



January 2026

Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

As we approach the end of January, I'd like to wish you all a belated Happy New Year, as we resume our u3a activities after a Christmas break.

We held a successful AGM, attended by 57 members, after our monthly talk on Tuesday 18th November. Our outgoing Chair, Bernadette Bell, reported on growing member numbers (now at 426 in January 2026), new activity groups and the successful Open Day held in July 2025. Treasurer Martin Doidge presented the accounts which showed we had funds of £2,129 on 30th June 2025.

Elections were held for Officers and Committee members and the following were elected:

Officers

Martin Doidge - Chair

Julia Walter - Vice Chair and Speaker Secretary

Liz Taylor - Secretary

Vacancy - Treasurer

Committee members (and roles subsequently allocated)

Maggie Smith - Membership

David Smith - Website and IT

Caroline Hose - Groups Co-Ordinator (to be followed by Jamie Dalrymple Hamilton later in the year)

Caroline Hose - Newsletter Editor

Mark Janaway - Publicity

Richard Mattick - Deputy Speaker Secretary

Chris Gibson - Monthly Meeting refreshments

The full draft minutes of the meeting are available on our website.

Please let me know (tetburyu3a@gmail.com) if you would be interested in taking on the role of Treasurer - it's not particularly onerous.

I'd like to thank Judith Randall for looking after the refreshments at monthly meetings and asking for volunteers for future meetings - Chris Gibson will take on this role. We always welcome volunteers to make refreshments and will develop a simple system at the monthly meetings to enable you to put your name down if you'd like to help. Thanks to those of you who have already offered, your support is really appreciated.

I'd also like to thank our Ukulele Group, the T'ukes, who have raised a further £886.79 at their Christmas gigs for Longfield Hospice. Due to their fundraising efforts they have raised and donated an incredible amount of £2,000 to the Hospice over the past 18 months. Well done T'ukes! You can read more about this at the Group News section. Please note that the T'ukes will be playing a singalong gig at the Tetbury Goods Shed on Wednesday 1st April 2026 from 2.00pm to 4.00pm - do come along, the more the merrier!



And last but not least, I'm pleased to report that the Pickleball group is now up and running, playing weekly on Thursday evenings 5:00 pm-6:00 pm at the Sports Hall, Sir William Romney's School.

This is a fun sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis, played on a badminton-sized court. There's more information on our website - take a look if this would interest you.

That's it from me.

Martin Doidge (Chair)

Monthly Speakers

We started the year well with over 70 attendees at the talk on Monday 12th January, provided by Nigel and Alexandra Lloyd-Jones on "Driving Safely in Winter". The talk included lots of practical road safety tips about driving ability (e.g. eyesight and physical mobility), vehicle preparation (e.g. tyre pressures and tread) and journey planning. The talk was illustrated with surprising facts and data to challenge our thinking. Nigel also demonstrated some devices which you can buy to clean car windows without smudges, dehumidify your car, and one to smash car windows if you are unfortunate enough to become trapped.

Nigel is Co-Lead of the award-winning Gloucestershire Older Drivers Forum; and a Trustee with the Gloucestershire Older Persons Association, whose aim is a future where older drivers can continue to enjoy the benefits of driving while minimising risks to themselves and others. Advice can be found on their website www.olderdriversforum.com/Gloucestershire

Our next talk on "The History of RAF Stoke Orchard" will take place on Tuesday 10th February 2026, 10:30 am to 12pm, at the Tetbury Goods Shed.

Richard Chatham will take us through the development of the World War II RAF Stoke Orchard base, from planning to the present day, introduce us to some of the amazing characters who trained there, and share original photos from the Luftwaffe to secret documents now derestricted from the War Department.

Over the last 40 years, Richard has been awarded a "Best Speaker" accolade, been a Senior Marshall for the Ryder Cup, Starter for the European Golf Seniors Tour, and acted as Master of Ceremonies at events from Business Conferences to Weddings.

Refreshments will be available - we hope to see you there.

