

Monthly meetings are held at the Greig Hall, Alcester

at 2.30 pm on the

1st Tuesday of the month



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



Those of you on email will have recently received an email from me concerning future arrangements for events. Those not on email will receive a copy of the guidelines we have drawn up for members with this newsletter. Now that we have a few events under our belt, we have taken the opportunity to review our practices for booking and running events to enable future trips to run more smoothly for members and event leaders. Similar guidelines for event leaders have also been drawn up.



U3A FESTIVAL IN YORK

Tricia Wyspianska

When I told people I was going to the U3a Festival 2026, I put the word "festival" in air quotes, in case they thought I would be camping in a field and listening to the latest music! In fact the accommodation was a student bedroom at the University of York and the days were spent in talks, activities and actually quite a lot of good music too.

The programme was extensive and varied, some things were booked up quickly, but I tried laughter yoga, walking netball and life drawing, in between talks on the Princes in the Tower, China and the history of shoes and listening to a ukelele concert, and jazz in the bar in the evenings.

I met and chatted to so many delegates from U3a groups in Cornwall, Scotland, the Isle of Man and everywhere in between, a stimulating and enjoyable three days. Look out for the next one!

Programme of Meetings for 2026/7 (subject to change)

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
5 January 2027	Keith Edwards	Cave & Potholes from an award-winning caver
2 February 2027	Adam Wood	Meon Hill Witchcraft and Murder
6 April 2027	Kevin Thomas	Top Hats and Tales from Victorian Birmingham
1 June 2027	Dan Szor	Founder of Cotswold Distillery

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
	Bronwen Bunting	Linda Beck
Newsletter		Anne Gladstone
Web: Manager - Lindsay Evans	http://alcester.u3asite.uk	Annual Sub £16
		Only members can join groups

"The Sauce City Jazz Band"

An evening of live jazz at the Greig Hall on Thursday August 20th at 7.30pm, featuring "The Sauce City Jazz Band", a top-class Traditional Jazz Band from Worcester.

Tickets at £10 are available from Geoff Male, Bob Applegarth or online from the Greig Hall, so if you are a fan of trad jazz do not miss this gig which could be the start of a further series.

CONCERT AT SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM 7.30 pm on 13th October 2026

Beethoven (Egmont overture & piano con no 4) & Brahms symphony no 2

Payment £38.00 by 4th AUGUST AT THE LATEST reference SH2

Contact Karen Dowman karen.dowman@gmail.com

Transport will be available from the Greig Hall at 5.30pm with return to Alcester at approximately 10.30pm

The booking form will be available at the August meeting

Otherwise contact above email or ring 07970785209. Hopefully it will be as enjoyable as the last event

EVENTS PLANNED FOR 2026

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

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

Thursday 5 November 2026: "As You Like It" at the RSC

Friday 4 December 2026: Visit to Chatsworth House at Christmas

THEATRE TRIPS

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)



We are happy to announce a trip for early next year, the details are shown below. It is an Agatha Christie Hercule Poirot story and is a bit more expensive as the Theatre have not offered a group discount for the show.

Both remaining trips organised for this year are now fully booked, but both have reserve lists, so if you fancy the show put your name on the reserve list and there is always the chance that you will be offered a place.

If you have booked a place for Barnum, please remember to pay by 7th July.

SATURDAY 31 October 2026 "Barnum" The Circus Musical at Malvern Theatre £47 per ticket (Ref T22)

The coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am; **Stalls Seats in rows P, Q & R**

Payment by Bank transfer to:- "The Alcester U3A" Sort Code 08 92 99 A/C No. 67268429 Ref XXX/T22

Or pay the Treasurer with cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 7 July**

SATURDAY 20 March 2027 "The Hollow" at Malvern Theatre £52 per ticket (Ref T23)

An Agatha Christie Hercule Poirot story

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/T23

Or pay the Treasurer with cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 3 November**

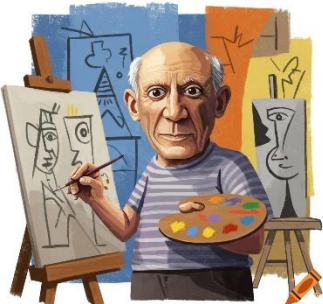
The booking and reserve lists for both shows will be at the August meeting.

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

* * * INTEREST GROUP NEWS * * *

ART APPRECIATION

Val Trim



For once, the Art Appreciation group left Europe and travelled to the wilderness that is Canada to study the work of **the Group of Seven**. This influential group of painters operated in the 1920's to 1933 when they disbanded as a formal group - not because they had run out of ideas - but because they had succeeded in their mission which was to create an Art that was representative of Canada and to use that Art as a cornerstone in the creation of a distinctive national identity. Scenes of vast mountains, torrents and lakes dominated their paintings and they owed much to Tom Thomson whose work, created before his mysterious and untimely death in 1917, inspired the Group to follow in his footsteps, Wonderfully evocative paintings, bright with the colours

of the Canadian autumn, the acid colours of winter and mysterious blues and purples that capture the night meant that our July meeting was, literally, 'sensational'!!

