

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

JULY
2024

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

After my AGM report I don't have a lot to say. I would like to inform you that we will be having a table at the Rearsby Summer Fayre on Saturday 31st August and I would be grateful if you could let me know if anyone could spare an hour or two to help.

We have already been to 2 Summer Fayres in East Goscote and Thurmaston and I would like to thank Jill for organising these events for us and thank those who came to help during the day.

At the AGM I mentioned that we still require both a

- Vice Chair &
- Committee member with a nonspecific role

If you can assist us with any the above items, you can email me at sadu3achair@gmail.com.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer.

Clive

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

2024 AGM

Our AGM was uneventful and over in record time. With no elections for posts, due mainly to the lack of volunteers to fill vacancies, the committee remains unchanged. The only items of business were approval of last years minutes, along with the Chairman's and Treasurer's reports. No queries were raised on any of these and there were no motions associated with the reports. As a result they were all accepted.

GROUP NEWS

POSSIBLE BRIDGE GROUP

Good News. We now have some people interested in joining this new group.

We need around six more to make it viable. If you are interested in trying this fascinating card game please let me know.

We hope to meet up by the end of July,(giving us time to collect more names) we can then discuss dates / times etc.

email me on sadu3agroups@gmail.com

or speak to me at the next general meeting Wednesday 10th July

Barbara Sargeant

BIRDWATCHING & WILDLIFE GROUP

The group decided that the obvious way to celebrate the Summer Solstice was to arrange a spontaneous extra outing. So on June 20th we decided to go all the way to Cossington Meadows at dusk in the hope of seeing Barn Owls and, optimistically, a booming Bittern.

It was a gloriously sunny evening as we gathered at the main gate at 7 o'clock and set off at our leisurely pace along the main path of the country park. Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve is run by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and has a variety of habitats which attract a wide variety of bird and other wildlife. It rarely lets us down in terms of what we see when we go there, and this night was no different, with 37 different species of birds, including a couple of stars.

But it's not only the rarities that make an evening like this. Wrens are very common, but to be able watch a wren chick being fed right next to us in the hedge was brilliant, as was the long tailed tit chick fighting to swallow a caterpillar nearly as big as itself. The bird song was glorious throughout the evening, and there are, of course, phone apps that will listen out for birdsong and interpret what they hear, which help enormously when we're not particularly expert in birdsong, although we did discover that they do not work so well when members of the group are nattering in the background!



The highlight of a memorable evening was this little star. A Barn Owl out hunting and taking its prey back to its nest box, where it proceeded to pose on a branch next to the box. We saw several hunting excursions, and it was a good hunter as we saw a small rodent (vole? mouse?) and something more substantial, probably a mole, in its talons as it flew back to its chicks.



A special mention for this little nondescript wader, as it is quite rare; it's the one on the right that isn't a lapwing, and it is a Green Sandpiper.

SUNDAYS FOR SOLOS

The "Sundays for Solos" Group is aimed at U3A members who live alone. We meet monthly, usually on a Sunday, to enjoy trips out, which we take in turns to arrange.

On a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon, we enjoyed a great visit to Rutland Water and a boat trip on the Rutland Belle.





We rounded off our afternoon with tea at Barnsdale Gardens.

If you are interested in joining the group, do contact us via the website.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

This month's meeting saw our numbers depleted by illness and holidays. We had a general discussion session, including some online demos using various sites.

The group will be meeting via Zoom for July and August, this is to allow several members who have health issues or are looking after family members who need their support, to join us. They will be on the original scheduled session dates of 16th July and 20th Aug starting at 10.00 am.

If anyone who is not currently a group member would like to join these sessions, please contact me, juliedjohnson@yahoo.com If you are not familiar with zoom, I can explain how it works. It's very easy to use.

Ancestry, one of the main family history sites, is rolling out some new tools. Some have just gone live in the UK. We will be looking at what's been rolled out and what's coming as part of a session. We'll also compare and contrast with other family history sites and what they have to offer.

EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

PROMOTING OUR u3a

Our u3a is organising a stand at a few local events, to attract new members from outside the Syston area.

We are looking for a few volunteers to help us 'man' the stands.

If you feel you have a few hours to spare, it would be greatly appreciated if you could contact our chairman, Clive Iliffe: sadu3achair@gmail.com or Jill Kempton-Hayes: sadu3apublicity@gmail.com

Remaining Event:

Rearsby: 31st Aug, 12-4pm.

Even if you can't manage the whole time, any help would be much appreciated.

CROQUET TASTER SESSION

I'm organising a Croquet Taster Session on Tuesday 23rd July, 2.30 to 4.30pm at a cost of £10 per member. It will be held at Leicester Croquet Club – additional details below. Croquet is great fun and suitable for everyone – my mum went to a similar session with her local WI down in Bath, and ended up joining the Bath Croquet Club at the age of 78 – the first time I've ever known her play a sport!

