

COUNTESTHORPE U3A UPDATE AND CURFEW CHRONICLE No 12

Dear Member

First of all may I wish you all a very happy, healthy and much improved New Year! I hope that you managed to have a reasonable Christmas under the late-announced draconian restrictions, and let's hope that they will soon begin to ease. Thank you so much to everyone who has been in contact with me via Christmas cards, emails and phone calls to express their appreciation for our little Chronicle – it is truly lovely to hear from you!

Thanks also to all the contributors! So many different items come in and they are tucked away safely for future issues. But, let's hope that the Chronicle will become redundant in a few months' time and that we can once more resume our former lives. I guess we may have a problem remembering just how we *did* live before all this began, as it is amazing how rapidly people seem to have adjusted to the 'new normal' or whatever it is called.

Anyway, I hope you will enjoy this issue of the Chronicle. Keep safe, keep smiling and keep remembering the good times we had, and will have again, in our U3A! And - don't forget to send in your contributions. Happy New Year!

June Hawkins

Information and Publicity Officer



Chronicle contributions not later than 23 January, please,

*to me by email at: jhawkins45@talktalk.net
or by post to 28 Mulberry Court, Enderby Rd, Blaby. LE8 4BU*

Just before leaving Christmas behind completely, here is a short tale sent in by Pamela Runacres:

The Strangest Christmas

As a child in the late 1940s, we always spent Christmas Day with all my mother's family. It was always great fun, no TV of course, but we played our own games, and my Dad or one of my uncles always dressed as Santa and handed out gifts from the tree.

One year, amid all the giving out and the stripping off of wrapping paper, there was a knock at the door and there on the step was Santa Claus! He carried a large hessian sack which was full of little newspaper wrapped parcels tied with string, and he proceeded to hand them out to all of the children in the house, about 7 or 8 of us. He then wished us all a very Merry Christmas and proceeded to the next house! None of us ever knew who he was, all of our Uncles and Dads were present - nobody missing, but as we grew older, whenever we were all together, this story was told and retold. It is still a mystery!



And now a little brain teaser for you:

SET SQUARE

Place each of the digits 1-9 in this grid to make the sums work. We've started you with two numbers.

	-		x		= 9
+		+		x	
4	+		÷	2	= 6
-		-		÷	
	-		x		= 2
=		=		=	
6		9		6	

MEMORIES OF WWII AND BEYOND

During the Battle of Britain I was seven years old and remember that awful time very well indeed. We lived in Castle Bromwich (Birmingham) at the back of an 'ack-ack' field. A nearby factory manufactured 11,500 Spitfires and we were mercilessly bombed night after night. Each night we walked to the communal air-raid shelter which was always ankle-deep in water. Walked on duckboards and sat on wooden benches. We sang "Ten Green Bottles", "Run, Rabbit, Run", "One Man Went to Mow a Meadow" amongst other wartime favourites, to keep up our spirits. We all had gas masks and my baby sister had a special one – just like a capsule with a little window. It was just like a cot, as she was only a few weeks old. We all wore "siren suits" like huge "Babygros" – I hated it but if Mr Churchill could wear one, then so could I.

We trooped home when the "All Clear" sounded. The milkman came round with his horse and cart and milk churns – he had long-handled metal cans which he dipped into the milk, and then poured into our jug. The jug had a crocheted cover with glass beads around the edge to keep it in place. We toasted 'rounds' of bread. We only had one sort – the "National" loaf which was grey and made from unbleached white flour. We sat in front of the fire with our slice on a special toasting fork with a long handle. Food was scarce and rationed. I don't remember exactly but we each had, per week, 2 ounces of butter, cheese, sugar, bacon, one egg, etc and, to keep us healthy, concentrated orange juice and blackcurrant jam – which we often saved to put on our semolina milk pudding. We had very little meat, but we did have tinned Spam which we often dipped in flour and fried. I still buy and enjoy Spam to this day.

Our lawns disappeared beneath the spade as we dutifully followed instructions to "Dig for Victory". We grew vegetables and saved the seed from year to year.

There was no TV, of course, but we did have the radio. We gathered around it in the evenings to hear "This is the news and this is Alvar Liddell (or John Snagg) reading it." We were told how many enemy aircraft had been shot down by our pilots and how many of ours had been lost. We had wonderful comedians (eg: Tommy Handley) to keep us smiling.

When victory came we had a street party. We brought out our tins of fruit and salmon which we had saved for this event since the war broke out.

In 1952 I spent (with three of my nursing friends) a month touring the Rhine Valley. We stayed with three university students who had come over from Germany to help with our harvest. It is great to know that even a terrible war could not prevent us from being friends. They are dead and gone now but will never be forgotten. They suffered just as much as we did. Hitler was the enemy, not the Germans.

