

# Cotgrave & District



Quarterly Gazette

No 13

Spring 2019

Good News

Membership fee for next year  
reduced to £15.

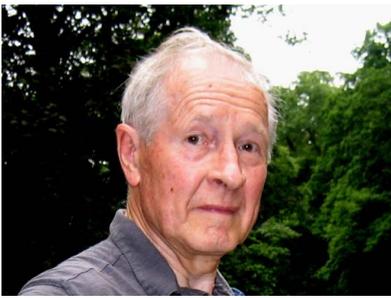
Good News

Welcome to the latest edition of the Quarterly Gazette of Cotgrave & District U3A. We cover news from the Groups, forthcoming events and other interesting items relevant to our U3A.

If you have any items for inclusion or comments please send them to  
The Editor at [cotgraveu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:cotgraveu3a@hotmail.com)

*This Gazette is produced by Cotgrave & District U3A.  
Views expressed are not necessarily those of the U3A, the Committee or of the Editor*

## How to be a Perfect Speaker-Finder



I only wish I knew!

First of all, what exactly is a Speaker-Finder? It sounds easy enough when you first come across the idea – it's just a matter of finding speakers for each and every General Meeting. But then you begin to realise that even the slightest slip-up on your part can land not only yourself but the whole U3A Committee in deep trouble. Imagine the scene! Sixty or more eager members, who got up a bit earlier that morning in anticipation of a good

hour's entertainment, being told (somewhat unconvincingly) that there has been a totally unforeseen muddle which means they are to be deprived of their morning's pleasure! Or, even worse, they might be obliged to listen to a half-prepared, half-remembered talk given three years ago to the History Group on a subject which even the History Group found disappointing (even if they were too polite to say so at the time). Well, the only alternative was a slightly better remembered chat about the history of the light-emitting diode (or LED) given last year to the Beeston Science Group. "Enlightening" you may say in the hope of winning a laugh but don't count on it – they aren't in much of a mood for such misplaced humour.

You, the reader, may well think that I'm exaggerating (and, actually, I am) but it is, nevertheless, the nightmare scenario which robs any Speaker-Finder of a good night's rest each second Tuesday of the month. Believe me! However, there are consolations, of course, such as the glow of satisfaction that creeps over one's ego towards the end of yet another wonderfully entertaining talk by the latest excellent visiting lecturer. And this, even when one knows full well that he or she was recruited not by one's own efforts but by those of one's predecessor. The truth is that all the best speakers are booked up months in advance so it is essential to be ahead of the game and book them even further in advance. I have been doing the job now for well over six months but the speakers we are currently hearing were actually booked by June Odell well before I even started. It only emphasises the importance of having an above-average predecessor – and I have certainly been fortunate in this regard – thank you June. I only hope that when I eventually come to retire (or die of overwork) that my successor may feel even a small fraction of the gratitude that I now experience.

But what does the job actually entail? First of all, it is necessary to get tuned in to the network. One soon realises that the world of U3A speakers is merely the tip of an iceberg – there are Probus's, WI's, Luncheon Clubs, Church Groups, Lady's Social Groups, etc, etc, all of whom are in desperate need of someone capable of keeping them awake for the most part of an hour and there are correspondingly numerous 'Speakers' all too willing to fulfil such a role – at the expense of a modest fee, of course. In fact, my experience so far suggests that the balance of power lies with the groups – speakers are falling over themselves to be employed. The tricky bit is to remember to tell your contact the precise time, date and place of the meeting (Post Codes are invaluable) and to ask him or her how much he or she would like in the way of fee, also to make sure we know exactly what technical accessories we should provide. All our speakers have been extremely pleasant individuals and it has always been a pleasure to meet them, even those who insist on arriving three-quarters of an hour early in order to 'set up' (when, in practice, it only takes about ten minutes!). Finally, there is the task of writing up a brief account of each presentation for reproduction in the Gazette, followed by distribution around the Village of the leaflets advertising our next meeting. All in all, it can keep one busy enough to induce feelings of nostalgia for the good old days when one was merely working.

## Group News

### Singing For Pleasure

As I write this, the singers have, quite literally, just left my house after another evening of sharing our voices in song. I try to vary what we do and tonight we concentrated on songs from our repertoire that, for one reason or another, we very rarely sing. It is so tempting to stick to our favourites time after time but it was lovely to pick up some old songs that bring back memories of our youth - Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly and so on. And then finishing tonight with When the Saints Go Marching In certainly rounded off the evening well.

