

## January 2019



The next meeting will be on

**Tuesday 8th January at 10.00 am**

We will have a return visit from speaker

**ROBERT MEE**

who will be telling us about

**BRADSHAWS—AN EARLY RAILWAY TOUR**

Doors open at 9.40 am

**\*\*\* IMPORTANT \*\*\***

**Please note:** All those attending the monthly meetings must sign in at either of the two desks at the entrance to the meeting hall of The Arena. This is necessary so that we know how many have attended and, even more important, **it is required to comply with fire regulations**. If you arrive early, before the signing-in sheet is available, please make sure you return to the desk later to sign in.

# Messages from the Committee

## Appeal for 2019 Committee Members

Your U3A needs **at least 7 Members** to form a working Committee in 2019.

To date, we have only received a total of 6 nominations for the 2019 Ilkeston U3A Committee. **Only 3** of these nominations are from existing Committee Members who are willing to continue in their current roles (Chair, Treasurer and Membership Secretary). This means that we urgently need **at least 4** new Committee Members to come forward. (Ideally we would like another 5 or 6.)

The following Committee Members will not be standing for their existing roles in 2019: –

- John Bell (Business Secretary)
- June Harrison (Vice Chair)
- Sue Daley (Vice Chair & joint Group Leader Co-ordinator)
- Janet Joy (Joint Group Leader Co-ordinator)
- Ann Richards (Minutes Secretary)
- Robin Short (Publicity)

The deadline for written nominations is **8 January 2019**, which is also the date of our next Open Meeting. If we do not meet these requirements, it will be my unpleasant duty to inform Jean Hogg (Regional Trustee) that it is highly unlikely that we will be able to form a Committee for 2019.

Should this be the case, I will have no choice but to verbally repeat the request for volunteers at the Annual General Meeting on 5 February 2019. Unless a sufficient number of members come forward immediately then I will be obligated to call an Extraordinary General Meeting at which the sole item on the agenda will be **the imminent closure of Ilkeston U3A**.

So, I am appealing to all Members of Ilkeston U3A who are willing to fill the **5 vacant roles** of Business Secretary, Vice Chair, Group Leader Co-ordinator(s), Minutes Secretary and Publicity to please come forward to help run your Ilkeston U3A.

As you can see, we need nominations from Members who are willing to help ensure the growth of your U3A by having an area of responsibility on the Committee. The current Chair, Treasurer and Membership Secretary will be more than happy to guide and support all new Committee Members in their chosen roles.

Ann Riley (Chair)

## Membership Badges

Membership 2019 badges, for those of you who have renewed your membership, will be available for you to collect at the January meeting at the Arena on 8th January. Please can you collect it (or arrange for it to be collected) and complete the back. Remember, you should be taking them to any U3A activity that you attend as it is proof of your membership. If you have not renewed your membership by **31st January** you are deemed to be no longer a member and should not be attending any group meetings.

Marian Stopper (Membership Secretary)

## Entrance Fee

Just a reminder that an entrance fee of **50p per person** attending a general monthly meeting is to be introduced in January 2019. To avoid the build up of a queue upon arrival, please have the correct change ready for when you sign in at one of the reception desks. Thank you!

Valerie Buxton (Treasurer)

# Geoff Belk

## A FORMER MEMBER AND VICE CHAIRMAN OF ILKESTON U3A

It was with great sadness that we received the news that Geoff Belk had passed away, after battling a long illness.

For a number of years Geoff had been a lively member of Ilkeston U3A and was also a very effective Committee member, during my time as Chair.

Geoff was not afraid to join the Committee almost as soon as he joined the U3A. He joined in debate without fear or favour and set about tasks on his own initiative. He became Vice Chair when the previous holder left the post. This continued until he had the first signs of illness, which, as is often the case, was not diagnosed until much later.

He joined the History group as soon as he arrived, and quickly became a valued and active member.

