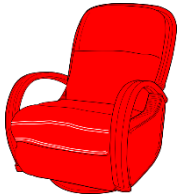




Monthly meetings are held at the Greig Hall, Gunnings Road, Alcester
at 2.30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month



Notes from the Chair

David West

Just a reminder about the AGM on Tuesday 5th March. If you are looking for a new interest, there will also be a chance to talk to some of the special interest group leaders.

* * * * *

**NEW GROUP
CREATIVE WRITING**

A new creative writing group is beginning on Friday 5 April 2024 and will meet on the 1st Friday of the month at the Catholic Church Hall from 10.30 – 11.30 am
6 places are available in the group (Please contact Pat Oliver for availability).
This is a support group with mentoring for those who would like to write short stories, Flash Fiction and memoirs.

For further details, please contact the group leader,
Pat Oliver (patoliver54@gmail.com)



2024 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Unfortunately, some members have not yet renewed for 2024, so I am sorry to say that their membership lapsed on 27th February (ie 8 weeks after subs were due), which means that they are no longer eligible to attend any u3a meetings or interest groups. However, we do understand that the reason behind non-payment could be quite legitimate, so it is an easy matter to re-instate membership as soon as subs are paid.

ANOTHER BIRMINGHAM HISTORY WALK

The above event has proved very popular and I now have 28 names on the Interest List! However, I know that circumstances change and people drop out for various reasons, so if you wish to add your name, please do so. I've talked to Michael Jay who is leading this event and asked him to confirm the length of time it takes and the mileage of the walk. He tells me he has added a couple of points of interest so needs to double check the route so I will be able to tell you more in the April newsletter.

John Pickering

Chairman	David West		
Vice-Chairman	John Pickering (temporary)		
Treasurer	Jean Morgan		
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Lindsay Evans		
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering		
Groups Coordinator	Brian Titterington		
Programme Co-ordinator	Marilyn Brannon		
Accessibility Officer	Ruth Dutton		
Archives	Jan Rowe (Coopted member)		
Committee Members	Val Hamblin Karyl Rees	Jan Carr (Coopted)	Bob Andrews (Coopted)
Newsletter Editor	Bronwen Bunting		
Web	http://u3asites.org.uk/alcester	Annual Sub: £20.00	Only members can join groups

2024 Coach Holiday "Discovering Cardiff & South Wales"

John Pickering

Please note that the booking forms and deposits for the above holiday need to be handed to Lyn or myself by the March meeting please. We still have rooms available, including two rooms for single occupancy (a supplement of £100 applies) so it's not too late to reserve your place! Don't forget that, because the holiday is organised and run by Harry Shaw Travel, it is fine for you to bring a travelling companion who is not in u3a.

Booking forms and deposits need to be handed/sent to Lyn or myself by the March meeting please.

If you would like more information and/or an electronic copy of the brochure, please contact me:

(01527453628 or johnpickering@gmail.com)

□

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION INVITATION

Anne Duff celebrates her 80th birthday in March and invites any of her u3a friends who would like to join her for a get together at The Hollybush in Alcester 1.00 – 7.00 pm.

Please contact Anne for more details, including the date (omitted as this newsletter goes out on our website).

THEATRE TRIPS

SATUDAY 13 APRIL 2024 "Sleuth" at Malvern Theatre £41 per ticket (Ref: T7)

All the seats are taken but many have still to pay.

Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting on 5 March 2024 (Ref: T7)

SATUDAY 1 JUNE 2024 "The Kite Runner" at Malvern Theatre £40 per ticket (Ref: T8)

Only one seat left but most still have to pay

Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting in April 2024 (Ref: T8)

Several reserves have been able to obtain tickets on these shows. Add your name to the lists if you wish

SATUDAY 13 JULY 2024 "What the Butler Saw" at Malvern Theatre £34 per ticket (Ref: T9)

Described as Joe Orton's most ambitious play, manic farce and masterclass in fearless comic writing.

(Age 14+, Strong Language)

Best stalls seats in rows E & F. Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting in April (Ref: T9)

There will be lists at the AGM meeting for all of the shows or email me if you cannot be there

Payment by Bank Transfer is the preferred payment method

("The Alcester u3a"; Sort Code: 08-92-99, Account No: 67268429)

In each case quoting your membership number and the appropriate trip reference (Ref: XXX T7 / XXX T8 / XXX T9)

Alternatively payment by cheque or in cash can be made to the Treasurer

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)

Programme for 2024

5 March		AGM & Group Displays
2 April	Abbey Watson	The Dogs Trust
7 May	Roy Smart	Amy, Wonderful Amy
4 June	Hilary Daly	A Pain in the Class
2 July	Cat Weatherill	A Feather in My Wallet
6 August	Patrick Hanglin	3 Years along the Zambezi
3 September	Karyl Rees	Me and Dylan Thomas
1 October	Chris Hanson	Fire Safety in the Home
5 November	Caroline Faulkner	Recycling in Warwickshire
3 December	Ian Boskett	The Great Train Robbery

NEW GROUP - NATIONAL TRUST VISITS

We are aiming to have a visit arranged every 3rd Wednesday of the month to a local property generally within a 20mile radius of Alcester. Transport will be by members' cars. Where car sharing is arranged we will recommend a contribution to be given to the driver at the recognised rate used by U3A. (36p/mile/car). Shared transport must be arranged amongst yourselves.

