

# Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

September 2025 [Stratford-upon-Avon u3a: Home \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Stratford-upon-Avon u3a: Home (u3asites.org.uk))

Founded 2000—

Celebrating 25 years, were you there at the beginning?

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)

This month

Wednesday 24th September

2 p.m.

At the Methodist Church

Jo Worthy-Jones will be talking about

Gardening with Wildlife in Mind



Members and Visitors welcome, join us for a cuppa afterwards.  
Do join the Chatting table if you are new, on you own or just fancy a chat.  
We look forward to seeing you.



Next month

Wednesday 29th October 2p.m.

At the Methodist Church

David Fry

Early Photographers in Warwickshire

**Sarais Crawshaw – Life as a Wildlife Artist – a pastel demonstration.**



Sarais has drawn and painted since she was a small child, especially animals. She admired people like David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell. She paints mainly wild animals and sometimes domesticated ones, cats in particular. She displayed some of her work, including an Abyssinian cat seen on holiday. She set the cat in an Egyptian background with a statuette of Bastet, the cat goddess.

Sarais is keen on Scotland and Northumberland to see animals in the wild. It is important to position herself at the right time and place. Dawn and dusk are the best for many animals when they will be in their best natural positions, as animals do not generally “pose” for the artist! In the garden, cover and well positioned food help to catch them at their best. Patience is essential.

The creation of a painting is in various stages.

Planning – she chooses the best place to observe the subject and uses binoculars and a camera etc. She mostly works in Britain.

She sometimes visits zoos and people’s homes. She takes a sketchbook and does quick pencil sketches to develop before painting. She also uses “props” and objects to achieve accuracy. She showed us a wing from a dead magpie. Her friends and neighbours sometimes donate found objects! Dead animals will be kept, wrapped and labelled, in the freezer.

She works in various types of media – acrylics, pastels, coloured pencils, paper cuts, and printing. Paper cuts create collages, and are also layered to create depth.

She places her animal subjects into appropriate natural backgrounds.

For her demonstration she used pastels, which vary in size and hardness. Large ones are softer than smaller ones and create a stronger colour effect, with little pressure. Small pastels are used for details. Pencils are also needed for detail with a sharp point. She uses a special paper – Papermat – which feels slightly rough to the touch. This helps the pastel to cling to the paper. Sarais passed samples round for us.

The demonstration started with a prepared pencil sketch, in this case, a heron photographed in the rain and sketched in her workbook with notes. She then started to colour in the background. She blended colours with an egg-shaped pointed sponge. She used small pencils for detail in the heron. She did the top half, then some of the heron, then the lower half, then finished off the heron’s body. Sarais also uses a thin, tight glove to protect her fingers and also to blend the colours.

Sarais produced a picture of about 18”x12” for us in half an hour – this would normally take 2-3 days! We were very impressed by this demonstration and many people wanted to buy the picture as it was. Sarais declined the offers as she needs to keep up her standards! When finished the dust is gently banged off, then framed with a triple mount card surround. She does not usually use fixative, possibly between layers, but never on the finished product, as it dulls the colours. She uses glass, never acrylic. For no glare, “museum glass” can be used, but it is expensive.

(Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary)



## REPORTS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

### Brush up your German

Among a range of topics including the delights of Guernsey and the fortunes of Stratford's Altstadt we were presented by Rodger with a mystery object to identify by asking lots of questions. It's a household object which he uses often. Well, here it is! Was kann das sein? What is it?

Answer in our October Newsletter!



### French for the Terrified

We have worked through two different picture stories from Histoires Illustrées, using useful everyday vocabulary, making up lots of different questions and answering them. The book's watchword is "If you don't know it, don't use it!" Find a way to say what you want to say only using words that you know.

### Improve your French

Contributions this month told of a Corsican film, revealed an enthusiasm for wood turning and introduced us to some French tongue twisters (virelangues). Steve's blague about a violent incident on the beach at Swanage fooled us all until the crocodile appeared and ate the sausages! Finally we revised our wedding vocabulary in anticipation of imminent Anglo-French nuptials and did some work on emphatic pronouns.

### Latin

We have begun reading Ovid's account of the Great Weaving Bee between Pallas and Arachne. The Latin is as complicated as the technical details relating to weft, warp and the like. The competing designs are full of mythological references, some quite abstruse. And we know it's all going to end badly for spider woman.

### Piano Group

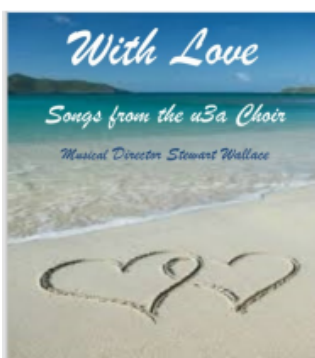
Two of our members have visited Steinway Hall in London. They booked a special practice room with two Steinways for playing duets and were then able to try out other super pianos in the grand showroom.

Dorothy writes: *"What a wonderful day it was. The two of us doing what we so love doing, playing our Diabelli duets, but this time on a beautiful Steinway Grand piano! Our hour there went so quickly but we were lucky enough to play one of our duets on two Grand pianos! It was a truly great day."*



### Stratford History Group

Sadly, our August meeting had to be cancelled because of the illness of the speaker. Many of our members have visited the exhibition in Harvard House this month, which we hope will pave the way for a Stratford museum. Some of us also went to an open-air talk in the garden of Hall's Croft, outlining its history, considerable problems and the plans for its conservation.



### u3a Choir Concert: 2.30pm on Friday 3rd October in Stratford Methodist Church

Many of our u3a members sing in the Choir. We are currently enjoying a variety of songs about love from over the past decades in preparation for our October concert. Songs will include : *From Russia with Love, Sunny, I'll have to say I love you in a Song, Love me with all your heart*, and more... with Stewart's delightful accompaniments as usual - plus a couple of solos and a chance for everyone to join in with *We'll meet again*.

Tickets @ £6 include refreshments and are available via [km27dews@gmail.com](mailto:km27dews@gmail.com)

# *With Love*

## *Songs from the u3a Choir*

*Musical Director Stewart Wallace*

See previous page for ticket information

*2.30pm Friday 3rd October 2025*

*Stratford Methodist Church*

*Tickets £6 including light refreshments*

# ITALIAN IMPROVERS GROUP



The Italian Improvers group enjoyed an outing at the smallholding of one of our members. We had a tour and saw some beehives, and some Soay sheep, a rare breed. They are rather sweet!

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soay\\_sheep](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soay_sheep)



We also did some Italian work, of course – we read and translated a difficult text about a pioneering Italian female cyclist who competed in the Giro d'Italia in 1924, despite prejudice against women competing. She was a professional cyclist from 1907 to 1936. We learned some new words and grammatical constructions!

The group is now so popular that we have had to start a waiting list

Helen Elliott

# Jokes Corner

And these did come from crackers,

Please smile or groan. Smiling is better, it's good for your mental health:

What type of room has no doors or windows? A mushroom

Where would you find chilli beans? At the North Pole

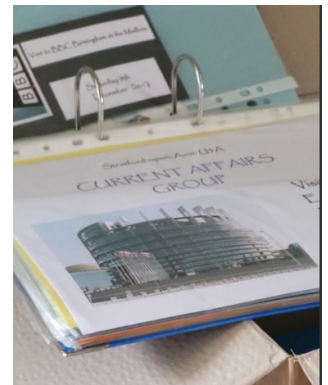
What do you call a row of men waiting for a haircut? A barbecue

What is an underground train full of professors called? A tube of smarties

That's enough laughter for one month, I already have more lined up for next month, but if you have any better ones please send them to: [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)

## Archiving our historic documents:

A group of eager beavers gathered around boxes and documents from the last 25 year. Our mission to sort the material for archiving (of which more in future editions). There are some interesting items relating to our foundation in 2000; some of which will be on display in our Silver Anniversary display. (on the right, a snippet from one of the albums)



## Silver Celebrations

On December 10th we will celebrate 25 years of learning, laughing and living. There have been many trips, even holidays away and we have lots of photographs to prove it! Do you have an event you think should be commemorated? Or even photos to see who was there? Please do send me your contributions.



# 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



Next coffee morning  
on **Saturday 11 October**

There is a room behind the bar at the back of the  
ground floor where we gather.

All are welcome, it would be lovely to see you.



Last month: There were 10 of our members at the September get together, but there is room for plenty more. It's a very sociable chance to catch up with other members of our u3a and find out what is going on.

# Silver Jubilee

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

This event will be on 10 December, please put the date in your diary. Our Christmas meeting will also be our silver jubilee celebration. Watch this space, as they say, more information coming soon. Please get in touch [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)

Helen Elliott and I are going to meet Jackie Checketts later this month. She is our founding mother(?); with her help we are going to put together a display of the last 25 years. Do share your stories of our early days, send them to me [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
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
24 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	SILVER CELEBRATIONS	Celebrating 25 years of our u3a



## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON u3a - SPEAKERS FOR 2026

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 January 2026	Poppy Jones – Silvertime Legal	Tax, Care & the New Guy – wills, care fees, estate planning etc.
25 February 2026	Abby Watson – Dogs Trust	Dogs Trust and its work.
25 March 2026	AGM + SUA Foodbank – Ian McLean	The Work of the Foodbank.
29 April 2026	Michelle Flint – Textile Artist	Textile art, including demonstration.
27 May 2026	Elizabeth Rose +1	African songs + percussion and audience participation.
24 June 2026	John Kinory	My Life and Times as a Film Extra.
29 July 2026	Janet Mobbs	How does your garden grow?
26 August 2026	Colin Wade	The Joys and Perils of being an Author. Crime thrillers.
30 September 2026	John Butterworth	My Trip to the End of the World – Antarctica, the Falklands and Argentina
28 October 2026	Margot McCleary	Ghost Stories of Warwickshire.
25 November 2026	Rosalie Taylor, Sharon Hilton, Warks. CC	Mature Drivers Workshop.
16 December 2026	TBA	No outside speaker.



# 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.

Many thanks to Annette Riddleston for agreeing to take on the role of tea person.

Many thanks also to Diane Edwards who is retiring from the post, a big thanks for all the cups of tea and coffee you have overseen in the last few years.

## Stratford-Upon-Avon u3a Tea Rota October 25 to September 26

Month	Group
September 2025	Friendly French Conversation
October 2025	Italian Improvers
November 2025	Piano Group
December 2025	The Committee
January 2026	Playreading
February 2026	Refresh your German
March 2026	AGM
April 2026	Rummikub Club
May 2026	Spanish Intermediate
June 2026	Stratford History Group
July 2026	Sunday Morning Walkers
August 2026	Tai chi/Yoga
September 2026	Wine Appreciation

And as Bugs Bunny used to say 'That's all folks'. If you wish to contribute do send your group news, pictures and even jokes to me [newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk)