

u3a

Bridgnorth
& District

learn, laugh, live

Members Together—Newsletter

Winter/Spring Issue 2026



MONTHLY OPEN MEETINGS with a GUEST SPEAKER ...

Every fourth Wednesday (exc Dec)
members come together to enjoy a good
Speaker, welcome visitors and newly joined
members and relax together.

Venue: Bridgnorth Community Hall,
Severn St, Low Town, WV15 6BB **£2.00 entry**
Doors open 1.30pm Prompt start 2.00pm

Followed by ...

Activity Group Notices and Refreshments

Non-Member New Visitors always welcome

Wed 28th January '26

Liz Ross (u3a Member)

'Kimchi & QI things about South Korea'

Wed 25th February

Hugh McQuade

'A Life with the Severn Valley Railway'

Wed 25th March

Keith Bonser

'The Life of Caravaggio'

Wed 22nd April AGM

Nicki Mott (u3a Member)

'Edinburgh Fringe Festival Experiences'

Wed 27th May

Philip Duckworth

'A Life in Antiques at Phillips & Christies'

Wed 24th June

Samantha Hope

'Hopes Garden Plants'

Wed 22nd July

Norman Pagett

'Iron Men of Shropshire'



Message to Members ...

Welcome to your Winter/Spring
Newsletter. I hope that you are well
and happy as we step into 2026.

Last year Jane Jasper, our Speaker
Secretary, brought us an amazing
programme and this year looks even
more exciting. I am really looking forward to it.

Our 'Meet and Greet' sessions are proving very popular
and a most enjoyable morning. Please feel welcome to
join us on any first Friday in the month.

We have so many wonderful groups to join, from the
Breakfast Club to French Conversation. Have a look
and I know you will find something exciting for you.

In our wonderful u3a we 'live', we 'laugh' and we 'learn'.
There is never a stranger – just a friend we haven't met
before. I'm really looking forward to seeing you soon.

With my warmest wishes.

Elaine de Graaff u3a Chair '25-26



Do you know someone

who is no longer committed to full-time work
or busy raising a younger family?

Someone who wants to make more of life,
explore new interests and make new friends?

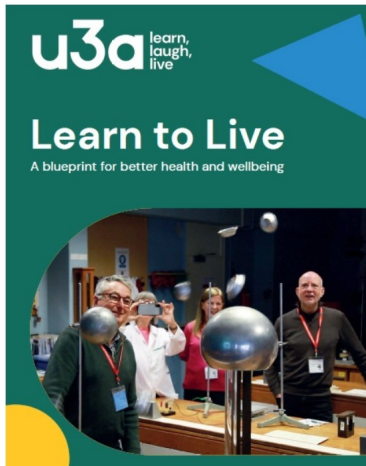
Let them know about

BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT u3a

website: www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk



Walkers—which way do we go now?



What is NON FORMAL LEARNING?

From the start, 42 years ago, the guiding principles of u3a were to promote learning through self-help interest groups covering a wide range of topics and activities. The founders envisaged a self-funded, collaborative approach to **Non-Formal Learning**. The u3a movement is arguably one of the best known, successful and longest running global examples of **non-formal learning** in action.

u3a research has demonstrated the exceptional impact of the **Non-Formal Learning Model** for well-being in terms of boosting confidence, combatting loneliness, feeling supported in new communities, learning new skills and, perhaps most important of all, feeling valued and enjoying life.

Of course, it's not just the learning that contributes to wellbeing, but the social interaction that comes with it and making new friends. There are five ways to promote wellbeing – by connecting, being active, taking notice, continuing to learn, and giving.

Five ways to promote wellbeing



All of these epitomise what it is to be a u3a member using the **Non-Formal Learning Model**. Being volunteer-led and low-cost means it is particularly well-suited to low resource settings and has the potential to work well for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Despite the u3a model being founded on face-to-face contact, members quickly adapted their offerings for an online world during the periods of Covid lockdown. It also served as a change point for many older adults who may have never entered a digital community in any significant way. With the current increases in the cost of living, it is more important than ever to promote low-cost, flexible and accessible solutions to support people of all ages to come together and stay healthy and active.