As we all know, every group has its designated leader but it has occurred to me that one or two of our newer members might not know who our Singing for Pleasure deputy leader is. It is Maureen Johnson. Of course anyone interested in knowing about our group can talk to any of the members, but if anyone has a more specific query, and I am not contactable for any reason, then Maureen should be able to help.

So far winter has been relatively kind but I do appreciate that the members make the effort to come out and brave the cold dark nights. Spring will soon be with us, though - hurrah!

### Card & Board Games



We have recently welcomed two more new members to our group and so my garden chairs get commandeered and brought indoors to ensure that everyone has a seat! I feel very lucky that people choose to come to my home and play games with a friendly and good humoured (and only slightly competitive) spirit.

In January, Peter Shreyhane did a great job of taking charge of our end-of-evening everyone-round-the-table game and we all had fun playing a slightly adapted version of Family Fortunes. At our February meeting we had a mini tournament of Triominoes (3 sided dominoes) and the winner was Paul Deacon who won the highly coveted foil wrapped chocolate biscuit medal!



The deputy leaders for our group are Pat and Malcolm Baxter and I am very grateful to them for taking the time to test out any new-to-us games that I manage to glean from charity shop shelves.

## Group News

### Knit and Natter Group

is going from strength to strength and we recently had another new member join us helping to swell our numbers.



### Chess Group

When I came to live in Cotgrave from Guernsey in the Channel Islands May last year I was disappointed there was no local Chess Club so set out to organise my own through U3A. In October / November 2018 this didn't get going but a relaunch after Christmas based on "An Introduction to Chess" whereby newcomers to the great game would be taught by us has resulted in a present group of ten.

We meet 2.00pm - 5.00pm on Wednesdays in Family Room at Welfare Social club and commenced on 6 February. The group includes four or five needing tuition and the remainder of us have all settled in to teaching.

I find the atmosphere amongst the group really good and hope to see our number grow.

Anyone interested in joining us just phone me on my mobile 07903178424 or landline 01159899845. Or call at Cotgrave Welfare social club Family Room 2.00pm Wednesday afternoons.

### Snooker Group

We continue to meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 2.00 in the Miners Welfare. It is an enjoyable and stress free few hours. We have 6 members now with the occasional extra. There are two full tables and we have the use of all the facilities of the club. We have singles, doubles and trebles games and standard varies from hopeless(me) to very serious. But whatever our expertise, it is a fun few hours. The banter and socialising are excellent ways to unwind. You don't need any equipment just come along.

#### *Reflection of a Novice Snooker player*

I attended a recent gathering of the Snooker group that meets in the Cotgrave Welfare.

Now I must say that whilst I love to watch the professionals making light of 'pinging the white ball' around the table knocking in one red after another with a chosen colour between and building up an impressive score 'en route'; when it came to attempting to do the same thing I was hopelessly exposed to my inadequacies of putting cue to ball and hitting a target.

Fellow members were entertained to a display bordering on the farcical by my attempts to a) hit the white ball to start with, b) to connect said ball with a red ball and much more embarrassing to keep my shot using the white ball from going down one of the table pockets (for those not understanding the game of snooker hitting the white ball into a pocket is a fault and gives 4 points away to the opponent). This I managed to do not once or twice but six times in all much to the enjoyment of my fellow players who tried to be sympathetic between the laughter.

I now look upon the game with much, much more reverence and intend in the coming months to improve my limited skills so that I can offer more of a challenge to fellow members.

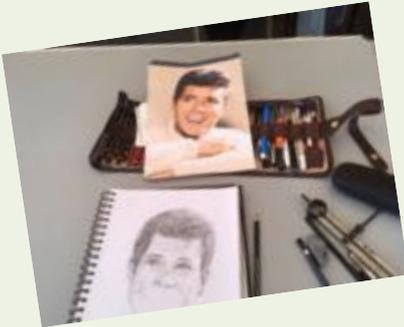
If you have taken pity on me please come along and try the game if only to boost my confidence levels and stop me feeling so useless!

### Science Group

The Science Group continues to flourish with a variety of topics under discussion. At Christmas we heard about the joys of oil exploration from a local speaker who had worked for many years for BP. Then John Ainsley took up the cudgels with two talks concerned with the origins of our everyday supplies of oil and plastics. The latter stimulated a serious discussion on recycling, which served well as preparation for our forthcoming April meeting, when a representative from Veolia will address us on just this topic. This is particularly apposite in view of Brenda Ainsley's start-up Group on Eco-subjects. In fact, we have agreed to make it a joint meeting. In between all this down-to-earth practical stuff, I managed to squeeze in an account of the early history of the Royal Society, which seems to have flourished largely as a result of their decision to avoid discussion of either religion or politics – a useful lesson to us all!

