

u3a learn, laugh and live
Ross-on-Wye & District
u3asites.org.uk/ross

Photo: Saleha Way



A Word from the Chairman



Where oh where did that summer go? Autumn is upon us, and at last, even briefly, the sun did finally come out!

I hope you've all coped with a truly rotten July and August – I shan't easily forget my first few months as your new Chairperson, but as the last incumbent quoted "It's time to move on etc., etc...."

I've been working hard on brushing up my skills on communication via the u3a all-singing, all-dancing Beacon online database system (!) and with the help of my understanding colleagues on the Ross and District committee have made some progress – I am now quite confident that despite some early hiccups the Beacon system is eventually going to make our u3a administrative lives much easier and more efficient – watch this space!

Many of you attended the talk on September 18 when our guest was Dr. Toby Jones, an American archaeologist who came to Newport, South Wales, on a one-year contract to supervise the excavation of the "Newport Medieval Ship" and is still there working on it 19 years later! Most of us have never even heard of this jaw-droppingly unique artefact but we do now after a really terrific talk by Dr. Jones on this massive (about 1.5 times the length, width and height of the Larruperz hall!) 15th Century trading vessel, discovered by accident 15 metres down in the Usk river bank mud! After many years' work it has now been chopped up and preserved in a warehouse and is awaiting a new exhibition space where it can be reassembled for what would clearly be a global audience. Definitely a venue for a future visit.

Errr... my wife has politely pointed out to me that we actually got married in 2021, not 2020 as I informed you in the last Newsletter. (Whoops!).

William

Email: u3a.ross.chair@gmail.com

COMMITTEE NEWS

Committee

Chair and Cotswold Link - William Lyons

Vice-chair and Front of House - Mark Eardley

Secretary - Prospective candidate

Treasurer - Alan Pitts

Membership Secretary - Vacant

Beacon Administrator - Caroline Miller

Groups Secretary - Marilyn Reynolds

Publicist and Speaker Secretary - Catherine Silver

Outings Secretary - Jane Ryland

Co-opted onto Committee

Website - Steve Elliott

Newsletter - Saleha Way

Deputy Groups Secretary - Judith Mackie

Three committee roles need to be filled: Secretary (which has a prospective candidate), Membership Secretary, and Treasurer (as the three-year limit on being on the committee takes effect imminently). We need your support.

GROUP NEWS

We are very thankful to our many willing group coordinators, who give their time voluntarily to keep our 52 groups up and running.

Our Cribbage group has restarted — held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at the White Lion, Wilton from 2-4 pm.

Some of you may wonder what the SOLO group is all about. It's a group for anyone who is living on their own (i.e. solo). Activities such as regular coffee mornings and Sunday lunches feature in this group — a wonderful opportunity to meet and chat to other people rather than sitting at home on your own.

Twenty-six groups still have spaces — please check the list in this newsletter — those in yellow should have a space if you're interested.

We are always willing to set up a second group for any subject that is full.

We also have plenty of **ideas for new groups**. . .

1. We mentioned **Pickle Ball** in the last newsletter. This is a game played on a half-sized tennis court using a bat similar to a table tennis racket. There is a group who meet on Wednesday mornings at the Tennis Club — they would be happy for you to go along and watch to get an idea of what the game involves. If there is sufficient interest, we will start a u3a Pickle Ball group in the Spring.
2. Do you have a telescope sitting collecting dust somewhere? Would you like to share what you know of the stars? Shall we set up an **Astronomy** group?
3. How about **Wine Appreciation**? There must be many of you interested in trying different wines! Come forward, get involved, meet new people over a nice glass of something.
4. **Poetry Reading** — have you always enjoyed your poetry, would enjoy reading it out and listening to other people's favourites? We already have a Play Reading group, so let's try a Poetry group!

5. Who plays **Canasta**? Shall we get a group going? Have you played before but not for years? Let's get a group going and wake up the brain cells!

