

Happy
New u3a
Year!

NEWSLETTER

New beginnings!

As many of you know I am standing down as Chair at the Annual General Meeting on 15th June. I thought for this 21st and final newsletter article it would be appropriate to look back at my time at the helm. Can I first say that it has been an absolute privilege to be Chair of this wonderful u3a here in Droitwich, it has been a joy to meet such positive and enthusiastic people with such a zest for life. May I also thank my fellow committee members, non-committee members and helpers for their work over the past years. They have been remarkable and I know we have all got so much out of serving you. Finally, I wish to thank all our Group Leaders, you are the backbone of our organisation and your support and commitment can never be understated.



Resin daffodils and tulips
- made by The Craft
Skills Group - see page 16

As we started to recover from the covid pandemic, Sue Cook took over as Chair and I as Vice-Chair. Sue was waiting for a joint replacement which occurred about four months into her time in the role and consequently I took over and stayed in post for the remainder of the year. I was asked if I would continue in the role of Chair and here we are, three years later. Covid saw our membership fall to a little over 400. We ran two open events showcasing our u3a, an advertising campaign together with updating our website, also, we used Facebook and traditional publicity but still our most powerful recruiting tool is you, the membership. As we went into our annual membership renewal, our membership stood at 630, with over sixty active groups. I have written many times, perhaps too many, about the challenges we face if we are to continue as a u3a and I am not about to repeat them in this article.

I am pleased to say that we have had members come forward to stand for many of the posts on the committee with Lesley Short our current Business Secretary standing for Chair. I wish her all the very best if you approve her appointment in June. A full prospectus of the members standing will be circulated in a few weeks' time and of course, your attendance and support is needed at the June meeting. By popular demand Philip Bowen is returning with a talk entitled "Britain in the 70's".

So, what next for me? I will be continuing with those groups which I am a member of and will co-lead the Genealogy Group. Also, touring in our campervan, skiing in the winter, flying my drone to produce short videos of this wonderful country of ours and being involved in the grand-children's lives.

Thank you, it has been a privilege.

Mike Bracey, Chair

A warm welcome to new members Janice Baines, Rosalind Watson, Lorraine Fellows, Helen Stafford, Jan Shepherd, Sean Flanagan, Ian Morgan, Margaret Lawson, Marie Farrell, Mavis Miles, Christopher Adam, Janey Slater, Sylvia Wilkinson, Derek Broderick plus reciprocal members, Susan Young, Bill Sumner and Colin Denson.

Droitwich Spa & District

Messages from the Business Secretary

April 2026 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 **57** members, and as of 28th April, we have raised **£765.00**. This money allows us to support groups and venues to give members a better experience. So, if your group needs equipment please speak to one of the committee members so that we can review your request.



Riviera Travel Scheme - Free Donations to Droitwich u3a

Do you book cruises with Riviera Travel?? If so, if you tell them at the time, when you book your cruise, that you are a member of the Droitwich u3a, they will donate 10% of the value of your cruise to our u3a. These funds can obviously amount to substantial donations which help us to improve the members experiences, help fund groups, help fund special events etc. So, please don't forget to tell them you are a Droitwich u3a member and help us to help you.

Save the Date! Strawberry Tea Monday 17th August

Don't forget to block out 17th August if you want to join us at the 2026 Strawberry Tea and Quiz. This is always a popular event and gets booked up very quickly. We are obviously limited to the numbers based on the venue, so watch out in a couple of months' time for more information from Clare Waite, our Social Secretary on how to reserve your place.



Volunteering to support your u3a

As always, we are continually looking for volunteers to help the committee either on an ongoing or a "one off" basis. I will be looking at how we run/organise events and hope to get people to participate to see if we can improve how we manage our volunteers and what they do to help. Often volunteering only involves people for very short periods of time and often for once a month but gives you a great opportunity to meet new people. If any of you have any interest in contributing in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the opportunities open to members. Keep your eyes open for future information from me about volunteering opportunities.

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Messages from the Business Secretary - continued

Cotswold Link

Don't forget the Cotswold Link Special Event Day on 2nd June on "From Pen to Reader: The Journey of a Book. For more information and to book tickets please visit their website at [Cotswold Link Special Interest Day - Cotswold u3a Link](#)

Cotswold Link half yearly meeting

I and the New Groups Coordinator, Sue Ackrill, attended the last Cotswold Link half yearly meeting at the end of March, and the Third Age Trust new CEO, Iain Cassidy also attended and gave a very positive talk in the afternoon. In summary, Iain is determined to raise the profile of the u3a at a national level with the aim of improving recruitment and making sure that the organisation develops in order to stay relevant to people no longer in full time employment in the future. He is also aware of the need for more technological support for local u3a's and has targeted the head office with working towards providing new tools for u3a's up and down the country. Many u3a's are finding and using different tools to fulfil the needs of the committee and the members which is not only inefficient but also time consuming at the local level. Both Sue and I left the meeting feeling very positive and hopeful for the future of the organisation at a national level.

