

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

DEC
2022

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

What an eventful year it has been. Sadly, the Queen passed away, we had 3 Prime Ministers and inflation the highest in 40 years. Let's hope the New year will be better for us all.

I am really looking forward to our Christmas meeting when the talk will be 'A Royal Christmas' given by John Whitehead. It would be especially nice to see people in their Christmas jumper or Santa hat.

Could I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Healthy New Year.

Clive

FROM YOUR EDITOR

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to the newsletter over the past year, your input is vital. If you have previously been shy of sending anything, please take the opportunity of the new year to pick up the courage to share items with our members.

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

From Your Groups Coordinators

We would like to thank all Group Organisers for your work and commitment in running your groups this year - and to all members who have assisted and enjoyed our wide selection on offer! Please do let us know if you have ideas for new groups and could be involved in some way.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas

Sheila and Barbara (Group Co-Ordinators)

Request from our Speaker Finder

SPEAKERS REQUIRED FOR MONTHLY GENERAL MEETINGS

As the current speaker finder, I am asking all members if they have any ideas for a talk/presentation at our monthly general meetings for 2023.

You may have an interesting idea for a talk yourself, based on perhaps, a trip somewhere, or a particular talent you have, which you would like to share?

Or perhaps you have heard a talk somewhere and feel it would go down well with our group? Let me have the contact details and I'll follow it up!

If you're unsure about setting up a presentation, I can help with that – just send in your information and preferably some photographs to include with it, and I'll set it up for your talk.

Talks tend to last around 45 minutes.

Please contact myself, Steve Kenney on sadu3aspeakers@gmail.com

or give me a ring on 07749 275755, or speak to me at the General Meetings.....

GROUP NEWS

DISCUSSION GROUP

It was as normal, quite lively, entertaining and informative. The 20 odd subjects covered were very wide ranging, The main discussions were related the Political situation in the UK; the world population; illegal & legal immigrants; the BBC not giving the full facts about climate change; the political situation in the USA; hydrogen as a vehicle fuel; the energy crisis – who is responsible in UK and Germany; the Saudi Arabian oil situation; heat pumps ;free trees from Charnwood Council: etc. The Group meets at the Council Offices, School Street, Syston at 10 am on the third Friday of each month, the next meeting being on 16 December . If you would like to join us, please contact Harold Betts on 0116 260 8671 for more details.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

The group had a look at the various online sources for birth registrations, how they differ and where one might be better in some situations than others. Civil Registration of births, marriages and deaths began in 1837, shortly after Victoria came to the throne. Prior to that, it was left to the Church of England to record baptisms, marriages and burials. However, as more and more of the population became non-conformist, i.e. followed other religions, those records covered fewer people. Initially local registrars were tasked with finding out about births and registering them, there was no legal responsibility on parents to notify the birth of their children. The local registration district for Syston was Barrow on Soar. There are various estimates about how many births simply didn't get recorded in the early years. The law changed, and from 1 January 1875 a birth had to be registered within 42 days, by a parent, or failing that, the householder where the birth happened.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON

Application Number Y 74166

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Nottingham

1887 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Saint Ann In the County of the Town of Nottingham

Columns—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10*
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
	<i>County of North Nottingham 1887 20, Capriano Street 228</i>	<i>George Harry</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>John Butter</i>	<i>Mary Ann Butter formerly Bell</i>	<i>Steel Bar Makie</i>	<i>x the wife of Mary Ann Butter Mother 20 Capriano Street Nottingham</i>	<i>Jorenth Dumder 1887</i>	<i>H. B. Baker Registrar</i>	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 8th day of August 1986

BXB 198715

*See note overleaf

This certificate is issued in pursuance of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953. Section 34 provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the birth or death to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.

CAUTION:—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

Form A502M Da 2923989 100M 2/86 Mcr (731726)

This is an example of a birth certificate. From the early days, the local registrar submitted a list of registrations each calendar quarter, which in turn went to the General Registrars Office. National quarterly indexes were produced. It is these that have in turn been indexed online to allow family historians to search for their ancestors births. The early indexes did not include mothers maiden names, but thanks to an index created by the GRO in recent years, these are now available, without needing to get a copy certificate.

AMERICAN HISTORY GROUP

We had three interesting presentations this month as we looked at 1950s USA.

Transistors and all of the benefits they have brought us, with the move forward to the 8.5 billion contained within a mobile phone, really does 'blow the mind'.

Creation and development of the Credit Card came along then too, and if you managed to see the documentary on BBC 'The Secret Genius of Modern Life' with Professor Hannah Fry, you'll know how far that's come too.

Senator Joe McCarthy took up the rest of our time, with his Senate Hearings on 'Unamerican Activities' which dominated the news as they were televised. Accusations of Communism were made against Government Employees, Hollywood stars and many others with devastating consequences. Charlie Chaplin was known to be one of the targets of the investigations. Fast forward to the age of Social Media, and how it has affected behaviours and attitudes.

Thanks to our contributors, who reminded us that these events all took place in our lifetime.

Our last session together will be on December 12th when we'll move into the turbulent times of the 1960s. Flower Power, Vietnam, Assassinations and the Space Race to name but a few of the events of the era.

FEELING CRAFTY GROUP

Wishing everyone a HAPPY CHRISTMAS from the 'Feeling Crafty' group



UKULELE ANNIVERSARY

Can you believe the Syston Happy Ukulele Band was first formed in November 5 years ago ! 🎸

From learning two chords to play " Singing in the rain " C and F , we now have 115 songs in our repertoire and counting .

We play for many organisations and groups. We have played in halls, churches, club houses and residential homes.

Outdoors have seen us playing in wind, rain, heatwave and frost ! 🌈

As you can see there is no stopping us ! From the original twenty members we have doubled our numbers to forty plus.



To sing and make music is so uplifting, we can see the positive effect it has on our audiences as they join in clapping, singing along and even dancing .

Who would have thought 5 years ago, from playing C and F we can now entertain a wide range of people with over eleven different chords.

All this progress is down to Dave and Len who have kept us all practicing week after week.

I wonder what the next 5 years will bring ?

CONGRATULATIONS ALL (We know a song about that)

*Remember that you can find details of all our groups on the website
u3a.simplmembership.co.uk/Syston/Groups*

Our display boards at the General Meetings also have details.

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks start 10.30am

Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am

Wed Dec 14th

A Royal Christmas - John Whitehead

John Whitehead will talk us through how Royalty have celebrated Christmas through the ages in a variety of ways, with luxury and excess, with cruelty and frugality, with family and frivolity.

Which monarch would you wish to share the festival with?

A schedule for the first few months of 2023 will appear in the January Newsletter.

THEATRE TRIPS

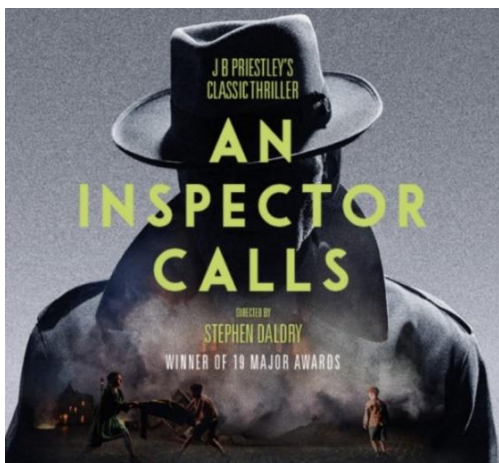
We thoroughly enjoyed Sister Act at the Curve.

The next trip is again to Curve Theatre to see an Inspector Calls. It's on Saturday 25 March and a matinee performance. Please let me have your names u3a numbers and email or telephone numbers if you want to go. Treat yourselves, the cost is £30.50 and the money will be required by 7th January 2023.

