

Monthly meetings are held at the Greig Hall, Alcester

at 2.30 pm on the 1st

Tuesday of the month



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

It is good that we have had several recent enquiries about prospective new special interest groups. However, could I please request that potential new group leaders discuss their ideas with Val Trim, Groups Coordinator, before taking any significant actions e.g. putting out an interest sheet.

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

6 October	Jessica Hicks	"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

NEW GROUP



If you play the piano at any level, you may be interested in a new u3a group for pianists. A meet up of pianists to play a short piece and talk about the joys and difficulties of playing, be it mastering the pedal, tempo, dynamics or sight reading. You may be a beginner, adult returner or intermediate and there is no obligation to play. This group is not to teach piano but to gain confidence and support from other pianists who are all learning. Absolutely no critique or judgement. As a member of Stratford u3a piano group I have gained immeasurably from the support, knowledge and motivation I have received from them, and this encouraged me to start a group locally. Any genre, be it classical, jazz, blues, Latin or pop. Date, time and venue to be confirmed if there is interest. Please contact Tracey@wyattuk.net for more details or to express an interest.



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

Transport available from the Greig Hall at 5.30pm; return to Alcester at approximately 10.30pm

Contact Karen Dowman Karen.dowman@gmail.com (07970785209) if you have any queries.

NEW TRIP

Visit to Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick with Guided Tour

Tuesday 10 November 2026

Leave the Greig Hall at 9.00 am; leave Lord Leycester Hospital at 2.00 pm

£26 pp, Members Only (Ref LL1) Pay as soon as possible but before 13 October 2026

Chairman	David West		chair.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Joint Vice-Chair	Lyn Pickering		
Joint Vice-Chair	Karen Dowman		
Secretary/Minutes Secretary	Belinda Widdop		
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering		membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com
Groups Co-ordinator	Val Trim		
Speaker Team Co-ordinator	Linda Randell		
Committee Members	Christine Dyer	Clive Owen	Anne Gladstone
Newsletter	Bronwen Bunting		
Web Manager – Lindsay Evans	http://alcester.u3asite.uk	Annual Sub: £16	Only members can join groups



U3A HOLIDAY SEPTEMBER 2026

Patricia Wyspianska

Our journey to Sussex began on Sunday morning and we stopped for a break at Bekonscot Model village which has an impressive collection of miniature buildings, trains, landscapes and figurines in intriguing situations.

After a comfortable night and a substantial breakfast at the Avisford Park Hotel we were treated to a coach tour around Brighton with a Blue Badge guide and then spent time inside Brighton Pavilion, built as a party palace for the Prince Regent, later George IV. The Indian style exterior and Chinese inspired interior are a stunning example of over-the-top embellishment

Tuesday started with a tour of Arundel Castle, built in 1067, altered and extended over the centuries, and still the home of the current Duke of Norfolk. There are varied and interesting gardens too.

We were amazed by our next visit to the English Martyrs Catholic Church in Goring, where a parishioner, Gary Bevan, painted a phenomenal 2/3 scale copy of the Sistine chapel ceiling, working alone in his spare time over five years.

On Wednesday we visited the Fishbourne Roman Palace, rediscovered by chance when a digger driver spotted part of a mosaic. Half of the layout is visible, with a collection of wonderful mosaics, but much more is still concealed by houses and a main road.

Returning to Arundel we had some free time in this lovely little town, and then were shown the cathedral, with its brilliant stained glass.

Our homeward journey included a stop at Upton House, where the art treasures included a temporary exhibition of a Rembrandt self-portrait.

Many thanks to John and Lin Pickering for their superb care and organisation; and they were still smiling at the end!

EVENTS PLANNED FOR 2026

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

Tuesday 13 October 2026: Concert at Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Tuesday 10 November 2026: Visit to Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick

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

Friday 4 December 2026: Visit to Chatsworth House at Christmas

End January 2027: King Richard III Visitors Centre Leicester



THEATRE TRIPS

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)

The 3 trips below are now fully booked. The reserve lists for the shows will be at the October meeting so please add your names to the lists if you want to go as there is always a chance that places become available

We hope to offer a new play at the November meeting

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**

Fully paid for

SATURDAY 6 February 2027 "The Other Side of Murder" at Malvern Theatre £38 per ticket (Ref T24)

a wickedly entertaining new thriller with a star cast including **Rufus Hound** (*One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Wind in the Willows*) and the return of national treasure **Susie Blake**

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/T24

Or pay the Treasurer with cash or a cheque. **Pay by Tuesday 6 October**

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 the shows will be at the October meeting.

