

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 edition of the Newsletter

The Committee would like to welcome a couple of new additions:

- **Frank Davis** – Publicity Officer and Groups Coordinator, Taking over the job from Mo.
- **Michael Clement** who will take over from Julia Hood as Membership Secretary.

Thanks to both for stepping up. We have a strong team on the Committee who work very well together.



Michael



Frank

Promoting our u3a

We always need new members to keep our groups active and vibrant. Most member-based organisations are suffering these days from a 'time-poor' society with the working population tending to work longer hours and having less time available to volunteer and get involved with a membership community.

Not so u3a! Our demographic of third-agers have the time and don't want to waste it. Group Leaders and Coordinators are the backbone and unsung heroes of our u3a BUT we always need enthusiastic members willing to take up the reins of groups when others need to take a break. Being a coordinator isn't as onerous as you might think – see Michael Clement's article in this issue.

To recruit new members and keep our u3a alive, we need a variety of different interest groups available to attract prospective members. Frank Davis, our new Coordinator of Groups/Publicity Officer, has identified some ideas – see his article 'New Interest Groups' in this issue.

How do new members join us?

Probably most new members join from personal recommendation – from you! Let's keep it up. Initial introductions are often at our monthly meetings. Non-members are always very welcome of course. We all enjoy our u3a and get a lot out of the Groups, so let's spread the word and invite a friend or neighbour to come next time?

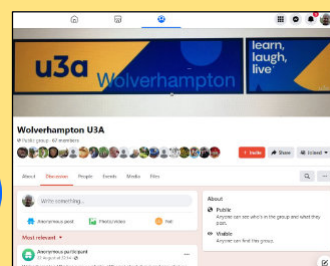
We hope that they will enjoy a meeting and experience a bit of what u3a has to offer – and so become a member. They can meet Group Leaders, network, learn something new and potentially discover a new activity to join. Plus tea and biscuits of course!



Our shop windows are the website and Facebook

Geoff Williams has recently re-launched our website on a new platform. This gives us great flexibility to create a more attractive image showing prospective members what's on offer. See Geoff's article – especially about appealing for more pictures.

Wolverhampton u3a also has a Facebook presence, which has grown from just 48 followers a year ago to 68. It would be good to get all the Wolverhampton members currently using FB to follow the pages.



We hope that members will post regularly to publicise what they get up to in their groups. It just needs a good photograph and a few words. Let's get posting and show casual visitors what an active branch we are – enticing them to join in.



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Round the Groups

Foraging

A new u3a member – Sabine Brotherton – was inspired by the August foraging walk to write this:

Into the Brambles . . .

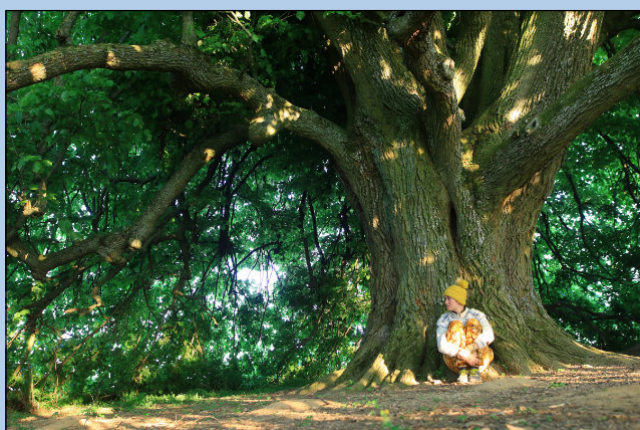
. . . and down the rabbit hole.

*Forget the drizzle and the autumnal duskiness
which belied the fact that it was an early morning
– and August in its prime – and follow me down
the chosen path.*

First stop: hazelnuts. Or are they filberts? Apparently, those are different names for the same thing, namely the edible nut of the filbert tree (genus *Corylus avellana*) named for France's St. Philbert, whose feast day falls on August 20th. This is said to be time when the nuts are ready to be harvested – but I cannot confirm: they were still of an unripe green.

