

NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year!

With your approval the future is looking brighter!

To continue as a u3a change is inevitable and in the coming months we will need your support to achieve this. We have operated under our present Constitution since February 2018, but your committee suggests it is time to adopt the latest u3a Trust Model Constitution in the very near future.

As you all know, I have been warning that unless we have members come forward to serve on the committee under our existing constitution we would almost certainly cease to exist as a u3a because of the conditions set out within this. The new constitution gives us a lot more flexibility, particularly regarding how long a committee member can serve.

For this change to go ahead a Special General Meeting will have to be held in March and under our existing constitution will need the approval of 15% (92 members). The change will enable members of the existing committee to stay in post, plus we have had several members volunteer to serve and support the committee, whilst we still need more members to come forward these changes will mean that the future will look brighter for our u3a. Of course there will be more information on this coming soon.



Multi Media Art
Group - page 16

I would like to thank Clare Waite, our Social Secretary, and the team, for their work in arranging our first Christmas Tea event. Also, thanks to all those who attended and for giving us such overwhelmingly positive feedback. I hope we will run it again in 2026. There were also learning points expressed and these will be taken forward. There are photographs of the event on our website and Facebook pages, plus a report and pictures in this newsletter.

Talking of Facebook, I would encourage you all to participate in providing content. All you need is a phone and a little creativity. More on this further in the newsletter.

We held a new members' get-together prior to the monthly meeting on the 17th November. Thanks to all those who attended and I hope you found it helpful; your committee definitely did.

By the time you read this, Christmas 2025 and New Year will have passed. I trust you all had a great time with friends and family.

Let's make our u3a family bigger and better than ever in 2026.

All the best.

Mike Bracey, Chair.

A warm welcome to new members: Gill Baker, John Baker, David Brown, Anne Ronan, Julian Selby, Wendy Dixon, Jacqueline Tysall, Elizabeth Smith, Malcolm Hunt, Heather Somerfield, Bev Collis, Jill Blerkom, Susan Daniels, Will Hawksworth, Kazz Hewlett, David Hudson, Hilary Riches, Pamela Ware, plus reciprocal members Rosemary Aveyard and Anita Steed.

Droitwich Spa & District

Welcome to the New Year - Messages from the Business Secretary

Firstly, I hope you all had a lovely time over the Christmas and New Year holidays. January can be a depressing month because of the weather and the lack of any celebrations following the Christmas festivities. However, if you look at the events/meetings going on in January, it would be surprising if you couldn't find something that would bring a smile to your face or something to make you feel inspired. Just meeting up with friends to enjoy time together and look forward to spring is enough to give us all a joie de vivre. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our monthly meetings.

December 2025 Easyfundraising Scheme Update

As always, I would like to say a very big thank you to all those members who have signed up to join the Easyfundraising Scheme to date. We now have **54** members, and as of 29th December, we have raised **£680.78**. All those who have signed up have made a huge contribution to the funds available to the whole of our membership. Despite how little it may seem, when it is all added up, it makes a great difference.



Don't forget that the money will be used with the sole intention of supporting the members, and the committee will review any requests for funding from any group. So, if you feel that there is something useful that the funds could be used for, to improve members experiences within the u3a then please contact one of the committee members with your suggestion/s.

Third Age Trust Insurance Information Update

We have recently updated the documentation on the Third Age Trust Insurance Policy shown on our website. In the **Members** section under **Documents and Policies** the previous documentation has been replaced with the **Third Age Trust Insurance FAQ's** and the **Third Age Trust Insurance Overview**. These are more detailed, up to date and comprehensive. Hopefully you won't have any need to refer to these documents but just in case you do, you should be able to find the answers to any questions you have.

Volunteering to support your u3a

So far, we have three volunteers who have expressed an interest in joining the committee during 2026 to help the committee, either on an ongoing or a "one-off" basis. This is really encouraging but if you have any interest in contributing, please do not hesitate to contact any of the committee members to discuss the opportunities open to members.

Lesley Short, Business Secretary

The Greatest Sing

Please see details at the end of the newsletter.

*** Join 1000 Voices*** - an extraordinary fundraising day of music and community to support the Anna Wilkinson Mockingbird Trust, a charity helping young people with a cancer diagnosis.

Pam Ballone, organiser of The Greatest Sing

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Monthly Meetings – Monday – Norbury Theatre, commencing at 2.30pm

Several members have written to me saying how much they enjoyed November's Meeting with Holly Reynolds singing songs from the 1950's and 1960's. Would you enjoy her coming again next November?

Come to our talks and meet up with friends for an afternoon at the Norbury Theatre, hearing, seeing, and learning different aspects of life and participating in the discussions that follow – with a cup of tea or coffee afterwards.

I hope the following subjects are of interest. Put the dates and subjects in your diary and check your emails for any changes.

