

# Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

May 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](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)



Wednesday 25 June 2025

2 p.m. at the Methodist Church

David Wornham will give a one hour light hearted, demonstrated talk on the world-wide history of wind instruments. He has played the cornet for many years and collected a large and varied collection of instruments, some of which he will be playing.

Members and Visitors welcome, join us for a cuppa afterwards. Chatting table available for anyone who wants to chat. We look forward to seeing you.

Next Month

Wednesday July 30 2025

2 p.m. at the

Methodist Church

Mike Luck will be talking about

Tools with a Mission

A scheme which refurbishes old tools and sends them places in the world in need of them.



### **A message from our new Chair. Bryan Riddleston**

I was delighted to accept the position of chair of our u3a at the recent Special General Meeting. This will ensure the continuation of the club after the scary email Maureen circulated earlier this year.

Firstly I wish to pay a warm tribute to my predecessor, Maureen, who so ably steered the u3a over the last few years so that it is now in such a good position. I recognise that it is an impossible task to follow Maureen's strong leadership but I will do my best. I know that I have an encouraging committee to help me.

Many of you will know that I only joined Stratford-upon-Avon u3a earlier this year. It has been a shock to find myself as chair so soon. I have met a few of you already but will do my best to meet as many of you as possible over the next weeks and months.

Equally my knowledge of how the u3a operates is very limited so I have a steep learning curve ahead of me. I hope you will bear with me during this period.

Finally my wife, Annette and I have had warm welcomes from all members we have met since joining.

Thank you and be assured that I will do my best as your new chair.

Bryan

*If you would like to meet Bryan he will be sitting on the chatting table after the next meeting, do come and say hello.*

### **Audrey Spencer**



Audrey died in Warwick Hospital on 27th May after a long and brave battle with cancer. You may have read the fulsome tribute to Audrey's life and work in the Stratford Herald (5th June) including her time working at the NFU and the RSC. She was a stalwart of many organisations and loved by all who knew her.

I first met Audrey nearly twenty years ago when I joined our u3a. She often took part in u3a outings and encouraged me to run one to Broughton Castle, which she and all of us enjoyed hugely. I worked with her for years on the committee and later joined her in organising the large Gardening group when Diana had to give up. They were good times.

Most of you will remember her as our indefatigable tea lady at Wednesday meetings, overseeing proceedings with efficiency and cheerfulness. She is much missed on all counts and even more for her generosity and friendship always. Bless you, Audrey.

Margaret Dews

Like Margaret I have happy memories of time spent with Audrey. I first got to know her when we visited the Bear Pit, and she recognised me straight away. We also spent a memorable day together visiting Holst's house in Cheltenham. AF.

## Stratford general meeting talk report, Wednesday, 28 May 2025 –

### Rebecca Finney – Cats Protection.

Introduction – a CP survey found that there are about 11 million cats in the UK, 26% of households have one or more. Cats are easier to keep than dogs and provide companionship, and are good for our health.

Cats Protection was founded in 1927 and is the largest cat welfare charity. When CP started it had an ambulance to pick up strays. It has since grown immensely. It helps about 184,000 cats a year. There are 32 cat centres, 192 volunteer led groups and 92 shops. There are about 1,000 employees and 9,000 volunteers. Stratford is covered by the Mid Warwickshire centre, and the nearest shop is in Leamington Spa.

CP's motto is "Making a better life for cats, because life is better with cats".

It has three main aims - neutering, information/education and re-homing.

Strays still constitute the most common reason for CP's help, and there is a waiting list to come into care. Adoption can happen due to a change in people's circumstances, including death. There is a free **Cat Guardian** service, for which one needs to sign up. This ensures that the cats are taken into care when the person dies.

Cats will be seen by a vet, health checked and treated, if necessary, neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, then re-homed. No cat will be put to sleep if it is healthy. Adopters are also given 4 weeks' health insurance when the cat leaves CP.

