chair

Eltham Palace Visit, September 7th 2015

Twenty eight U3A members from Ravenshead, Rainworth, Arnold and Cotgrave left at 8am on the start of our journey to Eltham, and unbelievably not a single hold up either way! The services at Cambridge were uncrowded and civilised. The notorious M25 behaved itself perfectly, even at 4.30pm and the start of the rush hour. The Dartford bridge and tunnel: not a problem - amazing!

So we got to Eltham in good time to find the usual English Heritage shop (selling an excellent guide book), pleasant and efficient staff, children's playground (no, none of us used it!) and then a walk through the edge of the Palace grounds to a very exclusive small road, a rebuilt medieval bridge over the moat and, through the trees, the first real sight of the Palace itself - and how impressive that was.

It is unlike anything else anywhere in Britain. A sort of squashed butterfly shape (dictated by the restrictions of the medieval site) with a huge medieval hall for one wing and a 1930s house for the body and other wing. It was built in the 1930s for Stephen and Virginia Courtauld who had the ideal combination of money and taste to build a unique house. The outside doesn't look Art Deco (except for the sculpture), it's more Lutyens at his most stately and grand: bands of brick and stone with odd roof shapes, but somehow it fits extremely harmoniously with the medieval great hall and the small fifteenth century gables which had to be re-used.

Inside, English Heritage has done a superb job of recreation where necessary. Downstairs is dominated by the huge curved Entrance Hall, mainly lit by a concrete dome pierced by rows of glass 'portholes'. The walls are wood veneer incorporating marquetry panels - everything in shades of brown and cream including the superb Marion Dorn rug. It was easy to imagine it in the evenings filled with guests: black ties, long dresses, diamonds, (definitely diamonds!), then it would come alive. Many of the other rooms had heavy, low ceilings with concealed lighting, and built-in furniture (unusual for the time). The most interesting was the dining room which has an aluminium leaf central ceiling feature and beautifully ebonised doors decorated with a Greek key pattern and lacquered realistic animals.

Upstairs the bedrooms were either grand and extravagant (Virginia's bathroom was covered with onyx and had a gold mosaic alcove for the bath), or very simple - quite small and with everything built-in - like ships' cabins really. In spite of all the up to date



Photo by Nick Blackburn

conveniences e.g. a central vacuum cleaning system, there was only one shower, cold water too!

Then we mustn't forget that Virginia's pet lemur had his own room, centrally heated and decorated with murals of his homeland, and a ladder down to the ground floor. Apparently he roamed the house freely and often bit the legs of guests while they were eating in the dining room.

It was disconcerting to pass a bedroom door labelled 'Batmen' (not Batman!) until we realised it was one of the relics of the 1945 - 1992 use of Eltham by the Army, mainly for educational purposes.

Then there was the complete contrast of the medieval great hall, carefully restored by the Courtaulds. It has a magnificent hammerbeam roof with spectacular pendants, reproduction panelling, and good modern stained glass. It is a complete contrast to the house in size and style but somehow a complete complement to it too, with no sense of disharmony.

Some of the cellars are shown, mainly to give an idea of how the family lived during World War 2 air raids, of which there were many.

English Heritage has revived the very attractive gardens which are mainly within the moat - a spectacular rock garden, good herbaceous borders, rose gardens etc. They were small enough to enjoy easily, but had a pleasing variety too.

We came away with a definite feeling of 'how the other half lived', and of having visited a totally individual, unique house - one of the most extraordinary we've ever seen.

Being a Judy and Alan Walker trip, everything ran like clock-work and we're all

extremely grateful to them for their hard work and skill which enabled us to have such a hugely successful day - even a sweet box came round frequently during the journeys!



**Tony & Isobel Dams,
Ravenshead U3A members.**

Only birds and horses!

Judith Moore asked me to write this article after I was telling her I had been involved with livestock and cage birds all my life. As a boy I kept numerous types of livestock, foreign birds, budgerigars, canaries, rabbits, white mice, guinea pigs, chickens and at one time a pig that was a reekling which had been given to me by a farmer in return for the work I had done for him during the school holidays.