19th January – Graphic Design at the BBC – Christine Green. Christine Green trained as a graphic designer and worked for the BBC creating title sequences. She runs craft workshops and gives inspirational talks. She featured on BBC's 'MAKE! Craft Britain', teaching paper cutting to a group of novices.

16th February – A solo walk across Africa – Fran Sandham. Critically acclaimed author and former Rough Guides editor, Fran Sandham walked across Africa solo from the Atlantic on Namibia's Skeleton Coast to the Indian Ocean near Zanzibar, a journey of well over three thousand miles – the first time on record anyone has crossed Africa by this route solo and entirely on foot.

His book 'Traversa: A solo walk across Africa' is the account of this remarkable journey and has achieved rave reviews and very wide press coverage in the UK and abroad.

Further Speakers and Subjects for 2026

16th March – The Canary Girls – Yellow Faces, Brave Hearts – Paul Wilkins. The Unknown Stories of the Canary Girls in World War One who were women munition workers, nicknamed "Canary Girls" due to the yellow skin from TNT exposure. The talk highlights their dangerous but vital work for the war effort.

Paul trained as a genealogist and social historian and is now living in the West Midlands, he lectures at Warwick University and has spoken to many u3a's not far from us.

20th April – Gilbert and Sullivan Politics – Bernard Lockett. Bernard has been a life-long fan of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. As an author, and Trustee of the International Gilbert and Sullivan Association, he will be looking at the background and history concerning the vast amount of social and political comment within the G & S works and to see how W.S Gilbert (the writer) was a man of strong social conscience and a friend of Charles Dickens.

15th June – Britain in the 1970's – Philip Bowen.

21st September – Raconteur and musician – Roger Browne.

19th October – The political satire in Gilbert and Sullivan – Bernard Lockett.

Hope you can make all of these.

Geoff Stollard, Speaker Organiser



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Droitwich u3a Christmas Tea and Quiz - Monday 15th December

Innovative, festive and fun!



This year we broke with tradition and a Christmas Tea and Quiz gave members the chance to meet and celebrate the season together. Coloured lights and Christmas music set the scene, crackers and party hats made it a special occasion.



It proved popular, with almost 100 members attending. There were cakes and cups of tea a-plenty, a challenging, and in parts, quite fiendish quiz and a final raffle. Certainly, plenty to chat about. It proved a warm and friendly afternoon and an ideal opportunity to meet up with old friends and make new ones.



Clare Waite our Social Secretary masterminded the event, with committee members and helpers in support. Our thanks to Clare and to our Chair and quizmaster Mike for an enjoyable lead into Christmas.

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

Photos - Mike Bracey, Chair



Group News - from the Existing Groups Co-ordinator

There have not been many changes to groups during December as we have all been busy with the festivities. Looking forward to 2026, we are hoping to move forward with the Big Band Group, and if you have any other ideas for groups in our u3a then do get in touch.

The Group Leaders Meeting will be coming up in March. This is an opportunity for group leaders to get together, and for us to pass on developments within the u3a. Please watch out for emails with further details.

Anne Everard, Existing Groups Coordinator

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Droitwich Spa u3a Facebook Group

You may remember me saying that over the Summer we had launched a new Facebook page for our u3a. While I know Facebook is not for everybody, it is an important tool in showcasing our u3a.



Many of us do have Facebook accounts and as a result, we can all be content creators in our own small way and by sharing u3a photographs and videos, demonstrating to the wider public the positive effect of being a u3a member. I would therefore encourage you to be proactive in sharing u3a group activities through social media. However, I would add a point of caution here; please check with all concerned that they are happy to have their image posted. You can post content yourself or pass it to me and I will make the necessary arrangements. In my ideal world, all groups would contribute once every other month, that is equivalent to a post a day!

Word of mouth continues to be our principal recruitment tool but supporting this through social media gives this leverage because you can say "have you seen this activity?". Mixing word of mouth and imagery will encourage us to grow in a sustainable way.

I have spoken about an informal/formal Facebook u3a Group to support groups earlier in the year and there was some interest, but it did not go ahead at that time. If you would like to revisit this approach to support the groups with social media I would be pleased to hear from you.

Find us on Facebook at Droitwich Spa u3a or on the web, search Facebook Droitwich u3a or at www.facebook.com/groups/1324163052558101/

So, let's get posting

Mike Bracey, Chair.

News from the Groups

Digital Photography Group visit to Lillian's Tea Room

After the final photography visit of 2025 members of the Digital Photography Group met at Lillian's Tea Room for coffee and cake to celebrate a very successful year for the group. The groups' Flickr account now displays 2600 photos which can be viewed at <https://www.flickr.com/groups/14918372@N22/pool/>



We will be meeting again on the second Tuesday of January. If you have a digital camera or phone, you are very welcome to join us.

