

Newsletter



Monthly meetings are held at the
at 2.30 pm on the 1st

Greig Hall, Alcester
Tuesday of the month



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

We have had a few changes to our committee following the recent AGM. Belinda Widdop will replace Miranda Sanders as secretary; Val Trim has joined us as Groups Coordinator; Anne Gladstone and Linda Beck have also been voted onto the committee. I would like to thank all these people for volunteering. The future of Alcester u3a is now looking brighter than it was a few weeks ago.

Programme of Meetings for 2026 (subject to change)

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

HAVE YOU LOOKED AT OUR WEBSITE RECENTLY?

It's a useful source of information for all our activities; you can browse our Interest Groups page where you'll find more details about each group - especially helpful if you're thinking of joining one of them. You can also find copies of the past year's newsletters as well as all our policies and procedures. If you know anyone who's interested in being part of Alcester u3a, we have a dedicated Membership page with joining details and application form. All our events and monthly meeting speakers are listed on the website, so it's a "one-stop shop" for everything you may want to know. Find us at <https://alcester.u3asite.uk>

Chairman	David West	chair.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Joint Vice-Chair	Lyn Pickering	
Joint Vice-Chair	Karen Dowman	
Treasurer	Jean Morgan	treasurer.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Assistant Treasurer	Linda Randell	
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Belinda Widdop	
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering	membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Groups Coordinator	Val Trim	
Speaker Team Co-ordinator	Linda Randell	
Committee Members	Val Hamblin	Karyl Rees
	Christine Dyer	Clive Owen
	Linda Beck	Sue Robertson
Newsletter	Bronwen Bunting	jandbbunting@btinternet.com
Web: Manager - Lindsay Evans	http://alcester.u3asite.uk	Annual Sub: £16.00 Only members can join groups

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

John Pickering

I would like to thank Karyl Rees for nominating me for the above award and our committee members for the approval. It was an honour and a privilege for me to serve as Vice Chairman and then Chairman of Alcester u3a. I believe that the continuing success of our u3a is due to the enthusiasm and hard work of our committee and all the volunteers who contribute in so many ways. Not forgetting the support and backing we have always received from our members. Thank you all once again.

AND IT'S A THANK YOU FROM ME TOO!

Lyn Pickering

I was equally honoured to be awarded Honorary Life Membership of Alcester u3a and thank our Chairman, David West, for nominating me. The various roles I've undertaken since joining the Committee have all been enjoyable, although at times challenging, so at least my brain's been kept active, even if my knees are creaking! Since joining u3a, I count myself very lucky to have met so many wonderful people, so thank you all for your support!

VISIT TO CHATSWORTH HOUSE AT CHRISTMAS

FRIDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2026

Includes entry to the house dressed for Christmas, Gardens, Christmas Market and Illuminations
Leave Alcester at 9.15 am and leave Chatsworth House at 5.00 pm

£55 each There are several places in the grounds where you can buy food & drink, or you could take your own
People could contact me if they are not going to be at the meeting at: randell_linda@hotmail.com

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 (6TH MAY)

Lyn Pickering

There are still places available on this day out, so I will put out the interest sheet at the April meeting. However, please note that if you do wish to go you will need to pay by 7th April (£26 – Ref. Membership No/NMA if you pay by bank transfer, or you can pay the treasurer at the meeting with a cheque or cash). The coach will leave from outside Greig Hall at 9.30 a.m. and is due to return around 5.00 p.m. Included in the price is coach travel, refreshments on arrival and a trip around the site on the land train. If you would like a place on this trip, but won't be at the meeting, please contact me: membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com or 01789 542589.



THEATRE TRIPS

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)

The trips planned for April & August are fully booked and there is a reserve list for the August trip. The trip in April had just 2 reserves who now have places, so put your name down if you fancy it.

Please remember to pay for the August trip by 7th April

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 Fully booked and paid for

SATURDAY 1 August 2026 "I'm Sorry Prime Minister" at Malvern Theatre £43 per ticket (Ref T21)

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/T21

Or pay the Treasurer with Cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 7 April 2026**

The booking and reserve lists will be at the April meeting.

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

*** INTEREST GROUP NEWS ***

ART APPRECIATION

Val Trim

Our meeting in March saw an excellent presentation given by Lynda Matheson on the topic of **the Welsh artist Gwen John**. Neglected in her lifetime, and outshone by her brother Augustus, her star is certainly in the ascendency now! Her sensitive use of paint is an object lesson in gentle but insistent application to produce subtle effects. She claimed that she was 'God's little artist, a seer of strange beauties, a teller of harmonies, a diligent worker'. Lynda's presentation showed us exactly why this assessment was absolutely accurate!

And now for something completely different!! April sees Lyndsay Evans tackling '**A Platform for Contemporary Art**' --- this enigmatic title is already the subject of much speculation within the Art Appreciation group! If **you** want to find out what it means, then you'd best join us on: **Thursday 2 April** at the RC meeting Room at 10.30am!



