

Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

April 2025

[Stratford-upon-Avon u3a: Home \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Stratford-upon-Avon u3a: Home (u3asites.org.uk))

Founded 2000

Deadline for copy for this newsletter is 17th of the month, it never varies, except December when we don't publish a newsletter. Please send items to me at this address: newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk



Next meeting

Wednesday 30th April 2025

At the Methodist Church at 2 p.m.

Elizabeth Rose will talk about life in Two Cultures
and the place of African textiles.

Intrigued? Why not come along and listen?

All members and guests welcome.

Good News!

We have a potential new chairman and secretary as well as new committee members. There will be a notice soon about a special general meeting to approve these appointments. Thank you to Maureen for her continued efforts to make sure that our u3a continues to thrive.

And a plea

Please can we urge you to pay your subscription for the 2025, if you have not done so yet. Here is a link to the form with instructions for how to pay:

[Membership Applications and Renewals - Stratford-upon-Avon](#)

After the end of May, if you have not paid, you will no longer be able to attend groups and meetings. Please do pay, we would love you to continue your membership.

Next Month
Wednesday 28 May 2025
2 pm at the Methodist Church



Rebecca Finney

Cats Protection and its work



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON u3a - SPEAKERS FOR 2025

We have an interesting and varied programme of talks and entertainment for you.
Please come along, and tell your friends!

DATE	NAME/ ORGANISATION	SUBJECT
28 May 2025	Rebecca Finney	Cats Protection and its work
25 June 2025	David Wornham	"Tuneful Tubes" – demonstrated history of wind instruments
30 July 2025	Mike Luck– TWAM	Tools with a Mission – tools refurbishment charity project
24 August 2025	Sarais Crawshaw	Life as a Wildlife Artist and demonstration
25 September 2025	Jo Worthy-Jones	Gardening with Wildlife in Mind
29 October 2025	David Fry	Early Photographers in Warwickshire
26 November 2025	Richard Churchley	English Countryside in Poetry and Song
10 December 2025	Entertainment to be confirmed	No outside speaker

**Sight Loss by Marie-Claire Barker –
W. Midlands Community Connection Co-ordinator, RNIB.**

First, some statistics – 250 people every day are diagnosed with some sort of sight loss, and over 2 million are living with it, ranging from severely sight-impaired to awaiting treatment. Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy are major causes. With Glaucoma the peripheral vision is affected; with Macular Degeneration the central vision suffers, and Diabetic Retinopathy causes patchy vision loss. 2% of people have no useful vision at all. Sight generally declines gradually and in many cases help is available. With increasing age, vision tends to decline.

The RNIB offers help across the range:

Eye health information, by phone and online.

Counselling.

Talking Books. There are 40,000 books in its library. There are also books to help with Dyslexia.

A phone group for a chat.

A course called “Living Well with Sight Loss” is available for the patient and for the friends and family.

Campaigns.

Legal advice.

Guide Dogs. – Are provided through the charity Guide Dogs for the Blind UK.

Marie-Claire was accompanied by her dog – Dee-Dee (Desdemona), a Labradoodle. Marie-Claire was born partially-sighted, with cataracts, and for some time she wore contact lenses after removal of the cataracts. This helped her during her formative years with brain training to see as well as possible. By her mid-30s, she was Registered Blind, with very little sight left, especially in the right eye and none in the left. She had her first guide dog, Faith, for 7 years before lock-down during the Covid pandemic. Faith did not cope well with the new conditions as her routine was upset, and she eventually just stopped working!

Marie-Claire asked for a new guide dog, she had a 5 months’ wait due to the lack of breeding and training of the dogs during the pandemic and many had to wait much longer. She was assessed by Guide Dogs and Faith was retired but has stayed with her as a pet. She was very lucky and received the Labradoodle she wanted, Desdemona. Dee-Dee came with a reputation for cleverness and escapology, as she opened the bolt on the kennel and took 2 other dogs with her! She is popular with groomers. They live near to the training centre.