## Art Group

Just another Thursday at the Art Group.



## Comedy Corner

What did Cinderella say when her photos did not turn up? *One day my prints will come!*

Few people realise the game of conkers was invented by Julius Caesar. He had swathes of trees cut down to make the horse chestnuts readily available to all. Hence his well known (and often misquoted) epitaph: 'I came, I saw, I conkered'

## Luncheon Group



Our December outing to the Unicorn's Head was a great success with 20 of us seated at long tables with crackers, needless to say a few of us wore paper hats whilst mottos were read out to those listening and not nattering.

Food was served promptly, starters were excellent, I had Gin cured Salmon – nice generous portion others had soup or home made scotch egg. The mains

were also very good and generous and well presented. Those who had desserts were well satisfied with quality and quantity. All in all an excellent venue.

For those not familiar with 'The Unicorn' they do a discount card for Seniors, giving 20% off food and drinks on the standard lunch and dinner menus.



Our first outing of 2019 went well with a visit to The Plough at Normanton On the Wolds; it was a very popular venue only a short distance from Cotgrave and with a reputation for good food. There was a good varied choice of food on the menu at reasonable prices. The service was very prompt, no one waited very long for any of the courses. We occupied three tables which was a little cramped as the



venue was very busy, despite this any requests for extras such as sauces or condiments were served promptly. From diner's comments and the cleared plates they were pleased with the venue.

The Plough is always popular with the Luncheon Group, good food, good prices, good service and convenient location.

The Harvester in West Bridgford was the venue for the February outing, unfortunately when booking we did not realise that it coincided with Half Term, Oops! This led to some confusion and delay, made worse by a failure between the ordering system and the kitchen.



Our tables were in a quiet area in the front of the restaurant slightly off the main thoroughfare. Service, once started was prompt, some of our party initially not aware of the self-service salad bar with plenty of choice of dressing and rolls etc. Most people had the set lunch menu with a good choice and adequate helpings.

It was surprising how many had the large ice cream puds.

People enjoyed the surroundings and the food, so we will go again some time avoiding the school holidays.

## Film Club

This year's winter quarter included 6 Oscar/BAFTA nominations shown at the Broadway Cinema.



The 'Three Identical Strangers' is a Documentary film set in 1980 telling the tale of how triplets were separated at birth and put up for adoption and raised by three different families. 'The Favourite' follows two young ladies who started a wicked rivalry in trying to win favour with an ailing Queen Anne whilst 'Mary, Queen Of Scots' covers the period when Mary Stuart returns to

her native Scotland to reclaim her rightful throne to be confronted by the rule of Queen Elizabeth I. Steve Coogan starred in 'Stan And Ollie' and follows the famous duo embarking on a Variety Hall tour of Britain and how their performances allowed them to reconnect with their fans. The tale of a black classical pianist hiring an Italian-American bouncer as his chauffeur and how they soon warmed to each other is told in the 'Green Book' with Richard E Grant being nominated in "Can You Ever Forgive Me" playing a drinking buddy of a best-selling celebrity biographer and encouraging her to forge letters from dead celebrities.



'An Impossible Love' was a Polish film with English subtitles following the life of a 1950's office worker bring up her daughter without help from her husband with 'Colette' follows the life of a free-thinking country girl who marries a literary impresario 14 years her senior who recognizes her talent but publishes her work under his name.

In 1613 the Globe Theatre in London has been burnt to the ground and William Shakespeare decides to return to his home in Stratford-upon-Avon but finds that he has to mend broken relationships with his wife and daughters in 'All Is True' whilst 'A Private War' covers the work of Marie Corvin, a celebrated war correspondent, in the Syrian besieged city of Homs.



'The Old Man And The Gun' tells the tale of an audacious jail breaker who up to the age of 79 led a geriatric band of brothers with 'It's A Wonderful Life' with James Stewart and Donna Reed being the Christmas film presentation.

The Long Clawson season started with 'A Man Who Invented Christmas' where in 1843 Charles Dickens, in a low point in his writings, decides to write a Christmas story and publish it in less than two months. Under pressure 'Ebenezer Scrooge' is born. The other two films had the audience rocking in their seats to ABBA music with 'Mamma Mia 2 The Movie' followed the next month the songs from 'The Greatest Showman' and the story of P.T. Barnum.