If you are interested, please email me with your name and membership number to Helen.Marshall@live.co.uk by Thursday 11th July. You will need to make your own way there (although I'm happy to help sort out car shares) and we will pay on the day. For more information, please see the leaflet below:



Leicester Croquet Club Taster sessions

If you are looking for an original, fun, hospitality idea this summer, a croquet taster session can provide the perfect answer for groups of up to 24. These sessions are ideal for social groups, office socials and charities etc. Men and women, young and old, can all play on equal terms.

Your group will be fully hosted by our club members. We will give you a brief introduction to the basics of golf croquet and full instruction on how to play. Games can be arranged on a friendly basis, where guests can choose to play as much or as little as they wish, or competitively in the form of a mini-tournament which we can organize for you. You tell us.

Dress: All that is needed is a pair of flat soled shoes.

Equipment: All necessary equipment will be provided by the club

Venue: Monks Rest Gardens, Vicarage Lane, Humberstone, Leicester LE5 1EE.
Plenty of free onsite parking. We also have a fully equipped clubhouse with kitchen and toilet facilities.

For more information see our website <http://www.leicestercroquetclub.org.uk>

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks usually start 10.30am
Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am

July 10th, 2024

Derek Holloway presents his talk on the life of aviator Amy Johnson, who will be remembered for her amazing achievement of flying, solo, from England to Australia in May 1930.



August 14th, 2024



Martin Lloyd (author)

Becoming a Famous Author: 'Discover the truth about writers, publishers and bookshops. In a step by step exposé you will learn what I had to do to get my first book published. Prepare to be informed, shocked, amazed and amused.'

Sept 11th, 2024

Mary's Meals charity - our presentation tells the story of our charity's humble beginnings in a shed in Dalmally Scotland to being a global charity feeding over 2.4 million children in some of the world's poorest countries.

Our talks are free and there is no expectation to make a donation.



NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



The Harlem Renaissance 2

Join Irene Kyffin, London u3a, for the second in the series of talks on the Harlem Renaissance movement.

Friday 12 July at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



Modern Britain: A Story Told Through Stamps with Diana Laffin

This talk will explore what stamps reveal about the modern history of Britain.

Friday 26 July at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



Flight Inspirations Aviation Meeting: The 'Bloody Hundredth' Bomb Group

Don Mobley will present the history of the 100th Bomb Group serving honourably with 8th Air Force during WWII.

Tuesday 6 August at 10am

Free – online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

u3a AIR FRYER COMMUNITY

Have you recently acquired an air fryer and are excited by the possibilities of what you can make with it but feel slightly overwhelmed by the range of recipes out there and where to start? Well, you're not alone! A recent online tutorial through u3a office saw over 700 people try to book a place to find out more about air fryers and we can see that there is definitely a need for a forum where people can exchange tips and recipes on how to use this new technology.

So, tell us more about the recipes you have been using. Please share any photos of your creations with us and we will add these to this page. Do you have any tips on what sort of utensils to use and how to use the different settings on your machine? We all want to find out more and are keen to create a space where people can find support to get the best out of their air fryer. Or do you have a question you would like to ask [Beverley Jarvis](#), regular healthy eating recipe columnist for u3a magazine Third Age Matters?

Click on the online form below to share your recipes, tips and questions with us.

[Online form](#)

Find out more from Beverley's answers to our [Air Fryer Frequently Asked Questions](#).

u3a FRIENDS

u3a Friends is an exciting new initiative to bring together stories and interests from across the u3a movement; to use our collective voice to change lives and to share exclusive member offers with our exclusive Friends Extra benefits program. All of these come together under the banner of u3a Friends. Signing up to the newsletter means you are up to date and in touch with all that's happening across the movement as it happens.

Why u3a friends?

Friendship and togetherness are at the heart of what we do at u3a.

It felt time to create a new look and feel for our ever popular u3a monthly newsletter. As we continue to promote the collective message of one movement of u3a members from across the u3a, the idea of u3a friends took shape. What started as a working title became the word that highlights the heart of what we do - that through the u3a, and its unique style of member led learning, our members find friendship and connection.



What does u3a friends offer?

The scheme includes

- Regular and special issues of the online national u3a Friends Newsletter, filled with news from u3as across the country, plus fantastic offers and services.
- Information about nationwide u3a events and national initiatives.
- Access to learning opportunities via *Interest Groups Online* for a low fee.
- Exclusive access to our u3a Friends Extra benefits program, featuring discounts, offers, and additional services across a range of areas:
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Shopping savings on major brands and retail discounts
 - Travel and holidays
 - Leisure offers, like family days out, trips to the cinema and theatre
 - Insurance offers on car, travel and medical insurance
 - Access to financial advice and a legal helpline.

