

**JANUARY**

Monthly meetings

are held at the Greig Hall, Alcester

at 2.30 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month

**NOTES FROM THE CHAIR**



A happy New Year to all members!

As you will see from this newsletter, our speaker sub-committee have put together an interesting and varied programme for our monthly meetings this next year. On average, around a third of our membership attends these meetings, so if you have never been to a meeting then why not give it a go! There is an opportunity after the speaker's talk to meet and chat with other members over a cup of tea.

I am sorry to start the New Year on a sad note. However, many of you will remember Pam Norman who recently passed away aged 102. Pam was an honorary life member of Alcester u3a and contributed greatly to the Group over many years, including leading a number of special interest groups.

**Programme of Meetings for 2026 (subject to change)**

6 January	Lily Samuels (nutritionist)	"How We Can Improve Our Lives"
3 February	John Kinroy	"Life and Times of a Film Extra"
3 March		AGM (plus Interest Group Displays)
7 April	Sue LeResche	"The Life of an Air Hostess"
5 May	Matthew Morris (Archaeologist)	"Finding Richard III in a Leicester Car Park"
2 June	Carole Zambonini	"All About Alcester Dementia Day Care"
7 July	Reuben Lynch	"The Life of a Toastmaster"
4 August	Fiona Conn (Shelter)	"Why People Become Homeless"
1 September	Andrew Lound	"The Lunar Society – Lunatic Astronomy"
6 October	Speaker TBA	"The History and Work of the Lord Leycester Hospital"
3 November	Kal Gravatt	"Charlecote – History of the Mill & the Craft of Milling" <i>There will be an opportunity to buy products</i>
1 December		Christmas Entertainment

**REMINDER - 2026 SUBS NOW DUE**

Lyn Pickering

We hope to welcome you to another eventful year in Alcester u3a, so, if you haven't yet paid your subscription, please remember that it is now due. To do this please follow the instructions you will have received either by email or letter which advised you of the amount and how to pay. Please be aware that we have several members with the same or similar surnames, so please remember when making any payments to Alcester u3a, to always include your Membership Number! *Also, please don't forget to let me know if there are any changes to your details!*

Chairman	David West	<a href="mailto:chair.u3aalcester@gmail.com">chair.u3aalcester@gmail.com</a>
Joint Vice-Chair	Lyn Pickering	
Joint Vice-Chair	Karen Dowman	
Treasurer	Jean Morgan	<a href="mailto:treasurer.u3aalcester@gmail.com">treasurer.u3aalcester@gmail.com</a>
Assistant Treasurer	Linda Randell	
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Miranda Sanders	<a href="mailto:mjanesanders56@gmail.com">mjanesanders56@gmail.com</a>
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering	<a href="mailto:membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com">membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com</a>
Groups Coordinator	Vacancy	
Speaker Team Co-ordinator	Linda Randell	
Committee Members	Val Hamblin	Karyl Rees
Coopted Members	Christine Dyer	Clive Owen
Newsletter	Bronwen Bunting	Sue Robertson
Web: Manager - Lindsay Evans	<a href="http://alcester.u3aasite.uk">http://alcester.u3aasite.uk</a>	Annual Sub: £20.00

Only members can join groups

## VISIT TO SYMPHONY HALL

41 of us travelled to the inspiring Symphony Hall to be entertained by the Budapest symphony orchestra who are one of the leading orchestras in Europe. Firstly we listened to Symphony No 9 by Dimitri Shostakovich which was beautiful. Next we had the Piano Concerto No 3 in c minor which featured the virtuoso pianist Paul Lewis who was superb. After the break we enjoyed the wonderful Symphony No 5 in c minor op 67 by Beethoven which we know so well but is still a delight to hear it played by such a distinguished orchestra. We had 2 encores of Hungarian music which ended a joyful evening. Thank you Karen so much for organising the trip.

Val Hamblin

## EVENTS PLANNED FOR 2026

All dates subject to possible change. More events to be added during the year.

Monday 27 April 2026: Afternoon Tea Studley Castle

Wednesday 6 May 2026: National Memorial Arboretum

Tuesday 23 June 2026: Bletchley Park

End September/October 2026: King Richard III Visitors Centre Leicester



## TRIP TO NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM (6<sup>TH</sup> MAY)

Lyn Pickering

In order for this trip to go ahead, *I need to know who is interested by the January meeting* (currently, we do not have enough members on the Interest List for the trip to run). So, if you wish to be included on this full day excursion to this interesting and moving destination, please put your name on the Interest Sheet at the January meeting. If you wish to attend but won't be at the meeting, please email or phone me. ([membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com](mailto:membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com) Tel 01789 542589). The price will include coach travel, tea or coffee/biscuits on arrival and a site tour on the Land Train. Please note that PAYMENT WILL BE REQUIRED BY 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH MEETING. *(As the cost will depend on the number of passengers, I will inform those on the list of the exact amount after the meeting, but it will not be more than £26.)*



## THEATRE TRIPS

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

### Happy New Year

The trips planned for January, February & March are all fully booked and there is a reserve list for each of them. **We need you to pay for the March trip no later than 6<sup>th</sup> January.** There are still seats available for 18<sup>th</sup> April.