Another curious find: some historians believe that the name filbert derives from the German 'Vollbart' (full beard) because of the husky shell of the hazelnut.

Next stop: the lime tree – or linden tree, easily recognised by its lush, heart-shaped leaves. When in bloom, the fragrant flowers may be used in tea – if you can reach them, that is! Ancient lore imbues the linden tree with healing, protection, luck, prosperity, truth, justice, love and fidelity, and it is the sacred tree of Laima (a Baltic goddess of fate), Freya and Venus. The belief that lime trees bring luck and ward off misfortunes is particularly strong in Germany. The verb 'lindern' means 'to soothe, to make better', and references can be found in cities, for instance Leipzig ('settlement where the linden trees stand'), and 'Unter den Linden' ('under the linden trees') is a road in Berlin; the latter being particularly significant, as German tribes believed that it's impossible to lie when questioned under a linden tree.



Swiftly moving on to birds – those aptly named ones are amongst the fastest birds in flight, and the 'common' variety is similar to the swallow or house martin but somewhat larger, with boomerang shaped wings and a short forked tail. Swallows have longer and thinner forked tails and a beige-white underside.

Beige was also the perfect camouflage of the grasshopper, and indeed the toad. But maybe it is a frog? How can one tell? A warty, dry creature would suggest a toad, while frogs have smooth, moist skins; they also have longer legs. Those of a toad are often shorter than the head and body, making for a squat, corpulent appearance, and toads do not have to live near water, whereas frogs need a pond or a brook.

Last but not least – Artemisia: a pretty frond-like plant with some ugly common names: mugwort, wormwood, sagebrush. The much nicer name derives from the Greek goddess Artemis, and there are almost 500 species, most of which seem to have strong aromas, usually a bitter taste from terpenoids, amongst them are absinthe (*A. absinthium*; wormwood) but also tarragon (*A. dracunculus*).

The one on this excursion was digitally identified as *Artemisia vulgaris* (mugwort), a midge repellent which can apparently also be used to make mugwort beer or wine – and strangely, as a remedy for hangovers.

Artemisia is mentioned seven times in the Old Testament, once in the New Testament, and Hamlet, Shakespeare's eponymous protagonist, says "Wormwood, wormwood" as a bitter aside, commenting on the murder re-enactment scene (act III, scene 2).

On a lighter note – Artemisia Gentileschi's Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria (about 1615–17) could be seen at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until September 9th (part of the National Gallery's Bicentenary programme 'National Treasures').

Sources: internet, esp. Wikipedia

PS: Plenty of blackberries were also gathered, eaten and processed on this foraging outing, which was expertly led by Ruth Byrne.

The Foraging group were foraging blackberries in August but, whilst doing so, were checking out where elderberries might soon be ready for gathering. With that in mind, Ruth Byrne (a group member) sent this:

Recipe for longevity

(or how to be ridiculously patient!)

Pontack sauce (goes well with liver)

Pour 1 pint of boiling vinegar or claret over a pint of elderberries (which you have foraged) in a casserole dish. Stand overnight in an oven on low heat. Pour off the liquid and boil with salt, mace, peppercorns, cloves, finally chopped onion, and ginger for 10 minutes then bottle securely. Allow to mature for seven years before opening.



*(Taken from
"Food for Free" by
Richard Maybe)*

Reading Group 1

Once again, we have had an excellent range of books. We choose one book each per year and I'm always amazed at the variety we generate.

This year's choices have included:

- 'Island' by Victoria Hislop which examines the heartbreaking tragedy of leprosy and the removal of people with the disease to Spinalonga, a Greek island. It finally closed in 1957. This disease can now be controlled with modern medicine.
- Ian McEwan's 'Machines Like Me' – was completely different: a chilling book of dystopian fiction, a sign of things to come perhaps.
- We even read a book narrated by a tree! Elif Shafak's 'Island of Missing Trees'.

Some books are popular with the whole group, while others are more contentious. However, the most important thing is that they all create great discussion and educate. Everyone gets a chance to have their say on a book, which often has the effect of making others see it from a completely different perspective.

