

NEWSLETTER

A letter from our new Chair

I am writing my first newsletter article as Chair and hope that you will all find this and future ones interesting and informative. I would like to thank everyone that attended our AGM on 15th June, it was a great turnout which is much appreciated and it was good to see so many of you there. The AGM went smoothly and the speaker, Philip Bowen was, as always, very entertaining. I would like to thank you all for voting in the new committee and I am really looking forward to working with the committee to ensure that you all continue to have an enjoyable experience participating in our great Droitwich u3a. I hope to see many more of you at the various events we will be holding throughout the year. You can see who is on the committee at the end of the article.



Coronation Day Celebrations in
Droitwich High Street 1911 - page 23

Although I thanked volunteers at the AGM, many of you could not attend, so I would like to say a big thank you to the outgoing committee members, Mike Bracey (Chair) and Anne Everard (Existing Groups Coordinator) for all their hard work and efforts over the last 3-4 years. I would also like to thank the people who stepped forward to volunteer for the committee roles which means that we have a "full house" and should make things a lot easier for the whole committee this year.

Members of the committee will continue to cooperate with other local u3a's, the Cotswold Link and the West Midlands Link to try to gain the most from the best practices used by other u3a's.

We will also try to ensure that you hear all about regional and national events, workshops and online groups.

I am looking forward to regularly meeting as many of our new members as possible via our new bi-monthly New Member Sessions. These have currently been held prior to our monthly meetings at the Norbury, but we will be considering other options which should give us more time to spend with new members. Sadly, one of our long-standing members, Josephine Gylee, passed away on 15th June. Our thoughts and commiserations go out to all her family. She will be missed, not only by her family but also by the u3a members.

I would like to remind you all that our u3a is "run by the members for the members" and our organisation exists and runs smoothly only because of all the volunteers. Volunteering is probably the best way of making many new friends and also having lots of fun without it having to take up too much of your time.

A warm welcome to new members Jennifer Mills. Vivian Allen, Kim Brown, Sue Shaw, Philip Shaw, Sally Shaw, Liz Price, Doris Shore, Catherine Baldwin, Lynn Thornes, Lynda Garner, Liz Cresswell, Glynis Betteridge, Jane Cross, Ruth Oliver plus reciprocal members, Felicity Jenkins and Kathy Bradley.

Droitwich Spa & District

A letter from our new Chair - continued

The committee will be looking at ways to encourage more people to come forward to help us make sure that everyone has help and support in whatever task they perform and that we have contingency and succession plans in place to ensure we do not have to face any unexpected crisis. Currently, a lot of the volunteers have been helping out and performing tasks for many years. I feel that it is only fair that some of those volunteers who may want a change, have some help, or to have a break, can do so. To make this possible we need newer members to step forward.

I would also like to remind people that we maintain our low membership fee due to the diligence of the committee from a financial perspective but also from receiving funds from **HMRC** (via **Gift Aid**), **Riviera Travel** (via donations from members' bookings) and **Easy Fund Raising** (from donations from members via On-line Shopping.) If you haven't already done so, please do consider donating via these avenues. All these additional funds help us to reward volunteers, offer events at amounts significantly below the actual cost and to support groups, without us having to use members' fees. Check out the **Members** section on our website for information on the three schemes and how to register.

Finally, I would like to say, that as Chair, moving forward, I know that we will not always get things right, but we will try our best and we are always open to new ideas or suggestions on how we can improve things and what we can do better. So, please feel free to contact the committee at any time. I hope you all have a great summer and continue to participate in many of our groups and forthcoming events

Lesley Short, Chair

Droitwich u3a 2026-27 Committee

Executive Committee Officers/Trustees

Chair: Lesley Short

Treasurer: David Hibbitt

Business Secretary: Jonathan Watkins

Committee Members/Trustees

Vice Chair: Susan Ackrill

Membership Secretary, Website Administrator: Barry Tait

Groups Co-ordinator: Julie Woodhouse

Speaker Organiser: Geoff Stollard

Social Secretary: Clare Waite

Accessibility Officer: Peter Field

Beacon Administrator: Les Hazlewood

Non-Committee roles/non-Trustee (non-voting)

Minuting Secretary: Heather Somerfield

Newsletter Editor: Val Hibbitt

Facebook Administrator: David Wornham



Strawberry Tea and Quiz

- Monday 17th August

- details page 7



Rik Mayall Comedy Festival

- pages 28 and 29

Droitwich Spa & District

Accessibility and Risk Assessment

My name is Peter Field, and I was appointed Accessibility Officer at the AGM. It may sound rather formal, but the role has two main parts;



First, I review Beacon's u3a records to make sure the information we hold about our venues is accurate, current, and relevant. This includes details such as opening times, telephone numbers, email addresses, and facilities. I have visited all 21 of our venues to help ensure they provide a safe environment for our members.

For anyone unfamiliar with it, Beacon is the u3a movement's dedicated online management system. Created by u3a members for u3a members, it securely supports local administration, including membership records, interest groups, finances, and email communications.

The second part of my role is to make sure all our groups are covered by the u3a insurance policy. To support this, I have been working with the Committee and Group Leaders to complete the u3a Duty of Care and Wellbeing (DCW) checklists. These documents are essential to ensure that, if an accident occurs, we are properly covered by our insurance.

That is my role in a nutshell, and I hope this gives you a clearer understanding. The tasks have involved a great deal of hard work, but I admit that I enjoy a challenge.

If I can help you at any time, I will be very happy to do so in any way I can.