Extracted from [Learn to Live](#)

INTEREST GROUPS started in 2025

Visit our Website to check the details ...

www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk



Supper Club

Plants & Gardens



Environment & Climate



Family History

Possible new Groups for 2026?

Acapella Choir? Rock Group?

Jazz Lovers? Modern Board Games?

u3a groups need a volunteer member to coordinate

Support is always 'on standby'.

u3a Activities Coordinator



INCREASE IN u3a ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS ...

All members will now be aware that their 2026 annual subscription has been increased to £13.00 from £12.00. This one pound increase is the first for over ten years! It has been necessary due to our running costs showing a small annual deficit over the past two years. We need to continue to endeavour to keep our running costs to a minimum which is the Ethos of u3a but unfortunately, we cannot avoid the current 'cost of living' rise that is affecting us all.

With the need to communicate effectively with our members, it has been necessary to purchase a printer and laptop for use by Trustees. We also have increased costs for necessary Licences such as 'Copyright' and 'Zoom'. As you can see, our financial situation doesn't stand still!

However, with over 400 members, we are confidently looking forward to the future and I hope that every member will agree that their u3a membership remains 'value for money'.

u3a Treasurer—Sue Hannah

OUR 'BREAKFAST CLUB' EXPERIENCE ...

It was in 2024 when I joined u3a here in Bridgnorth and my first adventure was to join the Breakfast Club at the Castle Tea Rooms in High Town. This is a monthly gathering, similar in essence to the 'Meet & Greet' venue but with a hearty breakfast included.



What an excellent way to get to know folk and to forge new friendships around the tables.

Venues change each month and so far all the breakfasts have been excellent and good value for money. You pay a bit extra for dining at The Falcon Hotel in Low Town but ten pounds in such convivial surroundings is not at all bad. After the food, it's nice to top up your coffee mug, meander around the tables and learn what other members are up to. By way of contrast, in October, we gathered at the High Town Grill on Waterloo Terrace, where, for those who know this 'fish & chip' establishment, the seating was 'tight' but compensated by the very generous and tasty food, excellent value at eight pounds for the full works. Of course, not everybody wants a 'Full English' and here, as at the other places, you can order a lesser plate, such as poached egg on toast. I am also pleased that these establishments cater for people with allergies especially as my wife, Anna, has to be gluten-free. The same can be said for Wetherspoons,

Jewel of the Severn, in the High Street.

At ten o'clock in the morning, it was uncrowded and service was good.

The food, too, was better than I had anticipated, and I liked the arrangement where, with mug in hand, you helped yourself at the tea/coffee machine which was surprisingly easy to operate – with as many refills as one could manage!

As each location has a different seating layout, this engenders an exchange of conversation between different members. In this kind of relaxed environment, ideas and suggestions may be forged for new knowledge, skills, entertainment and beyond, for the benefit of one and all.

Anna and I are really looking forward to 'sharing breakfast time' in the coming months.

John & Anna Cliff—Members



EXPLORING CHURCHES 2026

This Group has plans to visit three churches local to Bridgnorth during 2026.

A knowledgeable guide gives a talk followed

by an opportunity to explore the corners of the church and churchyard ... and we meet afterwards where possible for light refreshments. Our first visit is in the diary for 17th March and will be to



St Mary the Virgin, Jackfield. Erected in 1863, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield and built entirely of locally sourced material including excellent example of tiles, patterned and hand-painted, and red, blue, yellow and buff bricks.

We are looking forward to learning more about the link between this church and the now demolished 'Red Church' in Jackfield.

Chris Wright—Group Leader

'GREET & MEET' in Town

Have you recently joined u3a?

Would you like to meet other u3a members?

Have you a friend you would like to introduce?

This is time to relax & find out more about u3a

Tables are reserved in the Coffee Area

Pop in! Every 1st Friday in the month

Crown Inn, off High Street 10.30am—12 noon

2nd Jan, 7th Feb, 7th Mar, 3rd April, 1st May, 5th June, 3rd July



'Refrain'

(A moving contribution by a member of the Writers' Group)

No More I Love You's, a song from a singer my husband appreciated. I'd go as far as to say he was a fan of many of the songs by Annie Lennox and The Eurythmics. He was never a great singer, but we belted out the best 'pops' when driving in the car on many long journeys. I never realised he was probably tone-deaf in those early days. Love does that to you.

