



LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

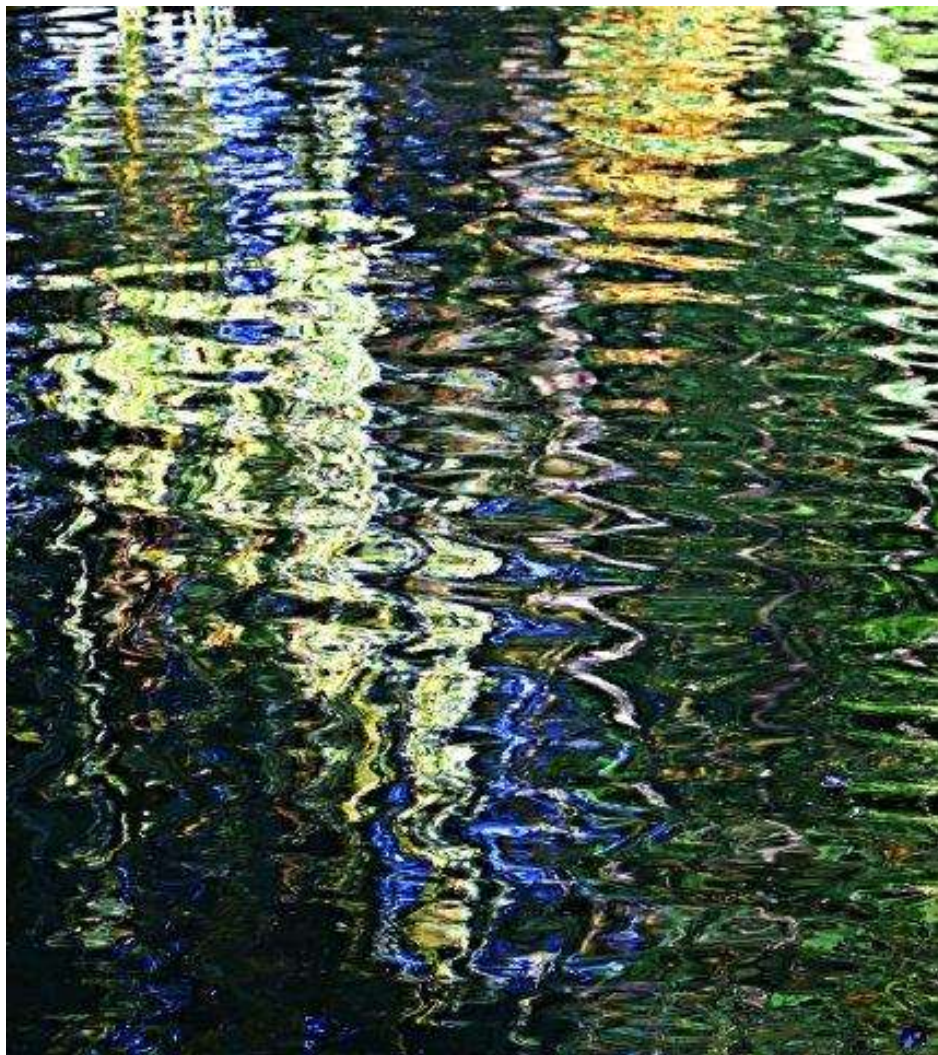
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## Leicester Newsletter

October 2020

[u3asites.org.uk/leicester](http://u3asites.org.uk/leicester)



Ripples

*Photo by Richard Taylor (Convenor Digital Photography Group)*

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Membership Information	2
Message from the Chair - Tony Davison	3
News from the Region	4
News from Third Age Trust – National AGM	5
Older People Profile Poll	5
The Groups Coordinator: Neil Taylor	6
Meet the Convenor: Susan Martin-Butt	7
Reports from Groups and from Individuals	
National High Street Project – by Sheelagh Dobson & Jeremy Whistle	8
Lifetime Disappointment - by Mike Westmoreland	9
Where There’s a Will - by Margaret Bowerman	10
The Artist at Work - by Tony Locke	11
Digital Photography Group - by Cliff Ault	12
My Claim To Fame - by Steph Smith	13
Creative Writing – Competition results by Stella Memory	14
Winning entry by Jim McCallum	14
Winning entry by Steph Smith	16
Cryptic Crossword	17
Crossword Solution	19
About the Newsletter	20

## **Membership Information**

The membership stands at 423. There has been one resignation since last month. Because of the current situation we are not encouraging new members but are happy to provide information about our activities when we are able to resume them.