6. Ross u3a is lacking some music!! We have a Rock Music group (which has spaces, particularly if you play the drums or a saxophone!) but how about singing? We have 420+ members – there must be the makings of a **choir** out there – come on! Let's get the vocal chords in motion . . . singing makes us feel good.

7. Would you be interested in learning bridge? Have you been put off because you think it may be too difficult? Try **Mini Bridge**! Roy Milne, well known locally for his bridge teaching skills, has offered to coordinate a Mini Bridge group for the u3a. Mini Bridge is a much easier game because there is no bidding. The game will still test your memory skills, which has to be good for all of us. We need at least 8 people to form a good group.

If you are interested in any of the above groups, Judith and I will be happy to hear from you.

Marilyn Reynolds
Groups Secretary
incaamba@gmail.com

Judith Mackie
Deputy Groups Secretary
judith@mackiehome.co.uk

Open Afternoon

Our annual **Open Afternoon** will take place on November 20 2023, at the Larruperz as always, from 2:30 to 4:30pm. All groups will be represented, and we will be serving cream teas as we did last year.

This is your chance to tell all your friends and neighbours about the benefits of the u3a – send them along or bring them yourself. Enthuse about the friendships you've made, the interesting talks that we have every month, the fantastic range of groups on offer. Reassure them that if a group is full, we will endeavour to start a second group once we have sufficient interest.

We're counting on you, as members, to spread the word!

Many thanks in advance from your Committee



Last year's Open Afternoon was well attended – as this photo shows

Keep the contributions coming

The Newsletter is getting an increasing number of contributions. We welcome articles, news, comments, notices, or anything that may be of interest to fellow members. Please send your contributions to Saleha Way at u3a.ross.newsletter@gmail.com

ACTIVITIES



Table Tennis Group

Just the game for golden oldies

It's almost full house today at the table tennis practice. Everyone is chirpy and raring to swing the bat. They are spirited and spry — really quite amazing considering that the 22 members are in their late 60s, 70s and 80s, with the oldest being 91-year-old Roy Rogers.

Roy started playing table tennis before the war at his father's company sports club, continuing the activity in 1945 courtesy of a friend's father. A mini stroke four years ago was a just temporary setback. "You have to keep going," says Roy, who also plays the more strenuous game of tennis twice a month.

"So what's the score?" someone shouts. "I don't know, I thought you'd been keeping it," says his playing partner. Christine Penny, 81, laughs. "It's hilarious because we keep forgetting the scores. The men especially get crossed."

The group was started by Margaret and Keith Westwood, both mere 67 years old, in November 2021. It certainly fills a need along with its physical, mental and social benefits

It may be a surprise that table tennis was invented in England, with a history that goes back to 1880s. There are several versions of its original name, the most popular being whiff whaff. By the early 20th century it became known as ping pong, before evolving to table tennis, the generally accepted name today.



DAYS OUT



Great day out at the history museum

Ross u3a members enjoyed a coach trip to St Fagans National Museum of History recently.

The weather was kind to us, so we could meander our way through the site having the opportunity of visiting over 40 buildings from different historical periods. They included houses, a farm, a school and a chapel.



PHOTOS BY
GORDON HAY





There are traditional crafts and activities in workshops where craftsmen demonstrate their skills. The bakery, as we walked past, had a wonderful aroma of Bara Brith, Welsh tea bread, which was just out of the oven.

The museum stands in the grounds of St Fagans Castle and gardens, a late 16th century manor house donated to the people of Wales by the Earl of Plymouth in 1948.

It was a great day out and even more appealing, entry to the museum is free!

MARGARET HAY



SPEAKERS' CORNER



Photo: Saktishree

Edwina Mountbatten: From social butterfly to war legend

Beauty, glamour and wealth. Edwina Mountbatten had it all and more. She had direct line to the monarchy, a husband of royal lineage, friends among the rich and famous, and a string of lovers.

A leading member of London society, Edwina was a social butterfly whose life was a continuous groove of partying, charity and deb balls, travelling, and total extravagance, said Fiona Morison (left), former history teacher and university lecturer at her recent talk on Edwina Mountbatten.