One evening near Christmas, on a garage forecourt, while he was inside paying for fuel and picking up some choccy nibbles, Gaudete, by Steeleye Span, was playing and I admit to turning up the volume so I could belt it out. When hubby returned to the car we drove away, windows down, letting any locals share in this wonderful song. I hope the locals were not offended by my attempts at the pronunciation.

I had my favourites, music-wise, but those I shared with my husband were the best of all. Luckily he was also a Beatles fan, but not as great as me. My best times with their songs were with my BFF (Best Friend Forever), known from infant school days when our Mums were great friends also and still going strong today, though we rarely see each other.

Annie Lennox made some really different songs and I am always amazed where the influence originated. Often the meanings did not matter and it was just the tune, the riff, the chorus or just a line which people would latch on to. It's the same for many of the really great songs. It's the gist of the lyric which will grab you or one singular phrase of notes.

Hubby and I both liked a variety of music, mine probably more eclectic than his, but we also shared other interests, while still having our own ones to develop. It's as important to have your own time as well as shared time between you. As the years progressed we had to leave some things behind and adapt others but very rarely spent time apart. The one phrase I could rely on hearing every day was **'I love You'**. I often felt it was superfluous, being always around each other and doing things for each other and I may be guilty of becoming complacent. Hubby never did but his ill health started to take its toll and he would often go all day without much conversation. Do you notice how some men will put up with sickness without telling you what's happening and how they feel? I may have missed some signs and in retrospect I can see a few now.

I miss a lot of the little things but the biggest, I guess, is **No More I Love You's**.

My u3a Experience

as a New Member ...



I joined u3a at the suggestion of a friend. When asked how she was enjoying retired life, she said, "I don't know how I ever had time to work!" As I am slowly feeling my way into retirement, the idea of meeting new people, learning new skills, and becoming part of a community appealed to me. In the last three months I have joined the Games, French Conversation Groups, as well as attending Speaker Meetings when I can. Members have been welcoming and friendly, happily teaching me to play Canasta, forgiving my schoolgirl French, and encouraging my creative efforts with those unfamiliar scripts. As someone who has worked for many years in the corporate world, it is a real pleasure to spend time with people who have relaxed into this third age of life. I'm now finding that the bit of work I'm still doing is getting in the way of my new-found social life, so I imagine it won't be long until I too am saying "I don't have time to work!"

Sharon Kennett—New Member



Bridgnorth u3a - Members Together

Private group

This is a **'SHOUT OUT'** to members who are presently not accessing our Facebook Social Media Group.

FACEBOOK has become the most popular social media platform amongst 'third agers'.

*Why not join your fellow u3a members who already enjoy this friendly **private** space where you can keep in touch through sharing news and photos from our wide variety of u3a Interest & Activities.*

This all helps to keep us connected!



This is a **CLOSED PRIVATE GROUP** which only u3a members can access

Why not join us? Email: activities@bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk



BUS PASS—DAY OUT GROUP

Looking Back and Looking Forward ...

We have enjoyed many Bus Pass Days during 2025. One of the highlights was our visit to **Wenlock Priory** in the spring. We had a beautiful sunny day and we all felt the amazing peacefulness that this local English Heritage site exudes. This was followed by a great guided tour around **Moseley Old Hall** and then a trip to **Wightwick Manor** to wander around the gardens on a lovely summer's day. The boat trip

on '**Sabrina**', enjoying the River Sever in Shrewsbury, was followed by a full 'afternoon tea' at **Bridgnorth Garden Centre**. We have been busy! Our last trip of the year in December is to **Attingham Park** to enjoy their Christmas decorations. Next year? Who knows? Ironbridge Gorge? Croft Castle? Hartlebury Castle? Suggestions are always welcome as long as we can get there by bus or minibus. **See you on the bus!**

Linda Ruston—Group Leader



OUT & ABOUT GROUP ...

