Syston and District u3a
learn, laugh, live

Vitality!

NOV 2026

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a CHARITY No 1180152

CHAIRMANS REPORT

Hi Everyone,

Autumn is really upon us as we put the clocks a few Sundays ago. It seems a long time ago when we were basking in the sun and now, we are putting on the heating. I hope you have all received your winter heating allowance and if you are struggling with your heating, please have a word with someone like Age Concern.

We have now started to organise our Christmas Social and hope I will see you all there.

Please stay warm and safe.

Clive

WE WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS – LAST CHANCE SALOON

Anyone who hasn't renewed their membership will very soon become a lapsed member and will be unable to attend groups or our monthly meetings.

If you are involved with a group that has a waiting list you risk losing your place, even if you rejoin.

So, if renewing is a task you have been putting off until tomorrow, you really do need to do it NOW!!

If you have any queries please contact Chris Gale our membership secretary:
sadu3amembers@gmail.com

HAVE A QUERY? WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

Occasionally, some members (or potential members) may prefer to speak to someone about an aspect of our u3a, rather than locating an email address or looking on our website.
So, we now have a contact number for Syston & District u3a, which is:



0300 102 1381

At the moment, this number goes through to Steve Kenney's (Webmaster) mobile phone, and if he is unable to answer the query, then he can advise who to contact.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP IDEAS

If you have any ideas for a new group, please contact Barbara Sargeant our groups co-ordinator sadu3agroups@gmail.com or speak to her at one of our monthly general meetings. Alternatively contact her assistant Angie Baker email sadu3agroupsasst@gmail.com
Acting as a group organiser doesn't have to be onerous, it doesn't have to be down to just one person, and it doesn't mean you have to organise everything the group does.

NEW GROUP – CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

This week we had a "one off " visit to Rearsby Church. It was so successful we now are forming a monthly group where we take it in turns to find local churches we could visit.
10 members met at Rearsby church where we were met by Rita the church warden.
We were introduced to Roy who told us all about the history of this lovely old church built around 13th century.
The heating was on and the church was so cosy. After coffee and biscuits we went outside to view the grave stones.
There are a couple of grave stones with a " Belvoir Angel " top. This is a sun with wings either side. Apparently, they are to be found in other churchyards.
If you think you would be interested in joining us, we will be meeting on the first Friday of each month.
sadu3agroups@gmail.com



Photo by Jonathan Thacker from geography.org.uk

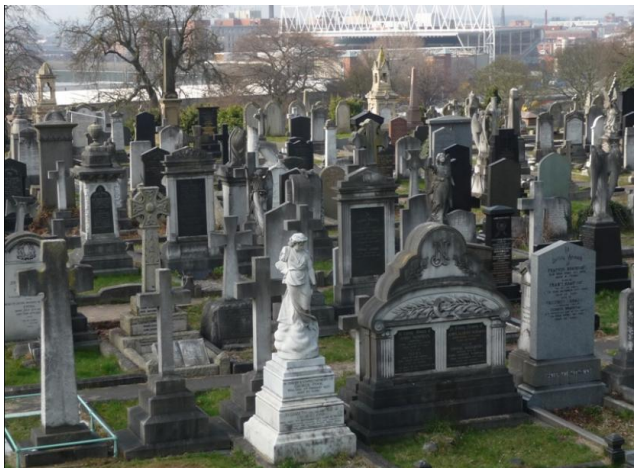
CRAFT GROUP



In the craft group we have been making Christmas decorations to decorate a tree for the Christmas tree festival at St Peter and Paul church at the end of November. Catherine Voyce has agreed to let us display the tree and other decorations in the Community Centre in December and they will have the decorations to allow people using the centre to have them for a small donation to their charity. It will be on display for the Christmas party!

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The group went out on a "field trip" at the end of October. We visited Welford Road Cemetery for a guided walk by one of the "Friends" of the cemetery. We had the general tour, but there are a variety of others on offer.



By the early 1840s Leicester's 7 churchyards and 17 burial grounds could no longer cope. There were numerous complaints about the smell from them and in 1843 a Council appointed special committee concluded that most were either full, or nearly, full. In 1845 the Council decided that it would build a cemetery. There were quarrels between the Liberal, Dissenter dominated Council and the mainly Tory, Church of England over the cemetery (so Syston was not the only place to have arguments). The Dissenters set up the Leicester General Cemetery Company, which was formed on 22 September 1845 with Richard Harris as Chairman.

