

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON U3A

NEWSLETTER

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February 2023

FEBRUARY MEETING

WILDLIFE IN MY GARDEN, Nick Martin will talk about his passion for wildlife photography.

2 pm Wednesday 22 February 2023, Methodist Church



Amateur local wildlife photographer, Nick Martin, has a passion for nature and the countryside and takes stunning pictures from birds to bees and butterflies to badgers. Not to mention the fox in this photo

Just a few words to introduce myself, or in some cases re-introduce myself. I have been a member of Stratford U3A for 9 years and attend several interest groups, those being Latin (intermediate), Current Affairs and conversational German. Like so many of you I have grandchildren who occupy much of my free time and some of you may remember a time when I used to bring both my parents to U3A meetings, it was they who brought me to U3A in the first place. They were two of the founding members of U3A in Stratford, you may remember Jean and Tim Dronsfield. Dad is no longer with us, but Mum is as busy as ever.

I am looking forward to editing your newsletter and hearing all about what you have been doing in your groups. I welcome new ideas; so if you have suggestions for regular items or would like to contribute please contact me, my email is annepfoster@btinternet.com

Advance Notice
AGM WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH
METHODIST CHURCH
2 P.M.

Please do come along and show that democracy is alive and well in Stratford! Your AGM is your chance to hear how we did last year (both practically and financially) and what we plan to do next year. We look as if we will still have vacancies on the committee but, naturally, all committee places are open for election at the AGM so you could nominate anyone (as long as they are a member of Stratford-upon-Avon u3a for any position. Of course they will be happy to be nominated.)

That will be followed by a demonstration of CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) by our Mayor, Councillor Gill Cleeve, so, in addition to saving democracy, you could also learn to save a life!

Joke of the month (a new departure for the newsletter, tell us if you like it, or better still send your own to be included)

From the late, great Barry Cryer.

A couple were sitting in their car in the pouring rain, the wife looked at a be-draggled man sitting in a bus shelter opposite and said that she thought he was the Archbishop of Canterbury. She told her husband to go and check. Husband crosses road and asks man "Excuse me, but are you the Archbishop of Canterbury", the reply comes in expletives "xxxx!!!!""!!!!".

Shocked, the husband goes back and reports to the wife whereupon she says

"Oh, what a pity, now we'll never know".

Membership Renewal

It's that time again. Please watch out for an email over the next few days (or letter if you're a letter member).

Trips

There is the possibility of a trip to the ballet later this year, the plan is to book a coach and all travel together. Please let Maureen know if you might be interested.



Group Round up, existing groups, new groups and possible groups

Possible new group: **Reading Group**

Calling all avid readers. We would like to start a reading group. Please could you contact Sue Crowley, sue.crowley25@googlemail.com if you are interested. The plan is to find a group leader and then the group can be involved in choosing the books. One possibility is to borrow books in group sets from the library or alternatively agree books to be read in advance and buy copies. First things first, please let Sue Crowley know if you are interested.

Useful French

This new group was set up in response to demand at our September event. From a promising dozen people who expressed interest, there have been two or three people turning up each time only one of these a regular. This is very frustrating and difficult to plan for.

It is not a chatty conversation group and is aimed at those with rusty basic (eg school) French who would like help and practice to improve. Our preparation takes time, thought and effort to make meetings varied and fun as well as useful. At present very little progress has been made. We have, therefore, decided to take a break and start again after Easter. We will make contact with everyone who has been in touch already and establish whether we do in fact have a viable twice-monthly group which is worth running. Details of our new start will appear in the March newsletter and on our website in due course.

Margaret Dews and Margaret Champion

Bereavement Group: new contact

We have been contacted by the new Co-ordinator for the Bereavement Group at Holy Trinity Church, David Harrison. The group has changed the time and day of its meetings to avoid any clash with u3a timings and now meets at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month in Holy Trinity's Parish Centre. There will be a warm welcome for anyone from u3a who has been bereaved and who might find meeting others who have been bereaved helpful and supportive. For more information contact David Harrison: davidianharrison@hotmail.com

Current Affairs

Meets monthly in the pub. Discussion focuses on current British politics, most recently the apparent fragility of governments and who will be Prime Minister next month. Leader Peter Burgess

Gardening Group

On 7 February the gardening group visited Batsford Arboretum. The weather was perfect, and we found time for lunch and a visit to the garden centre. As you can see in the photo below, the snowdrops were perfect.



Revive your French!

Daniele Schofield reported that the group were determined and spoke French for most of the time. There was also time to celebrate a member's birthday with cream cake from M and S. That sounds delicious, *bonne anniversaire!*

Wine appreciation

In January they tasted 3 different wines from 3 different countries, Hungary, Greece and the Thracian Lowlands of Bulgaria. Jim Schofield and Barbara Cox reported that the Greek one was the favourite and also the cheapest.

Next month the group will be tasting 3 French red wines.

Editor's note: can we buy the wines you tried locally?



Portuguese

We have a new leader, Elisa, from Porto and she studied literature and language. Our current focus is on pronunciation. Two of our group who recently returned from Madeira reported that they were pleased that their ability to follow Portuguese and understand the language had improved greatly since their last visit.



This lamp post is one of those studied by a member interested in the lamp posts of Stratford.

Ukulele

We are learning a mixed bag of rock and roll songs, and currently some love songs for Valentine's day!
We take suggestions from all players and work on new ones as well as enjoying the old songs, and extending our repertoire.
The group are ten moderately experienced players. New members who can strum a tune or maybe play another instrument (drums, flute, guitar etc.) would be welcome Phone Mary on 07368806548
We are hoping to play more gigs soon maybe at Briar Croft or Hathaway Court

The group has just enjoyed a meal out at Crowne Plaza and in other news the ukulele group have a gig booked at Lower Quinton.

Stratford History Group

We met in the foyer of the Methodist Church with the sun streaming through the windows. Despite the cold day, it was a pleasant environment. We were very pleased to welcome back Michael following his recent accident and hip replacement. Hopefully Margaret, having had similar surgery, will be with us next month; everyone sent best wishes for her speedy recovery. Members had been doing individual research on aspects of Stratford history which they presented to the group. This was very interesting and provoked lively debate. Our meeting next month will be led by Michael, who will tell us about his research into the Tramway which ran from Stratford to Moreton in Marsh.

Denise Davies





Steel Pans

I had hoped to refer you to a spread in the current issue of TAM, unfortunately it's not there. They played at our event in September and impressed everyone, hopefully soon there will be more to report. I recommend if you get the chance—go and see them!

The photo shows Barbara Wood playing at the Town Hall in September.

Chaucer

This month they compared the fusion of literary genres in *Troilus and Criseyde* and that of musical and theatrical genres in *West Side Story*.

"Refresh Your Spoken German "

The group now has seven members, who meet on the first and third Thursdays of the month from 2-4pm.

The emphasis is on spoken communication and each member is encouraged to prepare a short talk on everyday subjects, such as visits they have recently made, plans for future holidays and anything interesting or amusing that they have experienced.

We meet in each other's homes in a relaxed, light hearted atmosphere around a dining table with tea and biscuits.

Our first meeting in 2023, on January 5th, included a quiz in German about Christmas and New Year customs in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

In January we missed Margaret from our group and wish her a speedy recovery. There was a free choice of topics and our discussion included a future anniversary party, a discussion of a German film (*The Lives of Others*), a book about a Jewish woman who moved from

Germany to Birmingham and an article from a local German newspaper.

Many thanks, as ever to Rosel who has such interesting comments and is very kind in the way she corrects our German. The conversation gets easier as we sit round a lovely log fire and drink coffee

Spanish

Attending: Roger, Jo, Victoria, Sue, Christine and Liz.

Roger played a song in Spanish and everyone had the words of the song on a sheet with some words missing that had to be added by listening. This caused a lot of discussion about some of the words, and the pronunciation of Spanish by an American - Nat King Cole! After this we played a round of 'Articulate', in Spanish of course.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be at Sue's House and My Garden is the topic for discussion. A Netflix film called 'La chica de nieve' was recommended by Victoria

Do the Chaucer Group know this poem?

Here is some food for thought, I was determined not to cover this edition with pictures of hearts or roses, or chocolates. I set out to discover whether St Valentine was a real person., by googling who was St Valentine? As you might imagine google is full of such things, including a website called History.com Below is my own (admittedly biased and slightly edited) excerpt from my researches. The medieval English poet [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) often took liberties with history, placing his poetic characters into fictitious historical contexts that he represented as real. No record exists of romantic celebrations on Valentine's Day prior to a poem Chaucer wrote around 1375. In his work "Parliament of Fowles," he links a tradition of courtly love with the celebration of St. Valentine's feast day—an association that didn't exist until after his poem received widespread attention. The poem refers to February 14 as the day birds (and humans) come together to find a mate. When Chaucer wrote, "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate," he may have invented the holiday we know today.

A word from my predecessor

Thank you First, thank you so much for your collection and generous donation following my recent broken hip. I shall use this little windfall to buy one or two of the books I need to prepare for a summer school I have booked in July. It has quite an extensive reading list! It will not have escaped your notice that this Newsletter looks different. Producing our monthly newsletter has been one of the jobs I have enjoyed most during my latest spell on the Committee and I have taken a pride in its being well-written, informative, entertaining and attractive. I have been very touched by the number of members who have told me how much they have enjoyed it. But for health reasons, in order to focus on my many groups and still have a life outside u3a, I am stepping down from the Committee. I'm really pleased to be handing the newsletter over to a good friend, Anne Foster, whom many of you will know as our u3a Chair before Norman. Anne will put her own stamp and personality on future editions and I shall look forward to reading them. Please send her lots of interesting tales from your groups! Margaret Dews

Report on January Meeting

Pamela Devine talked to us about graffiti in the Guild Hall Chapel,

Pamela talked about marks on walls that I suspect many of us would never recognise as graffiti; graffiti which was much more acceptable and useful than much of today's work. The graffiti goes back to the days of Shakespeare and may shed light on life in Elizabethan England. We also learned that much graffiti is only visible with a torch as it lurks in the darkest corners often near floors. The Chapel's medieval graffiti reveals the hopes, fears and beliefs prevalent on the eve of Shakespeare's birth; later graffiti reveals the changes in the way the Chapel was used during his lifetime, and changes in belief after the Reformation as graffiti gradually became more about recording a visit or remembrance. The absence of more modern graffiti tells its own story, and reflects the different attitude towards graffiti in churches, particularly as the Victorian period progressed

Tea Rota—2023



February 22nd Revive your French

March 29th Chaucer

April 26th Italian

May 31st Gardening

June 28th Play Reading

July 26th Poetry

August 30th Spanish

September 27th Wine Appreciation

October 25th German Groups

November 29th Latin

December 14th Committee

And finally—from your editor

I hope I have included all the right items, please do let me know if I have got things wrong. It would be good to develop some new regular items and to include more photos of what you are doing around the groups. A monthly joke maybe, or a puzzle or two.

Deadline for the next newsletter is 19 March. Do please get in touch and send items for inclusion.

Anne Foster contact me via, annepfoster@btinternet.com (don't lose the p in the middle or you will never find me)