## Group News

### Walking Group

Our latest quarter started on a different day and at a different time to our normal Friday and after an 'old buildings' walking trail around Melton Mowbray we visited St. Mary's Parish Church which, during the first weekend in December, is filled with over 200 decorated Christmas trees donated by and decorated by local businesses, local schools and local community organisations.

A second walk in December took us to Fiskerton where we walked the banks of the River Trent via Rolleston Wharf and returned by green lanes.

The January walks started with a walk from Trent Bridge and along the towpath to visit Iremongers Pond in Wilford. Here we found that the pond was named after 2 brothers, James and Albert Iremonger who had connections to Notts County and Nottingham Forest Football Clubs as well as to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club. James played for Forest as a full back and during the summer played for Notts. C.C where he played over 330 games, scored nearly 17000 runs and took over 600 wickets. Albert played for Notts. County as a goal keeper where he stayed for 22 years and with one season at Lincoln City made a record 600 league appearances, a record held until 1970. Albert became landlord of the Ferry Inn, just over the road from the pond.



Peter Shreyhane led the second walk starting in Rushcliffe Country Park before joining the railway track with a walk towards East Leake and returning to the park by green lanes.



February took us to West Bridgford with a walk along the railway line from the site of Edwalton Station back to West Bridgford centre. The second walk took us to Wollaton Park where, when leaving the park we visited Wollaton Village and Martin's Pond before re-entered the park to visit Wollaton Park pond and onto the stable block to allow us to enjoy a well-deserved coffee in the sunshine

### Creative Writing Group

The 1st meeting of 2019 met to consider "the passenger instructions for time travel". Everyone put their own interpretations on this theme, whether for travel into the future or the past. We had to deal with a lot of philosophical issues including what happens if you meet yourself in the past! This month's topic, depending on how clear is your hearing: the history of a scarf, or of a scar.

This is a small group (living room size), but do come along if you feel the urge to test your writing and imagination.

## Theatre Group

### ***The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Lace Market Theatre, December**

This was not the original Conan Doyle mystery, complete with swirling mists, the baying of a supernatural hound, and an escaped convict described as more animal than human. Instead, in this spoof on the original designed by Peepolykus Theatre Company, "three actors, John Parker, Richard Young and LMT newcomer Jamie Goodliffe, achieved the illusion of incompetence by deploying high-level comic timing, first-class teamwork in 18 different parts, and an obvious willingness to take risks". So wrote Alan Geary in the Evening Post. Some of us were disappointed, having expected more of a thriller than a farce and finding the whole thing rather silly. Others agreed with him that it was a glorious send-up, enjoying the role-swapping, mime, knockabout comedy and entertaining use of film clips, especially for the terrible Hound. Oh well, you can't win 'em all, and as far as I know, no-one actually walked out. It's good to have some controversy after we have been to a play.



I don't think there was much disagreement after ***Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood*, the Playhouse Panto, January**. The pantomime can't really fail, and when it starts off with "Robin Hood, Robin Hood, Riding Through the Glen" it has the audience clapping along before the curtain has even gone up. You could tell just how proud we all are of Nottingham. Familiar tunes which got the audience moving and singing along included 'Let me entertain you', 'Money Money, Money' and 'We will rock you'. For the youngsters there was an energetic version of 'Baby Shark' and plenty of audience interaction. Add to that all the usual gags - our party had seats near the front and got very wet during the water-gun scene - and you will realise that a fun afternoon was had by all. Let's make the panto an annual event.

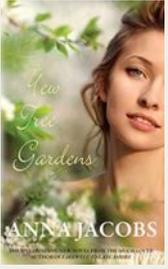
### ***Calamity Jane*, West Bridgford Operatic Society, February**

For the second time, we wended our way, whether by car, tram or on foot through the Arboretum, to the new theatre space at Nottingham Girls' High School. West Bridgford Operatic did not disappoint. *Calamity Jane* is somewhat dated now, being a story set in the small town of Deadwood, in "Indian country" where crazy, tomboyish Calamity Jane drives the Deadwood mail coach through alleged hazards - a world where political correctness has not yet impinged. It ends with a triple wedding, so all is well, as befits the world of musicals. The show is stuffed with well-known songs - classic numbers include The Deadwood Mail (my personal favourite), My Secret Love, The Windy City, The Black Hills of Dakota, and Wild Bill Hickok's love song Higher Than a Hawk, which was most sincerely and movingly delivered by actor Ian Pottage. Paige Shaw as Calamity was perfect - even our visitor from Arizona could not fault her accent.