Third Age Trust / u3a Festival 2026 - 1st to 3rd July

If you wanted to attend this year's festival and haven't already booked your tickets, I am sorry to tell you that it is fully booked, all tickets sold out!!!! The festival was a great success last year, so it is no surprise that tickets have already sold out. We owe a big thank you to the volunteers who organise the event each year and obviously do a great job of it.

Droitwich u3a Annual General Meeting - 15th June 2026

The Annual General Meeting will be held as usual, at the Norbury Theatre on 15th June starting at 2.30pm. I have already sent out details for nominations but if you have mislaid my email and wish to nominate yourself or someone else, please don't hesitate to contact me and I will send you the form and details - don't forget the closing date for submission of nomination forms to me is **18th May 2026**. I look forward to seeing you there.

Lesley Short, Business Secretary

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

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.

18th May – Worcester Paint Festival – Kate Cox taking a guided stroll around some of the murals created in Worcester and explaining a little more about them.

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

Further Speakers and Subjects for 2026

21st September – Raconteur and musician, Roger Browne – The Golden Age of Radio. A nostalgic trip through post-war broadcasts like *Take it from Here* and *Round the Horne*, featuring theme tunes and hilarious anecdotes.

19th October – Tripping Yarns – Brian Anderson.

16th November – Song writing – Andy Smith

I hope you can make all of these.

Geoff Stollard, Speaker Organiser

Group News – from the Existing Groups Co-ordinator

It has been a busy few months for Group Leaders as they have helped enormously with the process of the renewal of membership. They have reminded their group members who haven't got round to it yet, and helped those who find the process challenging.

The Croquet Group are currently without a leader for the new season, so thanks to Mike Fern for getting the group going over the last two seasons and please get in touch if you think it's something you could do. There would be lots of help available.

We were sorry to see the recent closure of the Droitwich Working Men's Club, not least because some of our groups met there, but the good news is that they have all found new homes. Canasta has moved to The Herriots and the Bridge Group are currently meeting at The Copcut Elm.

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Group News - from the Existing Groups Co-ordinator - continued

The Pétanque 2 Group are without an administrative leader at present. There are members who are willing to organise games, so please get in touch if you feel you can help with this. The job is not onerous, there is lots of help available and it will save the group from closure.

The Snooker Group has also recently found a new home in Worcester.

The Garden Visits Group continues to be very popular. Perhaps we could consider starting up a new group? If you think you could be a Group Leader and organise visits to gardens, or would like to be put on the waiting list for a new group then please get in touch with me, the Groups Coordinator, on the website.

Many thanks to all our wonderful Group Leaders without whom we couldn't offer the range of groups that we do, and if you feel that you could organise a group in any subject that interests you then please get in touch.

Anne Everard, Existing Groups Coordinator

News from the Groups

The AI and Canva Group

Got questions about AI?

Your u3a AI Support and Service Group is here to help.

- For individual members
- For Group Leaders
- For u3a Groups

https://droitwichspa.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/ai-and-canva/

Gerard van Zwieten, AI and Canva Group Leader

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The Digital Photography Group indoor studio session



On 27th February the Digital Photography Group held an indoor session at the studio of the Bromsgrove Photographic Society using studio lamps kindly loaned by the society.

Although not our first indoor session, it was the first using the facilities of a studio, using studio lighting and covering portraiture.

Individual pictures were taken of members of the group followed by a group picture. It was a very successful and fun session and one we look forward to repeating.



Thanks to Dug and Peter for their help setting up the lamps and to Peter for supplying the drinks and biscuits.
Derek Oakley.

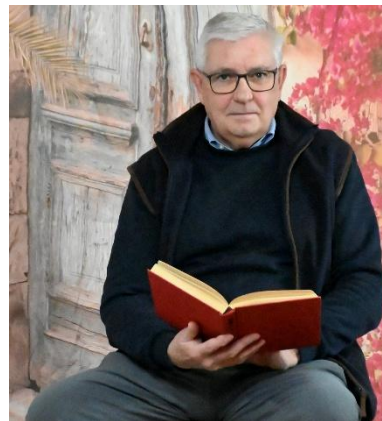


All members have given permission for their pictures to be used.