On leaving school I went to agricultural college and was unable to look after livestock and, in any case at that time, I was more interested in playing football and chasing girls! When I married I soon started to keep budgerigars and bred them successfully. In 1971 I joined Eastwood Cage Bird Society and became hooked on the exhibition side of the fancy. This went on for several years until it became apparent that to improve my study of birds would entail spending a lot of money – which I did not have. I was encouraged to start keeping Gloster canaries by a friend. The addiction of showing Gloster canaries lasted for 36 years and was thoroughly enjoyed and I made many friends both nationwide and in Europe.

In about 1980 I was selected onto the judges panel of the Gloster Convention which is the governing body for Gloster canaries. I found that I really enjoyed judging and was quite popular with cage bird societies inviting me to officiate at their shows. I have judged shows all over the country and had judged almost all of the Gloster specialist shows in the UK. These specialist shows are when only one variety of bird is exhibited and deemed to be the 'premier league' of cage bird exhibiting. I was very proud and honoured to be asked to place the awards at the National Exhibition of Cage and Aviary Birds held at the NEC and also the Scottish National. A few years later I was asked to place the awards at the National Exhibition again.



One type of Gloster canary

During all this time I had been asked to judge many shows in Europe, numerous times in Belgium, Italy and Germany, also Southern and Northern Ireland. I was also invited to place the awards at the National Gloster Canary Association in America, the show taking place in New York. I felt this was a great honour to be bestowed upon me.

The breeding and exhibiting of any form of pedigree livestock involves a great deal of time and dedication if you are to be successful. A few years ago I found that I was doing my chores almost on autopilot and finding that judging bird shows had become somewhat routine as this involved travelling the length and breadth of the country. Usually judging starts at 9 o'clock prompt so you can easily understand the time I had to be on the road travelling to the judging engagement.

Also during this 36 years I served on various committees and was Chairman and Show Manager of the International Gloster Breeders Association who used to stage the largest show of Gloster canaries anywhere in the world. The record entry of 2200 birds was exhibited at the Festival Hall, Kirkby in Ashfield which I organised. However I did decide I had to step back from these official duties when I became Chairman of the Gloster Convention. I held this post for 10 years.

As well as cage birds, during the last 10 years I have also had a keen interest in horse racing and blood stock breeding. I have been a keen caravanner for 30 years and as this conflicts with breeding birds I decided to give up the serious side of cage bird breeding in 2010 when I retired. One of the things I always wanted to do was spend more time in the caravan. Whilst the livestock bug has never left me I now only keep a few canaries in a large aviary in the garden which take very little looking after.



One of the strangest things I have found is that I have not missed giving up exhibiting and judging at all as the keeping of cage birds is now very much diminished in the UK although still very popular in Europe.

Winning 'Best Yellow' at the international Gloster breeders show (IGBA)

Mike Salmon, Ravenshead U3A member

U3A Visit to the Holocaust Centre at Laxton.

Following the visit of Arek Hersch, who spoke to our members about his experiences during the holocaust, two visits to Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre were planned.

In August more than 30 members made the short journey to Laxton.

What a privilege it was to visit the Centre on Wednesday of this week. We had a memorable day in every way. The weather was glorious and within half an hour we were there. We spent two and a half hours there with a very knowledgeable gentleman called Harry who guided us round showing us films and many pictures of the holocaust. He also answered our many questions.

Everything has been done with great sensitivity and empathy. There is an emphasis on showing younger people about the horror of this time during the early part of the second world war. They do have lots of visits from schools too.

I am sure everyone on the outing enjoyed the experience and it is something we shall always remember.

Our U3A group gives us opportunities which we would not always have.

I extend personal thanks to our Committee and the convivial company on the day.

Gill Daniel, Ravenshead U3A member

TWIDDLING OUR THUMBS

Members of Ravenshead U3A knitting and crochet group have been supporting the Dementia Care Appeal of Sherwood Forest Hospital Trust by making twiddle muffs.