Most, if not all, physical meetings of Leicester U3A are currently suspended due to the changing Coronavirus situation.

*Margaret Potter (Membership Secretary & Temporary Editor)*

## Message from the Chair

Well, the health crisis shows no sign of abating. If anything it seems to be getting worse, at least as far as the outlook for U3A activities is concerned. The recently introduced “Rule of Six” and the ban on visiting private houses and gardens make any resumption of most U3A group activities seem even more remote. Indeed the Prime Minister has said that not only are restrictions likely to last for another six months but that further measures might be needed as well. From being a temporary inconvenience the virus seems to be developing into a permanent change in the way we live our lives. I find it quite alarming that the government has taken to referring to “the new normal”. Sitting on the sofa on your own watching live sporting events on the television is just not the same as enjoying the same event with friends and family at Welford Road or Grace Road.



On a more positive note, many organisations, including art galleries and universities, have started to put activities on line to help all of us who have been stuck at home. Many of these have been mentioned in the regular Newssheet. One example is Queen’s University Belfast, which has offered free on-line courses for beginners in various languages. With the U3A Irish Group having been inactive for the past few months, I found the Queen’s Irish course very useful. Of course, despite the restrictions, it has been possible for some organisations to resume activities in ways that conform to the government’s guidelines. Away from the U3A the Ramblers’ Association has resumed its walks programme. It was on one of these walks a couple of weeks ago that I saw a kingfisher on the canal near Foxton Locks. This was the first time in my life that I had seen one, so I do have something positive with which to remember the 2020 Lockdown!

Let us hope that by next month the government will have given us something to actually look forward to. Everything it has tried so far has proved virtually useless. Leicester was put under special measures at the beginning of July and yet the infection rates here are as high as they were at the start. The two most likely solutions to the crisis are always just around the corner. Like a mirage, the promised vaccine always seems to be a few months away. Perhaps the government will finally get its “world beating” track and trace system to actually work. At least the NHS app is finally available and I have dutifully downloaded it. My phone keeps

telling me that it is looking for contacts but so far has not found any. I should be pleased about that but, in a strange way it also makes me feel more isolated.

Tony Davison (*Chair Leicester U3A*)

**Extracts from the September Newsletter from our East Midlands  
Trustee – Jean Hogg. *East Midlands Conference***

I do not imagine anyone will be surprised to learn that a decision has been made to postpone our Conference once more. The new date is: **Wednesday 5th May 2021**



I am sure we all hope that by then we will be able to meet together safely. However, the Regional team and I really want to have an event before that, when members from across the Region can come together.

We are planning a virtual event on **Wednesday 28th October 10.30-12.30**

This will be on Zoom and I will send out information about how to join in due course. We hope you will find it interesting so please note the date! There will be four short presentations.

- Hilary Jones, Vice Chair - update on the Development Plan
  - Michaela Moody - update on the work of the Post Lockdown working group
  - Paul Martinez – update on the planned recruitment campaign
  - Doreen Raine – Raising awareness of diversity and inclusion issues
- There will also be time for questions and a short break.

**Publicity** We are still hoping to find someone in the East Midlands who would be interested in taking on a role which would involve dealing with the media and raising the profile of U3A. If you think this sounds interesting, please let me know and I can let you have further information. *Thank you to all committee members and group conveners for all you continue to do to keep your U3As going under these challenging circumstances. We all know the difference that our activities make to people's lives. Keeping in touch with other U3As and sharing ideas is really beneficial and supportive and I have really enjoyed joining some virtual Network meetings and hearing all that is happening.*

I can be contacted on: [jean.hogg@u3a.org.uk](mailto:jean.hogg@u3a.org.uk) or phone: 0744 322 1688

## **U3A National AGM**

The AGM this year took place on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September as a virtual event. Our representatives were Bob Holness (Treasurer) and Neil Taylor (Groups Coordinator). A full report will appear in the next newsletter.