Peter Field, Accessibility Officer

Messages from the new Business Secretary, Jonathan Watkins

I am the new Business Secretary, taking over from Lesley Short at the AGM. Lesley has recently completed a comprehensive handover to me and I hope I can do the role as well as Lesley did!



June 2026 Easyfundraising Scheme Update

I would like to say a big thank you to all those members who are signed up to the Easyfundraising Scheme. We have 57 members, and as of 30th June, we have raised £805. This money allows us to support groups and venues to give members a better experience. So, if your group needs support, please speak to one of the committee members so that we can review your request. If you would like to join this 'easy to use' scheme, please let me know and I will send you details of how to do so.



Riviera Travel Scheme - Free Donations to Droitwich u3a

Are you booking a holiday through Riviera Travel? If so, please tell them at the time of booking that you are a member of the Droitwich u3a, and Riviera Travel will donate 10% of the value of your holiday to our u3a. These donations can obviously amount to a substantial sum which help us to improve the members' experiences, helps fund groups, helps fund special events etc. So please don't forget to tell them you are a Droitwich u3a member and help raise funds for our u3a.

Droitwich Spa & District

Messages from the Business Secretary - continued

Online Events from the Third Age Trust

Please click on the url below to see a full list of online events, workshops and courses from the Third Age Trust. There is also a link to sign up to receive these directly. There are some really interesting topics amongst the listing.

[u3a - Online learning events](#)

Jonathan Watkins, Business Secretary

Network Link Forum - Newsletters - 29th June - Zoom Meeting

Quite a meeting! 2+ hours, 100+ delegates, 3 speakers, lots of chat and discussion and all from a comfortable chair in my study!

Gerard van Zwieten also joined the meeting and whilst it was both interesting and reassuring, we both agreed that we are well up to date and probably "ahead of the game" at Droitwich u3a.

The speakers were:

1. Nellie Mair, Communications Officer, Third Age Trust - "Creating an Engaging Newsletter"
2. Maria Gabrielczyk, Editor, Notts Network Newsletter - "The making of Newsbites"
3. Glenys Hart- AI for Everyone Team - "AI without Jargon"

Nellie emphasised the value of a newsletter to our sense of community, considered its importance in signposting events and outlined good practice. There was much useful information on presentation and content, also on distribution methods and the need to avoid the rising costs of paper copies.

Maria outlined her production techniques, a totally encouraging talk since her methods follow the same path as ours. All credit to Dot Colman who set me on the path of newsletter production two years ago and which has formed the basis of what we have today. There is always more one can do but the strong support from our members is giving us a newsletter to be proud of.

The AI talk was rather basic. I realised how very lucky we are at Droitwich having the benefit of Gerard with his AI and Canva Group, his support of other groups and his newsletter articles. Despite the resistance of some, AI is definitely here to stay and, if used carefully, can help greatly with organisation and save a lot of time.

Discussion followed each talk with lots of questions and comments. The meeting notes will be interesting, I'm glad I don't have to compile them.

Thank you to Network Link and Chair, Karen Green for a most useful and comprehensive morning.

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

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Cotswold Link Special Interest Day - 2nd June 2026

I am leader of the Playreading Group and I was offered the opportunity to attend this Special Interest Day by Cotswold u3a Area Link in Cheltenham on 2nd June. This year the subject was **From Pen to Reader: The Journey of a Book**. The event was held in a large Church Centre and around 100 members attended.

The first speaker, Sue Ablett had, before retiring, worked at GCHQ and is quite a force and an excellent speaker. Since 2016 when she founded Evesham Festival of Words she has been its first Chairman and her subject was "Bums on Seats" giving tips on how they had started, the reasons, the organisation of similar events, the importance of getting good speakers, monitoring the expense, the difficulties encountered especially with "lockdown and after" and finally, the growing success which has resulted in a "year-long festival" culminating in the main weekend in June and a growing reputation. She is also a self-published non-fiction author offering practical tips to those hoping to promote their books.

Then followed author Jacqui Rogers. Her subject was "Researching Roman Britain". She has written three crime thriller series and she talked about the importance of authenticity, of building believable historical settings and the many Roman sites that can be visited across the country like Wrexham, Chedworth and museums, especially Taunton. She uses YouTube for some of her details and described Three Legions from Somerset, some members staying in Britannia and her characters taken from original history who feature in her crime stories; several about Otto Cornelius.

A break for a buffet lunch gave an opportunity for networking with other u3a members including a group from Taunton who had travelled together by train.

The next speaker was another author, Colin Wade, with his subject "The Joys and Perils of being an Author". Retired from a project manager role in Thames Valley Police based in Oxford, he has written over nine crime and thriller novels, producing one a year, often using his knowledge and experience, like Jacqui, to give authenticity. He described the difficult journey from writing "your" book to getting it accepted by publishers, the extended proof reading, refusing an agent and finally deciding to take the "self-publishing" route. He describes his books as "fast paced gripping stories" and had copies on sale or to browse. He encouraged "would be" authors to join a Writing Group and is a regular speaker at u3a main meetings. Some of his books can be purchased on Amazon (*Murder at the Manor*) but he told us there is little reward but enjoyment.

Our final speaker Gareth Swain MD and Co-owner of "The History Press", explained the history of this Publishing Company. Its acquisition, followed by details of the decisions taken with an outsider's view of modern publishing. Being faced with the thousands of books produced, reviewing the commerciality of each, and the links with newspapers. He described the factors that publishers are looking for, how a manuscript is selected and the processes before it is offered to firms like Waterstones and independent book shops. The problems of minimal prices paid by Companies like Amazon and he touched on the new phenomenon of AI and copyright which, once a book is accepted by a publisher, they own. He brought several boxes of 'new' books and passed them round the room. The talk was followed by many questions and finally Jocelyn Wishart, brave member of a u3a Creative Writing Group described their group's decision to publish using Amazon's "Direct to all" system to encourage other u3a groups to follow their success.