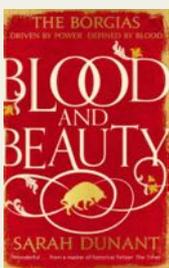
A personal observation - do we want our theatre outings to challenge us at all, or do we want to play safe with light comedy and musicals as our staple fare? Our next trip to *Mack and Mabel* in May has enough people for a group discount, but only just. Is this because the musical is little known? How much is cost a factor? We have also booked provisionally for *Calendar Girls*, and for Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*, and have yet to see how many of you will sign up for them. Please do!

## Book Club



The first book was *The Yew Tree Gardens*, by Anna Jacobs, set in Wiltshire and then later London in the 1900's. It is the story of three sisters who escape their oppressive and bullying father. They go their own separate ways, but do reunite near the end, they draw on their strength and courage to build new lives for themselves. This highlights male domination and female subservience both physically and mentally in the Victorian era especially in the domestic and service industry. Lots of discussion re-conditions then and now. Scored 5/6

The next book was *The Spool of Blue Thread*, by Anne Tyler, another popular author. This is set in Baltimore U.S.A, from 1942-1994 and tells the story of the Whitshank family and is a multigenerational saga and switches back and forth in time, showing chaotic family gatherings, disorienting crisis with various family members over 50 years. This proved jarring to some who felt some areas were under explored. Good discussion on style of writing and title. Scored 7/8.



The final book is *Blood and Beauty*, by Sarah Dunant, an very accomplished author we have read before. Set in the 15th. Century, a biographical fiction. By the end of the 15th. Century the beauty and creativity of Italy is matched only by it's brutality and corruption. Stripping away the myths around the Borgias this book breathes life into the astonishing family of Alexander VI and celebrates the raw power of history itself; compelling, complex and relentless. This will prove an interesting read and discussion of views in March, especially after two somewhat lighter reads

### **The Joy of book reading**

*I pick up this book and turn the page  
and drift into another world.*

*Could it be a world of a different place?  
Could it be of a different time?  
Could it be of wonder and joy?  
Could it be of darkness or light?*

*Do I like this book?  
What does it say to me?  
Do I agree, or not?*

*I turn the pages one by one,  
Thirsty for more.  
Do I like this book?*

*The clock is ticking,  
Time is passing by.  
Oh dear I have to go  
Until next time.  
When I pick up the book.  
I like this book*

## Tony's Spring Quiz

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1. What is the meteorological term for rain, snow, hail?
2. In which game might you launch an 'Austrian attack' ?
3. With which international airline did BA merge in 2010?
4. 'E pluribus unum' is which country's motto? #
5. And what does it mean? #
6. Which sport featured in the 1992 film 'White men can't jump'?
7. Which African states merged to become Tanzania?
8. In the proverb, what is sloth the key to?
9. What colour are the seats in the House of Commons?
10. In which year did Lenin die (+/- 2 years)

# Clue: Rather ironical with the current leadership's attitude/policies.

[Answers on Page 13](#)

### Comedy Corner

People in Dubai don't like The Flintstones  
*But people in Abu Dhabi do.*

## History Group

The December meeting of the group was a quiz about the past walks and talks around Cotgrave. Malcolm and Paul had prepared twenty questions designed to test members recall of the various activities and facts given out during the past twelve months.

The two guided walking tours around Cotgrave and the specific talks on past events in Cotgrave formed the basis of the quiz supplemented by one or two hilarious recollections of individuals antics on the visits undertaken.



In January the group received a very interesting and engaging talk by one of its members, Col John Ludlam relating his experience of being 'whisked off' to Bosnia at very short notice to set up the Logistics operation in supplying an international force with all the necessary equipment, spares and replacements required by a huge force on the move in foreign lands. Added to his difficulties were the communications

problems of working with many languages and different nationalities.

John's wife then spoke about the problems she encountered not only with domestic issues such as suddenly having to deal with the home finances when John had left to also having to deal with other army wives' problems as well.

Both talks gave a fascinating insight into the mammoth problems that are encountered in managing an international force abroad along with the minutia of small daily difficulties.

In February the group received a very interesting talk by Chris Weir about the life of Jesse Boot and family. Photographs and stories all about Nottingham and suburbs enabled members to recall many memories of the time. Chris is to return later in the year with another of his talks.