More information available [here](#)

SOMETHING FROM A NEIGHBOURING u3a

U3A PEAK DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY CONFERENCE

PALACE HOTEL,
BUXTON,
DERBYSHIRE

SATURDAY 21ST
SEPTEMBER 2024

SPEAKERS
PLUS VARIOUS EXHIBITORS

DR COLIN CHAPMAN MA FSG -
"WAS YOUR ANCESTOR A CRIMINAL"

SIMON FOWLER -
"MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES"

ANDREA HETHERINGTON -
"BRITISH WIDOWS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR"

IAN WALLER -
"READING OLD HANDWRITING"

TICKETS £30
INCLUDES BUFFET LUNCH, REFRESHMENTS
AND A FREE PRIZE DRAW



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO PURCHASE A TICKET GO TO OUR WEBSITE
[HTTPS://PEAKDISTRICTNETWORK.WIXSITE.COM/FAMILYHISTORY/ABOUT-5](https://peakdistrictnetwork.wixsite.com/familyhistory/about-5)
OR SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE

Includes talks, refreshments & 2-course finger buffet lunch

Parking:

Blue Badge holders – may park or drop off at hotel

Others – use side streets or the pay & display car parks

For car parks in Buxton

see: <https://en.parkopedia.co.uk/parking/buxton/>

Exhibitors:

Once again, about 15 exhibitors will be there – old friends & new:

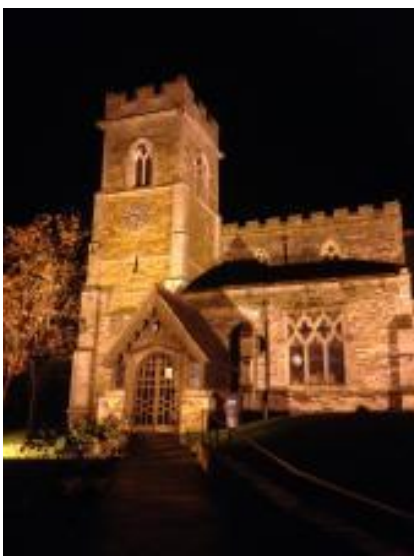
We plan to offer delegates a free goody bag and a free prize draw again.

To book your place, please complete the booking form on this link:

<https://forms.gle/mXnsgpBhQpmafuNU6>

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED

Cream Teas at All Saints' Church, Rotherby



Rotherby Church will be open every Sunday afternoon during August, and will be providing their popular cream teas. The church will be open for the cream teas from 2pm to 4.30pm

If you're taking a walk along the lovely Wreake Valley, then do please call and visit the beautiful Parish Church, and have a Cream Tea while you visit.

All proceeds to Rotherby Church. For further details please contact Churchwarden Sue Smith on 01664 434175



LSA ART IN THE GARDEN

BE INSPIRED!

This Summer Leicester Society of Artists will be staging four activity days in the University of Leicester's Botanic Gardens. It will provide an opportunity for visitors and members of the public to meet and engage with LSA artists who will be painting and drawing on the days, making it an enjoyable experience for all. Bring your family. Gift packs provided for children. Children need to be supervised at all times. Hope to see you.

PLEIN AIR ACTIVITY DAYS

1 JUNE 11- 4 pm • 6 JULY 11- 4 pm • 3 AUG 11- 4 pm • 7 SEPT 11- 4 pm



www.leicestersocietyofartists.co.uk

“HELP IS AT HAND!” - REPEAT SUBSIDISED SUPPORT OFFERED TO LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUPS

Syston and District Volunteer Centre is once again offering valuable subsidies to support local community service organisations in their efforts to promote their services, recruit new members and volunteers and to raise funds.

Their “**Help is at Hand!**” pavilions will be a major feature at the Syston Summer Fair to be held on Central Park in Syston on Saturday 31st August 2024.



In response to issues encountered last year, a single large marquee will be replaced by four smaller marquees to allow all exhibitors front line access to visitors.

Once again, our aim is to bring together not-for-profit organisations serving the communities of Syston and the surrounding areas which offer social, cultural, sporting, educational, financial, health and emotional support to people of all ages, thereby easing problems and enhancing their quality of life.

As before, we understand that some participants will be regulars at the Summer Fayre and would prefer to continue to operate independently. The aim of “**Help is at Hand!**” is to offer those others, who have, perhaps, not traditionally been involved, the chance to exhibit at a well-attended event at a significantly discounted price (**£15**). This may allow your organisation to take advantage of a relatively low-cost opportunity to promote your services with the minimum of organisational effort.

There are limited places available, so early confirmation of your attendance is highly recommended. This is a very popular event and places will be allotted on a first come first served basis, once all places have been filled, a reserve list will be established should any organisation drop out.

For further information and/or an application form to book your space, please contact:

“**Help is at Hand!**”, SADVC, 18 School Street, Syston, Leicester, LE7 1HN

Telephone: 0116 2607 888 email: info@syston-vc.org

BOWLING – SOMETHING SPECIAL TO OFFER WOMEN



Bowling is a sport, suited to all ages, in which the sexes are able to compete on an equal basis. No-one should feel excluded. “*Teenage to Third Age*” remains an appropriate invitation.

The sport has a particular attraction to offer those – especially women – who in their later years find themselves alone, having to adjust to the loss of a much-loved life partner. All too often, under these circumstances, loneliness, isolation and depression risk becoming the norm.