Derek Oakley

To join our group contact Alan Meyrick at ameyrick54@gmail.com

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Droitwich Wind Instrument Group (DWIG)



We played Happy 10th Birthday to us! (Posted on Droitwich Spa u3a Facebook page - 26th November 2025)

Wind Instrument Players Invited. The u3a Droitwich Wind Instrument Group (DWIG) meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays (except bank holidays) in Crowle Platinum Hall from 3pm to 5pm.



On 19th December St Andrew's Square, Droitwich, rang to the sound of eight members of DWIG playing Christmas carols. We all had a marvellous time, and the passers-by had enjoyed swaying and jigging to the music. We were collecting for the Midlands Air Ambulance and were pleased to raise £136.41 for this very worthy cause, thanks to the generous passing audiences.

We welcome all music-reading wind instrument players. We have players of all experience levels. If you can read music and play any kind of wind instrument, DWIG is the place for you.

For more information about DWIG please contact Group Leader, David Wornham, Tel. 01905 775840 or flexicase@gmail.com

Ron Hawkins for DWIG

The Quiz Group Timetable

After a successful three-month experiment, the group took a short break for the Christmas festivities. u3a Quizzing will return this January 2026

Continuing at The Old Library, our new place in the diary will be the second Thursday of each month at 2.00pm. Doors will open at 1.45pm, so team numbers can be arranged for a prompt start. The format remains unchanged; four quick rounds, picture questions with tea and coffee, four longer rounds and home by 4.00pm.

There is deliberately no limit on group numbers but a brief yes/no message to the organiser in the days before helps with seating arrangements. All are welcome and we would love to meet you.

Diary dates for early 2026: 8th January, 12th February, 12th March, 8th April, 13th May and 10th June

Andy Burge, Group Leader

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Garden Lovers Group

The Garden Lovers Group rounded off their gardening year with two indoor social events! On 5th November we all assembled in the cafe at Worcester Garden Centre for coffee, cake and a good chat. Elizabeth worked very hard throughout, finalising all the arrangements for our December event. This was held at Bodenham Arboretum on 3rd December, where a group of 18 enjoyed the festivities of a delicious Christmas lunch. Much fun was had by all in the warm atmosphere of the restaurant!



The snowdrops at Painswick

We kick off next year with the annual winter trip to view the snowdrops. The Rococo Gardens at Painswick will be the venue on Wednesday 4th February at 10.30am. If you are planning to attend, please let Elizabeth know and also visit Painswick's website <http://www.rococogarden.org.uk> as you need to book your ticket online before entry! The gardens do have some areas with uneven ground so please contact Painswick directly if you have any concerns about accessibility.



We look forward to another great year of garden visits in 2026.



Jan van Zwieten for Elizabeth Bartle, Group Leader

Singing for Pleasure Group

On the last two u3a Singing for Pleasure sessions of the year in Droitwich Baptist Church, we sang a selection of the 150 songs in our folders as usual before the tea break. But, after the break we let loose and raised the volume with a selection of Christmas Songs, such as Frosty the Snowman and Winter Wonderland and Carols, such as Deck the Halls and Joy to the World. To enhance the accompaniment, we had a box of percussion, which were heartily shaken, banged and rattled to enliven the singing!

We have recently welcomed five new members to the group and have room for more! What better way is there of spending the afternoons of the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month?

Gill Ansfield, Group Leader

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Local History Group

All talks are at The Emmanuel Church, Blake Avenue. Doors open at 10.00am for refreshments with a 10.30am start for the talk. Cost £2.50.

9th January - Suzanne Wenczek - **Willow Court Farmhouse Project**

6th February - Guided visit to **The Sacred Heart Church** to view the restored mosaics.

13th February - Howard Robinson - **Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy 'Woodbine Willie'**

Further Local History Programme for 2026

A varied mix of new and repeat speakers on what I hope you consider a good variety of subjects.

13th March - Marguerite Collins - **Madresfield - the True Brideshead**

10th April - Heather Flack - **Kidderminster 1912** - suffragettes and campaigners of better rights for carpet workers.

8th May - Mike Sharpe - **The History of Feckenham Forest**

12th June - Vanessa Morgan - **A Weekend Away** - properties around the country worth a visit.

Jeff Gogarty, Group Leader

Current Affairs Group

We meet on the first Friday in each month from 10.15am to 12.00noon to discuss current affairs. We informally chat to each other about different topics with the subject advised to all members in advance. Meetings are at Dorset House, a nursing home in Blackfriars Avenue near Droitwich town centre who kindly provide a lounge and refreshments.

Our next talk will be centred around the use of ChatGPT to help with mental health issues such as depression. It seems one in four of 13 to 17 year olds have used an AI chatbot for mental health support in the past year. Teenagers are likely to go online for support, including using AI, if they are on a waiting list for treatment, or for diagnosis or have been denied this and even if they are already receiving in-person support.

It is an alarming issue, but we must accept it is happening, and perhaps it is of value, join us to discuss. We normally have less than 10 members at each meeting and it is a very friendly group, if you would like to join just get in contact.