Our 2025 Trips were very varied and we hope enjoyed by all who participated. They included

*Afternoon Tea at **The Astbury**, a tour of **Eastnor Castle**, a day at the West Midlands 'Lock Up' **Police Museum** and our most popular trip, with over fifty members, was a ride on the **Brecon Mountain Heritage Steam Railway**.*

In January and February we will begin the complicated task of



deciding where

we might go in 2026, finding suitable dates, booking venues, guides and coaches. We will probably include some sort of rail/canal trip, a visit to a stately home, maybe a vineyard and possibly a museum/gallery. It may be

approaching Easter before we are able to let you know the final dates for your diaries but we look forward to welcoming members on our varied outings. So watch out for the monthly Activity News and our follow-on emails with full details about booking arrangements.

Jenny Green & Tricia Bennett—Group Leaders



GAMES TOGETHER ...

Coming out of Covid Lockdown, necessitated hiring one venue to bring

together several of our different games' players. After a hesitant start ... what a good decision this has proved to be! Every Monday afternoon, up to forty members regularly come together to challenge each other playing Mahjong, Canasta, Rummikub, Scrabble or Bridge ... and more? Where else in Bridgnorth can you enjoy a few hours in good company with a cup of coffee/tea and biscuits thrown in for just £2.50?

Why not join us? Tony Pritchard—Group Leader

A SEASONAL THOUGHT ?

At last, the whole family has gathered around the table for a nice old-fashioned game of Snakes and Ladders. The board is out, the pieces assembled. What better time to hide the dice?



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP ...

I don't know about you but when I first heard about greenhouse gases and global warming – fifty years ago in 1975 – I didn't really think that the effects of climate change would be felt in my lifetime. But here we are in 2025 with the global average temperatures already 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, carbon emissions still rising and more

extreme weather. As I write, Monmouth is suffering from floods and Jamaica is trying to recover from a devastating hurricane. Extreme weather has become more common and even here in UK we can see the effects on our gardens and our local environment. It is one of, if not, the greatest challenge for the future.

Our new Environment and Climate Change Group has already looked at the impact of climate change on the plants in our gardens and how we can adapt to the changing conditions and we have followed the progress of the current Climate Conference – COP30 – in Brazil. We will be thinking at our next meeting in December about how we, and our families, can enjoy a more sustainable Christmas – and looking into next year we will have the opportunity to look at the ways we can curb and reduce the impacts of climate change as well as how we can adapt to the changing conditions. We hope to also arrange some visits to, for example, Pam's Pools, the Battlefield Energy Recovery Facility and a regenerative farm.

If this interests you and you would like to join our group please make contact **Liz Ross—Group Leader**

EATING IN THE FIFTIES ...

- * Pasta was not eaten
- * Curry was a surname
- * A takeaway was a mathematical problem
- * A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower
- * Crisps were plain with the only added flavour of salt
- * Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding
- * A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining
- * Brown bread was something only poor people ate
- * Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking
- * Tea was made in a teapot using leaves & never green
- * Sugar enjoyed a good press and was regarded as white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh
- * Fish didn't have fingers
- * Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi
- * None of us had ever heard of yoghurt
- * Healthy food consisted of anything edible
- * People who didn't peel potatoes were regarded as lazy
- * Indian restaurants were only found in India
- * Cooking outside was called camping
- * Seaweed was not a recognised food
- * Kebab was not even a word, never mind a food
- * Prunes were medicinal
- * Muesli was readily available—it was called cattle feed
- * Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have been laughing stock!

... and the things that we never had on our table in the fifties and sixties were ... **elbows and phones!**

ART APPRECIATION or THE APPRECIATION OF ART?

We all do it most days. Whether we're looking for fabric for the home, or a piece of music to listen to, or a picture to hang on our walls. The appreciation of art extends into architecture, music, sculpture, photographs and much more besides.

We all have an opinion about art in all of its guises. In other words, "we know what we like".