The feel of the cemetery is quite different to that of Syston's Barkby Road. Apart from being far more extensive, the ground undulates and many of the older graves have wild vegetation. This is a consequence of the relatives of those buried there having themselves long died or moved away from Leicester, leaving no one able to fulfil the original requirement to care for their plot. That said, the cemetery is a wildlife oasis in

the city. It's many mature trees are well used by squirrels (of which we saw several) and of course birds, and those wilder areas are home to species that would not otherwise be there. I for one don't begrudge them their existence.

Photo from the Find a Grave – you can find more photos and search for relatives who are buried there here. More info about the cemetery can also be found here

CRAFT GROUP 2

Choir of Angels
The Craft Group 2 finished their Xmas Angels today. Made using clay, beads, paint, cardboard, sheep's wool, lace, sequins and feathers! I think they make a lovely group!



FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

Some of the group have recently taken the plunge and done a DNA test, some tested a while ago but were not sure what to do with their results. So, we had a look at the basics of DNA for family history.

DNA testing is a way of finding missing relatives, although there are no guarantees, or of confirming that the "paper trail" you have reflects the biology of your family. You can connect with cousins you didn't even know you had and you may find they have information that helps you solve a family history puzzle.

There can be unwelcome surprises, something anyone testing needs to be aware of, but is hidden in the small print by testing companies.

As a reminder - we meet on the 3rd Tuesday each month at Syston Library 10.15 – 12.15. If you want to join us or have any questions please contact me, email juliedjohnson@yahoo.com

DISCUSSION GROUP

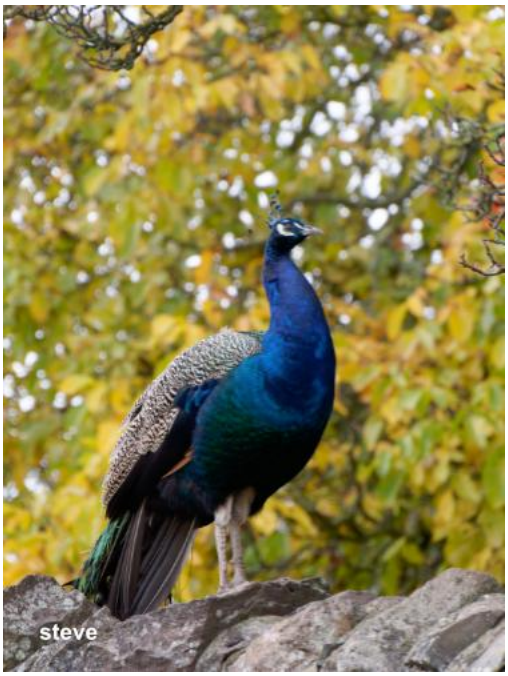


PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The Photography Group meet on the last Thursday morning of each month and two recent visits include the Mountsorrel Heritage Centre and Bradgate Park.

The Heritage Centre charges £2.50 per adult to visit the exhibition, which includes the nature trail and is well worth a look round and finish off with a drink in the café.
Bradgate Park needs no introduction, and we usually visit at the end of October, to see the ending of the deer rutting season.