As each NT property requires us to complete a form confirming our impending visit with the exact numbers a week before, we will need to know exact numbers by the monthly meeting preceding the visit. The format of the visit will depend on the systems that the various houses use and the availability of NT volunteers.

We plan for the visits to be a relaxed, sociable outing to some of our many local National Trust properties.

If you wish to join this group email us on david.folk@btinternet.com with the following information:

Name, NT member Y/N, whether you are willing to give lifts.

NATIONAL TRUST VISITS

Our first visit will be to Hanbury Hall in Worcestershire on Wednesday 20th March.

The contribution to the driver should be £8.64 divided by the number of occupants in the car.

Please arrive in the NT carpark at 10.30. Remember your NT membership card or be prepared to pay the reduced non-member charge of £14.25. This reduced charge is conditional on our group being more than 15.

Unless we hear differently we will not be having an introductory talk so it is up to you how you plan your visit. There are volunteers in most rooms ready to fill you in with details. It was suggested that we don't all try to get coffee or lunch at the same time. The gardens are laid out and planted as per original drawings. There are three waymarked walks for the more energetic,- Blue a 1 mile, Grey a 1.2 mile, Orange a 2.2 mile.

It is up to the driver as to when you leave.

Please email us by 5th March on david.folk@btinternet.com if you hope to come to Hanbury Hall on 20th March.

Linda and David Bradley

01789 488568

Interest Group News

Reading 2

Linda Jennings

During January we read **Autumn by Ali Smith**. It tells the story of the life of the elderly, unconventional but wise Daniel and how he talks to and gets to know the child Elisabeth next door, always beginning conversations with "what are you reading?". His influence broadens her horizons as she grows up and helps her to escape the restrictions of conventional thinking. There was a single enthusiastic reader and although some conceded that it had some good elements, most generally disliked the disjointed way the story was told.

Our next meeting is at 2pm on Tuesday 12 March at Alcester Catholic Church meeting room when we will be talking about Nora Webster by Colm Tobin.

Report by Jan Robertson

History

Lynda Matteson

February's meeting featured another tour de force from John Cooper, this time on the subject of **Dr John Hall, Stratford's first physician, son in law of William Shakespeare and the builder of Hall's Croft**. Dr Hall kept case books of his patients which give historians unparalleled access to early medical practice. He was financially very successful and died a wealthy man; unfortunately, many of his patients also died, despite, or possibly because, of his treatments. At this time medical practice was based on the Ancient Greek theory of illness being caused by an imbalance in the 4 humours which govern the human body and blood-letting was used to balance the humours. Dr Hall used rusty water to treat a lack of iron and poultices to draw out infection. He did his best, within the limits of his time and may have harmed fewer of his patients than his colleagues.

Jazz Big Band Sound

Bob Applegarth

Our theme, "**Records I can't live without**" produced a wide variety of enjoyable music. As well as tracks by many of the established greats, including Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, popular British trad bands, Terry Lightfoot, and Chris Barber, we heard some lesser known items from the Coventry based Bob Oliver Band and the Hallam - Roberts band from Barnsley. Quite an eclectic mix!

At our next meeting on March 13th in the Malt Mill Lane Community Centre Ian Greig will give a programme entitled "Jazz from Surprising Sources"We have recently acquired several new members. Anyone else with an interest in Jazz is warmly welcomed to come along.

Mah Jong

A good turnout of 11 for the February session (unfortunately the flooded roads defeated our 12th member). **The next session will be on Thursday 28 March.**

Bronwen Bunting



Music Appreciation

Jan Rowe

We started our afternoon with lunch at The Bear Hotel in Alcester and then continued with an enjoyable afternoon's music presentation by Lin Randall, her theme was 'Water' and included "The Skater's Waltz" by Emil Waldteufel, Schubert's "The Trout", "Deep River" sung by Bryn Terfel, Beethoven's "Thunderstorm & Tempest" from his Pastoral Symphony, after our tea break we heard Tchaikovsky's "Grand Waltz from "Swan Lake", Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave" from his Hebrides Overture and Handel's "Water Music". Our next meeting is on Wednesday 27th March at 2pm at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre when John Ruffell will present his programme.