Happy reading.

Jeanette Black (Group Coordinator)

Reading Group 3

Since its launch in January this year, Reading Group 3 has been proving popular and thought-provoking. We meet in my house in Penn on a Wednesday every six weeks. At the start of the year, we compile a list of interesting book titles and narrow it down to a selection for the year. Before each meeting we read the chosen book (titles on the website), which we discuss over tea and biscuits. It's always fascinating to hear each other's (frequently opposing) 'takes' on the books – usually provoking very lively and entertaining discussion!

Alison McKee
(Group coordinator)



Some of the books read so far this year – with a cuppa and biscuits!

Spanish Improvers' Group

If anyone doubted that English is now the ubiquitous language, then the Olympic events that took place in Paris and other French locations this summer served as convincing evidence. Every public address was in French (obviously) followed by an English translation.

Every athlete was introduced to the stadium in English. Every advertising hoarding seemed to be in English. Every successful competitor, irrespective of the land they were representing, could handle an interview in English.

Meanwhile, news outlets seem utterly amazed whenever a British politician addresses a European gathering, 'IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE', as though reading a couple of lines of prepared text equated to translating the Rosetta stone!!!

According to Google, around 12% of the world's population can understand some English, so if you find yourself on a 68-seater bus in some far-flung corner of the globe, there is a chance that as many as 8 fellow passengers would be able to help with directions.

Nevertheless, I am sure my fellow students would agree with me that Spanish Improvers remains a thoroughly enjoyable highlight of our week, as the waiting list for places would confirm.

VAMOS AMIGOS!

Bob Satterthwaite (Member – Spanish Improvers' group)



Summer Garden Party

Here are a couple of pics from the garden party. Despite grey weather and resulting low turnout (30) everyone had loads of fun. Games, music and a guided walk.



Poetry Appreciation Group 1

Over the last year we have continued to meet at 2.00 pm on the first Monday of the month in various members' homes.

As ever, we have enjoyed members' choices of a wide variety of poems/poets/styles/eras with some discussion of them (or not) and general conversation with refreshments. Our membership and attendance have only been limited by difficulties of age, illness or transport.

Sadly, two of our longstanding members died during the year. Some of us were able to attend their respective funerals. A poem in sonnet form written by group member Martin Murfitt and dedicated to one of our late members and her also deceased husband was read by her granddaughter during the service.

On a happier note, we have added three new members to our group maintaining our membership at ten. This is a good number for 'fitting into a front room' but I would be happy to hear from anyone else who may be interested in joining. They can contact me on 01902 765567.

Marian Graceson

Ukulele Group

The ukelele band has been up to its usual fun, with many gigs for different events including several sheltered housings lounges.

- Codsall Summer Fair was a highlight.
- We have a regular gig for a dementia group which is most rewarding.
- We have been booked for the Codsall Christmas Fair again as we have for many years.
- Penkridge Victorian Market has asked us to play in November for the 4th time.
- After a joint gig with The Marston singers for Tettenhall Institute Open Day in June, they asked us to join them for their September Concert at Penn Road Reform Church.

We now practise at Newman Centre Tettenhall on Monday Mornings at 10am.

As ever all the money that is donated goes to the Midland Air Ambulance.

Gill Stevens (group coordinator)

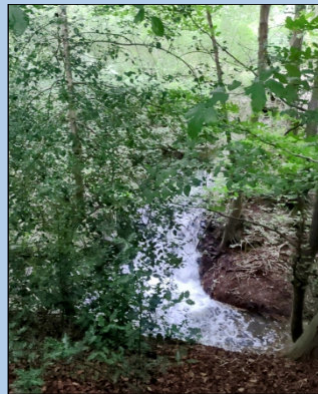
A summer stroll

On a warm and sunny day, members of the u3a Walking Group enjoyed a five mile walk along the Staffs and Worcester Canal, starting at Compton and ending at Dimmingsdale Road in Lower Penn.



Walking Group

As the new Walking Group coordinator, I'd first like to give huge thanks to Linda Moreland for the amazing work she has done since January 2017!