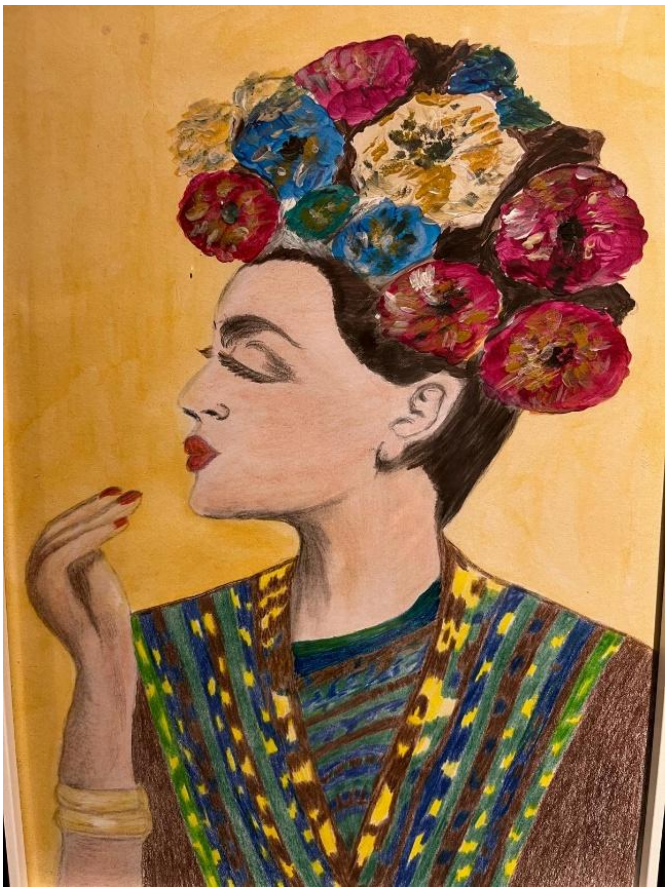


The photos displayed here are a small selection taken on the days out.

I haven't quite managed to display all of the selection, but what a range! - Ed

ART GROUP

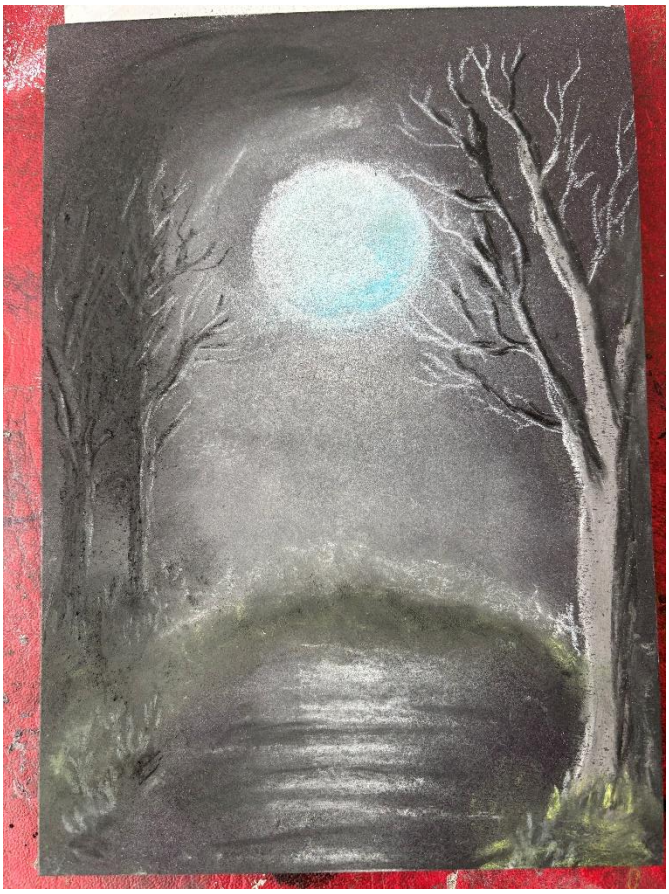
The art group have been mainly covering autumn with hedgehogs, autumn leaves and atmospheric scenes. Here are a few of our pictures













EVENTS – PAST, PRESENT & PLANNED

Some of you may have noticed a wreath making event on 23rd November on our website. There are no spaces left on it I'm afraid, they were snapped up straight away.

Do remember that our Events Co-ordinator Angie Baker is here to help if you have a one-off event you are willing to organise. She will guide you through what is needed, which really doesn't have to be onerous.
You can email her: sadu3aevents@gmail.com

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



Wed Nov 11th @ 10.30 AM

Lynda Hill talks about Project Linus UK, which provides love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children, who are sick, disabled, disadvantaged or distressed by donating gifts of NEW, HOMEMADE, WASHABLE quilts and blankets, lovingly made by UK volunteer knitters and quilters.