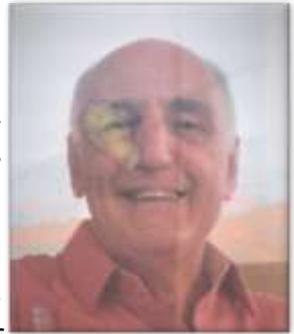
Not long thereafter, he took it upon himself to start a Philosophy group, going to some lengths to find stimulating materials, and setting ground rules that made everyone feel included and valued. He must be due some credit also for the fact that a second Philosophy group was soon needed.

Geoff was also a keen and very knowledgeable volunteer at Kedleston Hall, and he put this knowledge to good use with talks for the History groups about the history of the Hall and the family who lived there, as well as leading a tour of the Hall for them.

At his funeral it was mentioned that Geoff had done Mountain Leadership Training (which I didn't know), and that he shared some character traits with Peter Tinniswood's Uncle Mort (which I can't believe).

Our condolences go to Geoff's wife, Julie and their family.

**Andrew Hawkins**  
**Former Chair of Ilkeston U3A**



# Groups Round Up



## Science for All

At our December meeting the Science for All group commenced with details of future outside events which could be of interest to members.

We revisited quiet fireworks and heard the difference in noise between a 2/10 category and a 9/10 category. The quieter ones use much less explosive material in their construction and the material is not packed so tightly.

We watched a video to show that gathering fossils and palaeontology itself can be both interesting and enlightening.

Camels are so well adapted to the desert that it's hard to imagine them living anywhere else. But what if we were misled all along? What if those big humps, feet and eyes were evolved for a different climate and a different time? In this talk, the presenter tells a surprising story of how a very tiny, very strange fossil changed the way we see camels, and the world. This thousands of years' old fossil, found near the Arctic Circle, was to prove that camels originally came from North America. Bringing a live camel onto the stage was a fitting finale!

Biologist Elizabeth Blackburn shares a Nobel Prize for her work finding out the answer to ageing with the discovery of telomerase: an enzyme that replenishes the caps at the end of chromosomes, called telomeres, which break down when cells divide.

She went on to describe how we might have more control over ageing than we think but living longer could have its downside such as an increase in the incidence of cancer.

After a very short visual representation of a 3D printer, which is part of a technical revolution taking place in homes across the world, we had the benefit of information from one who had actually seen it working.

One of the group shared with us many facts regarding this new machine and was able to answer questions regarding its use.

In our final video we discovered how a super-thin 3-inch disk can levitate something 70,000 times its own weight. In a riveting demonstration the presenter shows how a phenomenon known as quantum locking allows a superconductor disk to float over a magnetic rail - completely frictionless and with zero energy loss.

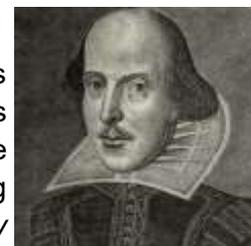
Although this information was difficult to assimilate it did stretch our minds and hopefully introduced us gently into the benefits of superconductors and to the future of science.

It was good to see members getting involved in the discussions and we hope to foster this approach with short bursts of information and subsequent debate.

**Janet Joy**

## Shakespeare Group

The Shakespeare Group is spending Christmas recovering from the emotional distress of King Lear. (Actually, we *really* enjoyed it.)



On **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> of January** we are going to start 'The Merchant of Venice'.

We meet on the second and fourth Thursdays from 10 'til Noon. We will be meeting in the home of one of our members. New members will be very welcome.

For further information contact me at: [r\\_short2@sky.com](mailto:r_short2@sky.com) or 0115 779492

**Robin Short**

## Dancing

Just a reminder that the Dancing Group recommences on **Tuesday 15th January at 2.00 pm**, at Trefoil House.

**Glenys Donson**

# Groups Round Up continued

## History 2

In December we celebrated the season with a Christmas miscellany.

The first item was a presentation by a member of the group relating to the history of the Christmas card. We started with a picture of the first card produced by Henry Cole in 1843 followed by many other examples.

In 1846 1000 cards were sold to the public at one shilling each plus postage at one penny.

In the nineteenth century the British Post Office delivered cards on Christmas morning - the postmen dressed up in their red uniforms.

