

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

**JUNE
2023**

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Well, where has the last year gone? It seems like only a few months ago I was wondering what to put in my report.

When I look back at what we have achieved, I think it has been a good year for our u3a. We have installed a new software system that will make the running and communication with members so much easier and more reliable. Our membership has risen back to nearly our pre-pandemic numbers and we also had a very successful Open Day. A number of groups have had such a lot of interest that we have had to add a second group and, in some cases, a third group. This is extremely pleasing and shows that we are doing something right.

Can I thank all of our Committee, Support Group & Group Leaders for all their hard work to achieve this success? Most of all I would like to thank all our members for supporting our efforts.

At every AGM we have to say goodbye to some of the committee and this year we are saying au revoir to 5 of our long serving committee who served the u3a for a total of 34 years. May I take this opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and dedication and it will seem very strange not to see their smiling faces at our meetings.

Clive

REMINDER

Our AGM is on 21st June before our General Monthly Meeting at the Community Centre. Please note this is not the usual second Wednesday of the month, but the third Wednesday. The AGM is not usually a lengthy affair.

WE WANT TO LET YOU KNOW

A Final Message from your Groups' Coordinator

It's been both a privilege and pleasure to have held this role since the "Birth" of our U3a - as Assistant for 3 years with Janet Downes and Coordinator for the past 4 years, currently working with Barbara. My thanks go to all our Group Organisers and their "Buddies" both past and present, who have worked so hard and with such enthusiasm to form the interesting groups we have - over 40 of them (including some from the past!) We've all learnt and supported one another as we've formed the role of Group Organiser and had a lot of fun along the way!

To all our U3a members please do continue to support our groups and come forwards to help and to make suggestions for new groups.

Thank you to our Committee members past and present for all your support and friendship. I'm certain our newly elected Coordinators will bring a renewed energy and enthusiasm to all!

I'll see you all around ... maybe I'll join some groups!
My very best wishes
Sheila

SmARTsy Fusion Glass Workshop



Friday 8th September from 10 till 12
Syston Community Centre.
Cost approximately £20 each but
depends on numbers. Each piece costs
£6 that you complete.
Please let me know if you are interested
giving your name and email address.

Elaine
Yarwood elaineyarwood@outlook.com

See more at <https://smartsy.co.uk>

MOSAIC WORKSHOP

To all who put their names down at the U3A open day for a workshop, I'm sorry I haven't got back to you yet. As there was a diversity of crafts people mentioned I have decided to offer the most popular choice which was making a mosaic. Also, I've decided to offer it from my home, as it's free and is easier to book, but can only take 6 people at a time. I can hold it Tuesday 10.30 am 25th July. I live very near to Syston station on Wanlip Road. It would be £5 to cover costs of materials. E mail me on helendidley105@msn.com if you'd like to attend.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP – IMAGINARIUM



On April 26th at our u3a Open Day, I staffed a table to promote the idea of a Storytellers Group. Keeping the brain agile is absolutely essential as we grow older, and exercising this muscle is just as important as the daily walk or the swim at the gym.

With the working title of Imaginarium, stolen from the great Walt Disney, I had lots of interesting conversations with lots of interesting people.

We all have a story in us, and with the help of a few props, I was delighted to have some of them shared. True or false, our imagination is a wonderful asset.

Here's just one example.

Look at the picture on the left. What does it say to you? What ideas come in to your head when you look at it?

I asked this question of one of our members – let's call him John (because that's his name) and here's what he said.

This item belongs to the Lord of the Manor. It's a huge country estate in the heart of England. He's growing old, and his heirs are well and truly fed up with his domineering ways and controlling influence on their lives.

They've had enough.

A plot is hatched. Poison is inserted to the shaving cream. When his Lordship cuts his face whilst shaving, the deed is done.

What happens next? I don't know yet....perhaps John will come to the first meeting of Imaginarium and tell us.....

17 people have so far indicated an interest in this new group, but unfortunately not all are available on the same day or time so I've had to aggregate the responses to come up with one that suits most people.

Our first meeting will therefore be on **Thursday June 8th at 2pm -4pm in the Syston Town Council Offices** where many of our u3a groups already meet. I'm hoping that enough of us attending will allow a charge of £1.00 to pay for the room rent.

Just as a little taster, and as it's a time with lots of Royal news, here's something to make you think. Have you or any of your family had an encounter with Royalty? What were the circumstances? Have you told the story?

