



**Monthly meetings are held at the Greig Hall, Gunnings Road, Alcester
at 2.30 pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month**

Notes from the Chair

David West



It was pleasing that after last month's meeting two people came forward to express an interest in joining our committee. However we have a number of long serving members on the committee who deserve a well earned break, and thus we are still in need of some fresh blood, including a vice chairperson, to assure the future of our Group. All members will shortly receive information about our AGM on 5th March, which will include a nomination form for the committee. I would urge members to put this date in their diaries as there are some key decisions to be made.

2024 Subscription payment

Many thanks to the majority of members who have paid their subs for this year! If you haven't yet paid, please do so asap, either by Bank Transfer (Sort Code 08-92-99 Account No. 67268429 Ref: your membership no/2024subs), or at our next meeting on 6th February. If paying by cheque, please remember to make it payable to "The Alcester u3a" then write your Membership No on the reverse. (Please don't forget to check your personal information stored on our database, details of which were sent out either by email or letter in December, and let me know if any changes are required!) The deadline for payment is 27th February.

Lyn Pickering Tel: 01527 453628
Membership.u3aalcester@gmail.com

Another Birmingham History Walk

Following the two previous very successful history walks led by my friend, Mike Jay, I'm pleased to announce that he has offered to do another f.o.c. walk, this time around the Jewellery Quarter! The walk will start from Snow Hill Station starting around 10.30 a.m. (depending on train times from Stratford) on Friday 26th April 2024 and will take around 2 hours. If you are interested in coming along, there will be an Interest list out at the February meeting. **John Pickering**

A visit would be so Welcome

Many of our long-time members will remember Hilda Watts, who used to live in Throckmorton Road (she and her late husband John, always opened their lovely garden during National Garden week!) Sadly, although, Hilda does not have dementia, she now needs 24 hour care so has moved to The Cherry Trees Care Home in Alcester and would love a visit from members who remember her! I have the telephone number of Sheila, Hilda's daughter, if you would like to arrange a visit to Hilda

Chairman	David West		
Vice-Chairman	John Pickering (temporary)		
Treasurer	Jean Morgan		
Secretary/Minutes Sec	Lindsay Evans		
Membership Secretary	Lyn Pickering		
Groups Coordinator	Brian Titterington		
Programme Co-ordinator	Marilyn Brannon		
Accessibility Officer	Ruth Dutton		
Archives	Jan Rowe (Coopted member)		
Committee Members	Val Hamblin Karyl Rees	Jan Carr (Coopted)	Bob Andrews (Coopted)
Newsletter Editor	Bronwen Bunting		
Web	http://u3asites.org.uk/alcester	Annual Sub: £20.00	Only members can join groups

2024 Coach Holiday "Discovering Cardiff & South Wales"

The good news is that the cost of the holiday is £465.00 and copies of the brochure will be available at the February meeting! (I also have a PDF version that I can email.) If you have put your name on the Interest List for a single room, please confirm asap whether you want the room as our current single room allocation has almost been used! (When our maximum allocation of single rooms is reached, we will start a waiting list, as rooms aren't finally confirmed until the booking forms are received; plus there may be a possibility of the hotel releasing more single rooms.

Booking forms and deposits need to be handed/sent to Lyn or myself by the March meeting please.

If you would like more information and/or an electronic copy of the brochure, please contact me (01527453628 or

johnpickering@gmail.com)

THEATRE TRIPS

SATURDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2024 "Murder in the Dark" at Malvern Theatre

"A thrilling new Ghost Story", starring Tom Chambers, Susie Blake & Laura White

We are fully booked & have 4 reserves (2 pairs) in the event of a cancellation

Reminder: the coach will leave the Greig Hall at 11.00 am

SATURDAY 13 APRIL 2024 "Sleuth" at Malvern Theatre £41 per ticket (Ref: T7)

5 seats still available Described as one of the greatest ever stage thrillers

Best stalls seats in rows E & F. **Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting on 5 March 2024 (Ref: T7)**

SATURDAY 1 JUNE 2024 "The Kite Runner" at Malvern Theatre £40 per ticket (Ref: T8)

16 seats still available "The best page to stage show since War Horse ... a spellbinding production" (The Stage)

Best stalls seats in rows D, E & F. **Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting in April 2024 (Ref: T8)**

In addition, we are taking bookings for our last trip until late Autumn and we need to take payment early to retain the booking and manage holidays.

SATURDAY 13 JULY 2024 "What the Butler Saw" at Malvern Theatre £34 per ticket (Ref: T9)

Described as Joe Orton's most ambitious play, manic farce and masterclass in fearless comic writing.

(Age 14+, Strong Language)

Best stalls seats in rows E & F. **Please sign up & pay no later than the meeting in April (Ref: T9)**

There will be lists at the meeting for all of the shows or email me if you cannot be there

Payment by Bank Transfer is the preferred payment method

("The Alcester u3a"; Sort Code: 08-92-99, Account No: 67268429)

In each case quoting your membership number and the appropriate trip reference (Ref: XXX T7 / XXX T8 / XXX T9)

Alternatively payment by cheque or in cash can be made to the Treasurer

Joe White (joe_patwhite@msn.com)

Programme for 2024

6 February	Eric Lawley	The Story of the Yard
5 March		AGM & Group Displays
2 April	Abbey Watson	The Dogs Trust
7 May	Roy Smart	Amy, Wonderful Amy
4 June	Hilary Daly	A Pain in the Class
2 July	Cat Weatherill	A Feather in My Wallet
6 August	Patrick Hanglin	3 Years along the Zambezi
3 September	Karyl Rees	Me and Dylan Thomas
1 October	Chris Hanson	Fire Safety in the Home
5 November	Caroline Faulkner	Recycling in Warwickshire
3 December	Ian Boskett	The Great Train Robbery

Interest Group News

Craft Group

At the January meeting, the Crafty Ladies made some very pretty Japanese Folded Fabric rooches.
In February the group will be making an Easter Easel Card.

Lynda Lamb



Reading 2

There was no January book, as the group was unable to meet on the regular Tuesday, but will reconvene in February, and look forward to resuming their busy book-reading.

Linda Jennings

History

Alan Godfrey, our guest speaker, gave an enthralling talk on **the history of the postal service**, taking his examples from Alcester and nearby. In 1635 Charles 1 opened the Royal Mail service to the paying public. It ran along 6 major roads radiating out from London and reaching as far as Dublin and Edinburgh. Over time the network expanded to cover the whole country, and latterly overseas. Oliver Cromwell gave the right to free postage to MPs and Peers, but this was abused. One member sent his horse by post and another 2 maidservants - addressed and stamped! It took Rowland Hill, (the inventor of the Penny Post in 1840) to stamp (!) out the privilege. Alan's. Talk was packed with sidelights, his observations on postmen's trousers causing much laughter.

Lynda Matteson

On the 15th February John Cooper will talk about Dr John Hall, of Hall's Croft, Stratford On Avon. John Hall was not only a medical pioneer but also Shakespeare's son in law, so doubly interesting.

Jazz Big Band Sound

At our first meeting of the year we welcomed two new members. Bob Applegarth gave a programme of original compositions written by jazz musicians entitled "**Up Jumped Spring**" after the piece written by Freddie Hubbard. Other musician composers featured included Louis Armstrong, Bill Evans, Wayne Shorter & Fats Waller. On a cold day we were glad of the warmth of our venue - the Malt Mill Centre.

Bob Applegarth

Next meeting is on 14th February at 2.00pm at Malt Mill Lane. Members are asked to bring along two records they cannot live without. Anyone interested in jazz is welcome to come and join our friendly group.

Mah Jong

Having had a 2 month break with Christmas in the middle, there was some racking of brains to remember where we were up to with our pungts and kongs but an enjoyable afternoon was had by 11 players. **The next session will be on Thursday 22 February.**

Bronwen Bunting



Music Appreciation

the next meeting is on 31st January 2024 and we will each bring a cd with our favourite tracks to play. we meet at Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at 2pm.

Jan Rowe



Beginners Bridge

The Beginners Bridge group restarted in 2024 on Tuesday 16th January at the Malt Mill Lane Community Centre at the usual time of 2.00pm.

Paul Brenda

Philosophy

For our first meeting of 2024 we had **a review of what we covered in 2023, in the form of a quiz**, but with a reminder of the topics circulated beforehand, together with the questions and some suggested answers. Last year we looked at human rights, secular theodicies, the nature of 'nothing - ness', truth, Artificial Intelligence, Public Philosophy, Ethics and AI, the concept of evil, and two plays by Aristophanes - Lysistrata and The Clouds. Quite a mix of philosophical ideas, concepts and issues, and it was useful to revisit the length and breadth of these, to see what other areas we could and indeed should consider in 2024. There were some additional questions in the quiz - who is your favourite philosopher, what was your favourite topic, and what would you like the group to discuss? Naturally in each case there was an implied 'why', as philosophy is all about questions. We have some ideas in the pipeline - another of Aristophanes' plays, a look at the philosophy of science, and perhaps looking at a Warwickshire philosopher and novelist, George Elliot. One area that would justify more than one session involves comparing Analytic Philosophy with Continental Philosophy. And how about some modern philosophers, seeing what is 'trending' in research? Well, the

Peter Tugwell

quiz produced some interesting results, as well as some hilarity, and of course everyone correctly answered all the questions. Our next meeting is on 20 February, and if you want to know the topic, contact the group leader.