Wed Dec 9th @ 10.30am

Christmas Social



The format of the last couple of years will be repeated, with musical and perhaps other entertainment on offer, along with some nibbles – although as last year was our 10 Year Anniversary, so we splashed out a little more on refreshments. You can come along, be entertained, and chat with other members.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

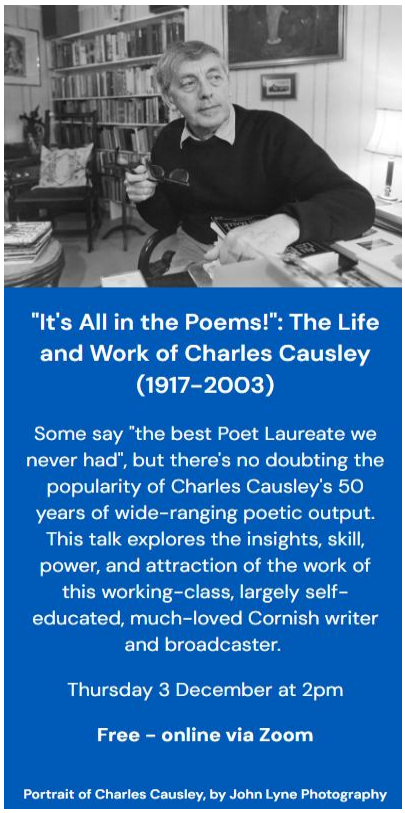
u3a TALKS



Book here



Book here



Book here

More talks can be found here

MPs and peers back u3a at House of Lords report launch

MPs and peers pledged to help raise u3a's profile and highlight its contribution to communities across the UK at the House of Lords launch of *Retirement rewired* on 27 October.

Hosted by Lord Norton of Louth in the River Room, the event brought together politicians, u3a members and organisations working in positive ageing to hear how learning, friendship and community in retirement benefit individuals and wider society.

Retirement rewired: Building fulfilling lives beyond full-time work draws on findings from the *u3a and me* survey of more than 10,000 members. It explores how u3a helps people stay active, build friendships and contribute to their communities after leaving full-time work.

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED

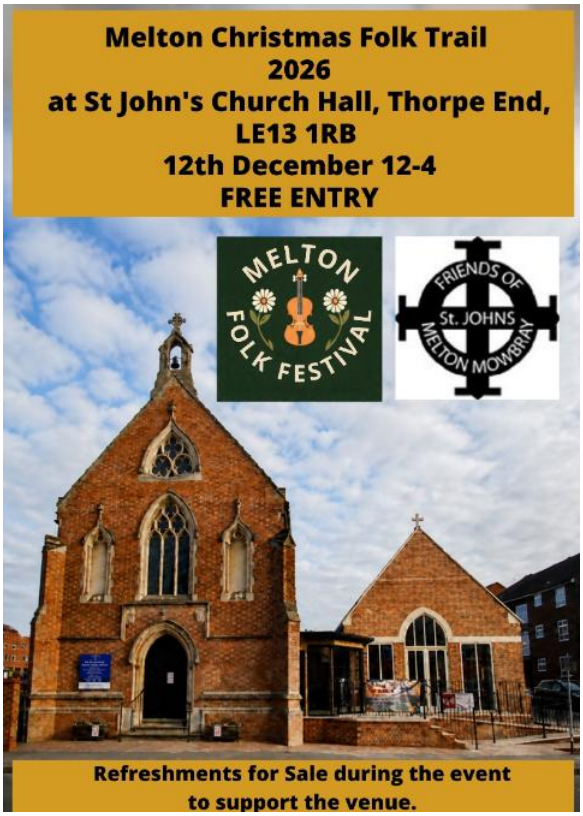
28 November @ 10:00 am - 29 November @ 4:00 pm

Festival of Christmas Wreaths

St John's Church Thorpe End, Melton Mowbray, United Kingdom

The Christmas Wreath festival is a showcase of Christmas Wreaths made by the community of Melton Mowbray as part of a competition.





27 November - 1 December

Christmas Tree Festival

St Mary's Church Melton Mowbray 8 Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, United Kingdom

Experience the magic of Christmas at St Mary's Church's annual Christmas Tree Festival. From 26 November to 1 December, admire beautifully decorated trees created by local schools, businesses, charities and community groups. Enjoy a special ticketed Preview Evening on 26 November before the festival opens to the public, with festive displays, seasonal services and plenty of Christmas inspiration in the heart of Melton Mowbray.

£3

Melton Mowbray Christmas

Market Place, Melton Mowbray Leicestershire, United Kingdom

The Melton Mowbray Victorian Christmas Market will sparkle over three days from 27-29 November 2026, with seasonal stalls, and plenty of opportunity to find that perfect gift or festive indulgence.

