



From Our Chair..

March saw my first AGM as Chair, which took place at our General Meeting. Following the meeting, we had a new volunteer offering to join the Committee. Thank you and welcome Sally Hollis. The afternoon continued with an entertaining and fascinating presentation by Andrew Miles and his dog Rolo regarding the work Canine Partners do in training assistance dogs for disabled people (see page 2). We had so much interest we have arranged a private open morning and lunch to visit Canine Partners at Osgathorpe on 27th May. If you would like to join us please contact Alison or myself - details are on the back page.

April has seen our first outing trip to Cambridge (see page 5), with reports from attendees of how much they enjoyed the trip, despite some very heavy rain. We met many of the party in the fascinating Fitzwilliam museum. The building itself is spectacular, maybe distracting from some of the exhibits.

Ian

May 2026

Issue No.98

Charity No.1101205

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Other Committee Members 2026/7 Elected at the March AGM



Ian Holah
Vice Chair/Beacon



Gill Howdle
Treasurer



Paul Fileman
Groups Coordinator



Derek Hollis
Membership Secretary



Mike Sharpe
Business Secretary



Alison Lloyd
Outings Coordinator



Sue Luczka
Events Coordinator



Sue Miles
Minutes Secretary



Brian Hinners
Newsletter/Speakers



Chris Bowerman



Sally Hollis



Transforming Lives

This was the theme of the talk at our AGM in March. Our speaker, **Andrew Miles** with his labrador 'Rolo' (*right*), is an ambassador for Canine Partners, an organisation that provides trained support dogs for physically disabled people.

In 2014 Andrew suffered a tragic, lifechanging car accident that left him permanently in a wheelchair. It put him in a very dark place for a long time. But around a year or so after his terrifying experience he met another wheelchair user, accompanied by her dog, who introduced him to Canine Partners. And his life changed again. He acquired Rolo, and like all CP dogs, Rolo is trained to help Andrew in so many ways; he picks up things that are dropped, empties the washing machine, fetches and carries and does so many small, but critical, tasks that able bodied people take for granted. Rolo can even get a cold beer from the fridge. Better still, he takes it from his neighbour's fridge!



We saw video clips from others partnered with CP dogs. They told how these highly sophisticated animals gave them security, companionship and independence. And having the confidence to meet with other people more brought back humour into their lives.

In their 35 years existence, CP have paired dogs with some 1,000 disabled people. But, of course, all this doesn't come cheap. From puppy to retirement, each dog costs around £50,000.

It was a most heartwarming tale, sprinkled with good humour. And total donations to CP following the talk have so far raised £181. If you'd like to find out more about Canine Partners, or make your own contribution, you can do so on their website by clicking here: [Canine Partners](#)

Brian Hinnners



Save the Date - Summer Social

Wednesday afternoon, 22nd July, Normanton on Soar village hall - details to follow. The Social Events team also have something in mind for September. We'll keep you posted.

Beacon Briefing



Group Leaders met together on 11th February for a demonstration of the newly installed Beacon member records management system and learned how they can use it to communicate with their group members.

There's still work to be done on the system: Ian Holah, Beacon Administrator, will provide an update in the next Newsletter edition.

The Honey Bee

Apis mellifera

Members Alison and Ian Lloyd keep bees at home and Alison is a volunteer keeper at Calke Abbey. She's put together some interesting facts about bees, some of which may surprise you.

How many bees in a hive? Up to 60,000

What is in a colony of bees? 1 Queen, many worker bees and, in the summer, a few hundred male bees called drones.

How many eyes? A Honey bee has 5 eyes which are sensitive to the blue end of the spectrum and ultraviolet, they are red blind!

How many wings? They have 4 wings, front and rear wings hook together and unhook for easy folding when not flying, top speed of a worker bee 15-20 mph when flying to a food source but slower returning when heavily laden with nectar, pollen, propolis or water.

How many legs? 3 pairs of legs, 6 legs in total, the rear pair have stiff branching hairs to store pollen when flying from flower to flower, the front pair of legs have special slots to clean their antenna.

Do honey bees sleep? Yes, 5-8 hours a day mostly at night, can fall over sideways and hold each other's legs when sleeping, bumble bees will sleep in flowers.

How far does a bee fly? Up to 3 miles away, but usually less than 1 mile from the hive. One colony will fly the distance from the earth to the moon every day.

How does a bee navigate? They use the position of the sun to navigate. They are also sensitive to the earth's magnetic field and due to their sensitive eyes can 'see' the sun through cloud.

Do bees hibernate in winter? No, the honey bee is the only bee to maintain a colony over winter. The colony reduces in size in the autumn and relies on stores of honey to last through the winter months when it is too cold to forage or there are no flowers or trees flowering. The colony clusters together to keep the colony at 20°C in the winter keeping the queen in the centre. On warmer days the bees will go on 'cleansing flights' to poo.

Why do bees have hairy bodies? A bee's body is covered in branch hairs, a bit like feathers. This makes it easy for pollen to get trapped in the hairs. As the bee flies its hairs become positively charged. The pollen grains are negatively charged so the pollen is attracted to the hair and sticks.

How do honeybees communicate? When they find a good source of food honey bees perform a 'waggle dance' which communicates the direction and distance of the food source to the other bees in the colony. They move in a figure of eight and 'waggle' their body to indicate where the food can be found.

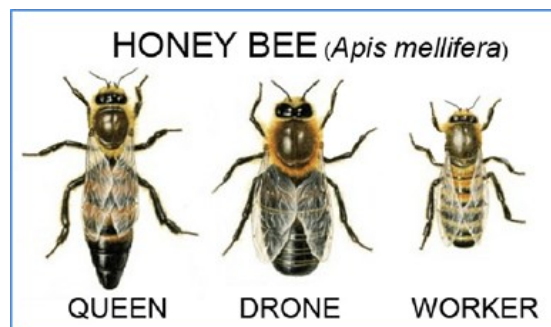
How long do bees live for? A worker bee can last up to 6 weeks in the summer but 5 months over winter. The drone bees can live for 4 to 8 weeks in the summer, die after mating and are thrown out of the hive overwinter!

How long have honeybees been on planet earth? 100 million years (Ancestors of humans have only been on the planet for 6 million years)

When did humans start harvesting honey? 7000 years ago, cave paintings have been found in caves in Spain showing honey being collected. Current day beekeepers always leave enough honey in the hive to feed the bees over the winter.

What is mead? Fermented honey, which was first produced in China around 7,000 BCE, making it the world's first alcoholic beverage.

When did organised beekeeping start? The Egyptians began beekeeping around 2,500 BCE. When King Tutankhamun's tomb was opened in 1922, still edible honey was found.



Alison Lloyd



Canal Cruiser

SVu3a member Les Heath has always been interested in canal boats; he even spent his honeymoon on one. Twenty six years ago he took early retirement and decided to make his narrow boat 'Country Rose' his home. He's cruised the whole of the UK waterways network with just his dog for company but now, at the spritely age of 82, Les has settled for a permanent mooring in Sileby. Here he tells us what floats his boat.

Some said it was madness. Others said I would be cold in winter. But leaving work for a new life on England's inland waterways was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. True, it was an immense learning curve - having to forget all about living on land and adapting to a new life on a 50ft narrowboat called Country Rose.

Firstly you learn to have on your boat just what you need - not what you want. Parting with many treasured possessions proved extremely difficult but within three months I had forgotten what they were.