Our programme for the year is well under way and, thanks to Paul Childs and Malcolm Baxter we have planned as much as we can. March is a visit to the University Archives to delve into local history, and we have The Ruddington Frame Knitters, the code breaking centre at Bletchley Park and our local Prince of Nigeria all on the horizon. We usually get between 15 and 25 members on the second Monday of each month at 2.00 in the Manvers public house. All are welcome to come and enjoy what is proving to be a stimulating and enjoyable few hours.

### Tony's Spring Quiz Answers.

1. Precipitation.
2. Chess.
3. Iberian.
4. USA.
5. 'Out of many, one.'
6. Basketball.
7. Tanganyika and Zanzibar.
8. Poverty.
9. Green.
10. 1924

## Group News

### Real Ale Group

To be frank, 2019 did not get off to the most auspicious of starts!



Our January meeting was at The VAT & Fiddle, just along, and down the road from the Midland station.

Though this is a pub belonging to the ever reliable Castle Rock Brewery, the range of beers, and the food, was not as good as last time we visited. The first two beers scored very low points and the third little better. However, they did improve.

Perhaps first impressions set the scene!

February's venue, The Head of Steam on High Pavement, was worse! Though the first beer scored well, the rest were off tap, and we had to wait for new barrels. When they came, the next, and final, two weren't very good. Strangely, for a Friday lunchtime in the centre of Nottingham, the bar was empty apart from ourselves and another table of two. Perhaps we'll give this venue a miss in the future.



However, this would not and could not deter the adventurous spirit of the R. A. G. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, our trip to the Embankment, the old Boots leisure centre, another Castle Rock pub, proved a big improvement, although, this time out, we had our lowest attendance at 6 (our Group numbers 10). All 5 beers received reasonable, to high, scores.

April will see us at Fellows Morton & Clayton, just down, and round the corner, from the station.

### Travel Discussion Group

The format for the Travel Group has changed somewhat.

In the beginning, we were cautious about the title of the group, because we thought members would think it was all about arranging trips and holidays.

Therefore, we discussed various destination topics, with group members describing their experiences in various countries.

With the success of the, now, annual trip abroad, we have decided that some of the meetings will be devoted to considering and promoting day trips, as you may have noticed from Maureen's newsletter.

The Chatsworth trip, last November, promoted by Malcolm, was very popular and it is to be hoped that one or more of the proposed day trips listed in the March Newsletter will prove of interest to U3A members in general.

The interest is there, you can be sure there will be more interesting trips offered in the future, with perhaps outings requiring overnight stays. Rail breaks seem to be popular, and these will be looked into as well.

However, the Group will also continue with discussions on members' destination experiences.

## Cotgrave & District U3A are going Social Media



One of the many advantages of belonging to the U3A is the social interaction with other members. We are excited to announce that soon, we will have a presence on the Social Media Platform 'Facebook'. This will be a 'closed' page, with details visible only to members of the Cotgrave & District U3A. Other users of Facebook can see that our group exists, but will not be able to access any information about the group or the people in it.

There are various ways in which members of our U3A group find out about events and stay in touch with each other: monthly meetings, website, newsletter and diary, this Gazette, word of mouth, email etc. Facebook is just another, very convenient, way of being reminded about what is going on.

Members of the committee have been looking at this carefully over the winter and will announce to members in a monthly meeting when the page goes 'live'. Help will be offered to those members who wish to participate but aren't quite sure how to do so.



All other methods of communication will continue to be available.

Since this article was written the page has been launched, please search on Facebook for "Cotgrave & District U3A"

*From Sue Tattam*

*Just a little thank you to all the members who bought my crocheted scarfllets, cowls and flowered hats towards the end of last year. You might be interested to know that the money raised has now been donated to charity as follows.*

*£110 to Rainbows Children's Hospice*

*£100 to Guide Dogs for the Blind*

*£5 to The Red Cross.*

*The £5 actually bought raffle tickets from The Red Cross - I was going to donate the winnings as well but, sadly, I didn't win!*

*Thanks again for your support.*

### Eco Group

This new group will hold its first meeting in March. Normally, meetings will be held at **2.00pm on the 3rd Monday of every month at 104 White Furrows...** except the very first meeting, which will be held on Friday 22nd March!

Members of the group will generate their own ideas for discussion and there might even be some 'outings'. Likely subjects will include topics such as transport, cleaning products, our carbon footprints. We would love to welcome you along!