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

*****If you contact Joe by email, please note the underscore between joe and patwhite in the address*****

*** INTEREST GROUP NEWS ***

ART APPRECIATION

Val Trim

September saw the long-awaited trip to the **Cotswold Sculpture Park near Cirencester**. The day tripper group was made up of members of the Art Appreciation and History groups plus a few other u3a members that decided that culture was their thing! Visiting a sculpture park was a new experience for many in the group, most of whom were delighted by the skill and, frequently, the great good humour of many of the works on show. Everyone was interested in the cost of some of the work which was on sale---ranging from a few hundreds of pounds to over a quarter of a million! A well-planned route round the park meant that everyone got to see most of the work whilst enjoying the sunshine and warmth. Later, the Roman Villa with its fine mosaics and well-preserved rooms gave an exciting insight to Roman life in Britain and the luxury enjoyed in the sheltered valley at Chedworth fifteen hundred years ago! All in all, a fab day out!

The Art Appreciation group meets on **Thursday Oct 1 at 10.15 at the Greig** (£1). We're back to earth with members' choices and thoughts on the topic of **Work!** Get In touch with me (Val Trim) if you'd like to join us!



CARD MAKING GROUP

Lynda Lamb

This month we designed & created **Stepper Card** - an interesting shaped card - using a garden/floral theme. We also made a pretty card using paper flowers & lacey leaves. I brought my die

cutting machine into the class which offered the card ladies a chance to choose different dies to cut out card to be used on future projects. **Next month we will be stamping with a poppy theme** as we're coming up to Remembrance Sunday. There may also be a little **Chess style card** for the male friends in our life!



CRAFT GROUP

Lynda Lamb

We were a small but mighty group in September as we clashed with the U3a holiday, but we still had a great & fun filled lesson! We used pretty origami papers to make **Japanese Kusadama Flowers** which we made into hanging decorations & we decorated our flowers with colourful dragonflies. They looked amazing.

Next month we'll be designing & making a mini canvas with a vintage fashion theme.



CHURCH VISITS

Chris Baker



Two visits in the Deep South of the county this month.

We began in **Oxhill at the church of St Lawrence**. Full of Norman and medieval features, this Grade 1 listed church also boasts a number of listed monuments outside. Most notable is the headstone to "Myrtilla, negro slave to Mr Thomas Beauchamp of Nevis". Probably a valued member of the family, she was baptised in the church but sadly died only 3 months later: we don't know whether from the unfamiliar harsh winter or homesickness. Both north and south doors have wonderful Norman decorations as does the font - rescued from Ettington Park in 1879, where it served as a water tub and then a flower pot! Unusually, the church contains no stained glass. The church boasts not one but two "squints".

Our second church was, quite literally, hidden away just south of Shipston. Invisible from the road, and dating from 1200, the **Church of the Ascension** was built as a chapel to Tidmington House next door. It has a most unusual 13th century tower, whose pyramid roof is tiled with Cotswold stone. Inside, we again enjoyed the Norman features, including the carved font and the 12th century door. Like St Lawrence, some of the pews were wonderfully rough carved and almost 600 years old. The group are now experts on corbel platforms - found at both churches!

We refuelled at lunchtime with our old friends at the Lion in Tredington.

GARDEN LOVERS

Janet Allely

Alcester u3a Garden Lovers had good weather for their September visit to a 6-acre garden with its own water supply. This water and the hot summer resulted in the most amazing displays of Dahlias and Hydrangeas set against the backdrop of Wasperton church. The garden had many different areas with young and mature trees, sculptures, water areas and the parking was by extra tall bamboo canes which had been successfully corralled into one space. This is our last visit for 2026 but if garden lovers wish we could meet on October 8th at a Garden centre of choice.





