

Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

October 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



This month

Wednesday 29th October 2p.m.

At the Methodist Church

David Fry

Early Photographers in Warwickshire

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 26th November 2025

2 p.m. at the Methodist Church

A familiar face to many of you

Richard Churchley will be talking about

The English Countryside in Poetry and Song



Gardening with Wildlife in Mind – 7 Top Tips - Jo Worthy-Jones.

Why are gardens important?

Climate change.

Fragmented wildlife populations - loss of habitat due to human activity, housing and industrial development, and farming.

Insect population decline. The UK is one of the worst places for biodiversity.

87% of UK homes have gardens, which is 4 and a half times more than nature reserves in England.

Gardens provide connectivity for wildlife to live and breed.

Gardens support wildlife not able to live in farmed areas. Hedgehogs have really declined as they do not have enough food there.

What is a wildlife garden? It does not have to be totally wild to be useful. 7 top tips:

Water – a water feature, however small, is useful. Frogs and toads, dragon and damselflies will all find it if you build it! They need it for their young to hatch.

Have a water butt – you can decorate them if they look awful.

Even a saucer of water with marbles in it is useful, so that insects can land and drink and escape. Birds wash their feathers all year round.

Connectivity – e.g., hedgehogs wander around a lot – about 3 km. a night. A hog hole in the fence is useful. See “Hedgehog Highway” online for information and in “Hedgehog Street” you can map sightings in your area. Even dead ones. Insects are important as food, especially beetles for hogs. Bees fly about 3 miles foraging for pollen or nectar, the latter for energy. They need a variety of flowers all year round

Natural foods – in urban and built-up areas people are often discouraged from feeding birds as it can encourage rats. Natural food is better if possible. Blue tits collect about 3,000 caterpillars for their young! Caterpillars provide protein and moisture, even for seed eaters. Timing is becoming a problem with climate change. Robins and blackbirds can have more broods in this event, and feed on insects in plants. Rowan is very good for both flowers and berries. Red/orange/yellow are the order of colour preference. But, Pyracantha is not popular as it is prickly. Holly and Poplar are popular. We were shown a picture of a Bee Hotel – Red Mason Bees collect pollen and mud and seal their eggs inside to develop. There are 250 species of bees in this country, one of which is the Honey Bee and 23 of which are Bumble Bees.

Homes – patches of ground that are not useful to us may be home to insects, e.g., logs, leaves, tree stumps etc. Spiders and fungi also use this debris and break it down. We were shown a picture of a Dead Hedge in which two parallel fences are filled with wood cuttings and leaves. It is also possible to grow plants through the gaps to look attractive to us. Insects etc. will live there.

No chemicals – pesticides kill useful creatures – poisoned insects, slugs and snails can kill the animals that eat them. Leave the red cases of insects found in soil – they are the pupae of a moth. Ladybird larvae eat more aphids than the adults do.

Peat free – 2024 should have been the year that peat should have been banned for sale but this has not yet happened.

Untidiness – leave seeds heads for insects to feed on and to lay their eggs. Try to leave clearing up until Spring. Variation and shape – Have flowers that cater for the different lengths of tongues in insects. Fruit and vegetables also produce beautiful and useful flowers.

Continuation – keep growing plants as long as possible and climate change means that warm weather might last a bit longer now. Not everything dies off in winter. Try not to mow the whole of a lawn, leave some long areas. Clover and Birds Foot Trefoil in grass are very welcome to butterflies and moths. Grow Nicotiana, Stocks, Evening Primrose and Honeysuckle for night flyers. Sunflowers are good for their seeds, and the whole Dandelion family is good for insects.



We were shown some lovely photographs and there were lots of questions from the enthusiastic audience. We all learned something from the talk.

(Helen Elliott – Speaker Secretary.)





Stratford u3a visit to the Guide Dogs National Centre, 22 September 2025

Following our talk about sight loss in March 2025 a visit was arranged to see the guide dog training centre off the Banbury Road. A number of u3a members enjoyed an interesting afternoon, finding out about the work done there to train dogs to help people with sight loss.

The visit included a walk through a dark tunnel with blindfold on, testing the long white stick, finding out about the changes in harness over the years for the dogs, and a look into the puppy area. We found out how the dogs are trained to suit their eventual "owners", and how clever the dogs are, including being trained to disobey if necessary.

Most of the dogs are Labradors or Retrievers, or crosses, and other crosses like Labradoodles. German Shepherds used to be used but they are rarely now, as they are stronger. The choice depends on the needs of the eventual owner.

About 75% of the puppies pass the training but some are not suited to the lifestyle. Unsuccessful puppies will go to good homes as pets, and retired dogs (at about age 10) may stay with the same person, or may go elsewhere, depending on how well they get on with the replacement dog.



We were given refreshments and shown a video about the training process and about the charity in general. A good time was had by all.



MEMBERS COFFEE MORNING

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

2nd Saturday of the month 10 till 12

The Town House Hotel, Church St



Next month we will get
together on 8 November
All are welcome, it would be lovely to
see you.

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

REPORTS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

BRUSH UP YOUR GERMAN

We began with matters of high finance and lots of new vocabulary relating to bank accounts and transactions. We then discussed the awful problems facing refugees here trying to access English lessons and find employment. On a lighter note we found at least a dozen German words for 'excellent' to describe both the RSC's *Mass für Mass* (Measure for Measure) and a short stay away with family and friends. Finally we had fun translating more Shakespeare titles and trying some German *Zungenbrecher* - tongue twisters.

Last month's mystery object? An apple corer and peeler!



Ein Apfelenkerner und -schäler

FRENCH FOR THE TERRIFIED



At our first meeting this month we concentrated on talking about the past using mainly the imperfect tense - when it's used and how it's formed. We finished by reading Michel Jonasz's nostalgic song about his family holidays by the sea and then enjoyed Yves Montand's hilarious rendition of *Une Demoiselle sur une Balançoire* on YouTube. Both are full of imperfect tenses at work.

IMPROVE YOUR FRENCH

Our reportage of news has mostly concerned visits to interesting places and events, plus a long awaited Anglo-French wedding. We have clarified *savoir vs connaître* and are listening to dialogues using irregular verbs in the *passé composé*. We have been ending with a smile on a couple of good *blagues* and a piece of *franglais*.



PIANO GROUP



Another happy session with some old favourites and some new composers, including a Spanish Air by Felix Le Couppey and part of an oboe concerto by the Venetian Marcello, arranged by Bach. These had both appeared in copies of *Pianist* magazine which members enjoy borrowing. Old favourites included Chopin's Waltz in A minor and part of a Sonatina for four hands by Diabelli, without whom no Piano Group meeting is complete these days: he's lively, tuneful and great fun. The first movement of Mozart's Sonata K189 was brilliant and demanding, and the first part of Brahms' Intermezzo Op 118 no2 was intended to stir emotions. And the whole proceedings began with Jerry Herman's *Hello Dolly!*

STRATFORD HISTORY GROUP

For our October meeting we visited Hemmingford House in Alveston, a splendid Georgian Grade 2 listed mansion dating from 1784, currently in use as a Youth Hostel recording 29,500 overnight stays a year. Built as a private residence it was a family home until World War Two, when it was commandeered by the British Iron and Steel Corporation. YHA bought the property in 1947, helped considerably by a generous legacy of £1,500 from a Mr. Wilson of Manchester.



We were warmly greeted by Steve, the manager, who showed us round. The hostel can sleep 150 in surprisingly smart accommodation, fitted into former grand rooms whose original stylish fireplaces are now sometimes to be found in a corridor! The Victorian extension (left) blends in well and the new wing added in 1975 provides a welcoming dining room, open as a café to the public during the day. The setting is very peaceful, in three acres of grounds with some remarkable listed trees.



Following our tour we enjoyed coffee and biscuits in the dining room where Liz, our group member who is a regular visitor and loves the place, shared with us some of her research findings. Warm thanks go to Liz for organising the visit which proved to be one of our most enjoyable, with the opportunity to chat over refreshments a lovely bonus.

ROY DYER

Roy died in September following a debilitating battle with Parkinson's.

A proud Stratfordian who worked as an engineer, Roy was a kind, gentle man who devoted much of his time to others. He and Kay were active members of Stratford u3a. Roy was on the committee for many years and served as our Secretary. He volunteered for St John's Ambulance, was a National Trust guide and produced early editions of *Searchlight* magazine for St Andrew's Church, where they were both long-time members and Kay was a curate. From 2019 to 2023 he also served as a Town Councillor.



Roy and Kay, October 1971

Latin map update

We received lots of enquiries from readers wanting to buy a copy of the LU map translated into Latin, featured in the last issue.

While the group that put the map together is in discussion with LU and the London Transport Museum, because of copyright issues the map is not currently available to buy.

But because it's been so popular, the group has put together an A5 pamphlet with the English to Latin translations. You can order a copy of this if you send a donation – however small – to the group's local hospice.

Please send an A5 stamped, self-addressed envelope and a cheque with your donation, payable to Shakespeare Hospice, to: Latin Map, Shakespeare Hospice Bookshop, 45A Rother Street, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6LT.

When the Latin group embarked on our map of Londinium Subterraneum we had no idea that Roy had once worked for London Underground, commissioning tube trains. He gleefully contacted his old employers and we received great publicity in three editions of TfL's *On the Move* magazine! The resulting numerous requests for translations made a significant contribution to our raising a four figure sum for the Shakespeare Hospice. Thank you, Roy.

We also have Roy to thank for setting up our u3a website. As webmaster he prided himself on keeping everything up-to-date and in the early days ran sessions for group leaders so that we could look after our own pages.

Kay, known to many locally as the Reverend Kay Dyer, associate priest at Holy Trinity Church, was a keen member of our Ukulele group, as was Roy too in the days when Norman was leader. Since Roy died she has left their home of 54 years in Stratford and is now living with her family in Redditch. We send her all our very best wishes.

Margaret Dews

New Feature

Instead of jokes this month, we have a WORD OF THE MONTH

Many of you, like me have a fascination with words, where do they come from? Why do they mean what they do? Well try this one for starters:

NERD

What a strange word! Where does it come from? Perhaps unsurprisingly it comes from the US and has been around since at least the 1960s. It was originally coined by students to refer to someone who would rather study than go to parties. A party-goer would often be drunk: a swot was the opposite, and so a **knurd**. This of course, became written as **nurd** and later **nerd**. QED (quod erat demonstrandum)

Calling all Bridge players

Are you interested in playing Bridge in Stratford? If so, the Bridge Group at Heart of England U3A would welcome you. (As a U3A member, you can join an interest group at another U3A.) We are a friendly group, playing 'social bridge' - very relaxed, with a variety of levels of skill. We are not able to teach beginners, but would welcome anyone with some experience of the game. We meet at the Methodist Church Centre on Tuesday afternoons, and the weekly subscription is around £ 3. If you are interested to join in, please phone Keith Rockett (01926-863-143) or David Whitfield ((01564-771-550)

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

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



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
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, with a mixture of entertainment provided by you



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, our new mistress of the tea urn.

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

Month	Group
October 2025	Italian Improvers
November 2025	Piano Group
December 2025	The Committee and of course, yourselves
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