I will be at December's u3a meeting at the community centre to take details and early payments

Thank you

Elaine Yarwood



Stephen Daldry’s multi award-winning **National Theatre** production of **JB Priestley’s** classic thriller returns.

Winner of 19 major awards and hailed as the theatrical event of its generation, *An Inspector Calls* has thrilled more than 5 million theatregoers worldwide.

LAST MONTH’S GM

Sadly continuing family problems meant I couldn’t make the GM. I was disappointed as the “history” of East Goscote was a subject I was particularly interested in. Unfortunately there is little online on this, so whatever the speaker said I can’t echo or add to it.

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

U3A TALKS



Learning is the Elixir of Healthy Life

Sir Muir Gray will be talking to us about what we know about living longer and the interaction between ageing, loss of fitness, disease and ageism – and then tell us what we can do about it!

Tues 13 December at 4pm

Free – Online via Zoom

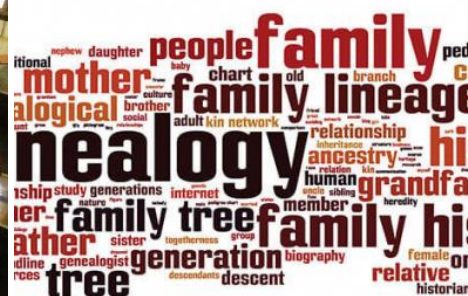


The Maths of Bell Ringing

An introduction to the mathematics behind the unique music of English-style bellringing with Wokingham u3a member, John Harrison

Tues 6 Dec at 10am

Free – Online via Zoom



Genetic Genealogy – Understanding DNA Testing

A talk on understanding your DNA test results and finding your family matches from u3a Subject Adviser for Genealogy, Stephen Dyer.

Tues 6 Dec at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

These are not the only events available, in addition Eventbrite have various other free sessions, as well as ones that require payment. Visit their website <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/> to find more.

FUTURE LIVES

Future Lives is a UK-wide u3a group which shares information and resources to inspire, influence and inform members about how we can improve our future lives.

How can we add life to our years, and maintain our independence and quality of life for as long as possible?

The u3a Future Lives Group is run by u3a members across the country. We aim to challenge attitudes and break down physical barriers that limit and restrict people as they get older.

What can we do to improve unsuitable homes or products, isolation and poor health? Good design can be liberating - and the reverse is true! Let's use our collective voice to bring about change.

We want to hear what u3a members have to say, sharing information and stimulating ideas that will help us all live our best possible future lives.

- We're holding a series of free [online events](#) that we'd love you to join.
- Please also complete the "Our homes for our future" [questionnaire](#). You can find more information on this page.
- To stay up to date with Future Lives' activities, please sign up to our [newsletter](#).

NETWORK NEWS ITEMS



Christmas Quiz – 12th December – Final Reminder

There are only 3 weeks to go until our final Zoom quiz and there are just a few places left for members to take part – over 130 already registered!
Please give it one final push to make sure as many of your members that want to can take part – this will be their last chance.

NOT U3A BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



Jubilee Square's real ice rink is back this year! Skaters can show off their best moves, come rain or shine under the lights of this covered rink.

With the introduction of super off-peak pricing this year there will be opportunities to skate for just £5. Plus, popular demand on the ice means the opening hours have been extended adding the new late skate session of 9pm.

And if that hasn't given plenty of time to show off your skating skills, why not book on to make your Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve extra special. And, for the first time ever, the rink will be open on New

Year's Day too!

Tickets can be purchased from Jubilee Square Ice Rink ticket office, located at the front of the ice rink in Jubilee Square. The ticket office is open from 9.30am each day until 9.30pm, except for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve when it will close at 6.30pm. The rink and the ticket office will be closed on Christmas Day. Tickets can also be purchased in person at the Visit Leicester Information Centre located at the KRIII Visitor Centre, 4A St. Martins, Leicester, LE1 5DB.



