



University of the Third Age

u3a
learn, laugh, live

Stratford-upon-Avon u3a

Newsletter

September 2022

Wednesday 28th September, 2pm: How to survive in a toxic world



Nutrition adviser Vicky Farmer will tell us how to lead a healthy lifestyle, eat well and stay well. An excellent follow-up from our August meeting.

Wednesday 26th October, 2pm: Victorian Housekeeping
Ruth Smith will have tales mainly of Life Downstairs: her grandmother was in service



INDIAN SUMMER EDITION

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August meeting: Busting Brain Myths - My Top Five Peeves

There was a warm welcome back for Dr Katy Bellamy, who this time set about exploding brain myths in her inimitable and entertaining way to a very receptive audience.

Each of her five myths was preceded by a question. First of all, how much of our brain are we using at any one time? 10%? No. We are using 100% all the time, even when we're asleep. But it's a myth perpetuated by the media. The 2014 film, Lucy, a huge box office success, was heavily criticised for its focus on the 10% nonsense.

The second myth was that one side of the brain is more dominant than the other. The left side is responsible for logic and language and the right for creativity and problem solving, but in fact they work together: there is no such thing as left or right brain dominance. The myth arose due to the misinterpretation of results from a type of surgery to treat epilepsy in which the brain is bisected. It expanded as a pseudoscience claiming that people could find out if they were right or left brain dominant. But we all use both hemispheres.

Depression was next. Contrary to popular belief this is not caused by an imbalance of chemicals in the brain. The levels of serotonin, the so-called happy chemical, make no difference. In July 2022 research from UCL found no evidence that low serotonin levels cause depression. In addition they found that patients who did not believe that depression was due to a chemical imbalance in the brain were more optimistic about their recovery. Other researches are instead looking at the gut-brain axis and how this might predicate depression.

Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing - yet another myth. Dementia is a syndrome caused by a number of diseases such as Alzheimers (which can be caught as young as 30), Vascular and Batten's disease. This last affects children and unfortunately demonstrates that, just like cancer, dementia is not always age related. In countries with high life expectancy such as Japan rates of dementia in the elderly remain comparatively low when compared with countries such as the UK and US. Lifestyle factors, in particular diet and exercise, are therefore more likely to explain why we are seeing such high rates of dementia appearing in the elderly in the UK.

The myth that successful people need less sleep, such as great leaders and entrepreneurs, is busted by looking at Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, for example. Both claimed they needed little sleep; both went on to develop dementia. We know that sleep, especially its deep restful stages, is crucial for removing the toxic proteins that build up in the brain, but in western countries people rarely get the required seven to nine hours' sleep a night. This may be another factor driving increasing rates of dementia. Sleep is the best drug available and it has no side effects.

Lots of the many questions put to Katy at the end of her excellent talk were to do with sleep patterns. Cue for her to come back again before too long and talk to us again on that vital subject.



NEWS FROM OUR INTEREST GROUPS

Ambling

On Wednesday 14th September five members of our group met up at the Fountain in Rother Street and made an enjoyable walk to Shottery. Unfortunately the café opposite Anne Hathaway's Cottage had shut down so we walked back to town and had refreshments and a good natter at the Deli, sitting outside in the lovely sunshine.

Next month 12th October will be Mop Day in Stratford so we have decided to have our walk in Alcester. We will catch the X19 (Redditch bus) leaving at 10.10 from Guild Street at the back of the Marks and Spencer store. Please remember to bring your bus passes. **Joyce Steckel (268088) and Olive Puzey (762281)**

Brush up your German

Rodger told us of his recent journey through Germany to Warnemünde on the Baltic (including a stop en route at Grimmwelt, the fairy tale world of the Brothers Grimm) for Hanse Sail Rostock, a great festival of traditional and museum ships. Jo talked entertainingly of her 70s style Goldene Hochzeit celebrations. Other contributions were less exotic but no less riveting. Next time we shall talk about a German book or film we have enjoyed.