Photos by Lynne Bowater, Dug Holloway, Alan Woolhead, Janet Oakley, Peter Marrs, Derek Oakley, Alan Meyrick, Pete Coward, Pattie Smith and Barbara Newton.

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The Digital Photography Group indoor studio session - continued



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

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The Gallivanting Group

Review of the visit to The West Midlands Police Museum

Sixteen Gallivanterers departed Droitwich on the 9.53am train to Snow Hill Station and by 11.02am, they were banged up behind bars in jail!

We went to the "Lock Up" which was constructed in 1891 and operational as a Police Cell Block until 2016. It is sandwiched between Steelhouse Lane Police Station and the Victoria Law Courts. We were able to view the underground passage way along which prisoners were marched from the cell block to the law courts.

The cell block closed in 2016 and finally opened as The West Midlands Police Museum in 2022. The collection of artefacts was previously displayed in a wing of Sparkhill Police Station where the museum was previously housed.



The museum is constantly being updated and they have won many awards.

After our guided tour, we could have played around taking mug shots or practicing taking finger prints the old black ink way but lunch was beckoning so we headed to "The Old Contemptibles".

This Public House was built in 1880 and renamed in 1953 in memory of a group from the First World War British Expeditionary Force who met regularly at the pub. Outside the Inn are two signs which are three dimensional representations of the Mons Star, a campaign medal*. Inside the bar are three murals depicting First World War soldiers.

We were lucky enough to grab fourteen seats and were soon devouring our lunch.

Jan Skan, Gallivanting Group Leader

- Editor's note: The 1914 Star, also known as the Mons Star, was awarded to soldiers who served in France and Belgium between 5 August and 22 November 1914. They took part in the first battle of the First World War.

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Droitwich Wind Instrument Group (DWIG)

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

Preparations are now under way for our annual visit to the Wye Float event in Hereford in August, which this year features "Safari" as its theme.



We are rehearsing tunes such as "Swingin' Safari" and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and we have made a display board depicting a safari scene. Some of our members plan to wear safari-style clothing, and we have heard rumours of a zebra costume.

Now is a great time for you to get involved: we welcome all music-reading wind instrument players. 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

Editor's Note:

DWIG were recently featured by our **Droitwich u3a Facebook Group** - A step back in time to an event on two week-ends in June and July 2024.

A quintet from DWIG played as the The Village Band in Highley Engine House for the Severn Valley Railway's "Step Back to the 1940's". Group members dressed in 1940s style and played wartime tunes including "Tipperary" and "Keep the Home Fires Burning."

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

Singing for Pleasure Group

Singing for Pleasure is a thriving, friendly group, meeting twice a month at the Baptist Church in Droitwich and we always love to accommodate new members.

We sing lots of songs in each session. Everyone is welcome, whether you 'can sing' or think you 'can't sing!' Singing is good for all of us. Do come and see if it makes you smile too!

Gill Ansfield, Group Leader

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The Digital Photography Group visit to the Tything, Worcester

The Tything features a distinct and varied architectural character dominated by 18th and 19th century red brick and painted stucco. It forms a key historic, linear, urban conservation area north of the city centre.

It is characterised by Georgian style residences, ornate door surrounds, sash windows and two to four storey terraces

including the Queen Elizabeth Almhouses, the Royal Grammar School, Britannia House, St. Oswald's Hospital, Kay's and Clydsdale House.



It originated as the ancient hamlet of Whistones, a settlement extending north from the city's Foregate through what is now the Tything.

The Tything of Whistones was a part of the parish of Claines and served as a rural hamlet outside the city walls for centuries.

The spasmodic ribbon development, had grown by the late 18th century into a residential suburb for well to do families. The original hamlet extended from the Liberty Post (near Foregate Street) to Barbourne and was officially absorbed into the City of Worcester following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.



Derek Oakley.

Photos by Janet Oakley, Peter Marrs, Derek Oakley, Jeff Gogarty and Alan Meyrick.

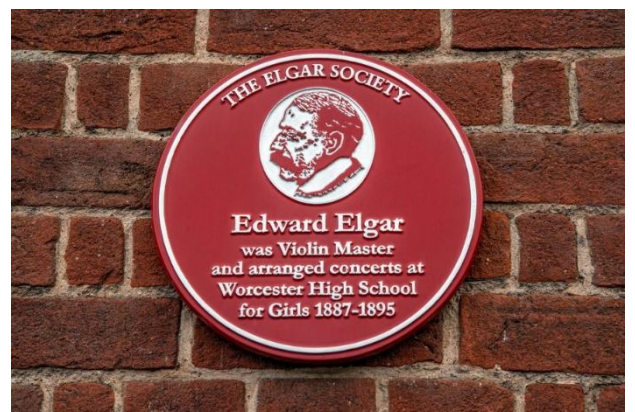


To join our group contact Alan Meyrick at ameyrick54@gmail.com

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The Digital Photography Group visit to the Tything, Worcester - continued