Step into the magic of Cinderella this Christmas. Marvel in the fairytale, brought to life by award-winning Interior Designer, Charlotte Lloyd-Webber of CLW Event Design, before embarking on the trail to the Engine Yard for a day filled with festive fun for the whole family.

More details at <https://www.belvoircastle.com/cinderella-at-belvoir/>

SLEEPING BEAUTY pantomime at Loughborough Town Hall



📅 Sat, 19 Nov 2022 - Mon, 02 Jan 2023 📍 Loughborough Town Hall

Enjoy a brand-new spin on a much-loved yarn this Christmas with our action packed spectacular and spellbinding adventure.

Deep in Coalville Castle, Nurse Nancy is making plans for the christening of the baby Princess Rose. When the wickedly glamorous Carabosse, a thorn in the royal family's side, discovers she's not invited she sets out to put a spindle in the works!

It's down to the dashing Prince Vince to hack his way through the thorny thicket, wake his true love and help her save the kingdom.

Will true loves kiss break the curse? Will Mervin the magician ever get a spell right? Will Nurse Nancy look any better after a hundred years of beauty sleep?

If you snooze you lose so book now as tickets are already selling fast!

With daring duels, doting dragons, lavish sets and costumes, and of course bucket loads of laughs, the team behind previous smash-hit Town Hall pantomimes return to cast their spell over Loughborough with this magical new pantomime.

More details including booking tickets [here](#)



A Belgrave Hall Traditional Christmas
Sunday 11th December 2022, 11am-3pm

Come and take part in traditional Christmas activities including Willow Wreath Making, Christmas Tree Decoration, Magic Lantern Slideshow, Mechanical & Clockwork Toy Displays, Wassailing & A 'Christmas Through the Ages' talk with author and historian Eddie Smallwood.

Father Christmas will also be dropping by between 11am – 1pm.

Please note that the Christmas Wreath and Christmas Tree Decoration Workshops are sold separately.

£2 for Adults – Free Entry for Children (up to 17yrs)

For further details & to book please visit www.leicestermuseums.org

FROM OUR MEMBERS

FINDING FATHER

“I’m hoping you might be able to help me find out about my father and his family” Helen explained to the rest of the u3a Family History group. She went on to tell them that she didn’t know anything about her father other than his name and the fact that he had been a salesman at the time she was born. She had discovered that only when she needed her

birth certificate as a young adult. It had been handed over with great reluctance by her mother. No one on the maternal side of the family would tell her anything. "Mum died earlier this year" she added, "And I found this when clearing out her things". She extracted an old shoe box from the hold-all she had brought with her. She laid the box on the table and lifted the lid. "There are photos along with horseshoes and other wedding bits and pieces and her marriage certificate" she unfolded it and spread out, "But I don't know where to go from there. That's why I've joined the group". She had readily been able to put two and two together and realize that she was already on the way when her parents had married.

"Right" said Esme the group organiser, "Let's see what we can track down. What was his name?". Several of the group had fingers poised over laptop keyboards, ready to get searching. "Daniel Allsop Nichols", "Oh, that's good" said Lena, "Not a common name, that'll help. When and where did they marry and how old was he?", "1953, at the Register Office in Lincoln and he was 25", "I'll look for a birth then" offered Lena, "I'll look for him on the 1939 register if you like" said Alan. Helen looked puzzled, "It was similar to a census" he explained, "It was compiled and used during the war for ration cards and the like and later as the basis for the NHS. As you've no idea if he's alive or not, I might not find him, people who might be alive have been redacted", "Oh, I'd presumed he would be dead" said Helen, "I mean he'd be 90", "There are quite a few 90 year olds about these days" Marie chipped in. The possibility that her father might still be alive really hadn't occurred to her. "What about looking for his father on the 1939 register?" said Marie, "That's if the name on the marriage certificate is right". Helen looked puzzled again, "Father's names on marriage certificates were sometimes made up, especially if someone was illegitimate. Anyway, what's on the certificate?", "Oh, Ralph Allsop Nichols, and it says he was a grocer", "Another less common name. Sounds like Allsop might be an old family name being used as a middle name".

