

Wyre Forest and District u3a

Newsletter

Autumn

2025

learn

laugh

live

Notes from the Chair

My goodness! How the time does fly by! The AGM is fast approaching and my term of office will come to an end.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as Chair! Our membership continues to expand and it is an enormous source of pride to me to be part of an organisation which gives such pleasure and friendship to so many people.

Our groups are thriving, thanks to the commitment and dedication of all our group leaders, many of whom, on top of everything else, have organised different and inventive ways to celebrate our 20th Anniversary Year. We will be ending the year with a wonderful Christmas Entertainment at our December Monthly Meeting – make sure you have the date, 15th December, in your diaries!

I would like to thank you all for your support this year, your kind words, friendly smiles and the many offers of help whenever it has been asked for, I'm absolutely confident you will continue to this for the new Chair, who will be in place after the AGM elections.

I particularly want to thank the Committee who have worked with me, for their unfailing support and friendship; all the many volunteers who have ensured the Monthly Meetings run so smoothly and well, often from behind the scenes; and the Website Team who have worked so hard on our new Website.

Without doubt, I believe we have one of the best u3a's, if not THE best, in the whole country and long may we continue to "Learn, Laugh and Live"!

With best wishes

Elaine

Wyre Forest & District U3A – Handbell Group

The first group to be active in our 'new' U3A in October/November 2005 was Liz Struckett's Handbells – who have performed at odd events ever since such as our Christmas parties, celebrations at Hartlebury, both Castle and church, visits to Town Halls, shopping centres and care homes and private functions. This year does truly feel that celebrating the 20 th anniversary of those events of 2005 which kicked it all off was to be worthwhile!



On Wednesday 9 July Liz and her present team invited those who rang (or played) with us in those early years to a larger than usual gathering – for which we chose Shatterford Village Hall, instead of our usual practice home in Stourport.

With two sets of handbells, lots of music and stands, and cakes which Liz had prepared, we certainly made the most of the occasion. Many familiar faces were recognised – the first three U3A chairmen were also present! And lots of recollections, as well as a splendid social time in between. Those who had not played for a while were encouraged to participate, as the notes could be duplicated with either set of bells. With varying degrees of success, it was certainly fun!



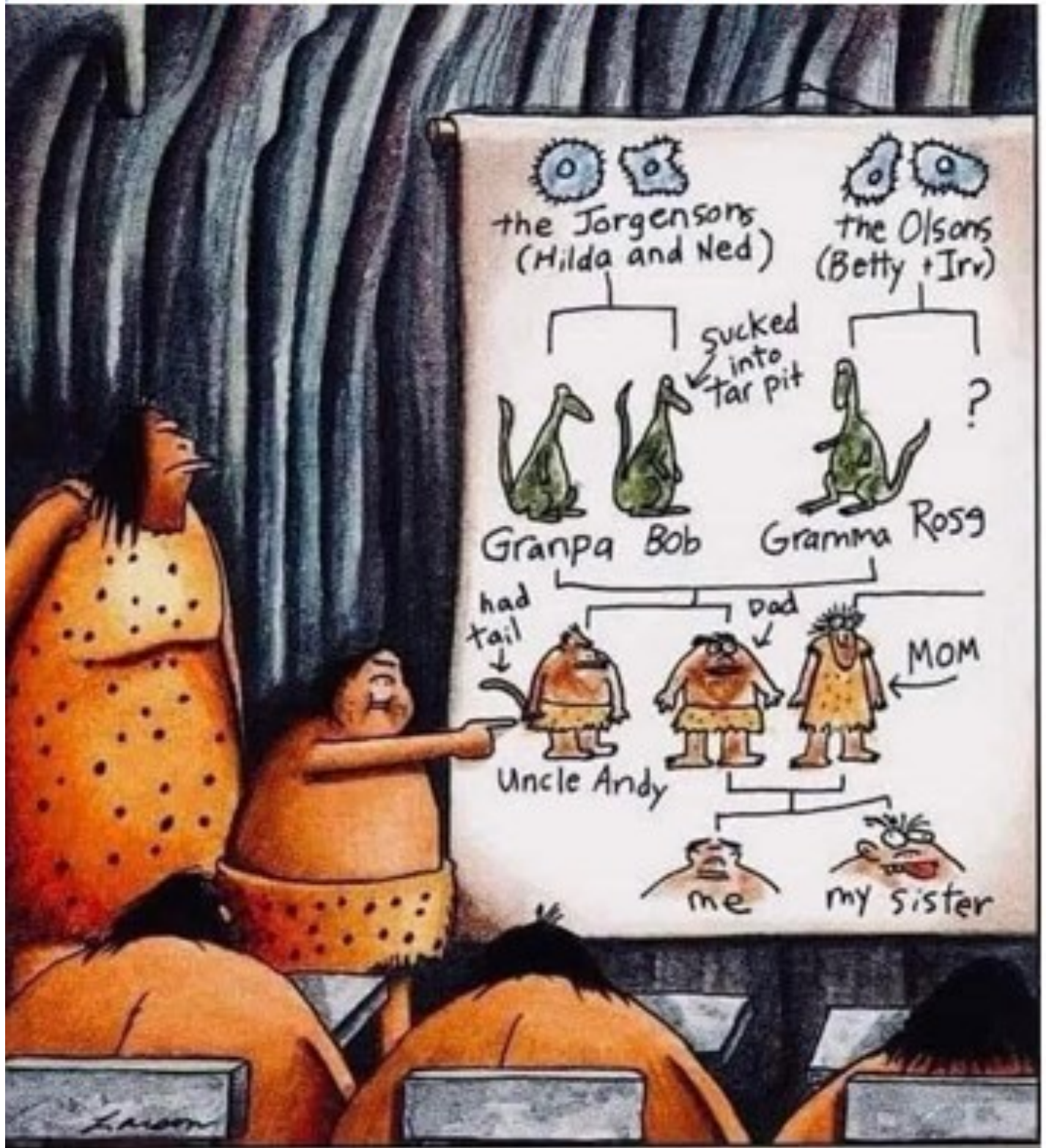
The Struckett household has kept various records of the activities over the years as well as details of the bells that we have used, so a table was reserved for a display of the 'history' of the group. For our early practices we used the Struckett family handbells (made at Whitechapel), until under Rhydwen's chairmanship of our U3A a very generous grant was obtained which allowed us to buy a set of modern handbells by the American company 'Malmark' – which have adjustable clappers and advanced polymer handles, but otherwise a traditional profile and tuning which allows us to play with the other set. With Liz's due diligence to expanding the repertoire, several extra bells have been added to this set, which now comprises two and a half chromatic octaves. (allowing all sorts of tunes to be attempted!). These are the two sets in use on this occasion.