Membership of your local Club – such as Syston Bowling Club - offers a perfect remedy.

One of our established lady Members says:

“Bowling is a very healthy and sociable sport – not only do you meet lots of friendly people, it also gets you outdoors in the fresh air and sometimes in the sunshine (although sunshine is not guaranteed!). You don’t need a partner, you can turn up on your own and you will immediately be part of the team.”

Here in Syston Bowling Club, the teams are mixed and the kit of a polo shirt and shorts or trousers apply to both. The rules are quite simple to follow and there is always someone happy to show you what to do. Men and women compete on equal terms. There are many opportunities to play, but no pressure - you just play to fit in with your lifestyle.

After the games, there are tea and cakes and, possibly, a drink from the Bar, whatever takes your fancy.

In the winter months, there is an active social programme in the clubhouse, including Christmas lunch and a New Year party.

Bowling offers ladies a great and easy opportunity to make new friends and to get fit through gentle exercise and have fun – whatever your age!

Why wait? “

Syston is actively working to welcome more women into its membership. If, for whatever reason, you are seeking “Fitness, Friendship and Fun” or if you are faced with the challenges of adapting to living alone, you should seriously consider contacting us to take that first step on your journey. Start with a couple of free introductory coaching sessions starting at 5.00 p.m. on a Tuesday evening. No need to book in advance. Otherwise, contact Val Foreman (vfpolo@aol.com; 0116 2609 635) who will be very happy to hear from you and give you more information.



Thornton Open Gardens (nr Markfield)

Thornton village sits on a ridge overlooking its well-known reservoir.

This event offers:

- Gardens to visit, refreshments, stalls and other attractions around the village
- Cream teas on sale at the community centre
- St Peter's Church...

7 July 2024 Open 13:00 - 18:00

Where: Thornton Community Centre, Main Street, Coalville, LE67 1AH

Contact details: 01530 230453



All the King's Men Hunt

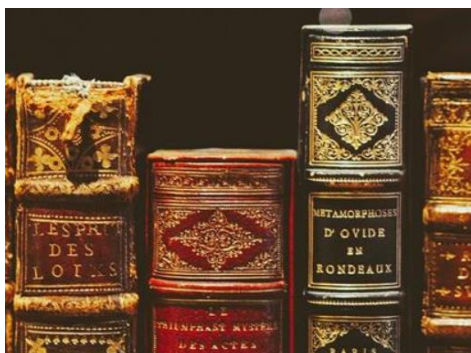
Tensions are brewing and a battle is on the horizon. The Kings are trying to build their armies and round up their men at arms. Can you help them?

£2 a sheet, pick one up from the Bosworth Ticket Office or Shop.

13 July 2024 to 31 Aug 2024

Where: Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, Bosworth Battlefield Ambion Lane, Nuneaton, CV13 0AD

Contact details: 01455 290429



Medieval Abbeys and Priors of Leicestershire – Peter Liddle Talk

In this fascinating talk, archaeologist Peter Liddle will take you on a tour of the remains of the medieval religious houses of Leicestershire from their creation in the 12th century to their destruction under Henry VIII in the 16th century – and...

21 July 2024 Open 18:00 -

Where: The 1620s House And Garden, Manor Road, Coalville, LE67 2FW

Contact details: 01530 831259

FROM OUR MEMBERS

A STRANGE OLD LADY

A strange old lady has moved into my house 😬

I have no idea who she is, where she came from, or how she got in. I certainly did not invite her. All I know is that one day she wasn't there, and the next day she was.



She is a clever old lady and manages to keep out of sight for the most part, but whenever I pass a mirror, I catch a glimpse of her. And, whenever I look in the mirror to check my appearance, there she is hogging the whole thing, completely obliterating my gorgeous face and body. This is very rude! I have tried screaming at her, but she just screams back.



The least she could do is offer to pay part of the bills, but no. Every once in a while, I find a £5 note stuck in a coat pocket or some loose change under a sofa cushion, but it is not nearly enough. And I don't want to jump to conclusions, but I think she is stealing money from me. I go to the ATM and withdraw £50 and a few days later, it's all gone! I certainly don't spend money that fast, so I can only conclude the old lady is pilfering from me. You'd think she would spend some of that money to buy wrinkle cream. And money isn't the only thing I think she is stealing.



Food seems to disappear at an alarming rate-especially the good stuff like ice cream, chips, and sweets. She must have a real sweet tooth, but she'd better watch because she is really packing on the pounds. I suspect she realizes this, and to make herself feel better, she is tampering with my scale to make me think I am putting on weight, too.



For an old lady, she is quite childish. She likes to play nasty games, like going into my wardrobes when I'm not home and altering my clothes so they don't fit. And she messes with my files and papers so I can't find anything. This is particularly annoying since I am extremely neat and organized.



