



Monthly meetings are held at the Greig Hall, Alcester

at 2.30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month



Notes from the Chair

David West

We are fortunate to have a large number of volunteers who help our Group in a variety of ways. However we continue to struggle to recruit volunteers for specific roles on our committee. We have had no expressions of interest with respect to the forthcoming vacancy for the Secretary role in spite of several general requests and some direct approaches to members. In addition, we have a longstanding vacancy for a Groups Coordinator. It is understandable if members have reservations about assuming a specific role on the committee with no previous experience on the Alcester u3a or other committee. We would therefore welcome new members on the committee who would assume the role of Secretary or Groups Coordinator further down the line at a time when they would feel comfortable. Interested members should contact me (contacts are included in this newsletter). If we fail to fill these vacancies before our AGM next month, we will need to have a serious discussion within committee as to how we manage without these roles in the future

COLLECTION NEWS

Our collection on 7 January for "First Responders" after an interesting talk by William Goodall raised **£262.05**

Thank you to everyone.



Programme for 2025

4 February	Colin Millet	Worcester Porcelain (bring pieces for valuation; author's book for sale)
4 March	AGM	& Interest Group Displays
1 April	Jo Richardson	Life on the International Space Station
6 May	Philip Caine	A Personal Journey to Baghdad and Back
3 June	Clive Owen	Bermuda Police Murders
1 July	Andrew Lound	Shackleton, Antarctic Explorer
5 August	Fiona Conn	Why People Become Homeless (cash collection for Shelter)
2 September	Jenny Stone	Comic Monologues
7 October	Kay Starkey	The Work of the Air Ambulance (cash collection)
4 November	Eddie Smallwood	Richard III – Villain to Hero
2 December	Coughton Community Choir	Seasonal Musical Entertainment

Chairman	David West	chair.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Joint Vice-Chair	Lyn Pickering	vicechair.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Joint Vice-Chair	Karen Dowman	vicechair.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jean Morgan	treasurer.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Assistant Treasurer	Linda Randell	
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Sue Robertson	
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering	membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Groups Coordinator	Vacancy	
Speaker Team Co-ordinator	Linda Randell	
Committee Members	Val Hamblin	Karyl Rees
Coopted Members	Christine Dyer	Clive Owen
Newsletter	Bronwen Bunting	07900 303134
Web: Manager - Lindsay Evans	http://alcester.u3asite.uk	Annual Sub: £20.00

Only members can join groups

2025 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Lyn Pickering

I must start by thanking the huge majority of members who have paid their subs for 2025, especially those who so patiently queued to pay by cash or cheque at the January meeting (the late opening of the Greig Hall couldn't have come on a worse day!!!) An even bigger thank you must go to the record number of members who paid by Bank Transfer, which makes our Treasurer's job (and mine) so much easier. *However, as I type, there are still around 50 members who haven't renewed their membership, so please would you do so asap?*

Please remember to keep the Membership Card you were issued with last year, as we are not in future issuing Cards to existing members. Instead, I have affixed a name label to a Programme when members pay, so please don't forget to collect this from me at the next meeting, if you haven't already done so. (Please only take the programme with your name label on, as I use this to double check my records.)

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS Lyn Pickering (Membership Secretary)

January has brought us late Christmas presents in the form of many new members, all of whom are very welcome! If you were one of our new joiners in January, I apologise that I was not able to spend more time with you than to say "hello and welcome". I hope you have joined one of our many interest groups, as all our Group Leaders are ready and willing to welcome you. Please remember that if you need any information, you can contact me on the email address membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com



2025 HOLIDAY: DISCOVERING DEVON & CORNWALL STAYING AT THE MERCURE PAIGNTON HOTEL

Our 5-day (4 night) coach holiday this year will be based in Paignton, Devon and we leave on Sunday 31st August – a little earlier than usual. The paper brochures will be available at the February general meeting, but if you're not going to be there and are online, I will also have an electronic version. Our itinerary includes: visits to Knighthayes (NT – extra charge if not a member), The Eden Project*, a guided tour of the National Naval College* Dartmouth, a cruise on the River Dart, a blue badge tour of Plymouth and free time in Paignton. On the return journey we have a guided tour of the Bishops Palace in Wells. The cost will be from £615 which includes all of the above plus coach travel and half board accommodation. Please note that the single room supplement is £30 per night, *which can be avoided by sharing a twin room with a friend, even if they are not u3a members.* (We are able to do this because the trip is organised and run by Harry Shaw Travel and all payments go directly to them.) The number of single rooms is limited, so single occupancy allocation will be on a first come basis. If you would like more information, you can talk to me at the meeting or email me.