Free





The images below are clickable links to more information about the event including booking places/tickets.



SATURDAY HERITAGE FAIR

21st November

Leicester Adult Education College, 2 Wellington Street, Leicester, LE1 6HL

Visit website



THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LEICESTER MARKET BY JOSEPH PETERS

24th November

The Guildhall, Guildhall Lane, Leicester, LE1 5FQ

Book now



FESTIVE GIFT FAIRS

27th November

Beaumanor Hall, Beaumanor Drive, Loughborough, LE12 8TX

Book now



ABBEY PUMPING STATION CHRISTMAS STEAM DAY

29th November

Abbey Pumping Station Museum, Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX

Book now

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Easy to get to... if you've got a car

How often does everyday life assume that everybody drives?

"Just take it to your local recycling centre."
"Recycle this packaging at your nearest large supermarket."
"Collect your parcel from the depot."
All perfectly reasonable suggestions. Except for one small detail: **what if you don't have a car?**

It's surprising how often that question seems not to have occurred to whoever designed the service or wrote the instructions. Having access to a car is so often treated as the norm that those of us without one can become almost invisible.

And we are hardly an insignificant minority. According to the latest Department for Transport National Travel Survey, **25% of households in England had no car in 2025**. Among households in the lowest fifth by income, the figure was 44%.
So why do we so often behave as though everybody drives?

“Just take it to...”

Recycling provides a particularly good example.
We're quite rightly encouraged to recycle as much as possible. Increasingly, however, that comes with instructions to take particular items somewhere: to a recycling centre, a large supermarket, or some other collection point. For somebody with a car that may be mildly inconvenient. Without one, it can be impossible. And sometimes this isn't merely a question of getting there. Here in Leicestershire, pedestrian access isn't permitted at a number of recycling and household waste sites. There may be perfectly sound safety and operational reasons for such restrictions. But from the non-car owner's point of view, the practical problem remains.
What are you supposed to do with something that you're being encouraged to dispose of responsibly if the facility provided for doing so assumes that you will arrive in a motor vehicle?

When home delivery isn't just a convenience

Online shopping is sometimes portrayed as a convenience, and of course it is. But for somebody without a car it can also provide access to things that are difficult to obtain locally. That changes the consequences when delivery goes wrong.

Some retailers give reasonably predictable delivery dates. Others don't. A parcel expected on Tuesday slips to Wednesday, then perhaps Thursday. If you drive, a failed delivery that ends up at a collection point or depot is annoying. If you don't drive, the problem can be rather more fundamental:
How am I supposed to collect it? There are similar difficulties with returning larger or heavier items. “Simply take your parcel to...” isn't necessarily simple at all.

Perhaps removing words such as *just* and *simply* from these instructions would encourage whoever designed the system to consider how simple the proposed solution actually is.

“But it's only five miles away”

Distance and accessibility aren't the same thing.
A place five miles away may be a short journey by car. Without one, the questions are rather different. Is there a bus? Does it go anywhere near the destination? Does it run at the time you need it? Is there one to get you home again? And how far will you need to walk at either end of the journey? Those questions become still more significant for someone with restricted mobility.

Alternative transport does exist. Leicestershire County Council says there are Community Transport projects covering each of the county's seven districts, as well as Central Leicestershire Dial-a-Ride.
But the existence of an alternative service doesn't necessarily mean that transport is available when an individual needs it.

When the alternative is already stretched

We have a volunteer-driver service locally which helps people with journeys such as appointments and shopping, at a lower cost than using a commercial taxi.

It provides an extremely valuable service. The problem is that demand can exceed the number of journeys its volunteers can provide. That leaves the people running the service with some difficult decisions. If there are more requests than can be accommodated, whose journey should take priority?

A medical appointment might appear more urgent than a shopping trip. But the person requesting the shopping trip still needs food. An outing or social engagement might appear less essential again, yet maintaining friendships, interests and connections with other people matters too, particularly to somebody whose opportunities for getting out may already be limited. There isn't necessarily a simple answer. It does, however, expose the weakness in saying, “People without cars can use community transport.” Community and voluntary services don't have unlimited resources. The relevant question isn't simply whether an alternative **exists**, but whether it is available **when somebody actually needs it**.