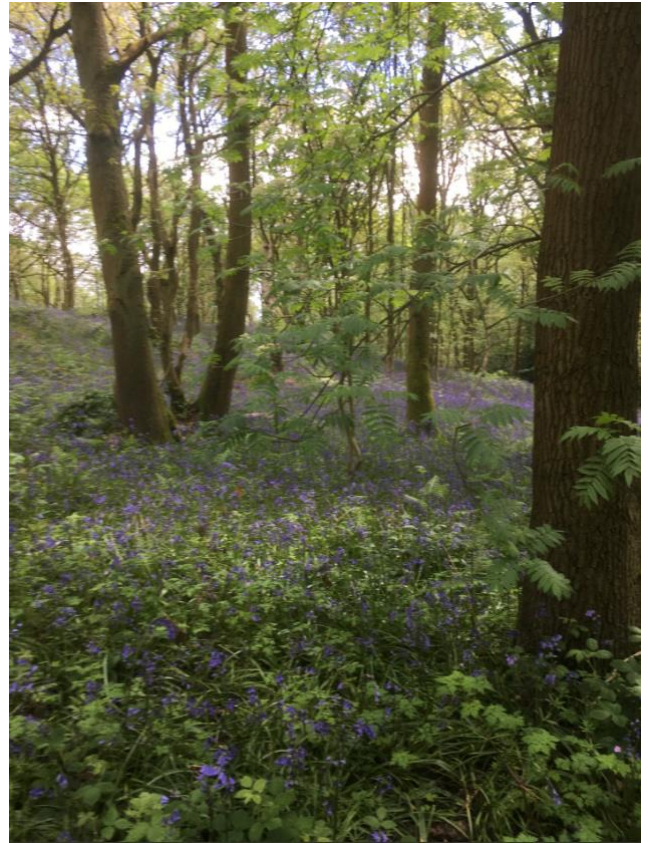
I have a story of how the presence of Princess Anne spoiled my trip to the Butchers Guild in London.....intrigued? Come along to our first meeting and help to shape how storytelling and using our imagination can be fun.

Pat Wherton

AMBLING GROUP

Our recent visit was to Outwoods.

We were lucky to have a sunny day which showed off the beautiful carpets of bluebells.
Followed by nice lunch at the excellent Olivia's cafe.



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

The first meeting of the new Art Appreciation Group was held in April and we were pleased to have 13 members attend. We introduced ourselves and each discussed the areas of the subject that most interested us. There were lots of ideas about the content and structure for the group.

At our second meeting we discussed two art movements. Angie gave us a very informative introduction to the Bauhaus movement and Mel introduced the Impressionists.



These both generated a lot of discussion amongst the other members and sparked interest in finding out more about the subjects.

It was agreed that it would be good to carry on with short introductions to art movements for the next few meetings. So our next meeting will be looking at the Post impressionists and Pop Art. As you can see we have an eclectic mix of interests and hope to expand our knowledge with more in depth talks and other activities.

If you would like to join us please contact Michael Wherton via the website. Our next meeting will be held on Weds 7th June at 2pm in the Syston Community Centre.

THE LIBRARY BOOK GROUP

The Library Book Group is a cosy little team and we have been meeting in various Syston Cafes.....unfortunately some of our venues have closed down and we have undertaken a few quick moves. As far as we know, this is not our fault!

So, economic circumstances permitting, our next meeting will be at The New World Cafe on Wednesday 28th June at 10am. Our shared book will be "The Paying Guests" by Sarah Waters, but there will also be time for general chat about other books we have read too.

On Wednesday 22 July, we will be discussing an old favourite: "Silas Marner" by George Eliot.

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

We were pleased to welcome several new members as a result of interest generated at the Open Day. Some are not new to family history research; others are looking to start their family history journey. A presentation was given on the basics of starting your research, and experienced members shared their tips on what they wished they'd been told in the early days of their own journey.

Next month we will be helping the newbies get started with some live demonstrations using whatever existing information they have. If you would like to join us, it doesn't matter how little you may know about your family, please get in touch with me email: sadu3familyhistory@gmail.com


CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

It was marvellous to have an injection of new members. People came along with various pieces to share. We discussed the different ways we go about our writing and chewed over how much research was needed in producing a piece. Is it necessary to be absolutely accurate, or is "poetic licence" acceptable? We decided that there was no one correct answer to that question.

Next month members have been challenged to write a fairy tale, but in a modern setting, and aimed at adults rather than children. You can join us at Syston Library from 2.00pm on Thursday 22nd June, but please contact me first – juliedjohnson@yahoo.com

FEELING CRAFTY GROUP

The group had a go at wet felting the other week.

This is a process where you take raw wool (practically straight off the  sheep) and turn it into felt...this involved a lot of hot water and rolling! But the results can be really good. The group took theirs home and next meeting we will embellish them with embroidery, beading and maybe some textile collage. I didn't get round to taking photos afterwards, but this is a photo of mine that I finished later.



PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

A baker's dozen of us went to the "1620s" House and Garden in Donington le Heath.

We are usually given an idea of what to look for by Steve so the theme this time was Circles, Buds, Flowers and Texture.