Here's a link to our full 2026 programme <https://tetbury.u3asite.uk/events/>

Group News

u3a Christmas Lunch December 2025

80 members and friends came together for the 2025 Christmas Lunch at the Great Tythe Barn in Tetbury. The barn was very welcoming and looked wonderful with all the beautiful Christmas decorations. The tables were set with seasonal decorations, crackers and a quiz.

It was a great opportunity for so many to gather together at a Tetbury venue, and enjoy each other's good company at Christmas time.

By Maggie Smith



Art Appreciation

We began the new year by looking at a painting by Velazquez (1599 -1660). "Las Meninas" (1656) is considered to be one of the most important paintings in Spanish culture. It shows the Spanish Infanta Margarita Theresa surrounded by her "meninas"- her maids of honour. The composition was revolutionary for its time and the perspective confuses the viewer.

Velasquez shows himself working at a large canvas on the left - appearing to look at the viewer and not the subjects of the painting. King Felipe IV and Queen Maria de Austria are reflected in the mirror implying they are standing where the viewer is. And the chamberlain disappearing through the door at the back would in this reality only be seen by the King and Queen and not the painter. The Infanta is shown age 5 unaware of her sad future. At 15 she made a political marriage to Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and a close relative, and died aged 21 after bearing several children only one of whom survived.



Velazquez, "Las Meninas" Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Christina Robertson 1796 -1854 was a Scottish painter who is virtually unknown in the UK. Unusually for a woman of that time, she became a professional artist. As a female, she was unable to attend art school so she was trained by her uncle - a successful portrait painter. She started working on miniatures but later progressed to portraiture, mostly of women, and was taking commissions by age 22. She was made the first honorary female member of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1829.

Whilst in Paris she met members of the Russian aristocracy which led to her moving to St Petersburg where she became known for her portraits of Tsar Nicholas I and his family. Many of her paintings are in the Hermitage Museum but only two are on show in the UK- a self portrait at the V&A and a painting of children at the Royal Scottish Academy. She died in St Petersburg and is buried at the Volkovo Cemetery.

By Judy Greeman

Aviation and Classic Cars

The new group's first outing of 2026 was an enjoyable and informative visit to the Morgan car factory in Malvern, to see how these cars are made. The 'Morgan Experience' lasts two hours, led by a knowledgeable guide. The tour covers the history of the company and visits all the workshops still making elements of and assembling these classic cars by hand - each car completely individual to the wishes of the owner.

Customers can choose bespoke wood - eg for the dashboard; colours - for the car itself, upholstery etc; and any additional touches the client wants that the car can support. Attention to detail is superb! For example, the body paint consists of three primary coats, three coats of colour, and two top coats.



Morgan car production

There is an active apprentice scheme and many of the staff have been working at the factory for decades. Sales agents around the world attest to the global popularity of the cars, despite the high price tag! It was fascinating to see the cars come together from the aluminium monocoque shell, through wood turned, glued and shaped by hand, fitting the all-important engine, to leatherwork for the seats and headrests. In an era of robots and mass production, it was refreshing to see people skilled at their work creating cars to be proud of.

The next outing is to Aerospace Bristol on 11 February (car share available), where we will have a guided tour, to include seeing inside Concord. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact the group leader via the website.

By Judith Austin



Morgan car visit

Bookclub Monday - "Butter" by Asako Yozuki.

"Butter" is the cult Japanese bestseller about a female gourmet cook, and serial killer, and the journalist intent on solving the mystery of her life. It is based on the true case of the "Konkatsu" killer (marriage hunting killer). Had Kijima described as "ugly and fat" managed to attract these men with her "homely" qualities and cooking? Following her trial she was found guilty of murdering three men she met on dating sites in 2012 and sentenced to death.

At the time much of the Japanese media focused on the defendant's appearance rather than the heinous nature of the crime. In the novel the journalist covering the case of a similar woman murderer is sucked into her swirling obsession with butter and indulgent food, exposing fat-phobia and sexism, and the weight of societal expectations on gender and appearance in Japanese society. If you are

fat, you are lazy, too easy on yourself and you are ugly. If you are thin, you are controlled and beautiful.