August will see us thinking a little deeper about some aspects of art -- the Nude, amongst other things!

Greig Hall at 10.15am on Thursday August 4th at 10.15am (£1). As Picasso might have said: Be there or be square!! (but contact me first if you are thinking of joining the group!) Val Trim

CARD MAKING & CRAFT GROUPS

Lynda Lamb

Now taking a break during the summer and will recommence in September

CHURCH VISITS

Chris Baker

On JULY 21 The Church Visit Group travelled to **Kenilworth** to combine a visit to **St Nicholas Church with the remains of St Mary's Abbey** which are also visible in the churchyard and grounds. St Nicholas is entered through a particularly splendid west doorway described by Pevsner as "the most sumptuous Norman doorway in Warwickshire" - generally believed to have been relocated to the church from the Abbey by Robert Dudley to impress Queen Elizabeth I. She visited the church twice, which was also visited by James I. The church was founded in the 13th Century and significantly enlarged in the 14th Century. Inside, we admired the gothic Sedilla (seats) for the priests. We also hunted for the teddy bear portrayed in one of the stained-glass windows (one of only two such images in the UK). Some of us found the bronze "pig" - an ingot of bronze melted down from some of the abbey's bells which "fell off a wagon" on its way to one of Henry VIII's armouries before being found in the Abbey Fields over 300 years later. War reached St Nicholas anyway in 1940 when a land mine destroyed the St Nicholas window in the south wall, to be replaced by a modern version. Outside the church, the remains of the old Abbey include much of the gate house, the old priory hall (now a museum) and a section of the cloister walls. On a very hot day we were happy to have suitable pilgrim's refreshments at a local pub!

GARDEN LOVERS

Janet Allely

Garden lovers visited **Morton Hall**, which was purchased for its lofty situation on high ground with great views in two directions. The owners succeeded in creating many different gardens for the purpose of supporting the Royal Shakespeare Theatre costume department, by arranging tours of these gardens throughout the year. We had a very informative tour on a very hot day and were very pleased to find our cream tea in the orangery, which was open to the through breeze.

Our next visit, on 13 August and starting at 2.30 pm, is to the Alpine Society Garden, Avon Bank, Wick, Pershore, WR10 3JP which is by Pershore College. There is no charge for the visit but a small charge for tea of £5.

HISTORY

Lynda Matheson

The island of Ireland has had a long and troubled history with the English from the Normans to the present day. English monarchs attempted first to invade Ireland and then to settle it. But throughout this turbulent history no period has seen fighting as vicious as that of **the Irish Civil War 1922-23**.

Patrick Hanglin, in his masterful illustrated talk, made clear the complexities of the politics which led up to the war and multiple groupings which fought it. Religion was not an issue; it was about the Anglo - Irish Treaty of 1921 which founded the Irish Free State and hived off the 6 counties of Northern Ireland. 70% of the voters were in favour of the treaty, but a powerful minority of predominately IRA members were against and fought against the Free States' National Army which was assisted by the British. Both sides had troops battled hardened from serving in the British Army in WW1.

The IRA troops did not have uniforms and fought a guerilla war, living off the land. Some of the soldiers on the other side had also been IRA. When IRA soldiers were trapped in the Battle of the Customs House and O'Connell St other IRA commanders did not come to their aid and 65 men were killed by the government forces. The brutality of the Government forces led to an upsurge in support of the IRA, which used this to live off the land.

Acts of brutality were common to both sides, tit for tat killings were commonplace and awful disruption to the lives of the civilian population led to a loss of support for the IRA. This, with lack of funds, led to the end of the Civil War, although the IRA did not concede defeat.

The cost to the small country was huge, it could not afford to pay its troops and the National Army was much reduced in size.

With so many leaders dead or imprisoned, 2 new political parties were formed – Fianna Fail and Fine Gael which still dominate politics in the South today.

On 20th August we have another meeting devoted to the stories behind objects brought in by members.

JAZZ & BIG BAND SOUND

Bob Applegarth.

We were well entertained by Val Trim at our July meeting. Val's talk entitled "**European Jazz, Artistes and Interlopers**" featured a wide range of musicians who many of us had not come across as well as some better known. Val was able to give an audio-visual presentation. Seeing the musicians as well as hearing them adds another dimension. Among the musicians featured were Michael Petrucciani, Stephan Grapelli, Enrico Rava and Joshco Stephan. Thanks, Val, for a most enjoyable & entertaining afternoon.

One of our members, Geoff Male has arranged a concert featuring an excellent Trad Jazz Band, **Sauce City Jazz at the Greig Hall on Thursday August 20th at 7.30pm**. Tickets are a very reasonable £10 and can be obtained from Geoff, myself, PSW in town or online from the Greig Hall. The bar will be open. If you enjoyed Trad Jazz in your youth why not come along. It will be the first time that we have had live jazz in Alcester since the sad demise of the Jazz Brunches in the Town Hall.

Our next group meeting is on Wednesday August 11th in the Malt Mill Lane Community Centre a 2.00pm as usual.