There is another point worth considering. When ordinary services are designed on the assumption that people will provide their own transport, some of the consequences of that assumption inevitably fall elsewhere: on voluntary services, friends, neighbours and family members who provide lifts.

One day, the distances can change

There is another reason why all this is particularly relevant to an organisation such as u3a. Some people have never driven. Some can drive but choose not to own a car. For others, the cost of keeping one may no longer seem worthwhile. And then there are those who have driven for much of their adult lives but eventually stop.

There is no set legal age at which someone has to give up driving. Age UK points out that people can continue driving in later life provided they can do so safely and don't have a medical condition affecting their driving. Eventually, though, some people decide that the time has come to stop.
Nothing else has changed.
The supermarket hasn't moved.
The doctor hasn't moved.
Your friends haven't moved.
The u3a meeting hasn't moved.
But suddenly the distances between them have changed.

Someone who has always lived without a car has probably spent years finding ways around the difficulties. Someone relinquishing a car after decades of driving may suddenly discover how accessible, or inaccessible, familiar places really are. So, this isn't simply a question concerning today's non-drivers.
Today's driver may be tomorrow's non-driver.

Are we sometimes making the same assumption?

It would be easy to point the finger at councils, retailers, delivery companies and transport providers. But perhaps we should look a little closer to home as well. How often, when choosing somewhere for a meeting, lunch, activity or outing, do we hear:
“It's easy to get to. There's plenty of parking.”
Plenty of parking is useful. But it tells us only how accessible a venue is **after somebody has reached it by car**.

Perhaps there ought to be another automatic question:
"And how would somebody get there if they didn't drive?"
A lift from another member may sometimes provide the answer, and that's one of the benefits of belonging to a friendly organisation. But we shouldn't automatically assume that another person will always be available to provide the missing transport. That doesn't mean every activity has to take place next to a bus stop, or that whoever organises it has to solve everybody's transport problems. It simply means recognising that car access is only one measure of accessibility rather than treating it as the universal starting point.

That seems particularly worth considering within u3a. We want members to take part in groups, meetings, talks, outings and social events. But somebody's ability to participate doesn't depend solely on whether an activity interests them. It can depend on whether they can actually get there.

Seeing the assumption

None of this is an argument against cars. A car provides tremendous freedom and flexibility, and those who have one understandably make use of it. Nor can every shop, public service or voluntary organisation accommodate every individual's circumstances. The problem is subtler than that. It's the **unnoticed assumption** that access to a car is universal. Once you don't have one, you begin noticing that assumption everywhere: on packaging, in recycling instructions, in delivery arrangements, when appointments are offered, in decisions about venues and in that apparently reassuring description:
"Don't worry. It's easy to get to."

Perhaps next time we hear that, there's one more question worth asking.
Easy for whom?

Why Do We Remember This Way?

The story behind the silence, the Cenotaph, the Unknown Warrior and the poppy

At eleven o'clock on 11 November, we fall silent.
On Remembrance Sunday, wreaths are laid at war memorials throughout the country. Red poppies appear on coats and jackets. At the Cenotaph in Whitehall, the familiar national ceremony takes place. These customs are now so well established that they can seem to have existed for generations. But in November 1918, **none of them existed in the form we know today**.

The two-minute silence, the permanent Cenotaph, the burial of the Unknown Warrior and the poppy appeal all developed in the few years immediately following the First World War. They arose as a country confronted by an extraordinary scale of loss tried to find appropriate ways to remember its dead. Imperial War Museums records how the more solemn forms of commemoration developed after the initial rejoicing that accompanied the Armistice.

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day

The Armistice brought the fighting of the First World War to an end at **11am on 11 November 1918**.

A year later, at the request of King George V, the country marked the anniversary with a two-minute silence. The tradition has continued since 1919, with the silence beginning at 11am to coincide with the time at which the fighting had ended the previous year. It was a remarkably simple form of commemoration. It required no monument and no journey to a particular place. People could participate wherever they happened to be. More than a century later, that communal silence remains at the heart of Remembrance.

