

Syston and District

**u3a**

learn, laugh, live

JAN  
2023

# *Vitality!*

Official newsletter of the Syston and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152



## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

A Very Happy & Healthy New Year to you all and I hope Santa brought all you wished for.

I thought the December talk by John Whitehead on A Royal Christmas was very interesting and amusing. At the same meeting Barbara suggested several activities we might try in 2023. If you have any ideas that you think our members might enjoy, please let us know. It was nice to see that the mulled wine and mince pies went down very well. Many thanks to everyone who made the meeting a great success.

At our first meeting of the New Year on January 11th the subject of the talk will be Radicals and Rebels by David Bell and I hope to see you there.

Stay safe and stay warm.

Clive

# WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

## From Your Groups Coordinators

It has been brought to our attention that some groups are shown as full and the offer of a waiting list is available.

As this can mean someone waits for many months before a place becomes free, we are happy to help anyone who would like to start a second group. The second group may be able to follow the same programme as the first.

We can advise with room hire, costs etc. and the group leader from the original group could help with relevant information.

We have a second birdwatching group, a second play reading group and a second book reading group so as you can see it is possible.

All members are invited to come forward with ideas. With a little help, most things are possible . Please get in touch with your ideas.

You can contact either Sheila Driver or Barbara Sargeant via our website using the contacts page, or at one of our monthly General Meetings.

## GROUP NEWS

### POSSIBLE NEW GROUP – CLASSIC CARS



Terry Farmer asks if there are others in our u3a who have an interest in classic cars and would be interested in forming a Classic Car Group. He envisages this would include visits to car meets, shows and the like, and sharing of information. Any interested parties can contact Terry email:

[mg\\_terry@icloud.com](mailto:mg_terry@icloud.com)

### RUMMIKUB GROUP

The rummikub group is going from strength to strength. What a lovely bunch of people.

There's lots of chatter and laughs as we all get to grips with the game.

On the next page is a photograph of a hand one player had. For those who know how to play the game, you can see it's a "bad" or "rubbish" or call it what you will hand!



Having started with 14 tiles this player had to keep picking up until the required 30 points, in a set way, was achieved.

As you can see, she ended up with 31 tiles and still couldn't go! Many of us found ourselves in this situation at some time.

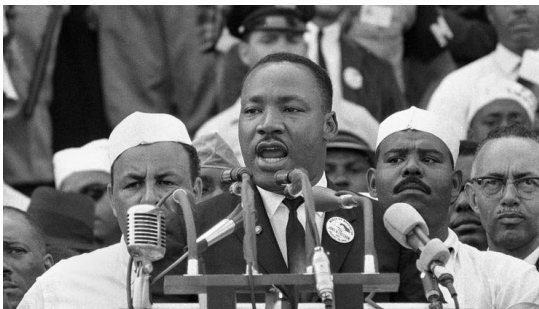
It's all good fun and a little frustrating at times!

If you fancy this game we have a waiting list where we are more than happy to add your name.

## AMERICAN HISTORY GROUP

The group held its final meeting looking at the 1960's.

Martin Luther King and the Medicare system were the focus. Two meaty subjects to finish on.



**On August 28, 1963, some 100 years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves, Martin Luther King climbed the marble steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to describe his vision of America. More than 200,000 people-black and white-came to listen. They came to Washington to demand equal rights for black people. And the dream that they heard on the steps of the Monument became the dream of a generation.**

He finished his speech with the following words "When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every tenement and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old spiritual, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last""

**Medicare** is the federal health insurance programme that was introduced in 1965 for:

- People who are 65 or older and Certain younger people with disabilities
- People with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD)

The United States does not have universal health care because no one has ever voted for a government willing to provide it. While Obamacare did reduce the number of Americans without health insurance coverage from 40 million to less than 30 million, Obamacare is not universal healthcare.

It is generally believed that if the US had universal healthcare in America, lives could be saved. A study from Harvard researchers states that not having healthcare causes around 44,789 deaths per year. This means that there is a 40% increased risk of death for people who are uninsured.

The USA is not alone in not providing a national health service but it is still the only country in the developed world without a system of universal healthcare. Around 112 million Americans have trouble paying for health care, while more than 90 percent of the country believes it is not worth the cost, according to a recent report.

There are non-profit hospitals in the United States that are subsidised by state governments and bill Medicaid and offer medical services at low or no cost to the end user. That's probably as close to a "public" hospital as you'll find in the United States.

## BOOK GROUP



The book group met an hour earlier this month at the Britannia pub in Queniborough and had a lovely lunch before discussing the chosen book. The meal was really tasty and everyone seemed to have enjoyed what they had chosen. The book under discussion was Maisie Dobbs, a book which, although not the main part of the story, showed a different aspect of WW1. It told of the war from a nurse based at the fronts' perspective and also about the lasting effects the war had on the soldiers, both mentally and physically. Maisie was a private investigator and the rest of the book is about her life and how she became a private investigator from poor beginnings.

## KURLING GROUP

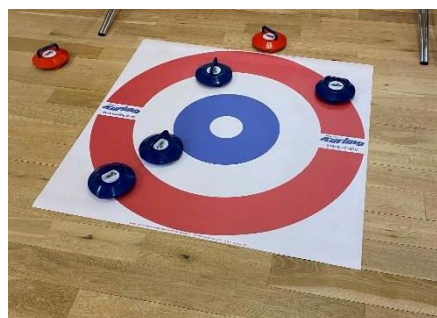
This group is still going strong and regularly has in excess of 20 people playing each month. We play at Rearsby Village Hall, using 3 lanes with around 6 teams.

After the December session, we visited the Queen Vic in Syston for our Christmas lunch.

Here are some photos of a recent group



*Dave Palmer*



## UKULELE GROUP

*The Syston U3a Happy Ukulele Band celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary recently and many of us enjoyed a Christmas Lunch at the Queen Vic in Syston, which was very well organised by one of its members, Barbara Sargeant.*

*After the meal, some of us had brought our ukuleles with us (and why not!), so we finished off with a few Christmas Carols, led by Len and Dave, our trusty leaders.*

*During the year, we had played in many venues (inside and outdoors) for free, giving enjoyment to the audiences, (and ourselves), so if you fancy booking us, contact Len or Dave (or any of our members)*



## CRAFT GROUP

The Craft group have been very busy this month knitting teddy bears for the Baldwin Trust Foundation, all completed to their specifications, the Baldwin Trust colours. These bears being sold by them to help raise money so that they can purchase a defibrillator for each of their canal boats.



## ART GROUP

The art group had a lovely Christmas lunch at the Grosvenor snooker club after our meeting. We almost had a full house for art and then eighteen of us made our way to the Grosvenor for turkey and all the trimmings, a lovely time was had by all.



## MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION GROUP

I have attended all but one meeting of this Group which meets monthly in Rearsby or Syston depending on attendance numbers.

The format is usually our Group Leader sharing her knowledge on various topics. So far topics have included Sound, Bach Remedies, thinking Positive and a guided or unguided Meditation, with or without sound accompaniment. Meditations are very calming and relaxing. By the end of each meeting there is a strong sense of calm and peace. Gentle movements are also included at some point depending on where during session Group prefers. These are very gentle and can be done standing or seated and very relaxing. Talks are always interesting and informative. Question and answer input is encouraged and makes for in depth, fascinating discussions between everyone.

Each person's experience of "Mindfulness and Meditation" will be different from the person sitting next to them and Meditation gets better with practice. This isn't for everyone who tries it as it can release strong

emotions to be acknowledged or addressed resulting, on occasion, in tears due to power of Meditative state.

Like every new experience it is best entered into with an open mind and at your own pace. It isn't a competition as it helps with Mental Health and emotional, Psychological balance. I find it certainly does it for me. In today's often fast paced, demanding and stressful times Mindfulness and Meditation skills are very beneficial to acquire and practice regularly, it is Grounding and healing, promoting a slower, calmer approach to problem solving by enabling a clearer thought process to be used. Meditation also promotes healthier sleep patterns, calming the Nervous System, "Monkey Mind" and stimulating our Vagus Nerve which is linked to the Parasympathetic nervous system.

Each of us takes away something different from every meeting and can be simply a little knowledge which we didn't have before.

Alison Lawrence.

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

#### **January 11, 2023**

##### ***David Bell—Radicals and Rebels:***

Historical figures from the East Midlands (Leics, Derbys, Notts) who rebelled against the Establishment.

The men and women featured are an eclectic bunch. We have a mutineer; a couple of suffragettes, one of them framed for conspiracy to murder the Prime Minister; a man who led an armed rebellion in 1817; an early Quaker who incurred the bigotry and wrath of the governor of Massachusetts; a volunteer with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War; a woman who fought for the abolition of slavery taking on not only the slave-owners but also the gradualist approach advocated by William Wilberforce; and many others.

What they all have in common is that they had the courage and confidence to take on the power of the establishment -moral courage and often physical courage.

They are all heroes worth celebrating, women and men whose example can teach us about the importance of being willing to stand up and fight against cruelty, against unfairness, against bigotry.

They show us what it means to be a rebel and a radical.

#### **February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

##### ***The Climate Crisis and some solutions by Brenda Ainsley***

Brenda presents this popular talk explaining the science behind the climate emergency and outlining ways in which we can all 'make a difference' for future generations. Brenda will briefly summarise the scientific background to climate change and look at examples, in the UK and worldwide, of how it is impacting people's lives.

The presentation is up-to-date and draws on examples from both around the world and here in the UK.

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

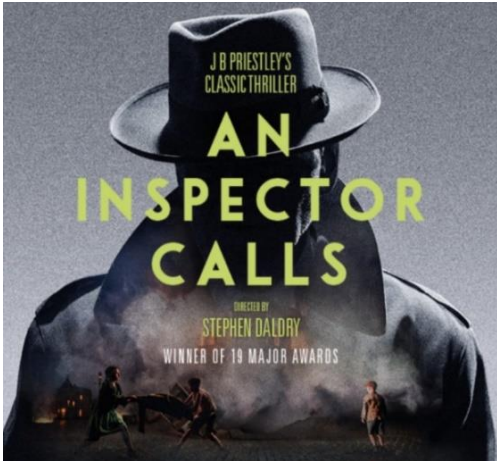
*'I'll polish him off!'* the Curious History of Sweeney Todd by Ann Featherstone

Was he real or fictional?

Why is the story of this violent murdering barber, 18th century London low-life and Mrs Lovatt's pies so enduring and fascinating?

Come along and find out!

## THEATRE TRIPS



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.

For those who want to go to an Inspector Calls on March 25th matinee performance I need your money £30.50 by 5th January. Please contact me if you wish to pay by BACS transfer for details. Thankyou

Elaine Yarwood email: [elaineyarwood@outlook.com](mailto:elaineyarwood@outlook.com)

## LAST MONTH'S GM

*Hooray! I was actually able to make the December GM!*

### A ROYAL CHRISTMAS

John Whitehead's talk was mainly about how the current royal family celebrated Christmas during the reign of Elizabeth II. The description of frequent changes of clothing, the ladies retiring after dinner leaving the men to port and brandy, and the Sandringham staff being given the afternoon off following the serving of Christmas Dinner (the family being left to serve themselves from a buffet style tea) was very reminiscent of much earlier times. As a fan of historical novels I recognised these events, they appear in Georgian, Regency and Victorian settings. Others may have found the scenes familiar from TV series like *Downton Abbey*. Many of the Christmas traditions of the nobility in these periods have North West European roots, because that's where the heritage of the royal family of these eras lays. That said, many of our earlier traditions have similar connections. I wanted to explore these earlier eras.

So, how have English Royalty celebrated Christmas through the ages and what impact have their Christmas traditions had on the rest of us? The first reference I found was to William the Conqueror, who was actually crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066. Norman nobles loved a good hunt during this season, which is said to be the origin of the present Boxing Day hunt meets. The stirrup cup tipple at the start of such meets also dates back to the same time.

Henry II had a palace built in Dublin specially for Christmas celebrations and travelled there in 1171. There was a huge Christmas feast which included crane's flesh, not eaten in Ireland before. Along with herons, peacocks, swans and wild geese, all considered delicacies at the time. Henry III's reign typified the Middle Ages. Christmas was one of the greatest feasts of the year. It was difficult and expensive to feed livestock over winter, so a large proportion of animals were killed and thus needed to be consumed. A good excuse for extensive feasting. In 1265 he celebrated Christmas at Woodstock Palace. The Sheriff of Oxford supplied 30 oxen, 100 sheep, 5 boars, 9 dozen fowl, salted venison from Wiltshire, salmon and lamprey from Gloucester, six tuns (or large wine casks) of new wine from Bristol and 13 from Northampton. By 1400 the preferred royal Christmas location was Eltham Palace, Henry IV spent 10 of 14 Christmases there. In 1400 the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus was



invited share festivities at the palace. In 1484 the Medieval writer, the 'Croyland Chronicler' wrote, 'During this feast of the Nativity, far too much attention was given to dancing and gaiety'. This was in reference to Richard III, who was then on the throne.