*Please note: both of these sites involve a moderate amount of walking, although both have wheelchairs available; also note that the College does not allow access to Mobility Scooters. The Eden Project has Mobility Scooters available to hire @ £20, which must be booked in advance.

John Pickering (johnpickering@gmail.com)

BRIDGE IMPROVERS GROUP

This is a group for those who have learnt to play Bridge (however long ago) and who would like to improve their bidding and card play. The format will consist of individual advice as members bid and play. The venue is the Catholic Church Hall. The dates and times are every Tuesday at 2.00pm except the first Tuesday of each month. Anyone interested is invited to just come along or may contact the Group Leader, Paul Brenda.



THEATRE TRIPS

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)

SATUDAY 22 MARCH 2025 "Just Between Ourselves" at Malvern Theatre £33 per ticket (Ref: T13)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am

Perhaps Alan Ayckbourn's most emotionally charged play & navigating the tightrope between comedy & tragedy.

Fully booked and several reserves already

SATUDAY 5 July 2025 "By Royal Appointment" at Malvern Theatre £38 per ticket (Ref: T14)

Starring Anne Reid & Caroline Quentin as Queen Elizabeth II & her Dresser.

The late Queen expressing her thoughts through her wardrobe?

Best Stalls Seats in Rows D, E & F. Please book & pay no later than 15 April

Payment by Bank transfer to:- "The Alcester U3A" Sort Code 08 92 99 A/C No. 67268429 Ref XXX/T14
Or pay the Treasurer with Cash or a cheque. The Booking list will be at the February meeting.

Both lists will be at the January meeting, email me to book or add your name to the reserves if you cannot be there

At this time of year, members do call off due to illness or other causes, so being on the reserve list can bring a place.

When you pay for a Theatre Trip by BACS Please include your membership No and T No

Ukulele Course Starting on 13th February

Tony Renfrey is proposing to run another 8-week ukulele beginners/taster course Great Alne Park clubhouse, starting on Thursday, 13th February, 10am-12 noon. Ukuleles & all course documentation will be provided. This course is also being offered to Great Alne Park residents, so may be well subscribed. Assuming there is sufficient interest, this will be followed by a ukulele improvers course starting in mid-May.



If you are interested in learning to play the ukulele please contact Tony Renfrey on tony.renfrey@outlook.com or 07768 970325.

* * * INTEREST GROUP NEWS * * *

ART APPRECIATION

Val Trim

The new Art Appreciation group got off to a fine start in early January at its first meeting. **The topic was the Norwegian artist Nikolai Astrup** whose affecting work was much appreciated by the fifteen or so that attended. At the next meeting (Feb 6th at 10.30 am in the RC Meeting Room) the topic is "Who are we and What do we see?" Hopefully, this will give group members an introduction to art from a variety of different time periods and introduce a few new ways of how artists and their work can be viewed, analysed and appreciated! Future topics may include, Women artists, Impressionism and Cezanne -- for starters! Get in touch if you are interested in joining the group!



HISTORY GROUP

Lynda Matheson

Did you know that the first shot fired by the British in the First World War was in Togoland (West Africa)? Or that the first British Army officer to die in the war was killed there in August 1914? These, and other golden nuggets were served up by Patrick Hanglin in his absorbing talk on the First World War in Africa. In German East Africa (modern day Tanzania) a force of 2,500 German men tied up a South African army officer of 73,000 men in a guerrilla campaign which went on after the end of the war in Europe; this was the value of the war in Africa to the Kaiser. Radio stations in all 4 German colonies/protectorates were the Allies' targets as these could report British shipping movements direct to Berlin. **On 20 February Val Trim will talk on Panoramas: Spectacle and Entertainment. Please note our new time of 1030am for a 10.45 start**

JAZZ & BIG BAND SOUND

Bob Applegarth

At our first meeting of the year in January we welcomed a new member, David. Geoff Male treated us to a selection of recordings by some of his favourite pianists. Some were classically trained - George Shearing, Dave Brubeck & Andre Previn while Errol Garner was self-taught. The music played was varied - original compositions, tunes from the Great American Songbook as well as classical pieces given a jazz twist. Thanks Geoff. **Our next meeting is at 2.00pm on Wednesday February 12th at Malt Mill Lane when John Ruffell will present some "Jazz on Film" .**