We had the opportunity to have a guided tour around the house and gardens giving us lots of inspiration.

Although the grounds are quite small, they are packed with flowers, fruits, trees and herbs.

Everything has labels telling us more.

Some I found interesting were

" Sneezewort" Chew the root to ease toothache and combat flatulence.

" Meadow Rue" was used as a powerful laxative, and did you know, the Romans were convinced that "Gardoon" was an aphrodisiac! One many of us would like to try is " Cowslip Ointment" supposedly

takes away spots and wrinkles.

It's lovely to have a few hours with friends discovering how to get good photos of Circles, Buds, Flowers, and Textures.

We all met up at the excellent coffee shop for a drink and cake and to compare pictures.

If you don't know the " 1620s" house and garden, please look it up. It's well worth the £5 entry fee (which by the way is valid for a year)

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

June 21st, 2023: Note this is the 3rd Wednesday of the Month

Julie Johnson - (Our Syston u3a Vitality Editor) "My not so prim and proper Victorian ancestors"

The Victorians are generally thought to be very prim and proper but come along to my talk about my own Victorian ancestors and you'll see that is a sweeping generalisation.

As some of you know, I have been researching my family history for several years. I've found runaway brides, bigamists, a mistress, "lodgers" and "housekeepers" who were rather more than that, sons and daughters who were really grandchildren and plenty more besides.

Let me tell you about some of them.





July 12th, 2023: Roxanne Dinsdale, belly dancer: ‘The myths of Middle Eastern dance’.

Come along and hear all about the funny anecdotes which have happened over the years as a professional belly dancer and performer.

This includes a demonstration of Middle Eastern dance plus a rummage through costumes throughout the ages and how they have developed and what styles of dance they are used for.

August 9th, 2023: Philip Caine, Barrow to Baghdad & Back Again

(My career story) My talk begins with me leaving school . . . I talk about how my career began as a chef and hotel manager. My 17 years working the oil rigs in the North Sea. Followed by operating projects in Algeria & Nigeria.. My time in Kazakhstan & Russia was particularly exciting. Not to mention the most dangerous place of all . . . Baghdad. My career culminated in Dubai where I ran an oil services company. The talk is full of interest, anecdotes, humour, and inspiration. I conclude with the writing of my latest novel (currently number 10).



LAST MONTH'S GM

Peter Barratt talked to us again about his great grandmother Alice Hawkins, this time telling us about how her statue had come to be produced and placed in Leicester's Market Square. He began with a brief account of her life – below is a little more detail about her – along with a photo of Peter with his ancestor's statue.

Although Alice was resident in the city when she became prominent in the suffragette movement, she was actually born in Stafford in 1863. She was one of 9 children, 6 girls and 3 boys, born into a poor working-class family. She met husband Alfred when she was 20, they had both come to work in Leicester where they married. He was very supportive of her efforts to gain voting rights for women.

She worked in the shoe trade, where earnings for women were half what they were for men working in the same factories. She spent much of her working life at Equity Shoes on Narborough Road. She also campaigned for better working conditions and equal pay, at a time when the local unions were not always supportive.

The bicycle was a key item for working class women of that time. It provided them with a means of cheap travel and the freedom to get out and about. It allowed Alice to go to events to both listen and give speeches. She once cycled from Leicester to Great Yarmouth! Alice started the Leicester branch of the suffragette movement; the Pankhurst's came up several times to speak at events. They had their headquarters in a shop on Bowling Green Street. The family lived on Mantle Road, off Tudor Road. The fact that the Pankhurst's sometimes sent their own car to collect Alice for events caused quite a stir in the neighbourhood.

February 1907 was a key point in the suffragette movement. There was a rally in Hyde Park which coincided with the opening of parliament. Those present were hoping to hear that "votes for women" would be part of the agenda for the forthcoming sitting. When their hopes were dashed, they marched on parliament. Mounted police charged the women in an effort to break up the protest. Alice was one of 29 women arrested and taken to the police station near the House of Commons. The Pankhursts' were also part of their number. They were charged with disorderly conduct and bailed at 10.00pm that day. On appearing in court, they were given 14 days in jail and taken off to Holloway. The jail was known as Holloway Castle. Hyde Park was again the setting for a rally the following year at which half a million gathered. Alice was one of the speakers. A boat was hired and moored near the Houses of Parliament to advertise the event.



Alfred's support for Alice was highlighted when in 1909 Churchill came to speak at the Palace Theatre. He was not in favour of votes for women. Alice and 4 other ladies were refused entry, but Alfred went in, heckled Churchill and was thrown out. Alice and her comrades protested outside, which led to her second arrest. He later travelled to Bradford to do the same, again he was ejected, but this time he was thrown down some stairs and broke his leg. He was awarded £100 in damages for an illegal ejection. Although he is said to have drunk the money away.