Next you wonder how to survive. Turning my back on a job as a newspaper editor to exist on comparatively little income was a shock to the system. I was told I would not receive a decent pension unless I stayed until I was 65. I took a leap of faith and decided to leave



Crossing The Wash

anyway. It soon became apparent that, despite a reduced income, I had few outgoings and no bills. Everything was paid for in advance. Several years later when the state pension kicked in I remember thinking 'I was managing ok without this'. So I opened a new bank account simply for the pension and promptly forgot about it. From then onwards canal life became idyllic, knowing I had financial backup.

At one stage I was negotiating more than 800 locks a year single handed and I covered almost every navigable waterway in the first

three years, including travelling to London every year to spend time with my youngest daughter.

As a result of improvements over the years I now have on my boat everything one would expect in a house. Life soon became one long adventure, surrounded by nature, living through the seasons and making many new friends along the way.



'Country Rose'

As the years rolled on I reluctantly accepted a permanent residential mooring on the River Soar near Loughborough. I then joined the local rambling club as I was not getting the exercise associated with continuous cruising. After experiencing Achilles tendon problems, a member of the rambling club suggested I join the u3a, which, he said, had several walking groups, and one would probably suit me.



..but he's never been cold!

I noticed the Soar Valley u3a had a group called Strollers which sounded suitable for me while my tendon healed. It was just over a year ago that I joined and have since become a member of a more challenging Tuesday walking group and a history group. So the u3a has taken over where my travels left off.

Just for the record I am still living on my boat. And, yes, I can honestly say I have never been cold in winter.

Les Heath

You can also see Les' article in the current spring edition of Third Age Matters.

Have You Taken a Look at our Website Recently?

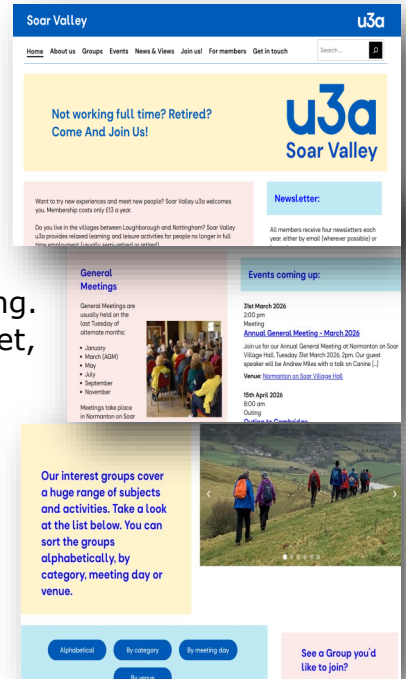
If you've not visited our website for a while, or you've yet to see it for the first time, you're in for a pleasant surprise. It's the best way to keep abreast of what goes on in Soar Valley u3a. And you'll find lots that's new.

We've got over 40 interest groups now, and the number is growing. Want to find out more about them? What they do, when they meet, which have spare places, whom to contact? It's all right there, crystal clear, with photos, videos and reports from members on activities they've enjoyed. You can see ideas about possible new groups for the future as well.

