



September 2026 Newsletter

TODAY'S MEETING

3rd Sep - Henry Chance "The Chance Family and their Smethwick Glassworks"

DATES FOR YOUR 2025 DIARY (All talks start at 2pm)

8th Oct - Jess Nash "Tales from the driver's seat – a woman bus driver in the 1970s"

5th Nov - Paul Thornber "The Rising of the Son" the story of the unknown Soldier"

* Please check the website "Events" for a list of speakers for 2026

FROM THE CHAIR

David Haggarty

As previously announced, we will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the forming of our u3a at this month's meeting, with some of our interesting archive material on display in the hall and there will be a special cake with our usual refreshments. Also previously advised, our AGM will be held at the start of our 1st October monthly meeting when attendees will be nominating and seconding committee members for 2026/7. A copy of the nomination list is at the end of this newsletter. We have three vacancies that we need other H of E members to come forward to fill, Treasurer, Newsletter Secretary, and Archivist. Out of the current committee of ten members, three have served for over five years, one for nine and one for sixteen years and we now need others to step forward to help take H of E u3a forward. This is imperative since we are getting to a stage when long standing committee members will be leaving and H of E cannot operate without the three officers, Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, so if you feel you are able to contribute to our u3a, you would be warmly welcomed.

This September will be the 25th Anniversary of the inaugural AGM of the Heart of England u3a in 2001, and at the monthly meeting we will be displaying some of our interesting archive material. We hope that some of our longstanding members will regale us with a few anecdotes of those early days. We will also have cake! Also Just confirming our coffee morning at the Pen & Parchment at 10.30am Wednesday 16th September. All welcome.

David

ALL THAT SWINGS AND JAZZ

Sue Tringham

Edna presented a great programme combining Big Band and Jazz recordings at our August meeting. Not sure yet who will be presenting the programme at our next meeting on Thursday 24 September at 2pm at the Methodist Church but rest assured, someone will!! Look forward to meeting up with everyone.

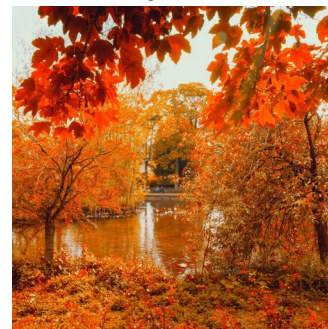
**Michaelmas
29th September**



**Rosh Hashana
11th September**



**Autumn Equinox
23rd September**



AUGUST SPEAKER REPORT

Tim Folan

John Butterworth returned to us and gave a lively talk about the development and demise of stagecoaches in the Midlands. Our area is on the route between London & Holyhead so ideally placed for those travelling between the capital and Ireland. In 1730 the first direct service was via what is now the A3400 though the roads were so bad and dangerous that passengers would sometimes write their wills before embarking. In the 1760s and 70s the expansion of turnpike roads made journeys more comfortable, although the toll booths were as popular as speed cameras are today. John told an amusing tale of one determined toll booth keeper who made George III pay his dues of 27 shillings when visiting the Bishop of Worcester. Stratford's remaining toll booth (1814) is on Clopton bridge and is grade I listed. Royal Mail began using stagecoaches and cut delivery times by half, they had fewer stops, priority over other traffic and were the first class express trains of their day. Many coaching inns ran their own service for particular "stages" of the route - hence the name. Competition was fierce. Passengers usually had no more than 20 minutes for meal breaks (paid for in advance) and some canny hoteliers reheated the leftovers for the following group of passengers. It could be dangerous for those travelling outside, if passengers fell asleep and "dropped off" (hence the phrase) the coach it would not stop to rescue them - sensible travellers tied themselves on. By 1830 Royal Mail had begun using the even quicker railways, turnpikes had reduced revenues and less money for repairs so the stagecoaches entered a doom loop as rail travel took over. By the 1860s they had disappeared completely; except on Christmas cards.

BOOK CLUB MONDAY

Jackie Biggs

Last month we read "Long Island" by Colm Tobin, sequel to "Brooklyn". We all enjoyed the book and would recommend it. Set in a small Irish town in 1976, it tells the story of Eilis who emigrated to New York twenty years earlier and married an American. She returns for a holiday bringing her two teenage children. A previous relationship reignites but things have changed and decisions will affect all the main characters. We see the dangers of secrecy and 'going back' ... a page turner!