CRAFT GROUP

Lynda Lamb



Our project this month was to make a **handbag sized notebook** so we can jot down a quick shopping list etc. Another lovely, relaxed morning of craft & chat! I think you'll agree they all look splendid. Thank you to Denise for the artistic arrangement ready for our photographs!

Next month will be a pin cushion which can be worn on the wrist.

CARD MAKING

Lynda Lamb

At our March Card Making Group we made several **Easter Cards** using spring stencilled backgrounds, Cottontail Bunny stamps & die cut Easter eggs & buttons. How pretty they all looked when lined up in a row! Well done ladies- such beautiful work. It's quite amazing that just 1 year ago we held our first class with many of the ladies having never made cards before. Now, with



a little help & instruction they are all competent in composition, stamping & colouring, making original & elegant cards.

HISTORY

Lynda Matheson

Dr Val Trim delivered a wide-ranging, absorbing, and at times literally thrilling, talk entitled "**The Golden Age of Alpinism**", the period from 1854 to 1865. This was the British led period in which many of the Alpine peaks were climbed for the first time. Val showed how social and transport changes contributed to the interest in mountaineering, from the rise of the professional middle classes, the founding of the Alpine Club and the improvements in transport. Before the 1850s, coaches crossing the Alps had to be dismantled and carried, piece by piece, through the mountain passes by porters. The British -built railways changed all that and made the Alps accessible.

Climbers wore hob-nailed boots, tweed suits and gaiters. Their equipment was no more than an alpenstock and an ice pick, a far cry from today's climbing gear. One 3-day expedition consisted of 4 climbers and 16 guides/porters. The supplies included over 90 bottles of wine, most to be used as bribes to retain the guides!

Guidebooks of the time warned visitors of the goitres and cretinism endemic amongst the mountain population. Since the 1920s these have been known to be caused by low thyroid activity due to a lack of iodine in the diet; in the 19th century the guidebooks prepared travellers for some shocking sights.

Val also showed a film of a modern-day climb of the Matterhorn shot by the helmet camera of one of the climbers. This really gave the group the sensation of being there – truly thrilling, but scary. She also had a clip from a film of Edward Whymper's climb when he and his party conquered the Matterhorn for the first time. The clip covered the descent when 4 of the 7 men fell and the rope holding them snapped. All 4 died and Lord Douglas's body has never been found. This tragic accident brought the golden age to a close. Whymper continued to climb, but in South America, not in the Alps. It would be 60 years until the second golden age dawned.

JAZZ & BIG BAND SOUND

Bob Applegarth.

We had a good attendance for our popular "Bring a CD" afternoon. Jazz from all decades from the 1920s up to the 2020s was played. As well as many old favourites such as Chris Barber, Glen Miller and Stephane Grappelli, we heard numbers by Bob Oliver, Mary Lou Williams, Karen Sharp, Bill Evans and Sade. A very eclectic mix! Thanks to all who contributed.

Our next meeting is on April 8th at the usual time & place - 2.00pm at the Malt Mill Lane Community Centre. Bob Applegarth will give a talk entitled "Kansas City Jazz "

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Jan Rowe

As the sleet and snow fell outside we enjoyed Lin Randall's programme of 'British Musicians of the 20th Century' which included Elizabeth Lutyens, Phyllis Tate, we heard Kathleen Ferrier, Russell Watson and Bryn Tervill singing, then Karl Jenkins' 'Adiemus' and John Rutters beautifully moving 'A Gaelic Blessing' and 'The Gift of Music', the finale was from Elgar's magnificent 'Nimrod'. **Our next meeting is on 29th April at 2pm at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre,** Alcester when John Ruffell will give his presentation.

PHILOSOPHY

Peter Tugwell

Shakespeare's Macbeth was the subject of our March meeting, prompting a lively and wide-ranging discussion. Among the themes explored were the hard problem of consciousness, personal identity, moral values and guilt, ambition, and determinism.

Many lines from the play have entered common usage, expressing ideas that continue to resonate both philosophically and in relation to contemporary events. The allure of power—its capacity to shape ambition, influence action, and determine consequences—provided a particularly fruitful lens through which to examine the characters and events of this tragedy.

Although a work of fiction, the group agreed that *Macbeth* offers ample material to justify its place as a subject for philosophical discussion.

At our next meeting, we will turn to the life and work of the English philosopher Bertrand Russell, dividing the session between a general discussion (before the break) and an examination of his writings on universals (after the break). [usual thanks to ChatGPT for its 'polished' version]

The next meeting will take place on 28 April 2026.

