

# STRATFORD -UPON-AVON u3a

September 2026

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

Founded 2000

## THIS MONTH

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September

2 p.m. The Methodist Church

John Butterworth will talk about

My Trip to the end of the Earth



***Everyone is welcome, do please come along and join us. Why not stay and have a chat and a cuppa (biscuits available and optional!). We love to chat.***



## Next Month

Wednesday 28 October 2026

Margot McCleary

Will be telling us

**GHOST STORIES OF  
WARWICKSHIRE**

2p.m. Methodist Church

## MEMBERS' COFFEE MORNING

You are invited to join our members' regular coffee morning  
chit-chats at the Town House, Church Street

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month 10.00 till 12 noon

**Next month: Saturday 10 October, 10.00 a.m.**



### **Stratford-upon-Avon u3a monthly meeting report, Wednesday, 26 August 2026.**

#### **Speaker – Colin Wade – The Joys and Perils of being an Author – Crime Thrillers.**

Colin has published 7 murder mystery books so far. He retired in 2016 and decided to try writing novels, and, as he is a fan of crime fiction, this became his genre. He joined a writers' group in Oxford and received some advice, the first suggestion being to solicit a manuscript review. The feedback was a bit depressing, but he decided to stick with his "voice" and plucked up the courage to do it *his way*.

Publishing the novel was not easy either. He had 80 rejections from literary agents. Unfortunately, agents are overwhelmed with submissions, so most new authors pursue the self-publishing route these days. Agents give the client an advance payment, but with self-publishing, the author has to pay everything. Colin had some help from Troubadour Publishing with his first book – **The Lost Years** – which was published in September 2019. It was all very exciting!

However, when Colin went to find it in Waterstones in Oxford, it was not there. The book was sold online, but the major bookshops can only carry so many books in the shops. So, Colin started to promote his book at craft fairs, and independent bookshops were more open to selling it. Six months' later he received his first royalty cheque. It was 99p. from a book that sold for £9.99.

Colin takes the view that it is not all about the money, but more about the joy of writing. He produces a book a year now. He still has the output of Agatha Christie, 66 novels, as an

inspiration! Also, he gives talks to inspire others to take up the pen. Crime remains his favourite genre, as there is both light and dark in it. He vowed not to write a series, nor stories set in his home town, Oxford, but he has broken this rule with number 8, which will follow on from the seventh book.

1. **The Lost Years** is a dark psychological thriller.
2. **Plutus** is about corruption in the drugs industry.
3. **Deadly Connections** is a Christie type of story.
4. **The Sins of the Fathers** is about corruption in the housing industry.
5. **The Devil's Code** is at the dark end of crime, dealing in serial killers.
6. **Murder at the Manor** is "Cosy Crime" of the gentle Christie type.
7. **The Oxford Mystery** has a mystery trail to follow. The trail is real and there is a £50,000 prize for the reader who solves it.
8. **Murder at the Book Club**, a sequel to Murder at the Manor, will come out in October 2026. He is now writing the third in the series.



Colin originally resisted series as he feels that they can lead to the books becoming rather similar and less original, but he has been inspired to try it due to the subject matter.

His influences are Agatha Christie and Harlan Coben, who is a classic "twist at the end" author. Colin wants his writing to be authentic and set in real locations. He worked as a civilian in the police force so he ensures that the procedures are correct. Also, Murder at the Manor was inspired by a 17<sup>th</sup>. century hotel, Charingworth Manor, in the Cotswolds.

His aim of one book a year is to give momentum to his work. On the advice of an old lady, he aims to "hook" the reader within the first 20 pages. He also writes short chapters, a device that gives pace to the story. He writes a "cliff-hanger" at the end of each chapter, leaving the reader wanting more. He also finds that readers do not generally like too many characters to remember. He also opens each chapter with a different character.

Until his 4<sup>th</sup>. book he was doing most of the promotion of his books by himself. Then he lighted upon libraries! Librarians like to work with local authors and also welcome donations to the book stock and put them on display. Colin also set up an author group, now 25 strong, which is a sociable way to exchange ideas and give support. He also attends literary festivals. He will be in Wallingford in October 2026.

He has learned a lot and become successful, and he feels that he is also giving back to the community by giving talks, like this one, and by helping children's charities ,to encourage reading in young people.

In conclusion, he believes that having the courage to follow one's instincts has worked well. He finds reviews useful, but he does not chase them. Bad ones are discouraging, but

good ones are helpful. The real joy of this career is the act of writing itself and appreciation by readers.

The talk was well received and prompted a number of questions.

Reporter: Helen Elliott, Stratford u3a, August 2026.

## **POETRY MATTERS!**

At our meeting on the 31st August we rolled 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 was intriguing to see that their poetry was much more complex, darker and rooted in tradition than it may have appeared at the time.

During a short break for a caffeine boost we also shared some photographs of ourselves from the 1960s and 70s as a way to get to know each other better and as a fun reminder that we were all part of *The Mersey Sound* generation once too!

At our next meeting on the 28th September we will be exploring the work of William Blake. Anyone interested in the group will be welcome to join us in the 'Welcome Space' at The Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Please get in touch with **Jonathan Baker** by email at [jonobaker@hotmail.com](mailto:jonobaker@hotmail.com).

## **From your editor.**

For the last 28 years I have happily used Publisher to produce various documents including this newsletter. Microsoft are withdrawing Publisher next month. In preparation for this I have started to use Word to edit and produce this newsletter. Word does not seem to be as clever as Publisher, so I have a couple of requests.

1. Does anyone know of a suitable and fairly similar to Publisher programme that I might use instead?
2. Please could you send me your documents in a Word file, with photos separate, so that I can incorporate them as space allows.

Finally, as editor, I claim editorial rights and cannot guarantee that your submitted articles will always be reproduced exactly as you write them. I know I am not editing a grand daily paper, but I claim the same rights as they have.

**WORD OF THE MONTH** : This month it's the turn of **VERSE**

It will soon be time for "*We plough the fields and scatter*", the first line of the first verse of the famous harvest hymn. And the word **verse**, believe it or not, owes its existence to ploughing. Back in the day a Roman poet spotted that a ploughman turning round at the end of a furrow to start a new one, an action called **versus**, was just like a poet reaching the end of one line to move on to the next. And so *versus* acquired a new meaning. Never waste a good word! Originally referring to a single line of verse, it soon came to be used for the grouping of lines, either rhyming or with a set rhythm - as in blank verse.



*Versus* > *verse* is part of the Latin verb *vertere*, which means to turn. Its offspring have proved to be most diverse and diverting, turning in many directions. In a conversation (people turned together) you may inadvertently become adversarial and try to convert someone to your own version of the truth. Though an introvert would doubtless wish to avert a major controversy. All this turning could well set your head spinning with vertigo! And your body can turn too, thanks to all those *vertebrae* able to turn in your spine.

It's hard to know where to stop in this vortex/*vertex* (Latin: whirlpool) of verbal diversity. There are many more examples, so do look out for them. Reverting to where we began, let's not forget **versus** itself, still existing in its own right: England versus France! two teams unforgettably turned against one another.



What a versatile set of words *vertere* has spawned !  
And what a great advertisement for the study of Latin.

So now, as the plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
it's time to turn these lines into verse...



Iambic pentameters, anyone?

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## NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

### Improve your French

Two meetings since last time. In the first we heard a tale of deux chats, ending with a groan-making pun. As two members were undergoing dental treatment we tackled *Le Petit Nicolas: Le dentiste* as an aural then a reading exercise. The past historic (*le passé simple*) cropped up, so in our next meeting we looked at how it's formed and where it's to be found, with examples. Before that we learned about a life-affirming song festival, a group of village bat detectors in the dark and a linguistic phenomenon known as le cycle de Jespersen (see pic).  
Waouh!