Chaucer

This month we discussed Chaucer's incorporation of comic element within the tragic structure of Troilus and Criseyde and compared this with Shakespeare's technique in Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Richard III.

Gardening : 'India in the Cotswolds'

Just a few of us on our visit to Sezincote, near Moreton-in-Marsh on a glorious day. What an amazing place!



Most of us contented ourselves with the gardens but Helen managed to fit in a house tour too:

It was worth the entrance fee, a very interesting and informative tour of a house influenced by the architecture of Rajasthan in 18th century India. Inside there are some Indian and Chinese influences, but it is mainly in the classical style popular in the 19th century. After a visit in 1807, the Prince of Wales (later Prince Regent) changed his plans for the Royal Pavilion in Brighton.

Piano

We were practising so that we could make some sort of a showing on the grand piano in the Town Hall ballroom at our special Open Day event in case of a lull in the proceedings.

Stratford History : The Stratford Cannery

Margaret read out a friend's diary record of a week spent working at the Stratford cannery in the early 1960s. Memorable were accounts of the din of machinery and the Light Programme at full blast, the wading through puddles to get buckets of plums, cuts and scratches on fingers with unsatisfactory bandages ("they're fussy about blood in tins") and great cauldrons of jam like red glue, oozing all over the floor and running down drains. She was also shocked that everyone downed tools the moment the tea-break bell rang, even if one second more would finish the job. However, clocking off a very few minutes early at night was totally out of order: she was told to go to the cloakroom (cracked wash-basins among cartons of tins) and mess about till the bell! A salutary experience. We then planned our next three meetings: New Place, wall paintings at the Guild Chapel and Alveston Manor.



Our Special Celebration Open Day : Tuesday 20th September

Well, it was nerve-racking for a few days, wondering whether the Queen’s funeral would mean a cancellation. The 19th September Bank Holiday meant a complete change of plans for collecting and installing displays, with our best boards now unavailable. However, a great team accomplished everything during the week and in the two hours allowed us on the previous Friday afternoon. Thank you to those of you who came forward to help. And the day itself ? Here are a few photos - but sadly no record of the music or the terrific ‘buzz’ in the room. It was fantastic! Thank you so much.

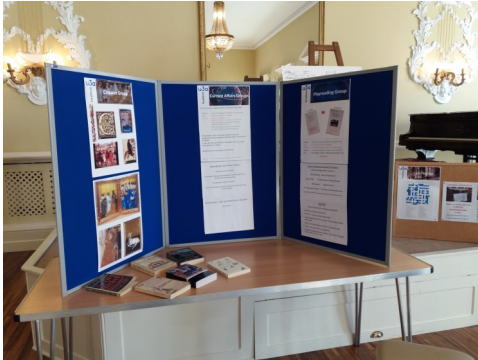
The only
qualification you need to
join is

ENTHUSIASM

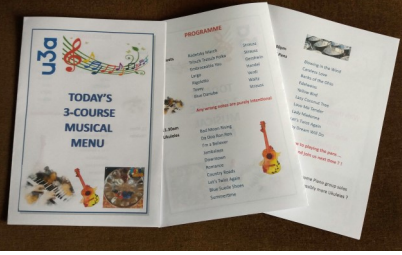
Visit us in the
Town Hall Ballroom
Tues 20 September
10.30-2.30



Friday setting up



Invitations



The Mayor opens at 10.30



and stays to chat and visit all the groups

Our Welcome Desk



Prost! Santé! Cheers!



Lots of smiles and chat



and lots of people!



More chat and
more people ...



A good audience
for the musicians



The Ukuleles and Steel Pans were so successful that they have both been asked to play as part of the town's Christmas Celebrations!



Finally, thank you to Hazel, Cindy, Linda + Marian who were far too busy organising cake and drinks to have their photos taken: what a team! Thank you to everyone who baked or bought such splendid cakes, to Tesco and Morrisons who donated all other refreshments - and to all of you for coming and making it such a great day!