The household book of Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, shows how tables at Thornbury Castle groaned on The Feast of The Nativity 1507: "Dined 95 gentry, 107 yeoman, 97 garcons. Supped 84 gentry, 114 yeoman, 92 garcons." The Tudor and Stuart periods marked a historical high point of Christmas revels among royalty and nobility. Christmas Day was reserved for serious religious devotions, but frivolity reigned through the rest of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Traditional rules didn't apply; men dressed as women, jesters became Kings, and servants became masters. Misrule happened during festivals such as Easter, Mayday, Whitsunday and Midsummer's Eve, but the most extravagant was after Christmas on Twelfth Night. Someone would be elected to be the 'Lord of Misrule' to oversee the festivities. In 1561 Lord Robert Dudley, a favourite of Elizabeth I, was elected as the Lord of Misrule at Inner Temple. Elizabeth I discouraged Misrule because of her disliking of the public disorder that it caused. Even in the upstairs, downstairs world of the Victorians and Edwardians three centuries later, Twelfth Night balls would see social hierarchies cast aside, as the master of the house danced with the cook, and the mistress stepped out with the butler.

Shakespeare and other playwrights were much in demand over Christmas—Twelfth Night, for example, was probably performed before Elizabeth I's court during the revels of 1601–2. The Stuarts enjoyed the collaborations between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, who wrote and staged elaborate masques—a blend of poetry, propaganda, music, dance and extravagant costumes—often performed on New Year's Day or Twelfth Night.

Then came the Civil War. The defeat of Charles I led to the victorious Parliamentarians, or Puritans as they were aptly called, banning the festivities of Christmas. It was not until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 with Charles II, that festive Christmases made a come-back. However, many historians argue that it was not until Georgian times that Christmas really made a proper return, with a number of the traditions we now associate with the season becoming established. George I was not well-liked, he spoke little English, knew little about England, but he became known as "The Pudding King" for his reputed love of Christmas plum pudding. His wife Queen Charlotte has a larger claim to fame, it was she who introduced the Christmas tree to England, not the now traditional fir, but the yew. It was not a whole tree that was brought in and decorated, but a large bough. It sat well alongside the existing tradition of the yule log, not the chocolate confection of today. Traditionally, a huge log would be selected in the forest on Christmas Eve, decorated with ribbons, and dragged back home. This was known as '**Bringing in the Yule Log**'. The magical properties of the Yule Log were said to ensure good luck in the coming year to all those who lent a hand at pulling it over the rough ground. Once the yule log was brought to the fireplace, a blessing was said over it, asking that it should last forever. Wine was poured over the log at this point to make it feel welcome. It was then placed on the fire and lit with a torch made from a piece of wood left over from last year's Yule Log. After lighting, it was kept burning throughout the twelve days of Christmas.

The claim that Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria, introduced the Christmas tree, stems from the fact that he was responsible for the fir style of tree, still popular today. Several images of Queen Victoria and her family gathered around the such Christmas trees became popular with the public and they soon decorated homes around the country.

A combination of the introduction of the penny post in 1840, followed by cheaper commercial printing developments over the next 20 years, led to the practice of sending Christmas cards. Queen Victoria is credited with sending the first official Christmas card. It is during the Victorian era that the Christmas cracker also became a feature of the season. Queen Victoria cherished Christmas—"this happy, most blessed Festival"—as a family occasion, spent mostly at Windsor Castle or, after Albert's death (1861), at Osborne House, Isle of Wight. It can be argued that the Sandringham based family Christmases so beloved of Queen Elizabeth II, hark back to those of her ancestor Victoria.

We are now into a new era, that of Charles III, we have yet to see what changes that may bring to royal Christmas celebrations, if any.

## NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

### U3A TALKS



#### The Story of Motown Records: A Four Week Course

A series of four talks covering the history of one of the world's most successful independent record labels from Lee Wellbrook of Ilkley & District u3a

Every Tuesday at 2pm from 10 Jan to 31 Jan

Free – online via zoom

Book [here](#)



#### Sleep and Dreams

An interactive talk from Dr Bob Pullen of Prudhoe u3a explaining how our brains make us sleep and dream.

