u3a Tetbury and District Newsletter



October 2026

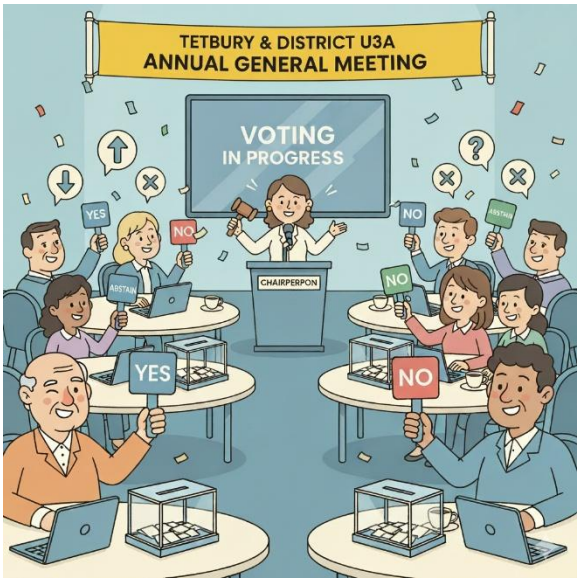
Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

As I write, it's raining, and although this is welcome it may be restricting some outdoor activities. Fortunately, there are plenty of indoor u3a activities to enjoy. Visit the Groups page on our website at tetbury.u3asite.uk/groups/ or see the summary in Annex A of this newsletter.

This year's AGM will take place on Tuesday 17th November, after the monthly talk and a short refreshment break, at 11.45 am, and is open to all members. The AGM provides an opportunity for you to hear how our u3a is progressing and to ask questions of the Chair, Treasurer and other Committee members.

Full details of the AGM including the Agenda, last year's AGM minutes, annual financial statements and Committee nomination forms are available to view on our website tetbury.u3asite.uk/2025-annual-general-meeting



Like all voluntary organisations, we depend on members to serve on the Committee and help run our u3a. If you would be interested in joining, please contact me for more information.

To stand for election, you will need to submit a completed nomination form to chair@tetburyu3a.org by 9th November 2026.

We need 10% of the current membership present for the AGM to be quorate so please come along if you are able to. I hope to see you there.

I'm pleased to share that we have two new groups which have been set up and are ready for more members. These are Philately and Music Appreciation. Details of the groups and how to join may be found via the Groups page of our website

Don't forget that our December lunch will be held at the Hare and Hounds, Westonbirt, on Tuesday 1st December, 12.30 pm for 1 pm. Guests are welcome. To book, please contact Chris Gibson using the contact form on our website: tetbury.u3asite.uk/u3a_events/december-meal-2026
Our monthly meeting on November 17th is the final date for menu choices and also payment in full; cash and cheques accepted.

There's also an opportunity to join the Pub Lunch Group for a traditional Christmas lunch at the Beaufort Arms, Hawkesbury Upton, on Tuesday 15th December 12.30-13.00. As it is Christmas this is open to all u3a members, their friends and relatives. If you would be interested, please get in touch with Grahame Inman by the end of November via the contact form on our Groups page tetbury.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/pub-lunch

Well that's it from me for now. I hope to see you on the 17th November.

Martin Doidge (Chair)

News Flash

u3a Website: New Calendar Feature

Our website now features a "Group Events Calendar" that displays almost all individual group events in one place. You can click on any entry to view details regarding the date, time, venue, and a link to the relevant group webpage. Use the drop-down menu at the top right of the calendar to switch between month, week, or schedule views.

You can access the calendar via links on the "Groups," "About," and "Events" pages, or go directly by clicking here. You can also find it by typing "Calendar" in the search box at the top right corner of any of our webpages.

If you are looking to develop a new interest or join a new group, check it out to see what fits your schedule. We hope you find this new feature helpful!