When the group re-assembles after the well-earned Summer break – expect some 'winter' music – inevitably working towards Christmas See you at Hartlebury, or somewhere!



Geneology - well sort of! Thanks Caroline O'C



Dirk brings his family tree to class.

Quizzing-4-Fun Online Group

Test your
knowledge

Have fun anytime at your
own pace
and get those brain cells working!



Each month sheets are emailed to members -
on various subjects

Internet use is allowed

Members' email answers back at the end
of the month, they are marked and
top scores are posted on the group's webpage

Could you be next month's top scorer?

Join Today

If you would like more further details
please contact:

Janice Evans - Email: janiceevans1713@gmail.com

Quiz at
anytime

u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Wyre Forest & District

Beavers in The Wyre Forest



Beavers in the Wyre Forest

In April 2024, a family of six beavers was released into an enclosure in Wyre Forest. Wyre Forest Ranger, Graham Haw, came to tell the Environmental Concern Group why this project is important and how the beavers are progressing.

Graham told us how in the first couple of hours after their release, the beavers spent a short amount of time surveying their new environment. They then got to work efficiently repairing and extending the man-made dam. Beavers have very strong teeth and jaws. Graham showed us some film clips of the beavers making light work of small branches.

The newly-built dam then led to the formation of a large pool which is good for all kinds of wildlife, not just the beavers. The Forest Rangers installed cameras and have captured footage of muntjacs and a wide variety of birds visiting the area.

One of the success stories has been the gradual return of woodpeckers to the area.

Gail Tutchter

Craft group Anniversary Celebration

Our craft group enjoyed a wonderful outing to the Glass Cone in Stourbridge.

We were split into 2 groups , the first had a very interesting and informative tour around the cone , learning about the history of glass making. The glass makers had an incredibly hard life..." Health and Safety" was not thought about in those days.

The other group were able to use their artistic talents to decorate a glass tile with fragments of coloured glass. We left them to be fired and are really looking forward to see the end results.

The groups then swapped and enjoyed the other experience.

To complete our time there we had a lovely buffet lunch and time to look around the shops, selling beautiful glass ornaments etc.

We certainly Lived , Laughed and Learned a lot.

Many thanks to the Wyre forest u3a committee for their contribution to make this possible.

Sheila Munden



Life as a member of MOTO

It is just over twelve months now since I became a member of the MOTO group within U3a and my goodness how my life has changed. At seventy-six years of age, you don't expect to suddenly start a new life that re-charges your interest, enthusiasm and passion for living, long forgotten. I no longer coast along with the occasional lunch with friends and a visit to the theatre; I have had to buy a bigger diary to fit in all the events and occasions as well as a new personal directory to list all my new friends' names and telephone numbers.

I first learnt of the group from a lady I sat by at my first U3a monthly meeting. She told me she had joined the group very recently and explained to me what MOTO was about; I thought it was something to do with motor cars and was pleasantly surprised that it stood for Members On Their Own. Having been a widow for twenty-three years I felt I qualified. So, I contacted the group leader, Roy, and asked if I could join, little knowing exactly what I was getting into. The first event being held was a Treasure hunt around Bewdley with a Sunday Lunch held at the Live and Let Live, quickly followed by a River Severn Cruise on a Sunday with an ABBA tribute band on board. This was being held on my birthday and although already being fully booked I was lucky that Roy took pity on me and fitted me in. It was a beautiful sunny day and the trip down the river was excellent, and the day was finished off with a picnic in the park. It was a wonderful way to spend a birthday.

We have regular Skittles games followed by Sunday lunch, which I was determined not to play but of course my name went on the board and I play each time the event is organised, not that any of us seem to be improving but it's not stopping us having a go. We also play Ten pin bowling, well, the ones that can still pick up the balls! We have coffee mornings every Monday at Sainsburys and recently three new members joined our table. We try to make everyone welcome, there is such a variety of people, a lady who told us she had got rid of her husband after 47 years, she felt that was long enough, (we presume she had been divorced), but we did not ask for details! Another lady talked about going on holiday alone but was apprehensive. A few of us shared our solo holiday experiences with her and she left the meeting hopefully with more confidence. You hear so often at these get togethers how much belonging to the MOTO group has saved someone's life. No longer do we sit at home alone watching the world go by, we go out, meet others with so much in common with ourselves, we chat, share experiences and in a few cases, even meet someone who becomes more than a friend. For me the change that I have noticed is that I laugh more. Laughter had almost disappeared from my life before joining this group, We are a lively group and you can join in as much or as little as you like and all this is down to the group leader, Roy, and the small group that helps him organise all of these events, not all Super Heros wear capes you know. (Roy this is not an excuse for you to wear your underpants on the outside of your clothes!)

Pamela Ford
MOTO member

u3a Birdwatching group

We are looking for a leader of this group He / she needs to be able to identify a wide range of birds by sight and sound in various localities. Currently we meet for 2 hours on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

If you are interested please contact:

Ted Pochribniak

Edward.pochribniak@gmail.com

07908 442343





GENERAL HISTORY IN ITALY SEPTEMBER 2025





CITIZEN SCIENCE IN BIOLOGY

The History and Development
of Public Participation in Science

PELAGIC

Wilson Wall
& David Morgan

A new science book by Wilson Wall one of our u3a members and David Morgan

This may be of interest to some of our members, Citizen Science in Biology. It is published by Pelagic Books. ISBN 9781784275846. Should you wish to investigate your editor can put you in touch with Wilson Wall.