One of the tactics used by jailed suffragettes was to go on hunger strike. Alice was no exception. Having been given the option of a fine or jail following the Palace Theatre incident, Alice and her colleagues refused to pay. They were sent to Welford Road, after 4 days of refusing food, the governor released them. As a result, the ladies were presented with hunger strike medals, as were all suffragettes who took such action.

Alongside her suffragette work, Alice continued to be active in the trade union. When the men did a deal with the shoe bosses that excluded women, a separate union was formed for the women. They went on strike and succeeded in getting the employers to sit down with them. Later, Alice was invited to speak to Lloyd George regarding conditions in the shoe

trade. The minutes of that meeting reveal that Alice took the opportunity to raise the issue of women's votes, "The shoe women have told me they demand the right to vote" she told him.

Tragedy struck the family in 1912 when they lost their 16 yr. old son Tom. The Pankhursts' were amongst those who sent a letter of sympathy, still in the possession of the family. The following year Oadby Golf Course had turf dug out forming the words, "No votes for women, no votes for men". This led to Alice being sent to jail again. Activities were stepped up, with failed attempts to set fire to the council offices at Market Harborough and to Stoughton Hall. This led to a Kitty Marion, the suffragette expert on such matters, being sent up to Leicester to show them how to succeed. This was followed by Blaby Railway station being razed to the ground. Alice was suspected, but not proven, of being involved.

The outbreak of WWI led to a cessation in activity, as everyone threw their efforts into supporting the war. Alice had 3 sons serve in separate units. The war was felt to have aided the fight to gain women the vote, a view which Alice did not share. Whilst 1918 saw some women over 30 being given the right to vote, that did not include working class women like Alice. She finally got the vote, along with women in general, in 1928. She died in 1946 aged 83 and was buried in a pauper's grave in Welford Road cemetery. A headstone has since been erected by the family.

In 2018 a bronze statue of Alice, produced by sculptor Sean Hedges-Quinn, was sited in the Market Square. Funding was provided by Jamie Lewis through his charitable organisation. The former Equity Shoe building is part of his portfolio of student accommodation, having



been converted some years ago. It was formally unveiled on 4th February that year. There was also a special exhibition of suffragette material in Westminster Hall, at which the family collection of memorabilia, the largest and most important collection of its' kind, was displayed. 100,000 people were said to have visited.

More recently, on International Women's Day 8th March 2023, a blue plaque was unveiled at Mantle Road, where Alice used to live. Local school children took part in the event, which made TV news coverage.



CHANGE OF PLAN – NOW A DAY TRIP

THE END OF THE PIER SHOW

AT CROMER

Leaving Syston at 7.40 a.m. on Tuesday, 26th September 2023 for a matinee performance and arriving home at 9.30 p.m. Time for a wander around Cromer and lunch prior to the show.

Total cost of coach and the ticket for the End of the Pier Show is £50.00.

Please contact me by email on theatre@u3ameltonmowbray.co.uk

Angela Fielding

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

U3A TALKS



Leo – The World's First Business Computer

From cakes to computers – Join Neville Lyons to hear about LEO, the World's First Business Computer.

Fri 16 Jun at 2pm

Free – online via zoom



Expedition Cruising: An Antarctic Adventure

Neil Stevenson of Up Holland & District u3a shares his experience of visiting the Falkland Islands, S. Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsular

Thurs 8 Jun at 2pm

Free – online via zoom



Into the Mind of an Artist. Van Gogh Part 1

Catherine Stevenson of Newcastle u3a looks at the life and works of Van Gogh.

Thurs 22 Jun at 10am

Free – online via zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Share your family memories of WW2

You are invited to take part in 'Their Finest Hour', a Heritage Lottery-funded nationwide campaign organised by the University of Oxford to collect and preserve the everyday stories and objects of the Second World War.

As these personal stories are fast fading from living memory, it is vital to preserve them and the wartime objects that often accompany them. As well as artefacts from the front, there are the experiences of those at home, including women and children.

How can you help?

- Subscribe to a national email group where u3a members can share views, air your Q&As with 'Their Finest Hour', and generally keep in the loop at <https://forms.office.com/e/ctt2eu6v2c>
- Attend the u3a Online Learning Event, date tbc.
- Share this message in your u3a, on Facebook, and in your newsletters.
- Go to a 'Digital Collection Day' to bring your stories or volunteer at it.
- Run a collection in your activity group over several meetings.
- Go online and upload your war-related stories and materials at <https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/>

'Digital Collection Days' are being run at a host of museums, libraries, services charities, and schools across the country, from Belfast, Cumbria, and Edinburgh down to Essex, London, Oxfordshire, and South Wales. u3a members volunteered at one of the first 'Days' in Oxford:

"It's like 'Flog It!' or 'Antiques Roadshow' without the valuation! There's so much you can do, from meet-and-greet to what I enjoyed the most, showing someone their husband's war record online - he flew Lancasters - helping them understand more about their family story."