They've raided their button tins and odds and bits boxes to find the decorations.

These cosy and tactile muffs not only keep hands warm, but encourage hospital patients to be active. Around two dozen will be going to Kings Mill Hospital in December.

The group received a letter of thanks from the NHS Foundation Trust.

The knitting group welcomes donations of spare wool and patterns. Bring them to meetings or contact the organisers.

Carol Wright,

Ravenshead U3A member



MALLARD BREWERY TRIP



Fifteen members boarded the Village Bus for a visit to the Mallard Brewery in Maythorne, near Southwell, on the 15th November.

Mallard is a craft brewery (situated on land that in times past, was used for the farming of North Clay Hops) and produces quality ales by hand. This award winning brewery is so tiny, it could only accommodate the 15 of us and our driver – and then some had to move outside to get from one side of the unit to the other! We were greeted by the brewer, Steve Hussey, whose passion for brewing was evident as he explained the brewing process and showed us samples of the various ingredients and types of hops. We were even allowed to sample some which, in their raw state, proved not to be for the faint-hearted.

All the ales reflect the Mallard name – Duck n Dive, Golden Duck, Specduckular, Quackerjack etc. and each has its own distinct flavour. This distinction became even more interesting when we were allowed to sample some of them direct from the cask! After we had sampled everything on offer it became evident that travelling by Village Bus was a good idea and our sympathies went to Colin, our driver, who had to stand and watch!

A considerably more relaxed group re-boarded the bus for the short drive to the Cross Keys at Upton (the Mallard Brewery pub and runner-up in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year Competition) where we enjoyed a fish and chip lunch accompanied by, of course, Mallard beer. Everyone was given a bottle to take home and we agreed that we had all learnt a bit about brewing, enjoyed a pleasant sociable lunch and were very happy indeed about it all!

Anne Eldridge, Ravenshead U3A member

RAVENSHEAD U3A – INTEREST GROUPS

Group Name	Leader	Phone	Meeting Day and Time	Location	Full
Angling	Lionel Castle		Please ring for details		No
Art Gallery/Museum	Antony Gordon		Various visits arranged	Please contact for details	No
Bird watching	Peter York		Usually once a month	Please contact for details	No
Canasta	Enid Thomas		2pm 2 nd & 4 th Tues.	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Chess and Backgammon	Jan Fraser		1 st & 3 rd Mon 10. -12.00	Jan's Home	No
Computing (Beginners)	Alan Paul		Every Wednesday 2pm	Alan Paul's House	Full
Computing(Beginners)	Alan Paul		To be advised	Alan Paul's House	No
Creative Writing	Villia Bullock		Friday 1 week after Monthly Mtg.	Members Homes	No
Craft workshops	Kate Asquith		Every Thurs. 10-12noon	Kate's Home	No
Current Affairs	Carol Wright		3 rd Wednesday 2.00 -3.30	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Family History	Barbara Jukes		4 th Tues 10 am	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Folk Dancing	Mike & Mary Adams		2 nd & 4 th Mon 2pm - 4pm	Ravenshead Village Hall	No
French Conversation 1	Brian Machin		1 st & 3 rd Mon 10.00-11.30.	Wanda Parker's House	Full
French Conversation 2	Anick Spence		1 st & 3 rd Mon 14.00–16.00	Anick's house	No
Garden Group	Peter York		Var. Dates & Locations	See Group Web page	No
Guitar	John Bewick		1 st & 3 rd Thur 10am-Noon	Ravenshead Church Lounge	No
Hikers (5-8Miles)	Steve Hargreaves		1 st & 3 rd Weds.in month	Meet 9.30 am Ranger Pub	No
Knitting and Crochet	Anne Lovegrove Liz Corner		2pm – 4pm 1 st &3 rd Friday. Please ring for dates	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Local History	Philip Jones		2pm – 4pm 2 nd Tuesday	Kighill Farm	No
Luncheon Club	Chris Dean		Various locations monthly	See Group Web page	No
Mahjong	Anne Eldridge Jennifer Philby		1 st & 3 rd Tuesday 1.30-3.30	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Music Appreciation 1	Joan Harvey		2 nd Tuesday 2.00 – 4.00	Members' Homes	Full