The organisation, the venue, the audio system and especially the speakers were excellent and thought provoking and the "day" ended with Chair Alan Russell giving a well-earned vote of thanks.

Droitwich Spa & District

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.

July – no meeting

17th August – Strawberry Tea

Our speakers hope to generate questions. As well as applause, please try to ask five minutes or more of questions to show your interest.

Speakers and Subjects from September 2026 – 2027

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

21st September – Professional 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 – Egypt “The Gift of The Nile” – Brian Anderson – According to Herodotus, the Greek historian, Egypt was “the gift of the Nile”, for without her rich waters, Egyptian civilisation would have been short-lived. The river provided the elements that have sustained and influenced an ingenious and vigorous civilization for over three thousand years. In this talk, we travel down the river Nile from the Great Pyramids in Cairo to the Temple of Ramesses II in Abu Simbel in Nubia, with Brian's images of the wildlife, colourful landscapes, stunning architecture and the mystical Egyptian Gods who ensured the life-giving properties of the River Nile.

16th November – Song writing – Andy Smith – Featuring well known songs and armed with guitar, mandolin, and ukulele, he will steer us through the challenging and sometimes funny world of song writing and performing. There are some fascinating and amusing anecdotes, revealing what it's like to stand in front of an audience and entertain. A chance to laugh, cry, cringe and sing along!

18th January 2027 – Strange Meetings – the Words of Wilfred Owen – Shaun Higgins – This talk reveals the Shropshire poet-turned-soldier in all his complexity. Sprinkled with excerpts from his writings and showing him overcoming his struggles both to write and to fight. This is the story of Wilfred Owen, told in his own words.

15th February – Dr Livingstone I Presume – Fran Sandham – The fascinating history of these two famous 19th century pioneers. Dr Livingstone, who was looking for the source of the Nile, and Stanley, who was looking for Dr Livingstone. As we all know, Stanley fulfilled his mission, allegedly greeting Livingstone with the famous words, “Dr Livingstone I presume”. Sadly, the doctor didn't find the Nile's source, but later Stanley did. It is a very exciting tale told with enthusiasm and humour.

15th March – An on-stage demonstration of the art of paper cutting – Christine Green – A live demonstration showing on stage how she works cutting material for a backdrop at the BBC. It Should be fascinating and brave of her to show us all about the art – I just hope we can sort out the cameras!

I hope you can make all of these.

Geoff Stollard, Speaker Organiser

Droitwich Spa & District

Droitwich u3a Strawberry Tea and Quiz Monday 17th August 2026



The Strawberry Tea and Quiz will be held in the hall at the rear of Droitwich Methodist Church on Monday 17th August 2026 from 2pm until 4pm. As usual, it will include a scone with jam and cream or butter, a slice of cake and as much tea and coffee as you would like, plus the quiz!

In order to help with catering arrangements, we need to know how many members will be attending, so please book your place by sending an email to the Social Secretary via the Droitwich u3a Contact page at: [Contact - Droitwich Spa and District](#)

Alternatively, you can reply to the email announcement I will be sending about the Strawberry Tea. Please include information about any special dietary requirements with your booking. The charge this year will be £2.50 per person, payable at the door, cash only, and only for members who have already booked a place. Because of the size of the venue, places are limited, so book now to avoid disappointment.

Clare Waite, Social Secretary.

Group News - from the Groups Co-ordinator

The Improvers 2 Bridge Group who meet on a Friday morning, currently at The Copcut Elm, have completed the taught part of their course, and have enjoyed it so much that they have decided to continue just as a Bridge playing group. They are calling their new group **"Bridge for the love of it"** and would welcome new members. If you are interested in playing with them or any other of our Bridge Groups then full details are on our website, just get in contact with the Group Leader, or the Groups Co-ordinator.



Calling all gardening enthusiasts. There has been interest shown in setting up a new Gardening/Growing Group. Perhaps in the form of meeting once a month during the growing season, in each other's gardens, to share ideas, expertise and encouragement, and to swap seeds, cuttings etc.

So, if you were involved in the former Growing Group, or the idea of belonging to such a group interests you, then get in touch with the Groups Co-ordinator and an initial meeting will be arranged for everyone showing an interest. Hopefully, we can get this group up and running before the end of the season.

Can you speak Spanish at an intermediate level? Would you be interested in meeting others trying to improve their Spanish? Then get in touch with the Groups Co-ordinator, as there has been interest shown in setting up a Spanish Conversation Group to meet regularly, to practice speaking Spanish and maybe to study some Spanish literature, or use other language learning aids.

If enough interest is shown we'll arrange an initial meeting.



Julie Woodhouse, Groups Co-ordinator

Droitwich Spa & District

New Groups

Bridge Beginners Group

We are now taking names for the next occurrence of this group which will operate as a course running from October 2026 to March 2027 inclusive, with the 2-hour meetings being held weekly on a day to be agreed between the members.

The course is suitable for members who are complete novices to the game of Bridge or who may have played some time ago and forgotten most of what they once knew.

Bridge is a "whist-like" card game for four players operating as two teams/pairs, who sit opposite each other. The game consists of two main parts. Firstly, the bidding - where players compete to decide on a contract where one pair aim to take a specified number of tricks, with a specified suit as trumps (or with no trumps). Secondly, the play - where the pair that won the contract then try to make at least the specified number of tricks.