Mon 9 Jan at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

Book [here](#)



#### Fashion and Sustainability

Join Helen Howard, Canterbury u3a, for an introduction to the environmental impact of textiles.

Fri 3 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom

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.

## All Our Yesterdays



Our current initiative is called 'All Our Yesterdays', and involves a collection of stories from the 1950s and 60s which stand out in members' memories.

So far members have contributed stories about such things as Anthea from Bromsgrove u3a's time overseas in Aden, Sheila of St Austell u3a's sugar sandwiches and Barry of Cheadle Hulme u3a's discovery of rock 'n' roll.

Share your memories on the [All Our Yesterdays page](#).

## NETWORK NEWS ITEMS

*Network Website – <https://u3asites.org.uk/landr>*

Following all the problems with the website hosts for u3asites, the Network website is now back but only in skeleton form while we work to rebuild the structure and restore the contents. This process will take several weeks as all the photos, documents and website links etc have been lost.

If you have any suggestions of things you'd like to see on the website please send them to the webmaster using the contact page on the website. If you need access to any of the "missing" information please email [coordinator@landru3a.org.uk](mailto:coordinator@landru3a.org.uk).



Our own u3a migrated away from using u3asites, so has not been affected by the above issues!

## NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



"Mary Queen of Scots, James I (James VI of Scotland) and the witches of Husband's Bosworth, all make their appearance in the Guildhall's past.

Come along and help solve the conundrum of what happened to Bonnie Prince Charlie's troops after the battle of Swarkestone Bridge. Join us at the Guildhall Hall ...."

Tour Guide, Erica Statham will lead you on a free Guided Tour of Leicester's Guildhall, with an emphasis on 'The Scottish Connection'.

This event is part of a series of events to commemorate Burn's Night.

Tours are free - pre-booking is highly recommended.

Tours will take place on Saturday 21st and Saturday 28th of January only.

Times available are: 11:30am, 1pm & 2:30pm.

To book on-line: [www.leicestermuseums.org](http://www.leicestermuseums.org)

## BRADGATE DEER PARK TRAIL

SUNDAY 15TH JANUARY

Approx 7 miles

Refreshments: Deer Barn Tea  
Room

Dog Friendly Trail



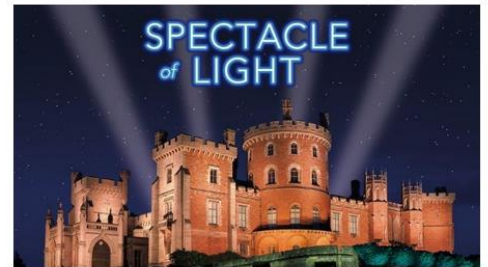
More information [here](#)

January 27, 2023 - February 19, 2023

### Spectacle of Light @ Belvoir Castle

**Belvoir Castle** Woolsthorpe Road, Grantham, Leicestershire

The magical after-dark experience for all the family! Discover the night-time wonder of Belvoir Castle as you follow a beautiful new Spectacle of Light and Sound around the glorious landscape.



### LDS fundraisers present: The Same Faces

Leicester's longest running improvised comedy group, The Same Faces, are making their Little Theatre debut. In this special fundraiser for Leicester Drama Society, the two-time Comedy Festival award finalists will deliver their unique blend of sketches, songs and one-liners – all made up on the spot and based on your suggestions!

It's all for a good cause, with 100% of proceeds going to the theatre. Come and enjoy this special night of improvised hilarity!

Book [here](#)

# FROM OUR MEMBERS

## ON BEING FOSTER or ADOPTIVE PARENTS from Julie Johnson

You may think the title odd, why write about fostering, surely most u3a members wouldn't be accepted as foster parents? Well, not for human children may be, but in fact those not working full time are ideal foster or adoptive parents for animals.

I lost both of a pair of cats within a few months of each other. They were around 16, quite a good age for cats, although I've had others get to 19 to 21. It was the first time for over 30 years I had been without a cat in the house, I hated being cat-less. On looking around, it was clear that in these tough financial times, many are struggling with the cost of keeping pets. Animal rescue organisations are finding themselves inundated with cats, dogs and other creatures, so it was to them I turned.