Geoff Stollard, Group Leader

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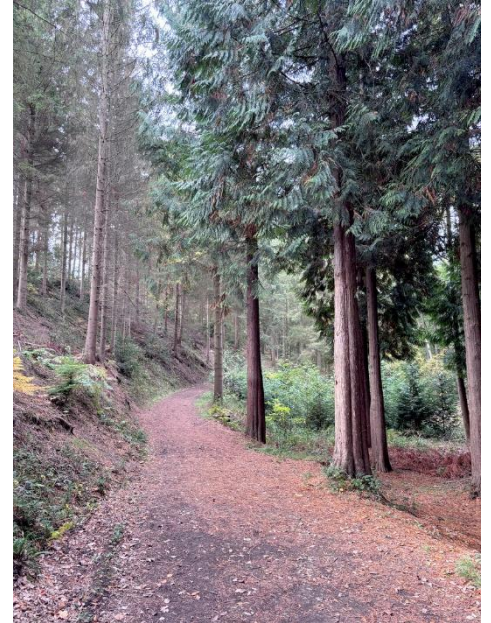
The Digital Photography Group visit to Bodenham Arboretum

Our visit on 28th October covered the Halloween celebrations and the school's half term holiday so it was quite busy.

The arboretum extends to 170 acres containing mature woodland, specimen trees and shrubs, and two chains of pools and lakes, integrated within a working farm.

The farm has donkeys, ducks, geese, pigs, cattle and sheep, all of interest to visiting children and photographers.

Derek Oakley.



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The Digital Photography Group visit to Bodenham Arboretum - continued



Photos by Peter Marrs, Helen Coward, Janet Oakley, Peter Coward, Tim McCarthy, Derek Oakley, Patricia Smith.



To join our group contact
Alan Meyrick
at alanmeyrick54@gmail.com



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A visit to The Commandery, Worcester.

In November, the u3a Local History and Gallivanting Groups visited The Commandery, Worcester. This 1,000-year-old half-timbered building has been a monastic hospital, Royalist HQ during the English Civil War, a private dwelling, a college, a printing works and today a fascinating museum.



The Great Hall is the building's principal room. With many features of a medieval open hall and wonderful carvings.



Projected on one wall one can watch players enact a feast held in the monastic hospital refectory.



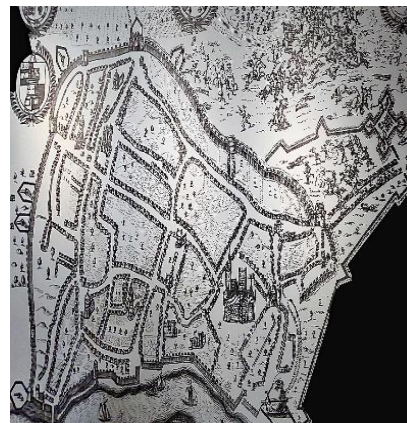
Wandering around the rooms upstairs, once occupied by the Wylde, there are fine carvings in the ceiling beams.



One cannot but try on a crown and other items, as questions arise whilst ambling around and it is important that time is taken to absorb its beauty and history.



The most impressive room is The Painted Chamber. It is believed the panels derive from the 15th century. They were whitewashed over following the dissolution of the monasteries because of their Catholic nature. They were rediscovered in 1935. The panel above depicts St Michael weighing the souls. Visitors spend much time in this small room marveling at the art and stories behind the panels.



A map of Worcester city during the English Civil War. The River Severn flows along the bottom.



A view from an upstairs room of the entrance to the Great Hall.

Organised by Sue Helps of the Local History Group, who unfortunately could not go. A guide led the tour telling of its history and of its many uses over the centuries. It has been beautifully preserved, and one can only wonder how so much has been preserved despite alterations and changes in use over the centuries.

Alan Meyrick for Local History and Gallivanting Groups

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A Review of the visit to The Commandery, Worcester

Whilst Storm Claudia raged outside a mixed bunch of Gallivanterers and Local History buffs took a guided tour of The Commandery in Worcester. The Commandery is a beautiful building and garden where you can encounter the past brought to life.