Music Appreciation 3	David Turner		3 rd Tuesday 1.30 – 3.00	Members' Homes	No
Occasional Visits	Various often Alan Walker is involved		Various dates	Please see website, U3A4U or info at monthly meeting	No
Painting	Mary Abbot		2 nd Monday 1.30-4.00	The Centre at St Peter's Church	No
Pastels	Wanda Parker		Weekly Grp 1 wed.	grp 2 Fri. Wanda's House	No
Photography	Dennis Harvey Glynne Payze		Last Wed in month at 2pm	Brammer Room. Village Hall	No
Play Reading Group	Alan Kirkham		2 nd Wednesday 2.30pm	In members Homes	No
Reading Group 2	Carol Payze		3 rd Tuesday 2pm	In members Homes	Full
Reading Group 1	Pat Brown		3 rd Tuesday 2.30pm	In members Homes	Full
Scrabble, Rumikubs and Cribbage	Susanne Smith Les & Rhoda Newey		3 rd Tuesday 10am and 1 st Tuesday 7.30-9.30	Brammer Room, Village Hall	No
Singing for Fun	Graham Jukes		Last Thurs in Month 10am	Vars. Locations See web site	No
The weekenders	Sue Owen and Pat Von Gondelle		Once a month plus trips	For more info see website	No
Thursday Walks	Paul and Margaret Craddock		2 nd & 4 th Thursday - 1.30 prompt start.	Details on the website or contact Paul and Margaret	No
Wine Group 1	Lionel Castle		3 rd Friday	Members' homes	Full
Wine Group 2	Brenda Beale 0115		3 rd Tuesday	Members' homes	Full
Wine Group 3	Michael Neville		2 nd Monday	Members' homes	Full
Wine Group 4	Judy Vaughan		3 rd Tuesday	Members' homes	Full
Wine Group 5	Sue Tidbury		1 st Wednesday	Members' homes	Full
Yoga 1	Bob Ford		Wkly 2.00–3.30 Tuesday	The Centre at St. Peter's Church	No
Yoga Group 2	Bob Ford		Wkly 9.30–11 Friday.	The Centre at St. Peter's Church	No

If you are interested in joining any of the above Groups but they are showing as full, please contact the Group Leader to ask to be put on a waiting list. You will then be contacted once a place becomes available or there are enough people to form a further Group.



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL



Our Years with Friendship Force

What is FF? It is an international, non-political, non-denominational organisation, set up by president Jimmy Carter when he was in office in 1977. He recognised the fact that diplomats formed friendships with other diplomats, and proposed that other people might enjoy doing the same. He felt that ordinary people should be able to experience the culture and lifestyle in other countries, by staying with them in their private homes.

The organisation is centred on Atlanta but covers a good part of all five continents. There are a dozen branches in the UK, and we were members of the Derbyshire branch for fifteen years. When visiting another country, you travel there as a group and are met on arrival by your hosts for the week. Contact between you and your hosts has already been established in the period before the visit, but meeting is still a happy and surprising event. Grins, smiles, handshakes and hugs are in abundance. That's what FF is all about. The next day or two are absolutely magic. There is a strong feeling of having known these people for years, even though they are complete strangers and may not easily speak the same language.

Flexibility, a spirit of adventure, a sense of humour and a desire to make friends with folks from another culture, are the qualities which help. When travelling with FF, you see a part of a country from the inside looking out, rather than, as a tourist, from the outside looking in. The hosts usually set up a program of events to cover the week. Here again FF scores because they already know where to go and what to see – it's their locality and they want to show it to you. FF visits are limited to one week in case the 'chemistry' doesn't work. Most groups then move on to a second region or country for a second week. By the end of that week, you are ready for a rest and a chance to digest the experiences gained from the recent days. During our membership, we visited a dozen countries in four continents and hosted a similar number of friends from around the world.