### Do you want to be involved in the running of your U3A?

The AGM is coming up on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, so if you fancy helping out with any of the tasks that the Committee carry out on your behalf or if you would like to join the Committee then please contact any Committee Member

### Customer Survey

The Gazette is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> Year. So thought we should ask for some feedback from the readers.

- Q1. Do you read the Gazette?
- Q2. Do you find it informative/worthwhile?
- Q3. Should we continue producing the Gazette?
- Q4. Any suggestions to improve the Gazette?

Please email your answers to The Editor at [cotgraveu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:cotgraveu3a@hotmail.com)

## Speakers Corner (1) - Life as an Author - Holding on Tight

The December meeting, the last of 2018, was a grand climax to the year. We were privileged to hear an amazing address by a remarkable man who is determined to wrest the World Water Speed Record back from the USA to Great Britain. Nigel left school with just four O-Levels and began work in Woolworths as a shelf-stacker. He now leads a dedicated team of enthusiasts who have designed and are building a technologically advanced speedboat which he hopes to steer at speeds in excess of 350 miles per hour on Lake Coniston in two year's time. Just how he progressed between these two extremes formed the quite fascinating subject of his talk, which, incidentally, was his forty-first of the year. It was obvious that he was, indeed, very well practiced.

It all began as a result of his growing interest in aviation and other technical subjects. Not only did he write a growing number of articles for popular magazines, but he developed an ability to interview famous people, ranging from Buzz Aldrin to Tommy Cooper! He then took advantage of the cheap flights inaugurated by Freddie Laker to attend the launch of the NASA Space Shuttle and promptly wrote a book about it. When the proposed publisher rejected it, he went ahead and published it himself, a risky business to say the least. In fact, he ended up in serious debt, but this was mitigated by the tremendous success of the book – it sold some 50,000 copies and stimulated him to pursue his love of technology, including vivid accounts of the famous Red Arrows.



It was then that he met up with a speedboat designer called Ken Norris who had worked on Donald Campbell's Bluebird and, together, they planned to build a truly modern boat which could bring the speed record back to Britain. All went well for many years until Nigel lost patience with Ken on account of the latter's lack of urgency for the practicality of actually building it. Research into boat design was all very well but there came a time, thought Nigel, when one had to get down to 'brass tacks'. They parted company. He then set up collaborations with both Southampton and Salford Universities and a group of enthusiastic volunteer experts who have been working devotedly for nineteen years to build their dream boat, named Quicksilver. It was intriguing to realise just how different is the approach adopted today, compared with the earlier heroics of Donald Campbell. In his day, one did one's best with design but had to rely on the ultimate (and, of course, fatal) experiment to check it out! Today sees years of computer modelling and wind-tunnel experiments with models to take the risk out of the final test. The result is a super-streamlined boat some forty feet long, weighing three-and-a-half tons and employing a ten thousand horse-power aero-engine which has already cost well over a million pounds in development – but the essential feature is that it does actually exist! Two more years of work should see it ready for the ultimate attempt on the record. We shall certainly look forward to it.



All this technology was exciting enough (at least for the male members of the audience) but our speaker rounded it off with a touching account of how Sir Donald Campbell's bluebird and, finally, his body were found, using ultra-sound techniques (a bit more technology!) and a description of the funeral, which he had attended. Overall, it was certainly a well-rounded presentation, including several video-clips of earlier record attempts, together with sound effects.

## Speakers Corner (2) - Adventures and Travels of a Wildlife Artist



Paul Dyson addressed our first meeting of 2019 on his wide-ranging experiences in pursuit of the World's wildlife in this and numerous other countries. We rapidly came to appreciate that he was not only a superb artist, as evidenced by a beautiful selection of illustrated greetings cards, but also an accomplished photographer. Some of his photographs of snow-clad mountains and close-ups of smiling lions left one almost gasping with pleasure.

Apparently, he took to art as a young schoolboy, followed by several years at Mansfield College of Arts, as a basis for over twenty years as a professional artist which have brought him no less than five National Awards. From examples of his work which he brought along to show us, this was easy to understand. Judging from his accounts of climbing numerous lofty mountain peaks in the Himalayas and similarly challenging ranges, he is also a remarkably fit individual. Indeed, he looked exactly that, allied with a thoughtful and sympathetic personality. He is clearly much concerned by the serious reduction in the World's wildlife which we are currently experiencing. His photographs of the local populace in the many countries he has visited bore out these impressions. In particular, he showed us some delightful images of the local children both at school and at play.