The Art Appreciation Group exists to share ideas about what we like but also to widen horizons and remove boundaries. We are encouraged to look behind the scenes of a painting or sculpture or whatever to link up with the artist that created the works, the times in which the works were made and the influences that set each artist down the road of their self-discovery.

By suggesting a topic and offering to prepare a little research ready to tell fellow group members, each group member becomes a specialist for the session. Questions are encouraged, as is opinion sharing.

But most of all we get the chance to look at and talk about art and artefacts that we may know or have never seen before. If something catches your imagination it can be followed up at home or at the next session. This all makes each session so very interesting.

I appreciate
ART

**Ellen Schofield—
Art Appreciation
Group Member**



GARDEN VISITS '25 ...

Our fourth garden outing ended the way the first one had begun with beautiful blue skies and abundance of colour, albeit it was stunning autumn colour at **Westonbirt Arboretum** in October and fresh colours and perfumes of summer during our June private visit to **Preen Manor Garden**.

In July we travelled by coach to **Hidcote National Trust Arts & Crafts Garden** with its series of garden rooms, followed by the family run **Kiftsgate Court Garden** with its vibrant borders and reflection pool.

We were not so lucky with the weather for our visit to the **Dorothy Clive Gardens** in September but despite the rain the gardens still gave us plenty to see including amazing seasonal borders, an edible woodland, an alpine scree to name just a few elements. The rain meant members retreated to the tea room but "it is good to talk" and we did.

In the New Year, Susan and I will start on the 2026 Programme and whilst we cannot guarantee sunny weather, there will be lovely gardens to enjoy and good company to share them with.

Pamela Oakley & Susan Powell—Group Leaders



THEATRE GOERS '25 ...

The current **Theatre Goers Group** has been running for just over a year.

Our first outing in November 2024 was to see '**Birdsong**' set during WWI. In contrast, this November, our final visit of 2025 was to see '**The Nutcracker**' Ballet. Other outings have included '**Just Between Ourselves**' by Alan Ayckbourn and '**Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story**' which put a smile on all our faces! For these, we travelled to **Malvern Festival Theatre** but we have also supported **Theatre on the Steps** and the **Rose Theatre** in **Kidderminster**. New horizons await in 2026!

We very much enjoy our informal monthly meetings in **The Falcon Hotel, Low Town**. Over coffee, we chat about our recent individual theatre experiences. This is an opportunity for members to pass on information about upcoming local productions. There is usually a short presentation about an aspect of the theatre world. Topics this year have included Greek Theatre, Victorian Travelling Theatres and Japanese Theatre. We have also heard personal experiences from **The Edinburgh Fringe Festival** and '**Behind the Scenes**' at **Stratford Theatre**.

Every month an email summary is sent out to all members after the meeting. This includes references to local venues and information about the 'live screenings' at our local **Majestic Cinema**.

A full programme one way or another!

Heather Yarwood—Group Leader

Interest Groups Online

DO YOU LOVE YOUR INTEREST GROUP?

DO YOU WISH THERE WERE MORE SESSIONS?

learn,
laugh,
live

Do you have an INTEREST but no fellow members to make up a Group?

For a separate membership fee of £12 a year, you can join a large selection of **Interest Groups On-Line** through their u3a national website www.u3a.org.uk/learning/interest-groups-online.

Here are a few examples to explore ...

ANYONE
BUT AGATHA

CANAL BOATING

LAUGHTER
YOGA

MORE FUN
WITH MATHS

ARMCHAIR
ARCHAEOLOGY

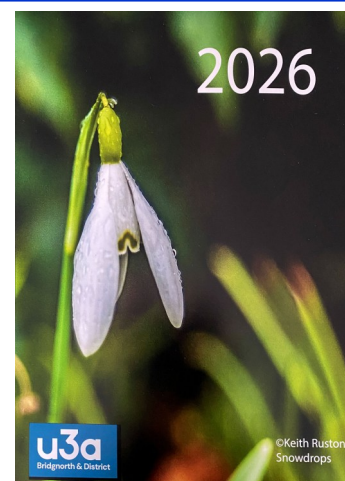
CRYPTIC
CROSSWORDS

GREAT ALBUMS OF
THE '60s

POETRY PATCH

3D PRINTING AT HOME

TALKING ART



2026 Calendar produced by
our Photography Group

Art Appreciation

Fire Station Mtg Room
Mon (am) 3rd monthly
Leader—Jane Harris



Book Groups 1 & 2

Bridgnorth Library
Wed (am) 2nd monthly
Leader—Graeme Stoner
Wed (am) 3rd monthly
Leader—Susan King