Sadly, due to the advance of the years, we have decided to resign from the group. It's difficult to imagine that we will ever forget the experiences we had and the friends we have made during our fifteen years with the Derbyshire group.

As we used to say "we arrive as strangers and leave as friends"

John Rollinson, Ravenshead U3A member

John Rollinson's Indian Cookery Page



Baked Minced Lamb -- Bhune Kebab

Serves 4 Prep: 25 min + cooling Cook: 50 min

225g minced lamb 4 cardamom pods 2 cloves 1 tsp ginger
4 onions sliced 125ml ghee 1 tbsp roasted gram flour
800mm square papaya with skin 1 tsp chilli powder

To garnish:

5 green chillies few mint sprigs few chopped coriander leaves

To serve:

Lime slices mint or mango chutney

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C. Put the mince into a food processor and grind to a fine paste. Transfer to a bowl.
- Remove the cardamom seeds and put them into a blender with the cloves. Add the ginger, 2 onions and 2 tsp water and process until ground. Add to the mince and mix well.
- Heat half the ghee in a frying pan over medium heat, add the remaining 2 onions and fry for 7 minutes until brown. Spoon into a blender and process until ground. Add the mince with gram flour, papaya and chilli powder and mix well.
- Heat the remaining ghee in a pan until melted, then remove from heat and cool for 20 minutes.
- Preheat the grill to medium. Put a little ghee on to your hands and roll portions of the mince into balls. Arrange them almost touching in a baking dish. Cover with a lid or foil and bake in the oven for 40 minutes until the mince is cooked and browned. Do not allow the mince to burn. When the mince is cooked, place under the grill to brown the tops a little more.
- Garnish with finely sliced green chillies and mint leaves. Serve with lime slices and chutney.

Grandad's Chicken Farm

Jayne's grandad's smallholding was at the top of Hogg's Lane, Kirkeby-in-Ashfield



The reliable black Austin spluttered and struggled up the uneven lane to the chicken farm. Grandad and I rode with the bumps and jogs, pleased when our mile long journey was over. The large cans of water, full to the brim, were pulled out of the back of the car and we finished the last part of the journey on foot up the muddy path. The comfortable, familiar sound of clucking hens greeted us as we unloaded feed and water into the shed and pulled on our wellington boots.

It was six in the morning and we could hear the rooster joining the morning chorus as the feed of potato peelings, bread and seed which the chickens so enjoyed was slopped into the big container. First grandad inspected the broody hens to make sure none had been victimised in the night. You could always tell if one had been picked on and pecked by the others by the tell-tale mound of feathers lying in the sawdust, shavings and straw. We replaced this with fresh bedding and went to inspect the nesting boxes. The delightful anticipation just before reaching for those lovely white or brown eggs inside the warm nest of straw will always remain. You were careful never to disturb the hens still laying as they would give you a short sharp peck to remind you not to try that again!

Next came the cockerels and one was occasionally put in with the hens. These were the noisiest of all the fowls and ran quickly from one end of the pen to greet us. They started feeding before we had time to empty the pails into their dishes. Grandad had a covered oil stove going in each chicken coop at night and this was always checked and refilled if necessary the next morning. Many times the cold nights of winter had taken the life of a fowl.

The bantams gave us their small eggs generously and were the most beautiful of all grandad's birds. He had many breeds and had won prizes at shows for them. His grandson now breeds them on a wide scale and is bent on discovering the origins of the Orpington.

Occasionally we had one or two sick chickens to visit in a special pen and tried to encourage them to feed on bread soaked in milk. Sometimes it was too late and they would die in a corner, indifferent to their lives. I couldn't see what interests in life a chicken could have except perhaps the daily airing outside in the covered runs when they could enjoy the sun and air.

The two enemies of the fowls were the fox and the rat. Creosote was thrown down the hole where it was suspected a rat had come in, hopefully to deter if not to kill it. The fox was more difficult to deal with as its night prowlings were cunning and sly. To prevent its entry efficient checking of all gates and doors was done last thing at night. The work of a fox, discovered in the morning, is never a pretty sight. Although it may take one of its prey away it leaves behind a carnage equal only to the work of a murderer. It was never a happy thing to watch grandad count the loss of so many chickens and clear up the resulting mess.