A few moments later, "I think I've got the family on the 1939 register" said Alan, "I've found a Ralph A Nichols grocer in Lincoln, there are 3 redacted entries and what looks like his wife Elsie M", "Does that mean my father's still alive?", "Not necessarily, it could be that the entry hasn't been matched up with a death", "I'm looking for a death registration" said Martin, "Haven't found anything yet". "I've got a birth registration in Lincoln in 1928" said Lena, "Mother's maiden name Chalmers. I'll look for other Nichols/Chalmers births". A few minutes later she announced she had found 2 others, one born before Daniel and one after.

Various members of the group identified a marriage registration for Ralph and Elsie in 1925, a birth registration for Ralph in 1900, and a 1911 census entry for him and his family. It seemed his father had operated the grocers shop before Ralph. Helen's mind was in whirl, "I'm astonished that you're finding such a lot of information so quickly" she said. "We wouldn't have if your father's name had been Smith or Jones" said Esme, "But I think we're getting ahead of ourselves. We need to document where we've found things so that Helen can go back to them later, and we need to see what else we can find on her father. We don't know yet whether he's dead or alive", "But we might not be able to confirm that one way or the other" commented Alan, "If he died fairly recently we won't necessarily find anything online". "I'll have a look for him on the electoral rolls" said Jim. "It would be worth looking for his siblings as well" said Lena, "The younger brother was 5

years younger than Daniel". "Good idea" said Esme, "What are their names?", "Matthew Allsop Nichols was born in 1936, and Jacob Allsop Nichols was born in 1925". "I've found Daniel on electoral rolls in Lincoln, looks like he was at the same address through 2003 to 2014. That might mean he died in 2014, or he could have moved, or opted out of being included". A few minutes later he added "I've found both Jacob and Matthew. It looks like Matthew at least might still be around. Judging by the fact that he's listed with about 20 other names on last year's register, I'm guessing he's in a residential home. I'll see what I can find from the postcode", "I've found a death registration for Jacob in 2005", "I was right there is a residential home in that postcode, it might be worth contacting them" suggested Jim. He jotted the phone number down and handed it to Helen.

In the next half an hour the group had constructed a family tree showing Daniel, his brothers, their wives and children, parents, grandparents and aunts and uncles. Helen left the meeting with contact details for some of her father's nieces and nephews, including Matthew's eldest son, Mark, who it appeared was a couple of years younger than Helen. The meeting broke up with everyone eager to know what progress Helen made, preferably before the meeting the following month. Helen agreed to keep in touch with Esme and for her to circulate updates.

Having turned the options over in her mind, Helen decided to contact Mark, her heart was pounding as she dialled his number. He quickly confirmed he was indeed the son of Matthew, and yes, his father was in the residential home they had identified. Not only that, although physically frail, he was still fully mentally alert. "I think his brother Daniel may be my father" Helen's heart was racing even faster as she said those words, "My friends at the u3a family history group traced him on electoral rolls up to 2014, I'm guessing he passed away then", "Good heavens no!" said Mark, "That would be when he went to live with Sarah. Your father is still alive, he isn't very mobile, and he isn't quite as with it mentally as my Dad". After a lengthy pause in which Helen struggled to take in the news, she found her voice again, "Who is Sarah? Where do they live?", "Sarah is, well, she's your half-sister. I don't know the full story, but I knew Uncle Daniel had another family, I must admit I presumed he and your mother divorced. I knew you existed and that there was no contact with your mother after they split up, but that's about all. You have 2 half-sisters and a half-brother. Sarah married an aircraft engineer, when he left the RAF they settled in Yorkshire. Her sister Louise lives locally, she kept an eye on her father, but then her husband developed Parkinson's, so when your Dad couldn't manage on his own, Sarah and Malcolm persuaded him to go and live with them". "I really didn't expect he'd still be alive" said Helen, "I don't know how he'd feel about me making contact". "Where are you calling from?", "Leicestershire", "Maybe you should talk to Louise and to my Dad. Could you come over to Lincoln? I can talk to Dad about setting up a meeting", "That sounds like a good idea. Are you in touch with Louise?", "Oh yes, how about I ring her, she's ex-directory, can I give her your phone number?", "Yes, of course".