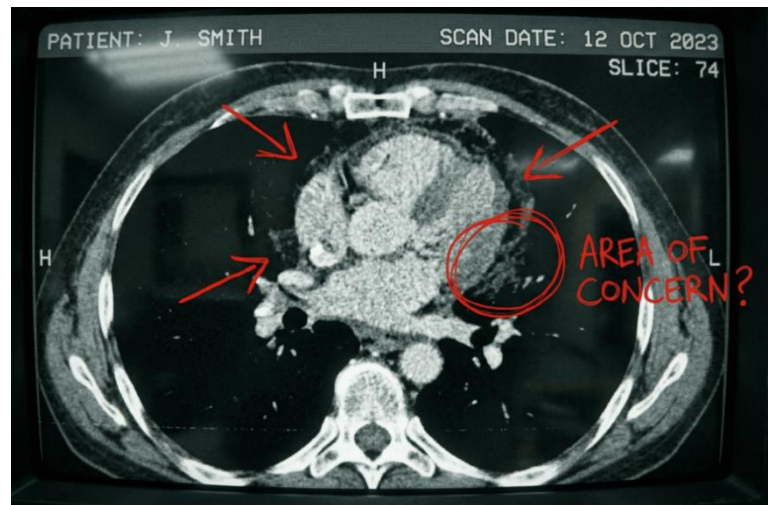


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The AI and Canva Group

AI in action -

Researchers at the University of Oxford have built an AI tool that predicts heart failure up to five years before it develops, using routine cardiac CT scans that patients are already getting. The system reads invisible changes in the fat surrounding the heart that indicate the muscle underneath is inflamed and deteriorating. **No human doctor can see these patterns.** No existing imaging test can detect them.



The details:

- **The Data:** Trained and validated across 72,000 patients at nine NHS trusts with a decade of follow-up data. Published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.
- **The Accuracy:** 86% on predicting heart failure within five years. Patients in the highest risk group were 20 times more likely to develop heart failure than those in the lowest. One in four of them did.
- **How It Works:** Fat around the heart changes texture and composition when the muscle beneath is diseased. The AI reads those textural shifts from standard CT scan data and produces a risk score with no human input required.
- **NHS Rollout:** The Oxford team is seeking regulatory approval to add the tool to routine cardiac CT analysis in NHS radiology departments. Around 350,000 patients are referred for these scans every year in the UK. The team is also adapting the tool to work on any chest CT scan, performed for any reason.

The Bigger Application: Over one million people in the UK live with heart failure. Globally, the figure is over 60 million. The condition is consistently diagnosed too late, often only when a patient arrives at hospital with severe damage. An early warning system built into scans that are already happening could shift the entire treatment model from reaction to prevention.

This is AI doing exactly what the technology was supposed to do. Reading data at a scale and resolution that humans cannot, then giving doctors the information they need to intervene years before damage becomes irreversible. If this rolls out across the NHS, it will be one of the first genuinely prospective AI diagnostic tools deployed at national scale in any country.

Gerard van Zwieten, AI and Canva Group

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"Framed" - A Photographic Theme, by Alan Meyrick.

Suggesting a theme for a photography session can help the photographer focus on a specific idea or subject. But, setting a theme does not mean everyone must photograph only images which may fit the idea or subject, it is only a guide.

I am always looking for subjects which could be considered as a theme for my photographic colleagues. Recently I went to a photography exhibition at The Hive in Worcester (the first integrated academic and public library in Europe). As I walked toward its entrance my eyes were drawn to the Victorian arches of the railway viaduct; not just the architecture but also how the arches framed views and, in their glass-frontages, mirrored what I was standing outside.

Therefore, after I visited the exhibition, I decided to explore those earlier thoughts further. One can now walk alongside the railway viaduct from the river to Foregate Street station. As I strolled the short distance, I used my mobile to photograph what I saw. Viewing the images at home later, I had no doubt that "Framed" was a good theme. My colleagues did not let me down, as you will see below, from our photographic session held on 24th March.



A view through the arches, framing the disused rail line and the ground of the 'Old Infirmary', now living quarters for university students, with leafless trees in the foreground.

Photo by Pattie Smith



Walking through an arch and looking back The Hive framed in depth by the arch of the disused railway line, further narrowed by the arch of the existing GWR railway line.

Photo by Pattie Smith



The arches are being developed to accommodate businesses; the glass frontages mirroring the modern structures. The Victorian brickwork framing the modern designs.