Starting from the absolute basics the course will cover the main features of Acol (the most commonly used bidding system), and some techniques of card play. Familiarity with "whist-like" card games would be an advantage, but is not essential.

For more information or to sign-up for the next course please contact the Group Leader by email via the Droitwich u3a website, or phone on 01905 796201
Les Hazlewood, Group Leader

Bridge Improvers Group

We are considering offering the Bridge Improvers group again this year to operate as a course running from October 2026 to March 2027 inclusive, with the two hour meetings being held weekly on a day to be agreed between the members. If you have played social Bridge for a while and have a basic understanding of the Acol bidding system, or you have recently attended one of our Bridge Beginners courses, and would like to improve your bidding and playing techniques, please read on as this group could be for you.

The starting point will be some initial understanding of the Acol bidding system (such as "weak no trumps", Stayman, Blackwood and Gerber) and some basic techniques of card play (such as "finessing" and avoiding "suit blocking"). Thus, the group is not suitable for members new to the game of Bridge. The Improvers course will start with a very brief review of basic Acol, followed by a look at various techniques of hand evaluation, including the "losing trick count" method. Then, about one-half of the course will comprise some of the major Acol extensions in common usage, including "Blackwood and Gerber variants", "Benjamin/Weak 2-Bids", "Red-Suit Transfers", "Cue Bids", "Trial Bids", "Splinter Bids", "Jacoby 2 No Trumps", etc. The remaining half of the course will look at techniques of declarer card play, for either no trump or suit contracts, intended to either maximise the number of tricks made, and/or achieve the number of contract tricks safely. There will also be coverage of card play techniques for the defence, for either no trump or suit contracts.

This group/course was run for the first time from October 2025 to March 2026 and was oversubscribed by members. In order to try and gauge the level of demand for such a group/course this year, if you are interested in joining this Bridge Improvers Group, please express your interest by contacting me by email on leshazlewood@btinternet.com or by phone on 01905 796201
Les Hazlewood, Group Leader

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News from the Groups

The Hawley Cup

On Thursday the 18th June, our annual Hawley Cup competition was held on the petanque pistes at Gaudet Luce Golf and Leisure Complex. Despite some concerns in the late afternoon that the weather was starting to deteriorate, it did in fact brighten up for our 6pm start and was pleasantly warm and sunny for the whole of the event.

Six teams, two from each of our three groups started out, with the three winning teams and the highest loser going through to the semi-final. The final was then played between Dinah Griffin and Arthur Grice against Cheyenne Haynes and Liz Wilson, both representing Group 2, which meets on a Friday afternoon. It was a close match up until the last couple of ends when Dinah and Arthur stormed through to take the title. Congratulations to Dinah and Arthur, who were, in fact, the highest losers from round one!

My thanks to all the players and referees for making it such an enjoyable event, and to all the spectators who came to support their teams and add to the sense of occasion.

Steve Hawley

A game in progress -



- the winning shot?



Val with the four finalists -



Our worthy winners -



Droitwich Spa & District

The Digital Photography Group visit to Cheltenham Spa

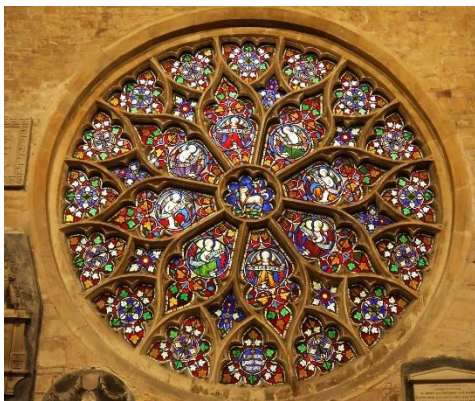
On 28th April, the group visited The Minster and its surrounding areas.

The Minster, also known as St. Mary's, is the town's oldest building and only surviving medieval church. It has mid-11th century origins and is built upon a suspected 8th century Saxon site.



Designated a Minster in 2013, the church features decorated Gothic architecture, a 14th century spire and a ring of twelve bells cast in 2018.

The Minster remains a centre for worship and a significant landmark in the centre of Cheltenham, featuring memorials to local figures, including *Henry Skillicorne.



Photos by Peter Marrs, Janet Oakley, Lynn Bowater, Derek Oakley and Alan Meyrick.



* Historical note - Henry Skillicorne was a British Sea Captain who recognised the potential in local salt springs and is considered the founder of Cheltenham Spa.

Droitwich Spa & District

The Digital Photography Group visit to Cheltenham Spa - continued



Cheltenham is a premier Regency town in Gloucestershire, transformed from a small Saxon market town into a famous spa resort after mineral springs were discovered in 1716. It gained national fame following King George III's visit in 1788.

Renowned for its complete Regency architecture, it evolved into a vibrant cultural hub, hosting major festivals and serving as the home of GCHQ.

Rapid growth as a leisure destination led to the construction of elegant Regency villas, terraces, and pump rooms, making it one of the most complete Regency towns in England.

Derek Oakley



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

Registered Charity No. 1180564

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Garden Visits Group – Rashwood Care Home

On 20th May the Garden Visits Group enjoyed a trip to Rashwood Care Home, part of the National Garden Scheme. Rashwood has a 6½ acre landscaped garden surrounding a large Queen Anne period house.



The garden is designed to be wildlife friendly and has a thriving population of woodland animals with many seasonal flowering shrubs. There are mixed borders, sculptures, a rose garden and mature trees, including redwoods, pine, beech and "Davidia involucre" (dove or handkerchief tree) and a wisteria, about one hundred years old.