**Saturday 17 January 2027** **Sherlock Holmes "The Hunt for Moriarty"** at Malvern Theatre £34 (Ref T18)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am **Best stalls seats in rows D, E & F** Fully Booked

**SATURDAY 28 February 2026** **"Inspector Morse: House of Ghosts"** at Malvern Theatre £40 per ticket (Ref T17)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am; **Best stalls seats in rows D, E, F & G** Fully Booked

**SATURDAY 21 March 2026** **"The Spy Who Came in from the Cold"** at Malvern Theatre £43 per ticket (Ref T19)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am; **Best stalls seats in rows D, E & F**

Payment by Bank transfer to:- "The Alcester U3A" Sort Code 08 92 99 A/C No. 67268429 Ref XXX/T19

Or pay the Treasurer with Cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 6 January 2026**

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

**SATURDAY 18 April 2026** **"The Bee Keeper of Aleppo"** at Malvern Theatre £38 per ticket (Ref T20)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am; **Best stalls seats in rows D, E, F & G**

Payment by Bank transfer to:- "The Alcester U3A" Sort Code 08 92 99 A/C No. 67268429 Ref XXX/T20

Or pay the Treasurer with Cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 3 February 2026**

**The booking and reserves lists for all the above will be at the January meeting.**

**When you pay for a Theatre Trip by bacs, please include your membership number and T number**

## 2026 U3A HOLIDAY – DISCOVERING SUSSEX

John Pickering

Good news! I am now able to confirm that this year's 5-day holiday will be going ahead but, unfortunately, the full itinerary, and therefore the brochure, aren't yet available as my contact at Harry Shaw has been off work with this horrid flu virus! The details I have so far are that the date of departure will be Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September (return on 17<sup>th</sup>) and the hotel will be the 4\* Avisford Park Hotel, near Arundel (which has an indoor pool and Spa!) I apologise that I can't state the cost of the holiday yet, but early indications are that it will, as always, be excellent value for money! I will put out a "no obligation" Interest Sheet at the January meeting, for those who wish to express their interest and will supply brochures as soon as they're available.



### \*\*\* INTEREST GROUP NEWS \*\*\*

#### ART APPRECIATION

Val Trim

Our Christmas Art Appreciation meeting was very well attended - no doubt in anticipation of Jane Lytton's slideshow on the various 'Representations of Christmas' produced by artists across the centuries.

From Roman times to the present day, she explored the many different ways in which artists depicted the Christmas story, both as religious narrative and secular celebration. As the history of Christian Christmas imagery developed and unfolded, Jane was able to illustrate how Christian imagery and iconography was used across time and then, later, how the commercialisation of Christmas centred on consumerism of one sort or another. The first introduction and use of the Christmas card in the 1830's was also shown. Of great interest was the surprising involvement of many famous artists in the production of Christmas cards --- And Warhol and Salvador Dali amongst others. Thank you, Jane, for your hard work.

A lighthearted quiz followed to 'test(!)' the knowledge acquired over the course of the year by the group members---- happily, everyone passed!!! The mince pies and chocolate biscuits went down well too!

As everyone will be nursing hangovers on what would have been the date of our January meeting, **the next scheduled meeting will take place on Feb 5th 2026 at 10.30am in the RC meeting room as usual.** Happy New Year, Art Lovers!!!



#### CRAFT GROUP

Lynda Lamb

Our December Craft Group was a lovely morning spent making our **Christmas wreaths** using natural wooden beads & faux greenery. They looked splendid when we finished them & will bring some no-shed decoration into our homes! **Our next meeting will be**

**21<sup>st</sup> January - project to be confirmed.**

#### CARD MAKING

Lynda Lamb

Our final card making session before Christmas was a busy morning with many beautiful cards made by our talented ladies. **Our next meeting will be 9th January when we will be designing & making a pretty Spring card.**



#### HISTORY

Lynda Matheson

Unusually, the History Group met in December for a special meeting **celebrating food and drink from history**, with most of the delicious samples prepared by group members. The room was beautifully decorated with foraged greenery in keeping with the event.