She has found other imaginative ways to annoy me. She gets into my mail, newspapers, and magazines before I do and blurs the print so I can't read it. And she has done something really sinister to the volume controls on my TV, radio, and telephone. Now, all I hear are mumbles and whispers. She has done other things-like make my stairs steeper, my vacuum heavier and all the knob and taps harder to turn. She even made my bed higher so that getting into and out of it is a real challenge.



Lately, she has been fooling with my groceries before I put them away, applying glue to the lids, making it almost impossible for me to open the jars. She has taken the fun out of shopping for clothes. When I try something on, she stands in front of the dressing room mirror and monopolizes it. She looks totally ridiculous in some of those outfits, plus, she keeps me from seeing how great they look on me.



Just when I thought she couldn't get any meaner, she proved me wrong. She came along when I went to get my picture taken for my driver's license, and just as the camera shutter clicked, she jumped in front of me

I hope she never finds out where you live!

DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our members or groups be able to make use of it?

I have 3 items that I no longer need and would like to be added to your de-clutter den feature if possible.

1). Ladies Raleigh bicycle. 10 gears with front basket, rear carrier frame and lights. This has been neglected so is in need of some TLC

2). Clothes hanging frame. Fully adjustable.

3). Lap-top bag. As new. Dimensions 40 x 28 cms

Alison Lawrence My contact number is 0116 2609530



If you have something that you are prepared to give away – **strictly no items for sale!** Let me know and I'll put it in declutter den and hopefully we can help each other free up some space, whilst giving others something they have a use for, even if we don't.

Email: sadu3aed@gmail.com

THE FORGOTTEN PLACE

Jack and Beth were staying with their aunt and uncle for part of the summer holidays. Some of their friends thought it a really boring prospect that they were going to stay on a farm in the countryside. The idea that a brother and sister were packed off together, was also something many of them would not have entertained. Jack was eleven and his sister fifteen months younger, they were close siblings. That Beth was something of a tomboy, who climbed trees as readily as her brother, meant that Jack didn't see her as any different to many of his friends. Both of them preferred being out of doors to cooped up inside. They found Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom had a relaxed attitude. They quite happily let the pair go off exploring, the only ground rules were that they must stay together, must be back for meals, not go too far away, and take their mobile phones in case they got lost. Their parents never allowed them such freedom. As their aunt and uncle were older than their mum and dad, they found this quite a surprise.

One morning they set out across a field just down the road from the farmhouse and headed towards a spinney in the far corner. "Wonder what's in them trees" said Jack pointing, "Probably nothin' unusual" replied Beth. They took a few steps into the undergrowth beneath the trees when Jack stopped, "Listen" he said, and after a pause "That sounds like water". He headed towards the noise. They had to fight their way through saplings, waist high grass, and brambles that clung to their jeans and tangled around their feet and legs, as if wishing to prevent them reaching their goal. Before they discovered the water, something else stopped them in their tracks. In a sort clearing they saw some remnants of stone wall, "There was a building of some sort 'ere not just a wall" said Jack, "Look, you can see two corners", he pointed them out. The stones were partly covered by ivy and other plants that had scrambled over them, that neither of them could name. "Could it've been an house?" suggested Beth, "I dunno, maybe it was a small barn or somethin' like that" her brother replied. They had to battle through more brambles and undergrowth to get closer. They also realised that a few trees nearer the building were different from those in the spinney. "These look like apples" said Beth, "Apple trees wouldn't grow near a barn" observed Jack. They came across a partly fallen down wooden structure with a tangle of roses with small pink and apricot flowers winding through it. "This must 'ave been one of them things that people 'ave in gardens for climbing roses and the like, I dunno what they're called," said Jack. As they drew closer to the walls, they began to stumble over stones that must have been part of the structure. They had to pick their way through carefully, testing how solidly the stones were embedded in the ground below before putting their full weight on them, or sometimes wriggling their feet into spaces between them where they were unstable.

They realised that a gap midway along the wall wasn't due to fallen stone, but had been a doorway. They stepped through it, part way along the wall inside they saw an old very discoloured white kitchen sink standing on a plinth of bricks, "It must 'ave been a house" said Beth, "It weren't that big" said Jack, looking around and taking in the footprint of the outer walls, "More like a cottage I'd say". "There's no taps" said Beth, who had approached the sink. There were several years of dust and debris inside it. Jack joined her, "There's no pipes either" he commented on looking at the wall around it. "But 'ow can you 'ave a sink wi'out taps and pipes?" Beth queried, Jack shrugged, but after a moment said "Perhaps the've just been taken out, metal pipes would be worth somethin', the scrappies that come round our way are always after that sort of thing", "Perhaps the've been pinched" suggested Beth, "Na, things don't get pinched 'ere. People leave doors unlocked". They noticed that there were even plants growing out of what would have been the floor.