I will be presenting a programme on the Music of Bix Beiderbecke. Lacking the skills of Val, this will be sound only! New members are welcome.

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Jan Rowe

Tony Ingram's programme for July called "**Viva Espana - Hola!**" was a delightful insight into Spanish music from 15th to 20th centuries, we heard 'Pilgrimage to Santiago' 'Nesciens Mater' by Jean Mouton, 'Asturias' by Isaac Albeniz played by Milos Karadaglic, two compositions by Manuel de Falla and the fine finale was 'Barcelona' by Freddy Mercury with the soprano voice of Montserrat Caballe. **Our next meeting is on 26th August when John Ruffell will be presenting his programme at 2pm at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre, Alcester**

PHILOSOPHY

Peter Tugwell

This month the Philosophy Group discussed **Capital Punishment**. A wide range of opinions was expressed and several themes were debated. These included: the general feeling that killing others was wrong; that Capital Punishment served as a deterrent to murder; that some executed people were subsequently found to be innocent; that some crimes were so abhorrent that the perpetrator deserved the death penalty; that revenge was not a suitable reason for promoting Capital Punishment; that the police needed the extra protection given by the death penalty; and that death for some people was preferable to a lifetime in prison.

At our August meeting we will look at Max Weber's definition of a State.

POETRY TOO

Rosemary Harvey/Ruth Dutton

For the meeting on 6 July, **Buildings, DIY and Architecture** was not a theme at first glance inspiring but surprisingly prolific.

SLOUGH by John Betjeman: Slough was used as a dump for surplus materials during the years between the wars when just before WW2 several hundred factories were built there. The poem is not so much about Slough but general degradation and industrialisation –

'Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough'.

His daughter in later years said he regretted having written it.

Simon Armitage's 'The Lodge' describes a very different kind of building, that of a beaver's lodge

'Dropped from a great height

Then cobbled together

With sludge and stones..'

'The Lodge' is one in a collection of poems inspired by a visit to the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall. **'The Man of the Millenium takes a new look at Stratford'** by our friend Betty Addison, gives Shakespeare's view of today's Stratford

'My senses are assailed by noise and bustle...

....not all are townsfolk hale and rude,

but from far off lands seeking souvenirs and fast food..'

'Cathedral builders' by John Ormond describes the dangers in early cathedral construction.

'They climbed

With winch and pulley, hoisted hewn rock to heaven

...defying gravity, deifying stone....

'The Homes of England' by Felicia Hemans is a hymn to patriotism - that women in all lifestyles shared the same domestic role.

'Because I'm Worth it' by Nicola Vaughan describes a disastrous attempt at coiffure DIY

'Don't be fooled when they tell you you're worth it

...I've tried it,believe me..... I'm not.....!!'

'Atlas' by UA Fanthorpe shows how the everyday 'glue' in a relationship is an important part of love.

'.....stores the WD40.....knows the way the money goes...deals with Road Tax...'

Finally 'Garage' Betty (again!) is an acrostic spelling out all the detritus of life within that building. **August poetry**

Monday 3rd August -theme Wind and Weather. See you then!

READING GROUP 2

Linda Jennings

This month's choice of book was **Summer in February by Jonathan Smith**, which recreates the Edwardian Cornish artistic community based in Lamorna, close to the nearby Newlyn School of Art. The main characters include artists who went on to be acclaimed by the Royal Academy - eg Sir Alfred Munnings and Dame Laura Knight, alongside less famous contemporaries and villagers, all of whom are involved in what one critic describes as 'a love story of beauty, deprivation and tragedy'. Reviews from members of our group were positive and enthusiastic, with everyone sharing the urge to research the history of these characters and their acclaimed works and then contributing their findings to our discussion. **Next month's book is Old God's Time by Sebastian Barry.**

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Chris Capstick

We are NOT meeting in August and start our 5th year Singing for Pleasure when we are meeting again on September 24th.



WALKING GROUPS

AMBLERS GROUP

Bronwen Bunting

The second Friday in July saw us in the midst of the heatwave so the decision was made to cancel the amble and stay cool at home. Fingers crossed more amble-friendly weather in August.

FRIDAY WALKERS

Jane and Chris Baker

Another walk cancelled due to the heatwave.



SCRABBLE GROUP

Linda Salsbury

With a good number of players either away or with other commitments, the group took a break in July and will meet again in August. Monthly meetings are held at 2.00 pm on the 1st Friday in St Joseph's Church Hall, Priory Rd, Alcester B49 5DY. The welcoming and friendly group averages between 8-10 members per session and meets for 2 hours 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 and 11.15 am – 12.15 pm

Classes were held on 13 & 20 July prior to the group taking a summer break until September.

Reminder to those who make direct bank payments monthly to adjust these accordingly.



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
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
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 01789
National Trust Visits	3 rd Wednesday		Contact Linda Bradley	
Philosophy	4 th Tuesday		Catholic Church Meeting Room	Peter Tugwell
Poetry Too	1 st Monday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Ruth Dutton & Rosemary Harvey
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	Every Monday	10-11 am 11.15–12.15	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Karyl Rees