Beginners Bridge

Paul Brenda

The Beginners Bridge group restarted in 2024 on Tuesday 16th January at the Malt Mill Lane Community Centre and meets weekly at the usual time of 2.00pm.

Philosophy

Peter Tugwell

Some years ago, the Philosophy Group was given a large number of back issues of *Philosophy Now*, covering the years 2003 – 2019 and so we decided to use some of them for our February meeting. Each member was given a magazine from the years 2017-18, with the task of finding an article, review or letter which caught their eye – and starting off the discussion on that subject. Members were told beforehand what each member had chosen, so they could do their own research or collect their own thoughts on those choices. The result was that we had a number of topics to discuss, and as there was a maximum time of 5 minutes for the member concerned to introduce their topic, we were able to get through quite a few varied ones in our session. It was a good exercise in extracting the main points, highlighting the philosophical significance of the matter in question, whether it was the philosopher (as in "Socratic Dialogue") or the philosophy (as in "Anarchy"). AI figured in several guises, as in "The Ultimate Computer" and "Can Robots be Conscious?" along with the "Problem of Evil" and Aristotle on forming friendships. We plan to repeat this format as everybody thought it was useful and engagingly challenging. Our next meeting is on 19 March, and as the question itself is rather long, suffice it to say that it concerns Thomas Kuhn and his concept of "paradigm shifts" in the philosophy of science.



Photography Group

Roger Harris

A good steady variety of daily photos including lots of indications of Spring. For one week we were also treated to a series of photos of a holiday in Aberdovey. Just what was needed in these damp days of Winter. The "Places of Worship" competition produced some fine results from across the world. It was won by John Ruffell's great shot of the interior of Lincoln Cathedral.

Poetry Too

Ruth Dutton & Rosie Harvey

Our theme for the February meeting was "Children". As usual we had an eclectic mixture of verse from a variety of poets, some we knew well and others recently discovered. We were joined today by someone who brought their own work to share with us, which is always something special to enjoy.

We began with a poem by Michaela Morgan about the Pakistani writer, Malala Yousafzai, who was shot by a Taliban gunman when she was 15. She went on to become the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. The poem ends with the verse "A girl who has words. A girl with a pen. A girl to be heard with support of her friends, Who want to live free. That's what they fear, A girl just like me".

Larkin reminded us in his poem "This be the verse", that having children is very irresponsible, as parents always "mess" them up. Needless to say, he did not have any of his own. Neither did Felix Dennis who wrote over 2,000 poems, two of which were read. "I watched you while you sleep" and "A Song for the newly born". The latter in particular is a thoughtful, sensitive poem about the new arrival. One of our group often sends a copy of this to new parents. Roger McGough & Pam Ayres provided us with some hilarious moments in a child's life from the child who says I wanna be the leader, then, when appointed to the role, says "Yippee I'm the leader, what shall we do?" Pam Ayres describes vividly the tortuous experience of listening to the practising of the violin until she can bear it no longer. She also creates totally the right atmosphere in her poem "I don't want to go to school" where the child eventually decided it's much more fun to go there than stay at home with mum. The teacher's perspective of what it

is like to be faced with a classroom of children is accurately portrayed by Allan Ahlberg in "Please Mrs Butler". In desperation she tells the child to go and "Lock yourself in the cupboard Run away to sea, Do whatever you can my flower, But don't ask me!"

The poem "Lament" by an American writer Edna Vincent Millay, writing in the 1900s, describes the way a mother coped with explaining the death of their father to her children by making jackets for them out of his old ones. "There'll be in his pockets, Things he put there – keys and pennies covered in tobacco".

"I remember, I remember" by Thomas Hood & Rupert Brookes "Funeral of Youth" both remind one about the passing of childhood and what fond memories we all carry.

We concluded our afternoon with the tragic epic saga of poor Albert who was eaten by the lion. Marriott describes how the poor mother is asked what compensation she would like for his life, the magistrate suggested that she might have further sons. "At that mother got proper blazing, I'll thank you sir, kindly said she, What waste all our lives raising children, To feed to ruddy lions, Not me. Made famous of course by Stanley Holloway.

We meet again on Friday 22 March at 2.00 pm when the theme is "Food".

Walking



Groups

Amblers Group

Linda Bradley/Bronwen Bunting

Once again the ambling group fell victim to the vagaries of this winter's weather and had to cancel the amble as half the route was under water. However, not to be deprived of the monthly social gathering, the planned lunch went ahead at The Three Horseshoes at Wixford where we enjoyed excellent Thai food. **The next amble will be on 8 March.**

Friday Walkers

Jane and Chris Baker

Our February walk started in Claverdon. It was 5-6 miles and was to include the villages of Langley and Wolverton. When we did the pre walk about ten days earlier, the weather was fine and dry and there were far reaching views. Unfortunately between then and the day of the walk we had copious amounts of rain. Although it was still enjoyable, the standing water and mud made some of the route almost impassable. The walking was slow and we had to shorten the route, completely missing out Wolverton. On a positive note, there was a good turnout for the walk and ten of us ate in the Red Lion afterwards. This is a walk we may repeat in drier weather.