POETRY TOO

Rosemary Harvey/Ruth Dutton

We found that modern poets provided us with the majority of our poems for our topic of sarcasm and irony. Brian Bilston is a fine example of such a poet writing in 'Marriage Vows for the Uncommitted' and 'The Academy Goes to', the acceptance speech where he thanks everyone including himself. Wendy Cope, another prolific poet, recounts the sadness of losing the corkscrew when the couple split up in 'Loss', and in 'The Reading Scheme' this is a take on Peter and Jane, but also features the milkman. A great favourite is always Jenny Joseph, with her ever popular 'Warning', "I shall wear purple...". Carol Ann Duffy's 'Mrs Icarus' is a wonderful short piece.

Noel Coward reminded us of his great talent with a song he wrote and performed in 1952, reflecting on the past difficult years in 'There are Bad Times around the Corner'. Ogden Nash turned mundane life into social satire too with 'The Joyous Malingerer', where the husband avoids all tasks in the house by appearing to be incompetent or lazy!

We had some serious reflections with the war poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon in 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and 'The General'. Philip Larkin was frequently reflecting on the frustration of life as in 'Toads' work takes over our personal life and perhaps like toads we are too servile. Finally, Shakespeare in 'Spring' in *Love's Labour's Lost* contrasts the romantic notions of spring with the reality of human fertility and mocks marriage.

We have a meeting on May 4th, as yet we have not chosen a theme.

Theatre Trips

Joe White

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold starring Ralf Little and Grainne Dromgoole

My first visit to Malvern Festival Theatre to see a play. A Cold War espionage is not usually my cup of tea, but I do love live Theatre. The Theatre's contemporary interior with cafe and foyer was bright and buzzing.



On entering the auditorium, we took our seats wonderfully close to the action. The stage was black save for a spotlight on a bicycle with one wheel spinning slowly, ready to tell us its story.

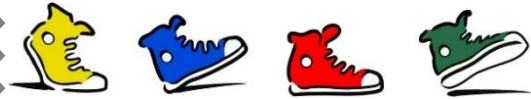
In the opening scene a cast of sombre clothed commuters circled the cyclist.

Throughout Ralf Little was superb as agent Alec Leamas. Many of the cast had dual roles. The backdrop of the Berlin Wall with its imposing wire added to the stark staging and gripping story.

Some costumes had only a touch of colour. There were minimal props and a lot of dialogue.

The audience clearly appreciated this adaptation of John Le Carre's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*. The appreciative cheers for Ralf Little as a disillusioned Spy and cast was well deserved. I look forward to finishing the book. How did he survive being drowned in front of us? A triumph.

(Report by Kathryn Horsley)



WALKING GROUPS

AMBLERS GROUP

Bronwen Bunting

After 3 months of cancellations due to torrential rain, we finally managed an amble in March, despite it falling on Friday 13th! We met at the Park & Ride and having got to grips with the mainly defunct pay machines, we set off on a footpath walk around Stratford, kindly led by Tricia, who seems to have an inexhaustible knowledge of Stratford footpaths that we never knew existed. The weather was very much on our side for once and when we reached the centre of Stratford, the end point of walk, it was left free to everyone to decide what they wanted to do – find a sunny outdoor spot for a coffee stop, lunch or a bit of shopping before catching the bus back to the Park & Ride, an added bonus for most of us being the ability to use our bus passes. **The next amble will be on Friday 10th April.**

FRIDAY WALKERS

Jane and Chris Baker

Our March walk was a circular one taking in the National Trust properties of **Packwood House and Baddesley Clinton**. It is about 5.5 miles and an easy walk devised by the Trust for visitors to their houses. We started at Packwood and immediately walked through a stunning display of daffodils before continuing along a lane to join the Stratford upon Avon canal. We followed the towpath to Kingswood Junction where the canal merges with the Grand Union Canal. We paused to admire the pretty surroundings and a heron waiting for lunch! Our route continued along the towpath and a road before we joined the Heart of England Way to Baddesley. The moated Manor House looked lovely, but we didn't stop, instead continuing on our way through more daffodils bordering the entrance drive. After following tracks and lanes we eventually arrived back in the grounds of Packwood. It was a lovely walk and for a change there was no rain! Eleven people walked and five of us enjoyed lunch at the Fleur de Lys, 'the pie pub', in Lowsonford. **Our next walk will be on the 17th April.** As we will be on holiday in May, please let us know if you are willing to lead a walk on 15th May.



SCRABBLE GROUP

Linda Salisbury

Meetings are held monthly at 2.00 pm on the 1st Friday in St Joseph's Church Hall, Priory Rd, Alcester B49 5DY. Our group is very welcoming and friendly, and average between 8-10 members per session, and meet for 2 hours from 2pm; with a break for tea and biscuits.

Our games seem to be of a genial nature but can prove to be quite competitive when new words crop up! We have the use of the official Scrabble dictionary and 'Words Allowed' book, plus a list of 2 letter words that are permitted, and these tend to satisfy most challenges. Any **new enquiries please email U3a Group Leader, lindsalsbury@hotmail.co.uk** or call 07872 625006 for further information.

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