They turned their attention back to the sound of water that Jack had heard. It seemed to be nearer. They picked their way through fallen roof timbers to the front of the cottage. Once outside they were met with more undergrowth, but they could see what must have been the boundary, the remains of wooden fencing, there was even a gate still hanging precariously on one hinge. The water was even closer. They made their way out through the gate and walked straight ahead, the sound of water getting closer still, then they saw it, a watercourse with a small weir several yards further downstream. "There's a stream near the farmhouse" said Beth, "Wonder if it's the same one?", "Might be," said Jack. He looked this way and that, then scratched his head, "How did people get 'ere? Can't see a path or anythin'", his sister looked about her, "Dunno, must've been one, we'll 'ave to ask Uncle Tom". They decided to take some photos on their mobile phones to show him.

They were interested in finding out whether it was the same stream as the one at the bottom of the farm house garden, but looking at the time thought better of it. They needed to be back for lunch. "If it in't the same we'll get lost" they agreed. They picked their way back through the cottage and its grounds. They had reached what had been the back garden when Beth spotted something she hadn't taken notice of before "What's that?" she asked pointing towards a small outbuilding, it was more intact than the cottage, "Bet that's where they 'ad wood an' stuff" said Jack. She decided to investigate, having reached the doorway, that no longer had a door, she peered in. Her eyes adjusted to the difference in light, "Jack, there's something in 'ere" she said, "Only a load of rubbish I bet" he replied as she stepped further in, "Jack!!" she shrieked, he'd never heard that kind of fearful sound from her before, she appeared in the doorway, her face white as a sheet, "There's a body", "Don't be daft". He made his way over to her. She stepped aside to let him go in, there was one of those big coats laying lengthways on the ground, like the sort he remembered seeing on soldiers, it was tattered but recognisable, as were the boots below it. "It's only an old coat an' boots" he said as he moved closer. Then he saw the hat at the other end of the coat and the eyeless sockets that stared out at him from the part of the skull not obscured by it. He swallowed hard, "Bloody 'ell, we'd best ring Uncle Tom".

"What do you mean, you've found a body!?" his uncle asked in disbelief, "What body?", "A man's body" Jack replied, "You're not having me on I hope", "No, no, I'll send you a photo if you like", "Oh, I don't think I could handle that, I'm fine with calls on my mobile, but not much else. Where are you?", Jack explained. "Oh, you must be at Spinney Cottage. I'd forgotten about that place. You stay where you are, I'm coming, and don't touch anything", "I know all about that, from cop shows on TV" Jack assured him. Whilst he was waiting, he decided to take some photo's, his mates would never believe they found a body without some proof. There'd be some mileage in the story when he got back home. They heard a distant vehicle within minutes, it stopped, and then their uncle appeared through the spinney shortly after. Having confirmed that this was no prank on the part of his nephew, "I'd best ring the police and then your Aunt Mary to come and get you" he said. "Oh no, we'll miss all the action" protested Jack, "A body is no place for you kids" he replied firmly, "I don't want to stay 'ere" put in Beth, "Don't turn all sissy on me" said Jack glaring at her, "A dead person isn't a nice thing for anyone to find. In any case the police will no doubt want to take a statement from both of you, so you won't miss out on "all the action" as you put it", said his uncle. "Oh, yes, course they will!", Jack was placated a little by that prospect. "It was me that found it" pointed out Beth, "You just came an' looked after that". "Damn" said Jack under his breath, she wasn't going to let him get away with telling his mates he'd been the one who discovered it.

Aunt Mary arrived, she was all of a fluster, but took them back to the farm house. "How do y'think the body got there?" Jack asked her, "I'm sure I've no idea" she replied, "I'd have thought most people had forgotten about the place". "We thought it looked like it used to be a cottage" said Beth, "But we couldn't see how people would get to it", "It was a cottage" Mary confirmed, "And the only way to get there is the way you did. The Spinney wasn't overgrown back then and there was a pathway worn through it". The pair were incredulous. "We didn't see any taps or pipes to the kitchen sink" commented Beth, "No, there was no running water in the cottage, they had to go down to the stream with a bucket. No electric either". They stared at her open mouthed. "But what about the loo?" was Beth's follow up, "That was outside, in the outbuilding", horror spread over her face, "But what about at night?", "They used a chamber pot", "A what?" they asked in unison, "Follow me", their aunt led them into the sitting room, on the sideboard sat a chamber pot being used as a holder for a large plant. "Urghh!!" they both said and pulled disgusted faces at the idea of using one. Having been diverted away from the subject of the body they quickly turned the conversation back to it. "Is anybody missing, been missing for a while?" asked Jack, "Local I mean", Mary shook her head, "Not that I can recall". "Who'd do a murder and dump the body in a place that most people will 'ave forgotten about? It has to be somebody who 'adn't forgotten it", "It might not be a murder" his aunt pointed out, "The man could have gone there on his own and died", "But then 'e would need to be somebody who hadn't forgotten the place, so 'e would 'ave to be local, or least ways 'ave known the area" Jack replied, looking smug at his powers of deduction, "We didn't know about it, but we found it" Beth piped up, he pulled a face at her for ruining his logic. She may have been the one that found the body, but if he could solve the mystery of who the man was, he'd be one up on her. It had to be someone local, the chances of someone stumbling across the place the way they had were remote. Maybe when Uncle Tom came home, he might remember something that Aunt Mary hadn't.

When Tom came through the door Jack bombarded him with a stream of questions without pausing to let him answer, "Hang on, hang on" he said holding up his hands, "I don't know anything, it's way too early to know who it might be or what happened to them, if you watch police programs on the telly you should know that", "Oh, yes, they'll need to do a post-mortem" he acknowledged, "What's a post-mortem?" asked Beth, "It's when they cut up a body to find out 'ow they died" Jack explained, "But only the bones were left" she pointed out " You can't cut up bones", "But you can, they can tell all sorts of things from just the bones, I've seen it on telly. 'E must 'ave been there a while for just bones to be left, and nobody would 'ave a big coat like that on this time of year, that was a winter coat", "Oh, we have a budding Sherlock Holmes do we" said Tom, laughing as he spoke. "He's already decided the man must be local, or whoever killed him must be" said Mary, "I suppose that's a fair conclusion" said Tom, "Bearing in mind the place is tucked away off the beaten track, but he could just have died of natural causes", "What's natural causes?" asked Beth, "That's when somebody dies because they're ill, or just plain old" Jack piped up. "He's been asking whether anyone local went missing a while ago, I can't think of anyone" said Aunt Mary, "Neither can I", Jack's heart sank, he'd been pinning his hopes on his uncle coming up with that key piece of information that would solve the case. Now where did he go from here?

When the police called to take statements he peppered them with questions, but was disappointed when they skirted around giving him much by way of answers. After they'd gone Jack and Beth got to talking again, "I know, the police do 'ouse to 'ouse enquiries. I need to ask around in the village, somebody might remember if anyone local went missin' in the last few years" said Jack, "Don't be daft" Beth replied, with a derisory snort, "They won't talk to you, specially not after the police 'ave been round askin'". Much to Jack's surprise, the police didn't seem to be any hurry to make enquiries of the villagers. The discovery of the body was of course the subject of gossip and speculation. He couldn't go house to house like the police, but he could make enquiries of anyone out in the street, or in their front gardens. People were actually quite willing to speak to Jack, once they realised that he wanted to talk about what he'd found. When he put forward his theory that the man must be local, but added that his aunt and uncle couldn't think of anyone that had gone missing, people stopped to cast their minds back, then shook their heads, no they couldn't think of anyone either. He was getting nowhere, until he spoke to Mrs Upshall, "Now I don't know, but old Henry Simpson he's got a memory like an encyclopedia, if anybody would remember somebody being missing, he would. He'll be sitting on the bench near the Green this time of the day". When Jack saw the elderly man, leathery hands clasping a walking stick, his heart sank. How could he possibly have a good memory?

"Now then lad, you're Tom and Mary's nephew, found a body at Spinney Cottage I 'ere tell", Jack nodded and sat down on the bench. "I reckon the bloke must be local, or least knows 'is way round 'ere, but nobody remembers anybody going missing in the last few years". He went on to describe the great coat, the boots that he'd seen. The old man took off his cap, scratched his head and said nothing for a few moments. Then he replaced his cap, "Bill, he used to wear a great coat when he came thro'. This bloke, was he tall?". Jack tried to think back to the length of the body he'd seen, he couldn't really translate what was on the ground with a standing man, "I dunno" he admitted. "Well, Bill was in the Grenadiers, an yer 'ave to be tall to be in the Grenadiers. He used to come thro' ere' every year, in the winter. Had a regular route I reckon, but didn't see 'im last year, or the year 'afore that. I took it that he'd passed on, such as 'im don't tend to mek old bones". Jack looked puzzled, "Them as lives on the road, bein' out in all weathers, they don't last as well as rest of us". "So, he was a tramp" said Jack, "Nay lad, a gentleman o' the road, a tramp yer can't trust. Bill, well nowt ever went missin' when 'e was about". Jack went off for his meal confident that he'd put a name to the body, except that Henry Simpson only knew him as Bill, he had no last name for him.

He sat down at the table, "I thought the cops would be about askin' questions" he said, "But they weren't". "Well" said his uncle, "They're probably waiting for the results of the post mortem, so they've some idea whether he was murdered or just died of natural causes. No point in investigating as if it was a murder, if it wasn't.", "But won't they want to know who 'e was?" asked Jack, "Of course, but that won't be the same as if it was a murder, won't be so much of a hurry needed" uncle Tom explained, "I know who he was, well sort of". He recounted his conversation with Henry. "Now, you come to say, I remember him", Aunt Mary nodded in agreement as his uncle spoke. "But it could be somebody else", as usual Beth wanted to put a spoke in the wheel, "Anyway, just 'aving a first name's not the same as knowin' exactly who somebody is, or was" she added. Jack no longer felt quite as cock-a-hoop as only an hour before, not that he let on.