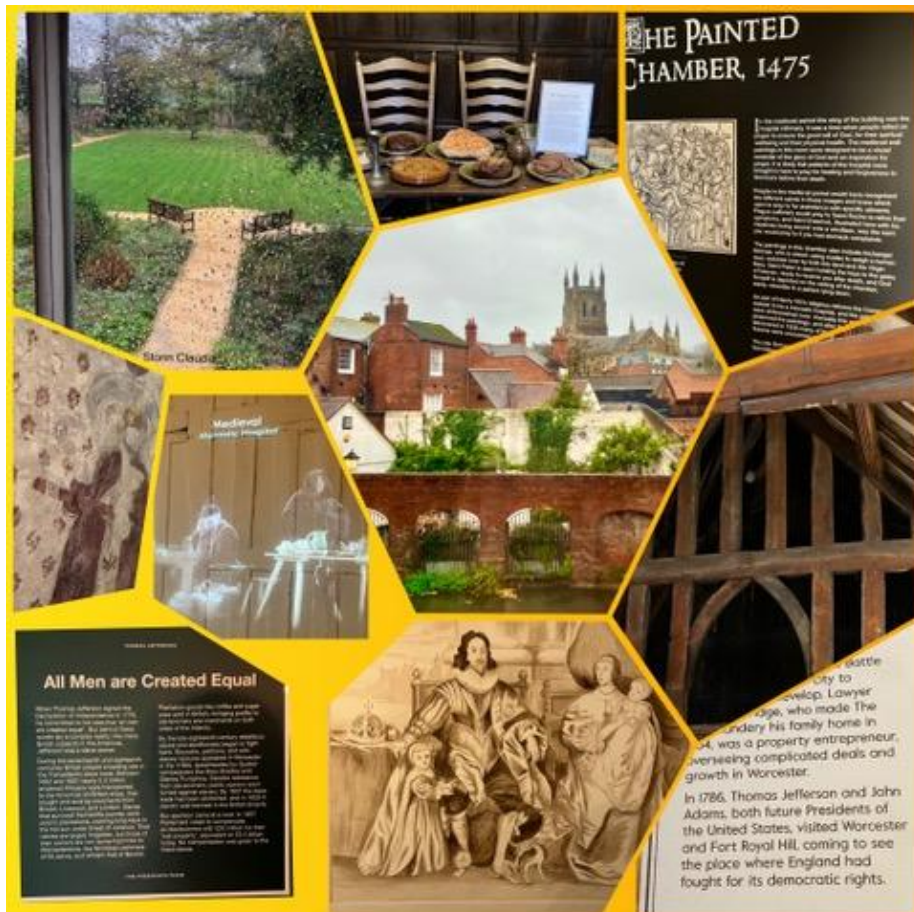
Set in the heart of historic Worcester, it's most famous for being the Royalist Headquarters during the deciding battle of the English Civil War - the Battle of Worcester 1651.

Built on the site of an early medieval chapel, The Commandery has also been a monastic hospital, family home, a college for the blind, and it housed the Littlebury Printworks before becoming today's museum revealing significant stories of the city's history.



Time line of the Commandery

It is many years since I last visited. Oh, my word, the museum has had some money spent on it in the past 30 years and is much improved. It uses modern technology to show holograms of past inhabitants.



In one room we saw some modern murals of King Charles I and II but later in The Painted Chamber we saw some original murals from 1475 which were absolutely amazing.

Our guide was extremely knowledgeable about all the different phases that the building has experienced.

The history is far too vast and complicated to write about here so if you have never been, add it to your bucket list.

Thanks to Sue Helps for organising this interesting day out.

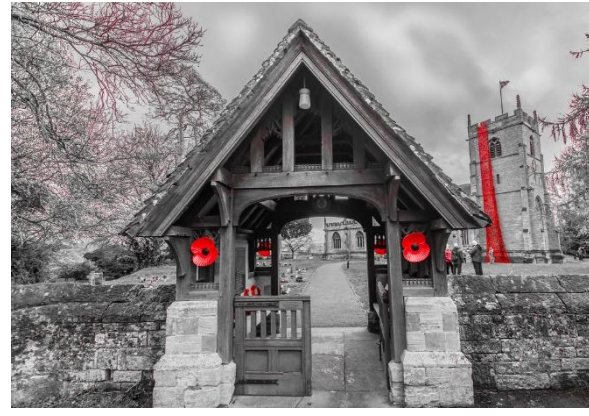
Jan Skan, Gallivanting Group Leader

Droitwich Spa & District

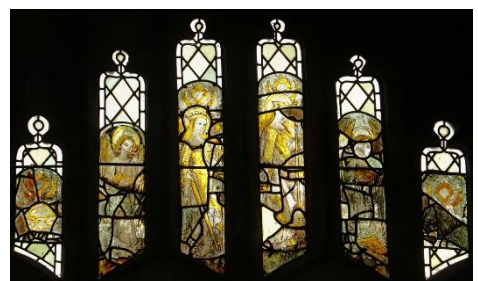
The Digital Photography Group visit to the Worcestershire village of Inkberrow

The visit on the 11th November was to photograph the cascade of over 6000 hand-made poppies suspended from the tower of the church of St. Peter.

The church is grade 1 listed and dates from the 13th century although there was certainly a church before this, possibly of wooden construction. The church is the largest in the district, suggesting that even long ago Inkberrow was a most populous settlement.



