

# Stratford-upon-avon u3a Newsletter

April 2026 [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)



## **This Month**

**Wednesday 29th April 2026**

**2 p.m. at the Methodist Church**

**Michelle Flint Textile Artist**

Michelle describes herself as a mixed media textile artist. She does free-motion embroidery, drawing with thread and likes to challenge herself.

Intrigued? Come along and find out more.

## **Next Month**

**Wednesday 27th May**

**2 p.m. at the Methodist Church**

**Elizabeth Rose**

Will be talking about African Songs and Percussion.

With (optional but encouraged) audience participation

You may remember Elizabeth spoke before about African Textiles and her collection.

It would be lovely to see you there





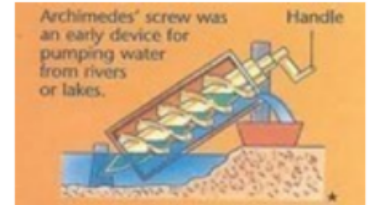
Were you amused, spooked or maybe even screwed by an April Fools joke this month?



## WORD OF THE MONTH : SCREW

The OED lists a relatively modest 36 uses of the word 'screw', some of which are best left unexplained here. The accepted belief is that the word comes from the Latin *scrofa* (sow), a screw's spiral form being reminiscent of one of a pig's curly parts.

Wooden cylinders with spiral threads were used from ancient times for pressing oil or grapes and lifting water (remember Archimedes?) but the word screw as a metal fastener appears first in the 15th century. The screwdriver was invented soon afterwards. The cocktail of the same name dates back to the 1940s - 50s when Americans working in the Gulf masked their alcohol consumption by adding vodka to orange juice and stirring the mix with their screwdrivers.



Less humorous is the term as applied to prison staff. Early prisons had inmates shackled using a screw mechanism. Torture was used in the form of thumbscrews and later 'screw warders' would tighten the screw on a crank machine to increase the resistance for prisoners struggling to turn its handle. Screw was 19th century slang for key, hence today's derogatory term for prison officers with their turnkeys.

Finally, Victorian times saw the introduction of mechanisation and industrialisation, by which time screws had become ubiquitous in engineering. But in those early days it only took a single loose component to cause a whole mechanism to malfunction. Woe betide the machine minder who had a screw loose! He really had screwed up.



## NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

### Brush up your German

Another most enjoyable morning, beginning with a stay in a wonderful historic building in Prague Old Town. Asparagus and how to grow it took us to asparagus festivals in Germany - and Bretforton! Closer to home we learned of the developments and ongoing problems at Halls Croft, which plans to open in a limited way from Shakespeare's birthday. Environmental issues were then considered in a mini-quiz. Following these serious topics we crashed into the crazy tale of how Tony Robinson pulled out all the stops to help promote Worksop as a tourist town, having made fun of it in *Maid Marian and her Merry Men* on children's TV. Finally Rosel reminded us of the Easter hare, der Osterhase, and told of some enduring Easter egg traditions in Germany. Frohe Ostern!

### French for the Terrified

Our main focus was on making polite requests, interruptions and apologies. There are lots of ways, lots of possible phrases, depending on your situation - a shop, cafe, restaurant, bumping into someone accidentally, pushing your way through a crowd and so on. For a complete change we talked through a series of pictures depicting a family on holiday at the seaside.

### Improve your French

We certainly improved our awareness of France's attitude to the arts. Ann's son in Provence plays in a successful alternative hip hop band whose members have long been supported by *Intermittents de spectacle*, an insurance scheme for artists and technicians in the entertainment industry who alternate between short term work and none. Picking up the theme Chris, a former actress who has known unemployment here, described her worst audition. On a more positive note we discussed the delights of jazz festivals and finally our European neighbours' keenness to talk about their own ill health. If in doubt, google *tamalou*!

Our second meeting led us to discover a useful new website: the Collins French Word of the Week Blog! Every week this highlights a French word, its meaning, derivation, pronunciation and use in several examples. There are lots of examples of words to explore in the blog archive, but a new word is explained every week.

### Piano Group

Hilary and Dorothy began with another great duet by Diabelli, the 1st movement of his Sonatina no 5. Sylvia played a Chopin Waltz in A minor (KK IVb no 11) followed by Neville with Bach's Air on the G string. We then had two jazz pieces: I played Spooky Wood Hollow by Heather Hammond and Jill played Honeysuckle Rose, music by Fats Waller, arranged by Nikki Iles. She was then persuaded to sightread a piece from a book of Sylvia's: 'I will wait for you' by Michel Legrand. Brilliant as always. We have since learned that she recently played a piece with her daughter and granddaughter (one piano, six hands) in a concert performance of a modern requiem in Bristol. Quite an honour!