Photo: Philip de László/Wikipedia



Edwina in wedding dress



Edwina and Nehru

Her marriage to Louis “Dickie” Mountbatten at 21 — soon after she inherited a substantial fortune when her father died — was a grand society wedding attended by King George V and all the royal family. It became the talk of the town, especially among the middle and working classes.

And yet the overindulgence of youth was to give way to respected work in her later life when Edwina seemed to find her vocation in the Second World War.

“She was a good-time girl, then the war came and she did astonishing work,” said Fiona. “To be honest, I think she was bored and threw herself into her job.”

Edwina was to become a war legend with her courage and efficiency, the latter thanks to her housekeeping skills acquired at a Sussex boarding school. She later went to a finishing school in Italy, but was not popular because she was extremely rich and Jewish, and “accustomed to the very best”.

Edwina became the last vicereine of India when Lord Mountbatten became a viceroy overseeing the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. He later became the governor-general of India.

It was at this time that a serious relationship between Edwina and Nehru, the new prime minister of India, began. Whether the romance was ever consummated is open to speculation but their mutual fondness was evident.

Edwina had had several lovers, all tolerated by Louis until an affair with a black musician. She was socially ostracised, said Fiona. Dickie was devastated but to spare themselves the shame of divorce — and also its effect on his paltry naval officer’s income — they agreed on an open marriage. Soon Dickie himself began a long-term affair with Yola Letellier, a 20-something married French socialite.

Edwina died in her sleep in 1960 aged 58 in the Far East and was buried at sea off the coast of Portsmouth in accordance with her wishes.

Described as a person of extremes and contradictions, how important was Edwina in the country’s history?

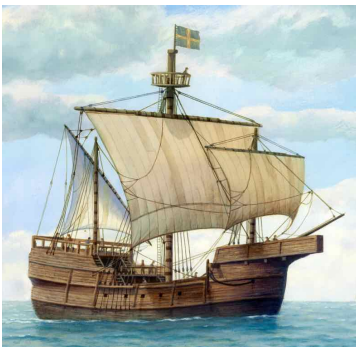
“She was important for what she achieved in the war,” said Fiona, adding that Edwina’s life was open to a lot of interpretations. Her diaries have been put on a 100-year rule, instead of the usual 30 years, because “there are too many beans to spill.”

Fiona is an active member of the Linton and District History Society and gives talks to local groups on a wide range of historical topics. She said her interest in Edwina was triggered by the 2017 film *Viceroy’s House* but largely through her visits to Rajasthan and New Delhi where Edwina worked.



Newport Medieval Ship, a crucial archeological find

The recent monthly talk at the U3A was given by Dr Toby Jones (left) the curator of the Newport Mediaeval Ship. About 100 members sat enthralled listening to him describing the discovery, restoration and importance of this archaeological find.



Photos: Newport Museums and Heritage Service

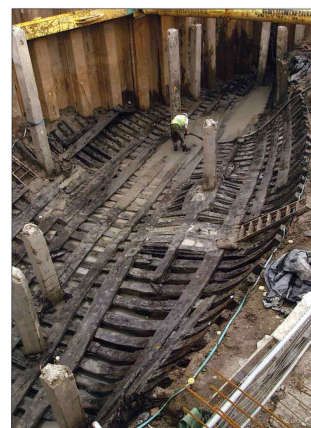
Very few in the audience were aware that a 45-minute drive from Ross-on-Wye is an archaeological site of European importance to rank with the much more well known *Mary Rose* in Portsmouth.

The bulk tanker of its day, it was used to transport kegs of wine from Portugal to Bristol in the 1460s. Taking over 300 oak trees from forests in the Basque Country to build it in Santander it had a working life of about 10 years. The ship was 35 metres long, probably twice the size of Columbus' *Santa Maria*. It was built

without written plans, and the only wood cutting tools used were axes and adzes.