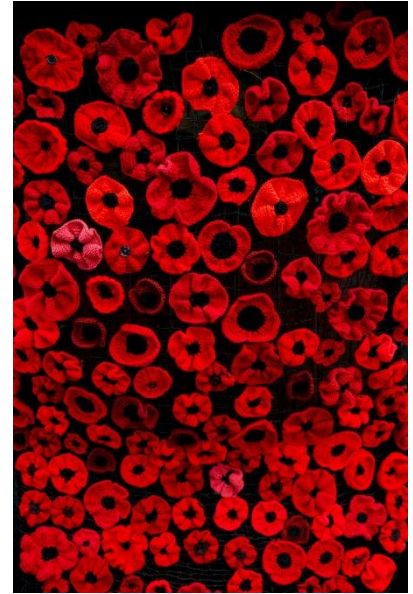
Photos by Peter Marrs, Ted Smith, Janet Oakley, Dugald Holloway, Tim McCarthy, Derek Oakley, Lynn Bowater, John McBride, Alan Meyrick, Anne Matthissen.



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The Digital Photography Group visit to the Worcestershire village of Inkberrow - continued



Inkberrow boasts two traditional English pubs: The Bulls Head, an imposing Georgian building on the main road, and the picturesque black and white half-timbered Old Bull, situated in front of the church and by the village Green.



The fictional "Bull" in the long-running radio serial "The Archers" is based on the Old Bull, giving it a present-day claim to fame. The pub contains several items of Archers memorabilia, following visits by members of the cast. The village is often thought to be the model for Ambridge the fictional village from the BBC series.



Following the photography session at the church we moved on to photograph the Old Bull and to enjoy lunch in the bar.

Derek Oakley



To join our group contact Alan Meyrick at ameyrick54@gmail.com

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Relaxed Multi Media Art Group

During September to December the Art Group have explored collage. We have made our own painted papers using watercolour and acrylics.

We then produced our own collage using these papers and other paper items, buttons, stones, ribbon, cards etc.

We also made some collage Christmas items using our painted papers. Everyone enjoyed the sessions and it was fun learning something new.

Starting in January we are focusing on 'Still life'

We will all use our favourite medium for our results.

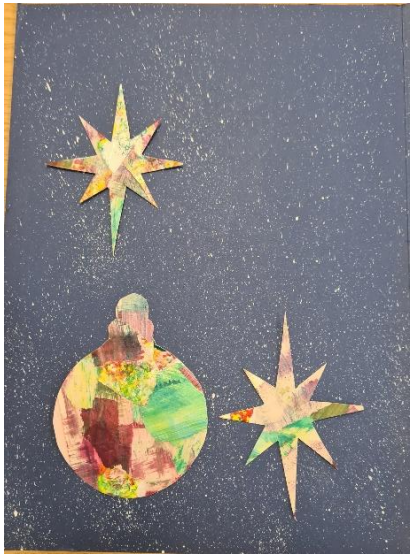
Sue Cook, Group Leader

Pictures by Melanie bell, Kim Burkett, Sue Cook, Diana Garcia, Chris Stuart, Margaret Townsend and Gillian White.



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Relaxed Multi Media Art Group - continued



Droitwich Spa & District

AI and Canva Group

Alan Turing: The Man Who Taught Machines to Think



The Birth of Modern Computing

In 1936, a brilliant young mathematician named Alan Turing changed how the world understood intelligence and technology. At just 24, he described a theoretical machine that could follow precise, step-by-step instruction — what we now call algorithms — to carry out calculations automatically. This all happened even before his further brilliance on cracking the enigma code during WW II.

Before this breakthrough, the word "computer" didn't mean a device at all. It meant a person who spent long hours performing calculations by hand or using a mechanical adding machine. Turing's idea — that a machine could take over those tasks — became the foundation of modern computing.

His theoretical design, the Turing Machine, still underlies every computer on the planet. It was the first time anyone had clearly shown how logic and rules could be turned into mechanical thinking.

Machines That Learn

Turing's curiosity didn't stop at mathematics. He wondered whether machines could ever think and learn like humans. In 1948, while working at the UK's National Physical Laboratory, he wrote a visionary report suggesting that the brain might be simulated on a computer.

He proposed a system built from simple processing units — neurons — connected together, just like the human brain. The signals would travel between them as ones and zeros. Sound familiar? That's the same concept used in today's neural networks, the engines behind AI tools like ChatGPT and image generators.

From Machines to Smart Tools

In just two centuries, humans have moved from manual labour to industrial machines, and now to information work powered by data and software. Today, computers and robots perform much of what once required human effort.

Robot vacuum cleaners were the first household step. Next robotic helpers came in hospitals, offices, and homes — some completely autonomous, others guided by people. Science-fiction writer Robert Heinlein imagined this back in 1942 with his "Waldo" robots, controlled remotely by human hands. The future he imagined is now arriving.

Humans and Machines: A Partnership

Turing's real legacy may not be the idea of artificial intelligence but the concept of human-machine partnership. In 1950, Turing published "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," beginning with a bold question: "Can machines think?"