It has been said that "at its heart, this is a story about hunger: for food, for connection, for sensuality, for friendship, for knowledge, for independence, and for acceptance."



In parts the book appeared disjointed and appeared to veer away up blind alleys. Most of us agreed, however, that this is a book we would never have read, but for the book club.

It was suggested that cooking, preparing and sharing the turkey (an important meal to accomplish at the Cooking School) was the whole metaphor for the book, which was highly appropriate as we ate our Christmas meal.

We are now keen to savour hot rice, with melting cold butter and soy sauce and we were all amazed to discover that the true Konkatsu Killer "the Black Widow" is still on death row in Japan. We held a very good discussion, as always, ranging over many pertinent ideas and collectively rated Butter 3.16 out of 5.

By Corrine Hinton



Bookclub Wednesday

Our choice was a non-fiction book this month. "The New Silk Roads" by Peter Frankopan was both a fascinating yet disturbing read.

The author has updated his 2015 version of his book in which he discusses the recent rise of Asia's economic and geopolitical strength in a changed world. He explains that while Europe is going through a crisis, the rest of the world is moving on and shaping the 21st. Century. In an age of Brexit and Trump the themes of isolation and fragmentation belong to the western world in contrast to The Silk Roads where, since 2015, ties have strengthened and cooperation established to cope with new challenges.

Frankopan tells us that this is The Asian Century's as their economies will soon be larger than those of the rest of the world combined. The Asian nations are used to adapting to challenges - over 80 countries are now part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Their aim is to work together in the spirit of "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and benefits".

In contrast the west "is slow and complacent with no coherent plans believing its global dominance is something predestined".

All roads used to lead to Rome, now they lead to Beijing. Is this change the difference between autocracy and democracy? What does the future hold for Europe?



Our next book club meeting will be on Wednesday 28th January 2026 when we'll discuss "The Covenant of Water" by Abraham Verghese.

By Pauline Whittaker

History Group - "The world of Aldhelm" by Anne Cox

On a damp January afternoon 21 members of the History group met to hear Anne talk about the world of Aldhelm (c.639-709). Her interest in the subject arose from her work in Malmesbury Abbey which she was able to pursue further during the Covid years.

Aldhelm was the Christian monk who founded a Benedictine monastery at Malmesbury in 675. During his lifetime he became the first Abbot of Malmesbury as well as the first Bishop of Sherborne in 705, four years before he died.

He was highly regarded for his immense learning and blending Roman academic traditions with English culture. He was dedicated to spreading Christianity and noted for playing the harp and singing songs (in Old English) on bridges to reach common people and draw a crowd before preaching to them. Described as "tall, cheerful, friendly and good natured" it is little wonder that Aldhelm was revered as a saint following his death in Doultong (near Shepton Mallet) on the 25th of May 709. William of Malmesbury, writing 400 years later, describes how when Aldhelm died stone crosses were set up at each place his body rested overnight on the way to Malmesbury for his burial.



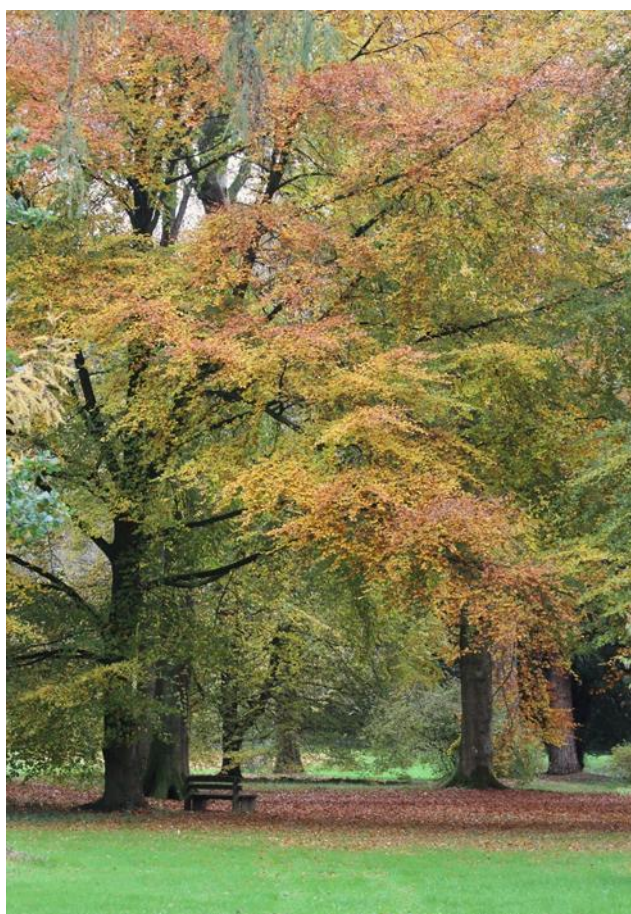
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Anne discussed how Aldhelm fitted into history, the world he occupied and its influences upon him. These included the migration of people across Europe, the extent of the Christian church, the growth of the Islamic world, trade routes in goods and intellectual knowledge and culture, and the law code of Wessex introduced by King Ine (c690). A very detailed and interesting talk, setting us all a very high standard for the rest of the year.

