

STRATFORD -UPON-AVON u3a

NEWSLETTER

August 2026

<https://stratford.u3asite.uk/>

Founded 2000



This Month

Wednesday 26th August 2026

2 p.m. Methodist Church

Come and hear

Colin Wade

A local author and crime writer will talk about

The Joys and Perils of being an Author

Everyone is welcome, do come along, listen and have a cuppa with us afterwards

Next Month

Wednesday 30th September

2 p.m. The Methodist Church

John Butterworth will talk about

My Trip to the end of the Earth



STOP PRESS

Especially for Stratford u3a Members

AFTERNOON TALK ON FALLING SAFELY

Your committee has organised a talk for Stratford u3a members on falling safely. Bearing in mind that falling is something that third age people are prone too, there have been many studies on the effects of falls on confidence, mobility and general health.

We are fortunate that an expert who has been involved in the "Finding your Feet" programme for East Anglia University and the British Judo Association is coming to speak to us

Wednesday 7th October
2-4 pm
Wesley Hall
Stratford Methodist Centre

There is no charge for this for members as it is something the Committee thinks will benefit all of us and we are using Stratford u3a funds to sponsor the event.

The first half of the presentation is a talk with slides; the second half is a demonstration of safe falling techniques.

We will watch these, we will not be asked to fall over!

The afternoon will conclude with tea and biscuits.

NB This is an additional offering; there will be our normal monthly meeting the week before.

Refresh your German – a vacancy

Sprichst du Deutsch, willst du mehr sprechen? The refresh your German group meet on the first and third Thursday of the month, in each others' homes. They would love someone new to fill a vacancy in the group. You need to have some German and the topics discussed range over recent activities, future plans, recent visits and holidays. The emphasis is on everyday German, but is not for beginners.

If you are interested please contact the group leader Pete Lakey by clicking this link [German conversation](#)

From one German group to another....

Brush up your German

I have been tasked with reporting our July meeting. On a sunny morning at the end of July, we met in Rosel's lovely garden. We spoke about many things including my garden, and advice on growing tomatoes. One member told us about the German passport controller who was amazed that she spoke German; another about her forthcoming trip to Germany. Rosel told us about her surprise birthday party at Compton Verney. We also had a discussion about our supportive and in some cases over supportive families. We know our children want to help us, but how do we stop them treating us like children. No answer just a lot of thoughts in both German and English. Perhaps it is apt that the notice about the talk above arrived just after our meeting. Does anyone have any suggestions?

MEMBERS' COFFEE MORNING

You are invited to join our members' regular coffee morning chit-chats at the Town House, Church Street
2nd Saturday of the month 10.30 till 12 noon

Next month: Saturday 12 September, 10.30 a.



**Stratford u3a meeting report –
Wednesday 29 July 2026.**

Plants produce roots and shoots, and they understand gravity, so they go the right way up or down. Carbon dioxide, oxygen and water enable photosynthesis and production of glucose for the plants to grow, light and warmth are essential, plus minerals. Plants will grow in various places, even in cracks in tarmac. Lack of light causes etiolation, lack of water causes them to flop. Big leaves need more due to evaporation. Cactus with spiny, wispy leaves need less water. Frost causes the tips of leaves to be damaged so water cannot get to the top of the plant.

Janet's husband used to use heating in winter in the polytunnels, but it is expensive and non-environmentally friendly so they have stopped using them. Some commercial growers use closed system greenhouses, burning fossil fuel, however, to create the right atmosphere, and some grow hydroponically.

Minerals generally come in the compost. Osmocote (yellow spheres) or Miracle Grow may be included, and liquid fertilisers can be used to feed the plants. These lead to chlorophyll production in the plant. Nitrogen is also needed. 78% of air is nitrogen, but plants need it in solution. Compost can be too strong in nitrogen, so it is best to mix in leaves and other matter. Farmers spread slurry from animal dung too.

Respiration is essentially glucose + oxygen + water. All plants and animals need this. Plants absorb oxygen and it is important not to press too hard on the soil or compost as this deprives the roots of the air spaces. Also, do not over-water as this fills the air spaces. We sometimes kill plants with kindness! Glucose is stored as starch, e.g., in root vegetables.

However, there are problems preventing good growth:

- Diseases like bacterial cankers and fungal spots. It is important to dispose of affected plants and not put them in the compost bin.
- “Fasciated” stems, e.g., in foxgloves (we were shown a sample) are multi conjoined stems, which can be caused by fungi, viruses and genetics.
- Wind damage. Some trees in certain areas grow at a slant!
- Red Spider Mites, which kill leaves.
- Aphids (greenfly), which live in the tips of leaves and make them crinkly. Ladybirds can help by eating them.
- Snails and slugs, which like Hostas especially.
- Rabbits, which eat almost everything green, except thistles and ragwort.
- Deer are voracious and eat even the bark on trees.
- Woodpeckers love Silver Birch.