Photo by Pattie Smith

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Is there a better way to frame your Photography Group colleagues, avidly taking photographs outside The Hive mirroring the flats behind them?

Photo by Ted Smith



The frontage of the café and roastery 'The Method' within an arch of the railway viaduct, mirroring the offices behind.

Photo by Ted Smith



But one should not confine oneself to arches when looking for frames because they can be found in all shapes and sizes wherever one wanders.

Here day-to-day life is captured within the frame of the exit / entrance to Friary Walk.

Photo by Ted Smith



Windows in an older building framing posters, contrasting the windows in the rather plain modern flats across the road.

Photo by Mel Simkiss

Droitwich Spa & District



A streetlight and telegraph pole framed in the screen of the parked ambulance in The Walk.

Photo by Mel Simkiss



Focusing on the stairwell of the Infirmary, with the chapel to the left, the weathered disused railway arch contrasts majestically with the redbrick of the renovated university student accommodation.

Photo by Mel Simkiss



Unoccupied archway - looking through, the disused railway line can be seen. The original idea was that this lower viaduct would skirt the river and take lines to and from the Royal Worcester Porcelain, past the Cathedral. But permission was refused so as not to disturb services.

Photo by Alan Meyrick



In the distance the Infirmary, the railings of the disused railway viaduct and mirrored above the golden roof of The Hive.

Photo by Alan Meyrick

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"Frames"

Photo by Alan Meyrick

I hope you agree with me that the images and ideas which led to their production are good. If you wish to join the Droitwich u3a Digital Photography Group to enjoy and develop photography, not forgetting a coffee and chats afterwards, contact me at: ameyrick54@gmail.com

Alan Meyrick, Group Leader

Craft Skills Group

The first meeting of the year was on 14th April making the ever-popular Resin Flowers, this time, it was Daffodils and Tulips.



Future Workshops for May and June are Dotty Art and Felting.



Clare Waite, Group Leader

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Garden Lovers Group

The Garden Lovers Group is all geared up for the 2026 gardening season - and beyond!

Following our very productive planning meeting on Wednesday, 4th March at Springridge Nursery, we have an exciting schedule in place, thanks to all our members' ideas and suggestions.

Our April trip has already taken place on Wednesday 1st April at Witley Court, Great Witley, WR6 6JT. More on that later...

The remainder are as follows:

Wednesday 6th May - Warndon Court, St Nicholas Lane, Worcester, WR4 0SL. A two-acre family garden. This has replaced our original trip to The Alpine Garden Society, who will be preparing for their entry at the Malvern Show! We will now be visiting their garden next year.

Wednesday 3rd June - A local private garden.

Wednesday 1st July - Bourton House GL56 9AE

Wednesday 5th August - Summer social, plant swap and bring a cake - kindly hosted by one of our members.

Wednesday 2nd September- Sezincote Garden GL56 9AW

Wednesday 7th October - Miserden Garden GL6 7JA

Wednesday 4th November- Coffee and cake social at Bonnie's at Wildgoose WR2 6LS - an opportunity to support a local charity:

"Wild goose Rural Training is a care farm for adults and young people based in the heart of Worcestershire. Occupying a 42 acre site, comprising a 36 acre nature reserve and 6 acre care farm, we offer our students the chance to learn about horticulture, conservation, farming, arts and crafts, cooking, mechanics and animal care, connecting them with the outdoors, nature and all of the goodness that it brings."

Wednesday 2nd December - Christmas Carvery Lunch at Bodenham Arboretum, DY11 5TB

Wednesday 3rd February 2027 - Snowdrops at Dudmaston Hall, WV15 6QN - To be confirmed!

We also discussed other suggestions that will be carried over for consideration next year - eg Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Arley Arboretum, Croome Walled Garden and now also the Alpine Garden Society.

If any u3a members would like to join our friendly group of garden enthusiasts, please contact our Group Leader, Elizabeth Bartle.



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Garden Lovers Group - continued

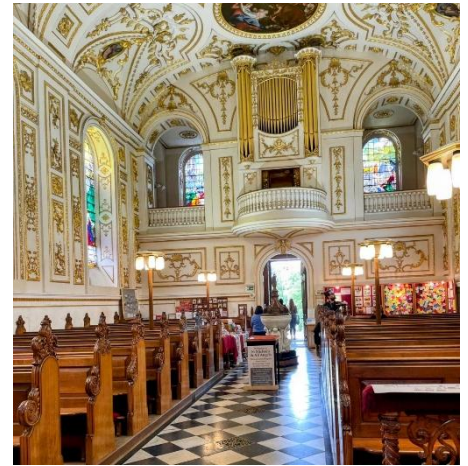
Witley Court visit

As mentioned above, our second visit of the year took place on Wednesday 1st April and we certainly weren't fooled by our experience there! We were lucky with the weather, and the famous fountain was a delight as always.