The food with the longest pedigree was probably oatcakes, but could have been butter which dates from 8,000 years ago while Crowdie cheese probably is Iron Age in origin. Sweet food included Angle Saxon cakes (rather like flapjacks), a Norman date loaf and a Tudor palate cleanser, smartcards. Maids of Honour tarts were snapped up, but did Anne Bollyn really make them for Henry? Bath Oliver biscuits represented the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and we finished an entire Victorian Christmas pudding, eaten with plenty of brandy butter, of course. Star of the show was a 3-bird roast made of mallard, pheasant and pigeon with a wild boar sausage stuffing – who says history is dull?

Drinks were not forgotten, mulled wine was on offer as well as Atholl Brose, a 500-year-old whisky cocktail which supposedly began life in a well. Coffee (1652) and tea (1658) were also served in the interests of public safety.

Warm thanks go to our cooks, Glenys, Christine, Val H, Lynda, Jean and Val T; to our avuncular quizmaster Paul, and to all the helpers who set the room. **Next month John Ruffell will give a film show he has specially prepared for the History Group.**

#### JAZZ & BIG BAND SOUND

Bob Applegarth.

A well-attended group lunch at The Bear was enjoyed by all. We are made very welcome there. Afterwards Laurence presented his talk, "**A Christmas Box**". His box included classic tracks that we all enjoy. Musicians featured included King Oliver, Benny Goodman, Humphrey Lyttleton and Frenchman Claude Bolling - one of Laurence's special favourites. Luckily a problem with the disc player was resolved thanks to John so disaster was avoided!

**Our January meeting is on the 14th at Malt Mill Lane at 2.00pm. John Ruffell is our presenter.**

Hope to see you all there. Have a very Merry Christmas & a Happy and Peaceful New Year filled with lots of good jazz.

#### MUSIC APPRECIATION

Jan Rowe

**The group took a break in December, with the next meeting on Wednesday 28th January 2026 at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at 2pm when Jane Lytton will present her programme**

#### National Trust Visits

Linda Bradley

We have had some lovely visits this year but notably the last that was to see the two houses, **Packwood house and Baddesley Clinton house dressed for Christmas**. A group of crafters spend the whole year making the themed decorations for both houses.



and carrot for Santa the fun.

Another

grounds was led by

We are a small but together. It doesn't

something that you missed last time or it was a different season.

**We will start back in March, third Wednesday as usual.**



Packwood had the theme that followed the world tour that Ash took in 1910 on steam trains and boats. (Graham Baron Ash gave the house to the National Trust in 1941) The countries visited were the theme for decoration in the various rooms, Canada, Japan, China, Switzerland etc.

Baddesley's theme followed the use of the room, ie the scullery's tree was decorated with kitchen utensils topped with a chef. The games room tree was decorated with miniature games eg playing cards, snakes and ladders etc. The children's bedroom even had a mince pie by the chimney. Outside there was a snowman trail to add to

memorable visit was to Hanbury Hall where a tour of the a volunteer gardener.

happy group that enjoy a day out, coffee and sometimes lunch matter if we have been there before as there is always

#### PHILOSOPHY

Peter Tugwell

**Apologies: a Christmas gremlin entered the philosophy report in last month's newsletter and as the group is taking a break in December, the correct version of the report from the November meeting is included below.**

Our topic for November was **Antigone by Sophocles**. Although the play was written around 441 B.C., we found its themes, issues, and characters strikingly contemporary. At its heart lies a fundamental question about the relationship between human law and a claimed higher or moral law, and whether the latter can ever justify breaking the former. Legal positivism asserts the authority of enacted law; natural law theory gives primacy to moral principle. In *Antigone*, this tension becomes a dramatic conflict between individual conscience (Antigone) and the authority of the state (King Creon).

We explored many related issues and also revisited the events leading up to those portrayed in the play, including the complex family history—and the "curse" generated by it—stemming from Oedipus's unknowingly killing his father and subsequently marrying his mother, Jocasta. Antigone, as their daughter, carries the weight of this legacy. Themes such as destiny, hubris, and gender all feature prominently, giving us plenty to discuss.

We even had time to consider whether Creon is treated unfairly by the playwright. It is hoped that this summary whets the appetite to read (or reread) the play. The plot and ending have not been revealed here, and there are two further plays by Sophocles that we will probably tackle in 2026. [Thanks again to Chat GTP for its assistance in preparing this report]

We are not meeting in December. **Our next topic will be Karl Marx and the 1848 Communist Manifesto, and our next meeting will take place on 27 January 2026.**

## POETRY TOO

Rosemary Harvey/Ruth Dutton

Our topic of **sports and hobbies** was a challenge for us, but as usual the group found a great variety of poems from John Betjeman with 'The Subaltern's Love song', 'The Olympic Girl', 'Hunting Trials', and also 'Seaside Golf' to Pam Ayres' hobby of knitting in 'Thoughts of a Late Night Knitter'.