That evening Helen's phone rang, "I'm Louise" said the voice at the other end, "I would have rung you earlier but Brian had a hospital appointment so we were out when Mark first rang, then he was off visiting his Dad with the news when I called back. I gather that you didn't know anything about us, me, Sarah and Michael I mean", "No, my mother wouldn't tell me anything, but Mark said your side of the family knew about me", "Oh yes, we always have, Dad hated that he couldn't have contact with you", "So do you think he'd

want to hear from me now, after all this time?”, “ Without a shadow of a doubt. His short term memory isn't what it was, but he still talks about you, wishes he knew how you turned out”. The pair talked for over an hour, she was able to tell her about her father's life as she remembered it, but explained that he hadn't talked about what had happened between him and Helen's mother, although she guessed that Matthew probably knew more. She thought it would be a good idea to meet him, it would probably be easier for him to talk about it than their father. She was also keen to arrange a family get together, Sarah and Malcolm brought their father down to Lincoln periodically. They agreed that she would phone her sister, pass on Helen's contact details, then Sarah could call her, and hopefully she could at long last talk to her father.

It was barely an hour later when the phone rang again, “Is that Helen?”, “Yes, it is”, “This is Sarah. I have Dad with me by the phone. He didn't think this day would ever come and he's struggling to take in that it has. I'm going to hand the phone over to him”. “Helen, is that really you?”, “Yes Dad, it really is me”, there was uncontrolled sobbing in reply, and she heard the handset being juggled, “I think maybe Dad needs a bit more time before he'll be able to talk to you properly” said Sarah, “Can we ring you again tomorrow?”, “Yes, I'll be here”. She put the phone down and the tears came, she had actually spoken to him, only a few words, but she had spoken to him. She emailed Esme with heartfelt thanks to the group for their help.

By the next group meeting she had spoken with Sarah, Louise, Michael, Mark and her father on the phone. She'd travelled to Lincoln twice, the first time to meet Louise, Mark and Matthew, the second time Sarah and her husband had come down from Yorkshire and she finally met her father face to face. Her father had been quite deliberate in not blaming her mother for the breakdown in their marriage, but Matthew had been rather more forthright. Her mother had been convinced that her father had only married her because she was pregnant, she'd never been able to accept that he truly loved her. His work as a salesman had taken him away from home, she'd accused him of having liaisons with other women on his trips, without any evidence, there'd been no lipstick or lingering perfume on his clothing. Under the weight of accusation the relationship had deteriorated into a marriage in name only, a situation that had torn her father apart. On the one hand he wanted to be with the woman he loved, the daughter he loved, but on the other he couldn't bear to be with her when she pushed him away, wouldn't return his love, kept his daughter at a distance, wouldn't let him let him get close. Her final act of retribution had been to refuse to agree to a divorce. Kate, mother of Helen's half-siblings, had in contrast, loved her father so deeply that she had lived with him as his wife, despite the absence of marriage vows. They had shielded their children from the slur of illegitimacy by calling themselves Mr and Mrs, only very close family and friends knew that they were not.

There were tears for the lost years when she embraced her father for the first time, but hope for the future, however long or short that turned out to be, something she had never dreamt would be possible before she had walked into her first U3A family history meeting.

DECLUTTER DEN

Do you have anything sitting in a cupboard, or on a shelf, that you no longer want? Might one of our groups be able to use it? Might one of your fellow members be able to use it? Do you have an older item that's been upgraded by a Christmas present and so is now redundant but still useable.