In June, we had a very successful evening walk around Evelith Mill near Shifnal. The photo shows a delightful waterfall encountered during the walk.

Autumn/winter dates of walks are listed below and have been selected to incorporate different days of the week to avoid clashing with other interest groups.

- Monday 14th October
- Thursday 31st October
- Friday 15th November
- Thursday 5th December – incl. festive meal

Walking in the countryside is most refreshing and energising because of the exercise, the beauty of the scenery and the stimulation of social interaction. We very much welcome new members to join the group.

If you're an existing member of the group – or if you're thinking of joining – and you have ideas for walks on the planned dates, these points may be of interest:

- Flexibility: if you can lead a walk the day before or after the dates circulated, let me know and let's go for it: rather change than nothing at all.
- Inspiration. Members have already told me that they would like to take an active role in leading walks, but they don't know how to go about it. That is not a problem. We have very experienced walkers who could share their knowledge and resources in the form of walking guides, maps, digital apps and also, they could accompany the new leaders in the reccie of their walks. I am happy to arrange a meeting with experienced leaders to give up some pointers. It is all part of learning new skills and boosting our confidence. Please contact me if you are interested in taking this up.
- Length and Pace. We want to continue offering walks of different lengths and different pace to accommodate all abilities. I hope that the new programme continues to do so.
- Pairing-up. Some leaders tell me that to find a walk is easy but finding the pub/restaurant for the meal can be difficult. Would you like to help leaders finding drinking/eating places for our social time? You might want to share your local knowledge and favourite spot or widen your horizon by searching for new places. This is particularly important for our Christmas Walk.

Please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mercedes Fonfria (Group Coordinator)
mfonfria@gmail.com

New interest groups

We are very keen to expand the number of groups in Wolverhampton u3a.

These are suggestions we have received from members so far:

- **Walking football/netball**

If you have ever played or wanted to play either game but now feel that your fitness is not up to scratch, this may be for you. Both are non-contact activities that offer the joys of the games at a slower pace, enabling members to maintain or improve your mobility in a friendly environment.

- **A free pass to anywhere**

The idea is that group members go on excursions – with friends old or yet to be made – to a chosen venue using bus passes. On arrival, members might have coffee or lunch – or discover what else is on offer in the surrounding area.

- **Pickleball**

This is a very fast-growing sport which has been described as a mixture of tennis and table tennis. Perhaps a better description would be slower tennis.

- **Local History**

The aim of this group would be to find out more about 'local' history. The knowledge gained could then be spread throughout the group through talks, discussion groups and visits to places of interest.

- **Cycling**

Two types of groups have been suggested

- a leisurely cycling group whose members meet to take a gentle ride to various locations, with time to recover and take some refreshments before returning home.
- a more serious group for members who want to go for more strenuous rides.

- **Breakfast Club**

This would give the chance to gather for breakfast at local, independent establishments where group members can chat and relax over tea and toast or, if feeling adventurous, a full English breakfast.

- **Yoga**

Pretty self-explanatory.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. If you'd be interested in joining one of these – or have another suggestion of a group you'd like to join – please contact Frank Davis via the website: wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/contact/

We're sure you're aware that all groups need coordinators. With that in mind, a current coordinator has shared his experience of the role.

See Michael Clement's article on the final page.

Frank Davis

Website

The new website is now live. The URL is wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/ Please make a note of this as this site will be the principal source of information about Wolverhampton u3a in future.

When you have a moment, please explore the site and make sure you can find your way around. The headings and basic structure are similar to those of the old site. As you explore the Groups page you may come across an interesting looking group which you might like to join.

The new site is very much a work in progress and will evolve over the coming months.

A challenge: The photos on the Welcome Page are taken from the National u3a gallery and are designed to give a general idea of what u3as are about. We would like to replace some or all of them with images of our own members. If you have any of people looking suitably enthusiastic or dynamic, please send them in.

Geoff Williams
u3awulfrun@gmail.com

Car sharing for meetings?