Some place animals into foster care, rather than having premises in the way that the RSPCA do. They have an army of volunteers who look after surrendered and abandoned animals in their own homes, whilst they are being vet checked, treated for injuries or other medical issues, neutered and vaccinated, as needed. Some animals find their forever homes with these volunteers, others, especially kittens, move on to those who want to give an animal a permanent home.

Only a day or two after I had passed my "home check", the story of 2 young cats appeared on Roxie's Rescue's Facebook pages. A lady had moved into rented accommodation, only to find a pair of cats had been left behind by the previous occupants of the house. Thankfully she took pity on them and provided food and water, but she couldn't afford to keep them long term. So the call went out, can anyone out there take these cats into their care? As they had been abandoned, nothing was known of their history. What names did they have? They hadn't been micro-chipped, so no one knew. They seemed to be okay with dogs, the lady who moved into the house had a dog. So, it was decided they would likely be okay with Darcy, my 5 year old black cocker spaniel.

They arrived at my house in cat carriers. We took the carriers upstairs so that they would be separated from Darcy, and could quietly start to settle in, time for introductions between animals would come later. After some hesitation the bolder tom cat emerged from his carrier, followed moments later by the daintier, more diffident female, but both went into hiding. A brief examination when they were collected, had revealed that the tom cat had not been neutered. That left a question mark over whether the female had been or not. One school of thought was that the original owners hadn't bothered to neuter either of them, the other was that they may have decided that if the female was neutered, they didn't need to bother with the male. Of course there is no sure way of telling whether a female cat has been spayed, apart from waiting to see if she came into season – a risky option the rescue didn't want to take.

Over the first few days they began to come out of their shells, but when presented with toys, they showed little inclination to play, despite being estimated as between 1 – 2 years old. Was their previous existence such that they had forgotten how to play? I ordered a cat tree from Amazon, of course it came in pieces and had to be put together. There was only an A4 page of diagrams to guide me. Thankfully it was enough. Apart from one initial mistake, soon corrected, I had a completed cat tree within an hour or so. I was quite

pleased with myself. It proved a hit with Ellie and Flynn as they had now become. Another favoured toy proved to be the cardboard box the tree had arrived in. However, I made a big mistake! Hearing cats playing in a box on the landing at 3.00 pm is one thing, but I left the box where it was when I went to bed, cats playing in a box at 3.00 am is another matter!

Three weeks after arriving it was off to the vets with Flynn for the snip. That was the earliest he could be booked in. It was a nervous three weeks hoping that Ellie had indeed been spayed or would not come into season. What should have been a quite quick and simple op, turned out to be a little more complicated. He had a retained testicle. Left inside his body it could have caused problems further down the line. He hated the plastic Elizabethan collar, designed to prevent him licking his wounds. As soon as he had recovered from the anaesthetic he wanted to get it off. Fortunately I already knew that cats and dogs can be very unhappy with these collars, so I had bought a donut instead. This stuffed fabric ring, with a hole in the middle, was much more comfortable around his neck. Three days later, I made the trip to the vets with Ellie. Would they find a scar consistent with a spay? The answer was no, she hadn't been spayed. Instead of the collar or a donut, I had a little recovery suit to prevent her from interfering with her incision. The little monkey proved quite adept at wriggling out of it though, so I had to use some stretchy bandage to keep the top end around her neck more securely and stop her escape tricks. Here they are with their post-op attire.



Neither had any complications following surgery. Now they are both recovered, they are proving they do know how to play, with each other, and with toys. How is it that a pair of creatures renowned for being able to sneak up on their prey quietly, can do a passable impression of a herd of elephants when playing tag upstairs? Flynn has become quite a vocal lad, he comes into the kitchen asking, politely, when his breakfast, supper, or treats are going to be served, at about the time they are due. Ellie is hanging back, but both are very affectionate, and have enough trust to present their tummies to me for a rub. They both have loud purring motors and have decided

my bed is THE place to sleep, including when I am in it. I wouldn't have it any other way!