Ally Edwards, u3a Evesham and District, 10 March

There are connections between 'Their Finest Hour' and u3a groups, for example, genealogy, local history, creative writing, photography, storytelling, getting our members confident in using technology, and combating loneliness. Find out more on <https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/>

Pilot Session – Family Photos and Family Histories

Wednesday 14th June 10.30 am On Zoom

Most of us have collections of photos, however small, that show our families' lives in the past. Photos are often the most common and sometimes the only record we have. This pilot session will explore how to make the most of family photograph collections. The session is led by social historians Laura King (University of Leeds) and Jane Hamlett (Royal Holloway, University of London). Both specialise in the history of the family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The pilot session is a part of a new project that Laura and Jane are developing that explores the way families document their lives and experiences through personal photography. The session will provide an initial toolkit for exploring the meanings of personal photo collections. Laura and Jane will give a short talk about the topic, before there's some time for discussion and sharing a photo. Themes will include:

- Thinking about the choices people made about which photographs to keep and how to preserve them – how do the ways our relatives assembled their photos affect how we understand them today?
- Interpreting relationships and reading emotional meaning in family photographs – how can we interpret pose and facial expression? Who is included in family photos and why?
- Understanding the social context of family photos – what can photos tell us about how our relatives experienced home life, work and leisure?

If you would like to, please do bring a family photo to share with us online for discussion.

Click here to enrol: <https://forms.gle/ink1DMdjLCRXEReb6> or email Maggy Simms at slp@u3a.org.uk

Special Performances from West Leicestershire u3a

There must be something in the water that feeds into West Leicestershire which turns u3a members into musical performers. They can now offer other u3as the opportunity to feature these performances at monthly meetings or special events.

THAT BAND

Featuring lead, rhythm and bass guitars, drums and "other percussion" and vocals, they will take you on a musical journey through the songs of the 60s, 70s and 80s with the occasional instrumental for good measure, and to give your vocal cords a rest. I forgot to mention you are invited to join in and sing along.

The performance can be geared to your time frame just discuss your requirements with Gary on 07890 218581.

They recently performed for members of Lutterworth u3a –

"...what a great performance we have just enjoyed at Lutterworth u3a's 20th Anniversary lunch from That Band! I am sure that if any u3a is thinking of having an event where they would like some entertainment, they could not go wrong. If they want something other than a band, they should have Juke Box Jury. We have loved both."

NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



1620s House and Garden,
Donington le Heath, LE67 2FW
<https://1620shouse.org.uk/whats-on/>
e: 1620shouse@leics.gov.uk
t: 01455 290429 (10am - 4pm)



The Bard as a Botanist Talk and Tour
Sunday 11th June, 5:30pm – 7pm
£6 per person. Pre-booking Advised.
Join us in the idyllic setting of our gardens for an intriguing talk on Shakespeare's relationship to Botany and a tour around our Gardens to discover the plants mentioned.



Picnic for Pa
Sunday 18th June, 3:30pm – 5:30pm
Adults: £18.50, Child: £12. Pre-booking Essential.
Show your appreciation for the father figure in your life with our special Father's Day picnic!



The King's Lutenist
Friday 30th June, 7pm – 9pm
£8 per person. Pre-booking Essential.
Join Ayres and Graces for a delightful evening of song and poems as they present, 'The Kings Lutenist' – a celebration of the music of Philip Rosseter and his contemporaries on the 400th anniversary of his death.



Garden Talk, Tour, and Cream Tea
Sunday 2nd July, 6pm – 7:30pm
£10 per person. Pre-booking Essential.
Our wonderful Garden Volunteer, Michael Arkle, will deliver an engaging talk & tour around our fantastic 17th century style gardens followed by a little Cream Tea.

National Garden Scheme



<https://ngs.org.uk>

The National Garden Scheme gives visitors unique access to over 3,500 exceptional private gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands, and raises impressive amounts of money for nursing and health charities through admissions, teas and cake.

Thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors we have donated over £63 million to nursing and health charities, and in 2022 donated £3.11 million. Our beneficiaries include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK and The Queen's Nursing Institute.

The gardens you can visit range from small to massive, town houses to estates, all open to welcome visitors, open by appointment only, but all fabulous gardens in their own right and with a huge variety of themes. There are several to choose from locally.

Simply go to the website and click on the *Find A Garden* tab to start browsing. You can even make a virtual visit to many of the gardens by going to the *Virtual Garden Visits* tab. And don't forget to have a look in the shop where you'll find cards, book and gifts as well as details of lectures and online even.