Needing a major refit it sailed across from Bristol to the repair facilities at Newport docks but the supporting cradle collapsed and the ship sank into the mud. It was only discovered during redevelopment work in 2002 at seven metres below ground level. Far too big to be lifted out of its place in the mud it was quickly apparent what an unusual and important archaeological find it was, providing all manner of evidence about everyday life for ordinary people in the time of the Wars of the Roses.

Dr Jones explained that the lack of any oxygen in the mud had preserved the timbers extremely well but all iron artefacts had long since corroded away. But once timbers become exposed to air, they rapidly deteriorate, crack and shrink. This necessitated a long and complex preservation process, with the ship being taken apart timber by timber and each piece being treated. And then, of course it all has to be put back together.



The eventual plan is for Newport to have a new museum to house the reassembled ship.

To give a time perspective, Dr Jones arrived as a naval archaeologist on a one-year contract with Newport Council in 2004. Nearly 20 years on he is still there, and he believes there is another 20 years work to do. The project has involved many different experts from different disciplines and provided many opportunities for different educational establishments in South Wales.

Dr Jones finished his talk by encouraging members to visit the museum, which is free.

More information at "Friends of The Newport Ship Project"
Ship Centre Tel.01633 274167

SIMON SILVER

Monthly talks and events at the Larruperz Centre, 2.30pm

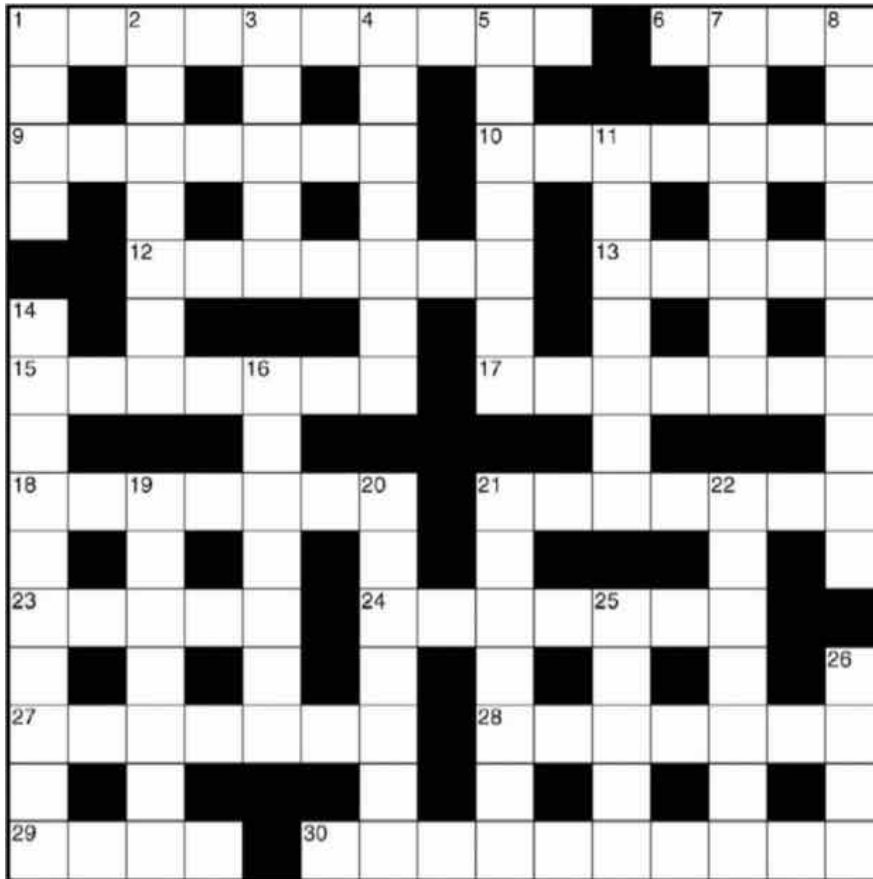
October 16: Peter Gill

The Wit and Songs of Noel Coward

November 20: Open Afternoon with cream teas

December 11: Christmas gathering with the Roaring Megs choir

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



Across

1. Males unfit to work: protests strongly (10)
6. Wielded cane raises skin complaint (4)
9. Islamic fast time! (7)
10. Foreword launch (7)
12. Visualise in image reworked (7)
13. I rest in preparation for examination (5)
15. Ah! Fangs! - rehoned for dogs (7)
17. Fake smell for hair treatment (7)
18. Cockney Ray is indoors - shoot! (7)
21. Conveyance for expression of fulfilment (7)
23. Island ford? (5)
24. Holiest place for stone artefacts (6)
27. As there is, remodelled Mother (7)
28. An area of land to tempt, we hear (7)
29. Thus twice was mediocre (2-2)
30. 'Woman's Own' editors (10)

Down

1. Tool to bifurcate (4)
2. Rodent heading for Beachy Head? (7)
3. Nation founded from Hindi aboriginals (5)
4. Relatives sinuate about (7)
5. Communicate quickly? (7)
7. Bivalve's awake - stops talking (5,2)
8. Choose routes on the radio for conductors (10)
11. A bar she uses to browbeat (7)
14. Makes seat fabric upholstered (10)
16. Developing agonies give rise to worry (7)
19. Influence and indent (7)
20. Dear Mel - herewith a gem (7)
21. Fearless Latvian manoeuvred (7)
22. Spooners cash bars found in Arabic citadels (7)
25. Articles revamped as one tenth (5)
26. Tribe's pick-ups! (4)

Answers on Page 11

LIFE STORY



Photo: Saleha Way

Remembering the good times BY JANE TRAVERS



I've been asked if I can explain why Ross U3A's Life Story groups have been so successful, in that there are now four on the go! The short answer is that I have no idea, and the longer answer is that I believe these groups provide an answer to the almost existential question "has it all been worth it?". Human Development theoreticians such as Erik Erickson believe that during different stages of our lives, we need to think about various developmental tasks. These tasks don't so much tick off an imaginary checklist, as give us an opportunity to think about the things that have given our lives meaning.

Many of us had tried writing things down using the process of "autobiography", and by the time we reached age 10 or so had completely bored ourselves! We felt there was a kind of "deadness" in recording our stories chronologically! We discussed that really what we wanted to record were little "moments in time" and capture memories around those moments and what made them memorable. And thus we began!

Each month the six or seven members in each group write between two and three pages about a topic of their own choice. There isn't a set guideline around these as topics are often generated by listening to each other, and remembering something in our own experience which has been triggered by what we hear. For example who doesn't remember the little third pints of milk given to us in infants or junior school? Was it too hot from standing near a radiator, or frozen because of being kept outside? There is discussion and sometimes laughter as we share our memories, and these, I believe, add to a sense of community within the room.

Some of us have children and family members who ask us what life was like "back then", or beg us to write down a story that they have heard, lest it be lost to them through them forgetting. Some of us write because it gives us pleasure to think about those times when we have been moved or touched by life, the special people we've

encountered, places we've visited etc. There are all sorts of motivations for beginning this process. None is more or less valuable than another!

And yes, most of us worried in the early stages about being "good enough" writers, or whether our pieces of writing would be of interest to others in the group! And in the evolutionary style of each group, those worries diminish as we just plain old enjoy two more hours each month sharing what makes us tick! Each of the group members has given an undertaking to keep confidential what we discuss, and our stories. This diminishes any uncertainty around the potential for gossip about some of our more memorable forays!

What I CAN tell you about the success of Ross's Life Story groups is that Ross has a tremendous number of individuals who continue to live lives full of curiosity, sharing, humour and a desire to impart that life indeed has been worth it!

Nature Group

Enjoying the flora and fauna around us

We meet on the first Monday of each month in the Larruperz car park, sharing cars to go various locations usually within a half hour drive of Ross. Our nature outings usually start in March and carry on until November. In December, weather permitting, we do a short walk in the Forest, finishing off with a lunch at the Speech House.

We are a very friendly group and love looking at the beautiful scenery and flora and fauna in the local area which we are so lucky to have so much of on our doorstep.