Many thanks to the core of our members who regularly attend the monthly meetings at Springdale.

We always arrange for informative speakers or entertainment at each meeting – plus refreshments of course!

It's a great way for our members to interact collectively – in addition to the groups we are involved with.

Currently the turnout each month is about 40ish. Not a large number when we have about 240 members. It would be good to get all the chairs out to capacity every month.

It has been noted that some members find it difficult to attend for lack of independent transport.

Maybe members who regularly drive and have a spare seat could offer to provide a lift to those with a problem. Perhaps this could be mentioned at your next group meetings and drivers could offer lifts to those who live nearby them?

It does beg the question whether it's worth appealing for someone to volunteer to set-up a car sharing scheme to enable more members to attend the meetings. What do you all think? It could be a simple list of drivers willing to participate and a list of members who would appreciate a lift – and matching them up.

Any volunteers willing to start it up?

Yes? Then set up a scheme.

Forthcoming Events and Speakers

22nd October	Will Farmer, an auctioneer of Antiques Roadshow fame. He will be talking on the intriguing topic of ' Lost and Found ' Will's love affair with antiques began at the tender age of ...
26th November	Peter Morris: The Man with four organs Peter tells us how he rebuilt and performs on the most important instruments in the Black Country.
17th December	Xmas Party
28th Jan. 2025	TBA
25th Feb. 2025	Dr. Shailendra Bhandare The numismatic curator of the Ashmolean Museum gives us a talk on ' A Story of Coins '. Shailendra Bhandare is Assistant Keeper, South Asian and Far-eastern Numismatics
1st April 2025	AGM As well as the AGM business, there will be a speaker or entertainment

Being a Group Coordinator

Being the coordinator of a U3A group is simple and rewarding.

In the hope of encouraging others to become group coordinators, here is a summary of what I do:

- **Record keeping.** Keep a register of who attends each session. Make a note of who provides biscuits for the session and whose turn it will be next time. Record what texts the group wants to work on next time and which of two venues we will be meeting in.
- **Communication.** Send a one paragraph WhatsApp message to all members after the session to summarise what happened in the meeting and what we will do next time.
- **Enquiries.** Respond to enquiries about joining the group to help people decide if this is the right group for them.
- **Other.** There are occasionally other tasks requested e.g. confirming how many members the group has or plans to write something for the newsletter once a year.

The total time taken by all these tasks would probably be two or three hours per year.

If anyone is thinking about coordinating a group and wants advice, please get in touch.

Michael Clement (Coordinator – Latin group)

Interest Groups at Wolverhampton u3a

If you are interested in joining a group, please contact the Group Coordinator – see Wolverhampton u3a website: wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/groups/

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Brush up your Shakespeare | • Play Reading (three groups) |
| • Classical Music | • Poetry (Contemporary) |
| • Computing | • Poetry Appreciation |
| • Contemporary History | • Reading (three groups) |
| • Craft | • Science and Technology |
| • Creative Writing | • Self Study Resources |
| • Foraging | • Spanish Improvers |
| • French | • Table Tennis |
| • Games-General | • Ukulele |
| • Gardening | • Walking |
| • German Improvers | |
| • Jazz | |
| • Latin | |

Want to start a new Group?

Contact Frank Davis, Coordinator of Groups:
fhDavis@gmail.com

Your Committee

Mo Johnson	Vice Chair
Mike Clack	Magazine Co-Editor and Vice Chair
Mary Warwicker	Secretary
Yvonne Rickard	Treasurer
Julia Hood	Committee Member
John Sheard	Beacon Coordinator
Josie Turner	Speakers' Secretary
Margaret Taylor	Committee Member
Carol Chapple	Magazine Co-Editor
Frank Davis	Publicity Officer and Coordinator of Groups
Michael Clement	Membership Secretary

A special meeting in October

As you can see from the list of events, we are fortunate to have Will Farmer, an auctioneer of BBC Antiques Roadshow fame to entertain us. This is bound to be a very entertaining session. We urge you not to miss it.

I'm sure he'll be up for a few selfies!