Bradgate Park Summer Fayre



📅 Sat, 10 Jun 2023, 10:00 - 17:00 📍 Bradgate Park

On Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th June, a Summer Fayre will be coming to Bradgate Park!

We'll be kicking off the summer season with a fun-filled weekend in the heart of Bradgate Park! Featuring live music, hot food and drink, a bustling marketplace of local independent makers, and plenty to keep you entertained - including a vintage carousel, traditional fete games, and have-a-go archery.

Soak up the summer vibes and while away the weekend on the Park. Grab a bite to eat from one of our delicious local food stalls, peruse the wonderful work of local artists and makers in our craft marketplace, and then dance the afternoon away to our live music, including Impact Steel Band.

For little ones, there'll be a vintage carousel and have-a-go archery, plus face painting and children's crafts in the Ruins.

Entry is free (car parking charges apply) - so pop by and join in with the summer fun.

FROM OUR MEMBERS

The Shoe Manufacturing Trade - why the Riley and Hawkins families came to Leicester.

The return visit from Peter Barratt, grandson of the suffragette Alice Hawkins to our May GM raised some questions in my mind. Both Alice and husband Alfred was also born in Stafford. Both the Riley and Hawkins families moved to Leicester in the 1870's and worked in the shoe trade. But why did they leave Stafford and migrate to Leicester?

In short, although Stafford had a long history in shoemaking, by the 1870's Leicester had overtaken it. Employment opportunities in this sector had increased in Leicester, but declined in Stafford. To answer the question in more detail we need to go back in time and look at how shoe manufacture was originally undertaken, and how and why that changed.

Shoemaking started out as a cottage industry. Shoemakers, or cordwainers as they were sometimes called, made new footwear to meet the needs of their local community. It was often a family enterprise with a man's wife and children involved in some of the processes. It was considered to be a skilled trade. A boy might become an apprentice, then as a young man move on to journeyman status (nothing to do with journeying, more to do with proving and improving your skills) before becoming a master craftsman and perhaps taking on his own apprentice. Cobblers were different, they repaired footwear, and were considered inferior – hence the derogatory term “cobbled together”. At one time cobblers were not allowed to use new leather or make brand new shoes, but some were resourceful enough to get around the edict by making more affordable shoes out of old leather. Over the years the lines between cordwainers and cobblers did become blurred, but some jealously guarded their status as cordwainers.

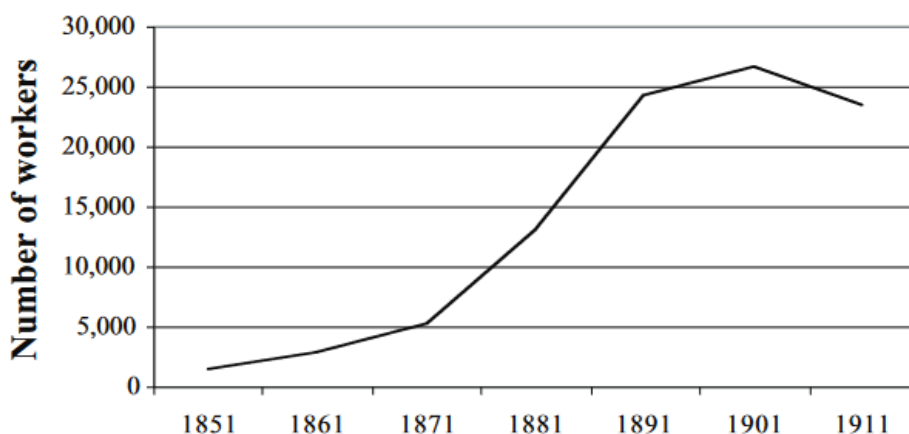
A combination of the increasing home population, the needs of the military at war, and of those who had emigrated to Canada and Australia, meant that the demand for footwear was increasing. By the late 1700's there were potentially lucrative contracts with the government to be had, along with relatively new export markets to tap into. This led to larger scale manufacturing, but it was still largely cottage based. Entrepreneurs invested in leather in larger quantities than the cottage-based shoemakers could possibly afford to do. They employed people to make footwear for them in their own homes. Again, this was often a family-based effort. Stafford became one of the centres for this changing approach. Leicester in the meantime was very much a centre for the hosiery trade, with shoemaking limited to the needs of locals.

William Horton, probably the best-known shoemaker at the time, was considered the father of shoemaking industry in Stafford and founded his business in 1767 when he was 17 years old. This remarkable man went on to have the largest shoemaking business in Stafford and supplied shoes all over the world. He secured many of those valuable contracts with the government, probably through his connections with local MP Richard Brinsley Sheridan (better known as a playwright). The process might have continued unaltered right through the Georgian and Victorian eras had it not been for developments across the pond.