Your editor has a TV that's looking for a new home. It is a 32" screen, not a smart TV, but is a slim set, has HDR and freeviewHD. A Skyq box has been hooked up to it until recently, along with a DVD player, I feel I still has a decent picture. You can hook up a laptop or PC, via an HDMI or VGA cable, and use it as a larger screen, something I've done several times.

The picture of the rear shows some of the connections available, there are some other USB and audio related connections just to the side.

Contact me email: juliedjohnson@yahoo.com





I have an item that I would like to go into the "declutter den". It is a unit for storing CD's and DVD's. Mahogany finish - 45" high, 16" wide, 6" deep The DVD shelves are fully adjustable. I don't want anything for it other than a good home!

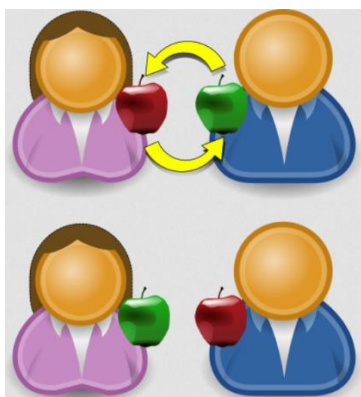
If you are interested contact Sue Blaxland

email: sue.blaxland@gmail.com



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

SWAP STOP



Maybe you don't have something you are willing to give away, but how about swapping it with something from another member?

Are you a jig-saw fan looking to exchange with another jig-saw fan and give both of you a new challenge?

Do you have books you've read and would like to swap some with another bookworm?

Have you received a Christmas present that upgrades something you already have, leaving you with a still useable but older item that you'd like to swap?

Let me have details of what you have and what you want and we'll try and connect you with another member who wants what you have, and has what you want. The usual email address applies.

POETRY CORNER

MISTLETOE

By Walter de la Mare

Sitting under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Someone came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

DECEMBER 26TH

By Ken Nesbitt

A BB gun.
A model plane.
A basketball.
A 'lectric train.
A bicycle.
A cowboy hat.
A comic book.
A baseball bat.
A deck of cards.
A science kit.
A racing car.
A catcher's mitt.
So that's my list
of everything
that Santa Claus
forgot to bring.

ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS MY TRUE LOVE PHONED ME UP

By Dave Calder

Well, I suppose I should be grateful, you've obviously gone
to a lot of trouble and expense – or maybe off your head.
Yes, I did like the birds – the small ones anyway were fun
if rather messy, but now the hens have roosted on my bed
and the rest are nested on the wardrobe. It's hard to sleep
with all that cooing, let alone the cackling of the geese
whose eggs are everywhere, but mostly in a broken smelly heap
on the sofa. No, why should I mind? I can't get any peace
anywhere – the lounge is full of drummers thumping tom-toms
and sprawling lords crashed out from manic leaping. The
kitchen is crammed with cows and milkmaids and smells of a million stink-bombs
and enough sour milk to last a year. The pipers? I'd forgotten them –
they were no trouble, I paid them and they went. But I can't get rid
of these young ladies. They won't stop dancing or turn the music down
and they're always in the bathroom, squealing as they skid
across the flooded floor. No, I don't need a plumber round,
it's just the swans – where else can they swim? Poor things,
I think they're going mad, like me. When I went to wash my
hands one ate the soap, another swallowed the gold rings.
And the pear tree died. Too dry. So thanks for nothing,
love. Goodbye.

And finally.....

Who is never hungry at Christmas? The turkey — he's always stuffed.

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? A rebel without a Claus.

What would you give a dog as a present for Christmas? The best present would be a mobile bone.