HISTORY

Lynda Matheson

With Autumn almost upon us the subject of our September meeting was **The Gunpowder Plot**. Lise Evans gave a masterly talk, clearly explaining the complex events which led up to it - 4 changes in religion in 12 years, fear of invasion and the Armada itself, Mary, Queen of Scots, and the various plots which threatened Queen Elizabeth, causing severe repression of practising Catholics.

The plot itself had local connections as several of the 13 plotters were grandsons or great grandsons of Sir George Throckmorton of Coughton Court. The plotters' intention was to return England to the Catholic faith by blowing up parliament with King James and the Prince of Wales inside it and to install James' 8-year-old daughter on the throne as head of a Catholic state. The plot was discovered, either by Sir Francis Walsingham's spy network or because one of the plotters sent a warning letter to a relative which triggered the search which caught Guy (Guido) Fawkes under the Houses of Parliament with 35 barrels of gunpowder.

All the plotters died, some shot in fighting with the troops sent to arrest them, others hung, drawn and quartered. Surprisingly, no one was burnt on a bonfire, not even Guy Fawkes, and this tradition may be associated with the pre-Christian festival of Samhain when fires were lit on the night of 31st October, quite an irony if so.

The next meeting will be on 15th October when Margret Noyce will be our speaker.

JAZZ & BIG BAND SOUND

Bob Applegarth

It was **"Bring your own CD"** at our September meeting. This gives a chance for members unable to give a full presentation to make a contribution. It is fascinating to listen to the variety of music chosen. This time we had several examples of British trad bands, a selection of jazz pianists and others. Musicians featured included Chris Barber, Humphrey Lyttleton, Billy Taylor, Hampton Hawes, Lester Young & the Dutch Swing College band. An afternoon enjoyed by all.



At our next meeting on October 14th, Ian Greig will present his programme. Expect a few surprises! Looking forward to seeing all members (and any newcomers), at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at 2.00pm as usual.

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Jan Rowe



We each brought a CD to play our favourite track, the choices were delightful, we enjoyed ballet music, opera from Andrea Bocelli and Bryn Terfel, two choirs, one from Croatia, violin and cello sonatas, two pieces by Paganini, a Herb Alpert piece, and the theme from E.T. **Our next meeting is on 28th October at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at 2pm when Jane Lytton will present her programme.**

PHILOSOPHY

Peter Tugwell

At our September meeting we considered **Euripides' The Bacchae**, a tragedy which raises surprisingly modern questions about rationality, authority, evidence and the limits of human understanding.

We began with the relationship between Dionysus and Pentheus. Dionysus was the son of Semele, daughter of Cadmus, while Pentheus was the son of Agave, another of Cadmus's daughters. So, both were grandchildren of Cadmus and first cousins. Pentheus was therefore not simply confronting an unfamiliar god but denying the divinity of his own cousin.

The Messenger's report provided an intriguing philosophical problem. The Bacchantes were chaste, peaceful and apparently living harmoniously with nature, yet they were also capable of extraordinary violence. Was Pentheus therefore justified, as ruler of Thebes, in taking action to maintain public order? We distinguished between evidence and its interpretation and asked whether Pentheus allowed his preconceptions to determine its meaning.

The tragedy becomes more troubling when Dionysus manipulates Pentheus into his destruction. We questioned whether Pentheus could have avoided his fate, and whether the punishment inflicted on him and his family was proportionate to their failure to recognise Dionysus's divinity. This raised questions about divine justice, free will, determinism and moral responsibility.

We also considered whether the play might illuminate artificial intelligence and the challenge posed by something we do not fully understand. **Our next topic, on 27 October, will be "Is a river a thing or a process?"**, exploring identity, change and what constitutes a thing in contemporary metaphysics. [Thanks ChatGPT!]

POETRY TOO

Rosemary Harvey/Ruth Dutton

The theme of **memory and reflections** provided us with a great range of poetry. There were many old favourites, like W.H.Davies' "What is this life if full of care, there is no time to stand and stare". There were some unusual poems from Brian Bilston, and Alistair McGowan, with his usual wit he reminded us all of the home knitted jumper, which damaged his ears when he tried to wear it. We were thrilled to have Betty join us, she read Ithaka, by a Greek poet, Cavay, who reminded us how important it is to enjoy the journey of life rather than just having high expectations at the end. There were several poems that reflected this theme including Arnold Bennett's 'You Wake up in the morning and your purse is magically filled with twenty-four hours of the magic tissue of the universe of your life.'