**Ann Such**

### Stratford History Group: The vast legacy of designer Tibor Reich (1916-1996)

Linda Fraser came from London to tell us about her inspirational, much loved father, Tibor Reich. A refugee from Budapest, Tibor worked in Stratford for 30 years from 1946. He was a devoted family man, passionate collector, creative designer, photographer, technician and shrewd business manager. The Tibor legacy encompasses a huge range of fabrics, carpets, clothing and ceramics. He designed and produced printed and quality woven fabrics for (among others) the RSC, Shakespeare Centre, Princess Elizabeth's wedding in 1947, the Royal Yacht, the 1951 Festival of Britain, Downing Street and British Airways, including Concorde. His designs were influenced by European and Hungarian peasant traditions, following the colours of nature which "never go wrong". He developed mohair fabrics in colour in 1974. The Tibor brand lives on today, curated by his nephew Sam Reich, with offices in the UK and in New York, very successfully!



In Stratford Tibor first lived next to an antiquated mill in Clifford Chambers, employing many wartime refugees there. The family later occupied a thatched cottage in Alderminster, where he produced Tigoware, taken up by Denby in the 1950s, when demand became too great. In 1963 he bought an old builders yard in Ely Street and turned it into a showroom and shop. His final home in Stratford, still occupied by a member of the family, features a stunning onion shaped heater and is an architectural showpiece. It was a joy to learn so much from Linda about this amazing man. If this has whetted your appetite for more, there is plenty online.



*(Linda's samples)*



Tibor working near the mill in Clifford Chambers



Tibor House, with 'the flaming onion'

## Keep Fit

The Keep Fit group is as active as ever on Monday mornings. Paula ensures we are kept on our toes (metaphorically speaking!) and is keen for us to exercise every muscle, even those we've forgotten we had! She provides plenty of variety and some fun activities whilst providing choices for those less flexible or able. We are a very friendly bunch and are currently enjoying a 2 week Easter break although we have been given strict instructions to practice our balancing exercises! Due to a variety of reasons our waiting list is currently empty. If you are interested in joining us please get in touch.

If you are interested, follow this link to the groups' co-ordinator who will help you find out more: [groups@stratfordu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@stratfordu3a.org.uk)

## NEW GROUP

### DRAMATIC NEWS

A NEW GROUP on IMPROV (or improvisation). This theatre based group is based on games like "Whose line is it anyway?" and was featured in this month's Third Age Matters magazine. We are very fortunate that the u3a National Adviser for this subject will come along and lead the first session for us. He cannot come until May so, logically, we are starting in May!

This is what he says .....

*It will be two hours, with a 10 minute break in the middle. It will consist of silly games to get everyone in the mood, exercises to practise improv skills and then a chance for everyone to do some sketches. Our main aim always is for everyone to have fun!*

Again, if you are interested, please contact Maureen [maureenbe@savu3a@gmail.com](mailto:maureenbe@savu3a@gmail.com)

Date and time will be fixed to suit the majority.

I think this looks fun! (ed)

Stratford u3a AGM meeting talk report, Wednesday, 25 March 2026.

**Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank.** Talk by Ian McLean – Community Group Organiser.

Ian has been a volunteer for 11 years.

The Foodbank is an independent charity which supplies emergency food for people in crisis. It is affiliated to the Trussell Trust which has oversight of 400 foodbanks and 1,300 distribution centres nationally, but they work independently. It covers Stratford District, and there are some smaller outlets in the area too.

The short-term goal is to make food banks more accessible, but the long-term goal is to reduce the amount distributed by tackling the problems that the recipients experience. They are referred by other organisations – health visitors; social workers; Citizens' Advice; schools; doctors; housing offices etc. Clients are given vouchers, paper or electronic, for each person in the family. They are also passed on to others to deal with other needs.

The foodbank works this way:

Non-perishable food items etc. come from donations in supermarkets, schools and churches, businesses, community groups, religious festivals (e.g., Easter), house to house collections, etc. From January to August more is given out than in September to December when more "seasonal" donations come in! Marks & Spencer does not participate, however.

Volunteers sort and store the items, which are weighed for stock-taking purposes and dated, 3 times a week. Tesco also gives a notional value to its stores' donations and it then gives the profit to the Trussell Trust.

Front line professionals assess the clients for their need for vouchers according to certain criteria and they are exchanged for food parcels.

The vouchers are worth 3 days' worth of food. The food is mainly packaged and tinned items, including cereals, UHT milk and juice, tea/coffee, biscuits, dried food like pasta and rice.

Volunteers chat to clients and they may be referred to others for advice and help. Many need emotional support and have feelings of guilt. Problems include debt, energy costs and housing.

Some foodbanks offer fresh fruit and vegetables, of the least perishable type, which are well received. "Kettle" packs, "Cold" packs and "Cook" packs are also offered, e.g., a lasagne kit, and lunch packs for school holidays. Special diets are also catered for. There are also Christmas goodie bags which also contain non-food items.