Apparently, it hadn't been working the day before! Also, we were the first visitors of the year at The Secret Garden Tearooms, near to the beautiful Baroque church, which opened for the season just that day. A great time was had by all.

And finally, a reminder about our next visit on Wednesday 6th May, which will be an NGS Garden, opening for our group and supporting the NGS charity, Warndon Court in Worcester, WR4 0SL. A private two-acre family garden. Entry is £6, plus £5 for bottomless coffee/tea and a slice of cake! There is parking at the nearby church and disabled parking at the house.



Jan van Zwieten, for Garden Lovers Group

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.

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

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

We take a break for July and August returning on 11th September with the talk cancelled in January

- **The Willow Court Farmhouse Project**

Jeff Gogarty, Group Leader

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The Gallivanting Group

Review of the visit to The George Marshall Medical Museum

We often think of Worcester as a provincial city but actually, Worcester is the historic home of the British Medical Association.

It was founded in the city in 1832, initially as the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, by Charles Hastings. He was born in Ludlow, started his training as an Apothecary in Stourport on Severn aged 16 and went on to study medicine in Edinburgh, before eventually returning to Worcester. The Provincial Medical and Surgical Association became the BMA in 1858.



George Marshall was a Scot who came to Worcester in 1931 as a GP. He originally took up General Practice in Worcester in the Tything but later became a Consultant Surgeon at Worcester Royal Infirmary.

He was an enthusiastic collector of old medical and surgical equipment and by his retirement he had accumulated a large and varied collection of several thousand objects including death masks, which were the first discussion point in our tour.

We divided into two groups and Louise, our guide, gave both groups an informative and at times macabre introduction to the museum, beginning with the death masks displayed at the entrance.

These masks were made of criminals recently hung at the city gaol, the skulls being transported through an underground tunnel from the gaol to the Infirmary opposite. Phrenology was a pseudo-science at the time and they believed that the lumps and bumps could identify criminal traits. A historic kind of profiling.

We moved on to the Apothecary where we learnt numerous recipes for weird and wonderful potions to cure conditions such as gout. Then, bloodletting and the use of leeches was the next topic.

Thence to Victorian Surgery - one person in each group had a limb amputation. Coincidentally, both chose opium for sedation, we could have been knocked out! The surgeon worked quickly, 20 seconds being the optimum time for a good survival rate.

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The Gallivanting Group - continued

There followed some quiet time to browse the cabinets. I was obviously interested in "The X-Rays and Images Cabinets" and yearned to be back on the shop floor! Others, some about to have orthopaedic surgery, were more interested in the display of artefacts.

The museum is open daily and free to visit. Our knowledgeable guide brought the medicine of the past alive with her vivid descriptions. However, for all its problems, I think I prefer to be alive in the 21st century rather than the 1800s!

It was a great morning out and we will probably repeat it next year for group members who missed out. Another positive is that some of us now know that it is entirely possible to get to Worcester Royal Hospital from Droitwich on two buses and that one doesn't have to rely on Google alone since there is a First Bus app.

Jan Skan, Group Leader

Wine Appreciation Group

The Wine Appreciation Group met in Rotary House on 15th April for a tasting of sparkling wines from around the world. The opinions and conclusions were as follows:

AUSTRALIA - Kooliburra Sparkling Shiraz - 13% - Aldi £7.49

NV* but probably quite recent.

Produced by Hill-Smith Estates who also make Yalumba wines in Angaston, South Australia.

This is basically red Champagne. A sparkling wine made with Shiraz. A medium bodied wine with fresh flavours of juicy cherries, red currants with hints of liqueur chocolates. It still has the bubbles and the expected sharp flavours but there's also a slightly sweet cherry taste - basically it's like cherry cola with added black coffee. It has curiosity value rather than drinking value. We rated this at 4/10.

NV* - Non Vintage - champagne is generally given the year of its production as some years are better than others, so NV may be a mixture of years to produce the final wine.

FRANCE - Comte de Senneval Champagne - 12.5% - Lidl £13.99

NV but probably quite young.

A bona-fide Champagne from the Lanson and Besserat de Bellefon stable in Epernay. It is a blend of the three main Champagne grapes Chardonnay - Pinot Noir - Pinot Meunier.

It's a little basic in texture, but shows classic Champagne notes of biscuit, green apple, and lemon zest. The mousse is lively, and while the blend may not be as refined as premium examples, it's balanced and refreshingly dry. There's enough complexity to keep it interesting, and it would work well as a party drink or casual celebration bottle. Not too startling and we rated it at 7/10.