By David Smith, IT & Website Support

Updating Your Membership Information

Please remember to let me know of any changes to your membership details. An increasing number of our members are removing landlines, so it is important that we have up-to-date emergency contact information. Additionally, please inform us if you change your email address so we can continue sending you this newsletter, group, and other information.

I can be contacted by email at tetburyu3amembership@gmail.com.

By Maggie Smith, Membership Secretary

Monthly Speakers

Our next monthly talk takes place at Tetbury Goods Shed on Tuesday 17th November 2026, from 10:30 am to 12 pm. Peter Gill returns to present Musical Satire of the 20th Century. On his previous visit, he gave an outstanding account of Jerry Lee Lewis's flawed but momentous life, enriched by splendid piano and vocal performances. This time, Peter turns his attention to musical satire. Will Noël Coward, Flanders and Swann or Tom Lehrer feature? Come along and find out—you are in for a treat! The talk will be followed by a short AGM.

Our programme of talks for 2027 may be found on our website tetbury.u3asite.uk/events

By Julia Walter (Speakers Secretary)

Group News

Art Appreciation

We started our meeting this month by looking at the work of Joaquin Sorolla (1863 – 1923) a painter from Valencia. He was often compared to John Singer Sergeant and the two were friends. He was interested in painting from a very young age and produced an extensive body of work, both portraits and landscapes, often with social and historical themes bringing to light some of the injustices of the time. An example of which was "Triste herencia! " (1899) (Sad Inheritance) showing children affected by polio on the beach.



Sorolla 1909 Paseo a orillas del mar (Walk on the Beach)
Museo Sorolla, Madrid

His landscapes often concentrated on depicting the Spanish sunlight on the sea and invariably describe movement - his use of oil on canvas gives the paint texture and emphasises the direction of the wind and waves in "Paseo a orillas del mar" 1909 (Walk on the beach) where the wind is blowing the women's dresses and the umbrella behind them.

We next looked at a contrasting painting style - the watercolour and pencil landscapes of Eric Ravilious 1903-1942. A painter described by Alan Bennett as "modern but nostalgic". We looked at four of his pictures all of which generated a lot of discussion. "Tea at Furlongs" 1939 shows a table set for tea, a tranquil summer scheme but with the dark umbrella and confusing perspective portraying a sense of unease on the eve of war.



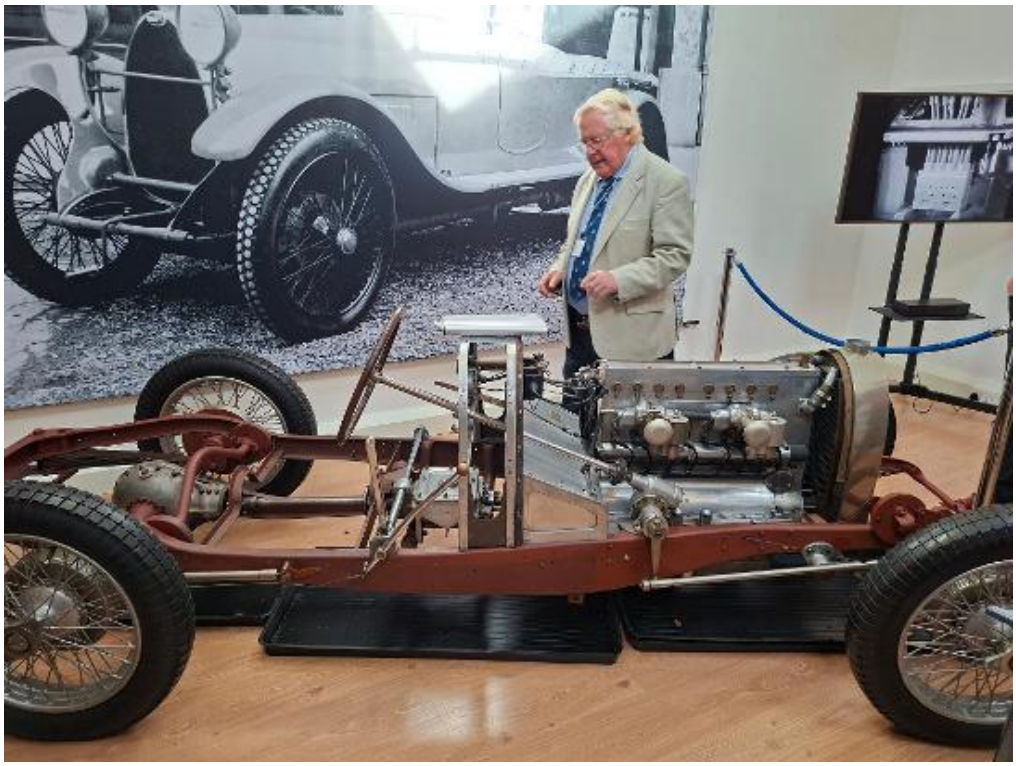
Eric Ravilious Caravans 1936
The Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden

"Caravans" 1936 show two caravans bought by Ravilious and his wife, one of which they used as a studio. They were originally "fever wagons" used in the Boer War and together with the telegraph pole (a cross) and the direction of the lines in the picture leading towards a bright light on the horizon there is again a sense of foreboding in the picture.

By Judy Greeman

Aviation and Classic Cars

Seventeen members of the Aviation and Classic Cars group made their way to the Bugatti Museum in October for a talk and tour. This small but fascinating museum, just outside Cheltenham, is the home of the Bugatti Trust. The talk and tour were given by enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers – one of whom (Charles) actually owns a Bugatti car!

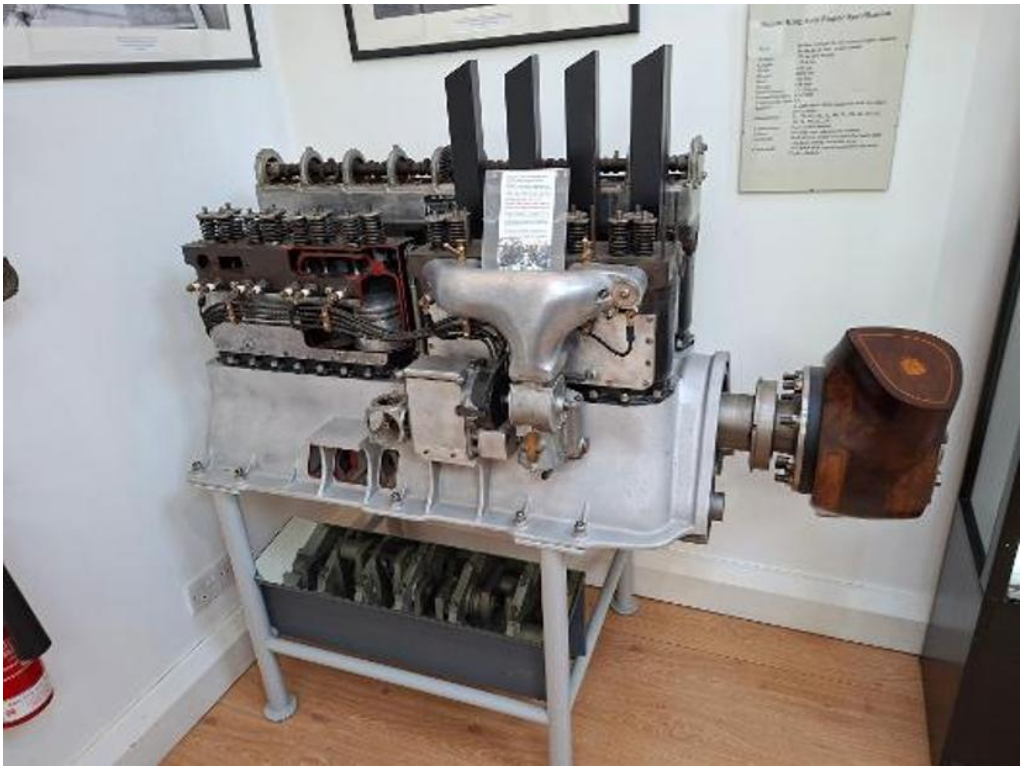


Volunteer Charles explaining the chassis and engine

After a slide show and talk, we split into two groups and toured the exhibits, with the volunteers pointing out the many interesting points. The two sons of Ettore Bugatti sadly lost their lives very early on, one from suicide, Rembrandt (a renowned animal sculptor, some of whose works are on view) and one in a car accident, Jean (when a drunken postman strayed onto a supposedly closed road during a speed test).

Ettore Bugatti was ahead of his time with the intricate, beautiful and extremely functional design of the cars he built. While known for his successful racing cars, Ettore also produced touring cars, horse carriages and even designed an aeroplane and the engines to power it. The latter never flew but his plans for the twin-engined 100P were painstakingly followed by Scotty Wilson, a former US fighter pilot. Scotty did fly the aircraft but, sadly, lost his life in a crash on the plane's third flight in 2016. The workmanship and novel designs of the

components of Bugatti's combustion engines are truly works of art and well worth viewing! He also filed patents for many and varied engineering items, a lot of which can be viewed at the museum.



Bugatti Engine



Explaining the finer points

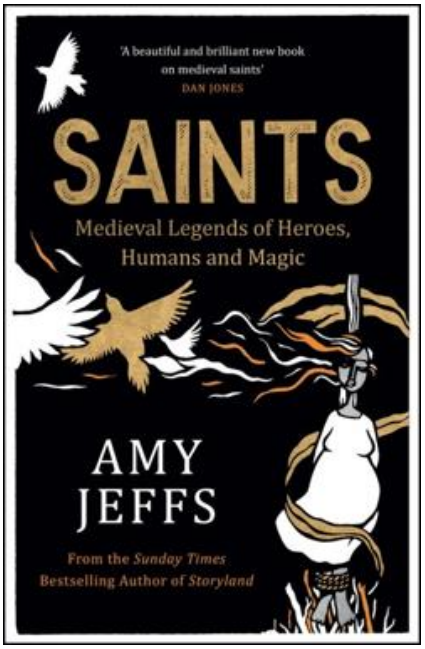
The Trust does a lot of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) work with schools, and also supports seven 'Formula Student' teams, which gives a head start to students wishing to work with Formula 1 teams in the future. http://www.bugatti-trust.co.uk

The group's next meeting is on Wednesday 25th November at The Royal Oak, Tetbury, starting at 10.30am. We will have a talk by Sue Bell who started SueAir. Sue will explain how she went from being an actuary to running an aircraft hire and training school. All are welcome.

By Judith Austin

Book Club Monday Evening

Saints: Medieval legends of heroes, humans and magic by Amy Jeffs



When asked for a one-word summary, we coalesced around "unappealing", with its academic credentials worn rather too heavily.

It gave the sense that there was a more interesting book trying to get out, but as published, this was not it.

Image credit: Riverrun, 2025

We recognised that it was impossible for us in the 21st century to occupy the mindset of those in millennium from 500-1500 CE, where the intercession of, appeals to and behaviours of saints was part of the fabric of everyday life. This too came to a very abrupt halt with the Reformation across Europe, and in England the penalties on traditional Catholic observance served to eliminate the collective memory of saints in a remarkably short time.

Although the author posed the question of what distinguished the miraculous from the supernatural, she offered no real answer beyond the view that while miracles flowed from the divine and through approved means - relics and so on - magic was usually dismissed as false marvels, or an unnatural manipulation of nature - which led directly to successive waves of persecution, notably of witches. One interesting point of comparison is with the author's companion works – "Wild" and "Storyland" - which look at myths and folklore and to ask why, especially to modern minds, some events and activities were brought into the Church's official canon while comparable ones, and their followers, unsanctioned, were rigorously persecuted.