**Microchipping** - Case history: Rebecca showed us a picture of Wendall, a cat that was found as a stowaway on a coach! He was not microchipped, and, as he had no known home, was re-homed. Cats are known to wander, so it is important for them to be microchipped. (As of June 2024, it has been the law to have cats microchipped.) The chip is for life (although it can move a bit within the body), there is a national database, and it is vital to keep one's details up to date. Professionals like vets use it to trace cats brought to them. CP does not recommend collars as they can be dangerous to the cat.

**Education** – speakers go to schools, colleges and local community groups. The talks are free. There are also information resources on the website. Education is key to cat welfare.

**Advocacy** – this includes campaigning, e.g., for compulsory microchipping, and neutering. A Cat Manifesto has recently been produced –

A call for a ban on breeding for extreme characteristics, e.g., flat faces, hairlessness and the Scottish fold ears, which are growing in popularity. These characteristics can lead to poor health and discomfort for the cat. Prevention of kitten smuggling into the U.K. This happens via the black market and is increasing. These cats can go wild and bring diseases into our country.

Encourage social media to use "normal" healthy cats in advertising.

Neutering campaign – this can have the biggest impact on a cat's life. Unneutered cats are more likely to stray, catch infections, and increase the stray population. It is possible to neuter a cat at 9 weeks' old, after the first vaccination. 4 months' old is the usual recommended time to do the procedure, as cats can breed at quite a young age, when they are not fully grown and capable of looking after kittens.

At present CP's neutering vouchers have run out. This scheme enables those on low incomes to have help, but funds are limited and demand is high.

For feral cats, there is a "trap, neuter and return" scheme run by volunteers. CP gives information, support and advice about helping ferals. 130,000 cats are neutered every year, including 15,000 feral cats. Rebecca told us about "Skippy", a week-old kitten found in a skip. It was looked after by volunteers, and young kittens need feeding every 2 hours for about a month, so it is hard work.

Helen Elliott (U3A Speaker Secretary, CP member and ex-Education Speaker! And cat servant!)

*Further information on the next page*

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**Lifeline** scheme – this helps people who are fleeing domestic abuse. In these cases, people are often unwilling to leave home without their cats, so there is a cat fostering scheme, run by volunteers, until the person has a new home. The fosterer keeps in touch with the victim during the time apart. This has spread all over the country and other animal welfare organisations also do this.

**Paws to Listen** – this is a free confidential grief support service, by telephone and online. People can also be passed to other services if necessary. There is also a Memory Wall on the website. There is also advice on how to talk to children when a pet dies.

**General information and advice:**

CP National Information Line, open 8-4 Monday to Friday.

CP website and social media.

Veterinary team.

Behaviourists. There is an annual behaviour conference.

**How to get involved with Cats Protection** – donate; adopt; volunteer; become a CP member; sponsor a cat pen; do the lottery and raffle; take part in challenge events; leave a gift in your will and Give in Memory.

The talk was well attended and there were a number of questions. Many thanks to Rebecca Finney for an interesting and informative talk.



## COFFEE MORNING

You are invited to join our members' regular  
coffee morning chit-chats

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month 10 till 12

The Town House Hotel, Church St



This month's attempt at humour.... Enjoy....

**What do solicitors wear to work?**           Lawsuits  
**Why did the bullet lose its job?**           It got fired  
**Why can't a toe be 12 inches long?**       Then it'd be a foot  
**Want to hear a joke about a roof?**       The first one's on the house  
**What does a house wear?**                Address!

Laugh, Groan Giggle, I know your grandchildren have better jokes than this, so please send them to me at: [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)



## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON u3a - SPEAKERS FOR 2025

Our monthly meetings are on the last Wednesday of the month, except in December when the meeting is earlier to avoid the Christmas rush. We have an interesting and varied programme of talks and entertainment for you. Please come along, and tell your friends!

DATE	NAME/ ORGANISATION	SUBJECT
26 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
27 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

# Silver Jubilee

## Stratford-upon-Avon u3a will be 25 this year

Are you a founding member of our u3a? Or do you know someone who is? It would be good to hear some of your stories from the last 25 years, successful and whoops a daisy moments.