I had a slightly early Christmas present to myself, officially adopting Ellie and Flynn a few days before. They certainly relished the tasters of turkey. Sadly, whilst they have a safe new home, there are many others who don't. Just after Christmas someone tied a 12-14 week old kitten in a carrier bag and threw it out like rubbish!! Thankfully someone rescued the little one and called Roxie's Rescue, he was warm and safe in foster within a very short time. There really is no excuse for abandoning pets. Yes, times are tough, and people are having to make choices between feeding their children and feeding their pets, but most animal rescue organisations will move heaven and earth to take them in.

Could you join the ranks of animal rescue volunteers? Those of us who are no longer working full time are in an ideal position to give rescued animals the kind of time and attention they need. Fostering provides an opportunity to care for animals, without the financial cost. Many rescues will pay for all the basics, as well as covering vets fees. Some volunteers are exclusively foster carers, others foster then adopt, or do

both. Seeing an animal recover and blossom is a really rewarding experience. Ellie and Flynn have still to settle in fully, but maybe when they have .....



*The animals may not be bosom buddies yet, but as you can see, progress is being made. Flynn ( a name of Irish origins, meaning the red haired or ruddy one) is the ginger and white tom, Ellie (meaning little) is the female. Darcy is Gaelic for the dark one.*

If you want more information about animal fostering, get in touch via my “ed” address as shown below.

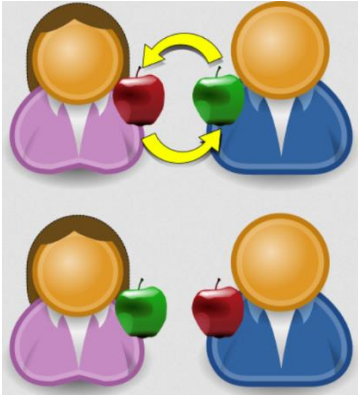
## DECLUTTER DEN

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.



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](mailto: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

### THE YEAR by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What can be said in New Year rhymes,  
That's not been said a thousand times?

The new years come, the old years go,  
We know we dream, we dream we know.

We rise up laughing with the light,  
We lie down weeping with the night.

### The Old Year

by John Clare

The Old Year's gone away  
To nothingness and night:  
We cannot find him all the day  
Nor hear him in the night:  
He left no footstep, mark or place  
In either shade or sun:  
The last year he'd a neighbour's face,  
In this he's known by none.

All nothing everywhere:  
Mists we on mornings see  
Have more of substance when they're here  
And more of form than he.

We hug the world until it stings,  
We curse it then and sigh for wings.

We live, we love, we woo, we wed,  
We wreath our brides, we sheet our dead.

We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,  
And that's the burden of the year.

He was a friend by every fire,  
In every cot and hall--  
A guest to every heart's desire,  
And now he's nought at all.

Old papers thrown away,  
Old garments cast aside,  
The talk of yesterday,  
Are things identified;  
But time once torn away  
No voices can recall:  
The eve of New Year's Day  
Left the Old Year lost to all



## THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR

By Alfred Lord Tennyson

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,  
And the winter winds are wearily sighing:  
Toll ye the church bell sad and slow,  
And tread softly and speak low,  
For the old year lies a-dying.

Old year you must not die;  
You came to us so readily,  
You lived with us so steadily,  
Old year you shall not die.

He lieth still: he doth not move:  
He will not see the dawn of day.  
He hath no other life above.  
He gave me a friend and a true true love  
And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year you must not go;  
So long you have been with us,  
Such joy as you have seen with us,  
Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim;  
A jollier year we shall not see.  
But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,  
And tho' his foes speak ill of him,  
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die;  
We did so laugh and cry with you,  
I've half a mind to die with you,  
Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,  
But all his merry quips are o'er.  
To see him die across the waste  
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,  
But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.  
The night is starry and cold, my friend,  
And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend,  
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes! over the snow  
I heard just now the crowing cock.  
The shadows flicker to and fro:  
The cricket chirps: the light burns low:  
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands, before you die.  
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you:  
What is it we can do for you?  
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.  
Alack! our friend is gone,  
Close up his eyes: tie up his chin:  
Step from the corpse, and let him in  
That standeth there alone,  
And waiteth at the door.  
There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,  
And a new face at the door, my friend,  
A new face at the door.

## And finally..... New Year thoughts

Forget past sorrows and woe and step into the new year with joy and happiness.

**Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us.**

A new year is like a fresh page in a book. So hold the pen my friend and create a wonderful tale for yourself.

**If you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello.**

Last year's words belong to last year's language, next year's words await another voice.