**And... From the latest National Newsletter...**

### **Let's Change the Narrative about Older People**

Have you ever heard someone in their third age being patronised by the language used towards them? Perhaps you don't feel like an 'old dear' or aren't too keen on anyone other than your grandchildren referring to you as 'grandad'?

In early October, we'll be launching a media campaign to help tackle some of these negative perceptions. The news coverage will be centred on the results of a survey (below) and we need your help. Thank you for taking the time on this - it is very much appreciated.

**[Help us by filling out this poll](#)**

*Unless you specifically request to share your details, all of your answers will remain anonymous and your answers could help us build a case to begin redressing the balance on many of society's views towards those who are retired.*

## Update from the Groups Coordinator

Congratulations to Natural History, which successfully resumed its meetings on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September at Everard's Meadows nature reserve on Soar Valley Way. There is ample parking, a café and a toilet and the group passed around details of access before the meeting.

They took great care to look at the Personal Risk Assessment and the main Outdoor Risk Assessment before giving the go ahead, and Richard Edwards, the Convenor, took great care to point out to people items to consider. On receipt of the replies the meeting went



ahead, even discovering rare plants! Next month they will meet and visit Shady Lane Arboretum to look for fungi, followed by a visit to the Cow and Plough for coffee - I'm also advised they do really good chips there too! Also, Shakespeare and Table Tennis were not far behind, but in their case the guidelines, and the restrictions to six people, got in the way.

Architecture and Design are actively planning for the future, as are Parks and Tea Room Strolls - hopefully. Understandable difficulties around things in cafes etc. are causing concern there. But each group's personal and group risk assessments are still in place for the day when they can meet. As Liz Brandow, Convenor of Shakespeare says (or someone equally famous) "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...!!"

Jackie Caunt and Table Tennis' difficulties were around initially the readiness of Parklands, as a leisure centre, to invite people back: lots of understandable difficulties there. In the end a meeting just couldn't take place because of limitations to two to a table and the costs that would have entailed. But again, the Risk Assessments are in place for when the group can meet.

**Finally, Convenors will remember that I sent around a Groups Activity through Coronavirus email to get to know what groups had been managing to do. The expectation was to receive a description from each group, from as good an activity as possible under the circumstances to just having a talk - just as valid. Unfortunately, at time of writing over a third of the groups haven't replied. Just an acknowledgement and single sentence is all that's needed and much appreciated.**

**Here's hoping we can get back to normal, at least in the medium term!**

*(Neil Taylor - Groups Coordinator)*

## Meet the Convenor

This month's Convenor is Susan Martin-Butt, Convenor of the Architecture Group

*Q: Are you originally from Leicester?*

No I'm a Canadian from Quebec where my mother and sister still live.

*Q: What brought you to Leicester U3A?*

I married an Englishman and we came back to his house in Leicester in 1991 intending to look after his elderly mother. Sadly she died before we got here. I have been here ever since though I go back to Canada every year – normally!

*Q: What did you do before you retired?*

Strategic Planning in higher education, mostly in Canada but latterly at De Montfort University.

*Q: What made you join Leicester U3A, & when?*

I had heard of it from John Cook who also retired from DMU, and joined in 2009 after my husband died.

*Q: What groups did you join to start with?*

The Architecture and Science & Technology Groups. When Architecture became too big it split and I became convenor in 2013 when Veronica Matthew started Architecture & Design. I also joined the Architecture and the Built Environment Group. I have also been a member of the Theatre Group and Strollers. Last year I joined the Botany Group.

*Q: What's your TV guilty pleasure?*

I watch very little TV except for on-line opera which takes up most of my viewing time.

*Q: What was the last book you read?*

Having run out of reading I acquired a compilation of sea stories by Hammond Innes. I had forgotten what a good writer he is. I've just finished 'Wreckers Must Breathe' and intend to read 'The Wreck of the Mary Deare' next.