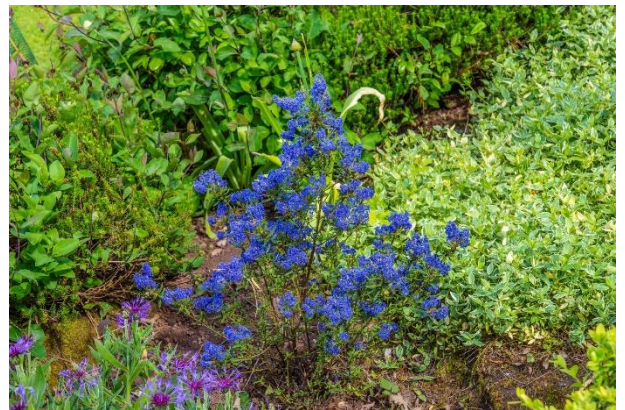
Pictures by Janet and Derek Oakley.

Kathleen Simmons,
Group Leader



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Garden Visits Group - continued



Droitwich Spa & District

Garden Lovers Group

The Garden Lovers Group had two visits to glorious local gardens in May and June.



On 6th May we visited **Warndon Court** in Worcester. This two-acre family garden, packed with many various features, was very interesting to experience, and a record number of our group came along.

Following an introductory talk by owner Rachel, we were free to roam the extensive garden and view the summerhouse gallery.

We were of course treated to delicious refreshments, as always! St Nicholas Church was open for visits too. A very enjoyable visit for us all.

This garden can be visited on certain open days through the National Garden Scheme.



On 3rd June we chose another NGS garden, which was opened especially for our group.

This **private garden in Claines**, owned by a member of Droitwich u3a, was extremely well designed and packed with interesting plants. We were very lucky with dry weather, as rain had been forecast. The owner's delicious home-made parsnip and ginger cake was a hit! This lovely garden can also be visited during its open days via the National Garden Scheme.



Photos of the gardens are courtesy of our resident photographer, Barry Tait!

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Garden Lovers Group - continued

The private garden in Claines - continued



The next trip will be to Bourton House Garden, near Moreton-in-Marsh, on Wednesday, 1st July. Please contact Group Leader, Elizabeth Bartle if you would like to join us for future garden explorations!

Jan van Zwieten for Elizabeth Bartle

Garden Lovers Group - future visits

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 - Change of venue - Ravelin Garden, WR6 0AS

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."

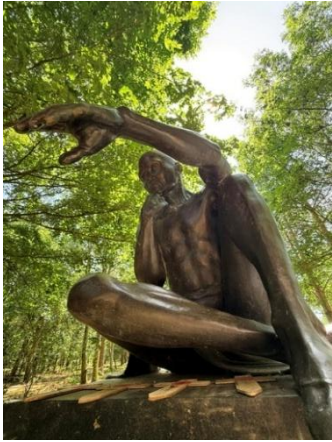
Wednesday 2nd December - Christmas Carvery Lunch at Bodenham Arboretum, DY11 5TB

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

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

Droitwich Spa & District

A visit to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire



Recently, I joined around 22 fellow members from the Digital Photography, Local History and Gallivanter's Groups from Droitwich u3a for a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. It was a gloriously hot summer day, where the sun showed no mercy, but armed with plenty of water and my trusted camera, I was ready to explore.

Upon arrival, I immediately set off along "The Beat", heading towards the far eastern corner of the Arboretum where the Shot at Dawn Memorial stands.

The walk itself was a moving experience. Around every bend were memorials dedicated to different organisations and regiments, including the Forces Police, Medical Corps, War Widows Association and Parachute Regiment, amongst many others. Surrounded by vibrant rose bushes, graceful willow trees and pockets of poppies, remembrance seemed woven into every part of the landscape.

My destination was the Shot at Dawn Memorial. After arriving, I sat quietly and listened to a short introductory talk about the installation. The memorial depicts a young British soldier, blindfolded and tied to a stake, awaiting execution by firing squad. The figure was modelled on 17-year-old Private Herbert Burden, who lied about his age to enlist and was later executed for desertion.



Surrounding the memorial is a semicircle of 309 stakes, each bearing the name of one of the British and Commonwealth soldiers who were executed during the First World War and later pardoned. Many of these men were convicted following brief trials where little opportunity for defence was offered. Today, it is widely recognised that many were suffering from what we now know as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition not officially recognised until 1980. Some were little more than boys when they volunteered to serve.

The statistics are sobering. Of approximately 200,000 soldiers court-martialled during the First World War, around 20,000 were convicted of offences carrying the death penalty. While over 3,000 death sentences were handed down, 346 were ultimately carried out. Of those, 309 men were pardoned by the British Government in 2006. Standing amongst those memorial stakes, each representing a life cut tragically short, was a profoundly moving experience.

The location of the Shot at Dawn Memorial is equally symbolic. Positioned at the most easterly point of the Arboretum, it is the first memorial to greet the rising sun each morning — a powerful reminder that these men, long misunderstood, are now remembered with dignity and compassion.

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A visit to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire-continued



From there, I continued my walk towards the Armed Forces Memorial, the largest and arguably most striking monument within the Arboretum.

The memorial sits atop a six-metre-high earth mound inspired by ancient British burial barrows. Rising above it is a magnificent circular stone structure, 43 metres in diameter, constructed from Portland stone. At its centre stand two bronze sculptures created by sculptor Ian Rank-Broadley.

