

*June*

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



**Notes from the Chair**

**David West**

It was good to attend the recent Spring lunch which was enjoyed by all those present, thanks to the hard work of Lyn Pickering. The committee are interested in hearing members' thoughts regarding the possibility of other general social events which provide the opportunity for members to meet other members whom they may not normally see. However please bear in mind that such events require a significant amount of work to organise.

**A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!**

**Lyn Pickering**

35 of our members enjoyed a delicious lunch and animated conversation at our annual Spring Lunch on 24<sup>th</sup> May. Laura and her staff at the Golden Cross were as attentive and helpful as ever, even when they had to delay service for a few minutes because a couple of our members had car trouble!



**MUSICIANS GROUP – come along and join our happy band!**

**John Pickering**



The above group got off to a flying start with 11 members attending the first meeting! We're an eclectic mix, both in the instruments played and the standard of the players, but we all joined in our first "jamming" session, enjoying the music and the company! If you play any musical instrument, at any level, and fancy coming along to see what we're all about, you would be made most welcome! (Next meeting Wed 12<sup>th</sup> June, 10.00 a.m. at The Catholic Church Hall.)

**Programme for 2024**

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

Chairman	David West		
Vice-Chairman	vacancy		
Treasurer	Jean Morgan		
Assistant Treasurer	Linda Randall		
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Sue Robertson		
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	Karen Downman
Newsletter Editor	Bronwen Bunting		
Web	http://u3asites.org.uk/alcester	Annual Sub: £20.00	

## THANKS TO OUR LOVELY "SMILERS"!

Lyn Pickering



In the May newsletter I asked for volunteer "smiley" members to be near the entrance at Greig Hall to greet new members and visitors and I'm delighted to say that five people have come forward! (Although no-one would call me a shy person, I do empathise with people who find it hard to walk into a room full of strangers, as my lovely Mum was painfully shy!) If you feel you would like to help out in this way, please let me know!

## THEATRE TRIPS

Joe White ([joe\\_patwhite@msn.com](mailto:joe_patwhite@msn.com))



**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)

**We have had to confirm the booking, but will accept reserves with a possibility of asking the Theatre for more tickets in July.**

**SATUDAY 19 October 2024 "The History Boys" at Malvern Theatre** £44 per ticket (Ref: T10)

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary production of Alan Bennett's brilliant modern classic.

**Just 9 places left. Please book as soon as you can and pay no later than 5<sup>th</sup> August**

**SATUDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024 "Birdsong" at Malvern Theatre** £40 per ticket (Ref: T11)

Sebastian Faulk' epic story of love and loss returns to the stage (Age 14 plus)

**Over half the places have been booked already. Please book as soon as you can and pay no later than 5<sup>th</sup> August**

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

**Reserves are welcome and often end up with tickets, add your name to the list if you wish.**

Payment by Bank Transfer to:- **"The Alcester u3a"; Sort Code: 08-92-99, Account No: 67268429)**

Quoting your membership number and the appropriate reference (Ref: XXX T10 or XXX T11

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

## INTEREST GROUP NEWS



### Garden Lovers

Janet Allely

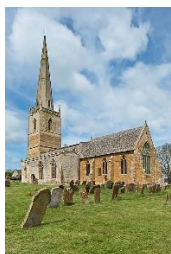
Garden lovers travelled to Badsey near Evesham to visit Bob and Fiona, who supply flowers to Chelsea Show, at Cotswold Garden Flowers, on their open afternoon for N.G.S. With umbrellas ready and lists in hand, we wandered amongst the many unusual special varieties. I was very taken with the many different paeonies and the history of the site. At the end of our walk, we found seating in the dry with hot tea, coffee and cake and were entertained by the family cat. **Our next visit, on**

**13th June is to a Japanese Garden in Alne Bank Road, Alcester where the owners will be showing us round in small groups starting from 2.30 pm so I can give various times to members at our monthly meeting. Also don't forget that 23rd June is our famous Alcester Garden Walkabout Day.**

### History

Lynda Matheson

Margaret Noyce gave an illustrated talk about **the history of the Sikh Empire** and its historical context. Sikhism developed on the wealthy, fertile Punjab at the same time as the Tudors ruled in England. Sikhism was based on one god which is a spirit rather than a person. Everyone is equal, including women and there are no castes. An honest day's labour should receive an honest day's pay and the Sikhs should share the fruits of their labours with others. The sect grew rapidly and in 1699 Sikhs began to collect together to form a defensive fighting force. Ranjit Singh aged just 21 shaped a formidable army which conquered the Punjab and eventually extended from the Chinese border to the Khyber Pass. The last descendant, Dulep Singh was taken to England where he was a favourite of queen Victoria but lived and died a virtual prisoner of the British. As a 10-year-old he was persuaded to give the Koh-i- nor diamond to Victoria and today it is claimed by 4 countries.