*My grateful thanks to Susan for her time. (Editor)*

## **Reports from the Groups and Individual Members**

### **U3A Survey: Queens Road**

Sometimes it is good to take a closer look at what is on your doorstep. Jeremy and I did this when we undertook to take part in the U3A survey of shopping streets and chose Queens Road, just round the corner from our homes in Clarendon Park. The project proved to be a welcome distraction in the time of Covid19.

Queens Road is narrow and busy. It is a bus route and in normal times is active from morning to late evening with vehicles and pedestrians. Most of the shops and other businesses in this road were built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time they served the newly developed area of terraced housing on the west side of the street and, equally, the larger and more affluent households on the east side. The shops continue to serve the same community and beyond.

Since lockdown the street layout has changed: the width of the pavement outside the Post Office and neighbouring businesses has been widened to allow greater social distancing and safer queuing outside popular shops. Car parking spaces have become restricted waiting areas. Several large planters containing birch trees have appeared at the edge of the road – possibly to slow traffic or prevent further parking, we are not clear.

We were already familiar with the road but there were some surprises: the first being the discovery, when Jeremy went to take photographs, that there are seventy-five shops or small businesses in this fairly short length of the road, more than we had supposed. Most are actively trading, only four were vacant and for sale or to let. It seems that the number and variety of the shops, eating places and bars is influenced by the proximity of the University of Leicester at the north end of the road and by halls of residence beyond the southern end. Many students, academics and other employees of the University live in the area and provide much of the trade. The shops include convenience stores, computer supplies, off-licences, a health food store, two charity shops sell second hand books, another sells music and two more sell upcycled clothes. There are many places to eat: both dine-in and take-away with a range of prices and choice of food styles - Spanish, Italian, Indian, Korean and Cypriot - to suit any taste or pocket.



Having completed the survey we might conclude that in a time when the effects of Covid19 on both the health and the economy of the nation are deeply concerning, Queens Road shows encouraging signs of survival. Its success may be seen in the second part of the survey to be conducted in 18 months' time.

*Jeremy Whistle & Sheelagh Dobson (members of the Architecture & Design Group)*

## **Lifetime disappointment**

When I was a teenager at the end of WW2, I paid my first visit to Blackpool. It was with one of my peer group from school and our day out was a coach trip.

Thus we wandered along the seemingly endless waterfront and discovered an endless proliferation of amusement arcades: something new to people like us from industrial Leeds.

Eventually however we came to a doorway over which we saw a large notice proclaiming the words: INDIAN ROPE TRICK

Got to see that! It was one of the legends we had grown up with in learning about our British Empire and its curiosities (still under British rule at that time).

The basic story was that an Asian magician could climb up a ten foot vertical rope which was not attached to anything.

The entrance took us into a zig-zag corridor full of various types of slot machines.

Eventually we arrived at a staircase made inaccessible by a horizontal ornate rope from which was suspended a notice proclaiming: INDIAN ROPE TRICK SORRY: CLOSED FOR TODAY

Bother! Just our luck!

Forty years later I paid my second visit to Blackpool. This time with my youngest son..... And there it still was.....same entrance notice...same jungle of slot machines.....same regretful apology.

How unlucky can you be?

*Mike Westmoreland (member of the Creative Writing group)*

## Where There's A Will

A few weeks into the 'shielding' period I was desperate to find something to occupy my itchy fingers during the long, empty evenings. I fancied doing some knitting. Unable to get to a wool shop I couldn't think of a way around the problem when, lo and behold, I received an e-mail from an alpaca wool company offering various kits. For some reason I chose a shrug. It had no sleeves.

As I began the work I realised that if it had sleeves the garment would be ideal as a sort of bed jacket to wear during the autumn/winter period as I read in bed before sleeping. It would keep my shoulders and upper arms warm. I sent for some extra wool.

Of course there were no knitting instructions for sleeves and the 'armholes' were slits. I had never created a knitting pattern before but I had sewn many blouses, dresses etc. during my 80+ years so I began by making a paper pattern which I pinned into the slit, making adjustments to get a good fit. I wanted a roomy shape to accommodate winter nightie sleeves. I then spread out the paper pattern and calculated the knitting procedure to produce the correct shape. I am pleased to say it worked.

*(Margaret Bowerman – Member of the craft group)*

[If you would like the pattern for the sleeves please contact the editor]



## The Artist at Work

During lockdown, I've tried to do a sketch a day, mostly exercises in developing skills, but I've also started drawing cartoons. Part of the "serious" drawing has been learning to get different expressions in faces. The last few have gone from single faces to groups.

*Tony Locke (member)*

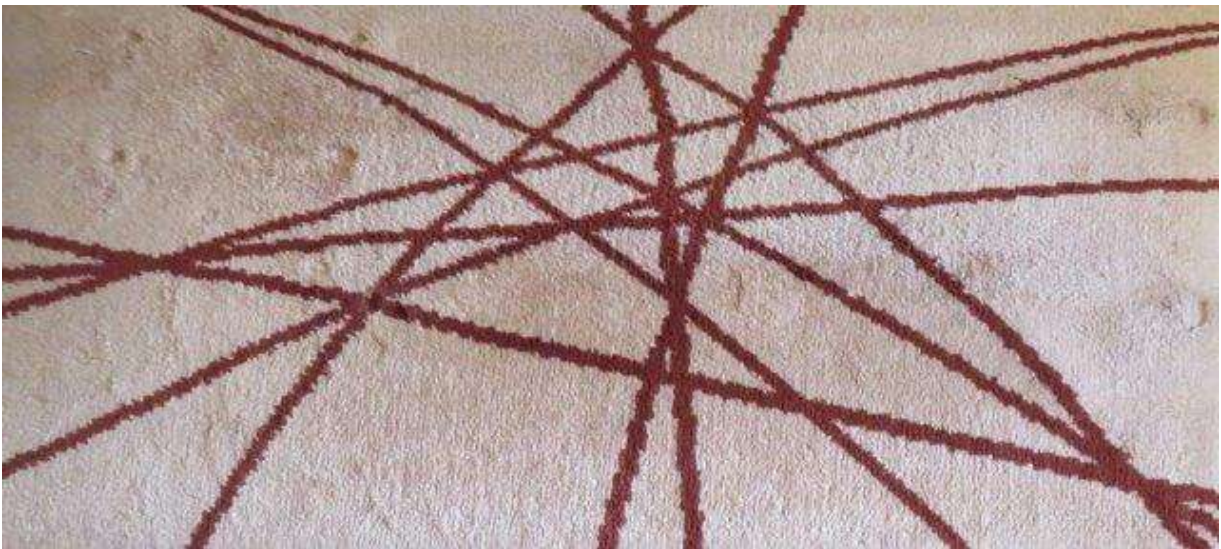


## Digital Photography

With everyone being (mostly) confined to home, the topic for the September meeting of the Digital Photography Group was "pictures from a room". There were various interpretations of this from an evocation of Tracy Emin's bedroom, through abstract designs of close-up details, to straightforward pictures of aspects of the room.

Attached is one of mine: A rug designed and made by me based on a theorem from geometry.

*Cliff Ault (member of The Digital Photography Group*



Photos by Cliff Ault ↑

← and Irene Ault

## My Claim to Fame

Whilst out ‘botanising’ in a local nature reserve recently, I noticed a pretty



little plant that I didn't recognise. I've become somewhat lazy recently and often don't take my various plant identification books out with me as they weigh a ton! Actually they only weigh 2.8kg/6lb 3oz but that's quite a weight to lug around all day. So I tend to use an app initially then check when I get home. So I checked with my app, which identified it as *Mentha pulegium*, or Pennyroyal. Well I didn't check, but went back the next day for another look and met with the Wildlife Officer for Leicestershire County Council who had also identified it as Pennyroyal, and had also come back for another look. We