He is obviously a very patient man when it comes to obtaining shots of lions, tigers, leopards and cheetahs – this being the pecking order, as it were, within the various species. How he could obtain such intimate close-ups of these creatures, even with the advantage of modern lenses, left one gasping with admiration. As he pointed out, these various animals are disappearing from view, not only as a result of their own shyness, but, more seriously, from mankind's encroaches on their habitat. Indeed, he must have had to wait many a long hour to achieve the impressive collection of the World's cats which we were privileged to see. Then, there were elephants, gorillas, monkeys, goats, ibexes, mountain hares and others, too many for your scribe to remember!

In conclusion, he told us of his preferred Christmas-away-from-it-all visit to the Isle of Arran where there were birds of just about every feather – puffins, of course, but also fulmars, grasshopper warblers (I had never heard of such!) and, would you believe, a robin! Again, the photography was breath-taking. Altogether we were kept enthralled for well over an hour by one of our best recent talks – and that is some compliment, given the exciting offerings which we have been fortunate to experience of late. One can only say yet another heartfelt thank you to June O'Dell for arranging it.

## Speakers Corner (3) - Our Time in Uganda



Our February meeting was addressed by a delightful couple, Shelagh and Ian Baird-Smith, who had spent two years working in Uganda between 2011 and 2013. They were very much involved in helping the local people provide schools and colleges for themselves. Shelagh did some teaching, while Ian undertook administrative tasks associated with setting up and running both junior schools and a nursing and midwifery college. That such excellent provision could result from private effort in such a poor country was remarkable enough – one could only admire both them and the local men who had made personal financial sacrifice to see it happening - and the excellent Baird-Smith photographs really did enable us to ‘see’ it happening. It was fascinating to follow the transformation from ‘learning under a mango tree’ to the provision of well-constructed buildings, complete with laboratories, libraries and computer rooms – and toilets. The Nursing College even had its own bus to ferry students between different locations. A fee of just £100 for a year’s education, including what was, to those concerned, luxury accommodation, meant that many poor students could progress to academic success while the schools themselves remained self-sufficient – no-one was making financial profit.

There were many practical developments included, such as the use of solar power to fuel a water pumping system which not only served the school or college but also served the surrounding community. Then again, we learned important details about life in Uganda. A typical country house, for instance, would have a floor of beaten mud, smeared with cow dung – it took courage for westerners to enter following a fresh ‘smear’, given that one was expected to take one’s shoes off!

Then there was the hazard of entering a kitchen lacking smoke extraction – cooking consisting of long-term boiling in pots heated by open wood fires. The lack of refrigeration meant that meat could never be properly seasoned and immediate cooking demanded lengthy time scales if it was to be at all digestible. More commonly, diet depended on maize and beans, which may have been nutritious but definitely lacked flavour. Yet another feature of everyday life was the use of tin roofing for many public buildings, which was unbearably hot when the sun was out and unbearably noisy when it rained, while the alternative of thatch suffered from relatively short life. Shelagh desperately wished that she could find a way to combine the two technologies but admitted to a lack of technical skill. Mosquito nets are an essential in a country where malaria is endemic and I, personally, discovered an interesting snippet of information in this regard – the mosquito which carries malaria only bites at night, so one is perfectly safe all day long without protection.



Perhaps needless to say, Uganda is a beautiful country and we were shown various photographs of its wildlife – rhinos, lions, elephants and monkeys – and scenery. In particular, there is an exciting stretch of the river Nile (which, incidentally, cuts the country completely in half, there being only two crossing points!) where the river flows through a cutting no more than ten metres wide and it is possible to enjoy (if that is the right word) white-water rafting. Ian and Shelagh did just that and very nearly came to grief. Their raft was overturned several times and they spent what must have felt like an eternity going under the rampaging waves. Fortunately for them – and, indeed for us – they survived to tell the tale, a tale which was fascinating and touching in equal proportion.



Once again, we were indebted to June Odell for arranging it – this was the last talk to be arranged by her and we must all express our heartfelt gratitude for her sterling efforts.

## And Finally

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Welcome to the new members who have joined since the Winter issue of the Gazette.

Jan & Peter Cadwallader, Penny Florey, Janet Crowther,  
Val Boulton and David Eldridge

If you are booking a holiday with Riviera Travel don't forget to mention your membership of Cotgrave & District U3A at the time, as they kindly donate 10% of the cost of the holiday to your U3A.

*(Please also let the Treasurer, Chris Soar, know so he can claim the money back.)*

*Articles for inclusion in the next edition of the Gazette should be sent to*

*The Editor by 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019*