The Food Bank now has a new home. It will be in the Precision Business Centre on Masons Road instead of the Fred Winter Centre. There is more space and the warehouse and distribution centre are on the same site. There are other distribution centres – Meon Vale, Bishopton Community Centre, Escape Arts (which will transfer to the new place) and the Ken Kennett centre. This is to help people who struggle to travel to the town centre.

As well as food distribution there has been a need for a library of children's books and deliveries to people who cannot get out easily, e.g., the disabled, people with no vehicle or convenient public transport and people with social or mental difficulties. Two members of staff go on these visits for safety reasons.

From 2013 to 2025, on average, the number of people fed, per month, rose from 86 to about 400. During Covid, Universal Credit was increased so the numbers reduced. The number of children fed rose as a proportion of the total as there were no free school meals during the pandemic lock downs. Recently donations have dropped a bit as most people are feeling the cost-of-living increase.

During the year 2024-5, 3,158 adults and 1,730 children were fed. 65.6 tonnes of food were distributed, but only 62.4 tonnes were collected so the difference was made up by purchasing food. Debt is the main reason for use of a Food Bank. In February 2026 203 vouchers were given out covering 370 people (261 adults and 109 children).

The vouchers are meant to be short term emergency help. Originally people received them maybe 3 times a year. Now there is no limit. According to clients, without them they might starve, or resort to scrounging or stealing. Many are on zero hours contracts so their income varies and they cannot budget. A mobile phone is a necessity so half of their living allowance can go very quickly. They are very grateful for the help.

Other organisations also give help. For example, Jaguar Land Rover and NFU Mutual provide staff volunteers and Anytime Fitness, the Arden Hotel are supporters.

There are 4 paid members of staff, the rest are 170 volunteers from churches, community groups and referrers etc. The Town Trust gives about £30,000 a year.

How can we help? People can raise money in various ways, such as donation via the website for those who do not visit shops ([givetoday.co.uk/stratforduponavonfoodbank](http://givetoday.co.uk/stratforduponavonfoodbank)), at supermarkets, donation of old shopping bags, become a volunteer, advertise to friends.

More food is needed in school holidays. Items such as toiletries, pet food, baby and sanitary products are also very useful. However, there are often too many tins of baked beans!

It was a very interesting talk, with a number of comments and questions about these subjects:

the pattern of voucher receipt varies, 3 vouchers every 6 months nationally, but some people are regulars and some pay odd visits.

The positioning of donation baskets is determined by the supermarket itself.

15-20% of clients are in work.

The reason why M&S does not take part is unknown, but its goods are often donated elsewhere by shoppers.

It is important to donate only food that is **in date**. Foodbanks cannot risk using out of date food.

However, clients can be offered items that are within 3 months of the date, at their own risk.

The reasons for the need for food banks is complex. Inequality across major economies has increased, and the gap between rich and poor has grown since the 1960 and 1970s compared with 1913 when records began. 70% of land is owned by 1% of corporations. Thomas Picketty, a French economist was mentioned as a source - Capital in the Twenty First Century (2013) and A Brief History of Equality (2022).

Volunteers help in different ways. There are different roles and volunteers help at various times to fit in with their lives. There is the "Assemble" software package for volunteers to use and choose their slots. Volunteers use their own cars.

Volunteering enquiries should be sent to Sarah Crompton,

Operations Manager, [info@stratforduponavonfoodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@stratforduponavonfoodbank.org.uk)

(Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary.)

Thank you Sheila



A group of us went to the RSC restaurant for pudding and tea to say thank you to Sheila who has been a member of our u3a for many years; she worked hard to keep us going through lockdown and has continued to serve on the committee for several years, including as membership secretary. THANK YOU Sheila and enjoy being an ordinary member.

From your editor:

It's good to know that our u3a is growing to record numbers, if you are reading this as a new member, WELCOME.

I hope you enjoy our u3a, this newsletter is entirely written by our members, I merely curate your contributions. The photos and reports show a snapshot of what is happening. If you want to know more, and you haven't found it yet. Here is a link to our website: [Stratford-upon-Avon - Embark on a learning adventure with likeminded people](#) where you will find previous newsletters, group information and news of future meetings.

If you are a group leader, an invitation. It is lovely to be able to include news and information your groups. Do please send me photos, with a few notes about what you were doing. I never include photos unless I know that the people in them have given permission for the image to be shared.

News and information from all our members are always welcome.

[Anne Foster](#)

Newsletter editor

# 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 Saturday 9th May

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

Fourteen of us gathered this month for a  
Saturday morning coffee. A lovely way  
to start the day with a relaxing coffee  
and good conversation





## 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
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.

We are in the Spring edition of u3a Matters Magazine.

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A feature on our 25th party with a good picture of the cakes.



# 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 mistress of the tea urn.

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

Month	Group
April 2026	Rummikub Club
May 2026	Bryan and Annette
June 2026	Stratford History Group
July 2026	Sunday Morning Walkers
August 2026	Tai chi/Yoga
September 2026	Wine Appreciation