One of the memorial's most remarkable features is a carefully designed gap within its southern walls. Every year on Armistice Day, a shaft of sunlight passes through this opening and illuminates the bronze wreath at the centre of the memorial precisely at 11am.

More than 16,000 names are inscribed on the memorial, commemorating members of the Armed Forces who have lost their lives whilst on duty, in operational theatres, or through acts of terrorism since the end of the Second World War. The names are arranged by year, service and date, ensuring those who died together are remembered together. While many of the original



inscriptions were computer-carved, names added since 2007 have been engraved by hand each year. Perhaps most poignant of all are the blank panels still waiting — a stark reminder that the story of service and sacrifice continues.

As I wandered the grounds throughout the day, camera in hand, I found myself pausing often. Sometimes to admire the beauty of the gardens and woodlands, sometimes to read a name, and sometimes simply to reflect.

It was a wonderful day; not in the sense of excitement or entertainment, but in the opportunity it provided to remember, reflect and quietly give thanks to those who served. I found myself thinking especially of my late stepfather, who served in the SAS, and of the countless men and women whose sacrifices have shaped the freedoms we enjoy today.

The National Memorial Arboretum is a place of serenity, remembrance and perspective. It leaves a lasting impression on all who visit.

Lest we forget.

Paula Knight

Registered Charity No. 1180564



Droitwich Spa & District

Wine Appreciation Group

The Wine Appreciation Group met in Rotary House on 17th June for a tasting of various wines from around Italy. All the wines came from The Wine Society and the opinions and conclusions were as follows:

Isola della Flamma Grillo Sicilia 2025 12 £8.75

This white wine was made from Grillo grapes produced by Cantine Rallo which is located just south of Marsala on the western edge of Sicily.

We found the wine to be dry with a reasonable flavour but did not linger with much aftertaste. A pleasant summer's day wine which was considered quite good value and rated at 7/10.

Vermentino Sicilia 2025 12.5% £8.95

A white wine produced by Parcheeggio Cantine Mandarossa outside Menfi on the western side of Sicily. Founded only in 1990s, the winery grows a wide range of grapes. Vermentino is one.

The wine is used to make Marsala hence was quite fruity with a depth of flavour - quite good with fish. We rated this wine at 7½/10.

Timorasso Boveri Luigi 2024 13.5% £16.00

This was a white wine produced by Azienda Agricola Boveri Luigi in the Tortona hills in the Piedmont about 30 miles north of Genoa.

This wine was 100% Timorasso and was quite complex, with an elegance - very fruity and a good aftertaste. We thought it quite expensive and hence rated it at 7½/10.

Salice Salentino Riserva 2022 13.5% £10.50

A red wine which is 100% Negroamaro, produced by Agricole Vallone located between Lecce and Brindisi in Puglia. We considered this to be rather like a poor Pinot Noir and lacking in interest. It did not seem to have much body or fruit and was rated at 6½/10.

Santa Tresa Cerasuolo di Vittoria 2022 14% £13.95

The winery is near Vittoria on the south side of Sicily. This is the only *DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita)* in Sicily. This was a red wine predominantly Nero d'Avola with some Frappato. It was robust with a pleasant cherry note, a good body as one would expect from a Nero d'Avola. We rated this at 8/10 although some of the members preferred the white wines.

Vino Nobile di Multipulciano 2023 14% £23.50

Produced by Cantina Contucci in Multipulciano, about 30 miles south east of Siena in Tuscany. The winery has been owned by the Contucci family since the 11th Century. This red wine was made from Sangiovese grapes and was full-bodied. It had good tannin and was a well-balanced wine. We considered it to be rather expensive (but probably worth it) and hence rated it at 8/10.

Our next tasting is planned for 19th August and we will taste wine from Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.



Roy Thurston, Group Leader

Droitwich Spa & District



The Digital Photography Group themed visit to Worcester City Centre

On 12th May the Digital Photography Group visited Worcester City Centre with themes of Look Up, Black and White and Reflections.

We normally walk down the street seeing only

what is at eye level but look up and you have a very different viewpoint or, looking at the reflections in a window, can provide a very different picture.



Views were photographed on Foregate Street Railway Station, The Crowngate Shopping Centre, along the High Street and the black and white buildings in Friar Street.

Following the session we adjourned to Waylands Yard in Foregate Street for coffee and cake.

Derek Oakley.



Photos by Ted Smith, Alan Meyrick, Janet Oakley, Derek Oakley, Peter Marrs and Patricia Smith.



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

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The Digital Photography Group themed visit to Worcester City Centre -contd.



A picture through an optician's window to catch the reflections in two pairs of spectacles inside.

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The AI and Canva Group

Supporting Our Genealogy Group: AI and Canva Services in Action

It was a pleasure to visit the Droitwich u3a Genealogy Group recently and spend time hearing what members are working on right now. The aim of the visit was simple: to understand what support would be most useful for data research, restoring their family tree photos, other family photos etc. Also, how our AI and Canva group can help in practical, time-saving ways. The meeting in the Droitwich Library was full of curiosity, generous sharing, and a real sense of community.

What the Genealogy Group Values

Sharing discoveries is a highlight, whether it's a newly found record, a surprising family connection, or a helpful website or archive tip that saves others time.

Preserving family history is at the heart of the group's work, with a strong focus on keeping stories, documents, and photographs safe for future generations.

Collaborative research helps everyone go further - members compare notes, suggest next steps, and pool knowledge to break through tricky "brick walls."

Research Support Services

Our AI and Canva group can provide research support that complements the group's expertise and makes day-to-day tasks easier. This includes helping with document analysis—such as summarising long records, extracting key details, or comparing multiple sources for consistency. We can also assist with data organisation, turning notes into clear tables, checklists, or research logs that are easy to update. And when it's time to share findings, we can help create visual family trees, timelines, and simple charts in Canva that make complex information easier to understand immediately.

Photograph Restoration Services

We also offer photograph restoration support to help bring treasured family images back to life. Using AI tools, we can improve clarity, reduce damage like scratches or fading, and enhance contrast so faces and details are easier to recognise. Canva then helps present the restored images neatly ready for printing, sharing with relatives, or adding to a family history booklet. The result is a more accessible record that supports genealogy research while honouring the people and stories behind the photos.

Examples of recovered images:

Restoring an old faded and partly torn image into a new digitised version with the request to improve the sharpness of the eyes.



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Supporting Our Genealogy Group: AI and Canva Services in Action - continued



The original from 1926.



The recovered image in black and white.



Keeping the colours as in 1926.



Digitising the image to 2026.



From 1922 damaged photo to neutral background 2026.



Twin Towers before 9/11/2001 from a black and white look to a more expressive look in colour.

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AI and Canva Services in Action - continued



Coronation Day Celebrations in Droitwich
High Street 1911.



Same image from 1911 but with a colour
brilliance to accentuate the flags.

The AI and Canva Group offers these services to all u3a groups and group leaders.
Contact us to learn how we can support your group's projects!

Thank you to everyone in the genealogy group for such a welcoming visit and for sharing what you value most. u3a works best when groups learn from one another, and we are keen to support that collaborative spirit with practical help that saves time and boosts confidence. If your group could benefit from research support, photograph restoration, or help presenting your work, please get in touch with the AI and Canva Group - we'd love to help.

Gerard van Zwieten, AI and Canva 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.

We take a break for July and August but will return in September.

11th September - **The Willow Court Farmhouse Project** - Janine Rusby

9th October - **Photographs from recent visits** - Alan Meyrick

13th November - **Roman Worcester** - Carolyn Clarke

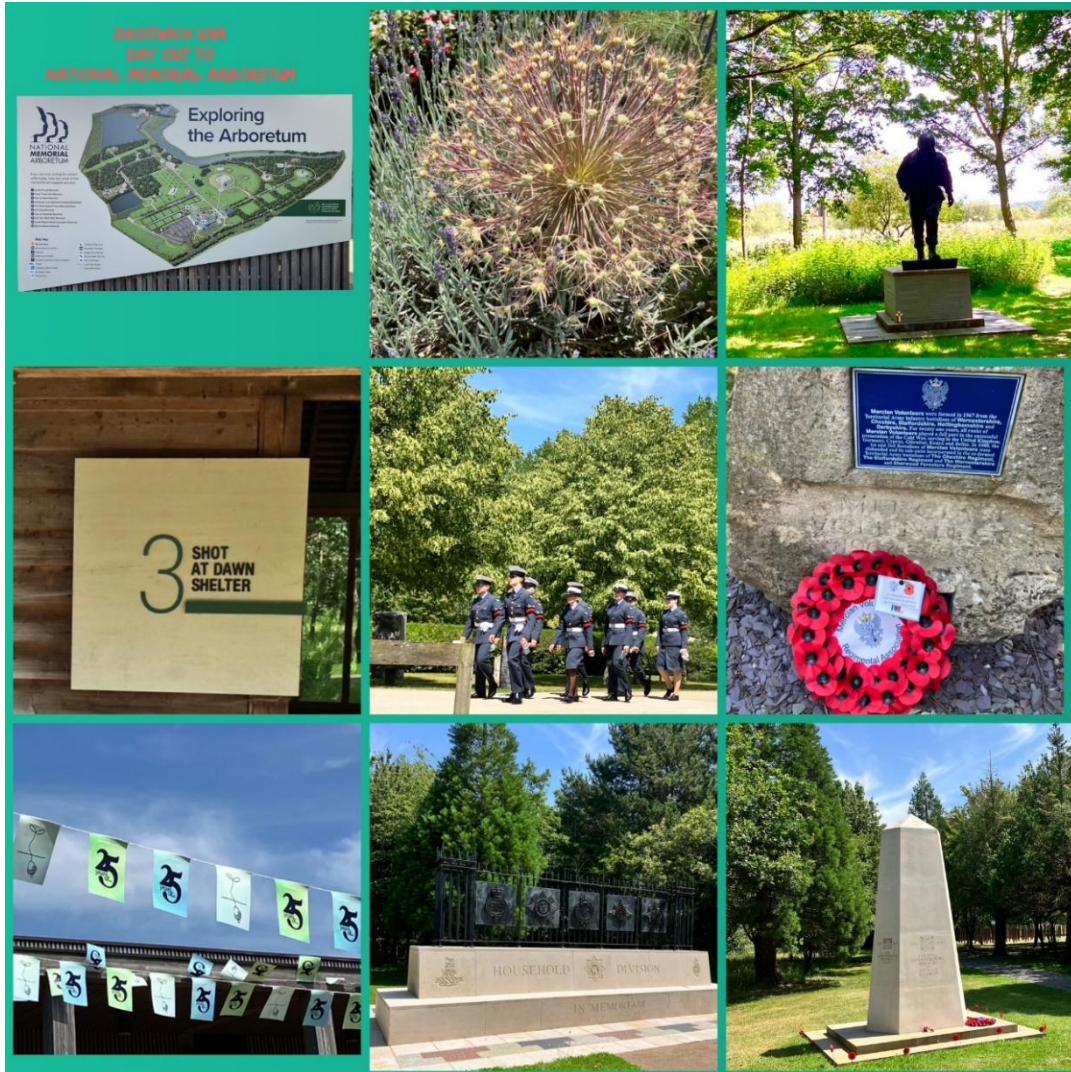
December - no meeting

Jeff Gogarty, Group Leader

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The National Memorial Arboretum

On a glorious summer's day about 22 of us were taken to The National Memorial Arboretum by Elgar Coaches. The coach was wonderfully air conditioned and we were deposited at the entrance. Heads up from people who had visited previously were "Do the land train tour". Several of us were lucky to book onto the 12 noon departure. The train escorted us around the grounds with a wonderful descriptive sound track. The trip lasted 45 minutes and gave us a gentle breeze.



After the land train, some rushed off to look at specific memorials that they were interested in or to follow the special commemorative trail. Some of us just ate our picnic in a shady spot. As first-time visitors we were very impressed with the variety of memorials and the planting was glorious. It is obvious that it is a place one could visit more than once and absorb different vibes.

Thanks to Alan for organising the trip.

Jan Skan, The Gallivanterers, Group Leader

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Garden Visits Group - Trench Hill

Trench Hill, a three-acre garden in Sheepscombe near Stroud was the destination for the Garden Visits Group on 10th June. This garden has been created over the past 30 years by Celia Hargrave, a retired head teacher, who manages the garden with the help of three gardeners for one day a week. She runs it on organic principles, improving the Cotswold brash soil with home-made compost and leaf-mould.

Group Leader, Kathleen Simmons



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Garden Visits Group - continued



Photos by Janet and
Derek Oakley.



Droitwich Wind Instrument Group (DWIG)

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.

We are working towards 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.

We continue to grow, recently gaining a new clarinettist and a flautist. We are just finalising a new playlist for the autumn, and 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



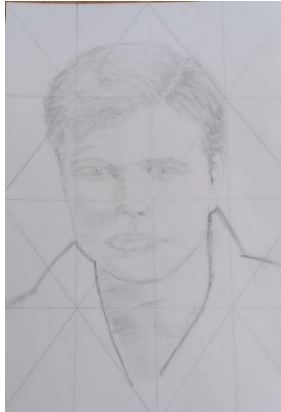
Wye Float River and Music Festival - Saturday 8th August 2026 at Hereford Rugby Club. For details:

<https://www.wyefloat.com/event-details-registration/wye-float-2026-2>

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Relaxed Multi-Media Art Group

The pictures show our most recent work. We have continued to practise the triangular grid*.



In the Autumn we will have half a term about leaves. In the second half we will be making things that will relate to u3a.

Sue Cook, Group Leader

Editor's note *The triangular grid method in Art is used for patterns and tessellations which are visually appealing and mathematically correct.

Maths, Science & Technology (MST)

We only meet in the winter months. The meetings are on the 3rd Friday morning of the month in Rotary House at 10am for coffee and chat, followed by a talk of about 45 minutes and then questions. All members of Droitwich u3a are welcome to attend.

18th September - Steve Barrett - Astrophotography.

Steve describes this talk as photographing the night sky without ridiculously expensive equipment.

He will be showing lots of images, and will be bringing some of the equipment used, so there will be a little bit of a "show and tell".

Future dates are 16th October - Mike Ansfield and 20th November - Rahila Chaudry. The titles will be in the September newsletter.

Catherine and Roger Bach, Group Leaders

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The Rik Mayall Comedy Festival 29th May – 6th June

For the second year The Rik Mayall Comedy Festival was staged in Droitwich. After last year's fantastic event the organisers decided that it should become an annual event.

I again volunteered to take photos during the festival week and I really enjoyed the various events I attended. The first event was staged at St Andrews Hotel and the performers staged "An Improvised Murder". Taking written ideas from the audience at the beginning of the performance they staged and solved a murder! I captured a performer's actions and facial expressions and produced the following 'improvised' film strip:



After that exhausting two-hour session on the Sunday, next day I went to Droitwich library where there were a couple of free sessions in the afternoon. The first was entitled "Grim Tales", historical television programmes performed by Rik Mayall. The photo on the left, below, is of Rik performing. The second session was a live performance; "My Date with Pierce Brosnan" in which a "French waitress" retold the story of meeting and falling in love with the actor.



The latter performance involved the bemused audience in the unfolding events!

I then decided to find more traditional stand-up comedy during the following two days, so I positioned myself in the front row at the Old Cock Inn comedy sessions.

With only the flood light offering any light these two sessions were challenging but more traditional and the two comedians certainly entertained their audiences.

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The Rik Mayall Comedy Festival - continued



The comedian on the left above, Jake Baker, performed "My Jakey Bakey Heart", an opportunity for him to trial ideas ahead of a performance at the forthcoming Edinburgh Festival. I captured him reading from "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" but with some added comedic activities not in the original children's story!

Whilst on the next night Ryan Mold performed a more professional and polished performance called "Resistant".

So, my final session was a little earlier in the day at the Crafty Café, off the High Street, where the author MJ Simpson set up a table and sold his book entitled; "The Films of Rik Mayall". I had not heard of the majority of films but the author, whilst signing his book, retold stories of the films and Rik's involvement in them.



For the second year running the festival brought in people from far-and-wide and helped the local economy. Hopefully the festival will be a yearly feature and, even if you were not a great fan of Rik, the comedians and performances were well worth visiting, many of which were free, and not necessarily in the style of Rik.

Alan Meyrick, Digital Photography Group Leader.

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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 September 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 7th September.

Val Hibbitt, Newsletter Editor

With thanks to Jan van Zwieten for proof reading.