### Brush up your German

With Rosel and others away, a small group still found plenty to talk about, including house improvements, the delights of Dorset and the joys of entertaining young children: a Thames boat trip, visiting Greenwich Observatory and Hamleys, and painting a pottery owl. It seems that there are two German words for 'owl': each hoots in its own way! Harry Potter's Hedwig is definitely *ein Kauz* ("UHU") and NOT *eine Eule*. We then had the sort of medical discussion beloved of Germans: illness, problems with knee replacements and a rare side effect of statins. And finally we were introduced to the benefits of an air fryer, with a demo - and chips!



### French for the Terrified

We are continuing to revise past tenses with some stories and songs along the way.

### Piano Group

We enjoyed another great variety of music from Baroque to Music Hall: from Bach's *Jesu, Joy of man's desiring* and Purcell's *When I am laid in earth*, to *Daisy Daisy* and *She was a sweet little dickie bird*! The standard was set by Schubert's *Allegretto in C minor* (very difficult) followed by *Étude in C* by Louise Farrenc, a 19th century French composer new to us. Our remarkable duettists played all three movements of Diabelli's *Sonatina no 6* for the first time and we finished dreamily on Debussy's *Girl with the Flaxen Hair*. For a complete change we had a fascinating demo of the Tomplay app!

### Stratford History Group

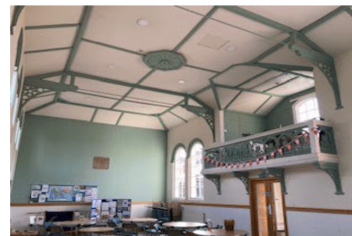
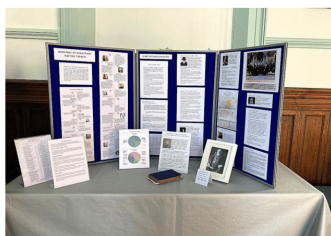
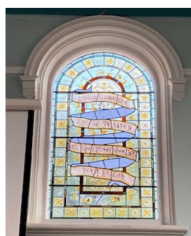
Our September meeting took the form of a visit to the Baptist Church, organised by Rob Brown, one of our members, prior to its participation in Stratford's Heritage Open Days. We were given a very warm welcome and had plenty of time to look at the information and many exhibits on display, while Rob took us through the history of the church and its building (which is beautiful) from 1836, with its ministers, renovations, events, mission work and significant contribution to religious, civic and community life in Stratford. (Enough material for a saleable booklet, Rob!) The icing on the cake, quite literally, followed with delicious refreshments in the former schoolroom, now Fellowship Hall. Thanks go to Rob, Maggie, Gill, Kevin, Julian and all who helped.

Our October meeting, a presentation on Chedham's Yard, will also be held at the Baptist Church - which, we are delighted to report, will be our venue now for all future Stratford History Group meetings.



Photos by Helen Elliott

Below: the Fellowship Hall



## Silent Disco!

Monday 16th November, 2.30pm to 4.30pm

Rother Street Arts House, Stratford-upon-Avon

We are holding our first ever Silent Disco!

YES it's silent so you can hear yourself think and chat.

YES it's a disco so you can bop all you want.

If you've seen these, you will know that people wear head phones (supplied) on their ears and choose the music they want to hear and dance to. No-one else can hear their particular choice.

Non-dancers have the fun of working out what "Julian" is dancing to over there and what on earth "Jemima" is dancing to over here!

We have asked for tracks from Abba, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and maybe even Meatloaf!

People just bop around on the dance floor without partners.

Disco with cup of tea/coffee and cake included and the availability of buying extra hot/cold or alcoholic drinks.

Cost £6 per person. This is a subsidised price so the offer is only open to paid up members of Stratford-upon-Avon u3a.

If you want to come please pay £6 to

Stratford-upon-Avon u3a

Sort Code 20-48-08

Account number 70778818

**and mark your payment "Disco".**

Please pay by 5th October at the latest. Earlier replies and payments will stand a better chance of getting in.

Please come and, as Mama Cass used to sing .....

**"Make your own kind of music"**

All good wishes

Maureen Bourniquel, Member Engagement Office

## **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.



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

## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON u3a - SPEAKERS FOR 2026 and 2027

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 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.                                                       |

| 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.