For us, sitting in the garden is good for our health. Warmth, light (Vitamin D), touch, sound, smell and taste are all there and help with relaxation.

The audience was well entertained and informed, and asked a lot of questions.

Helen Elliott (Speaker Secretary) July 2026.



Was John Keats 'snuff'd out' by bad reviews?

Do the poems of John Keats still stand the test of time was the question the Poetry Matters! Group set out to answer in its meeting at the end of July. Interestingly, Keats himself, despite his early hopes, had no expectation that they would. Keats died in Rome on the 23rd February 1821 at the tragically young age of 25 and was buried in the city's protestant cemetery. Prior to his death, while suffering from the late stages of tuberculosis and disappointed by the poor reviews of his poetry, Keats asked for no name to be written on his gravestone but just the epitaph, 'Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water'. At the time, regarding the unfavourable reviews, Lord Byron famously commented that Keats had been 'snuff'd out by an article' yet despite this inauspicious start Keats' reputation almost immediately soared and his poems have long been considered among the greatest in the English canon. In its bid to re-assess Keats' reputation the group selected for study and discussion a range of poems including a short extract from an early pastoral work, two ballads, two of his sonnets, and two of his late great odes: Ode on a Grecian Urn and To Autumn. Although some of his works can seem challenging on a first reading the group agreed that by studying them and opening them up to discussion they soon revealed the true nature of the poet and the sophisticated artistry with which his poems were written, much of it inspired by Keats' huge admiration of Shakespeare. And while many of Keats' most famous poems are concerned with the impact of time and the impermanence of life, no doubt coloured by Keats' premonitions of his death, we did discover another Keats who could revel in the power of the imagination and take huge delight in responding to his senses and the solace of nature. By the end of the meeting, we all felt that Keats more than deserved his place in the pantheon of English poets. At our next meeting on the 31st August, as light relief after the intensity of Keats, we will be rolling the clock back to 1960s Liverpool to explore the The Mersey Sound a ground-breaking volume of poems by Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Brian Patten. Sixty years on it will be intriguing to see if their poetry was more than just a passing fashion statement of its time like collarless jackets, bell-bottom jeans and vinyl 'go-go' boots? If you are interested in dropping by or in joining one of our future meetings in the delightful 'Welcome Space' provided courtesy of The Royal Shakespeare Theatre please get in touch with Jonathan Baker by email at <mailto:jonobaker@hotmail.com?subject=Poetry Matters>. He and the group will be delighted to hear from you.

OLDER ADULTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH!



We are looking for **older adults (age 60+)**, either **with or without a diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease**, to **take part in a study** that will ask about aspects of psychological wellbeing and worries about others.

You will be invited to complete **a single set of questionnaires online** (or by post if preferred).

The results of the study will be used to better understand these experiences in older adults with Parkinson's Disease, how this compares to the general older adult population, and what interventions might be helpful for supporting wellbeing.

Want to take part or get more information?

VISIT:

<https://tinyurl.com/onlinesurvey123>

OR EMAIL

lauren.cash@psy.ox.ac.uk



OR CALL 07775546457

Or scan this QR
code!

NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

French for the Terrified

We did more work on finding our way from place to place in a town before moving on to describing a holiday journey using the present tense. Trying to do the same using past tenses showed that we need to do lots of revision. Margaret will come up with some ideas for simple regular (daily?) practice at home....!

Latin



We had fun reading some witty poems by Martial and Catullus, with some of the many translations they have inspired - nothing too scurrilous. More to come next time, with a couple of more serious and lyrical examples. Catullus wrote using many different sorts of metre, so for a change of activity we tried a spot of scansion, looking at some of the rules of rhythm which a poet had to obey without compromising on content and style. Picture shows his grotto at Sirmio.

Stratford History Group

Our August meeting had to be cancelled owing to the illness of our speaker.

But we would like to take the opportunity again to remind you of the splendid **Stratford Heritage Exhibition** at Harvard House in High Street. The exhibition is free, accessible to wheelchairs up to 70cm wide and staffed by enthusiastic volunteers including some of our group members. It is open every week now from Thursday to Sundays, but only until 27th September.

You can explore the 200 years of the Stratford and Moreton Tramway, celebrate the 100 years since the Memorial Theatre fire, and learn about the Clopton War Hospital, our heritage lamp posts and Tibor Reich, whom our group 'discovered' recently. There is so much to digest that second visits are not unusual! With activities for children and families too, it really should not be missed. One more month only!



(Photo by Helen Elliott)

u3a Choir Concert: We got Rhythm!