The police didn't reappear in the next few days. A reporter from the local weekly newspaper did come with a request to interview Jack and Beth, but much to Jack's disappointment, Uncle Tom shook his head. They only learned more when the paper arrived. The discovery of the body was front page news, "MAN FOUND DEAD IN ISOLATED COTTAGE RUINS". "The post mortem revealed that the man likely died of natural causes" it began. Jack was disappointed that the report simply stated that "two youngsters visiting relatives stumbled across the body whilst out walking". However, he read on, "The man is believed to have been around 50 years of age and over six feet tall. The remains of the coat he was wearing may well have been military in origins, but as such coats are available from a number of outlets, it is not clear whether the deceased was ex-military".

Jack and Beth were due to go home the following weekend. Trips were needed to get uniforms and supplies for the new school year. Jack hated the prospect of going home without knowing whether the body was that of Bill, ex-Grenadier. The next weekly edition of the paper simply reported that enquiries were ongoing. Uncle Tom assured him that he would let him know of any further developments. Once back home, his friends were agog at the tale. Rob was less convinced that it wasn't just a tall story, until Jack showed them the photos on his mobile phone. He'd also cut the reports out of the newspaper and brought them with him. They were dismissive of his claim to know who the man was, "Ner, the police woulda worked that out" said Rob. Uncle Tom was as good as his word and sent Jack the update from the local newspaper a couple of weeks later. "Police have identified the body of the man found in the remains of Spinney Cottage, Wolferton, as belonging to William Samuel Brodie aged 53, formerly of the Grenadier Guards. The Grenadiers served in most of the major campaigns since the second world war, Mr Brodie was awarded the military cross for his part in saving fellow soldiers during action in Iraq. He is believed to have struggled to come to terms with civilian life after serving in the army for over twenty years. He was of no fixed abode but is remembered as a regular visitor to the area until a couple of years ago."

POETRY CORNER

JULY – by George Meredith

I
Blue July, bright July,
Month of storms and gorgeous blue;
Violet lightnings o'er thy sky,
Heavy falls of drenching dew;
Summer crown! o'er glen and glade
Shrinking hyacinths in their shade;
I welcome thee with all thy pride,
I love thee like an Eastern bride.
Though all the singing days are done
As in those climes that clasp the sun;
Though the cuckoo in his throat
Leaves to the dove his last twin note;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Golden-dawning oriently,
Come with all thy shining blooms,
Thy rich red rose and rolling glooms.
Though the cuckoo doth but sing 'cuk, cuk,'
And the dove alone doth coo;
Though the cushat spins her coo-r-roo, r-r-roo -
To the cuckoo's halting 'cuk.'

II
Sweet July, warm July!
Month when mosses near the stream,
Soft green mosses thick and shy,
Are a rapture and a dream.
Summer Queen! whose foot the fern
Fades beneath while chestnuts burn;
I welcome thee with thy fierce love,
Gloom below and gleam above.
Though all the forest trees hang dumb,
With dense leafiness o'ercome;
Though the nightingale and thrush,
Pipe not from the bough or bush;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Azure-melting westerly,
The raptures of thy face unfold,
And welcome in thy robes of gold!
Tho' the nightingale broods—'sweet-chuck-
sweet' -
And the ouzel flutes so chill,
Tho' the throstle gives but one shrilly trill
To the nightingale's 'sweet-sweet.'

Inniskeen Road: July Evening by Patrick Cavanagh

The bicycles go by in twos and threes -
There's a dance in Billy Brennan's barn to-night,
And there's the half-talk code of mysteries
And the wink-and-elbow language of delight.
Half-past eight and there is not a spot
Upon a mile of road, no shadow thrown
That might turn out a man or woman, not
A footfall tapping secrecies of stone.
I have what every poet hates in spite
Of all the solemn talk of contemplation.
Oh, Alexander Selkirk knew the plight
Of being king and government and nation.
A road, a mile of kingdom, I am king
Of banks and stones and every blooming thing.

A Calendar of Sonnets – July by Helen Hunt Jackson

Some flowers are withered and some joys have
died;
The garden reeks with an East Indian scent
From beds where gillyflowers stand weak and
spent;
The white heat pales the skies from side to side;
But in still lakes and rivers, cool, content,
Like starry blooms on a new firmament,
White lilies float and regally abide.
In vain the cruel skies their hot rays shed;
The lily does not feel their brazen glare.
In vain the pallid clouds refuse to share
Their dews, the lily feels no thirst, no dread.
Unharmed she lifts her queenly face and head;
She drinks of living waters and keeps fair.

And finally.....

"July is hollyhocks and hammocks, fireworks and vacations, hot and steamy weather, cool and refreshing swims, beach picnics, and vegetables all out of the garden." - Jean Hersey

"If I had my way, I'd remove January from the calendar altogether and have an extra July instead." - Roald Dahl

"I love how summer just wraps its arms around you like a warm blanket." - Kellie Elmore

"Summer afternoon—to me, those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language." - Henry James

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time." - John Lubbock

"Everything good, everything magical happens between the months of June and August." - Jenny Han

"July, with its days of blue skies and time that seemingly stands still, holds a special place in my heart." - Daisaku Ikeda

"July is a blind date with summer." - Hal Borland