Dogs have to be matched with their new owners – pace of walking/ground type/transport/etc. Dee-Dee hates having wet feet! She is very sociable. Marie-Claire’s children were 4 and 6 when she got Faith. Her arrival took the pressure off them and enabled her to get out more.

Advice regarding dealing with partially sighted people:

Some people are afraid of dogs and the guide dogs sense this and often approach them to make friends! Marie-Claire wears a hat when out as she cannot wear a hood as then she has lost her peripheral vision.

She may not recognise people out of context. Please, always say who you are if you recognise a blind person unexpectedly.

Service assistants can help by stating the price of goods as she cannot see the till.

Members of the medical profession - please say what you are going to do!

She has a white plate with her food as it is easier to see it. Avoid coloured crockery! Colours help with distinguishing things. “Bigger, Brighter, Bolder” is her catch-phase.

Questions:

Are other senses, especially hearing, improved in blind people? Not necessarily, but they are better tuned in.

What is the dog training process? Every guide dog is born near the centre at Bishop Tachbrook. They stay 6-8 weeks with the breeder, then they go for socialisation training for 12 months with puppy raisers, learning basic commands. They then move to puppy fosterers who take them every day to the training centre for classes. The new owner has advanced training specific to their needs. The whole process takes about 2 years.

Dee-Dee was a “Covid” puppy born September 2019. One of her first outings after Lock-down was a visit to Marie-Claire’s daughter’s school to get used to noise and clapping. Dee-Dee responds immediately to clapping, as she amply demonstrated to our u3a audience!

The audience warmly thanked Marie-Claire, her companion and Dee-Dee. I am sure that we all learned a lot from this talk.

(Helen Elliott – Speaker Secretary)



Helen Elliott sent this picture of the Italian group dining out..... It looks good, but I don't speak Italian so I can't join

Pop-in, Drop-in Coffee

The second pop-in coffee session was held at the Town House Hotel, Church Street on 12 April. 26 members attended, and Maureen reported that a great time was had by all.

The next one will be: Saturday 10 May, 10 a.m.—12 noon.

At the Town House Hotel.

You are most welcome to join us, do drop in if you can

NEW CHAIR

Bryan Riddleston, our potential new chairman, is a qualified accountant and has many years experience in senior management. He was Director of opencast mining for British Coal in Wales before coming to Stratford. He has been an audit committee chairman for the Stratford Town Trust, chairman of the Ettington gardening club and a local magistrate. He has also been a Trustee of the RSPB. He and his wife Annette have joined our playreading group. In May our meeting in May will be a Special General Meeting, a chance for our members to vote for Bryan.

NEW SECRETARY

Sarah Cuthbert has volunteered to be our secretary, a position that will also be confirmed in May.

Do come along and meet them.

The anonymous sender of jokes has been at it again.....

There's a new Mr Men character known for his patchy paintwork; he's called Mr Bit

The CEO of IKEA was elected Prime Minister of Sweden; he should have his cabinet together by the end of the week.

Someone threw a bottle of omega—3 tablets at me; luckily my injuries were only super fish oil.

I removed a shard of glass stuck in the floor; it was a bit of a pane.

Sorry I can't make the ghost-hunting party, but I'll be there in spirit.

If you have some better ones, please do send them along with any other contributions to

newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk

REPORTS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

Brush up your German

With two members away on holiday and another ill, it was a small group which met at Rosel's in March for our monthly chat. Topics included coincidences, medical problems (inevitably) and the need in spring for decluttering. We'll look forward next time to hearing reports of happy times spent in Spain and San Francisco, as well perhaps as some good days here enjoying our glorious spring weather.

French for the Terrified

We practised being negative in three tenses - and being surprised. Tiens! Ça alors! We coped well with listening to and then reading Prévert's poems "Déjeuner du Matin" and "Les Belles Familles". We've revised our shopping vocabulary and become more familiar with the imperfect tense. Next time: how to ask all sorts of questions!

Improve your French

We always begin with our reports in French. Last time we were particularly sorry to miss Steve, whose surreal adventures of "les Petits Animaux" are now eagerly awaited. Will this pop sensation really make it to Glastonbury? We then went over some points of difficulty before learning more about Prévert and listening to Yves Montand singing his most famous poem/chanson "Les Feuilles Mortes". ("Autumn Leaves" in English but with different words.)