Winter scenes of robins - very popular - holly, evergreens, country churches, snowy landscapes and other seasonal and religious items were frequently included on the card.

Initially the cards were printed on single sheets of paper about the size of a lady's visiting card.

Another Victorian invention was the Christmas cracker and the production of pantomimes.

History has not always celebrated Christmas in the way the Victorians did. In 1647 the English Parliament passed a law making Christmas illegal as Oliver Cromwell considered it immoral. Anyone celebrating it was arrested and this law was not changed until 1660.

The Puritans who sailed and made their home in America took the same stance fining those guilty of celebrating the sum of five shillings.

We dissected the carol "Twelve days of Christmas" to discover the hidden meaning of each day's lyrics.

We have some very clever and well-read members of the group who contributed their religious knowledge to those, like me, who are less versed in the scriptures.

After singing the carol we had a "fuddle" even though it was only 11am! –Very satisfying.

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with two very short videos. One was entitled "Bet You Didn't Know this about Christmas" and the second one "History of the Christmas Tree".

Although there were only about three minutes of information in each video, they were an easy way to present learning

Wishing the group a Happy Christmas and New Year, together with thanks for their support in 2019.

**Janet Joy**

## Gardening

In November the Garden Group met at the Fire Station for the final meeting of the year. As this was our Christmas meeting we made it a social occasion with tea and cake, for which we have to thank Barbara Bailey and Wendy Wesley. Barbara also provided the garden quiz which was both educational and entertaining. Members left the meeting with a Secret Santa present to open on the big day – if they can wait that long.

Our next meeting will be **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019** at the Fire Station.

**Anne Wood**

## Dining Out



Our last meal of the year was a Christmas lunch at Risley Park. This year we have visited various venues, from pubs to Italian restaurants .

Two of our group members, Roger and Dennis, would like to encourage more male members to join us, as they feel outnumbered! Please contact me if you would like to join us.

A Happy New Year to you all.

**Janet Lumsden**

# Groups Round Up continued

## Quiz Group

Fifteen of us met in the Church of Christ for our first meeting, and a very pleasant place it turned out to be. It was very spacious with an excellent kitchen for preparing drinks.

Our quiz was named "Back to School" and had six sections of ten questions each. These were Geography, History, English Literature, Maths, Science and General Studies. Here is a sample of the questions. Could you answer them?

1. Which is Europe's largest port?
2. Who wrote War of the Worlds?
3. What is 3/8 of 760?
4. What were the first body of professional constables called?
5. What is the body's biggest organ?
6. Which sport are you not allowed to play left handed?

Answers at the end of the newsletter.

**June Harrison**

## Rambling

For our final walk of the year a small group of just 5 of us did a 6.5 mile walk around the estate of Calke Abbey. For the time of year it was a good choice, being mainly on a walking and cycling trail, which was much less muddy than our recent rambles. Some of the trail took us along the route of a former tramway, which used to serve lime kilns on the estate. Consequently we found ourselves walking along a number of dark tunnels—with only one small torch to light the way.



Calke Abbey is said to be the "un-stately" home. It had been owned by the same family since the 17th century, but they were often eccentric and reclusive. When the house came under the protection of the National Trust in 1985, it was found to be just as it was left by the last owner, Sir Vauncey Harpur-Crewe, including his collection of hundreds of stuffed animals.



We concluded an interesting walk at the Staff of Life, in the lovely village of Ticknall, for chip butties and soup.