A monument that wasn't intended to last

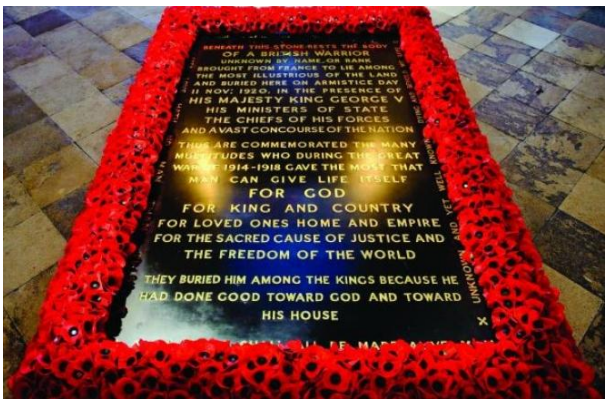


One of our other great symbols of Remembrance began as something temporary.
Architect Edwin Lutyens designed the original Cenotaph for Peace Day in 1919. It proved so powerful a focus for public commemoration that a permanent Cenotaph was commissioned to replace it in 1920.

The word *cenotaph* means an empty tomb. That was particularly appropriate to a war in which the remains of so many of the dead lay overseas. Imperial War Museums notes that people at home needed to find ways of commemorating those they had lost, while communities throughout the country recorded their dead on local war memorials.
Those memorials remain fixtures of our towns and villages today. It is easy to forget that there was a time when they were new.

The Unknown Warrior

In 1920 another enduring focus for national mourning was created. An unidentified serviceman was buried in Westminster Abbey as the Unknown Warrior. More than a million people filed past the flag-covered grave in the week before it was sealed. The symbolism was powerful. One unidentified individual could represent the multitude of individual families who had lost someone. The permanent Cenotaph and the grave of the Unknown Warrior therefore represented two different but related forms of remembrance: a national memorial in Whitehall and an individual grave in Westminster Abbey. Both became established traditions remarkably quickly.



Why a poppy?



The red poppy has become perhaps the most instantly recognisable symbol of Remembrance, but it too was a post-war development. Its origins lay in the landscapes of the First World War battlefields, where poppies became associated with the devastated ground on which men had fought and died. Imperial War Museums identifies the poppy as the enduring symbol of First World War remembrance.

But the poppy also had another purpose. In 1921 several organisations joined to form what became the Royal British Legion, bringing charitable efforts for veterans and their dependants together. Artificial poppies were sold to raise money.That is worth remembering. The poppy wasn't concerned solely with commemorating those who had died. From its early years it was also connected with **support for those who survived and their families**.

Remembrance wasn't always quite as we remember it

It is tempting to imagine that the sombre traditions familiar to us today appeared fully formed after 1918 and were universally accepted. The reality was more complicated. Material produced by the War Memorials Trust records that the first anniversaries of the Armistice developed a solemn atmosphere focused on mourning rather than victory. But it also records tensions during the 1920s. Some former servicemen protested about the lack of support and opportunities available to those who had returned from war, while some younger people regarded 11 November as an occasion to celebrate the ending of the war. That makes the history of Remembrance more interesting rather than less. People agreed that something of enormous importance had happened. They did not necessarily agree about how it ought to be remembered.

From one war to many

The meaning of Remembrance inevitably changed again following the Second World War. Commemoration could no longer concern the dead of 1914–18 alone. After 1945 the dead of both World Wars were remembered. War Memorials Trust records that services after the Second World War were held on the Sunday closest to 11 November. Today we retain both traditions. **Armistice Day falls on 11 November**, when a two-minute silence is observed at 11am. **Remembrance Sunday** provides the national and local Sunday commemorations.

The Royal British Legion describes contemporary Remembrance as honouring the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. Its meaning has therefore broadened significantly from that first anniversary of the Armistice in 1919. Sadly, it now encompasses remembrance of war losses since 1945.

Traditions created from loss

Perhaps the most striking thing about the history of Remembrance is how recently its apparently timeless traditions were created. The first two-minute silence came in **1919**. The permanent Cenotaph and the burial of the Unknown Warrior followed in **1920**. The poppy became part of British remembrance and fundraising in **1921**. None had existed before the First World War. Each answered, in a different way, the same difficult question: **how does a society remember loss on such an enormous scale?**

The answer wasn't found in one grand plan. It emerged through silence, symbols, monuments and individual acts of remembrance. More than a century later, much has changed. Those who gather at a war memorial today live in a world very different from that of the crowds who gathered soon after the end of the First World War.