The last visit of the morning was to the newly hatched chicks twittering busily inside the incubators from where they had scrambled out of their shells. Next we counted and wiped the eggs before boxing them up. Grandad would then choose the fowls he wanted for the shop, snap their necks and begin to pluck their feathers in the wash house under running water. The gizzards were put in a bag for rewrapping and the fowls were strung against the tiled wall on hooks. I would stand for an hour at a time watching this performance, mesmerised by the graceful quick skill granddad had acquired over the years in this task. We ate our sandwiches in the barn and then set to on any maintenance work which needed to be done.

Grandad's old cart and harnesses still remained in the big barn, reminding me of the time before his little black Austin which he drove recklessly about. He still could not understand the engine inside and why it would not respond to loud instruction rather than touch.

A visit to the fruit and vegetable garden just before leaving resulted in baskets of rhubarb, gooseberries, blackberries, apples, pears, plums, brussels, cabbages and beetroot at different times of the year. All too soon it was time to return home and the car struggled down the lane where it would return later for grandad to give the evening feeds and bed the fowls down for the night.



"Free range chicken flock" (by woodley wonderworks).

Jayne Llewelyn,
Ravenshead U3A member

U3A VISIT TO THE CHRISTMAS ART AND CRAFT SHOW AT THE NEC

On Saturday 7th November 27 hardy travellers had an early start (8am from the Sherwood Ranger – I don't do mornings!). We were off to the NEC to the Christmas Craft Show with our comfy shoes and spending money. Phil and Kate were our drivers on two Ravenshead Community Buses.

On the way there one or two on our bus had a few zzzzzzs – and on the way back. Not me by the way.

On arrival Paul's and my first stop was to "The Cobbler". I have bought shoes and boots from him for about the last four years. We took Sue to show her where he was and, determined this time not to buy any, I failed. I bought a pair of boots. Sue also bought a pair of shoes.



Next stop was a cup of coffee and, I know it was early, but I'd been up a long time and was hungry, so we had some of our sandwiches. Perhaps the Christmas Tree and House near the refreshments, made from Craft Bits, could be a project for the Craft Group next year?

There was a great variety of gifts to choose from. We bought a jacket for our 7 month old grandson and "tattoo" kits for the granddaughters. Sadly we couldn't find anything suitable for the 12 and 8 year old grandsons.



However, we did buy some Snow. Yes Snow. Add water to the special powder and it turned into Snow. Magic. Hours of fun for young and not so young. Sue tried the snow too.

I also bought a bag which I believe has been whisked away to send to Santa.

Then to the crafts. I bought beads, beads and more beads and bits to make Christmas decorations.



Janet and Wendy had great fun making Christmas tree baubles and Janet and Lionel did a picture in pastels. This latter was part of a challenge for the Guinness Book of records to produce as many pictures as possible during the time of the show. I don't know whether or not they gained the record.

Fred bought his gold champagne so it's everybody at Fred's for Christmas. *(See front cover. Ed)*

It was amazing that even with all the people at the show we kept bumping into our lot time after time for a quick catch up and look at purchases. Sometimes looking a bit perplexed where to shop next.

We all met up to leave at 3.30pm with our parcels. Nobody was late and we didn't lose anyone. I for one was very ready for a sit down. At the show Paul and I had walked nearly 6 kilometres – not a lot but when you're just ambling it's very hard on the poor feet – even in comfy shoes.

It was a great day out.

Next year folk?

**Margaret
Craddock,**

**Ravenshead U3A
member**



A Victorian Christmas

One hundred and forty members attended our November meeting to hear speaker Danny Wells talking about the beginnings of “Christmas as we know it!” Many of the traditions and practices we associate with the festive season were instigated and popularised in the reign of Queen Victoria and by the end of the 1840s most of the ingredients were in place. Ideas of family, feasting, gifts, cards and crackers all became part of Christmas, with a decorated Christmas tree having pride of place in many homes.

The Christmas tree had been a German tradition since the 17th century and the practice had been brought to England first by Victoria’s mother, Queen Charlotte. However it was the young Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert who must be credited with its rise in popularity. In 1848 the Illustrated London News published a drawing of the Royal Family celebrating at Windsor Castle around a Christmas tree, beautifully decorated with candles, sweets, dried fruits and homemade ornaments. The following year leading society hostesses vied with each other to produce the most lavishly decorated tree and it wasn’t long before the rest of the country followed suit.



The tradition of sending Christmas cards also has its origin in the Victorian era. The first cards were sent in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole, head of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He commissioned artist John Callcott Horsley to design 1,000 cards, illustrated with a festive scene on the front and printed with the greeting, “A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You”.

Costing one shilling each, the cards were far too expensive for ordinary Victorians. It wasn’t until 1870, when postage was reduced to one half penny per ounce that the sending of Christmas cards became hugely popular.

The invention of the Christmas cracker is attributed to Thomas Smith, a London sweet shop owner. While visiting Paris in 1840 he copied the idea of wrapping sugared almonds in tissue paper but the idea did not catch on. For several years he

worked on various ideas to improve the design, eventually adding a “crack” by using a small amount of chemical inside a fancy wrapper. Gradually, the sweets were replaced with small gifts and paper hats in the late Victorian period and crackers have continued in that form ever since.



Illustration of children pulling a cracker from 'The Graphic Christmas', 1878

The famous novelist Charles Dickens loved Christmas and did much to promote the festival in his Christmas stories. Savouring the atmosphere of Christmas in London became part of Dickens' annual routine. Every Christmas Eve he went to visit the Christmas markets in the East End. In October 1843 he began writing one of his most popular and best-loved books, A Christmas Carol. It was written in six weeks and finished by the end of November. Published in December 1843 it was a sensational success. In it he conjured up the delights of Christmas, with his descriptions of the Christmas shops “*where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp-heat of the windows*”. We can also enjoy his description of the goose, and stuffing, and gravy of the Cratchits' Christmas dinner, and their excitement as the Christmas pudding is unrolled from its pudding cloth and set alight “*like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.*”

At the heart of the Victorian Christmas then we discover family values, feasting and hospitality. Add in a selection of Christmas Carols , settle down with a Christmas book and enjoy a very merry Christmas!

Judith Moore, Ravenshead U3A member

Notice Board



Do you have an interest that you would like to share with other members? You can use this notice board to post messages.

Anyone interested in forming a ‘woodturners’ group?

Contact Mike Salmon on xxxxxx

Anyone interested in forming a ‘science and engineering’ group? Contact Alan Paul on xxxxxx

To post a message contact the Editor

Dates for Your Diary

(check website for latest information)

Monthly Meetings

(10.00 a.m. St. Peter's Church, Ravenshead)

Tue Jan 12th

Peter Scott - a Man of Many Talents

Speaker: John Whitfield

Tue Feb 9th

The Local Hero of the Titanic

Speaker: Graham Anthony

Tue March 8th

Nottingham on Sea

Speaker: Bob Massey

Tue April 12th

(title to be confirmed)

Speaker: David Templeman

NOTICE:

Our speaker finder Kate Asquith has booked our monthly speakers for the next year. We are looking for someone to work alongside Kate with a view to taking on the role when her term of office finishes. If you are interested please contact Kate on xxxxxxxxxx or call Freephone 0300 030 2990

Social Events

Coffee and Conversation, commencing 10am.

Venue: Room 3, the Centre at St. Peter's

Dates: (MONDAYS) **December 21st ; Jan 18th ; Feb 15th ; Mar 21st**

Tue Dec 15th

Christmas Bash at the Centre at St. Peter's

Occasional Visits

*Details on website **Occasional Visits** page.*

Wed Jun 22nd

MAMMA MIA 2pm Matinee Performance. At the Royal Concert Hall Nottingham