Scrabble Group

Linda Salsbury

Not only is playing Scrabble lots of fun, but there has also been research carried out to show that it lowers the risk of mental illness by keeping the brain stimulated and engaged, makes us happy, reduces blood pressure, improves the immune system and improves our memory! If you are keen to meet and play Scrabble against a group of U3a members, we recommend you give the group a try.



The Alcester U3a Scrabble Group has been going for nearly two years, and meetings are very sociable events, usually with hot drinks and biscuits available. So no matter how well you do, you are guaranteed to have an enjoyable time with a friendly bunch of people, and maybe pick up some Scrabble hints and tips to help you beat your friends and family too! **The U3a Scrabble Group meets on the first Friday of each month from 2pm** at a member's home in Alcester. If you're interested in knowing more about joining the U3a Scrabble Group please call Group Leader, Linda Salsbury 07872 625006 or email lindasalsbury@hotmail.co.uk U3a Scrabble members will offer any guidance when together each month and cater for all levels of expertise to ensure a good time is had by all.

We look forward to welcoming interested members in the very near future.

Theatre Visits

Joe White

Trip to see **Murder in the Dark at the Malvern theatre 24th February**

A Ghost story, a new play by Torben Betts this production had everything from the start, the opening music the gentle mist floating across the dark interior of the set then a light shines through the window a dog barks as the story unfolds.....

And there I must stop as we are warned not to divulge the plot to future theatre audiences except to say that the cast lead by Tom Chambers and Susie Blake were excellent. The dialogue was slick and surprisingly humorous. The scenery moved quickly and smoothly adding to the suspense as ghostly apparitions appear throughout the play. The final scene gave us much to talk about afterwards. I Believe everyone had a good time. How lucky are we as a group to have these trips organised for us by someone who works so hard in making sure we have a great day out. Thank you Joe for all you do.

Report by Kay Parish

ALCESTER u3a INTEREST GROUPS: Group Coordinator: Brian Titterington

If you would like to join a group, please contact the group organiser

Group	Meeting	Time	Venue	Organiser
Bowls	Fortnightly from 27 June	10 am	Bidford Bowls Club	David Sanders
Beginners Family History	2 nd Monday	2.00 pm	Contact group organiser for details	Linda Cooper
Beginners Bridge	Commencing November: every Tuesday except the first.	2 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Paul Brenda
Church Visits	4 th Tuesday as advised	11.00 am	Various	John Cooper
Crafts	3 rd Wednesday Sept to March	10.30-12.00	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Lamb
Creative Writing	1 st Friday	10.30-11.30	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Pat Oliver
Cycling	Various dates and venues		Tracey Wyatt	
French	3 rd Tuesday	2.30 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Brian Titterington
Garden Lovers	2 nd Thursday April – October	2.30 pm	Various	Janet Allely
History	3 rd Thursday	10.45 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Matheson
Italian Conversation	Weds Fortnightly	2 – 4 pm	Huff Cap, Great Alne	Chris Brain
Jazz & Big Band Appreciation	2 nd Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Bob Applegarth
Mah Jong	4 th Thursday	2.00 pm	Various	Bronwen Bunting
Man Talk	3 rd Tuesday	2-4.00 pm	Huff Cap, Great Alne	Ian Gregory
Music Appreciation	Last Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Jan Rowe
Music Theory Practical Piano/Keyboard	1 st Wednesday 3 rd Wednesday	10.30-3.30 pm	Confirm with group leader	Chris Capstick
Philosophy	3 rd Tuesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Peter Tugwell
Photo Group	On-line Group		Roger Harris	
Poetry Too	Last Friday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Ruth Dutton Rosie Harvey
Ambles	2 nd Friday	10.30 am	Various	Linda Bradley
Walks	3 rd Friday	10.00 am	Various	Jane & Chris Baker
Reading 2	2 nd Tuesday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Linda Jennings
Rees Reading	2 nd Monday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room (from January 2024)	Karyl Rees
Scrabble	1 st Friday	2.00 pm	Contact group organiser for details	Linda Salsbury
Singing for Pleasure	Last Thursday	10.30-12 noon	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Chris Capstick
Spanish	2 nd & 4 th Tuesday	10.00 am	Malt Mill Lane Community Centre	John Douglas
Theatre & Outings	As notified			Joe White
Yoga on Monday	Every Monday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Karyl Rees