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Jan Rowe..,

Val Trim's visual presentation was about brass bands - their concerts and contests, we saw The Rastrick Brass Band playing "The Floral Dance", Donizetti's "L'elisir d'amore" sung at the Royal Opera house and then the brass band version played on the cornet, next the orchestral version of Vaughan Williams "Fantasia" on a theme by Thomas Tallis followed by the brass band rendition which beautifully showed the great diversity of brass bands. The finale was part of the 2019 Wychavon Festival of Brass, the next Wychavon Festival of Brass at Evesham is on 1st November 2025. **Our next meeting is on 26th February at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at 2pm when Dave Allman will present his programme.**

POETRY

Rosemary Harvey & Ruth Dutton

Our theme this month was water, whilst this didn't provide us with much hilarity, it did give us a vast variety of aspects of water from waterwheels, to rivers, to the sea, to swimming, and inevitably to rain. Longfellow featured with the 'Tide Rises The Tide falls', as did Tennyson with 'Crossing The Bar', and of course 'Break Break Break'. Brian Bilston brought us light relief with '51 Words For Rain' as did Roger McGough with his silly version of 'The Weather Forecast'. A moving extract from a longer piece by Helen Mort was a poem about Lilian Bilocca who organised a campaign to highlight the danger that Hull trawlermen faced in 1968 before safety laws were introduced.

A poem by Helen Dunmore in 'Dolphins Whistling' reminded us of the damage we have done in exploiting our seas. There was a variety of poems about rivers, Wendy Cope in her role as poet laureate wrote an exploration of the Thames history to honour the late queen's jubilee, she also wrote 'By The River'. In contrast Kahlil Gibran described in 'Fear' how the river feels at being forced into the sea. 'Rivers in March' by Ted Hughes was a descriptive piece about

the changing state of the river. 'Waltzing Matilda', a poem written by Andrew Barton reminded us of the need for water in a very hot country. **We meet again on Friday February 28th, the theme is Memories.**

PHILOSOPHY

Peter Tugwell

For our first meeting of 2025 we had a quiz. As usual, the questions, based on the topics covered during 2024, were circulated beforehand with suggested answers. This time members were also asked to submit questions and answers based on the articles from *Philosophy Now* they had chosen for our members' choices sessions. So, we had an interesting review of 2024 and revisiting those topics sparked new and further ideas. The questions covered philosophers from St Thomas Aquinas to Hannah Arendt, Thomas Kuhn to the philosophy of Star Trek's Mr Spock, playwrights from Aristophanes to Tom Stoppard, and topics from paradoxes to the imagination.

We are changing slightly our members' choices sessions this year – there will still be the option to use something from the *Philosophy Now* magazines, but members can instead choose a topic they have found from other philosophical sources and internet sites. The first session of this type will be in March. **In February we will be looking at Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Our next meeting is on 25 February 2025 (not the usual third Tuesday this time).**

READING GROUP 2

Linda Jennings

Prize Women by Caroline Lea was our book for January's meeting. Based on the real will of Canadian lawyer Charles Vance Millar who left a vast fortune to the mother who gave birth to the greatest number of children in Toronto in the 10 years after his death, it follows the lives of 2 women from 1926 to 1936. As a group we agreed that the story began well and the idea was interesting although all but one of us felt the book was far too long, very repetitive and piled misery upon misery for the entire duration. As ever, different books appeal to different people and there was one member who enjoyed this choice! **We will be reading *Unruly* by David Mitchell for our February meeting.**

Report by Jan Robertson

THEATRE VISITS

Joe White

The name Jane Austen and a stage set with an elegant staircase and tasteful pale decor might lead to certain expectations. However, Isobel McArthur's version entitled "Pride and Prejudice (sort of)" shook us up with its energetic non-stop comedy. The five actors took on the roles of Mrs Bennett, her servants, her daughters, their suitors and Lady Catherine de Burgh (with a song by her "nephew" Chris!) The only silent character was Mr Bennett hiding behind his open newspaper. Songs, jokes, farce and rapid costume changes made for a hilarious performance. I would gladly watch it all again tomorrow