Stratford Methodist Church

Programme

2.30pm Friday 18 September

The u3a choir has members from most of the local u3as including ours. Our autumn concert is coming up in September, on Friday 18th, in Stratford Methodist Church. Starting at 2.30pm, it's followed by light refreshments: all for £6.

The title might suggest something about the range of songs we're singing. George Gershwin is one of our inspirations, and there are well known numbers from Dean Martin, Joan Baez and Mary Hopkin. Those were the days! There are new arrangements from Stewart and a couple of his originals, one worthy of a West End musical. It promises to be a really lively afternoon. Tickets are available from me or any choir member.

Margaret Dews

WORD OF THE MONTH: PTERODACTYL

It can often be useful to split a longer word into its component parts to discover its meaning, but we don't always get it right. A case in point is the word *helicopter*. The way it's pronounced seems to suggest a natural divide between *hell* and *copter*, but this would be wrong. However, it did produce the handy abbreviation *copter* for this rather unlikely flying machine. The correct split is actually between two Greek words, *helix/helicos* (spiral) and *pteron* (wing). The word was coined in 1862 by a French inventor, working on a model before the first copter even flew.



Since 1953 we have become familiar with the spiral of the DNA double *helix*, but what of *pteron*? We might recognise it in its pairing with another Greek word *dactylos* (finger) to produce **pterodactyl**. The French were clearly good at borrowing from Greek and scientist Georges Cuvier put together this particular combination in the 18th century to name an amazing ancient winged lizard whose fossil had recently been found in Germany. It highlights the anatomy of the creature's massive elongated fourth finger, which supported the membrane enabling flight. *Pteron* came from an even earlier word *pter* meaning to fly.



Dactyl also survives with another meaning familiar to students of poetry. A *dactyl* here is a unit of metre containing three syllables, the first one stressed, the following two unstressed. The word *poetry* is in fact itself a dactyl. The ancient Greeks hit on *dactylos* as a perfect description for this, as it brought to mind the three segments of a typical human finger, one longer than the other two. Obvious really!

Half a league, half a league, half a league onward!

Returning to attempts to split words to understand their origins, one which once caused much debate among lexicographers was *pamphlet*. The *let* ending was understood through words like piglet and booklet, denoting a smaller version of something. But a small *pamph*??

One for another time, maybe.



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
August 2026	Tai chi/Yoga
September 2026	Wine Appreciation

In Annette's absence I have drafted a new Tea Rota October 2026 to November 2027, any problems, please let me know <mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk?subject=Tea Rota>

Date	Group
28 th October 2026	Brush up your German
25 th November	Craft
16 th December	Creative Writing
27 th January 2027	Current Affairs 2
24 th February	Fluent French
31 st March (AGM)	Play reading
28 th April	French for the terrified
26 th May	Friendly French conversation
30 th June	German conversation
28 th July	Improve your French
25 th August	Italian Improvers
29 th September	Keep Fit
27 th October	Latin Advanced
24 th November	Piano Group

Plea for Help

Could you please come and help put out chairs for our monthly meetings in Stratford Methodist Church Wesley Hall?

The next meeting is Wednesday 29th July



You could stay for the talk which, this month, is
The Joys and Perils of being an Author by Colin Wade

RSVP to Maureen at maureenbsavu3a@gmail.com

We hope to make up a rota of helpers so no-one has too much to do. Thank you!

This plea may appear regularly. Meetings happen every month so help is always needed.

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
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.

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DATE	NAME/ ORGANISATION	SUBJECT
27 January 2027	Jo Worthy-Jones	The Secret Life of Trees.
24 February 2027	Kate Round	Stourbridge Glass: History of Industry.
31 March 2027	AGM + Bill Cowley	Scams – update.
28 April 2027	Dr. Javad Hashemi	Leonardo da Vinci's inventions.
26 May 2027	Alison Stone	The work of the Shakespeare Hospice.
30 June 2027	Paul Carpenter	Life in the Rainforest of Central/South America.
28 July 2027	Brenda Ainsley	Climate Change.
25 August 2027	Frederick Naftel – composer and performer	Landscapes in Music.
29 September 2027	Poppy Jones, Silvertime	Tax, Care and the New Guy – financial planning update.
27 October 2027	Richard Churchley	Plague, Pox and Pestilence.
24 November 2027	Andy Smith, singer and instrumentalist	Life in the Music.
15 December 2027	Xmas party and Coranto.	Folk band.

Helen Elliott – Speaker Secretary.

Another full newsletter, I hope you enjoyed it! It is lovely to have so many contributors, but I know some groups never tell us what they are up to. Do please send your items to me by 17th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. No newsletter in December.

[mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk?subject=newsletter item](mailto:newsed@stratfordu3a.org.uk?subject=newsletter%20item)