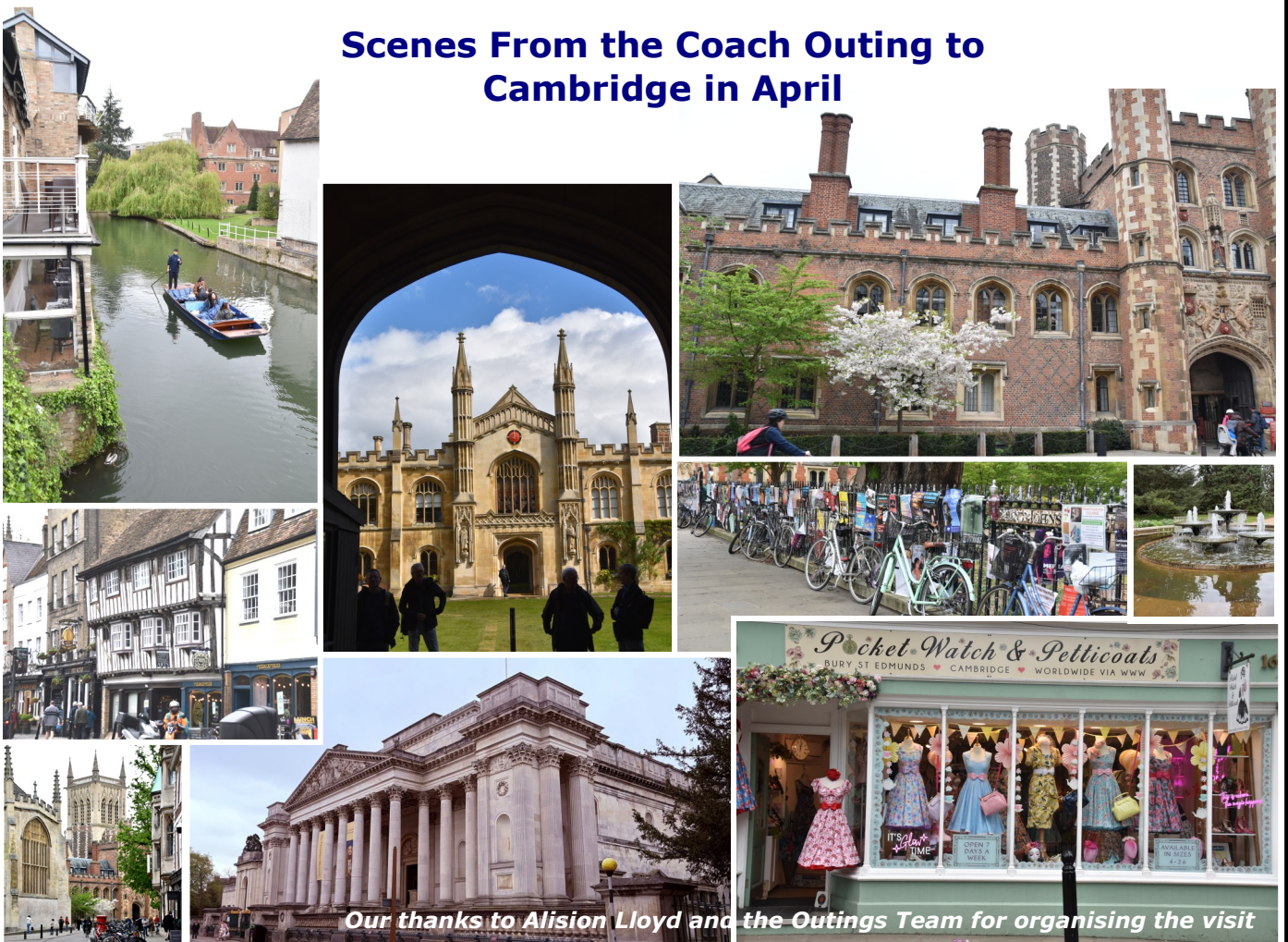
You'll find helpful information about our many events: general meetings with guest speakers, coach outings to attractive venues, singing concerts, coffee mornings, summer events, Christmas parties and other social get togethers.

There are also important things you need to know about your membership, like when it's time to renew your subscription. Plus of course you can check out the varied roles of our Committee members and find out more about how your u3a is run.

There's so much at your fingertips. And Webmaster Steve Jones is constantly adding new material and updates to keep pace with developments. So, if you want to stay on top of what's happening in your u3a, a click [here](#) will take you straight to the homepage.



Scenes From the Coach Outing to Cambridge in April



Genealogical Detective Work

Many of us have reached a time in life when we've become curious about our family history. Here, member Gill Howdle tells us about her experience of digging into the past.

I started to look at my family tree about 20 years ago, primarily to do some research on my maternal grandfather who was orphaned as a two year old. I only had his name and my mother's memories to go on.

