

Stratford-upon-Avon u3a Newsletter

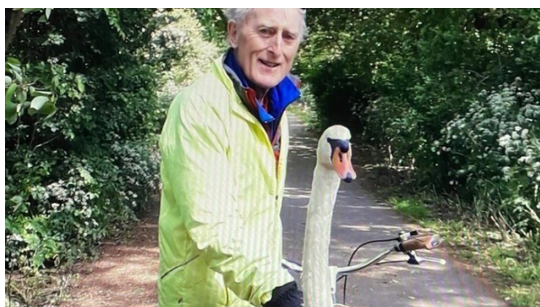
January 2024

[Stratford-upon-Avon u3a: Home \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://u3asites.org.uk)

Founded 2000

28 FEBRUARY 2024 – CYRIL BENNIS - THE SWANS OF STRATFORD

2 p.m. at the Methodist Church Stratford-upon-Avon



Our speaker in February has cared for the swans since the early 1970s. He will tell us about his experiences and also something of the history of the swans on the Avon.

March 27 2024

Stratford-upon-Avon u3a Annual General Meeting

2 p.m. at the
Methodist Church

Members old and new are very welcome to attend and join us
for tea/coffee and biscuits afterwards.

All relevant documents will be emailed to you before the event. Please bring them with you if you wish. There will be limited numbers of printed copies available on the day

Month	Group
February	Walking Group
March	Latin Intermediate
April	Piano
May	Chaucer (ref Patricia)
June	Portuguese
July	Playreading 1
August	Italian
September	Useful French

TEA ROTA

The tea rota is printed in this newsletter every month. Please check to see when your group is down to help.

If there are any problems, please talk to a member of the committee

Chatty Table

Do you come to meetings on your own? Would you like to come but want someone to talk to?

When we have tea/coffee after the meeting come and join the Chatty Table—exactly what it says— a table to sit and chat. New members especially welcome.

I wanted to put a picture here but couldn't find a suitable one, would anyone like to supply a photograph?

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON u3a - SPEAKERS FOR 2023-4

**We have an interesting and varied programme of talks and entertainment for you.
Please come along, and tell your friends!**

28 FEBRUARY 2024 – CYRIL BENNIS - THE SWANS OF STRATFORD

27 MARCH 2024 –AGM

24 APRIL 2024 – NICK MARTIN - STORIES OF OUR BRITISH MAMMALS

29 MAY 2024 – KATY BELLAMY – “SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM” – The Neuroscience of Snoozing.

26 JUNE 2024 – JANICE FISHER - CHARLES ROBERT ASHBEE – ARTS & CRAFTS

MOVEMENT

31 JULY 2024 – RICHARD CHURCHLEY - LOCAL PLACENAMES IN WORCESTERSHIRE AND WARWICKSHIRE

28 AUGUST 2024 - ABBY WATSON – DOGS TRUST SUPPORTER RELATIONS OFFICER - DOGS TRUST AND ITS WORK

25 SEPTEMBER 2024 – ERIC LAWLEY – CHEDHAM’S YARD

30 OCTOBER 2024 – CATS PROTECTION AND ITS WORK

27 NOVEMBER 2024 – SUSAN DRAGE – RECYCLING WITH A DIFFERENCE. UPCYCLING AND CRAFTING OPPORTUNITIES.

Stratford u3a monthly talk, 31 January 2024 – The Mediaeval Paintings of the Guild Chapel – Pamela Devine and Janet Hall

About 50 members were entertained and informed about the history of the well-known mediaeval wall paintings. The chapel dates from the 13th. century, it was purpose-built as a hospital and chapel originally, run by the Guild of the Holy Cross. Thanks to funding by Hugh Clopton, it was rebuilt in the late 15th. Century and the walls painted. The mediaeval wall paintings were whitewashed in the Reformation; some were uncovered and recorded in 1804 but were covered up again. In the 20th. century refurbishment works were carried out and other paintings were recorded. The wooden panelling was removed temporarily in 2022 and the paintings behind them were surveyed. It is hoped that some areas may be on show again in the future. A “virtual” online version has been produced by the University of York

The Doom (Judgement Day) painting, on the East wall, was cleaned and restored in 2016. We were shown some delicate details, like flowers, not easy to see in situ. Only the bottom half of Christ can be seen. The top half was covered by the 19th. century roof. In heaven there are angels playing musical instruments in a mediaeval castle, even a pipe and tabor can be seen. There is gold leaf in evidence. Hell has a tower and chaotic activity, including colourful hairy demons. One, in clothes, may be the devil in disguise.

The Dance of Death, hidden on the North wall, has 30 figures of all ranks, led by Death, a decomposing skeleton. The Seven Deadly Sins are represented, e.g., a lecherous woman in Purgatory.

Saints would also have lined the walls, including St Thomas Becket and St. George, of which fragments remain.

Currently behind panels on the south wall is the Life of Adam. The text is in Latin and Middle English, a sort of comic strip. There are pictures of sheep and a shepherd, musicians, a weaver, a blacksmith and the children of Cain. There is also a Trinity, and gold paint - an indication that the Guild may have considered re-dedicating the chapel to the Holy Trinity at that time. It never happened.

The Erthe upon Erthe painting, of the 15th. century, is unique, and very clear. There is a feathered angel, a Cherub or Seraph - every feather represents a virtue. People are being exhorted to do good deeds. At the bottom there is a grave with a shrouded body – a warning about Purgatory, urging people to repent. The “grinning” skulls are, of course, not happy, but rather, mad or suffering.

A painting once thought to be The Whore of Babylon, is also another hidden painting, behind the organ case on the West wall. However, the central figure is now thought to be Frau Welt, meaning World Woman, or an amalgamation of similar figures, and it represents the sins of the world, and the painting is again urging repentance.