Mechanisation came to the shoe making industry, particularly in the 1850's. American made sewing machines capable of handling the stitching of leather began to appear. They paved the way for a shift from home-based manufacture to factory production. Although many processes were still undertaken by "outworkers". These new developments were not popular in Stafford. In October 1855 over 500 shoemakers, both men and women, attended a mass meeting in Stafford's Market Square. They were protesting against the trial of a sewing machine by Edwin Bostock, one of the town's leading shoe manufacturers. The meeting passed a number of resolutions including one proposed by Mr A. Brew and seconded by Mr A. Prosser which condemned machinery as 'injurious to the interests of the working classes' and solicited the higher and middle classes of Stafford to assist them "with their sympathy and support." The proposer, Andrew Brew, was Irish, and until his death in 1866 he was in the forefront of the fight by Stafford's shoemakers to prevent the introduction of machinery. Not surprisingly, they didn't garner much support from the upper classes. A series of strikes were called to resist the introduction of the sewing machine and the factory system in the industry in general. These only succeeded in delaying rather than preventing the changes.

Meanwhile, over in Leicester, attitudes concerning the use of machinery were rather different. Thomas Crick was already using rolling machines to harden leather, along with cutting machines. The introduction of sewing machines was simply seen as another stage in mechanisation. Crick was also responsible for reintroducing and refining a forgotten process for riveting the sole to the upper by machine. Other developments are credited to Stead and Simpson in the late 1850's (yes, they did date back to the 19th century, starting manufacture in Cank Street in 1854). None of these changes were met with resentment or resistance. The acceptance of mechanisation in Leicester is said to have been behind the expansion of the shoe trade here. In 1863 it was reported that there was a 'scarcity . . . of operatives in the shoe manufactories of Leicester' It was this combination of factors that brought workers from Stafford and other locations to the city. Local directories, which by this time are fairly reliable, reflect the increase in the number of wholesale shoe manufacturers. There were 23 manufacturers in 1861, 80 in 1864, 117 in 1870, and 193 in 1877. A number of the established hosiery manufacturers branched out into shoe making. The graph below shows the number of people reported on census data as employed in the shoe trade.

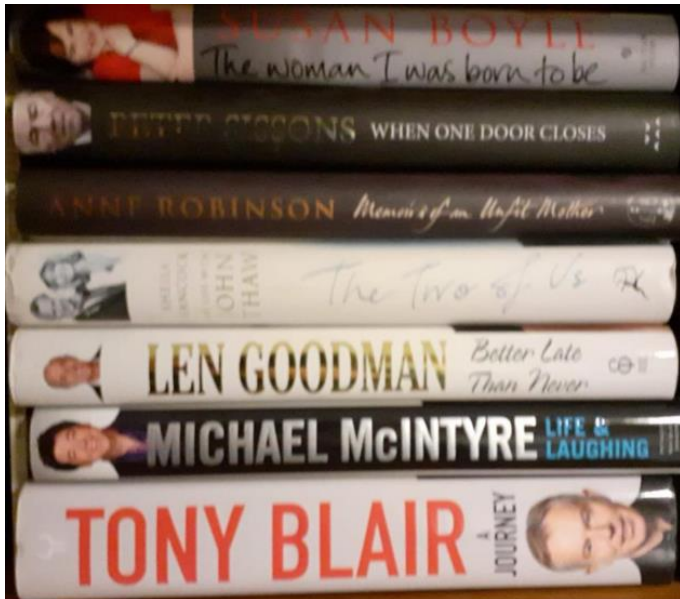
DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOOT AND SHOE INDUSTRY IN LEICESTER



The largest increases in the number of businesses and staff happened in the 1870's, precisely the period when the Hawkins and Riley families moved to the city. Whether without those migrations, Alice Hawkins would have become the leading suffragette she did, is open to debate.