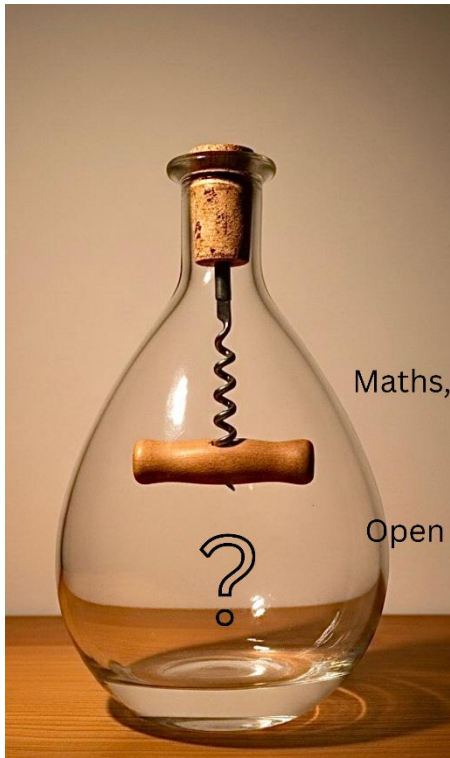
He proposed a test — still famous today — where a judge communicates with both a human and a computer through text. If the judge can't tell which is which, the machine is said to be intelligent. You've seen this in action: every time you chat with Siri, Alexa, or an online chatbot, you're taking part in a modern form of the Turing Test. No machine has yet passed it completely — but they're getting closer every year.

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Alan Turing: The Man Who Taught Machines to Think - continued

Legacy

Alan Turing is remembered as the father of computer science and one of the first to explore artificial intelligence. He proved that logic could be made mechanical — and that machines might one day learn from experience. Seventy years later, his question still challenges us:



AI in daily life and the influence of algorithms

Maths, Science & Technology Group
Friday 20 February 10.30am
Doors open for coffee at 10:00am

Open to all Droitwich u3a Members
£2.50 incl. coffee and biscuit

Rotary House WR9 7BD
Speaker: Gerard van Zwieten

Can machines truly think — or are they simply very good at pretending?

A presentation is given on this subject at the next MST meeting.

Gerard van Zwieten,
Group Leader AI and Canva

Maths, Science & Technology (MST) Group

All members of Droitwich u3a are welcome to attend these talks. Just dip in and out as the topic interests you. We only meet in the winter months. Meetings are held at Rotary House on the 3rd Friday morning of the month. Doors open at 10am for coffee and chat, with the speaker starting at 10.30am. Cost £2.50.

MST Group Programme for 2026

January, 2026

No meeting

20th February - Gerard Van Zwieten - **AI today and Algorithms**

20th March - Brian Wilkes - **Rory the Robot**

Roger & Catherine Bach, Group Leaders

Droitwich Spa & District

Wine Appreciation Group

The Wine Appreciation Group met on 17th December at Rotary House to taste wines of their choice, brought by the members, accompanied by some Christmas food.

There was a wide range of wines from different countries and a variety of grapes and the ones we tasted were as follows:



Sauvignon Blanc - Emma Marris, Marlborough New Zealand - 2024 - 13.5%

We all seem to like NZ Sauvignon Blanc and this was no exception. Fruity, well balanced and exactly what one might expect. Cost £10 -£11. Rated at 8/10.

Chardonnay - Morillon Blanc, Jeff Carrel, Languedoc - 2022 - 14%

Quite high alcohol for a Chardonnay but well balanced and reasonably delicate.

Cost £10.36. We rated this wine at 8/10.

Sauvignon Blanc -Salt River, Stellenbosch, South Africa - 2022 - 13.5%

This was pleasant enough but not as fruity as the Marlborough SB so was rated at 7/10. Cost £13 so perhaps not such good value. (Salt River is actually in Cape Town not Stellenbosch!)

Sancerre - Les Mareennes, Loire Valley - 2023 - 12%

This was another Sauvignon Blanc but rather lacking in character and certainly not as good value since it cost £18 (Waitrose). We rated it at 6/10.

Spatburgunder - Germany - 2023 - 11.5%

A fairly typical Pinot Noir - not very robust but with some red fruit flavours. It was brought back from Germany by one of the members on holiday, where it cost €5. We rated it at 5/10

Primitivo - Stilio, Puglia - 2022 - 14.5%

A very pleasant nose - fruity and robust. The flavour was oaky/buttery and very much enjoyed by most of us. The wine cost £16 and we rated it at 8/10.

Zinfandel - Brasil, Lodi Valley, California - 2022 - 14.5%

An interesting comparison to the Primitivo which is essentially the same grape. The Zinfandel had less tannin and hence was a rather lighter wine on the palate which suited some of the members. It cost £18 and was rated at 7/10.

Bread & Butter Red Blend - Napa Valley, California - 2021 - 13.5%

A unknown blend of red grapes probably Zinfandel, Merlot and others. The wine was similar to other Californian wines with slightly less tannin - pleasant drinking without being startling. It cost £16 (Majestic) and was rated at 6½/10.