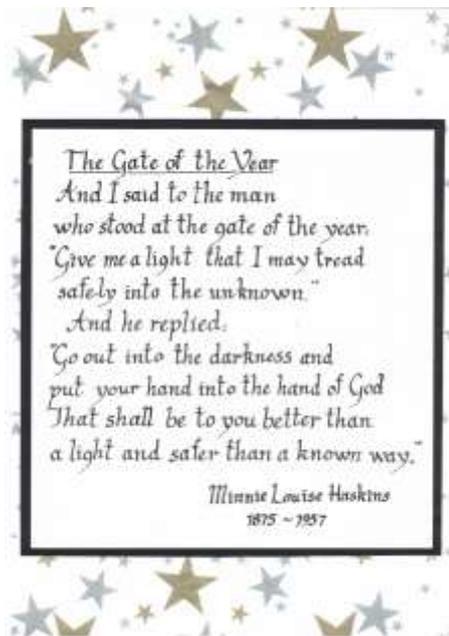


Thanks to all the Group for a very enjoyable year of Rambling. I look forward to whatever 2019 has in store for us. The next walk will be on Wednesday 16th January and will be led by Bridget and Doreen.

**Dennis Henshaw**

## Calligraphy

### The Gate of the Year



This is part of a 'preamble' added to a poem called 'God Knows' by Minnie Louise Haskins, published in 1908. In her early life she was a missionary but she returned to England due to ill health and pursued a professional career in industrial welfare, later in life becoming a Tutor of Social Science.

Her famous words were used by George VI in his 1930 Christmas broadcast and were read at the funeral of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother in 2002. They are inscribed at the entrance to the George VI memorial chapel in St. George's Chapel, Windsor and in a window at the Queen's chapel of the Savoy.

**Linda McKay**

# **A Short Story by Sue Daley**

***Winner of the 2018 short story competition organised by Beeston U3A:***

## **Congratulations to Sue for once again winning the latest Short Story Competition**

### ***An Invisible Hand***

***by***

***Sue Daley***

Nancy stared out of the window; she couldn't see a thing. She was fed up with the ominous yellow-black smog that blanketed everything. If this carried on, they wouldn't be able to go dancing on Saturday.

The bus was crawling along. A man, with a lantern, was walking in front of the vehicle trying to navigate the streets for the driver. Three days of a right pea-souper – as her mother liked to call it – and not a breath of wind. Even during the Blitz, her mother had said, she couldn't remember smoke from burning buildings being so dense.

Nancy checked her handbag to make sure her scarf was there. Once she'd got off the bus, she would cover her hair to protect it from the clinging fog. She had to wash it every night to get rid of the miniscule bits of soot that attached themselves to any stray tendrils of hair and when she blew her nose her hanky was covered in disgusting grey specks.

She smiled to herself, remembering her mother's advice the previous evening. 'Get yourself one of those masks, love. That Mrs Simpson down the street 'as got one from the chemist. She showed it to me. Put it over her nose and mouth. I dunno about keeping the smog out but it improved her looks.'

Nancy and her father had burst out laughing, both imagining their extremely haughty neighbour walking around in her best brown coat, feathered hat and a smog mask.

'An' that ain't all. She bought one for the dog.'

Still laughing the Mackays had started to discuss how on earth the spaniel would be able to keep it on. But it was Nancy's father, sitting at the kitchen table in his uniform trousers and vest, ready for his shift, who had turned the conversation to more sombre matters.

'You be careful, our Nancy. The word is it's going to be worse tomorrow. Visibility down to a few yards.' He'd stubbed out his cigarette and taken a slurp from his tea. 'There's a bad 'un taking advantage of the weather. Been a couple of attacks on young women. Nothing – erm – horrible. Pinching their handbags and snatching scarves and hats off their heads. I want you to be mindful.' He'd fingered his moustache and stared with steel grey eyes at his daughter, 'And I don't think it's a good idea if you go out tonight.' He'd spat on his boot and rubbed hard.

Nancy loved her father but sometimes he took his role of local police sergeant too far.

## An Invisible Hand continued

She'd smiled, 'No fear of that Dad. Peggy and I were going to the pictures, but the cinema's had to close.' It had been announced on the radio that the smog was infiltrating some buildings. 'Apart from sitting and breathing in the horrible stuff, apparently the audience can't see the screen properly.'

'Who'd of thought it.' Her mother had shaken her head, 'We've never had a dose of fog like this before. Can't even go to the pictures.'

'And Peggy said the Locarno's might be shut, so we might not be going out on Saturday night either.'

Nettie Mackay handed her husband his helmet as she started to lay the table.

'That's a shame. There's some lovely young men go dancing.'

'Not if they're wearing masks,' grinned Nancy.

'Huh – and not if they have urges to steal young ladies' handbags.' Her father had mumbled gruffly as he started to brush his helmet.

Nancy was used to her father's good intentions, trying to protect his only daughter, but she had had to admit to herself that the thought of an assailant out in the impenetrable fog had made her feel nervous. She had continued sewing the hem of her favourite red dress in the hope that she would be able to wear it sometime soon.

~~ oOo ~~

There hadn't been any shift in the weather the following morning. In fact it had seemed gloomier – just as her father had predicted. Nancy carefully negotiated the streets to her bus stop. She longed to see the sun, even if it was the weak sunlight of early December. She tried to cheer herself by recalling her summer holiday in Margate. Ice cream and walks along the pier.

When she had eventually reached the office, she knew immediately there was something wrong. The girls in the typing pool were standing clustered at the back of the room, speaking in hushed voices. Normally they should have been at their desks ready for the appearance of Miss Weston and her heavy folders.

'What's wrong?' Nancy had nudged Mavis.

'Oh, Nancy, it's awful. Margaret....'

Mavis' explanation had been interrupted by the entrance of the Head of the Typing Pool. Miss Weston had clapped her hands, 'Girls, girls. Please sit. I know that some of you have heard the terrible news. This morning Margaret Pearson was accosted at her bus stop and her handbag stolen. I want you all to know that apart from her scarf being snatched off her head and her bag taken, nothing else happened. She's in shock, of course, and has gone home. Now we need to do our work. Back to your desks, please ladies.'

For the rest of the day the chattering of typewriters had been the loudest noise. The girls staying sombre and quiet.

~~ oOo ~~

Now Nancy was on her way home. Still staring into the murky gloom, she couldn't help but think about the invisible threats that might lie in wait. The next stop was hers. She'd have to try and walk home as quickly as possible. Nancy tied her scarf over her chestnut hair and adjusted her coat collar; took a deep breath and stepped into the smog. She gripped her bag tightly. Nobody else had got off – she was on her own.

## An Invisible Hand continued

The streets were a hazardous obstacle course which needed to be navigated with care. Nancy tentatively started forward into the thick darkness. She hoped there were no cracks in the pavement waiting to trip her up. Concentrating on her feet she barely registered the dim shape looming in front of her. With a hand to her mouth, she froze, transfixed, trying hard to swallow a scream that was rising up inside. It didn't move and with a rush of relief she realised it was a lamp post. Thank goodness she hadn't hit her shoulder or even her head.

Nancy hunched deeper into her coat and nervously checked that her scarf was covering all her hair. She tucked a wayward wave back into place and strained to listen for any other footsteps but every noise was muffled and everybody appeared to be tucked up indoors. She turned the corner into Lilac Grove. Just a short way to go. But here were large houses with big front gardens. Ideal places to hide.

She tried to block out all thoughts of what had happened to poor Margaret. Nancy concentrated on walking as fast as possible but her heart leapt as she heard a rustling from some dense bushes on her left. A cat sprang out of the shrubbery and skittered away. Nancy stood still, trying to get her breathing under control. Then there was a loud explosion, partially drowned by the smog, but loud enough to make her jump. She quickly realised it was just the detonators on the railway tracks, firing to warn a train that it was approaching the signals.

Her shoulders relaxed but harsh hands suddenly grabbed her from behind and Nancy was rammed hard into the bushes, her knees knocking against a garden wall. Branches grazed her face as her scarf was pulled from her head. But it was stuck - she'd tied it so tight that the knot started to close around her throat as her assailant tugged it backwards.

His heavy breathing was tainted with the smell of beer and his clothes gave off a fusty odour as he pushed his body into hers, pinning her legs against the wall. He let go of the scarf and wrestled with her handbag. Her instinct was to cling on. He muttered 'Bitch' into her ear as his efforts intensified.