learn,
laugh,
live

Calligraphy

The Falcon Hotel
Mon (am) 3rd monthly
Leader—Chris Wright



Cinema Goers

Majestic Cinema
Film List Weekly Emails
Leader—Jean Swift



Creative Writers

Fire Station Mtg Room
Tues (pm) 1st monthly
Leader—Helen Herritty



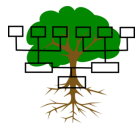
Environment & Climate **NEW**

Leader's Home
Wed (pm) 2nd monthly
Leader—Liz Ross



Family History

Fire Station Mtg Room
Thurs (am) 3rd monthly
Leader—Sue Evans



French Conversation 1 & 2

1. Members' Homes
Weds (am) fortnightly
Leader—Angela Treble
2. Giovanni's Café
Fridays (am) fortnightly
Leader—Janet Hardy



Needlecrafters

Bridgnorth Library
Mon (am) 4th monthly
Leader—Elaine de Graaff



Plants & Gardens **NEW**

The Falcon Hotel
Thurs (am) 1st monthly
Leader—Ellen Schofield



Photography Group

1. Sharing—Fire Station
Tues (pm) 2nd monthly
2. Photos—Out & About
Tues (pm) 4th monthly
Leader—Keith Ruston



Quiz Hour (Zoom)

Tues (am) weekly
Leader—Trevor Padget



ACTIVITY & INTEREST GROUPS

SOCIAL ...



'Greet & Meet' In Town Fridays (am) 1st monthly
The Crown Inn (Coffee Area) Welcome Host—Linda Ruston

Breakfast Club

Tuesdays (am) 3rd monthly
Venues vary
Leader—Elaine de Graaff

Supper Club **NEW**

Monthly tba
Venues vary
Leader—Alan Greenhalgh

VISITS ... DAY TRIPS

Out & About

Day Trips with Guide
Leaders—
Tricia Bennett & Jenny Green



Garden Visits

Half/Full Day Visits
Leaders—
Pamela Oakley & Susan Powell

learn,
laugh,
live

Exploring Churches

Shropshire Churches with Guide
Leader—Chris Wright

Bus Pass—Day Out

Venturing forth for the day!
Leader—Linda Ruston

INTEREST GROUPS cont'd



Spanish (Zoom)

Thurs (am) weekly
Leader: Marion Low



Theatre Goers

The Falcon Hotel
Thurs (am) 3rd monthly
Leader—Heather Yarwood



Travellers

Community Hall, Low Town
Thurs (am) occasional
Leader—tbc



Wine Appreciation

The Garden Bar, Low Town
Thurs (pm) 3rd monthly
Leader—David Sharland

GAMES ...



Games Together ...

Canasta Mahjong
Rummikub Scrabble
Backgammon Bridge

Mondays (pm) weekly
Community Hall, Low Town
Leader—Tony Pritchard

Cribbage

Tuesdays (pm) (1st & 3rd)
The Fosters Arms
Leader—Allan Clayton

Bridge

Fridays (am) weekly
Tasley Village Hall
Leader—Mary Galloway

Bridge—Beginners Plus

Thursdays (pm) weekly
Community Hall, Low Town
Leader—Mary Salter

KEEPING ACTIVE ...



learn,
laugh,
live

Walks—Day

Friday (1st) (monthly)
6-8 mile day walk
Leaders—
Jane Freshney
& Jenny Green

Walks—Medium

Friday (3rd) (monthly)
4 mile steady walk
Leaders—
Cliff Bassett
& John A Smith

Walks—Short

Weds 1st, 3rd, 5th (am)
2 miles max Local
Leaders—
Trevor Padget
& Ina Roberts