Photography Group

Roger Harris

The daily view photos in December did start to dwindle in the busy period around Christmas, but thankfully the new year has restored the flow. As always, an eclectic mix of subjects and styles, which is why there are plenty of new things to see. **The January competition topic was "Winter Bloomers"** and the relatively mild weather gave us plenty of subjects to choose from. Many Spring flowers were already showing themselves at Christmas time. **The winner, from an excellent field of entries, was an Iris taken by Jane Bowen.** Congratulations to her, and many thanks to all those who took part. **Our topic for February is "A place of worship".**



Poetry Too

Ruth Dutton & Rosie Harvey

Poetry Too met on Friday 26th January and the theme was **'Town and Country.**

Although few in number (6), we were treated to a varied and thought provoking selection, although 'town' poems were well outnumbered by 'country' ones.

The first offering provoked quite a discussion. It was from Chat GPT, no title, no author -yes - it was bound to happen - produced in three seconds by AI! As we read on into our optic choices it became increasingly evident that the AI poem was bland, lacking in atmosphere, imagery and colour. Very interesting to compare a 'real' poem with one produced via AI.

'Hedgerow' by Pam Ayers, usually an amusing and entertaining poet, adopts a serious tone

'Now the hedgerow casts its' shade
The sparse, the tall the neatly laid.'

was followed by John Clare's 'On a lane in Spring' which is filled with the language of new growth and warmth. There follows a change of tone in 'Middlesex' by John Betjeman, who gently prods at the lady of his native county, with er

'Well cut Windsmoor flapping lightly
Jacquard scarf in mauve and green,
Hiding hair which Friday nightly
Delicately drowns in Dreen'.

Whereas in 'Slough' his hatred of the town and despair at the industrialisation prevalent in the south of England between the wars is undisguised...

'... come bombs, and blow to smithereens
those air conditioned bright canteens,
tinned fruit, tinned meat, tinned milk, tinned beans
tinned minds, tinned breath..... ouch!

'Deer' by Blake Morrison, returns to the silence and stillness of countryside, as

'...the shy brown deer file from the wood...'
and eat peacefully until
'...a dog at the farm....
catches a whiff ..
and sets of a storm of yaps and barks...'

and the deer take fright.

Helen Leah Reed and Edith Nesbit, writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century give a 'day's gone by' feeling to the theme

'About the country they may walk who will
Who praise it ever to the town's despite.
Let him extol the charms of wood and hill
Who find them peerless. None disputes his right.'

A much gentler Betjeman 'In a Bath Teashop' observes from his corner, a cameo of a mismatched couple and wonders as to the origin of their meeting.....

Philip Larkin now gives us his enigmatic and wonderful 'Whitsun Weddings' filled with charming observations of wedding parties boarding a train on a hot Whitsun afternoon. Then Ted Hughes describes in 'Hawk Roosting', the view of the speaker, the hawk, looking down from the highest point in the wood.

'I kill where I please, because it's all mine..
...my manners are tearing off heads..'

'Blackberry Picking' by Seamus Heaney brings back memories of childhood days, in late summer, picking and eating juicy, purple blackberries. Of trying to store them and discovering that, once off the bush

'The fruit ferments , the sweet flesh turns to sour'.

Musical 'Manderlay' by John Keats was followed by 'Inversnaid' by G M Hopkins , as autumn becomes winter

'Of wet and wilderness? Let them be left

Oh let them be left. Wilderness and wet.

Long live the weeds and wilderness yet.'

Then Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud ' and finally the magical imagery of 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. By WB Yeats.

I will arise and go now

And go to Innisfree

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.

Nine bean rows will I have there,

' A hive of honey bees

and live alone in the bee-loud glade.

Shhhhhhh!

Poetry Too in February will be on Friday 23rd when the theme will be 'Children'.

Same time same place. Please let Ruth or Rosie know if you are unable to attend.

