



From Our Chair..

Hello and welcome to our latest Newsletter. I hope you are all enjoying the warm weather, and managing to sleep during these hot summer nights. Alison and I recently spent a week on the Shetlands where we enjoyed the cool 14°C temperatures during the days.

A few years ago I was asked if new members could complete the membership application form online. Well at long last, following moving to Beacon as our membership system, new members can complete their application form online, submit it and pay the appropriate fee. This will save a great deal of time for our membership secretary. Our newest member has just done so.

You will soon be receiving an email from Ian Holah (our Beacon Administrator) regarding access to the members' section of our website. From here you will be able to check the details we hold for you on Beacon. If you change your address, phone number etc. you will be able to update this yourself. Full step by step instructions will be included. However, we acknowledge that not everyone will wish to do this, so a quick email to Derek Hollis, the Membership Secretary, will still be possible.

Ian Holah and Steve Jones have put in a great deal of work in getting everything working, for which I am very grateful. Thank you both.

Ian

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Also in this issue

E&I Group 'Waste to Energy' Visit.	2
History Group Goes to the Craggs. A Large Obstacle. Afternoon Tea.	3
The DMRC. Canine Partners Thankyou.	4
Good Reads. Anglo-Indian Heritage Group.	5
Supporting Children in Ukraine.	6
Groups Update. All About Cards part 2.	7
Next General Meeting Speaker. Diary Dates. Contacts. Peter Mill.	8

Great Day for the Hog Roast

What a lovely day last month for Soar Valley u3a's first social event of the summer. We had over 70 members to the hog roast at Normanton Village Hall. It was a joy to see so many taking the opportunity to meet friends and enjoy delicious food while listening to music played by the talented Gary and Tony. Some members even had the opportunity to play croquet.

Thank you for those who donated prizes for the raffle. Thank you to Gary and Tony, all the helpers and a special thanks to my team for all their support and help.

Sue Luczka
Social Events Coordinator

Sue would love to hear your feedback on the event; what went well, what could be improved, and would you like a BBQ or a Hog Roast next year, or maybe something different? Please talk to one of the team at the next general meeting, or you can send Sue an email: suzeluczka@gmail.com



The ladies that made it all happen: Carole, Yvonne, Carol, Sue and Barbara

Engineering & Innovation Group Visits New 'Waste to Energy' Management Plant

16 members of our Engineering & Innovation Group met in Shepshed for a visit to the **Newhurst Energy Recovery Facility (ERF)**, located near Shepshed. This is a major waste-to-energy plant designed to process up to 455,000 tonnes of residual waste each year.

The facility was created to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste sent to landfill while generating sustainable electricity for the National Grid. The plant operates continuously, 24 hours a day, and can produce around 40–42 megawatts of baseload electricity, enough to power approximately 80,000 homes.

Rather than simply burning waste, the ERF focuses on recovering valuable materials from the treatment process. Incinerator bottom ash (IBA) is removed and processed into construction aggregate, while metals are extracted and reused in manufacturing. The site is also exploring opportunities to support district heating systems by supplying heat to nearby communities.

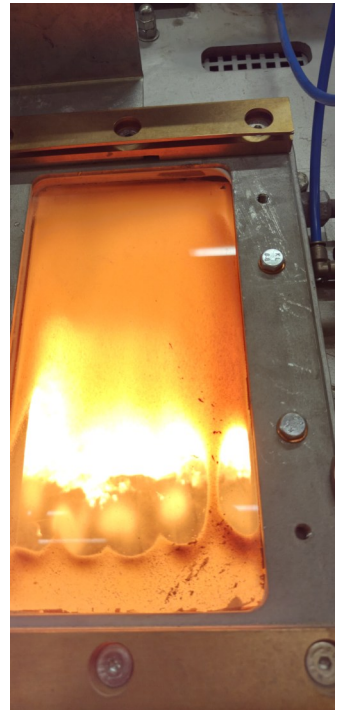
Construction of the facility began in 2020 and full-scale operations started in 2023, following a three-year construction and commissioning programme. The site now supports around 50 permanent operational roles.



Our visit started with a short presentation describing how the plant operates. We were then taken on a tour of the plant, starting with the control room where a bank of screens displays every aspect of the system. On one side of the control room is a large window looking out at the bunker where waste is initially tipped. Two large cranes shuffle the waste (to ensure even combustion) and then transport it from the pile into the hoppers that feed the furnace.



The waste is then delivered into combustion chambers heated to above 850°C. The combustion process reduces the waste to approximately 20% of its original volume, turning it into a non-hazardous form of ash. The process also heats up water in steel tubes within the boiler. The water is converted to superheated steam and delivered to a steam turbine that continuously generates electricity for onward transmission.



Our tour took us to the top of the plant so that we could see the boiler system and we worked our way down to the furnace itself and were able to look out over the machinery that sorts the residual ash from any remaining large metal items.

Flue gases are filtered and cleaned before being released via tall flue stacks. Emissions are stringently measured and controlled. On cooler days, the plume from the stacks may be visible as vapour.

Many thanks to Fred Ing for organising the visit.

Paul Fileman

Photos by Chris Bowerman



History Group Goes to the Craggs

It was forecast to be the hottest June day on record. That called for some swift action: frantic telephone exchanges to arrange an impromptu crash course on operating the air conditioning for the driver of the Soar Valley bus that was to take us to **Cresswell Craggs** the next day. Apparently the system is more tricky than what you find in the average car. And that aircon turned out to be a real godsend!

The Cresswell Craggs site on the border of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire is very picturesque. A small lake set in a deep limestone gorge is rimmed by huge rocky crags where prehistoric caves were discovered towards the end of the nineteenth century.



We enjoyed an introductory talk by our guide, Jo (*left*). She told us that these caves were occupied by nomadic Neanderthals and, later, by modern man (*Homo sapiens*), in the last ice period of between fifty and ten thousand years ago. Primitive artforms, from what archaeologists call the late Palaeolithic period, can be spotted in some of them. There were images of stags, bison and birds, and we were reminded that at this time Britain didn't yet exist in island form, but was simply part of a wider European land mass where all kinds of creatures we don't see here today once roamed, such as bears, hyenas and mammoths (except the one below).

In fact, to the untrained eye some of these images - rock engravings and line drawings using pieces of ochre - aren't immediately easy to recognise. But we were able to cheat a little because, on photographs, the faint lines were marked out more clearly. We were also shown replicas of small carvings and other artifacts from the period, all of which helped us begin to imagine a little of what early human life must have been like, all that time ago.

Then we were desperate for some air. A final short stroll along the tranquil ravine was a soothing tonic to the senses. But that fierce heat soon had us heading back to the blissful cool of the aircon again.. and homeward bound.

Brian Hinners



Member **Les Heath**, out and about in Watermead Park with the Strollers, attempts to remove a large obstacle.

A date for your diary...



Afternoon Tea

**Wednesday 23rd September at Normanton
on Soar village hall**

Further information to follow

The National Military Medical Facility On Our Doorstep



It used to be where the Co-op carried out staff training. Set in lovely grounds, Stanford Hall boasted an open air pool to take the children to and a quaint, traditional theatre to entertain the adults. But in 2018 the military rehabilitation unit established at Headley Court in Surrey eighty years ago relocated here and it's since developed into a state of the art **Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre**.

Back at our general meeting in May, temperatures in the low thirties didn't deter a room full of members who came to hear about the work of the unit, enthusiastically told by our guest speaker, **Lt Col Tim Clarke**.

Tim described the centre as providing 'occupationally focused rehabilitation' with the aim to get as many injured military personnel back into action as possible, either in their original role or different one.

The centre achieves this through the close coordination of a multitude of medical specialities that focus on the physical and mental needs of the patient. Around 350 clinical staff are available at the one site. And Tim proudly told us that, of the 1,900 in patient referrals last year, 75% of these were able to continue in service.

This kind of success enjoys an international reputation and has spawned a cooperation with militaries overseas, notably in Ukraine.

Finally ending his talk, Tim touched upon the DMRC Benevolent Fund, a charity which supports injured servicemen in so many ways to help them reacclimatise back into the world after suffering physical and mental trauma.

Soar Valley u3a has provided a donation to the fund. If you wish to make a personal contribution you can view the website [here](#).

Brian Hinners

Note: This talk focused on the military part of the centre but a new NHS integrated facility is also being developed and we'll be bringing you a speaker to talk about this next year.

A Thankyou from Canine Partners

Following the visit by 34 members to Canine Partners in May, we received this thankyou letter. In total, over £600 was raised for the charity. 'Amazing' says Alison Lloyd.

Dear Alison and all at Soar Valley U3A,

We are so grateful for the support you have shown Canine Partners with your very kind donations of £264.75, in addition to your kind donation for lunch! Thank you so much for taking the time to visit our National Training Centre to learn a bit more about Canine Partners. It was a pleasure to meet you all, and we hope you enjoyed your day with us.

We rely on donations to breed, train and support expert assistance dogs. So that they can go on to have loving, life-changing partnerships with disabled people.

Across the UK, your support helps people with a variety of physical disabilities and their families, helping us match them with a dog that suits their needs, personality, and lifestyle.

In 2024, Sue was partnered with James. "The moment I met James, I felt like I got part of my life back. It was as if a weight had been lifted and I could be myself again. James helps me feel safe and supported, giving me the confidence to go out again. I wasn't sure I would ever regain that sense of freedom, but with James, I've found it."

Thanks to you, our dogs, like James, bring confidence and independence, love and companionship, reducing reliance on carers and giving people the freedom to live life their own way.

Thank you so much once again for supporting Canine Partners. If you would like any further information or wish to get further involved please do get in contact by calling 01530 225930 or email fundraising@caninepartners.org.uk

Kindest regards, Freya Attenborough, Community Fundraising Administrator



Good Reads

Member Michael Webb-Ingall is an avid reader and is leader of the Book Club group. Here he offers some recommendations for your summer reading.

The Nanny State Made Me by *Stuart Maconie*, a book that I was nodding along to at much of what he says about the NHS, education, nationalised industry and the railways. Maconie makes an emotional case for a fairer society that is more than just about profit.

1950s Childhood: Spangles, Tiddlywinks and The Clitheroe Kid by *Derek Tait*, covers all aspects of childhood in the 1950s, including home life, school days, music and fashion. It will bring back memories for many.

The Dictionary of Lost Words. This one is set around the First World War when the men go off to war. We meet Peggy who lives on a narrow-boat and who is employed as a book-binder, a lowly position in which she is not actually allowed to read any of the books she binds! We also meet actual historical characters from the time, including *Vera Brittain*, who wrote..

Testament of Youth. This is entertaining and educational.

If you have an interest in the period of Oliver Cromwell and the Restoration then **Margaret the First** by *Danielle Dutton* is for you. The subject of the novel is Margaret Lucas, who later became the Duchess of Newcastle. Very unusually for the time, she wrote stories and plays which were published under her own name. Samuel Pepys wrote about her in his diaries, not very complimentary entries either! People called her Mad Madge and flocked to see her wearing outlandish costumes as she went to see King Charles II. This novel makes good use of a lot of actual biographical history as many books have been published about early modern female writers who had been neglected for hundreds of years.

Michael Webb-Ingall.

Anglo-Indian Heritage History Interest Group

Members of the West Bridgford u3a Anglo-Indian Heritage History interest group explore the rich history and heritage linking Britain and the Indian subcontinent. Meeting every eight weeks at the University of Nottingham, the group focuses on history through personal stories, family experiences and shared research. Recent topics have included the contribution of Indian servicemen during the World Wars, family histories involving the Indian Army and missionary work, the role of South Asian doctors in the NHS and the history of indentured labour in Mauritius.

The group has undertaken cultural visits to the Princess Sophia exhibition at Kensington Palace and the Jaipur Literature Festival at the British Library in June 2026. Upcoming meetings will explore the colonial influence on India's legal system, Indo-Anglo textile and fashion influence and connections and the history of Ayurvedic medicine.

This is a group that, by its diverse nature, is open to all members of the u3a in the region to come and have a taster and decide whether to join the group. Members of other u3as are welcome to join this group, without the need to become members of West Bridgford u3a.

For more information please contact **Surrinder Kaur**
Tel: 07855 322020 Email: surrinder.kaur@btinternet.com

Supporting Children In Ukraine



Seven years ago member **Colin Knight** told us in this Newsletter about his sponsorship of a young African boy and his trip to Senegal to see him. Here, Colin describes his continuing altruistic work, helping children in war torn Ukraine.

In addition to joining Soar Valley u3a after I retired from full time work I also joined Rushcliffe Rotary Club. Many u3a members will be familiar with the Rotary organisation which, like the u3a, is an international organisation with many members and many clubs. Rotary has a presence in Ukraine and, during the current conflict, Rotary members have received support from other European clubs including those in the UK.

Here in the UK, we have looked at ways we can support our contacts in Ukraine, and these include convoys of essential items being shipped on a regular basis. But we will all have seen the continual bombing of cities like Kyiv, and I am sure we will have given some thought as to how this conflict impacts Ukrainian children.

A Rotary group in Derbyshire specifically asked their friends in Ukraine if there was something they could do to support the children who live through the conflict and bombings. In response several Rotary members in Kyiv were concerned at the amount of time children were spending in the bomb shelters with nothing to do or to occupy their minds. And so, the idea of Friendship boxes, that we could send them from here in the UK, was proposed.

Although called Friendship boxes they are also called Playboxes. In essence, these are plastic boxes that contain a range of play items to help children pass their time away during their lengthy periods in the bomb shelters. They are transported to Ukraine alongside other items that go on the regular convoys.

Each box was shared between 4-5 children. The boxes included items such as colouring books, crayons, felt pens, dominoes, Jenga, snakes & ladders, jigsaws, Lego, sewing cards and thread, dolls, soft toys, toy cars and school supplies. In addition, some of the playboxes also included hats, mittens and scarves for the cold Ukrainian winters.

The only request our Ukrainian friends made was to ask that no items be included in the Playboxes where any English language appeared on either the item itself or on any associated packaging for obvious reasons.

We were given a maximum size for each box we filled and that was: length 40cm, width 30cm and depth 30cm, and a supply of these plastic boxes was purchased by our Rotary Club from a large retail store.

Our club shared this project with our local primary schools and the companies of the Nottingham Boys' Brigade (BB) battalion. We provided them with the playboxes for them to fill. My wife Brenda and myself checked and finalised the packing of each of the boxes and met up with a representative from the Rotary group in Derbyshire and handed over our boxes.

Thanks to the generous support and real enthusiasm for this project from the local primary schools; the Nottingham BB companies and Rushcliffe Rotary club members, we were able to send, on behalf of our Rotary Club, over 50 filled boxes to Ukraine.

Since the project commenced about two years ago, over 3,000 boxes have been dispatched to Ukraine with over 500 from our local Rotary District.

In response we have received some lovely letters back from the Ukrainian children who were so appreciative of our support. We have been able to share these letters with the schools and with the BB companies.



Colin Knight

Groups Update Whilst some of our groups take a pause in the summer, others are now fully active having taken their break over the colder months. Bowls (Wednesday Mornings) and Croquet (Thursday afternoons) are now in full swing and looking for new members. Recently started groups include Historical Heritage which visits historical sites in the region on the third Thursday of each month and still has some places.

Please look at the groups page on our web site (<https://soarvalley.u3asite.uk/groups/>) where you can find information on all of our groups and quickly identify those that have room for new members.

I am often asked about the possibility of starting new groups. Whenever we have more than a few people interested in a potential group, I put people in touch with one another so that they can explore the feasibility of the new group and get things started. This approach seems to work most of the time and we now have a few more groups becoming active with others on the cusp of getting to critical mass. If you have an idea for a group please get in touch with me – paul.fileman@btinternet.com is best to start with.

One area where there is some interest is around using computers and tablets more effectively. Whilst we have people in need of help, to date, we have not found anyone who would be prepared to take the lead on this. You don't need to be a computer wizard – just someone who is prepared to learn 'out loud' alongside the group.

Paul Fileman, Groups Coordinator



All About Cards - Part 2

This was the title of the talk by member **Mike Lister** at the July general meeting. He'd spoken to us four years ago on the subject but he hasn't stopped researching into more fascinating facts about playing cards. And there was certainly a lot to say.

There were plenty of numbers: 4 suits - 4 seasons of the year; 52 cards - 52 weeks in a year, for openers. Casinos in Las Vegas get through an amazing 180,000 packs of them in a day. And would you believe there are 172 different versions of the game of Patience!

We saw that around the world, pack sizes can vary, as can the suits and the demarcations, and Mike showed us colourful examples.

And there was some interesting history about cards, especially about the fortune telling and superstition aspects. During the Vietnam war for example, American soldiers attached an Ace of Spades to their helmets because it was rumoured that the Vietcong thought it meant bad luck for them. That might have boosted US morale a bit, but it turned out to be untrue.

But perhaps the saddest story of all was about Donald Campbell and his fatal attempt at the water speed record in 1967. He'd played cards the evening before and had been dealt that notorious Ace of Spades. He saw it as a bad omen and was quoted as saying: 'One of my family is going to die... I hope it isn't me.'



Fortune Telling Cards

Brian Hidders

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Our next General Meeting will be 2pm on Tuesday 29th September at Normanton on Soar village hall when our guest speaker will be **Alex Leger** with a talk..

Adventures Behind the Screen - Challenges and Changes at the BBC



Alex is now a regular cruise ship speaker but back in 1975 he joined the Blue Peter programme at the BBC and became its producer for 36 years. Over that time he's has built up a wealth of interesting and amusing stories to tell us - John Noakes climbing Nelson's Column, encounters with an erupting volcano, gorillas in Uganda and Lulu the baby elephant running amok in the studio - to name a few. And he's bound to have a view about how the BBC has changed and what the future might hold.



Diary Dates Reminder

26th August - Coach trip to Lincoln

23rd September - Afternoon Tea

27th September - Coach trip to Rockingham Castle

4th December - Christmas Party

**We're sad to report the passing of member
Peter Mill who died on 6th June.**