checked it was still there, noted its precise location, and then during our chat he threw in the passing comment “I think it might be rare”. He admitted he wasn't a botanist (despite his job!) and he didn't really know how to check. But I did. I checked again when I got home, comparing all the characteristics listed with what I'd seen. It all tallied, but what got me really excited (and at this point you have to remember, I'm a Botanist!), was that in both my usual books, it said ‘very rare’! These words are usually an indication that you'd made a wrong identification and you'd best start again. But I was convinced. Back I went with my books and trusty phone camera, and I photographed every characteristic listed in all the books. Back home I matched up the pictures and characteristics, they all still tallied. It was beginning to look like I'd actually found a ‘very rare’ plant. I tried to enter it into the Naturespot website, which some of you may know is where you can record any sightings of plants, animals, insects etc. They wouldn't accept it as there's no record of it being a plant growing in Leicestershire, it would have to be verified by a County Recorder. It just so happens that I know a County Recorder for plants, Russell Parry! I sent Russell all my findings and we met at the nature reserve. I took him to see the plant, and he spent a long time checking all

the characteristics against his very detailed (and very expensive!) plant identification book. In the end, he looked up and said “I agree with you, this is *Mentha pulegium!*” He took a very small sample to take home and do further checks, but he was confident that there would be a new record for this plant, and that I will be credited as having found it. Families bring you down-to-earth don’t they? My son pointed out that there are descriptions of Pennyroyal on the Gardeners World website (he checked!), but these are cultivars, not the wild, native plant. So fingers crossed, Russell will confirm this identification, because I suspect this will be my one and only, single claim to fame!

*Article & photo by Steph Smith (member)*

### **Creative Writing – Results of the competition**

There were 12 entries for the competition and the standard was high. The work was on varied subjects. A big thank you to all the entrants for sending in their work, and to local poet/playwright John Kitchen for judging the entries.

There will be a prize-giving for the winners at a monthly meeting, when they resume. All the entrants' work will be published in future Newsletters as space allows. *Stella Memory (Convenor of Creative Writing Group)*

Prose:       1st Prize: Jim McCallum for 'A Phone Rings' (SEE BELOW)  
              2nd Prize: Janet Malloy for 'Comeuppance',

Poetry:      1st Prize (JOINT);  
                  Steph Smith for 'The Being of Her' (SEE BELOW)

And:         Jim McCallum for 'An Encounter on Christmas Eve'.

### **Jim McCallums winning Prose entry – ‘A Phone Rings’**

Our English teacher, ‘Smoky’ Ash, said I want to be doing poetry today. A barely perceptible groan. I want to try looking at it from a specific point of view. A poem will tell a story, a poem will likely be lyrical and impress with its rhythms, its rhymes or its creative use of language. But it does all these things best if there are no wasted words.

I'm going to give you five minutes just to think, and to write down the title of a poem, or, if you can, the whole poem if you can do it in just one line. Odd, but not, I thought, without interest. We were fourteen or fifteen.

The five minutes soon passed. I don't recall what I came up with, but Husband, a quiet boy, something of a loner, but his own man for all that, came up with 'A Phone Rings in an Empty Room.' I like that, said Smoky, with genuine feeling: is it the title or the whole poem? Husband: It's the title Sir, the actual poem is 'A phone rang in an empty room'. Laughter. No, no, that's good, said Smoky. There is a difference, I think. Does anyone else like that poem, and if so why?

There was the usual classroom silence, a stirring of paper and a shifting in seats. Someone, possibly Hearson, said, "Sir, it may not tell you much but it lets you think of many possibilities."

I agree. Anyone else?

Sally Leatherdale put up her hand, "I don't know how you'd say it in Eng Lit terms, but it has a nice, sort of rolling cadence." Mr Ash's turn to smile: again, I agree.

Would the poem be better if it was longer? Here, after the statutory pause, a debate built up, Mr Ash bringing in the quieter members for, as he once said, "School can't just be a place for noisy, show-off types." "I think it has a sad air to it" said Lucy Ashton. "Well, yes", said June Orbson, "but it's full of potential. It could be your boyfriend ringing up to ask you out." Laughter again. June: "I didn't mean *my* boyfriend." And so on. Gradually pretty much everyone found something to like in the poem. Husband though remained quiet as if letting his work do the talking.

In the School Magazine which came out at the end of term, to our surprise, an edited version was printed in full.

### *A Phone Rings in an Empty Room*

*In an empty room  
A phone rang . . . .*

**Steph Smith's joint winning Poetry entry – 'The Being of Her'**

You wear your heart on your sleeve,  
You declare your love to the world of her,  
For her beauty,  
Her grace,  
Her poise,  
Her all.  
But...

...do you love the her of her?

The not-quite-ready-when-it's-time-to-go of her?

The I've-just-got-to-do-this of her?

The naivety of her?

The fussiness of her?

The not-always-getting-our-jokes of her?

The openness of her?

The guardedness of her?

The sadness of her?

The being of her?

And...

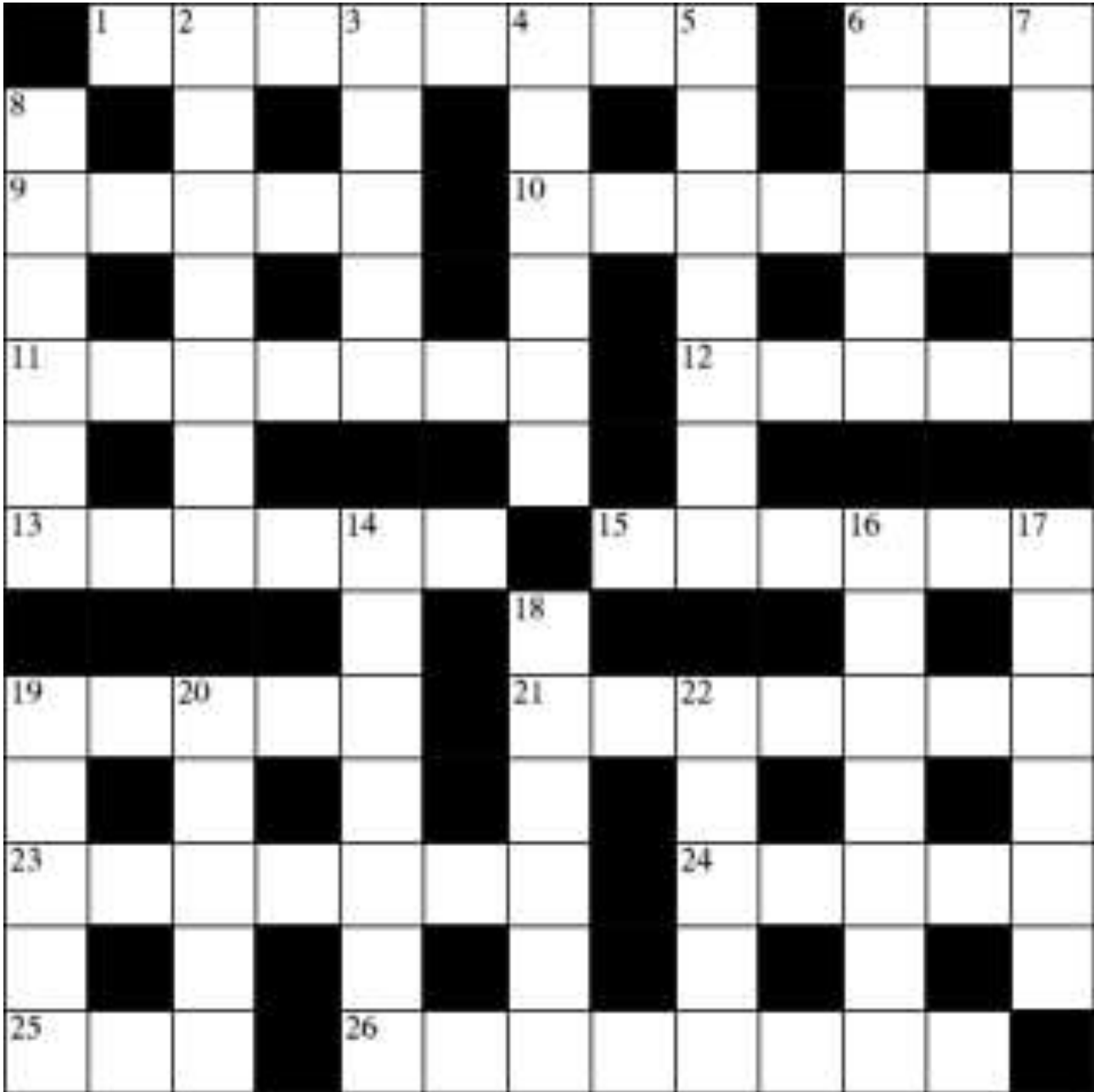
...have you told her?

15.2.18



# Puzzle Corner

Cryptic Crossword (created by Cryptic Crossword 2 Group)



## CLUES

### ACROSS

- 1 Praise be stewed pork! (8)
- 6 Like small animal (3)
- 9 Rent a meadow where Kent is (5)
- 10 Lion herb (7)
- 11 Crazy about Margaret - spicy too (7)
- 12 The plasterer holds a flower (5)
- 13 Key primate will break free (6)
- 15 Against endless poem with you and me (6)
- 19 Roofer left in row (5)
- 21 Wrecked boat C co may go up in smoke (7)
- 23 Poison which with old lace would cause a drama (7)
- 24 Motionless like some gases (5)
- 25 Organ within hearing (3)
- 26 Openers - I don't know - lockers (8)

### DOWN

- 2 Malleable cat's lip (7)
- 3 Old magistrate on the day before (5)
- 4 Meal about over (6)
- 5 Onslaught caused by pub anger (7)
- 6 Capone is given his share (5)
- 7 One who throws is more bashful (5)
- 8 Good weapon for a shot (6)
- 14 Standard cut vegetable (7)
- 16 Community club (7)
- 17 Agent imbibes too much and is pimply (6)
- 18 Fixes the sound of a mythical river (6)
- 19 Sprint against time to find evidence (5)
- 20 Earls made a type of beam (5)
- 22 Good egg - embarrassing if dropped (5)

# Crossword Solution

	<sup>1</sup> S	<sup>2</sup> P	A	<sup>3</sup> R	E	<sup>4</sup> R	I	<sup>5</sup> B		<sup>6</sup> A	S	<sup>7</sup> S
<sup>8</sup> G		L		E		E		A		L		H
<sup>9</sup> L	E	A	S	E		<sup>10</sup> P	A	R	S	L	E	Y
A		S		V		A		R		O		E
<sup>11</sup> N	U	T	M	E	G	S		<sup>12</sup> A	S	T	E	R
C		I				T		G				
<sup>13</sup> E	S	C	A	<sup>14</sup> P	E		<sup>15</sup> V	E	R	<sup>16</sup> S	U	<sup>17</sup> S
				A		<sup>18</sup> S				O		P
<sup>19</sup> T	I	<sup>20</sup> L	E	R		<sup>21</sup> T	O	<sup>22</sup> B	A	C	C	O
R		A		S		I		R		I		T
<sup>23</sup> A	R	S	E	N	I	C		<sup>24</sup> I	N	E	R	T
C		E		I		K		C		T		Y
<sup>25</sup> E	A	R		<sup>26</sup> P	A	S	S	K	E	Y	S	

## About the Newsletter

### *A Plea from your temporary Editor*

The position of Editor is currently **STILL** vacant. Although we will try and continue to produce an edition each month whilst we look for a new editor, if no one comes forward the newsletter in its present form may cease to exist. **CAN YOU HELP?** If you think you can please ring the membership secretary who can tell you a little about the commitment and send you the job description. Her contact details are in your contact list which was circulated recently.

### *Delivery*

The Newsletter is currently only being delivered to members by email as a pdf file with one page per side.

### *Contributions*

**The deadline for items to be included in the November 2020 Newsletter is Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October.** Contributions (from convenors and members) should be sent to the editor at: [newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk)

If you want to submit your entry as hard copy, please contact the Editor, or the Membership Secretary for the postal address.

We are always pleased to receive **brief** reports from groups about their recent activities and extend our thanks to all the authors who have done so. Please keep them coming. The occasional picture would be welcome as well. Please keep all articles to a maximum of 400 words. If you have a story or a report that is considerably longer than that, we can edit it into 2 (or more if it's very long!) shorter articles to be published in subsequent Newsletters.

When the current restrictions are lifted LEICESTER U3A will resume its meetings on the second Tuesday of each month (except August and December) at Christchurch, Clarendon Park Road, LE2 3AH, and many special interest groups will then continue to meet regularly in members' homes and elsewhere.