Latin



We have been learning from Vergil's 'Georgics' how to forecast the weather and finally drew that to a close with his majestic description of a violent storm in the countryside. Forecasting sunny days after rain we met Nisus and Scylla, a father and daughter turned into birds - she for her treachery and he, a sea eagle pursuing her constantly. So we have now moved on to read their story in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and learn about their fates in detail. It's a tale of lust, passion and betrayal expressed in beautiful restrained Latin.

Piano

Jill set the bar high this month, playing the first movement of Bach's Italian Concerto - wonderful. Bach was the choice of two others along with Chopin, Schumann, Diabelli and York Bowen. John Gerachty's rag and a longing for home by Samuil Maykapar were new composers and pieces to us, played from scores in Pianist magazines which members like to borrow for their free music, articles and hints on practising and playing.

Stratford History Group

Following talks on the distant history of Stratford's trade and industry, we turned this month to learn about a piece of modern living history, still in the process of being made. Lim Ho of the Methodist Church, executive trustee of its Eco-Church project, gave us a most interesting and informative presentation, talking us through the background to the church's becoming the first Methodist Church in the country to receive a Gold Eco-Church Award.

For most of us, I think, it was a revelation and an achievement of which the church can be extremely proud.



Visible above: building now all under one roof, solar panels, better disabled parking and access ramp, welcoming facade, attractive planting etc.

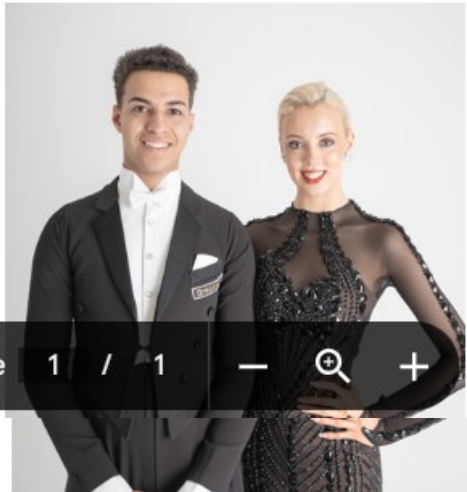
The green measures introduced in the last 22 years have made the building energy efficient and should achieve carbon net zero by 2030. All the windows have been double glazed and all the walls insulated. The gas heating system is programmed to match bookings, with costs reduced by using a ground heat pump producing 7 MWh renewable heat. All the electrics were rewired. Lighting is now LED and controlled in public spaces by microwave sensors. More solar panels are planned on the east roof to produce enough electricity annually not to need to import any from the Grid. The annual energy bill was £9,000 in 2013; taking into account the solar panels and ground heat pump, the actual energy expenditure now is about £3,000. A shining example to all.

Do You Enjoy Dancing?

Join Stratford u3a members for a free taster session led by two professional ballroom dancers. No need to bring a partner.

May 21st 2025 10.00 a.m. at St Andrew's Parish Centre, Church Lane, Shotton, CV37 9HQ .

Free tuition from Thomas and Harley. Please bring £3.00 towards room hire.



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If you enjoy this session we intend setting up a regular fortnightly Ballroom/Latin dance group on Wednesdays from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon.

Cost £10.00 per session plus contribution to room hire depending on numbers.

Please contact Sue Crowley on smcgroups241@outlook.com



TEA ROTA

Please make sure you know what to do when it is your turn. The task is not onerous. Put out the mugs and biscuits, pour the tea and coffee. Oh and of course wash up. Everything is provided.

You are always welcome to join us after meetings for a drink and a natter. We value your voluntary contri-

MONTH

April

May

June

July

August

September

GROUP

Rummikub Club

Sunday morning walkers

Keep Fit

Current Affairs 2

French for the Terrified

Friendly French conversation

That is all for this month. Thank you for all your contributions. This newsletter aims to reflect all the activities of our u3a, so please do send your contributions to me.

Your editor,

Anne Foster [at newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)