Yet at eleven o'clock, we still do something extraordinarily simple.
We stop.
And we remember.

POETRY CORNER

War and Peace

Three poems, three very different perspectives on war: Rupert Brooke's early idealism, Wilfred Owen's experience of death and mourning, and Sara Teasdale's vision of a natural world continuing regardless of human conflict. Read together, they also suggest how profoundly perceptions of war changed during the First World War.

Peace (1914), Rupert Brooke (1887–1915)



Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love!



Oh! we who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
Nought broken save this body, lost but breath;
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
But only agony, and that has ending;
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

Anthem for Doomed Youth, Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

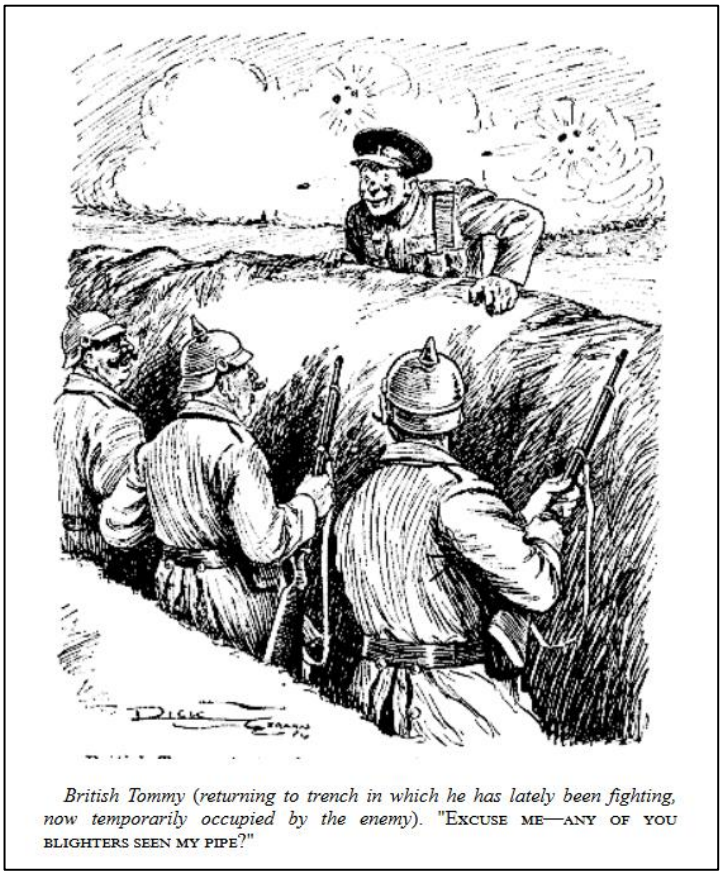
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

There Will Come Soft Rains, Sara Teasdale (1884–1933)

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;
And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum-trees in tremulous white;
Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;
And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.
Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
If mankind perished utterly;
And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

And finally....

War and remembrance are serious subjects, but wartime life wasn't unremittingly solemn. Humour survived too.



British Tommy (returning to trench in which he has lately been fighting, now temporarily occupied by the enemy). "EXCUSE ME—ANY OF YOU BLIGHTERS SEEN MY PIPE?"



PUFFING BILLY.

William Junior. "I SAY, FATHER, I BELIEVE THE DAM THING'S PUNCTURED!"

Parliamentary news

Question asked in the House by Mr Toothwaite as to what measures had been taken to stop the war. Mr Pennant replied: **"Tape measures."**
(Loud cheering.)

Motorist (Poperinghe). We have had other complaints of the suspected police trap on the Menin Road, and advise caution on the stretch between "Hell Fire Corner" and the Culvert.

Small Ad

Lost: Somewhere between the front line and headquarters, a sense of proportion. Finder will be suitably rewarded.

The Tea Ration:

When rations were tight and substitutes were invented, a popular contemporary joke circulated about the quality of wartime tea: An old soldier declared that the tea-leaves in the trenches had been used so often they were beginning to write their autobiographies on the bottom of the tin.

Cartoons from WW1 editions of Punch Magazine. Snippets From the Wipers News and its successor trench newspapers. The Tea Ration- a widely published joke.