## CHURCH VISITS

Chris Baker

Our inaugural church visit for May was to St Gregory's Church, Tredington. 16 members joined us for the morning, and we enjoyed generous hospitality from some of their church members.

We were given a fascinating tour of this remarkable Grade 1 listed church by John Plenderleith. From its Anglo-Danish origins in 961 AD to the present day, this church has quite a story to tell. We were shown the remains of the original Saxon church windows and doors and the collection of ancient furnishings preserved inside. These included the stocks, with its curious 5 lockable arm/leg holes, the civil war musket balls still lodged in the church door and a rare "housesing" table, used for kneeling for communion before altar rails were used. Valuables were once kept in an unusual "Churchwardens Chest" with a triple lock for which two key holders were required to open up. The 15<sup>th</sup> century font had been carved slightly squint (the mason should have been to Specsavers!) and its base was fitted with stout metal staples –believed to have kept evil spirits at bay by protecting the priest using the holy water by "grounding" him! Also 15<sup>th</sup> century was a magnificent array of oak pews, which were clearly designed for durability rather than comfort.

Outside, the 14<sup>th</sup> century church spire is the highest in Warwickshire and the entire structure dominates the village and surrounding countryside. The Norman south doorway is 12<sup>th</sup> century, whilst the chancel was consecrated in 1315. Rather younger is the Lion pub to which the party repaired for an excellent lunch.

## Jazz & Big Band Sound

Bob Applegarth

Our meeting on May 8th got off to a bad start - no electricity at Malt Mill Lane! Very kindly Jan offered us the use of her lounge. Eventually Bob Applegarth was able to give a talk about some important jazz arrangers, including Benny Carter, Gil Evans and Shorty Rogers. **Our next meeting is on June 12th** at 2.00pm in Malt Mill Lane (all being well!). **John Ruffell will give a presentation entitled "Is This Jazz?"** New members warmly welcomed.

## Music Appreciation

Jan Rowe

A delightful afternoon of **Russian and French ballet music** was the subject of John Wall's presentation and included Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty" and "The Nutcracker", Khachaturian's very lively "Sabre Dance" then French Ballet was the subject for the second half with "La Fille mal Gardee", "Giselle", "Sylvia" and "Les Deux Pigeons". **Our next meeting is on Wednesday 26th June at 2pm at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre** when Jane Lytton will present her programme.



## Singing for Pleasure

Chrissie Capstick

**There will be meetings on Thursday June 27<sup>th</sup> but no meetings in July and August, due to many people either taking holidays, or looking after family members during school holidays, and we will start again on 26th September.**

## National Trust Visits

Linda & David Bradley

The group had a very successful visit to Croome in lovely weather. Some explored the house and landscape while others joined a very interesting guided walk discovering where RAF Defford wartime airfield was set up. The airfield was used to test airborne radar developed at nearby Malvern. Croome was home to huge numbers of service and civilian personnel during that time.

**We will visit Snowhill Manor in June but will meet at the later time of 11.30am.**

## Philosophy

Peter Tugwell

Our May meeting looked at the **matters of philosophical interest in Aristophanes' *The Acharnians***. Well, this Greek comedy certainly provided a rich harvest of such topics as the use of satire in holding the establishment to account, the position of an individual in relation an unpopular course of action being pursued by the state and the nature of justice, to name but a few. The context for the play is the continuing war between Athens and Sparta; the main character, Dikaiopolis, is tired of the war and its consequences, and he negotiates a separate peace for himself and his family. How does this square with the sovereignty of the state – can he indeed do this – can civil disobedience ever be justified? He rails against the corruption and ineptitude of the politicians and starts trading in his own created market area with representatives from neighbouring countries, much to the envy of his fellow citizens, who seek to purchase a piece of his peace treaty and its benefits. This was the third comedy by Aristophanes we had looked at, so we were able to 'compare and contrast' this play with *Lysistrata* and *The Clouds*. **Our next meeting on 18 June will feature 'Members' Choices' - each member will choose an item from a back issue of *Philosophy Now* to discuss with the group.**





## Photo Group - Competition Results 2024



Birmingham Canals  
By Karyl Rees (1)



Caerlaverock Castle  
By John Ruffell (2)



Hidcote Colour  
By Ruth Dutton (3)

Birmingham was a popular photographic location in May and Karyl Rees treated us to comprehensive views of large parts of the city. The new modern buildings are quite spectacular but the older areas, such as the one displayed, make better images. Meanwhile, many miles to the north, John Ruffell captured the romance of the Caerlaverock ruins. Formidable in its day, but still impressive even now. As usual, Ruth Dutton gave us plenty to see from various NT visits. Surely there can be no better place than Hidcote to find such stunning blooms to record.