By Corinne Hinton

Photography Group

Following a somewhat damp (I am underplaying the extent of the rain!!) visit to Westonbirt Arboretum to capture some of the autumnal sights, we presented our images at our last indoor meeting. The photographs submitted were of an extremely high quality, showing the diverse colours and themes that autumn brings. There were no winners or losers as each picture had its own story and characteristics.



By Caroline Hose



By Steve Hammond



By Ian Clements



By Warren Hateley

The presentation was followed by an excellent demonstration of photo book creation by Caroline. She used "CEWE", a commercial programme that can be used for making photo books in an intuitive and simple way. Caroline's explanation of each stage of the book creation was enlightening and engaging, with group members enthused about taking on their own projects.

Following the meeting, we moved on to The Priory for our end of year meal (I didn't call it a Christmas meal as we were still in November!!). As usual, The Priory looked after us extremely well with good food and good service.

Our January meeting will be on Friday 30th January at The Steam Museum, Swindon www.steam-museum.org.uk/

Our February meeting will be held on Friday 27th February with the showing of our Steam Museum images and a presentation on the topic of 'Lighting' from Steve, Sandie and Ian.

By Mark Janaway

Playreading Group 1

Miss Brodie, an unorthodox teacher of her favourite pupils introduces them to an unofficial curriculum, including art history, classical studies and her own personal love life, this group is known as the "crème de la crème." The action takes place in a girl's school in Edinburgh in the 1930s. Miss Brodie's manipulative influence is a source of conflict with the other staff, her lessons often blur the line between education and tradition, even encouraging a student's participation in the Spanish Civil War, revealing her own flawed romantic and political ideas.

During its course the play suggests that Miss Brodie will be betrayed by one of the students who informs the headmistress of Brodie's fascist ways, this leads to her eventual dismissal. Miss Brodie never knows the identity of her betrayer and dies some years later, but her influence remains with her "set" for life.

It is a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked influence and the complex line between inspirational teaching and dangerous indoctrination. It was enjoyably read in two sessions by Bernadette's play reading group.

By Clive Jarman

Ukulele Group

Starting on 3rd December 2025 at Tetbury Goods Shed, the T'ukes (Tetbury u3a Ukulele Group) began their busiest performance programme since forming in early 2023. Over the space of 16 days we entertained 9 different audiences in a variety of local Gloucestershire and Wiltshire venues, including residential care homes, retirement villages, churches, and community halls. Those to whom we sang and played our repertoire of Christmas Carols and songs, were all very appreciative, joining in the singing and accompanying us when appropriate by ringing small hand held sleigh bells.

Through the generous donations from some of the host organisations, and bucket collections at most of the venues, we raised a wonderful sum of £886.79. This added to that raised at our summer and autumn gigs enabled us to donate a further £1,000 to Longfield Hospice, our chosen charity, bringing the total we have raised and donated to Longfield Hospice over the past 18 months to an incredible £2,000.



Our thanks go to all those who've not only enjoyed singing along with us, but who have donated that incredible sum of money to such a worthwhile cause. Having enjoyed a well earned rest over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, the 20 members of the T'ukes family have now returned to our weekly get togethers in the restaurant at Steepleton Retirement Village, learning new songs and rehearsing old ones in readiness for this year's programme of gigs which will begin in March.

George Harrison of Beatles fame, and an avid ukulele player, once described the ukulele as a "HAPPY INSTRUMENT". He was certainly correct in that, as the ukulele has indeed brought a lot of happiness to the T'ukes, and in turn hopefully to all those who we entertain throughout our local towns and villages.

If you've not yet sampled one of our singalong concerts, then please join us at Tetbury Goods Shed on Wednesday 1st April 2026 from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, and if you've enjoyed our performances there previously, or at any other venue, then please come again. The lyrics of all the songs we will be singing and playing will

again be projected onto a large screen, so you will have no excuse for not singing, and you may have the opportunity to play a small hand percussion instrument as well. Hopefully we'll see you there.

By Mike Hoskin

Wine Tasting Group A

The wine-tasting / appreciation group has enjoyed a year of membership stability with monthly sociable and educational meets. Each month is hosted on rotation in members' homes, often with an impressive selection of favourite savoury and sweet nibbles.

There are no boundaries to what can be explored and tried. Themes have included heavy winter reds / summer whites / summer Rose's / single grape varieties / unusual grape varieties blends / individual countries/ wine tours such as crusade wines or regional wines / value for money sparkling wines / wines for picnics including 'cans' / fortified wines / individual supplier offerings / supermarket wines / bottom and top shelf wines....the list is by no means complete but I hope provides the reader with some idea of the broad parameters that provide a framework for the group's activities.



Usually with a maximum membership of 12 in the group, it is expected that about 5/6 bottles of wine would be opened, tasted and discussed. Depending on the % alcohol, towards the evening's end tongues get looser and the world's troubles are put to right. It is always a very enjoyable evening spent in good company and with good humour. The wine themes are decided on by the host and the contribution from the group towards costs varies from £5-8 per session.

I am standing down from the role of group lead and Judith Austin is taking up the stewardship with our very own 'Liz Taylor' taking on the deputy role. While I commented that the group's membership had been quite stable, there's likely to be two places come up for new u3a members to join fairly shortly. We would be interested to know of anyone that may like to join.



Please contact Judith to find out more about us via the u3a website / Tetbury and District u3a- wine tasting group A. The only requirements for joining are an inquisitive mind, an interest in learning more about wine through interactive peer group discussions group and a sociable nature. One thing you can be sure of is that you won't become a wine snob.

If there is one thing that I have learnt over the last 4 years, it is that the more you think you know about any wine the reverse is true; the variety and complexities surrounding wine production and retail, serve only to confuse you even further as to what are the qualities that distinguish a good wine from either an excellent or even an average example!

By Marcus Galea

And finally the deadline for contributions to the February newsletter is Monday 16th February.

Please send your articles to Caroline, your newsletter editor, at newslettertetburyu3a@gmail.com

u3a National Events

Online Learning Events

u3a members can join a wide range of online talks, workshops and courses for free with their membership. Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves, sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement. There is also a wide range of talks on offer from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution.

All of these events can be booked at the link below via Eventbrite. Online events are hosted on Zoom - further information and 'how to' guides are here www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events

Want to be the first in the know? Sign up to receive regular monthly updates on upcoming events: [subscribe here](#)

Interest Groups Online

Interest Groups Online is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home. Like with a u3a, the activities are run by members and are a great way to meet people from all across the u3a movement.

It costs £12 to join for the year, equating to £1 per month. Membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of the next year. Membership and your groups are managed via the u3a Beacon Members Portal.

To become a member of Interest Groups Online you will need to fill out a short form and make your payment on the u3a Beacon Members Portal. As part of your subscription to Interest Groups Online, you can opt in to receive a free copy of the u3a magazine, Third Age Matters (TAM).

Take a look at the groups page for details on the wide variety of online groups, courses and talks, and how to join [interest groups online](#)