Report by Tricia Wyspianska



WALKING GROUPS

Bronwen Bunting, Jane & Chris Baker

AMBLERS GROUP

Bronwen Bunting

11 hardy souls braved the sub-zero temperatures for the first amble of the New Year in **Evesham**. The planned scenic walk, mainly along the river bank successfully receded the previous week, proved impassable due to the flooded Avon. However, our (temporarily) resident Evesham expert was able to re-route us further away from the river and our walk through the town highlighted many interesting facets which we were largely ignorant of, tending to visit only the riverside areas. An ancient town with a rich history and many fine buildings, the once thriving centre has suffered sadly from competition from the out of town retail parks and is in need of some well-deserved regeneration to fulfil its undoubted potential. Many of us plan a return visit to learn more about the history of the town when the weather warms up. A short drive away, Chadbury Farm Shop & Café provided an excellent lunch venue.



*Statue of Eof (from whom Evesham derives its name),
a swineherd who supposedly saw a vision of the Virgin Mary.
Eof told his tale to Bishop Egwin who built the great abbey on the site or the vision in 709 AD.*

FRIDAY WALKERS

Jane and Chris Baker

Our January walk to 'blow away the cobwebs' started from the Park and Ride in Stratford. We joined the Stratford upon Avon canal at Bishopton and followed the towpath almost to Wilmcote. We made a detour across the fields and did a circuit around the village. It was lovely to see the first signs of snowdrops coming out in the churchyard. We then rejoined the towpath for our return.



It was a shortish walk of 4.8 miles but it was easy underfoot and the largely paved route avoided mud from the previous wet weather. It was a fine day. Fourteen people walked and eleven of us enjoyed a sociable lunch at The View afterwards. **Our next walk will be on February 21st.**



SCRABBLE GROUP

Linda Salsbury

For the January Scrabble session, no games were played. Instead, we gathered at The Roebuck for a very enjoyable post-Christmas meal. Fortunately the staff were able to overcome their morning traumas of a power cut and find some emergency heaters, with power restored in time to cook lunch. If you would like to come and have fun and meet new friends at our Scrabble

Group, it takes place **first Friday each month from 2pm. Contact Group Leader, Linda Salsbury for location of where we meet 07872 625006 email: lindasalsbury@hotmail.co.uk**

YOGA

Karyl Rees

There are a couple of vacancies in the yoga groups so do get in touch with the group leader if you would be interested in joining.



ALCESTER u3a INTEREST GROUPS: Contact Group Coordinator for further information

Group	Meeting	Time	Venue		Organiser
Bowls	Fortnightly from 24 June	10.00 am	Bidford Bowls Club		David Sanders
Family History	3 rd Monday	2.00 pm	Alcester Library		Linda Cooper
Church Visits	4 th Tuesday as advised	11.00 am	Various		Chris Baker
Crafts	3 rd Wednesday Sept to March	10.00-12.00	Catholic Church Meeting Room		Lynda Lamb
German Converstion	2 nd Monday	2-4.00 pm	The Railway Inn, Station Road Studley B80 7JS	Graham Stout	
Cycling	Various dates and venues				Tracey Wyatt
French	3 rd Tuesday	2.30 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room		Shirley Stout
Garden Lovers	2 nd Thursday April - October		2.30 pm		
History	3 rd Tuesday	10.45 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room		Lynda Mattheson
Italian Conversation		Fortnightly on Wednesday	2 – 4.00 pm	The Huff Cap, Great Alne	
Jazz & Big Band Appreciation	2 nd Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre		Bob Applegarth
Mah Jong	4 th Thursday	2.00 pm	Contact group leader		Bronwen Bunting
Man Talk	3 rd Tuesday	2–4.00 pm	The Huff Cap, Great Alne		Ian
Music Appreciation	Last Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre		Jan Rowe
The Elastic Band	2 nd & 4 th Wednesday	10.00 am	Lounge at the Greig Hall		John Pickering
Piano, Keyboard & Theory Tuition	1 st Wednesday 3 rd Wednesday	10.00-4.00 pm	Confirm with group leader		Chris Capstick
National Trust Visits	3 rd Wednesday		Various		Linda Bradley
Philosophy	3 rd Tuesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre		Peter Tugwell
Poetry Too	Last Friday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room		Ruth Dutton
Ambles	2 nd Friday	10.30 am	Various		Bronwen Bunting
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		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 2 groups	10-11.00 am 11.15-12.15	Catholic Church Meeting Room		Karyl Rees