An interesting one was the choice made by one of our member's grandchildren called 'Keeping Wicket' by Valerie Bloom, the poem describes how the young girl living with brothers always has the same role as wicket keeper "too valuable a player to put into bat", the poem develops as, when the parents are in need of care the boys are too "busy in the crease", and she continues keeping the wicket, a simple poem with a big message.

Simon Armitage, in 'Great Sporting Moments' with his usual humorous way gave us a very realistic account of a working-class youth's rivalry and triumph over the class differences in a game of tennis. Wendy Cope felt there was certainly a lack of sporting poems in classical works and so created her own in 'The Cricketing Versions', in King Lear, his nastier daughters are women cricketers who scheme to keep their talented sister Cordelia out of the England team. We had a short excerpt from 'Hiawatha', and the lovely poem by Charles Causeley called 'The Jolly Hunter' and a poem by Lawrence Sail called 'Snooker Player', which described the snooker table as "cushioned greener than green".

**Our next meeting is on Monday January 5<sup>th</sup>; the theme is Moods.**

## SPANISH

John Douglas

**Spanish group says "Adios" to its leader, Don Juan**

After seven years in the role of Group Leader, John Douglas stepped down in December for a well-deserved rest. Group members were very sad to see him go but gave him a good send-off with plenty of Christmas cheer. Everyone agreed that it had been a pleasure to learn from his experiences of using the language when he worked in Spain – although not all the phrases he taught us are repeatable. He has left us all with a better grasp of Spanish and will be a hard act to follow. We wish him all the best in his "retirement" and hope he will visit the Spanish group in the future to add his unique input to our attempts to improve our Spanish.

NB: from January the group will be at the new venue – Our Lady & St Joseph Parish Hall, Alcester



## WALKING GROUPS

Bronwen Bunting, Jane & Chris Baker

**AMBLERS GROUP (Bronwen Bunting) and FRIDAY WALKERS (Jane and Chris Baker)**

On 12<sup>th</sup> December both groups joined together with a plan to have a pre-lunch walk from **The View in Wootton Wawen** to work up an appetite for our pre-booked Christmas lunch. However, given the vagaries of our weather, the best laid plans are often thwarted and a dire weather forecast meant that we skipped the active part and went straight to the main event, an excellent lunch, enjoyed by all. To work off some of the effects of over-indulgence **the next amble will be on 9<sup>th</sup> January and the next walk the following week on 16<sup>th</sup> January. Details of both will follow.**



## SCRABBLE GROUP

Linda Salsbury

Following a Christmas break, the Scrabble Group will be enjoying a post-Christmas lunch instead of the first New Year session on 9<sup>th</sup> January, but 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 at The Catholic Church Meeting Room in Alcester.** Contact Group Leader, Linda Salsbury for

further details 07872 625006 email: [lindasalsbury@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lindasalsbury@hotmail.co.uk)

## YOGA

Karyl Rees

Weekly Yoga classes take place on Mondays and are held in the Catholic Parish Hall from 10.00 – 11.00 am.



**ALCESTER u3a INTEREST GROUPS: Contact Group Coordinator for further information**

Group	Meeting	Time	Venue	Organiser
Art Appreciation	First Thursday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Val Trim
Bowls	Fortnightly from 3 <sup>rd</sup> June	10.00 am - 12	Bidford Bowls Club	David Sanders
Bridge Improvers	Weekly on Tuesday (except 1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday)	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Paul Brenda
Family History	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday	2.00 pm	Alcester Library	Linda Cooper
Church Visits	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday as advised	11.00 am	Various	Chris Baker
Card Making	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday Sep-May	10.00 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Lamb
Crafts	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Sept to March	10.00-12.00	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Lamb
German Conversation	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday	2 – 4.00 pm	The Railway Inn, Station Rd Studley B80 7JS	Graham Stout
French	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	2.30 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Shirley Stout
Garden Lovers	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday April – Oct	2.30 pm	Various	Janet Allely
History	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	10.30am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Matheson
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	The Huff Cap, Great Alne	Ian Gregory
Moving to Music – Folk Dance	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	2-4.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Malcolm Hall
Music Appreciation	Last Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Jan Rowe
The Elastic Band	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	10.00 am	Lounge at the Greig Hall	John Pickering
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	Linda Bradley
Philosophy	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Peter Tugwell
Poetry Too	Last Friday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Ruth Dutton
Ambles	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday	10.30 am	Various	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	Catholic Church Meeting Room	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	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Margaret Crabb/Lindsay Evans
Theatre Visits	As notified			Joe White
Trips	As notified			Linda Randell
Yoga on Monday	Every Monday	10-11.00 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Karyl Rees