Walking



Groups



Amblers Group

The ambling group enjoyed a lucky break in the weather for a 4-mile circular around **Oversley Wood followed by lunch at The Turks Head** in Alcester. An impressive turnout of 20 amblers could have something to do with New Year resolutions which will hopefully continue through the year. **The next amble will be on Friday 9 February.**

Linda Bradley/Bronwen Bunting

Friday Walkers

The wet weather and flooding earlier in the month left us few opportunities to do a recce for a January walk. To overcome this we did a familiar local route around the outskirts of Alcester which could be checked easily beforehand. We started at the Roebuck and followed the path to the Greig Hall. We continued up Captains Hill to Kinwarton and then crossed the field to Hoo Mill corner. We returned through Oversley to Bleachfield St before following tueries and footpaths back to the pub. The weather was fine and the walk was approximately 5.5 miles. We enjoyed a tasty lunch afterwards.

Jane and Chris Baker

Scrabble Group

Our group is very welcoming and friendly, we average between 8-10 members per session and play monthly for approx. 2 hours; with a break for tea and biscuits. We play 'standard' Scrabble and knowledge of the rules and experience of Scrabble are helpful, but all can be explained if you are a complete novice. Our games seem to be of a genial nature, but can prove to be quite competitive when new words crop up! We have the use of the official Scrabble dictionary and 'Words Allowed' book, plus a list of 2 letter words that are permitted, and these tend to satisfy most challenges. If you normally play online and feel like a new challenge, please come along for a taster session in the company of other enthusiasts and make your own mind up!

Linda Salsbury



Theatre Visits

The coach was full of happy theatregoers on the return from the production of Michael Frayn's Noises Off at the Malvern Theatre. The play was hilarious, fast-paced and very clever. It well deserves to have survived as a staple of the theatre for over 40 years. To label it as a farce does not do it justice. The unusual play-within-a play format kept our interest by presenting a completely different angle of the same stage set in each of the 3 acts – the first night rehearsal, the behind- the- scenes shenanigans, and the final chaotic production. Starring Liza Goddard, the cast list was impressive including many household names. The amount of actual rehearsal and energy that was required by them to perfect the immaculate timing needed for the farcical aspects, whilst also bringing their differing personalities to life, has to be much admired. There was also time for lunch and a wander around beautiful Malvern.

Joe White

Thank you to Joe for organising the trip. We all had a very enjoyable day.

Report by Ines Pickering

ALCESTER u3a INTEREST GROUPS: Group Coordinator: Brian Titterington

If you would like to join a group, please contact the group organiser

Group	Meeting	Time	Venue	Organiser
Bowls	Fortnightly from 27 June 10 am		Bidford Bowls Club	David Sanders
Beginners Family History	2 nd Monday	2.00 pm	Contact group organiser for details	Linda Cooper
Beginners Bridge	Commencing November: 2 pm every Tuesday except the first.		Malt Mill Community Centre	Paul Brenda
Church Visits	4 th Tuesday as advised	11.00 am	Various	John Cooper
Crafts	3 rd Wednesday Sept to March	10.30-12.00	Various – to be confirmed each month	Diane King
Cycling	Various dates and venues			Tracey Wyatt
French	3 rd Tuesday	2.30 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Brian Titterington
Garden Lovers	2 nd Thursday April – October	2.30 pm	Various	Janet Allely
History	3 rd Thursday	10.45 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Lynda Matheson
Italian	Fortnightly		To be confirmed each month	Chris Brain
Jazz & Big Band Appreciation	2 nd Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Bob Applegarth
Mah Jong	4 th Thursday	2.00 pm	Various	Bronwen Bunting
Man Talk	3 rd Tuesday	2–4.00 pm	Huff Cap, Great Alne	Ian Gregory
Music Appreciation	Last Wednesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Jan Rowe
Music Theory Practical Piano/Keyboard	1 st Wednesday 3 rd Wednesday	10.30-3.30 pm	Confirm with group leader	Chris Capstick
Philosophy	3 rd Tuesday	2.00 pm	Malt Mill Community Centre	Peter Tugwell
Photo Group	On-line Group		Roger Harris	
Poetry Too	Last Friday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Ruth Dutton Rosie Harvey
Ambles	2 nd Friday	10.30 am	Various	Linda Bradley
Walks	3 rd Friday	10.00 am	Various	Jane & Chris Baker
Reading 2	2 nd Tuesday	2.00 pm	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Linda Jennings
Rees Reading	2 nd Monday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room (from January 2024)	Karyl Rees
Scrabble	1 st Friday	2.00 pm	Contact group organiser for details	Linda Salsbury
Singing for Pleasure	Last Thursday	10.30-12 noon	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Chris Capstick
Spanish	2 nd & 4 th Tuesday	10.00 am	Malt Mill Lane Community Centre	John Douglas
Theatre & Outings	As notified			Joe White
Yoga on Monday	Every Monday	10.30 am	Catholic Church Meeting Room	Karyl Rees