My mother only knew that her father (Harry) and his brother had been orphaned very young and had been fostered out to a family called the Bennetts in Exeter. And also that Harry's father had possibly once been in the Metropolitan Police and before his premature death, he had worked as an attendant in Exeter Lunatic Asylum. I found Harry easily through the census data. He was born in 1889 and in 1891 he and his brother, Reg, were registered as 'lodgers' with Sidney and Kate Bennett and their 7 children.

But by 1891 he and his brother were living at St. Thomas Union Workhouse in Exeter; news to my mother. By 1911 he was in South Wales as an engine stoker and by 1921 he's back in Exeter, married, driving trains and with two children, my mum's older brother and sister. Then I went for Harry's birth certificate. So Harry's father was John Henry Durrant and his mother was Emma Jane Quinton. All that was quite easy and I knew I'd got the right family, the birth certificate stated Harry's father's occupation as Asylum Attendant in Exeter. So I went after the marriage certificate of John Durrant and Emma Quinton, followed lots of wrong trails, got stuck, and was not able to resolve it for 10 years!!

In the meantime, I contacted the Metropolitan Police historical register. For a small fee they went through the register and produced - John Durrant - joined the Met Chelsea Division on 30th September 1872, transferred to Hammersmith Division 11th December 1879, left the police on 9th March 1883 due to rheumatism. Armed with the year of his birth - 1849 - and knowledge that he came from Dorset, I tracked him down to Allweston, near Sherborne, with parents called George and Tamar Tuffin. By 1871 he was lodging down the road from his parents and working as an agricultural labourer and by 1881 he was in London, working as a police constable, and married - not to Emma Quinton but to Matilda, and he had a five year old daughter.



They took their daughter to be baptised back in Allweston. Then the trail runs cold.

And then along comes the offer from Ancestry of the DNA tests so I did this and lodged it with Ancestry. Interesting links pour in but nothing excites me as much as the message I receive in 2019. *'Hello I just want to say that it is absolutely amazing that our common ancestor was born in 1652 and DNA can tell! Amalie Tuffin.*

The name Tuffin is the real clue and Amalie let me have more detail and access to her family tree. And so now 10 years later I returned to the search for Emma Quinton. John Durrant had died in 1889 so there was no census for him in 1891 but there was for his first wife, Matilda Cross.

She appears to have had a second daughter in 1883 whose surname is given as Durrant. She lists herself as a widow. So John and Matilda stayed together until at least 1883 and Reg was born in 1887 and my grandfather, Harry was born in 1889. And John Durrant left the police also in 1883. I can only speculate that he went back to Dorset to look for work and there met Emma Jane Quinton, fifteen years younger than him and living in the next village to his parents. They moved to Exeter where he got work, and had two children. Emma had changed her name to Durrant. And then John died when his children were aged two and three months.

My grandfather's story to my mum was that he couldn't remember his father and that his mother had disappeared on a daytrip away. She had left them with the Bennetts. I have never been able to find her death certificate but I did eventually find her in the 1891 census working as a stillroom maid in The Rougemont Hotel in Exeter and living in. I also have the photograph above of the two boys in sailor suits when they are about 3 and 5 (Harry is on the left). Later I got more DNA confirmation that I had the right Emma Quinton.

My mother never knew any of this from her father because he didn't know most of it himself. Fortunately she lived until 95 and so I was able to share this all with her. It was a protracted but most interesting discovery.

Gill Howdle

Groups Update

Our Bowls (see below) and Croquet groups start running again in May - please take a look at the appropriate pages on the Soar Valley u3a web site as both groups would welcome new members.

Recently started groups include Play Reading (*contact Paul Fileman - paul.fileman@btinternet.com for more information*), Historical Heritage (information on the Soar Valley website) and How to Buy & Sell Online (also on the website).

Is anyone interested in joining one of the following groups which could be running soon if there is enough interest?:

- Antiques & Collectibles, Pickleball+, Spanish, Conversational French, Walking Football,
- Walking Cricket, Petanque, Bird Watching 3, Computer Support/Apple User Group,
- Bucket List/Have a Go, Doppelkopf Card Game'

Please contact Paul if you're interested.

Bowls

The days are getting warmer, the grass is growing vigorously, the sun is shining, sometimes, and, to some people, this can mean only one thing, let's play Bowls. If you want to indulge in some gentle exercise and get some fresh air, then the bowling green is the place to be. I am sure it must have some health benefits, balance, coordination, mobility, a relaxed environment in convivial surroundings, if you ignore the aircraft taking off from EMA. The opportunity to expand your social circle should not be overlooked and we don't take the game too seriously, so no stress, unless it is self induced and you like that sort of thing. The Bowls group was one of the original groups in the Soar Valley u3a so we are always on the lookout for new members to keep the group going.

The group meets on a Wednesday morning at 10am, from May to the end of September, at Sutton Bonington Bowls Club, Landcroft Lane, Sutton Bonington. We play until 12 noon with a mid morning coffee/tea break. There is a charge of £4 per session, which goes to the Bowls Club. Flat shoes are required and there are spare sets of Bowls available if you don't have your own set or just want to give the game a try before acquiring your own bowls.

The group includes a wide range of capabilities and if you are new to the game tuition and guidance can be given. So don't be shy, give it a try.

Contact me, **Colin Blackshaw** Group Leader, through the SVu3a website.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPORT & EXERCISE MEDICINE
Loughborough University

HELP OSTEOPOROSIS RESEARCH

CAN BRIEF HOME EXERCISE REDUCE THE RISK?

LOOKING FOR

- Women aged 55-75.
- Not taking any osteoporosis medication including hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
- Willing to do a few minutes of home exercise daily.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

- Baseline measurements including (2 visits <2 hours):
- DXA and computed tomography bone scans.
- Hopping test.
- Blood samples.
- Questionnaires.
- 12-month brief home based exercise programme.
- Follow-up assessments (mid-training at 6-month + post-training at 12-month).

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- Knowing more about your bone health.
- Help research on osteoporosis.

BEATOP@mailbox.lboro.ac.uk
01509226207
NCSEM, Loughborough University

Scan me

BEAT-Osteoporosis Flyer IRAS ID:354429 v.1 July 8th, 2025

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General Meetings Guest Speakers 2pm at Normanton on Soar Village Hall

Tuesday 26th May

Lt Col Tim Clarke with a talk about **The DMRC**

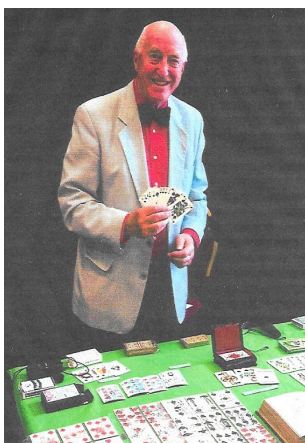


The DMRC (Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre) is an initiative conceived by the 6th Duke of Westminster to establish a new purpose built defence rehabilitation facility. It's co-located with a national clinical rehab centre at Stanford Hall which integrates military expertise and NHS needs.

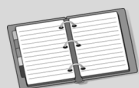
Tuesday 28th July

SVu3a member **Mike Lister** with a talk..

All About Playing Cards Part 2



Mike's second talk to us brings more fascinating insights into the humble playing card; a look at design and layout, foreign cards, superstitions, the Ace in the pack, transformation and fortune telling, building structures with playing cards.. and more. And Mike asks 'how dangerous are playing cards?' Looks like a good deal!



Diary Dates Reminder

Canine Partners visit - Wednesday 27th May

Summer event - pm Wednesday 22nd July (details to be announced later)

Coach outings - Shuttleworth 10th May, Melton Mowbray 21st July, Lincoln 26th August, Rockingham Castle 27th September.