BOOK CLUB – WEDNESDAY

Gillian Caveney

For August's meeting we read *In the Lives of Puppets* by TJ Klune - a sci fi fantasy with its found family theme based on Pinocchio and Swiss Family Robinson. Some of us felt the author had used other unacknowledged sources eg Star Wars and WALL-E, making the story quite derivative and leaving open the question as to how original it really was. Although the novel did have some relevance to current concerns around AI and LLMs the majority of the group did not enjoy it and not everyone finished it.

BRIDGE CLUB

David Whitbread

The Bridge Group provides a friendly and stimulating weekly meeting. Members have a range of bridge skills, from beginners with the basics up to well-trodden experience. If you, or a friend with U3A membership, is interested in joining in, try us out on a Tuesday afternoon. We meet in the Methodist Church Centre for a couple of hours, with up to four tables, with a weekly charge of about £3 per player for the room. Parking is usually available. For more information, have a word with Keith Rockett (01926-863-143) or David Whitfield (01564-771-550). We represent the range of bridge skills!

CARD MAKING CLUB

Angela Ramsey & Jane Edkins

We welcome new-comers to join us for a relaxing few hours, trying new techniques and producing cards for ourselves and for sale at monthly meetings. Base cards of different sizes and colours, A4 white and coloured card, backing papers and accessories are all provided. We spent the August workshop punching shapes from scraps of card and paper of various colours to create shapes which will be useful to decorate future cards. Our donation of £100 from the sale of cards has been sent to the Air Ambulance Service. Next workshop: Friday, 25th September, 12.30 to 4.00, in the new room. For more information, please chat with Angela and Jane at the card sale table or email Robyn, at redbird22@hotmail.co.uk

CHINWAGS

Glynis Holloway

We are a small friendly group who meets on the 4th Monday of each month at 12.30pm in Bistrot Pierre to enjoy a nice lunch and good conversation. Our August meeting was a little tricky because of a last minute problem with staff in the restaurant but we re-located to the Boathouse and had a very enjoyable lunch. Our next lunch will be in Bistrot Pierre on Monday September 28th at 12.30pm. Contact, glynisa.holloway@gmail.com.

CHOIR

David Haggarty

We will be performing our concert "We Got Rhythm", at the Stratford Methodist Centre on Friday 18th at 2.30pm. Tickets are £6 and include light refreshments after the concert and they will be available at the September monthly meeting from choir members or at the door on the day. Besides some new pieces by our Music Director Stewart Wallace, we will also be performing a medley of songs by Gershwin and other old favourites. Contact David at d-haggarty@outlook.com

CLASSICAL MUSIC GROUP

Edwin Lilly & Graeme Ramsey

It was a sweltering hot day (38 degrees C) on 13th August when the Classical Music Group met in a blissfully cooler room at the Methodist Church Centre to listen to an exciting programme of music. The programme opened with a short piano prelude by Rachmaninov, followed by Tchaikovsky's "Fantasy Overture Romeo & Juliet" and Benjamin Britten's "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra". After the interval, the programme continued with a rousing rendition of the "Orb and Sceptre Fanfare and March" composed by Sir William Walton for the occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Finally, the programme concluded with "Belshazzar's Feast", a dramatic choral work by William Walton, telling the biblical story of the fall of Babylon following King Belshazzar's worship of earthly treasures and his excessive indulgence in feasting and merry-making. The next meeting will be held on 10th September at the Methodist Church Centre, starting at 2:00 pm.. It is open to all u3a members, so do come along to enjoy two hours listening to some great music.

COMPUTER GROUP - offering I-T assistance for our members.

Robyn Nicoll

An organiser is required for the Computer Group. Please let Barbara Whitting, our Interest Groups Coordinator, know if you would be willing to arrange short courses for members. Thank you Robyn.

CREATIVE CRAFT GROUP

Robyn Nicoll

The Craft Group was formed 25 years ago so have enthusiastically joined in with the Birthday celebrations being held at the September monthly meeting. Members knitted small flags and embroidered squares to create a decorative garland to drape around the notice board. The Crafters meet monthly on the 2nd Monday afternoon at the Methodist Church, 2.00pm to 4.00pm in the reception area. The Crafters would welcome new members to join us for a relaxing afternoon each month. We bring our own projects to work on and from time to time have a joint project to which interested members are invited. We plan to hold an Origami afternoon before Christmas to create a tree decoration which could also be used to make a simple card. Next Get-together: Monday, 14th September.

For more information about the Group please contact Robyn. redbird22@hotmail.co.uk

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Sylvia Bevan

We will meet on Wednesday 9th September at 2pm in the Guild cottages upstairs room as usual. Enter through double wooden doors opposite the council offices and you will be greeted. New members and discussion suggestions always welcome. john.bevan573@btinternet.com

DINAHS

Sylvia Crooks

We next meet on Tuesday 1st September at the Pen & Parchment for lunch. Look forward to seeing everyone for a chat about what they have been doing in the last month.

FINE DINING

Hazel Miller

We visited number 4 Mediterranean Bar and Restaurant at the Stratford Marina. The food quality was very good, if not to everybody's taste. Generally though, we mostly enjoyed the evening. The service was helpful and the setting on a warm summer's night was perfect, with large open windows overlooking the Marina.

GARDEN APPRECIATION GROUP

Suzy Genge

We visited Hidcote gardens in August. It was a lovely morning and we enjoyed a coffee first. The gardens were surprisingly colourful, especially the Red borders. There were some beautiful lilac hydrangeas that looked very well, despite the drought. Next meeting is at Lord Leycester, Warwick, on Monday 14th September. Meet in cafe at 10am.

GRUMPY OLD MEN

Keith Riste

The Grumpy Old Men Group urgently requires some additional members. As stated in the regular Newsletters, we meet on the third Wednesday of each month at the Stratford Sports Club, where we have lunch and engage in a lively and usually humorous discussion on a chosen subject or on a variety of matters of general interest. We are not really Grumpy at all! If you are interested and would like to know more, please contact the Secretary Keith Riste by email at keithriste@yahoo.com

HISTORY GROUP **Robert Tringham**
The Group met on 16th December to consider the origins of languages. We discussed the findings that all languages devolved from the first African Tongue which was the cradle of all modern languages. We saw photographs of ancient carvings especially the Java Shells carved by Homo Erectus 500,000 years ago. We also looked at “Lucy” who walked upright and is likely a Homo Erectus but lived 3.2 million years ago. We considered whether a dog barks in different languages, or birds sing in their own local language. Part 2 of origins of languages will continue in similar theme in October. Please check the website for further information or contact me at hofe.u3a.com

KEEP FIT **Jan Jones**
Our small friendly group consists of both males and females of mixed abilities. The class is designed for our age group, with standing and sitting exercises. We meet every Thursday morning from 10 -11am in the Parish Centre at St Andrews Church in Shotton. We have an excellent tutor and really enjoy the exercises and a chat. At present there is a waiting list, but please contact me if you are interested in finding out more about the group. Contact janljones@aol.com

Scrabble, Dominoes and Card Games **Sue Tringham**
We normally meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month from 2pm until 4pm in the Foyer of the Methodist Church. It's a light hearted afternoon of fun, laughter and conversation! In September we will meet on the 7th and 21st. Tea, coffee and biscuits at 3. All welcome!!

SNATTS **Mike Genge**
Our next meeting will be on September 11 when Colin Stuart will talk to us about the recently completed Barcelona Cathedral, Sagrada Família. For more information please contact Mike at mikegenge@sky.com

THEATRE GROUP **Glynis McDougall**
In August we saw a classic The Importance of being Ernest at the Arts House. It didn't disappoint. September is “Home, I'm Darling” at The Bearpit. I have had to change the date from Thursday 24th to Tuesday 22nd. I hope this isn't a problem. October is back to The Bearpit on Friday 16th for “Mist over Avalon” set in Camelot. I will put the list out at the meeting. Contact Glynis at glynismcdougall1@gmail.com

WALKING GROUP **Lin Randall**
Our next walk is on Wednesday 9th September, starting at 10am from the New Inn Hotel at Clifford Chambers. You can park in the pub car park, as we can have a coffee at the end of the walk, or anywhere nearby in the street. The walk is circular, round to Atherstone and back, and includes one or two easy stiles and a couple of hills. It's under four miles and we should be back to the pub at 12pm when it opens. Everyone is welcome to join us. Lin.

**Pursuits Festival
Stratford Upon Avon**

**Jungle Feast
on Waterside in August**



TEA /COFFEE ROTA 2026
Refreshment Co-ordinator
Gillian Edwards, email: gillian_edwards50@hotmail.co.uk

Group Leaders please check the Newsletter for your rota.
Below is a list of the interest Groups that will be responsible for serving tea and coffee each month.

Sep	-	Wed. Book Club	-	Oct	-	History	-	Nov	-	SNATTS
Dec.	-	Keep fit	-	Jan	-	Theatre Group	-	Feb	-	Bridge