We noted too that the cult of saints was frequently abused. The author records that the monks of Canterbury were quick to recognise the benefits that a cult of sainthood would bring, after the murder of Thomas a Beckett, and even today the sale of purported relics continues; after all, one of the main drivers of the Reformation was the abuse of relics and services around them.

However, we all had positive memories of churches, either as architecture or as places of reflection, but mostly this was viewed from a humanist lens, celebrating the people who had gone before rather than what the original builders and celebrants intended. Similarly, where the author's examples included places, we had visited, this reinforced some sense of what the contemporaries might have felt.

In the end, for a book most of us first described as "unappealing" and awarded only 2.2/5, we recognised that it had prompted a wide and interesting discussion, so in many respects it was a good Book Club book.

By Douglas Looman

Bookclub Wednesday

We met on the 30th September to discuss Robert Harris' book "Pompeii". Such a talented writer, his books are always well researched and this was no exception. It tells the story of the 4days in August AD 70 when Vesuvius erupted, killing 20,000 and devastating Pompeii.

Attilius, a 4th generation Aquarius (a job description that doesn't hint at the responsibility) is sent to Misenum as there is a problem with the Aqua Augusta,

a huge aqueduct built by the Emperor at a cost of £2 million a mile to supply 250,000 inhabitants with water. The former Aquarius has, mysteriously, disappeared and Attilius is there to repair the aqueduct, not an easy task when the foreman is doing everything he can to undermine him and the demands of corrupt senators and officials who have villas there, including Ampliatus, a Trump like character!

We learn a lot about Roman society, corruption, decadence, debauchery and the unique role of baths in Roman culture.

I thought it was very relevant that Attilius argued that people should be aware about the precious quality of water. How can we withhold our respect from a water system that, in the first century, supplied the city with substantially more water than was supplied to New York in 1985.

Then at our October meeting, ten of us met to discuss "Patriot" by Alex Nevalny. It's Nevalny's final letter to the world, a moving account, partly history and partly diary, of his last years in the most brutal prison on earth in Kharp in the Arctic Circle.

Nevalny talks about 'a never ending soap opera about corruption in Russia'. Lawyer, politician and founder of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, a true patriot. Starting with house arrest in 2012 and unable to leave Moscow, things got worse in 2020 when he was poisoned which led to 18 days in a coma and 26 in intensive care in Germany. Determined to return to Moscow with the backing of his wife, Yulia, he was aware that that he would be arrested and imprisoned. Thus began a continual journey for him of protest, arrest, strip searches, trumped up charges of embezzlement and fraud, intimidation, deprivation all the while struggling to get help for his bad back.

We were all amazed at his resilience, such a strong, positive character, hating Putin for stealing 20 years of his life but knowing that his was the only meaningful opposition to him with his unwavering commitment to the fight against dictatorship, fraud and corruption.

By Pauline Whittaker

Garden Visits Group

Our final garden visit of the year took place on a lovely, sunny autumn day in late September at the Special Plants nursery and garden near Bath. Although we had visited before, the garden is well worth returning to in any season. The surrounding fields and hills provide a perfect borrowed landscape that showcases it beautifully.



Derry Watkins gave us a short talk on autumn sowing, explaining that late summer produces plentiful seed and autumn is the ideal time to sow it in a mix of grit and compost. Talks are included in Tuesday morning admission from April to October. specialplants.net.

After tea, coffee and cake, we explored the colourful garden. Salvias on the gravel terrace ranged from yellow and orange to pink, red, blue and purple, while tall orange zinnias and dahlias complemented the grasses and perennial borders perfectly. Even the vegetable plot looked impressive, with scary pumpkins ready for Halloween. Before leaving, we stopped at the nursery to buy a few 'special' plants.



We are developing our programme of visits for 2027, and have two planned so far: a visit to Kapunda Plants specialist nursery near Bath on 10th March and a return visit to Daglingworth House garden on 5th April. Details to follow nearer the time.