Written by Beth Jones



As our enforced social distancing continues and bites ever harder, I think Adrian has summed up our feelings perfectly in this poem:

SHOP FEVER

(With apologies to John Masefield)

I must go down to the shops again, I'll only be a while,
And all I ask for this short trip is you'll walk with me half a mile,
And the deal is this, it's been too long, and this cheerfulness I'm faking;
And all the folks I've missed each day and another day to be facing.

I must go down to the shops today, though I know I should stay home and hide,
But after all, what 'ere may befall, it's for me to decide.
And all I ask is a friendly face, laughing aloud, not sighing,
And the prayer that I pray is to banish the gloom,
For that's what I need to be buying.

I must go down to the shops today, once more to reclaim my life,
And I hope for the day, that so longed for day
When we cast off this worry and strife.
And all that I ask is a wave that is warm
And a handshake from all those out walking,
For when it's all beat and it seems like a dream,
Will we ever catch breath while we're talking?

Adrian Dobey



- Bread is a lot like the sun. It rises in the yeast and sets in the waist!
- A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.

And next a little (tongue in cheek) advice for the ladies for the New Year!

The Good Wife's Guide

From Housekeeping Monthly; May 13, 1955

Have dinner ready.

Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they get home and the prospect of a good meal is part of the warm welcome needed.

Prepare yourself.

Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.

Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.

Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives. Run a dust cloth over the tables.

During the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by.

Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering to his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.

Minimize all noise.

At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Encourage the children to be quiet.

Be happy to see him.

Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.

Listen to him.

You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time.

Let him talk first—remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.

Don't greet him with complaints and problems.

Don't complain if he's late for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through at work.

Make him comfortable.

Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or lie him down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.

Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes.

Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.

Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity.

Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.

A good wife always knows her place. ■



ICHISTOCK



I'm old enough to remember when paper bags were blamed for the destruction of trees – and plastic bags were the solution!

Here's another reflective piece, written a number of years ago, by an early member of our U3A who played a huge part in its development, running several groups and serving a spell on the Committee, including acting as Chairperson. This was Margaret Woolley, who many of you will remember, and who has been living in Exeter for some years now but retains her Associate Membership. She has kindly sent in a number contributions for our Chronicle. More will feature next time.

HOW THE U3A CHANGED MY LIFE

Imagine being able to write a story or a poem, and be brave enough to read it to a group of people who were mostly feeling as apprehensive as you about the task. Well, this is what happened when I joined the U3A Writers Group. Could I do it? Should I do it? Make a fool of myself maybe, but well, let's have a go, and now after two years the difference is amazing to say the least.

It is escapism, liberating, daring – the imagination that has been pent up for 75 years is at last able to escape my brain and flow free. Grammar was not my strong subject at school, as you will no doubt have guessed by now, but this – along with my long-suffering computer – does not hold me back. Thank heaven for spell check, and punctuation! Clever damn thing, isn't it!

Well, I've been set free now by this U3A group. Its monthly challenges are wide ranging – how far can I go? There are no boundaries – can I shock them, can I swear, can I include SEX? Wow! Who cares at my age – let it flow, it really doesn't matter. I just love this feeling of freedom. I feel young at heart and I don't care. The restraints of life have been lifted.

I just love my U3A activities. They have given me so much to enjoy in my senior years. Age is just a number. Be a child again, do as you like, be naughty, let your brain run free. This is what the U3A has done for me.

They are taking me away next week!

Margaret Woolley

(If you like the sound of this, why not give the Creative Writers Group a try out once we resume? We have great times !)



Today, 8-year olds are asking for the latest iPhone.

When I was 8 years old, I felt like I'd won the lottery if I had a pen like this!



WINTER TREES

The skeletal form of winter trees
Punctuating our roads and leas
Exposing nature's sculpted shapes
Bereft now of their summer drapes

Bare branches splay in random form
Often trimmed by winter's storm
Filigreed twiglets twist and twine
Encased occasionally by dormant vine.

