

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

This Month

Wednesday 28 May 2025

2 pm at the Methodist Church

Rebecca Finney

Cats Protection and its work



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 are welcome.

Do come and join us. Refreshments available after the talk.

7TH - 15TH
JUNE
2025

THE GREAT BIG GREEN WEEK

STRATFORD-ON-AVON DISTRICT

Let's swap
together for good

Stratford-upon-Avon Wellesbourne Shipston-on-Stour

<https://www.greatbiggreenweek.com/>

This link will take you to events that are happening in our area

Net  Zero

Thanks to support from Stratford Climate Action,
Launch Agency and Banbury Litho

LAUNCH



 banbury litho

NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

Brush up your German

Our conversations first took us to beautiful Cordoba, then gave us an insight into poverty and wealth in San Francisco - including a scary ride in a driverless Uber. Anne talked of her book club's discussions on the Wacker Scandal: Van Goch forgeries perpetrated by the German art dealer, Otto Wacker. Rodger had explored mediaeval Coventry and Margaret told the moving story of a remarkable Russian dissident, the late husband of a friend. Rosel, who supplies us with Kaffee und Kuchen, rounded up proceedings with her usual thought-provoking contribution.



Improve your French

We met again for more news and tall tales in French, after which we listened *attentivement* to conversations littered with adverbs. *Pas mal!* At our next meeting we aim to tackle a short French play for the first time.

Piano Group

We played our usual collection of varied pieces from composers including Beethoven, Chopin, Diabelli and York Bowen. Most memorable were a particularly spirited duet from Dorothy and Hilary and an inspiring performance by Jill of the most difficult movement of Bach's Italian Concerto. We all vowed to practise harder.



Stratford History Group

Robyn Greenwood, RSC's collection manager, spoke to us on the history of the theatre and its fantastic collection of props, scenery, costumes, fine art and archives, including manuscripts and programmes which show the history of the theatre from 1900 to 2016. The fine art works can be found on Art UK online.

Originally a modest art gallery and library installed in 1881 in what we now know as the Swan, the collection is today an accredited museum of global significance. The RSC's duty is to own, manage, maintain and enrich the contents, currently standing at 4,000 objects, 800 works of art and 2,300 records of costumes, especially those of major actors. Its library, held at the SBT archive, contains 20,000 books and millions of archive items on paper, including posters, photographs, letters, sketches and costume designs.



Robyn and her team collect twelve items each year from over 22 RSC productions. Items of unusual interest are always sought after: the visually striking snake from *Loves Labour's Lost* (2008) is now on display in the Swan, in the exhibition "The Play's the Thing". Donations from actors are very highly valued. Its special collections include Constance Benson's *Lady Macbeth* dress from 1903, Vivien Leigh's 'shipwreck' dress, Paul Robeson's *Othello* costume, Henry Irving's prompt book of 1905, original knitting patterns of some older costumes, three bloody handkerchieves used by *Desdemona*... and much, much more!

This was a fascinating and informative talk, richly illustrated by pictures of numerous items from a unique collection.

Because of the growth in our numbers we now meet in the Welcome Space/PACCAR Room in the theatre. Next month one of our members will speak about Andrew Yarranton and his plans for the development of Stratford. This will be followed by a short presentation on a second man, a Stratford resident who remains largely unknown but who did more to attract tourists here than many others in the early 20th century. No spoilers!

U3a general meeting report, Wednesday 30 April 2025

Elizabeth Rose – Colours of Africa – Textiles

The African continent has 54 countries, with more than 1 billion people, with many different cultures. Liz showed us many different types of textiles, made and decorated from various materials and using interesting techniques. “Batik”, using wax, came from Indonesia in the 13th century. The wax is applied by hand with a “tjanting” – a ball and stick with nozzle to draw the pattern on the material. She also showed us a “tjap”, which is a heavy copper block to make a repeat pattern. This is very fine work. In European countries, these processes were replicated by machine, e.g., in the early 1900s, the Newton Bank factory, Hyde in Manchester roller printed such patterns. It became known as ABC when it was taken over by a Swiss company in 1959, and the factory closed in 2007. The Africans liked the products and they were imported. Every design has a number, but a different name, depending on which part of Africa it was destined for. Now all production is in Africa.

Each design has a meaning, and make a statement about life, even politics. Each side is the same and the cloth passes through the machine twice. Such designs are also made in China and India, but Liz said that the African designs are more accurate. She showed us a design from the 1930s of a fallen tree, and spoke about the Sycamore Gap tree that was recently felled, making it very poignant. During the Covid Lock-down, there were designs with locks and chains.

Indigo dye is made from the plant. It is interesting that indigo comes out of the paint pot a green colour, but it turns deep blue when in contact with the air. “Adire” cloth is made from cassava starch laid onto the cloth before dyeing. Then the starch is peeled off. Also, stitching makes a pattern when the stitches are removed. Stones are tied into the cloth to make a pattern and feathers are used to paint onto the cloth.

“Mudcloth” produces a black and white design. It starts with white cloth and the mud makes the black background design. Men weave the cloth in narrow strips, which the women sew together to make a large cloth and then apply the patterns. They use a “mordant” from a tree to make the colour fast. They are skilful and make up the patterns as they go along. However, there are “fake” hand-made cloths for the tourist trade!

“Bark” cloth is said to be the oldest textile in the world. It comes from a sort of fig tree. The bark is stripped and the inner layer is used. It is laid out, wetted and hammered to expand it and make it thin and flexible. It feels like paper. Leaves are wrapped around the trees so that the bark can re-grow. It is structural and often used as a fashion item. It is washable.

“Kuba” cloth, made from slim palm leaves, are woven into cloth in the Congo. Liz showed us a picture of the painter Matisse, who had examples on his walls. In later life he was influenced by it to create paper cut-outs for collages. There are 2 sorts – cut pile, in which thread is pulled through the cloth, and applique, which is sewn on top.

“Kangas” – these are from East Africa, and bright cotton clothes – one piece is wrapped around the waist, a second round the shoulders, and possibly a scarf on the head. This garment is based on hankies which were traded by the Portuguese, sewn together to make a larger piece of cloth. There is a border, a middle section and a “saying”, which is a message.

“Khayamiya” - this comes from the word for tent – Khayma. This cloth comes from desert areas, and they are plain on the outside and patterned on the inside, with applique. The earliest known one dates from 980 BC. This one was made from gazelle leather. They now use cotton material. This was a men’s craft. They are sold in Egyptian souks, but it is a dying craft. There is an example dating from the early 20th century at Doddington Hall. The present owners discovered it in 1998 and it was repaired in India and is now on display indoors.

Liz showed us many pieces of cloth and her presentation showed us how the textiles were made. It was much appreciated by the u3a members.

(Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary.)



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

Tickets on sale at the door !!

THE U3A CHOIR

Musical Director : Stewart Wallace

brings you

SOUNDS

of the sensational swingin'

*** 60s ***

Friday 23 May 2.30pm Stratford Methodist Church

Tickets £6 including refreshments

Laugh, Groan Giggle, or better still, send me some more.... Jokes of course..... newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk
How do you know if a vampire is unwell? Because he'll be coffin

Where do pirates get their hooks? Second hand shops

Why did the bicycle collapse? It was too tired

What kind of music do bubbles hate? Pop

Why did the hairdresser win the race? He knew a shortcut

How did the picture end up in prison? It was framed



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

May

June

July

August

September

GROUP

Sunday morning walkers

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 or talk to a committee member. Please don't be shy.

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)