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Wine Appreciation Group - continued

NEW ZEALAND - Lindauer Special Reserve - 12% - Majestic £14.50 (from £17)

Produced by Lion Brewery in East Tāmaki in Auckland. The vineyards are in the Waitakere area west of Auckland.

This wine is a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, with a tiny portion of Pinotage. The wine goes through full malolactic conversion adding extra creaminess before ageing on lees for a minimum of 24 months giving it the biscuity, yeast and toasted nut characters. The high proportion of Pinot Noir adds weight, flavour and depth of colour. A pleasantly surprising wine which we rated at 8/10.

ENGLAND - Silverhand Estate Brut - 12% - Majestic £15.50

NV but, using methode champenoise, has spent two years in the bottle.

Produced at the Silverhand Estate just outside Rochester. The area shares the same chalky flint soils and Kimmeridge clay that run down into northern France, near Épône and Reims. This makes the terroir perfect for growing the key grape varieties used in premium sparkling wine production: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier. The ratio is 60%, 20%, 20%.

Delicate aromas of elderflower, white hedgerow flowers, pear and apricot, leading to a fine mousse and refreshing finish with lingering flavours of citrus and ripe stone fruit. We thought it a bit over-priced and rated it at 7½/10. M&S also has a Bramble Hill sparkling wine from this estate at £14.

FRANCE - Bouvet Ladubay Saumur Saphir - 12% - Majestic £16 (from £18.50)

The Bouvet-Ladubay winery is located in Saumur on the west bank of the Loire.

Made by the méthode traditionnelle from mostly Chenin Blanc with a little Chardonnay - vintage 2023. We considered this to be an excellent alternative to champagne and rated it at 8½/10.

The cheaper Bouvet Ladubay Saumur is good but not as good as the Saphir.

SOUTH AFRICA - Graham Beck Brut Rosé - 12% - Majestic £12 (from £17.50)

NV but disgorged 2025.

The winery is located a couple of miles west of Robertson in the Cape.

Made from the traditional "méthode cap classique" wines of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The pink comes from an enzymic reaction during transporting the Pinot Noir grapes to the cellar.

The wine has a fine lively mousse and is brisk on the palate with subtle hints of berry and cherry. We rated this at 8/10 and noted that it was not as good as the white Graham Beck

Roy Thurston, Group Leader

Handbell Ringing Group - sad news!

Unfortunately, the Droitwich u3a Handbell Ringing Group are finishing.

Wendy Hartwright, Group Leader writes - "We are down to three members and we need at least six to really enjoy ringing. The minimum number required is a regular 6 players. Droitwich is such a busy, enjoyable u3a that it seems there just aren't enough hours in the week to fit everything in!"

All rather sad.

Wendy Hartwright, Group Leader

Droitwich Spa & District

Garden Lovers Group

Ten members of our group enjoyed a self-drive holiday to Sussex during mid-April.

We stayed at The Sedlescombe Golf Hotel, where we were looked after really well.

The highlights of the holiday were a visit to Pashley Manor Gardens and to Sarah Raven's cutting garden at Perch Hill Farm. Some of you may have seen Sarah on TV gardening shows over the years.



Pashley Manor, Wadhurst



Sarah Raven's Garden, Burwash



We also managed a trip to the coast, on a very breezy day! The weather was kind to us in general, however, and we saw all the gardens in glorious sunshine.

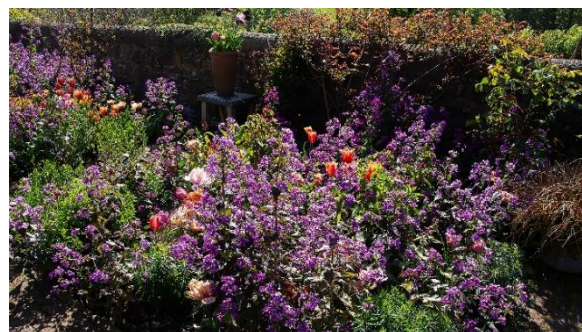
The trip was the idea of our Group Leader, Elizabeth, who expertly organised the whole event and a great time was had by all!

Jan van Zwieten for Elizabeth Bartle, Group Leader

Droitwich Spa & District

Garden Lovers Group - continued

Barry Tait, our Membership Secretary took a large number of photos of both the gardens visited.



The photos above show a sample, for more, Barry has given permission for member's to access the following website: <https://reprotech.co.uk/holiday/> If you are a garden lover you will not be disappointed!

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

Line Dancing Group - Are we still Beginners?

An interesting question I was recently asked!

We began in September 2023 and now have thirty dances in our repertoire. Some, are sixteen step beginner dances but most have thirty-two steps and cross over to improvers in their level of difficulty. We can even 'Waltz Across Texas' with a forty-eight step sequence - or most of us can! It is definitely a challenge to memory and stamina, dancing to a four-minute track, keeping to the beat and with the correct foot-work!

We regularly complete ten dances in a session. We do fit in rests and social time too and the rule is, do as much or as little as you want to and 'listen to your body'. It is okay to watch some dances.

We are open to new members. If you have never line danced before it does take time to learn. Well worth the effort though if you enjoy moving to music and certainly a good work out for brain and body.

Well done Droitwich u3a line dancers, amazing work and certainly great fun.

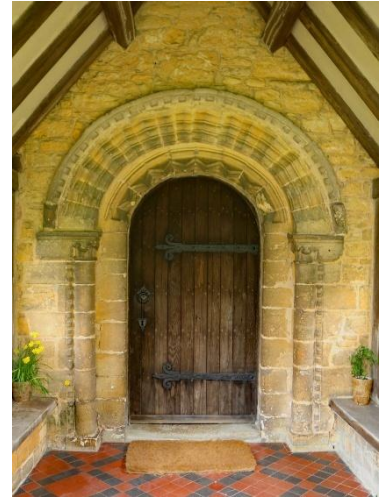


Droitwich Spa & District

The Digital Photography Group visit to the Worcestershire villages of Bricklehampton and Elmley Castle



Bricklehampton's parish church, dedicated to St Michael and All Angels, is a grade II listed building. The medieval church was rebuilt and restored in 1875-1877 but the 12th-century font and south doorway remain.



As of November 2020, there are 12 listed buildings in the parish, all at grade II, including the 1848 mansion Bricklehampton Hall, now a nursing home, and a K6 telephone box*.



Elmley Castle is an attractive village at the foot of Bredon Hill. The village is very pretty with a large number of half-timbered cottages. St. Mary's Church is a Grade 1 listed building dating back to the 11th-century Norman period. It features early herringbone masonry, a 13th century tower and significant 17th century monuments, including the alabaster tomb of the Savage family and the massive memorial of the 1st Earl of Coventry.



Editor's note: *The K6 red telephone box was designed by Sir Gilbert Scott to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935.

Droitwich Spa & District

Digital Photography Group visit to Bricklehampton and Elmley Castle -cont'd.



Pictures by Janet Oakley,
Derek Oakley, Alan Meyrick,
Ted Smith, Melvin Simkiss.



On the slopes of Bredon Hill are the remains of the Norman castle which gave the village its name. The castle was erected in the late 11th century as a series of circular earthworks. Stone defences were added in the 12th century and extended in the 13th century. Very little now remains and the castle is now little more than a series of partially defined earthen mounds on the sloping hillside.



The visit concluded with a visit to the Queen Elizabeth Inn and restaurant for coffee and cake. The Inn is an historic community run pub, famously linked to the visit of Queen Elizabeth 1st in August 1575.

Derek Oakley

To join our group contact Alan Meyrick
at americk54@gmail.com

Droitwich Spa & District

The Quiz Group

The group meets monthly (except July, August and December) at the Old Library in Ombersley Street, Droitwich Spa and is open to new members. Team members are selected on the day, usually tables of four, five or six so whilst bringing a friend for support is helpful, it is not a necessity. New players quickly grow their circle of friends and have a chance to discuss other u3a groups and activities.



Questions cover a variety of areas, but with no defined subjects. We don't do Science, History or Sport rounds, but they may come up along the way. Round headings are normally based around a common phrase or saying, so each is effectively Potluck. Our first ever question-set "Off to a Flying Start" featured a question on the Wright brothers, followed by the location of Start Point, then the meaning of flying a flag upside-down. This pattern continues across all our quizzes.

Are the questions hard? Yes, No, or only if you are working alone. They are more 'Celebrity Squares' than 'Mastermind'. As for the rewards, these are far from 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' and closer to 'Blankety Blank'!

We always include a final round on news items from the previous month, so limited 'research?' is possible. Those who attended in April know that twenty camels were disqualified from the 2026 Camel Beauty Show Festival. They now know why - but do you?

Join us for a couple of hours of fun and friendship

Andy Burge, Group Leader

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 July 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 6th July.

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

I have now been editing our newsletter for two years. I would like to give particular thanks to Jan van Zwieten who, throughout that time, has done a wonderful job proof reading the copy. We aim to make our newsletter as accurate and relevant as we can. Thanks Jan, you are very much appreciated.