Deserted nests sit like forgotten fruit
Appearing as a dried plant root.
Some neat and tidy, or mere platform of twigs
Or are they really abandoned witch's wigs

The evergreens stand out quite brash
Good cover for the birds that dash
Seeking the berries of a winter garner
Keeping them fed until the air turns warmer



Margaret Woolley



ADD-A-LETTER

Insert or add a letter to each of these words to make a new word to fit the clue given. The added letters should then spell out another word reading down the column. (*Answers later*)

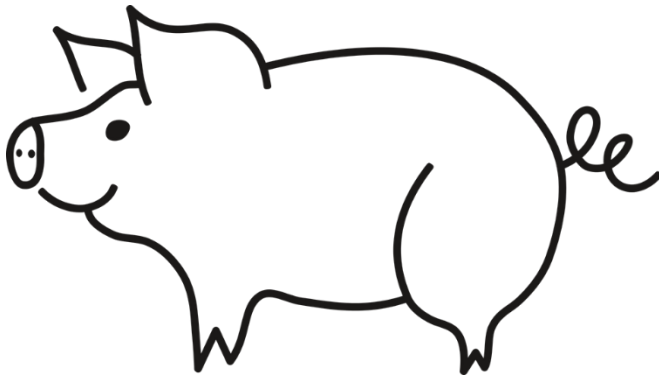
PETER	<input type="checkbox"/>	Annoy
FUND	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discovered
HEAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Centre, core
REEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	One who resists authority
HAVEN	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paradise
PLANE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earth, perhaps

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

As a young child during the war when food rationing was the norm, a lot of families had chickens to supply eggs, and a pig in a sty at the bottom of the garden which was slaughtered in the autumn to supply bacon, lard, ham, etc to supplement the meagre rations.

My mother was the one person in the village that had the skills to “put the pig away” as the expression goes, meaning turning the slaughtered animal into so many wonderful things to eat. As the youngest member of the family I was taken with her to people’s homes whilst she did the job, and slowly the memory of what she did was etched in my mind.

Firstly she would salt the fitches. Saltpetre and black salt were used. The saltpetre was bought from the chemist and the black salt in 7lb lumps was obtained from the bakery. This had to be chiselled off, then rolled to get fine



salt as we now know it. The saltpetre was pushed into all the folds and holes where the bones had been removed, then the whole sides of meat were laid on salt and well covered in salt in long, shallowish trays, where they would stay for about 6 weeks. The hams (top of legs and shoulders) could also be salted or boiled fresh.

The rest of the meat was sorted out. Light meat would be minced, mixed with herbs and breadcrumbs and made into sausage meat ready for filling the skins once they had been cleaned. Sausage skins were the outer sheath of the small intestines; firstly washed in salt water, then boiled and finally scraped clean on a flat board with the back of a wooden spoon. Once completely clean it would be threaded onto a funnel that fastened onto the front of the mincing machine, and filled into one long length. Then Mum, with amazing skill, would kink and knot this rope into links in sets of four – this always seemed like magic to me!

The red meat was minced coarser, then seasoned and left to stand whilst she made hot water pastry (flour, salt, melted lard and hot water, well mixed then kneaded) which was moulded around a “dolly” or wooden block to make the cases for pork pies. These were filled and lidded, then baked slowly until golden brown. The jelly for the pies was made by boiling some bones. Once the pies were cold, and using a small funnel, the stock was introduced through holes in the pies’ lids.

The offal – liver, kidneys, heart – were used within days, usually fried with onions. The “lights” (lungs and stomach) were cooked and then fed to the cats and dogs.

The head and tail were boiled for ages in a big pan. Then the bones were fished out and the meat mushed up. Finally, seasoned, the mixture was ladled into basins and allowed to set. This it did, and then could be sliced for sandwiches, etc. This was the “collared mead” or brawn as we know it.

Any other left over bits of mead were again minced, seasoned and mixed with breadcrumbs. Handfuls of the mixture were wrapped in pieces of the “skirts” – this is a skin membrane, laced with fatty streaks, that supports the bowel inside the body. Anyway, this made the skin for haslets which were cooked in the oven until golden brown.

Another job was to cut the large piece of fat that ran the length of the pig into small cubes and render it down in a large pan. As it melted, the liquid fat was drained off until all that was left in the pan were small scratchings that were delicious when cold and sprinkled with salt. The liquid fat would solidify and become lard that was stored in the pantry for making pastry and cooking with throughout the months ahead.

The feet (“trotters”) and hocks (ankles) were boiled then picked over when cold and eaten with bread and butter.

One of the few bits of the pig that appears useless – the bladder – well, my dad would wash that out, tie off the orifices, then blow it up and seal it and we would play ball with it!

It was always said that the only bit of a pig that isn’t used is its squeal! We were very lucky to have such good food.

Margaret Woolley

SET SQUARE and ADD-A-LETTER SOLUTIONS

9	-	6	×	3
+		+		×
4	+	8	÷	2
-		-		÷
7	-	5	×	1

pe(S)ter
f(O)und
hear(R)t
re(B)el
h(E)aven
plane(T)
The word is SORBET

THE BALLAD OF THE BUS STOP

They used to meet at the bus stop
Each morning just before school
They fell in love at the bus stop
But then he started to cool.