There will be a celebration later this year. Please do let me have your stories and photos from the last 25 years [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)

### News from our Interest Groups

#### Brush up your German

Topics in May included Miniatur Wunderland in Hamburg - a must visit for every model railway enthusiast, a description of the new exhibition at Shakespeare's birthplace, the trail-blazing 19th century activist and feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, and a recent Great Rail holiday in Bayern. Sehr eklektisch.

We have decided to try something different next time: we will each come prepared with one or more accounts of personal happenings, to be questioned by the others in an effort to decide whether they are true or false. Think a German version of WILTY or Radio 4's Unbelievable Truth!

#### French for the Terrified

The little word 'y' was causing problems, so we spent quite some time looking at how it is used, comparing it with 'en' and then using them both in lots of questions and answers.

#### Improve your French

Everyone had recent news to share, leading on to revising perfect and imperfect tenses, how they are formed and when they are used. Margaret had been given a set of Michel Thomas CDs, so we talked about his very successful language learning method, its pros and cons, and how we might perhaps adopt or adapt some of his ideas.

#### Latin

Following on from reading Ovid's account of the story of Nisus, Scylla and Minos (Metamorphoses VIII) we have returned with Minos to Crete. Here Daedalus creates for him a labyrinth to hold the monstrous Minotaur. But when Daedalus and his son Icarus try to take wings and fly away, tragedy strikes. Ovid is the supreme story-teller.

#### Piano group

A wide range of music was played again: another waltz by Samuil Maykapar, Song of the Weald by David Hall, director of Finchcocks Piano School, Libertango by Astor Piazzolla, a jazz duet by Nikki Iles and a sprinkling of Bach, Diabelli and York Bowen. We were delighted to welcome Bob Waters as a visitor. Bob, who played a couple of pieces from Schumann's Kinderszenen, is setting up a second u3a Piano group this month and we wish it well.

#### Stratford History Group

Michael Borsay and Margaret did a double act. Michael told us much more about the 17th century engineer Andrew Yarranton and his sadly unfulfilled plans to turn Stratford into New Brunswick, a port to rival Danzig. Margaret's subject was William Wells Quatremain, a local artist largely unknown and uncelebrated today, whose romantic paintings reproduced on Salmon post cards spread views of Stratford across the globe and attracted people from far and wide to visit this lovely town.



The group had two interesting talks about “unknown” local people!

1. Michael Borsay told us about **Andrew Yarranton** (1616-1684) and his ambitious but largely unsuccessful plans for the development of Stratford in the 17<sup>th</sup>. century. He was involved with the Dutch commercially and, as an engineer, he took some of his ideas from Holland. He proposed 2 developments – New Harlem (from Haarlem in Holland) in the manor of Millcote at what is now Milcote, and New Brunswick, now known as Bridgetown, at the site of the Swan’s Nest public house in Stratford. (One modern source of information is Robert Bearman and Lindsay MacDonald’s book “Stratford-upon-Avon in 50 Buildings.”)

He planned flax growing for cloth and thread, a factory and a granary at the junction of the Stour and Avon, where 9,000 or so people would be housed and work. The area was planned as a Navigation linking the two sites. The Clopton family owned the remaining building, now called the Swan’s Nest, but the 30-acre site development hardly took off. Milcote is now the site of a sewage works.

Yarranton published a book called *“England’s Improvement by Sea and Land to Out-do the Dutch without fighting, Pay Debts without Moneys, to set at work all the POOR of England with the Growth of our own Lands...etc.”* (1657). The plan for the navigation extended from Tewkesbury to Warwick, but when it opened, in 1670 with 20 vessels on it, it was not popular and the buildings were vandalised. There were 2 quays at the ferry and at the Swan’s Nest. They were never developed. Yarranton was obsessed with the plan and called it “A Brat on my Brain”.

Yarranton was a dreamer and an idealist who took the Parliamentary side as a Captain in the civil war. He spent 2 years in prison after the war. After this he promoted a scheme to join the Thames and the Severn, and, of course, later they were later linked by canals. Restoration is going on at Stroud. Some have suggested moving water from the West to the East via the canal to cope with water shortages, although Thames Water is not keen. Maybe Yarranton’s plans will happen in the future. He also advocated crop rotation, and docks in the City of London. He also suggested the creation of a public bank based on credit on land ownership – like modern mortgages. His ideas were in advance of his time.