Many of the poems were reminiscent of childhood, like Matilda by Hilaire Belloc and Michael Rosen's 'Chocolate Cake'. C.S Lewis wrote in 'Walking Away' that there is a time when a parent needs to let go. We had some funny verses as usual from Pam Ayres, which helped us cope with very poignant poems like Henry Normal's 'The House is not the same since you left', and Christina Rossetti's 'Remember Me'.

The next two themes are The Night Sky for October and Personal Choices in November.

READING GROUP 2

Linda Jennings

This month's book was **Old God's Time by Sebastian Barry** - the story of a retired police officer in Ireland -Tom Kettle - wherein the author follows the many and various trains of thought of this man, who constantly reflects on his past life, his treasured wife and children - none of whom are with him. He relates distressingly vivid accounts of child abuse inflicted by nuns and priests of the Catholic Church. Tom lives in solitude, and the reader is often uncertain as to whether these are true events or the vagaries of Tom's obvious dementia. Members' reviews were, as ever, varied - some describing their distress at the details of abuse, some finding the book 'boring', and other's celebrating Barry's vivid and rich descriptive language. The fabric of the book has many strands running through it - some members thought maybe too many strands. **Next month's book is The Lost Man by Jane Harper.**

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

Chrissie Capstick

I think I will have to rename 'Singing for Pleasure' to 'Singing with laughter' as that is what happened all the way through our September meeting. Not all of the funny moments were intended, I may say!

Great thanks to John Pickering who tried out a new system with Spotify which will mean great improvements from now on, once we get a licence. With so much music on Spotify, members who wish to can nominate a favourite track. We can also sing many more styles of music. Thanks also to Margaret Crabb who valiantly tried to get me 'on track', literally, with the CD player and projector, and also to Cath Tomlinson who has put the words onto PowerPoint each month for many years.

I was speaking to someone who was exiting the group which meets before us. She said 'I wish I could sing; I would love to join you' and 'You must be a choir doing serious music'. I wish.... Perhaps she should have come today!! Everyone is very welcome, from the tone deaf to the professional singer.

Next meeting 10.20 October 29th at the Catholic Church Hall, to start at 10.30



WALKING GROUPS

AMBLERS GROUP

Bronwen Bunting

Finally, a day of perfect walking weather when the amblers gathered at **The Valley**. Known to most of us as a shopping destination and garden centre or a way of keeping grandchildren occupied on the railway or other children's facilities, the surrounding extensive countryside leading from the car park proved a revelation, taking us along the riverbank and round the skylark trail (we think we saw one or two!). As usual, the different digital devices all came up with a different distance covered, ranging from 3.7 – 4.1 miles but we agreed that it felt more like 4 in view of all the ups and downs which proved a bit of a stamina challenge at times. Lunch followed at the Apple Barn restaurant where we were able to enjoy outside seating in the sunshine, probably the last time this year we will be able to do so.

FRIDAY WALKERS

Jane and Chris Baker

Our September walk was entitled **the Three Churches Walk**, because we started at one church, finished at the third and passed by the second. Unusually it was a linear route. Nine of us began at **St James, Weethley**, a lovely little church with stunning views over the surrounding countryside. After admiring the area to the west, we set off in an

easterly direction across the Ragley Estate towards Alcester. It was a beautiful day and from the ridgeway we could see for miles. On reaching Arrow, we crossed fields and the A435 before arriving at the outskirts of the town. Our route then took us along the footpaths and tueries until we reached **St Nicholas Church**. From there we went towards Oversley Green and followed the path across the fields and under the bypass to reach **Holy Trinity, Arrow**. Finally we continued to Arrow Mill where six of us enjoyed a pleasant lunch. The walk was about 5 miles.

Our October walk will be on Friday 16th from Claverdon.



SCRABBLE GROUP

Linda Salsbury

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

The group took a summer break in August and classes recommence on 7 September



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