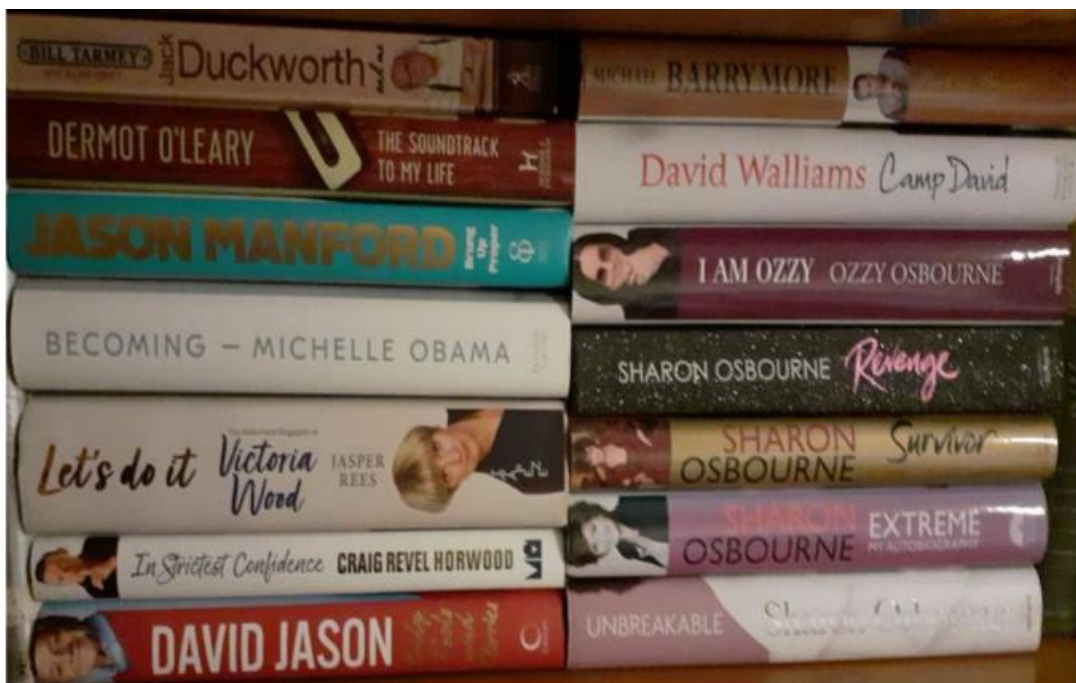
DECLUTTER DEN

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



Dave Steadman has some books on offer. If you are interested in any of them, please contact him -

Email: dave.steadman@talktalk.net



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

POETRY CORNER

Summer approaches, (although as you read this, the met office will tell you it already has, but I always think of summer as beginning with the solstice) here are few poems for the time of year -

Apple Blossoms by Horatio Alger

I sit in the shadow of apple-boughs,
In the fragrant orchard close,
And around me floats the scented air,
With its wave-like tidal flows.
I close my eyes in a dreamy bliss,
And call no king my peer;
For is not this the rare, sweet time,
The blossoming time of the year?

I lie on a couch of downy grass,
With delicate blossoms strewn,
And I feel the throb of Nature's heart
Responsive to my own.
Oh, the world is fair, and God is good,
That maketh life so dear;
For is not this the rare, sweet time,
The blossoming time of the
year?

I can see, through the rifts of the apple-
boughs,
The delicate blue of the
sky,
And the changing clouds with their
marvellous tints
That drift so lazily by.
And strange, sweet thoughts sing through
my brain,
And Heaven, it seemeth near;
Oh, is it not a rare, sweet time,
The blossoming time of the year?

Apple Blossom by Louis MacNeice

The first blossom was the best blossom
For the child who never had seen an
orchard;
For the youth whom whisky had led astray
The morning after was the first day.

The first apple was the best apple
For Adam before he heard the sentence;
When the flaming sword endorsed the Fall
The trees were his to plant for all.

The first ocean was the best ocean
For the child from streets of doubt and
litter;
For the youth for whom the skies unfurled
His first love was his first world.

But the first verdict seemed the worst
verdict
When Adam and Eve were expelled from
Eden;
Yet when the bitter gates clanged to
The sky beyond was just as blue.

For the next ocean is the first ocean
And the last ocean is the first ocean
And, however often the sun may rise,
A new thing dawns upon our eyes.

For the last blossom is the first blossom
And the first blossom is the best blossom
And when from Eden we take our way
The morning after is the first day.

On the Edge of Summer by

Delice Arleen Skelly

On the edge of summer
When cherry blossoms bloom
They make sad faces smile
Pink bewitching flower
With power to beguile.

On the edge of summer
Green hedgerows growing spry
Woodbine's singular spell
Sparks hawthorn harmony
'tis place where fairies dwell.

On the edge of summer
White brimstone butterfly
Dog rose grows fancy-free
Forget-me-knots flutter
An early bee I see.

On the edge of summer
Hedgerow is a busy place
Enthralled by this small sphere
World of innate wonder
Spellbinding every year.

And finally.....

The change of season from spring to summer often happens in May when the air warms and white seems to be the colour of the countryside. Most familiar of the white blossoms is the hawthorn, the may-tree itself. Barely a hedgerow is without one. It is accessible and common, and its froth of white flowers are attractive - yet no flower is considered more unlucky. To take hawthorn blossom into a house was thought to invite illness and death. Children were forbidden to bring it home. The reasons for such terrifying tales are not clear. Perhaps it is the smell, sometimes sweet and sometimes reminiscent of rotting flesh. The white blossom is followed by blood-red haws and the floral combination of red and white sit uneasily together in many people's view. For whatever reason, hawthorn blossom provokes the most powerful superstitions of our entire British flora.

Adlestrop – by Edward Thomas

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his
throat.

No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