General History

Monday 13 October 2025 from 2.15pm to 4pm

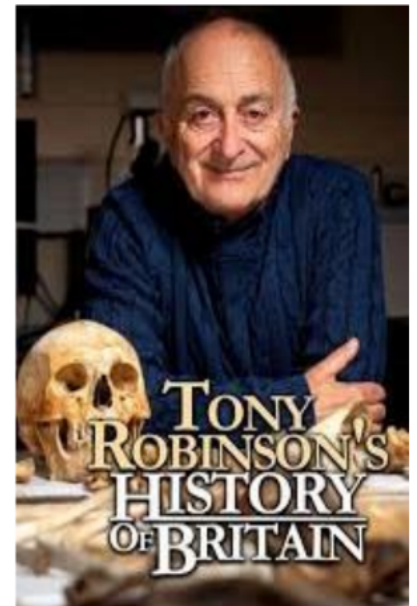
General History at St Peters Community Church Hall,
Merideth Green, Birchen Coppice, Kidderminster

Tony Robinson's The History of Britain THE TUDORS

The actor and history enthusiast explores the history of Britain through the everyday lives of ordinary people. How a knacker became an executioner, and how clothes were made. Finding Henry's sunken ship the Mary Rose. Showing us how food was prepared in Tudor England. A look at cumbersome armour.

A 44 minute colour film followed by group discussion and refreshments. **£3 a member** – Pre booking please

Contact: caroline.ocallaghan66@gmail.com



COME AND JOIN US

GENERAL HISTORY PROGRAMME AUTUMN / WINTER 2025

All meetings are at our new home St Peters Community Church Hall, 5 Meredith Green, Birchen Coppice, Kidderminster DY11 7EL on the 2nd Monday of the month unless it says otherwise

04 to 11 September Fully Booked

Umbria, Assisi & Perugia: The Heart of Italy

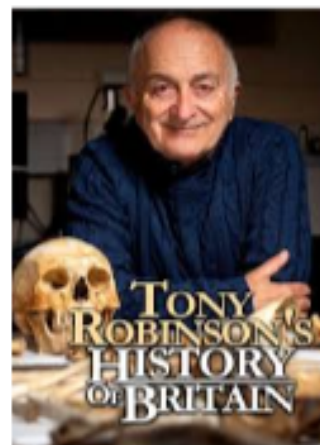
Following our successful visits to France and Spain we have booked another this time to Italy

13 October 2.15pm to 4pm

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The actor and history enthusiast explores the history of Britain through the everyday lives of ordinary people. How a knacker became an executioner, and how clothes were made. Finding Henry's sunken ship the Mary Rose. Showing us how food was prepared in Tudor England. A look at cumbersome armour.

A 44 minute colour film followed by group discussion and refreshments. **£3 a member**



10 November 2.30pm to 4pm Prebooking open to all members **£3** each including refreshments

A Tudor Christmas Banquet - If you were invited to a Tudor banquet, do you have what it takes to survive the festivities?

DISCOVER HISTORY

Join **Paul Harding** from "Discover History" as he takes us through the timetable of a banquet, demonstrating both good manners and etiquette. Just choose wisely what you wear on the day, and how you display your napkin!

Open to all WF&D u3a members to pre book

Monday 8 Dec 2025 from 2.15 to 4pm

The Tudor Monastery Farm Part 1 Archaeologists Peter Ginn & Tom Pinfold and historian **Ruth Goodman**, who is also a leading specialist in Tudor domestic life. In this television film they turn the clock back to the year 1500 to take on the role of the lay-folk who did the bulk of the farming and crafting within monastic lands. There are domestic tasks to tackle, from lighting fires with flint, making meals with depleted crops during the Hunger Gap and using a tread wheel to fetch water from the well. Peter and Tom's first job is to move the sheep to fresh grass. Wool at this time was known as 'the jewel in the realm', because it generated much of the nation's wealth. A colour film followed by group discussion and refreshments. **£3 each**



Contact: caroline.ocallaghan66@gmail.com

Group leader

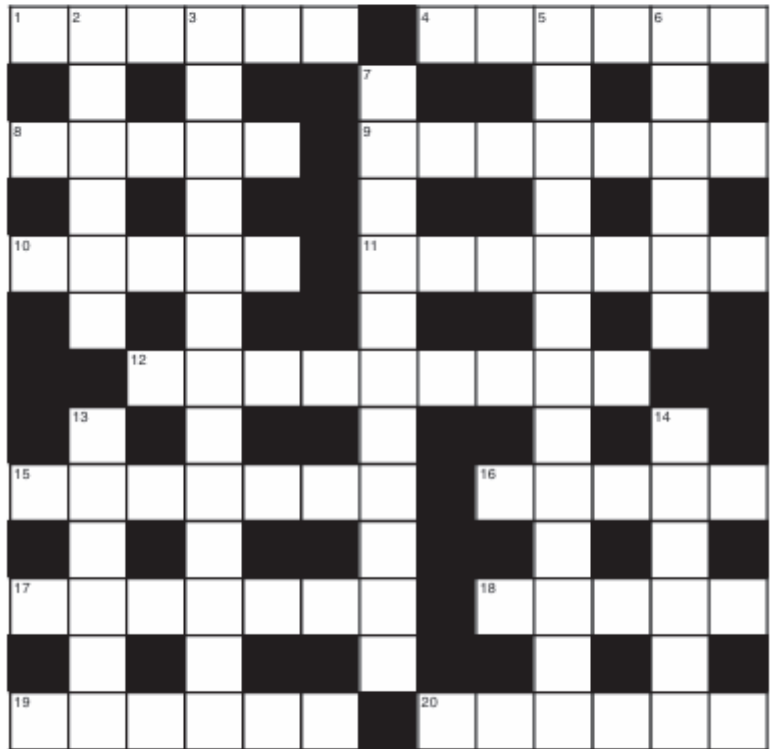
Take a break

ACROSS

1. Central keep of a castle eg Moncontour (6)
4. Mexican dish served sizzling hot (6)
8. US state known for potatoes (5)
9. Small incision technique for surgery (7)
10. An Italian woman, Dr Who's assistant (5)
11. Greek letter before pi (7)
12. Choosing to avoid (9)
15. Car window that opens to the sky (7)
16. Main character in The Avengers (5)
17. Lacking substance or intelligence (7)
18. Norwegian writer of "Hedda Gabler" (5)
19. Traditional Japanese performer (6)
20. First name of Marcos known for her shoes (6)