Thanks to everyone for all photos submitted this month and congratulations to our three winners. If you feel the need to revert to a true photo competition, including critical appraisal, then please let me know.

## Poetry Too

Ruth Dutton &amp; Rosie Harvey

The theme for the May meeting was "Love – Requited & Unrequited". A small but enthusiastic group met & shared an extraordinary range of poetry. Serious, sad, funny, puzzling, true, fiction, thoughtful, hopeful. So, in the course of the afternoon, our moods were many, helped along by tea & delicious shortbread.

An appropriate opening was "What it is" by Erich Fried, which relates what love is in any situation, starting & finishing with the same line

"It, what it is", says love.

Keats' poem, "You say you love" expresses the frustration of love unrequited while his "He Wishes for the Clothes of Heaven" is lyrical & romantic –

"I being poor, have only my dreams ...

... tread softly for you tread on my dreams"

"The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes, is a classic, romantic, narrative poem recounting the robbing of the rich under cover of darkness by a highwayman. He meets & falls in love with Bess, a landlord's daughter. It doesn't end well as they both perish is a tale of betrayal & sacrifice.

"Pershore Station" by Betjeman, atmospherically sets the scene on a gaslit platform as a conscript bids farewell to his love. Betjeman is reminded of the woman he left in "the Hertfordshire hills, and dreams of .." another wife

"One word would have made her turn

But the word I never murmured, & now I'm left to burn .."

Charlotte Mew's "Farmer's Bride" relates the sad tale of an inarticulate farmer about his wife who cannot respond to him in any way.

"When we was wed she turned afraid

Of love & me & all things human,

Like the shut of a winter's day ...

...one night, in the fall, she runned away ..."

Henry Normal's "Love at First Sight" is, he says, his favourite poem written when he met his future wife, Angela.

"... there is wonder in attraction,

There is love at first sight,

I am already yours".

None of this in "After the Kiss" by Robin Stubbs, imagining the conversation between the prince & Snow White as she wakes ... they are clearly appalled in the harsh light of day in what they see & what they discover about each other  
They say together

"Let's beg to differ on this one  
We're not meant to share wedded bliss  
Our hopes & ambitions are different.  
We'll agree to give it a miss!"

"Anyone but You" by Anna J Arredondo bemoans the fact that every call, text, email she receives will be from "anyone but you", while Wendy Cope is in a real fix in "I'm in Love with A E Houseman" ..

"No woman ever stood a chance with Houseman  
And he's been dead since 1936."!

In "Afraid to Love", Christopher Poindexter expresses his feelings for the unattainable ...

"...she was the ocean  
I was just a boy  
Who loved the waves,  
But was completely  
Terrified to swim ..."

And Chinese poet Du Fu, born 712AD, explains in "A Woman of Quality" the struggles & resilience of noblewomen displaced by war, made accessible in a very fine translation.

"The world turns quickly against  
Those who have had their day..."

Let us close with a smile & Pam Ayres in "Love is like a Curry"

"For both are full of spice & both have dishes on the side"!!

Then "Cling to me Nigel". Poor Nigel is VERY small which makes the relationship somewhat problematical, but the poem ends on a positive note ...

"But cling to me Nigel, & although you're not tall  
A little one is better than no one at all!"

Well, that's a relief!!

Once more, it is impossible to acknowledge every poem, but I will say that we enjoyed an eclectic mix during a most entertaining afternoon. Thank you, group members, for the time & care you take over your choices. It's all worth it if we go home happy! **Our June meeting on Friday 28<sup>th</sup>, same time, same place, with the theme of ANTICIPATION.** I'm filled with it already.



## Walking Groups

### Amblers Group

Linda Bradley/Bronwen Bunting

The sun shone on the amblers for their May walk around **Great Alne**, starting from the Village Hall and taking us through the churchyard, across fields and through the new Great Alne Retirement Village and surrounding woodland before passing the Huff Cap prior to the final part of the walk. This provided a welcome opportunity for anyone in need of an early finish and a leisurely drink to stop off and await the arrival of the rest of us to enjoy lunch. **The next amble will be on Friday 14 June.**



### Friday Walkers

Jane and Chris Baker

Our warm, sunny May walk started at **the New Inn in Clifford Chambers**. After walking down the pretty main street we followed the line of the River Stour to Atherstone on Stour and Preston on Stour. We had good views of Alscott House, the home of the Holman West family and some members of the group looked around their family church in Preston. Our return route was through beautiful countryside with views as far as Shropshire and the Welsh borders. The only downside was a challenging field of oil seed rape! We completed our walk with a satisfactory lunch at the pub. We hope our **June 21st walk will be from Hatton** but we still need to do the recce.