Droitwich Spa & District

Wine Appreciation Group - continued

Merlot - Mirlo, Cariñena, Spain - 2024 - 13%

A typical Merlot from northern Spain - quite fruity and full-bodied and was pleasant drinking. Probably better with food. It cost approximately £10 (Laithwaites) and was rated 6/10.

Nero d'Avola - Nero D'Oro, Sicily - 2024 - 14%

Made by "appassimento" method which allows the grapes to dry a little hence concentrating the flavour. Very fruity and quite smooth. Cost £12 (Majestic) and was rated at 7½/10.

Shiraz - Barossa Valley, Australia - 2024 - 14.5%

Perhaps a little disappointing for a Barossa Shiraz - quite fruity but lacking a bit of body - rather ordinary without the usual "oomph". Cost £11 (Tesco) and rated 6½/10.

Our next tasting is scheduled for 18th February when we hope to be tasting various Beaujolais and wines made from Gamay.

Roy Thurston, Group Leader

Beginners Line Dancing Group

Line dancing is great fun and remarkably versatile. Whilst initially part of American culture, the dances are done worldwide and there is a discipline to learning the steps and moving in time to the music.

Our members are a determined bunch and we currently have about twenty-five dances which we select from for each session. The music varies, but in our Christmas dance we tackled Jingle Bell Rock, Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree and In Dulci Jubilo, all danced very effectively with some of our usual steps that are more often done to Country and Western music.

There will be more new dances in 2026, much consolidation for our newer members and plenty of dance favourites for general enjoyment. Added to this, the bonus of keeping fit, keeping learning and having plenty of time to chat in the breaks.

Val Hibbitt, Group Leader



Photo - David Hibbitt

Droitwich Spa & District

The Digital Photography Group final visit of 2025 to the riverside town of Bewdley - theme "Your Favourite Thing About Bewdley"



This attractive Georgian town is nestled on the River Sever in an area with a rich agricultural and industrial history. It provides a gateway to the Wyre Forest itself and the English-Welsh borderlands known as The Marches.

Retaining its unique charm with a wealth of listed buildings, at its heart is the much-acclaimed Bewdley Museum where you can see local crafts people at work, adjacent to the

wonderful Jubilee Gardens and Community Orchard.

The museum also houses the award-winning Tourist Information Centre where staff are on hand to help you make the most of your visit including discounted tickets to major events and attractions plus memorabilia from such organisations as West Midlands Safari Park and Severn Valley Railway.



Once described as "the most perfect small Georgian town in Worcestershire", Bewdley's situation on the banks of the River Sever made it once a major inland port with many thriving industries.

The town has an attractive shopping and riverside area offering a range of pubs, restaurants and cafés, also, its own micro-brewery and a wealth of places to stay.

The 18th Century church of St Anne dominates the main street with its many tiny independent shops, antiques and craft galleries. One shop that stands out on the corner of Load Street is the local branch of

Teddy Gray's selling old fashioned sweets and their famous ice cream. The business was founded in 1826 by John Gray, and the company is now run by his descendants, including his great-great-granddaughter, who is in her 80s and still works at the company. The company has four shops in the Midlands, including the one in Bewdley.

After the session we retired to St. George's Community Cafe for the usual coffee and cakes. Derek Oakley



Droitwich Spa & District

The Digital Photography Group visit to Bewdley - continued



Photos by Alan Meyrick, Janet Oakley, Peter Marris, Derek Oakley, Helen Coward, Pete Coward, Tim McCarthy, Anne Matthissen, John McBride, Lyn Bowater.



Droitwich Spa & District

The Greatest Sing

*** Join 1000 Voices*** - an extraordinary fundraising day of music and community to support the Anna Wilkinson Mockingbird Trust (<https://www.theannawilkinsonmockingbirdtrust.co.uk/>) based in Worcester. The charity helps young people age 16-25 with a cancer diagnosis and arranges memorable events/days out for them and their loved ones.

A choir of 1000 people will sing a 4-part harmony medley, based on the music from the *Greatest Showman*, on 31st January 2026, at Malvern Three Counties Showground. They are asking for the help of u3a members and their friends to be part of the 1000 voices. No previous singing experience is required, just the desire to be part of this unique event and have fun.

If you wish to buy tickets to take part there is more information on the link:

<https://bit.ly/thegreatestsing>

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/theannawilkinsonmockingbirdtrust/1534268>

Pam Ballone, organiser of The Greatest Sing

Newsletter Editor's note...

Thank you everyone who has contributed to this edition of our Newsletter. I hope you have enjoyed the articles and updates, also the colourful supporting photos. Please note that if you send in photos which include members, you must ask their permission.

The next Newsletter will be published in March so please submit any articles and photos, also information on up-and-coming events which members may enjoy, to the editor, either via the website or email newsletter@droitwichu3a.co.uk by Monday 2nd March.

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor