

# Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

November 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 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



## Members' 25th Anniversary Christmas Party

**Wednesday 10th December 2025**

**Methodist Hall 2pm**

**Yes, it's our Silver Anniversary!**

There will be a special Anniversary Cake to be cut by our founding member

We will be providing fizz (hic) to toast our u3a, soft drinks and teas/coffees

There will also be assorted finger food.

There will be varied entertainment, music and our very own magician, Colin Rose, will once again astonish us with his prestidigitation!

Over 60 of you have said you will be joining us. Looking forward to seeing you there.

**Victorian and Edwardian Photographers in the Stratford-on-Avon area. David Fry.**



In the 19<sup>th</sup>. century photographic equipment was simple and cumbersome compared with the small and complex cameras of today. The first photographic images were Daguerreotypes, developed in France. The copyright was held there and they were very expensive to acquire. They used copper plates to produce an image. “Cartes de Visite” were produced from the 1850s to the early 1900s. “Cabinet cards” were produced from about the 1870s. The Cartes de Visite were very small – a calling card. Cabinet cards were about postcard size. Postcards were also cheap – about 2d. from a shop, and the Post Office also charged only half the price of a letter to send them. Millions of them were sent. They were quickly produced, in a matter of hours, and featured all sorts of events. This made them quicker and more topical than newspapers at this time.

At first cameras were only used indoors. It took 15 minutes to process glass negatives. Then they were processed in the studio to make photographs. Cameras were also large and needed a tripod to keep them steady as shutter speeds were very slow. They could be adjusted and extended to cope with different heights of the subjects. This is why it was difficult to use them outside, and action was very difficult to capture. The photographer had a hood over the head to make it easier to view the image, which was upside-down. The film was in a cassette which was placed there in the dark inside before going out. It is amazing how good the outdoor pictures actually were!

David showed us an old, late 19<sup>th</sup>. century camera – see the photo above.

The Daguerreotypes were fragile and expensive, so only for the rich. We were shown an “Exposure Table” (on the right) and it could take up to 50 minutes to take a photo! In good light it took about 6 minutes. That is why people had to sit very still. There were even neck braces to keep the head still! People tended to take portraiture seriously so they did not usually smile in those days.

STATE OF THE WEATHER		HOURS OF THE DAY					
	8	9	10	11 to 12	2 to 3	5 and after	
	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes	minutes	
Very brilliant and clear, wind steadily from W. or N.W., very deep blue sky, and absence of red rays at sunrise or sunset. Time employed.....	15	8	6	5	6	7	12 to 30
Clear, wind from S.W., moderately cold, but a slight perceptible vapor in conjunction with above. Time employed.....	36	12	7	6	7	8	35 to 40
Sunshine, but rather hazy, shadows not hard, nor clearly defined. Time employed.....	25	18	14	12	14	16	25 to 40
Sun always obscured by light clouds, but lower atmosphere, clear from haze and vapor. Time employed.....	50	20	18	16	18	20	35 to 50
Quite cloudy, but lower atmosphere free from vapors. Time employed.....	50	30	25	20	20	30	50 to 70

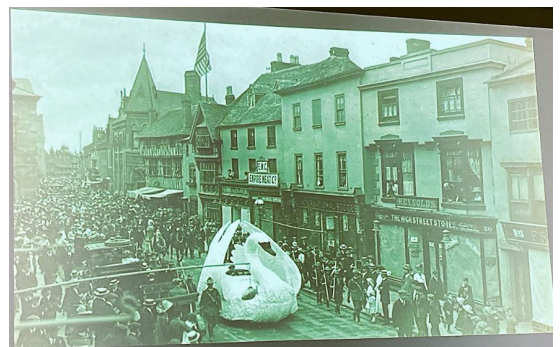
COURTESY GEORGE KANTIAN HOUSE

We were shown a camera for Cartes de Visite which could take 4 photographs on one plate. They could also produce a lot of copies from one plate. By the 1860s cameras were improved and outdoor photos became easier and a lot cheaper. Stratford with its tourist trade was a popular place for photographers.

Here are some of the photographers that David has researched.

Charles William Smartt was active from 1877 to 1888, with a studio in Rother Street producing good quality pictures.

Louis Fuidge, 1842-c.1890, once photographer to the Empress of Germany, was also an artist and the manager in Smartt’s studio. His photographic style was different from Smartt’s.



Edward Anthony Tyler, 1861-1924, had a studio in Bridge Street from 1883-1924. On the back of the photograph there was an elaborate picture of him as a painter. He took photographs of crowds in the streets, and also a lady fencer and an aeroplane, a novelty then. Plus, a Floral Procession, and an explosion at the gasworks in 1912. These photographs were produced as “news” at a time when it took newspapers too long to include pictures. There is also an interesting photograph of “Whitfield Pension” at 10 Church Street. It is believed to have been an alms-house, and we were shown a photograph of a simple dormitory. It was pulled down much later (1957).

Thomas Charles and Isobel Chaplin, 1841-1908. We were shown an oval cameo of the sitter. They also used heavier card and the words were in colour. We were also shown an outside image of Bird & Co. Wine and Spirit Merchants.

Douglas James McNeille, 1823-1935. He was known for portraits.

Francis Bedford, 1815-94 was known nationally and internationally. He took grand landscape photographs, and some of the collection of the royal family, and he went on tour abroad with Edward (known as Albert at the time), the Prince of Wales.

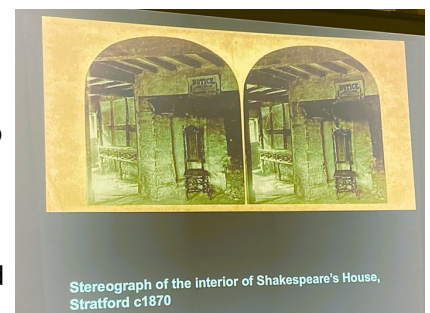
There are also photographs of Shakespeare's birthplace, and of the theatre in 1880. We were also shown stereoscopic photographs, including the interior of Shakespeare's house. These could be borrowed by people to view at home.

Ernest Joshua Bryan, 1878-1956. He was born in Bidford and was a window cleaner a first, and part-time photographer from 1901-6. From 1907 to 1925 he worked out of Leamington Spa. By this time photographs were quite cheap and working-class people were pictured by their homes, rather than in the studio, which was dearer. About 1905 postcards took off and they were used for advertising. For us, these are useful sources of history. The compositional style was still posed. We were shown a lovely photograph of two ladies on their bicycles by a tumbledown stile. Also, photographs of the annual Shakespeare festival were popular. There was also a photograph of a Temperance demonstration. By now these pictures were numbered, like a limited edition. The photographer wrote the captions on the back of the negative in reverse, quite skilful. Photographs of non-central streets were also becoming popular and generally featured people to make them more appealing. They were sold in their local shops.



W.A. Smith, 1964-1945 had a similar style to Bryan and they teamed up from 1905-7. They could then cover a wider area.

Frederick Downing Spencer, 1904-08, was also a chemist. Both professions used chemicals in their work. From 1908-1959 he was in High Street in Stratford. He took portraits as well as views. There is one of Sir Frank Benson, famous as an actor and for organising the annual Shakespeare Festival, standing by the theatre in 1912 (and there is a photographer captured in the scene). There is also a photograph of a huge swan in a parade in about 1930. There was also an interesting photo of a couple of clowns at a festival in 1907.



Frank C. Rickett (1878-19??) ran the Mercia Photograph Company from 1911 to 1916. He was very prolific pre-war. There are photographs of festivals, the MOP and the canal. He had an unusual style of handwriting on the photographs. Post-war, 1920-36, he worked out of Ely Street and produced the Antona series of photos. This included events, especially the MOPs, floods, and many of the fire at the theatre, 6 April 1926, were sold. In the end he went out of business as fewer people bought the postcards.

Charles W. Thornton, 1882-1967, worked in Stratford from 1925 to 1950, but there are no surviving photos of Stratford. He worked on commission taking photographs of individuals, and there is an interesting one of a tramp, called Theodore. A later photographer called Walker had a similar style of handwriting to Rickett and he re-used old Thornton plates.

Percy Simms, 1880-1950, worked in the 1930s, and there is a rare photo of the temporary theatre after the original one was destroyed by fire.

Ernest J. Daniels, worked until 1940, and there is a fascinating photograph of the Shakespeare's birthday festival of 1936, in which a group of girls in school uniform can be seen holding Box Brownies – showing the beginning of ordinary people taking their own images!

David showed us some mystery photographs, which he hopes we can identify. There is an aerial photograph with a very large mansion in the foreground. We have speculated that this might be the now Welcombe Hills Hotel, which the History Group visited a while ago. There is a photograph the Warwickshire Constabulary, a snow storm in April 1908, and a fund raiser for war planes at the Barclays Bank building.

(Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary, Oct 2025.)



## ITALIAN IMPROVERS

Seven members of the Italian Improvers Group went for an Italian lunch at Osteria da Gino. We chatted a bit in Italian, then put the world to rights in English. Here are some pictures of most of us.



Helen Elliott, Group Contact.



And now, 2 new groups may be starting, are you interested?

### Current Affairs 3

We have two active current affairs groups, much in demand, so there could be a new group starting soon. Are you interested in politics? Do you like to keep up with world developments, this might be a group for you

If you are interested in joining a new group: Current Affairs 3. Please contact our Interest Groups' Coordinator using the Contacts page on our website. Where, when, how often, and other details of meetings will be agreed between the leader of the group and its members. Here is our website: [Stratford-upon-Avon - Embark on a learning adventure with likeminded people](#) follow the link to contacts and send our Groups Co-ordinator a message.

### Beginners German

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Margaret via her email: [km27dews@gmail.com](mailto:km27dews@gmail.com). Where, when and how often to meet will be decided when it is known how many people are interested.

# *Singing for Christmas*

## *The u3a Choir*

*Musical director* ★ *Stewart Wallace*



★ 10.30am Friday 19 December 2025 ★

*Stratford Methodist Church* ★

*All Welcome : Retiring Collection*



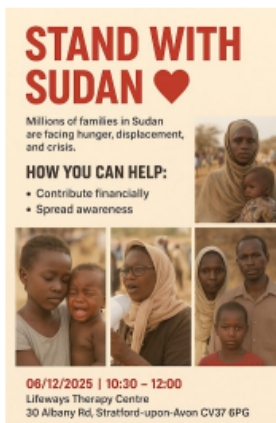
The Choir are singing again, do come along if you can.

## Coffee morning in aid of Sudan

A message from one of our members, Jo Pettitt



This coffee morning at Lifeways on Saturday December 6th is being run by a group of my students; I am helping them with their English. One of them has a sister in Sudan who is running a centre for women and children fleeing the front line. She has a small government grant but desperately needs to buy more supplies. We are hoping to help her. So do come along to Lifeways if you are able. My students and I would be delighted to meet you. Otherwise any donation you feel able to make will make a difference and help a lot of desperate people. Thank you. Jo ❤️



## Word of the Month

### SAUSAGE

Sausage rolls and sausages on sticks are staples of the Christmas party. A sausage is salted meat, the word coming from the Latin **sal-sus** meaning salty (**sal** = salt). Centuries ago, in some of Latin's spin-off languages, the letter **l** dissolved into a **u**. Sometimes both letters survive in one word, as in **somersault**; sometimes **l** wins the day, as in **salty**, sometimes **u**. Hence we now make **sauc**es, the French eat **saucis**sons and we love **saus**ages! Salt was important to the Romans; it was a very valuable commodity. If they were worth their salt, Roman soldiers were given a **salarium** (> salary), an allowance to buy it.



And if you're dancing a saucy **salsa** at a Christmas party, it was an original Cuban dance developed and named in the 1960s by New York musician and record producer Johnny Pacheco, using the word for 'sauce' in his native Spanish. So enjoy your sausages and your salsa... but go easy on the salt.

Two more very **European sausages**. I am sure many of you have eaten **Wurst** in Germany. The Swedes are also very fond of sausages, but they call them '**korv**'.

### Brush up your German

A great session was made all the more delightful by a little goldcrest (*das Wintergoldhänchen*) hopping about right outside Rosel's window.

We began with another "Was ist das?" puzzle. Answer in our January Newsletter. For something completely different we heard about two recent Soundbites concerts at Holy Trinity, one of German Lieder.



Collecting was the theme of the remaining contributions. We were astonished at the intricate craftsmanship of seafarers' engravings on a collection of tiny Coquillanuts. One dispensed a tape measure (*das Metermaß / Maßband*) and another unbelievably contained an image of the Via Dolorosa with text below in Russian and French. Amazing! Our two final collections (*Sammlungen*) were of poppies and mini telephone boxes. All in German, so lots of new vocabulary to learn.

### French for the Terrified

After wrapping up *Une demoiselle sur une balançoire*, we moved on to pictures of a group of lads visiting Paris. It was not too difficult to talk in French about what they were doing and we learned about some of the main tourist sites in the city, including l'Arc de Triomphe, la Tour Eiffel, les Champs Elysées, Notre Dame and *les bouquinistes de la rive gauche*, shown here.



### Improve your French

We enjoyed everyone's reports this month but Steve, compensating for an amazing lack of Birmingham knowledge, stole the show with his latest tall tale: it used every new phrase and item of vocabulary from our previous meeting. A real tour de force! We followed this with an aural exercise, listening to a poem of betrayal, hopes dashed and resolve to move on - which turned out to be the lyric of a French pop song from the 60s. More poetry is promised for next time.

### Latin

We tackled the most difficult Latin ever in Ovid's tale of the weaving contest between Pallas and Arachne. Ovid clearly understood the operation of a loom, with warp, weft, comb and shuttle, but these were words we had never met before. So we covered about half the text we normally do. However, the Latin was so clever that we relished every line. The blending of colours in the weave was particularly beautifully described. Memorable.

### Stratford History Group

Three volunteers from the Birmingham Rep gave us a fascinating presentation on Sir Barry Jackson, from his beginnings to his years at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Born in Worcestershire, with wealth inherited from his father's grocery business, Barry had an undying passion for Shakespeare from his early years. He began putting on plays in his garden at home, moving on eventually to founding the Birmingham Repertory Company which grew to be one of the most famous theatres in the world. He had a reputation for being unpredictable and exciting, and was the first to present Shakespeare in modern dress. He had an unerring talent for spotting and promoting future stars including Gielgud, Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Peter Brook and Paul Scofield.

Knighted in 1925 he was connected with the Memorial Theatre from 1926 when he became a governor. Sir Archie Flowers invited him in 1939 to direct the Shakespeare Festival, but the war intervened. In 1945 Fordham Flower offered him the position of Artistic Director at the theatre, which was in a parlous state after the war, run down, shabby, neglected and "full of badly organised junk". Seeing that a complete overhaul was essential, Sir Barry insisted on absolute overall control. He was a breath of fresh air and a new broom, improving working conditions and making the Memorial Theatre attractive to London actors who had previously seen a stint in Stratford as being "buried alive"! He adopted a completely new approach with a new company. This, however, did not go down well with Fordham Flower and relations were strained. Despite considerable success his contract was terminated after three years, deemed "a tragedy" by many. But by then the Memorial Theatre's national and international status was assured.

The fame of Stratford in the years that followed would not have happened without Sir Barry Jackson's inestimable contribution. He was an amazing man and deserves greater recognition here.

## Spanish Group

At our monthly meeting in November we told stories of our travels, mostly to Spanish speaking countries over the years.

Most exciting was Maria's experience of being on a plane from Caracas when it was attacked by hijackers who pointed their guns at the passengers but, fortunately didn't harm or rob them as their target was the airline itself.

Other stories were of visits to Peru and a visit to England by Spanish business men. Who delayed their meeting as they had to have a coffee when they arrived, and had to stop for lunch at 2 p.m.. This resulted in them missing their return flight and having to stay over night.

There was also discussion of Cuba and how friendly everyone there was. We also talked about the politics and the way it has changed. Jo brought a large shell which was bought from a young Cuban who dived into the sea without any equipment., see photo

The next meeting will be at Maria's house on December 4th at 2.30p.m. New members would be very welcome. Follow the link on our website to make an enquiry via the groups'-co-ordinator. [Contacts - Stratford-upon-Avon](#)





# MEMBERS 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 month we will get  
together on 13 December  
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.

# Beware of Scams

Nowadays there seems to be a new scam every day, here are some tips to help you stay safer, online and in the real world

- ◆ Be cautious of clicking links in unexpected emails, or on social media. As a rule of thumb—don't click
- ◆ If you are paying an invoice received by email, verify the bank details by calling the sender using a trusted number and never one quoted in the original communication.
- ◆ Research the seller and reviews, not just those on the website
- ◆ For expensive items, see the item in person and check any paperwork carefully
- ◆ Read warnings on payment systems carefully and always use a secure method of payment such as a credit or debit card or the recommended channels on well-known websites
- ◆ Never share your bank's one-time security codes with anyone. If you get a code you didn't ask for it may be a scam, and you should contact the bank immediately—but don't use any phone number in the email with the code. Add your bank's security number to your contacts and use that
- ◆ Remember if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Many thanks to Tony Orsman, for sharing these useful tips with us,



## 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 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
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