DOWN

2. Goldfinger's hat-throwing assistant (6)
3. 19th-century Viennese composer (6,7)
5. English landscape painter of "The Hay Wain" (4,9)
6. Fat used to make soap and candles (6)
7. Famous German beer festival (12)
13. Gas used in lighters (6)
14. Myth or historical tale (6)



Sudoku

Answers on Page 15

	9		7				5	2
4	6			3		7	8	1
2		7		6		3		4
	1			7			3	
				9	3			
3		9		1				
	2	1		4				3
		4				9		8
9				2	8		4	

EASY

6		7			4		1	
8								6
3	9			8			7	
1	3							
			6	2		3		
9		5		3		1	6	
4				2		6		1
		1	9					
	8				1	3	2	4

NORMAL

				1			7	
9	1	6		7	3		4	2
		7						1
1		4		9	5		2	
	6	5						
				1	6			
				9			1	
				3		8		6

HARD

Word Scramble

Grape varieties - unscramble these words to solve the puzzle!

1. LMTROE
2. IUGN NABCL
3. NCRHEGAE
4. HYSAR
5. ANCETRBE VNNASUIGO
6. TIONP ORNI
7. NDYONHAARC
8. GNUANVSOI CABLN
9. EAECRBTN RFCAN
10. ACARNING
11. ERLOULAG RSGI
12. YAMAG

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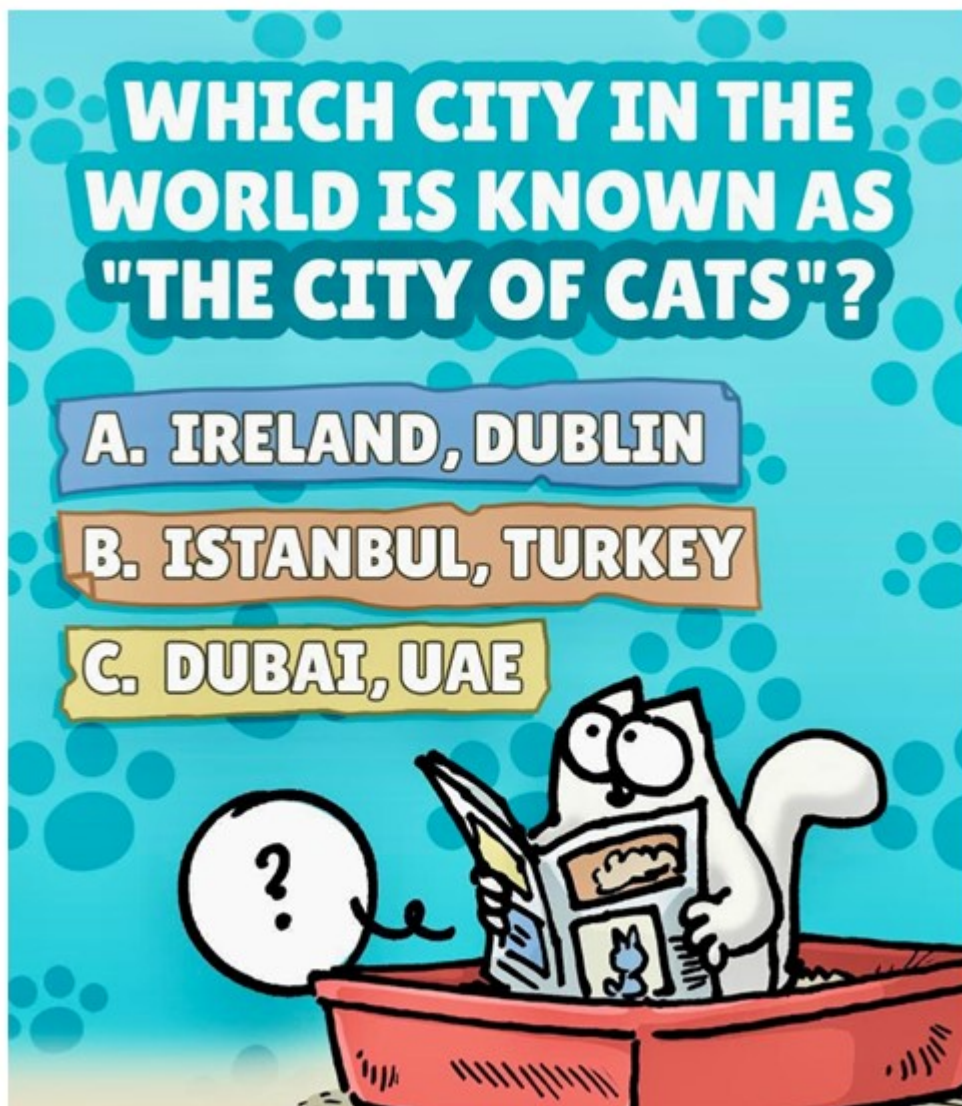
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GENEALOGY

Were your ancestors involved in crime? To celebrate the 20th Anniversary we have invited Richard Churchley (who recently spoke at the main monthly meeting) to speak to us in November on the Topic of “Local Law and Order and popular Protest before 1850”.

Whether or not you are a family historian or interested in getting into it, you are welcome to join our group sessions first Thursday in Month at Franche Community Church (Hope Church) at 10.30 am where we discuss and share our knowledge on relevant topics. Recent offerings covered using maps and education levels over time.



The answer is Istanbul due to the very high number of stray cats at least 125,000 in the city.

The Digital Photography Group

The digital photography group, met on a very warm day to celebrated the 20th Anniversary of our U3a by visiting Arley Arboretum on a photo safari using mobile photos and cameras.

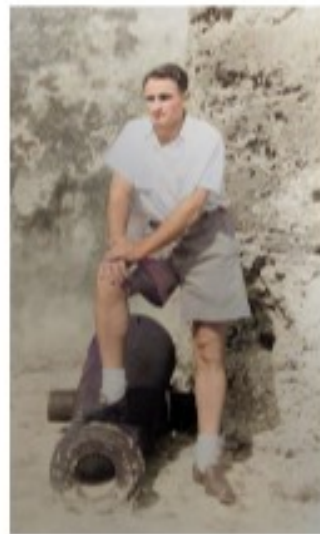


Our meetings are on zoom which gives us an opportunity to share our photos each month and discuss any problems and ways to

improve our photography.

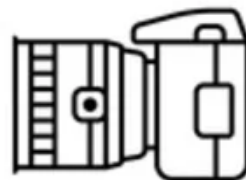
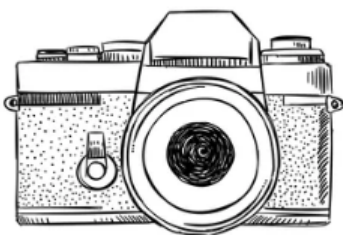
We set a task for the next meeting and arrange a Photo safari if possible.

We have recently explored ways of editing old black and white photos to keep a digital record.



In October we will share our photos of Landmarks in the Wyre Forest area.

Please feel free to join us (free on zoom) by using the Wyre Forest U3a web site and go to groups then Digital Photography. It will then show email address.



Spanish Conversation Group enjoy a Tapas Lunch

On 17th July in honour of Wyre Forest and District U3A's 20th Anniversary, the Spanish Conversation group enjoyed a celebratory lunch at Unwined in Tenbury Wells. We managed to get as many of the group together as possible and we had a fantastic time. The Tapas were authentic and so interesting with something for everyone. We raised a toast to the U3A in Sangria while waiting for our dishes to arrive and then, somehow, we managed to make it all disappear. Thank you very much to the committee for a generous subsidy which we really appreciated.

Muchisimas Gracias



Friday Exercise to Music

16 ladies from the "Friday Exercise To Music Class" visited Hartlebury Castle in August to have a delicious Afternoon Tea at the Cafe. We enjoyed a happy afternoon together.

This was to celebrate Wyre Forest U3A 20th Anniversary. Sue Gay



D	O	N	J	O	N	F	A	J	I	T	A		
D	O			O		O		A					
I	D	A	H	O		K	E	Y	H	O	L	E	
J	A			T		N		L					
D	O	N	N	A		O	M	I	C	R	O	N	
B	N			B		O		W					
	E	S	C	H	E	W	I	N	G				
B	T			R		S		L					
S	U	N	R	O	O	F		S	T	E	E	D	
T	A			E		A		G					
V	A	C	U	O	U	S		I	B	S	E	N	
N	S			T		L		N					
G	E	I	S	H	A			I	M	E	L	D	A

5	2	1	4	9	3	6	8	7
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2	5	4	9	3	7	8	6	1
6	9	7	1	5	2	4	3	8
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1	8	2	3	6	4	7	5	9

7	5	4	1	2	6	9	8	3
8	9	6	5	4	3	1	7	2
1	3	2	7	9	8	4	5	6
5	8	7	2	3	4	6	9	1
3	6	9	8	1	5	7	2	4
2	4	1	9	6	7	8	3	5
4	1	8	3	5	9	2	6	7
9	2	5	6	7	1	3	4	8
6	7	3	4	8	2	5	1	9

5	9	8	4	6	1	3	7	2
6	7	3	8	9	2	1	4	5
4	2	1	3	7	5	9	8	6
1	6	5	2	8	4	7	9	3
3	4	9	5	1	7	6	2	8
2	8	7	6	3	9	5	1	4
8	1	2	7	5	3	4	6	9
7	3	4	9	2	6	8	5	1
9	5	6	1	4	8	2	3	7

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9. EAECRBTN RFCAN
10. ACARNING
11. ERLLOULAG RSGI
12. YAMAG

- MERLOT
- UGNI BLANC
- GRENACHE
- SYRAH
- CABERNET SAUVIGNON
- PINOT NOIR
- CHARDONNAY
- SAUVIGNON BLANC
- CABERNET FRANC
- CARIGNAN
- GROLLEAU GRIS
- GAMAY

Answers to Take a Break quiz on page 10

NICKED—u3a Industrial History group visit to Birmingham police museum




WORKING CAT

The Lock-up cat's job was to catch the mice that lived in the building. There have been many cats here over the years, but the most famous cat was called Cooking Fat. Former custody sergeant Phil Tucker gave the cat to the Lock-up in 1982.


Cooking Fat was even added to the official staffing records, as there was funding available for staff, but none to directly address the mouse problem! His favourite place to sleep was the boiler room.

In the early 2000s changes were made and the cat was removed at the request of a senior officer. Within a couple of weeks the mouse problem was so bad, the cat was quickly returned!

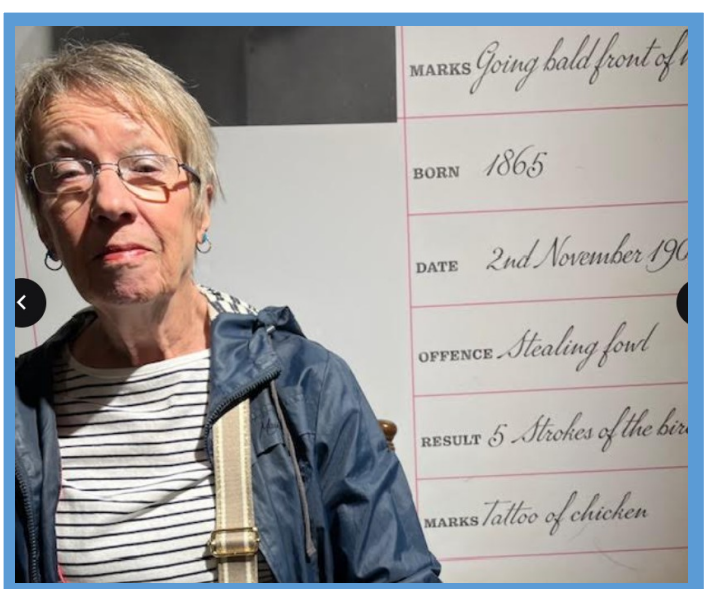
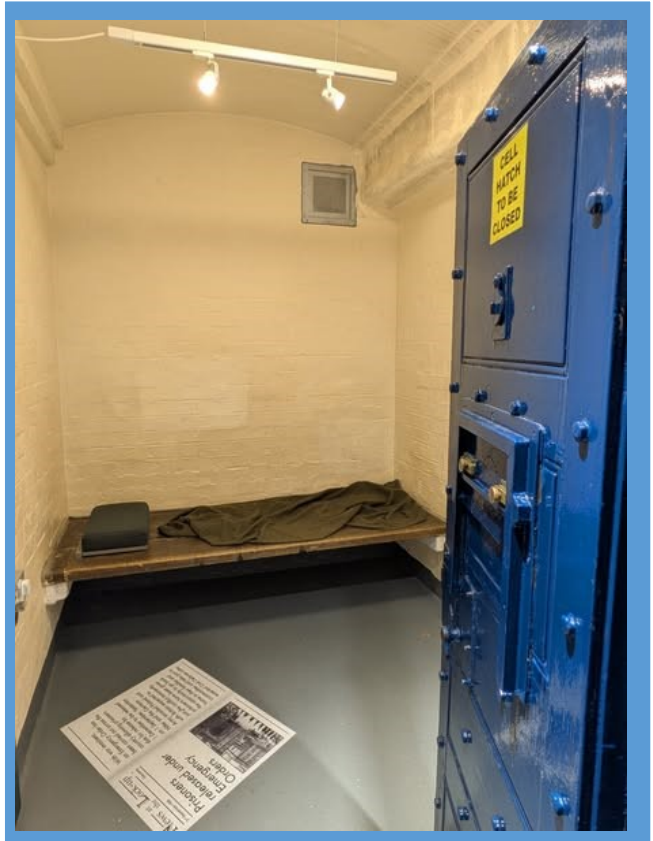
Can you spot how he used to get in and out of the kitchen?



Cooking Fat as a kitten with Phil Tucker's son Troy, 1982.



Nicked—more pictures from the Police Museum



20th. Anniversary

20th Anniversary

Anniversaries are special, particularly those which have a zero.

China is the traditional 'gift' on a 20th anniversary so I thought a gift of a story around china might be appropriate.

Staffordshire (with its resources of clay, coal for fuel and salt and lead for glazes) and entrepreneurs like Josiah Wedgwood and Josiah Spode became a centre of pottery production in the late 18th century. The Blue Willow Pattern was extremely popular – and still is.

The traditional Chinese legend depicted on this familiar china tells of a wealthy mandarin who had a daughter named Koon-se. She fell in love with Chang, one of her father's clerks but he was of lowly birth. Turtles carried love messages between them.

The mandarin would not allow the match and sent his daughter away so that he could find her a suitable husband. On the eve of her wedding to a wealthy duke, Chang, disguised as a boatman, helped Koon-se escape with her jewels. They crossed a bridge to a small island but as they were about to be caught the lovers were transformed into two turtle doves to be united forever.

Or so the story goes! In fact there is no such legend in China and the pattern and the story linking the details in the pattern were a clever marketing construct by English pottery manufacturers when they saw how popular was imported Chinese porcelain. These inventions are attributed to Thomas Minton and Thomas Turner, possibly Josiah Spode. Here lies another story!

Since the first production of Blue Willow pattern many potteries world wide have manufactured their own versions which all include: Willow tree; Pine tree; bridge with three people; fence; boat; pagoda; two birds in flight.

In the U.S. during the 1920s and the Great Depression restaurants and diners served up 'Blue Plate Specials'. These were reasonably priced, but hearty meals for budget conscious people. Separately, wealthy Americans also embraced the product, for example William Randolph Hearst commissioning a gold -rimmed version.

Willow trees are associated with sadness and loss but also resilience and flexibility, emotions which are part of this manufactured story. There are some wonderful stories about Willows, perhaps to be related another time.

Helen Ferguson. September 2025.

Anniversary Celebrations

Both of the **Science of Life Groups** had a great time enjoying the delights of Arley Arboretum where we tried, water divining in The Italian Garden, meditated under magnificent trees so full of energy, had fun thinking we were kids again climbing on them for memorable photo shoots and, singing our hearts out draped in u3a banners, as we conveyed to all the **u3a Anthem** to the tune of **'Blowing in the Wind'**. See page 19.

They were amazing hot days, with cream teas and the like, as we jockeyed for position with the wasps at the tea tables outside the café.

A very memorable few hours for so many different reasons.



Science of life—Anniversary Celebrations

The u3a Anthem

U3A Anthem—sung to the tune of Blowing in the Wind

How many times did you say in your youth, you were never going to be old and grey?

**You were never going to shirk, you would never give up work,
and retirement seemed a million miles away.**

But the time came around and very soon you found the perfect way to keep old age at bay.

The answer, my friend, is you joined the U3A

The answer is you joined the U3A

How many groups can you fit in a week, 5 or 6 or maybe even more?

**You can join in History, you can trace your family tree, play Bridge or cards or learn to paint
and draw.**

**You can walk and dance and sing, do almost anything, how did you get the time to work be-
fore?**

The answer, my friend, is you joined the U3A

The answer is you joined the U3A

How many times do you think to yourself the garden needs a weed and prune and dig?

**The fridge it needs a clean, 'cos the cheese is turning green and the pile of ironing's looking ra-
ther big.**

**You need to clean the loo, but have better things to do and, what the hell, you couldn't give a
fig!**

The reason, my friend, is you joined the U3A

The reason is the flippin U3A!

The reason, my friend, is you joined the U3A

You joined the brilliant Wyre Forest U3A!



Science of Life Groups



Ruth Lowe our guest speaker on Mary Quant

Well-known local Speaker Ruth Lowe was our guest at the Monthly Meeting in September and she was an absolute fount of all knowledge on the world famous fashion designer, Mary Quant.

Ruth showed us not just the sheer inventiveness of her fashion designs but the history of the business, Mary's entrepreneurial drive and her business acumen.

Our audience was treated to a literal car-load of dresses, make-up, shoes, boots, underwear, scarfs, fashion jewellery and photographs.

Many of Ruth's items have previously been on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London but she was quite happy to wear some of them herself on stage (which is always the best way to view clothing) but I understand that in smaller venues, she actually allows the audience to try garments on themselves.

Her talk was such a trip down Memory Lane. How many of us women remember trying to wear a mini-skirt over stockings and suspenders before the invention of sheer tights to cover us up better?

I wonder if you had a PVC dress or raincoat designed by Mary Quant?

Weren't the sixties just wonderful folks?



Ruth Lowe



The Industrial History Group

On a very hot day in July the Industrial History group and Ceilidh group went down the river to celebrate our u3a's 20th Anniversary. They embarked on the River King at Stourport and cruised to the Lenchford pub for lunch and celebratory cake, and members were entertained by the organisation's Rapper group, Retro Rappers. On the way back there was music and dancing and a lot of overheated participants! But it was a lovely way to celebrate. Sue Cutler.



The Industrial History Group

In June, the Industrial History group visited Charlecote Mill where they were shown round by Karl, the Miller. The Mill is a wonderful working piece of our heritage, in a lovely setting, and produces excellent flour for sale around the Midlands. Lunch at the local hostelry completed a great visit. Sue Cutler.



General History—visit to the Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey

Bordesley Abbey was a 12th-century Cistercian abbey near the town of Redditch, in Worcestershire, England.

The abbey's foundation was an act of Waleran de Beaumont, Count of Meulan, who gave the monks of Garendon Abbey in Leicestershire some more land.

However, Empress Matilda laid claim to the patronage of Bordesley once Waleran surrendered to her in about 1141, thus making Bordesley a royal house.

Bordesley Abbey was once an important local ecclesiastical centre, holding political control of the ancient township of Tardebigge. It was demolished by Henry VIII during the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 and the property was sold.

The ruins are now an archaeological site, undergoing investigation since 1969 by the University of Reading's 'Bordesley Abbey Project'. Many of the excavated items can be seen in a visitor centre and museum at the site, which is joined with the Forge Mill Needle Museum.

DESCRIPTION

The abbey is located in the borough of Redditch in Worcestershire, on the south bank of the River Arrow, close to where it meets the Batchley Brook. Archaeological findings by the University of Reading's Bordesley Abbey Project indicate that the abbey's focus was the church building, located on a hill, with its western side embedded within the slope. This location made it prone to slipping and buttresses were added to support the building. Piers were added for extra support in the 13th century, and again in the 14th, following a major collapse of the central tower.

The plan of the church was cruciform, with an aisleless presbytery, transepts each with three eastern chapels, and an aisled eight-bay nave housing the choirs of the monks and lay brothers. In the later Middle Ages, following the decline of the lay brothers, their choir was removed and chapels inserted in the aisles.

The abbey was the burial place of Guy de Beauchamp, 10th Earl of Warwick, whose family had been among its benefactors.

The claustral buildings are less well understood, as only a small part has been excavated, but this shows that the cloisters themselves were rebuilt in the late 14th century.

The east range housed the chapter house and dormitory, and the south range housed the refectory, aligned north-south in the usual Cistercian manner.

The ruins of the abbey today consist of visible earthworks and walls, and parts buried underground such as the watermill and workshops.

The watermill was industrial, with the wheel driving the bellows of a forge and hammers for making objects like knives and tenterhooks.

General History—visit to the Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey

The site is managed by the Forge Mill Needle Museum, which provides access to the abbey ruin, included within its entry fee as well as guided tours. The abbey has been designated by Historic England as a scheduled monument since 1957.

HISTORY

Bordesley Abbey was founded during a period known as The Anarchy, a breakdown in law and order which followed the disputed accession of Stephen, King of England. Historians generally date the founding of the abbey to 1138, when Waleran de Beaumont, Count of Meulan and Worcester filed a charter for the site. But an alternative charter by Queen Maud was recorded in the Winchcombe Annals, dated 1136 and witnessed by Waleran himself. After the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, Waleran switched allegiance from Stephen to Maud and it is possible that he renounced his own right to the abbey at that time, in deference to Maud.

The abbey was set up by Waleran as a monastery for a group of Cistercian monks, previously based at Garendon Abbey in Leicestershire. The designated area, located in the valley of the River Arrow, was predominantly marshland at the time and the monks had to drain the land and divert the river to make it suitable for building. The earliest buildings on the site were wooden, with stone constructions being built a few years later.

The first part of the abbey to be completed was the church, completed in around 1150, with subsequent building taking place predominantly during five distinct periods up to the early 14th century.

The abbey acquired considerable land-holdings in the area, on which it farmed produce such as cereal and wool for sale. This was managed through a system of around twenty granges, established by the early 13th century and located in Worcestershire and Warwickshire, up to 35 kilometres (22 mi) from the abbey itself.

In the 13th century a gatehouse and chapel were built at the west end of the precinct. This chapel, dedicated to St Stephen, survived the Dissolution and continued to be used by the parish; it was demolished in 1805 when a new church was built in the centre of Redditch town.

The abbey closed on 17 July 1538 during the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII, when its final abbot, John Day, surrendered the land and possessions to the king. The land was sold by Henry on 23 September 1538.

In 1542 the cleared site was granted to Lord Windsor, and was held by the earls of Plymouth until the 20th century. It is now owned by the borough of Redditch.

BORDESLEY ABBEY visitor's centre

Bordesley Abbey is rich in history and archaeological evidence.

In 1140 a group of Cistercian monks from Garendon Abbey in Leicestershire were

General History—visit to the Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey

granted land in the Arrow Valley by Waleran de Beaumont, Count of Meulan and Earl of Worcester. This enabled the monks to found Bordesley Abbey and turn the Arrow

Valley into a place suitable for a monastery. Bordesley means ‘the place where boards were obtained’.

Archaeological evidence shows that when the monks arrived the Valley was a very marshy and inhospitable place, unsuitable for the building of a large Abbey – so they dug a complex drainage system and diverted the River Arrow.

Excavations show that the first buildings were made of wood, but within a few years they replaced it with stone buildings. You can see evidence of how the Abbey changed as you walk around – from the early plain green sandstone to the more ornately decorated later red sandstone.

The ‘Night’ stairs are also clearly visible – so called because the monks used these stairs to get into the church for the first service at 2am!

We know that the Abbey had about 20 farms or ‘granges’ in Warwickshire and Worcestershire and the sale of its produce – cereals and especially wool – gave the Abbey much of its wealth. But this prosperity, however, was not to last.

In 1538 Henry VIII dissolved the monastic houses and Bordesley was demolished and the estates sold. The ruins remained buried until JM Woodward (tutor to the Bartleet family) first excavated them in 1864. In 1969 the Bordesley Abbey project team began a programme of excavations.

The Visitor Centre, which is set in an original reconstructed 16th Century barn, shows many of the finds that have been excavated over the years.

The exhibits show what the archaeologists have discovered about the life of the Cistercian monks of Bordesley – from how they worshiped, to the clothes they wore, to the illnesses they suffered.

Bordesley Abbey had one of the earliest metal working mills in the country and you can see the preserved timbers from the mill on display, as well as many of the metal items that would have been made there.



General History Group visit to the historic Needle Museum



General History Group visiting the historic Needle Museum and Forge at Redditch 15 July 2025 – We hope to return for better weather and the Heritage Sunday in September



Group List October 2025

Group Name	Group Leader	Category	Status
Absolute Beginners Guitar	Dave Bagnall	Music	Full
Adventure	Penny Smith	Sport and Exercise	Active
All In The Mind	Barry Walmsley	Science	Active
Amblers	Pauline Pitchford	Sport and Exercise	Active
Art	Pauline James	Arts	Active
Art Appreciation	Elaine Yates	Arts	Active
Backgammon	Gilbert Parker	Card and Board Games	Active
Badminton (Thursday)	Rosemary Jones	Sport and Exercise	Active
Badminton (Wednesday)	Howard Morgan	Sport and Exercise	Full
Ballroom and Latin Dance	Sue Langley	Sport and Exercise	Active
Bird Watching	Ted Pochribniak	Science, Social	Active
Board Games	Sue Taylor	Card and Board Games	Waiting List
Book Reading 1	Peter Gallagher	English Language and Literature	Waiting List
Book Reading 2	Tim Coombs	English Language and Literature	Waiting List
Bridge	Paul Lewis	Card and Board Games	Active
Craft	Sheila Munden	Crafts	Active
Creative Textiles	Gail Tutcher	Crafts	Waiting List
Creative Writing	Gabrielle Mapp	English Language and Literature	Active
Cribbage	Jean Laidler	Card and Board Games	Active
Dancing	Sue Langley	Sport and Exercise	Active
Digital Photography	Beryl Buckley	Arts	Active
Enjoying Operetta and Opera	Ralph Bramley	Theatre	Active
Enjoyment of Classical Music	Ralph Bramley	Music	Active
Environmental Concern	Gail Tutcher	Science	Active
Exercise to Music	Sue Gay	Sport and Exercise	Active
Friday Afternoon Ceilidh Club	Barry Walmsley	Social	Active
Friday Film Club	Ralph Bramley	Theatre	Active
Friday Night at The Rose	Rosemary Jones	Social	Active
Game For A Laugh	Nick Underwood	Social	Active
Garden Visits	Janice Evans	Science	Active
Genealogy	Beryl Buckley	Humanities	Active
General History	Caroline O Callaghan	History	Active
German Conversation	Ken Bell	Foreign Language and Literature	Active

Group List October 2025

Group Name	Group Leader	Category	Status
Gospelite Singers	Jill Judson	Music	Active
Guitar Club	Stephen Rosendale	Music	Active
Handbell Ringing	Liz Struckett	Music	Active
History	Elaine Yates	History	Active
Industrial History	Sue Cutler	History	Active
Jam Session	Martin Delahay	Music	Active
Kidderminster Station Adoption	Tony Haylock	General	Active
Local and Social History	Cathryn Plain	History	Active
Mah Jong (Friday)	Diana Gray	Card and Board Games	Active
Mah Jong (Thursday)	Dawn Cooper	Card and Board Games	Active
Members On Their Own	Roy Leigh	Social	Active
Military History	Dennis Plant	History	Active
Moral Maze	Sally Howes	Humanities	Active
Petanque	Howard Morgan	Sport and Exercise	Waiting List
Pickleball	John Cooper	Sport and Exercise	Active
Poetry for Pleasure	Beryl Greenwood	English Language and Literature	Active
Quizzing-4-All	Janice Evans	Social	Active
Quizzing-4-Fun Online	Janice Evans	Social	Active
Retro Rappers	Barry Walmsley	Music	Active
Rhyme and Reason	Sue Marsden	English Language and Literature	Active
Satellite Singers	Elaine Yates	Music	Active
Science & Technology In Society	Barry Walmsley	Science	Active
Scrabble & Rummikub	Ann Hill	Card and Board Games	Active
Short Mat Bowls	Terry Turner	Sport	Waiting List
Simply Photography	Steve Archer	Arts	Active
Songs of the Seven Seas	Steve Underwood	Music	Active
Spanish Conversation	Anne Williams	Foreign Language and Literature	Active
Story Telling	Elaine Yates	English Language and Literature	Active
Strollers	Sheila Munden	Sport and Exercise	Active
Table Tennis	David Hudson	Sport and Exercise	Active
The Science of Life (Friday)	Sue Langley	Humanities	Full
The Science of Life (Tuesday)	Sue Langley	Humanities	Active
Theatre	Julia Bouttle	Social	Active

Group List October 2025

Group Name	Group Leader	Category	Status
Travel	Ros James	Social	Active
Ukulele Baptist	Martin Delahay	Music	Active
Ukulele Willow	Martin Delahay	Music	Active
Understand the Economy	Michael Loftus	Humanities	Active
Walking for Fitness	Sue Langley	Sport and Exercise	Active
Website Support	Sandra Phillips	Science and Technology	Active
What a Performance	John Watkins	Music	Waiting List
WoolCraft and Natter	Sandra Phillips	Crafts, Social	Active

Finding out about joining groups.

Go on our website.

Look at the groups menu.

View the groups.

When making enquires click “group email” send an email asking to join.

If you have problems using internet.

Join us at the Monday Monthly Meeting

Theses are held the third Monday of every month

2.00 till 4.00pm

Harriers Social and Supporters Club

Stadium Close

Hoo road

Kidderminster

DY10 1NB

There you can chat to the membership secretary and other committee members in the chat area, by the tea and coffee tables.

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Any enquiries regarding this newsletter, or if you wish to have an article published in the next issue, please email Ralph Bramley / Newsletter Editor or phone 07756 636529 .

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