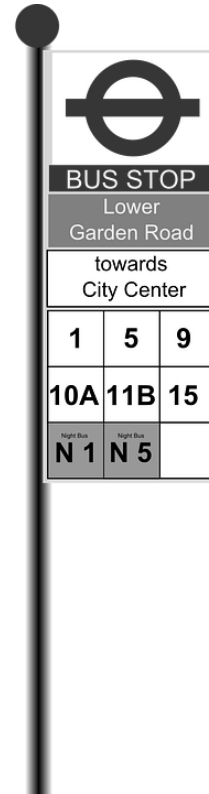
No longer drawn by the bus stop,
The prospect of seeing him there,
She just couldn't face the bus stop
When he no longer did care.

As years rolled on by the bus stop
People did come and did go.
With joy and tears at the bus stop,
Relationships forged? Yes and no.

His life went on by new bus stops,
And so did hers, truth to tell.
Hers, though, at different bus stops
Until climbing the bus steps she fell.

Who should be there at that bus stop?
I don't need to tell you, I'm sure.
He, too, was at the same bus stop;
He helped her. She still had allure.

They arranged to meet by this bus stop,
Serendipity they did take.
On the very next day at the bus stop
They planned for coffee and cake.



Mikki Wilde



ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: He's 20, much like your IQ.

WORDSEARCH

All the words can go before or after **MATCH**

E	V	O	L	A	D	H	H	S	N	A	F
A	M	R	B	M	A	S	O	C	S	R	C
D	I	R	A	A	Y	V	U	I	E	U	D
G	S	O	T	T	L	P	E	E	L	G	O
U	N	E	V	E	N	L	R	N	B	B	O
A	R	S	C	U	H	E	I	S	U	Y	W
O	A	I	S	R	F	H	T	E	O	E	T
C	T	D	L	E	I	R	T	G	D	E	Y
Y	M	I	R	N	N	C	E	I	N	A	A
M	A	K	E	R	P	T	K	N	W	S	L
G	N	I	L	W	O	B	I	E	O	P	P
T	R	I	E	L	H	S	A	F	T	N	U

AMATEUR

BALL

BOWLING

CITY

CRICKET

CUP

DAY

DOUBLES

FANS

FITNESS

GIRL

LOVE

MAKER

PLAY

REFEREE

RUGBY

TENNIS

UNEVEN

UP WITH

VENUE

WOOD

Contributed by Ken Marriott

BRUCE – REMINISCENCES OF A FAMILY PET

Part 1

As a child I longed for a pet – it could have been anything, a dog, cat, rabbit, rat - even a new sister or brother would have been some compensation. Unfortunately my pleas fell on deaf ears because my Mum explained that any pet created a lot of work and would be “a nuisance”. However, one day Mum and Dad came home from their weekly visit into Leicester and on opening the brown paper bags containing their shopping, a dog’s collar and lead were revealed. We were totally mystified because we had no dog, but Mum explained that we were to be allowed to have a puppy, BUT, should it prove to be a nuisance, then, it would “have to go”.

My brother, David, and I were absolutely ecstatic and straight after tea Dad took us to collect our little dog who was all black, a cross between a springer and a cocker spaniel and only 8 weeks old. On arriving at our house he was introduced to his new home which was to be a cardboard box with rags in the bottom, situated in the corner of our little kitchen. Mum instructed us he was not to be allowed anywhere else in the house except the garden. Within a very short time he deposited a puddle on our quarry-tiled floor, and my Dad, who was not quite so anti as Mum, quickly cleaned it up! We decided to call him “Bruce” and that we would concentrate on his house-training and teaching him the few words he had to know – his name and other commands eg, no, sit, be quiet, come here, etc.

We were so delighted to have him that the whole of the first evening was spent playing with him in the kitchen until he went into his little box exhausted and fell asleep. During the night I was woken up when I heard him crying – poor little puppy. I’m quite sure he was missing his Mum and many brothers and sisters. I hurried down to the kitchen and picked him up to sooth him – I was so afraid this could be considered a nuisance and he would “have to go”.

When we got the dog I assumed that all the teaching would be from the family and directed at Bruce. As I soon realised, this was a very wrong assumption – much of the teaching came from the dog to us and me in particular.

An instance of this is that I imagined that, as long as he got fed and exercised, he would be quite happy to be by himself in the kitchen, whereas quite the opposite was true – he didn’t care which room we were in so long as he could be with us. One event that sticks in my mind was the day he was in his box in the kitchen when an item of clothing slid off our overhead airer on to the handle of a saucepan on the cooker, which in turn fell off the cooker on to the

quarry tile floor! Bruce ran out of the kitchen all of a tremble - he was absolutely terrified - and never did stay in the kitchen by himself again!

Thus the rule about him being confined to the kitchen and garden was at an end and he wandered freely with us around the house. At first he was not allowed upstairs; again he soon made it very plain that we would all have disturbed nights unless he was allowed to sleep upstairs so as to be as near to us as possible.

I quickly learned that the dog had the family prioritised according to how much use we were in fulfilling his needs and his very favourite was Dad. If Dad was at home he was inclined to ignore us (Dad took him out for walks). Mum was priority no 2 (she fed him). David and I were a last resort – useful for play! My idea of play was to dress him up and put him in my doll's pram. This did not match Bruce's idea of play at all – his favourite game was “chase”. For many years I tried to train him to run after a ball and bring it back. Only problem – when he brought the ball back, sure enough, it would be dropped near my feet, but when I tried to pick the ball up he would grab it in the hope that I would chase him trying to retrieve it.



One Christmas David had a leather football and we knew Bruce would not be able to get a football in his mouth so David would be able to play with his Christmas present in peace. In a very short time the dog learned that leather footballs all had laces – very useful for carrying. Unfortunately for us this was replicated in a very embarrassing incident when a football match on the local park was interrupted by a cheeky dog running off with the football. Bruce just loved being chased by so many people including half the football team. We never again took his lead off on the park when there was either a cricket or football match taking place.

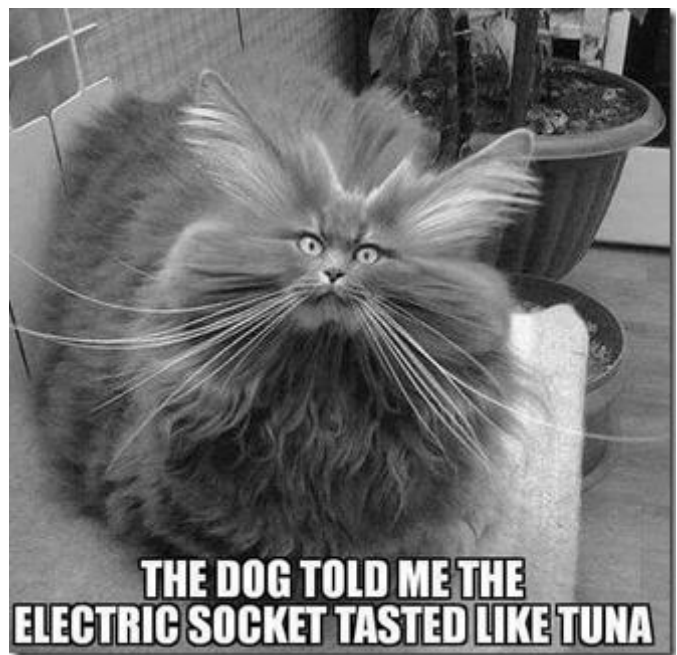
Cocker spaniels are called “merry” cockers and Bruce was certainly this – he just loved anything he could do to promote a game. So, if anyone was dusting he would watch and at the first opportunity would run off with the duster – the game being you had to chase him to get it back. On wash days, which was done in the kitchen, when Mum piled the clothes into various categories ready for the washer Bruce would keep his eye on her and when she wasn't looking would pick the clothes up a few at a time, run into the garden, put them in a heap and sit on the top, growling at whoever was sent to retrieve the clothes.

Contributed by Jenny Mills

SOME CLEVER ANAGRAMS - sent in by John Beaney

- THE EARTH SHAKES = THAT QUEER SHAKE
- ELEVEN PLUS TWO = TWELVE PLUS ONE
- PRESBYTERIAN = BEST IN PRAYER
- ASTRONOMER = MOON STARER
- DESPERATION = A ROPE ENDS IT
- THE EYES = THEY SEE
- GEORGE BUSH = HE BUGS GORE
- THE MORSE CODE = HERE COME DOTS
- DORMITORY = DIRTY ROOM
- SLOT MACHINES = CASH LOST IN ME
- ANIMOSITY = IS NO AMITY
- ELECTION RESULTS = LIES – LET'S RECOUNT
- SNOOZE ALARMS = ALAS! NO MORE Z'S
- A DECIMAL POINT = I'M A DOT IN PLACE
- MOTHER IN LAW = WOMAN HITLER

And thanks to David Hebblewhite for these two items!



THAT'S ALL UNTIL NEXT MONTH! HAPPY NEW YEAR!