Samuel Smiles book “Industrial Biography – The Black Country Chapters” also tells Yarranton’s story.

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2. Margaret Dews's talk "He was a Nobody" aimed to restore the reputation of **William Wells Quatremain** (1857-1930). He lived in Stratford for 62 years, but there are few direct recorded references to him – one letter, one invitation. There is no record of where he went to school. He was raised by his mother, initially in London. His father died when he was 10. Then they moved to Stratford and lived in 45 Waterside, later demolished. He was 34 when his mother died and he moved to Evesham Place. It is thought that he married his landlady, Elizabeth Marshall widow. She was described as a large lady in black with jet beads. They lived at 8-9 Church Street. He was described as a bookseller and she ran a sweet shop. He was buried in an unmarked grave.

He was, in fact, a well-known painter. Margaret showed us his painting of 45 Waterside. He was married in the Holy Trinity Church and there are many paintings of this. In the late 1800s there was a printing business – J. Salmon – which then extended its business into postcards, with photographs and paintings of scenes. Mr. Salmon met Quatremain and commissioned him to paint for him, a contract lasting from 1903 to 1930. Quatremain also painted scenes of Torquay and the Isle of Wight, 24 scenes of Warwick castle, but his main subject was Stratford. He travelled on a bicycle adapted to carry his painting kit!

Quatremain was also keen on the theatre – Frank Benson commissioned him to paint backcloths for the theatre. Unfortunately, they were destroyed in the fire of 1926. He also did many paintings of the theatre. Some of his backcloths were also used in the theatre in Newcastle, and they were also lost in a fire!

Marie Corelli was very supportive. She bought his house while they stayed as tenants in Church Street. She publicised his work and wrote favourably of him. He was described as an "unpretentious man". Corelli later bought Trinity College, next to her home, Mason Croft, a room of which was later let out to the Stratford Naturalists' Society for which Quatremain also painted. Jack Jeffries, a Chapel Street ironmonger, said that he did not paint people and, indeed, shunned them!

The Herbert Gallery in Coventry has one of his paintings, there was an exhibition of 67 paintings in Stratford in 1970, Tony Bird has a collection of his works, but Quatremain remains largely unknown. His Gloucester family crest shows 4 Hands, representing the name.

In 1990 Bigwoods, auctioneers, and the Salmon company raised funds for a headstone in the Holy Trinity Churchyard. It simply describes him as "Artist". The Salmon company ceased trading in 2017. His style is very familiar and it is remarkable that so little is known of him – until now!

Sources: Mr. Quatremain's Stratford, a booklet by Patricia MacFarland.

I found this article by her on the internet too.

<https://www.stratfordsociety.co.uk/files/Quatremain.pdf>

Helen Elliott



# 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 contributions, towards the cost of the refreshments. Thanks.

## **MONTH**

June

July

August

September

## **GROUP**

Keep Fit

Current Affairs 2

French for the Terrified

Friendly French conversation

## **Vacancy**

We are looking for a member to take on the role of 'Catering Manager' aka Tea Lady/Man. If you could sort out a rota of groups to do the teas each month, and give them a gentle reminder; as well as keeping us stocked up with tea and coffee then please do come and help. Send me an email at: [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk) or talk to a committee member. Please don't be shy.

Here is the tea rota for the next year. Please make sure you know when it is your group's turn and come to help if you can.



<b>Stratford-Upon-Avon U3A Tea Rota October 25 to September 26</b>	
MONTH	GROUP
October 25	Italian Improvers
November	Piano Group
December	Committee
January 2026	Playreading
February	Refresh your German
March	AGM
April	<del>Rummikub Club</del>
May	Spanish Intermediate
June	Stratford History Group
July	Sunday Morning Walkers
August	Tai Chi Yoga
September	Wine Appreciation



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,

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