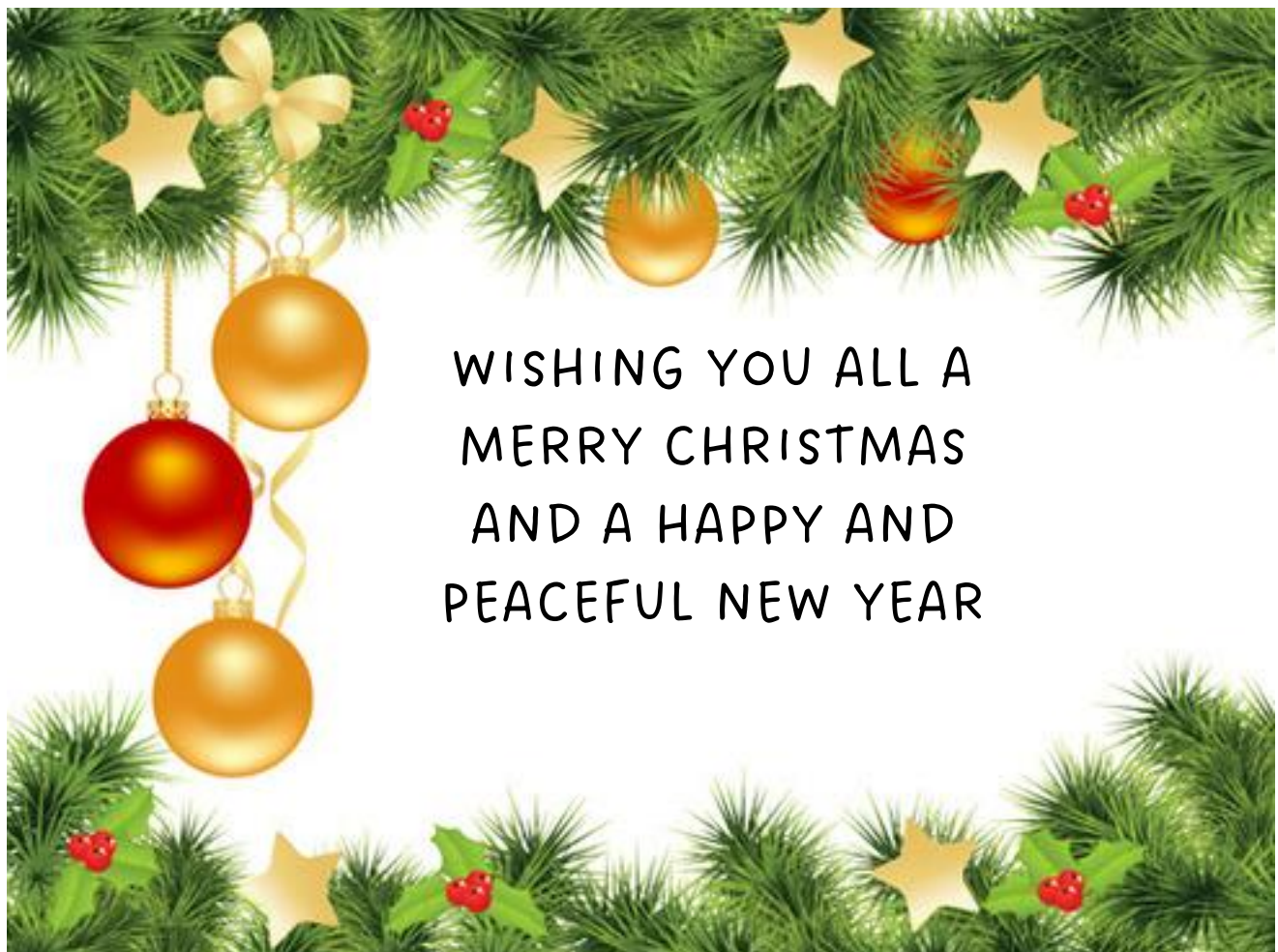
How does Santa Claus keep track of every fireplace he has already visited? Well, he keeps a log.

Why are Christmas trees bad at sewing? Because they always drop their needles!

What did one cranberry say to another at Christmas? 'Tis the season to be jelly!

Why wouldn't Ebenezer Scrooge eat at the pasta restaurant? It cost a pretty penne!

What did Mrs. Claus say to Santa when she saw this year's Christmas tree? You could spruce it up a little.



WISHING YOU ALL A
MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY AND
PEACEFUL NEW YEAR