By Caroline Hose

History Group

Twenty-six of us (including some residents) met in the restaurant of Steepleton at 2pm on the fourth Friday of September for an illustrated talk on the Wantage-born lad who, as the fourth son, was never expected to be king.

The late 800s were a time when the Anglo Saxons were having to deal with frequent violent attacks from Viking raiders and would-be invaders. Life expectations for a warrior-king were short and Alfred succeeded his brothers in 871, reigning for thirty years. He paid off the Vikings to buy time to revolutionise the defence of his kingdom by fortifying 31 burghs, each a day's march apart, and keep it relatively free from Viking attack. He brought in teachers to replace the monks killed by the raiders and re-established an education system and literacy.



Alfred is seen as a pious Christian ruler who founded two abbeys and promoted the use of English rather than Latin. The Anglican Communion venerates him as a Christian hero, and he may often be found depicted in stained glass in Church of England parish churches. His epithet 'The Great' is used by those who admire his patriotism, success against barbarism, promotion of education, and establishment of the rule of law. Alfred is the only native-born English monarch to be labelled as such. In 2002 Alfred was ranked number 14 in the BBC's list of the 100 Greatest Britons following a UK-wide vote.

Our next meeting will be on 23rd October 2026 at 2pm when Group co-leader Corinne Hinton will 'stand and deliver' the results of her extensive research into the horse-riding robbers of travellers under her title "Highwaymen: where, when and why?"

By Bob Kelley

Spanish Groups

Advanced Spanish

The Advanced Spanish group meets on alternate Thursdays, 2pm – 4pm at a member's home in the centre of Tetbury. It consists of members with a good level of Spanish, who want to converse rather than study Spanish. The level of fluency is still varied; some members having lived in Spanish speaking countries, and others who have studied in this country. We set a loose theme, but the conversation usually expands in many directions, and is always entertaining. It's

a very friendly, supportive and welcoming group, so please come and see if it suits you.

Intermediate Spanish

We have an active Intermediate Spanish (conversation with grammar) group and welcome new members. Meetings are on alternate Tuesdays 3pm – 4.15pm in a member's house in Tetbury.

We usually start the meeting chatting about what we have been doing since we last met. It's a very supportive group, as we help each other with the words we can't remember and aspects of grammar. I think it is more important that we practice speaking in Spanish rather than worry about using the right tense or words all the time. If the other person understands you, then that is positive communication.

At the end of the previous session, we agree what our theme of conversation and area of grammar we will focus on for the following meeting, giving us time to research/revise for it. Recent conversation themes have been: if we were a famous person, what would we do and not do; a dream that has stayed with us; memories from our schooldays, what we did, adventures good and bad and what were our schools like. Please get in touch via the Groups page on the website if you would like to join us. You are very welcome.

By Liz Trowell and Steph Dale

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

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

Annex A

Groups

List of current groups – all are active and accepting new members except those indicated *
For further information and to register interest, visit the Groups page of our website tetbury.u3asite.uk

Art Appreciation	Historic Buildings
Aviation & Classic Cars	History
Backgammon	Mah-Jong
Badminton	Meditation & Mindfulness
Board Games	NEW Music Appreciation
Book Club Mondays	NEW Philately
Book Club Wednesday	Photography
Boules - Friday	Pickleball
Boules - Wednesday	Play Reading 1
Computing - Apple beginners	Play Reading 2
Computing - technical support	Pub Lunch
* Creative Writing Group 2 FULL - waiting list	Quiz
*Creative Writing Group 1 FULL - waiting list	Scrabble
Creative Writing Group 3	Short Breaks
Cribbage	Short Walks – Friday
Curry Club	Short Walks - Thursday
Family History	Spanish - Advanced Beginners to Intermediate
French	Spanish - Advanced Intermediate to Fluent
NEW French Reading	*Ukulele FULL - waiting list
Garden Visits	NEW Youth Club for Recycled Teenagers
Golf	Wine Tasting Group

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