Our speakers illustrated the talk with a wealth of illustrations, some in greater detail than can be seen in the chapel. It was a fascinating talk with many interesting questions.

(Helen Elliott, Speaker Secretary, February 2024.)



Some of Helen's photos from the talk about the Guildhall chapel.

I believe it is possible to look up a 3D representation of the chapel. Does anyone have the link? Or do you know where to find it online. I will happily put it in next month's newsletter.

news@statforduponavonu3a.org.uk



NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

Brush up your German

Prepared topics at our last meeting included New Year resolutions, bucket lists and visits to Lincoln Prison and Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. We would be glad of the time for more discussion on subjects raised and are thinking perhaps of extending the length of our meetings by up to half an hour.

Chaucer

At our February meeting we looked at Chaucer's idiosyncratic narrative technique in *Troilus and Criseyde* and compared it with experiments in narrative by novelists from Richardson, Defoe and Henry James (*What Maisie Knew*) and Virginia Woolf (*To the Lighthouse*). Chaucer's narrator is both outside the story as an impartial reteller of a well-known tale and inside it as the sympathetic champion of Criseyde. This device anticipates Dickens' dual narrative in *Bleak House* and reflects the central theme of the poem: the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human free will.

French for the Terrified

We are growing slightly braver now talking about what we have been doing recently, using past tenses. So we have begun to look at the conditional tense with the help of Edith Piaf. We shall come back to that. Meanwhile we are revisiting some common irregular verbs, having found an excellent source of texts perfect for our level.

Improve your French

After having some fun with a short piece from *Parlez-vous Franais?* by Miles Kingston, we tackled a dialogue from our new book, *Grammaire en dialogues* (Intermediate level). This offers extra listening practice at home with a recording of the dialogue delivered by French speakers at normal (ie. quite fast) speed.

Latin (Advanced)

Horace's criticisms of Rome recalled those of Juvenal. His Latin has proved to be difficult but rewarding. We shall soon have to choose a new author to read and we would warmly welcome a couple of new members to join us. You really don't have to be brilliant, just prepared to have a go and not take it too seriously.

Piano

Lots of Chopin this month including the Raindrop Prelude, Waltz in B Minor and half of a difficult Nocturne. Bach and George Shearing also featured. We have asked whether the Church might have the piano tuned...

Stratford History

Michael, one of our members, shared with us his researches into the rise and fall of Bishopton's Victoria Spa, built on local mineral springs. Opened in 1837 and named in honour of the young Princess Victoria, who visited, the Spa was intended to rival those in Leamington. A syndicate of four local men funded the building of baths, a pump house and a hotel. Land nearby was bought to be developed into a middle class residential area, and a road was laid to link the Spa to the Birmingham Road. A few grand houses were built, but the distance from Stratford was a problem. Sadly the syndicate lacked the experience, nerve and capital required for the enterprise to succeed, and the whole project failed. Walking along The Avenue today from the Birmingham Road will take you to the canal and Spa, now a hotel, Victoria Lodge. The complex is easily seen from the narrow bridge over the canal at the top of Bishopton Lane.



RUMMIKUB GROUP

The Rummikub group for Stratford U3A has been running for three months now and we are building a very enthusiastic group of skilled players, some of whom were complete beginners when they started. We meet upstairs at Huffkins restaurant in Bridge Street, Stratford, every 3rd Friday of the month at 2pm. The session normally lasts about two hours – or whenever Huffkins chuck us out! Indeed, Huffkins make us very welcome indeed for no charge, except for the possibility that we might like refreshments. I think that has turned out to be a good business decision for them!

The room is beautifully beamed, with a tall ceiling, so that it is airy and light, and we usually manage at least three or four tables of three or four players. Of course, we have space for more so please do come along at least to try us out. If you happen to have a Rummikub set, please do bring it with you, just in case, although we have managed so far. Beginners are very welcome indeed and I usually spend the first session with them, teaching them the rudiments of the game, which is quickly and easily understood by most people. That's the lovely thing about Rummikub; you can have real fun, even from day one, but even a little practice can give you some very enjoyable and friendly but competitive skills.

Just this last month, when I was paying for my coffee, I met a lovely lady who looked perhaps a little too young to qualify for U3A, but she was absolutely hooked on Rummikub. Unfortunately, she also lived in Nottinghamshire, so we agreed it was a little far to come on a regular basis ☹.

I look forward to meeting lots more people over the coming months. Any questions, please do contact me or Maureen Bourniquel, who also loves the game and who continues to be such a wonderful supportive help in setting up this group.

Juliet Grundy

julietgrundy55@gmail.com

Juliet is happy to have her email address printed, if you wish to write for the newsletter but don't want your email included we can arrange to use a u3a address.

Mum and I attend, we have played Rummikub for many years and it's a lovely friendly way to pass the third Friday afternoon of the month. Ed.

A message from our Chairman

Are you able to donate a prize to the monthly raffle?

We are ending this year on a very small surplus (more of that in next month's AGM) and close inspection of the surplus shows it equates to the funds received from the monthly raffle and the tea/coffee contributions at the monthly meetings. As you know, both these donations are entirely voluntary and we thank those of you who have felt able to contribute.

Perhaps you have received gifts you can't use or chocolates or flowers? If that's the case please could you bring them to the monthly meeting (next one, a week Wednesday 28th February). If you don't come to the meetings, please email and we will arrange someone to pick them up from your home.

The only stipulations from the Methodist Church are that the prizes must not cost more than £50 and must not include alcohol.

Thank you and all good wishes,

Maureen

As you can see your contributions do go to a useful cause, please do contribute if you wish.