Nancy knew she had to let go of the bag, but just as she loosened her grip the pressure of the man body's against hers lessened. Somebody was pulling him away. Gasping for air, she heard bone connecting with flesh. She turned and saw a dark figure trying desperately to hold on to her attacker, but the man wriggled free and fled into the gloom.

'Thank you,' Nancy managed to croak, trying to disentangle her scarf from around her throat.

'No problem, Miss. Are you alright?'

Nancy looked up at the tall young man, made even taller by his policeman's helmet. She smiled with relief at the familiar silver buttons – just like her father's – standing in front of her.

'You're a policeman.'

'Yes, Miss. PC Frank James – Jimmy to my friends,' he grinned sheepishly.

'Thank you so much. It's a good job you were nearby.'

PC James considered his shiny boots. 'Well, as a matter of fact,' he paused, 'Sergeant Mackay asked me to look out for you. He assigned me this particular beat and said you'd probably be getting off the number 59...'

Nancy smiled, 'Good old Dad. He'll be grateful for you rescuing me.'

'Well – erm – I might not be in his good books. Letting that bloke slip away.'

'Oh, don't worry about that. I recognised his voice and his foul smell. It's Harry Cooper. Actually lives in the next street to us. Horrible man.' Nancy suddenly sat down on the wall.

## An Invisible Hand continued

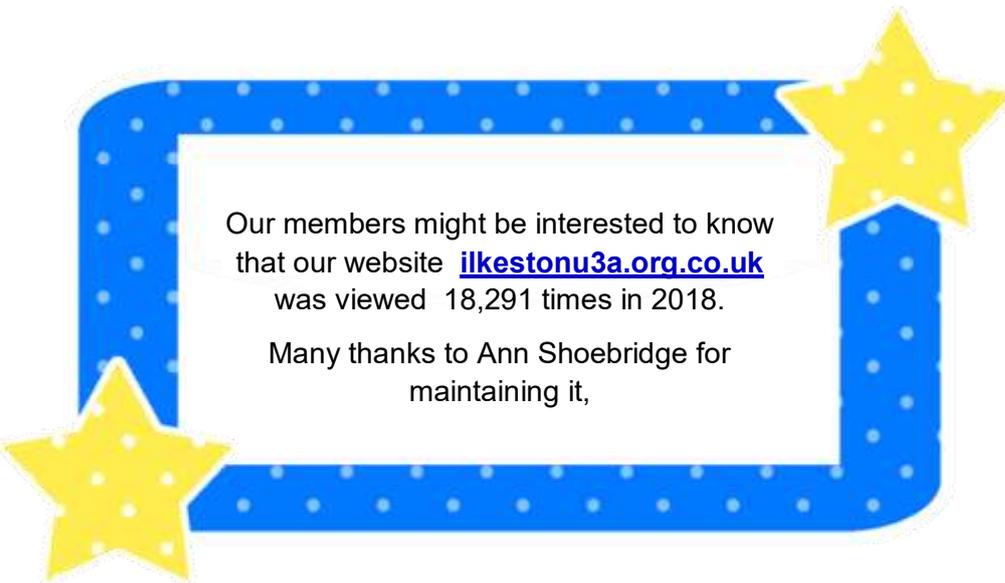
'Are you sure you're alright? Please let me escort you home, Miss Mackay, and perhaps after a nice cuppa I can take a short statement.'

Nancy gratefully took his proffered arm and shyly smiled up at him. A slight puff of wind dispersed a few tendrils of smog.

PC James smiled back, 'Looks like the weather's turning. Might be clear tomorrow. Don't suppose you'd be going to the Locarno if it's open?'

Nancy thought of her best red dress and suppressed a grin, 'I might.'

*The End*



Our members might be interested to know that our website [ilkestonu3a.org.co.uk](http://ilkestonu3a.org.co.uk) was viewed 18,291 times in 2018.

Many thanks to Ann Shoebridge for maintaining it,

### Answers to the quiz

1. Rotterdam
2. H.G. Wells
3. 285
4. Bow Street Runners
5. Skin
6. Polo