**A bumper report covering April and May meetings as unfortunately the April report fell foul of technology for inclusion in the May newsletter.**

The April choice of book was **'This Much is True' by Miriam Margolyes** - an autobiography of the life of the well-known comic actor - only child of Jewish parents, describing her Oxford and Cambridge education, followed by work in radio, voiceovers, drama, Hollywood, etc. One review describes this book as 'naughty stories and cutting remarks which spare no blushes'. Several members closed the book after the first few chapters, unable to tolerate the content and attitude of her writing; not wanting to read any more. Those who persevered with the invariably long-winded lists of all the colleagues she had loved or loathed over her career, shared a very interesting and lively discussion, and although there were some parts of the book which met with members' agreement, the general consensus was a 'thumbs down' for this one.

The May book was **Snow Country by Sebastian Faulks** - part of a trilogy - but each can be read separately. This part begins in the setting of Vienna, at the time of the first world war, and trails a small group of individuals over a period of time, examining their psychological, moral and emotional turmoils - eventually located in a snowbound sanatorium, the Schloss-Seeblick, where inmates are potentially guided towards resolving the above issues. Members' reviews were mixed, and it was generally agreed that this novel is not one of Faulks' best, whilst acknowledging that his literary skills are nevertheless admirable. **Next month's book is The Woodlanders by Thomas Hardy.**

### Scrabble Group

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 Salisbury 07872 625006 or email [lindasalsbury@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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.

Linda Salisbury



### Theatre Trips

How to create a successful stage show from a brilliant and graphic book was certainly achieved by Matthew Spangler in his adaptation of *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novel set between Afghanistan and San Francisco in the 1970s & 1980s. A powerfully effective performance took place with a cast of twelve and a tabla musician on a small stage with minimal scenery and clever use of lighting and sound from singing bowls and schwirrbogen to achieve a realistic portrayal of the kite-running, a central part of the play. The two main characters, Ali & Hassan, are firm childhood friends despite coming from two social extremes of Afghan society, but human weakness and jealousy on the part of Ali cause a breakup of his friendship with the fiercely loyal Hassan. The violent situation in Afghanistan results in Ali & his father going to San Francisco where they make a new life and Ali a happy though childless marriage. However, he is always haunted by what he has done to his childhood friend and, after many twists and turns in the plot and revelations about the intertwined family histories, Ali learns of the deaths of Hassan and his father, and returns to Afghanistan to rescue Hassan's son from a cruel fate in an orphanage, adopting him as his own and bringing him back to San Francisco where they begin to establish a relationship through kite running.

Altogether, a performance to remember and a strong recommendation to anyone who hasn't already read the book to do so.

Joe White

## 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	Start date for 2024 TBA		Bidford Bowls Club	David Sanders
Beginners Family History	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday	2.00 pm	Contact group organiser for details	Linda Cooper
Beginners Bridge	Commencing November: 2 pm every Tuesday except the first.		Malt Mill Community Centre	Paul Brenda
Church Visits	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday as advised	11.00 am	Various	Chris Baker
Crafts	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Sept to March	10.30-12.00	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Lamb
Creative Writing	1 <sup>st</sup> Friday	10.30-11.30	Contact group leader for venue details	Pat Oliver
Cycling	Various dates and venues			Tracey Wyatt
French	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	2.30 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Brian Titterington
Garden Lovers	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday April – Oct	2.30 pm	Various	Janet Allely
History	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	10.45 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Matheson
Italian Conversation	Fortnightly on Wednesday	2 – 4.00 pm	The Huff Cap, Great Alne	Chris Brain
Jazz & Big Band Appreciation	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Bob Applegarth
Mah Jong	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	2.00 pm	Various	Bronwen Bunting
Man Talk	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	2–4.00 pm	Huff Cap, Great Alne	Ian Gregory
Music Appreciation	Last Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Jan Rowe
Musicians Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	10.00 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	John Pickerint
Piano, Keyboard & Theory Tuition	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	10.00-4.00 pm	Confirm with group leader	Chris Capstick
National Trust Visits	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday		Various	David/Linda Bradley
Philosophy	3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 Rosemary Harvey
Ambles	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday	10.30 am	Various	Linda Bradley Bronwen Bunting
Walks	3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday	10.00 am	Various	Jane & Chris Baker
Reading 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Linda Jennings
Rees Reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Karyl Rees
Scrabble	1 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> 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