This year in the spring we visited several areas well known for their beautiful snowdrops, daffodils, anemones, bluebells and wild orchids in various nature reserves and woodlands around, which also have many species of birds and some very large ant hills. In the summer we visited the Ewyas Harold Common to see the beautiful wildflower meadows that support one of the best remaining butterfly populations in the region of the nationally threatened pearl-bordered fritillary, and we also saw marbled whites and the common blue. These meadows are maintained by cutting and grazing to encourage the wild flowers to produce the vital nectar for the butterflies.

Another interesting visit was to Newent ponds and woods with different wildlife on the pond and an amazing sculpture carved out of an old oak tree which was to celebrate the Queen's 70-year reign. We also learned about the interesting history of the area and woods from one of the members who had lived there for a long time. Another very enjoyable and peaceful walk was down by Soudley Ponds which is bordered by the enormous conifer trees. There were kingfishers sitting on branches by the ponds and many different types of damsel flies and dragonflies, and wild fowl on the water, and also pied flycatchers darting about.

We usually end up having a coffee or light lunch somewhere nearby, which makes a very enjoyable morning out for everyone.



CATRIONA PEARSON

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across: 1 Fulminates, 6 Acne, 9 Ramadan, 10 Preface, 12 Imagine, 13 Resit, 15 Afghans, 17 Shampoo, 18 Rhizome, 21 Vehicle, 23 Capri, 24 Eoliths, 27 Theresa, 28 Attract, 29 So-So, 30 Editresses

Down: 1 Fork, 2 Lemming, 3 India, 4 Aunties, 5 Express, 7 Clams Up, 8 Electrodes, 11 Earbash, 14 Fabricates, 16 Agonise, 19 Impress, 20 Emerald, 21 Valiant, 22 Casbahs, 25 Tithe, 26 Utes

ROSS u3a GROUPS

Yellow highlight has space

GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR	TELEPHONE	MEETING TIMES	EMAIL ADDRESS
Ancient & Med History	Frank Bowden	01989 567125	3rd Thurs 2pm	frankbowden25@gmail.com
Armchair Opera	Alan Stringer	01989 562792	2nd & 4th Tues 12pm	alan.stringer26@outlook.com
Art	Margaret Hay	01989 763564	1st & 3rd Fri 2-4pm	m.hay008@btinternet.com
Book Group	Ginny James	01531 821904	3rd Wed 11am	vljames1909@gmail.com
Book Group 2	Judith Mackie	07766 134956	4th Thurs 10am	judith@mackiehome.co.uk
Bridge	Rochelle Nash	01989 563195	4th Tues 2:30pm	nash_rochelle@yahoo.co.uk
Chess	Dave Tomlin	01989 720455	1st & 3rd Thurs 10.30am	gorsleydave@outlook.com
Crafts	Joyce Meyer	01989 568607	Alternate Thurs 10am	No email
Creating Your Life Story 1	Jane Travers	01989 562308	1st Thurs 10am	bjaneww@aol.com
Creating Your Life Story 2	Jane Travers	01989 562308	2nd Tues 10am	bjaneww@aol.com
Creating Your Life Story 3	Jane Travers	01989 562308	3rd Thurs 10am	bjaneww@aol.com
Creating your Life Story 4 (Men's)	Jane Travers	01989 562308	2nd Wed 10-11.30am	bjaneww@aol.com
Crewel	Gail Harley	01989 567672	Wed 2pm	No email
Cribbage	Suzie Kemp	07721 988125	1st and 3rd Thurs	witchiepoo_007@yahoo.com
Crime Book Club	Sandie Cotterell	01989 763546	2nd Tues 2pm	sandiecotterell@gmail.com
Cryptic Crosswords	Phil Angus	01989 562455	1st Thurs 10am-12pm	pandsangus@gmail.com
Current Affairs 1	David Mason	01989 762022	1st Fri 11am	djmasonross@gmail.com
Current Affairs 2	Ben Norris	01989 485273	2nd Fri 10am	bennorris@windowslive.com
French Revisited	Elizabeth Holleis	01989 565352	Mon 10am-12pm	keholleis@gmail.com
French 2	Jon Stern	01989 577020	1st & 3rd Tues	jon.stern.kimpton@gmail.com
Gardening 2	David Thomson	01989 762949	2nd Tues 2pm	dthr95jz@gmail.com
Genealogy	Di Taylor	07425 154730	3rd Fri 11am-1pm	zpundit@yahoo.com
Geology & Landscape	Tim Barrett	01989 567906	1st Fri 10am	trbarrett@btinternet.com
History of Science	Brian King	01989 769736	3rd Fri 10am	margaretfrances@hotmail.co.uk
Jewellery-making	Nola Bates	01989 610150	1st & 3rd Thurs 10.30am or 2pm	nolabates1@gmail.com
Joys of Gardening	Suzie Kemp	01989 566998	Ring for details	witchiepoo_007@yahoo.com
Keep Fit	Rae Duffield	07971 968469	Wed 11.30am	glasym@hotmail.com
Line dancing	Hilary Smart	01989 762383	1st & 3rd Wed 2pm	hilarysmart@ymail.com
Local History 1	Belinda Legge	07964 821930	1st Tues 10.30am	belinda@richardnet.co.uk
Mah Jong	Jane Collins	07887 768485	1st & 3rd Fri 10.15am	janelouisecollins@gmail.com
Modern World History	Brian King	01989 769736	4th Wed 2pm	margaretfrances@hotmail.co.uk
Nature	Catriona Pearson	01989 769425	1st Mon 10.30am	catriona64@gmail.com
Philosophy	Brian King	01989 769736	1st Tues 2pm	margaretfrances@hotmail.co.uk
Photography	John Ryland	07752 661390	2nd Tues 10am	jryland42@gmail.com
Photography 2	Andrew Mackie	01989 750860	2nd Wed 10.30am	andrew@mackiehome.co.uk
Play Reading	Anne Summers	01989 218432	1st & 3rd Tues 2pm	annemesummers@gmail.com
Pub Walks	Dixie Collins	07789 474091	2nd Fri 10am	dixie4028@gmail.com
Quiz	Mike Travers	01989 562308	4th Mon 10am-12pm	miketrovers1@hotmail.com
Rock Music	Mike Goff	01594 862640	2nd Tues evening	mikejgoff@outlook.com
Rummikub for Fun	Sandie Cotterell	01989 763546	1st & 3rd Tues 10am	sandiecotterell@gmail.com
Science & Technology	David Colenso	07857 940143	2nd Mon 2-4pm	davecolenso@yahoo.com
Scrabble	Nola Bates	01989 610150	2nd & 4th Wed 2pm	nolabates1@gmail.com
SOLO	Caroline Miller	01989 569903	Wed 10.30am	up7ailsa11@gmail.com
Spanish Intermediate	Diana Wood	01989 562355	Wed 10.30-11.30am	diwood407@gmail.com
Spanish Conversation	Marilyn Reynolds	01989 564830	2nd & 4th Tues 10am-12pm	incaamba@gmail.com
Table Tennis	Keith Westwood	01989 562697	2nd & 4th Mon 2-3.30pm	kw@keithwestwood.plus.com
Tai Chi	Jane Travers	01989 562308	Thurs 2pm	bjaneww@aol.com
Theatre	Fiona Leathart	01989 565271	1st Thurs 3pm	leathart.holly@gmail.com
Walking	Vivienne Nutt	07812 826155	2nd Mon 9.30am	vivnutt@hotmail.co.uk
Whist	Rochelle Nash	01989 563195	1st Thurs 2:30pm	nash_rochelle@yahoo.co.uk
Writing for Pleasure	Marianne Wright	01989 762949	2nd Thurs 2pm	wrightmarianne9@gmail.com
Yoga	Marilyn Reynolds	01989 564830	Wed 11am	incaamba@gmail.com