

# YEARBOOK 2019

# BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT U3A

where our Members 'Live, Learn and Laugh'



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE  
BRIDGNORTH & DISTRICT

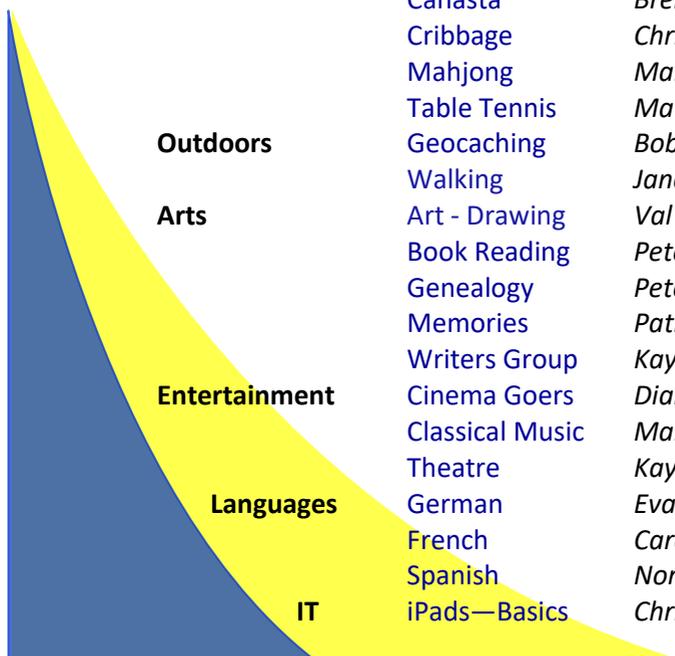
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## ACTIVITY GROUPS ...

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## Growth - or mere Survival?

We “Third Ager” are by definition survivors. Anyone who has completed a career, or experienced parenthood, endured “empty nest” syndrome or - even worse - bereavement, has to be a survivor. Mere survival, however, is not enough; in our “third age” we need a challenge or we will cease to grow. For increasing numbers of us membership of U3A provides that challenge.



The “University of the Third Age” is a people-friendly organisation, although you wouldn’t think so from its forbidding title. In fact, after reviewing progress at the recent National AGM it was decided that the label of “university”, with its overtones of academic elitism, was putting off potential members and was to be discouraged in the future, although the distinctive **U3A** logo was to be retained. The focus in the future was to be more on learning for its own sake, with the emphasis upon enjoyment and academic progress merely a side-effect. Interest groups - whether sporting, social, recreational or academic – were to continue to be formed on the basis of demand from the membership, and no distinction was to be made between “learners” and “teachers”. No qualifications were to be sought or offered.

**U3A** is driven by the “Self-Help” learning principle and thus wholly dependent upon individual voluntary contributions. *“We must never get to the point”,* said Eric Midwinter, a founder-member, *“where a small elite is providing for a large, supine clientele ... ours is, and must be, a participatory membership”*. It boils down to this: if everyone were to join merely for their own enjoyment without taking on any of the responsibilities, the **U3A** would cease to exist.

Initiating the formation of groups, or undertaking the responsibility of group leadership, is a challenge to those of us who have been bruised by

experience, or are shy, modest, or lacking in self-confidence. Yet the experience of so doing can be both liberating and empowering: the payoff for active participation is a feeling of being valued, which many of us lose in our Third Age. Discovering that you can have a lot in common with like-minded local people, too, is an energising experience. One member confessed: *“There was a time when I didn’t want to go outside, but when I was out I didn’t want to go back in again. I found coming to the U3A I met people who had been in the same situation or work and we shared our experiences.”*

Your local branch of **U3A** is the gateway to other branches which may have interest groups which meet your needs at a time which is convenient to you. The national network is at a further remove. National Summer Schools take place annually in August at Aston University, Birmingham. Subjects last August included Art, History, Archaeology, Creative Writing, Italian Language and Culture, Maths, Ukulele, Music, Singing for Pleasure ... all presented in a manner that is accessible to those of us who have never ventured far beyond GCSE level.



Active participation in your local **U3A** can change your life. We wouldn’t go so far as to claim that it can perform a miracle of cosmetic surgery, but it can lead to an enhancement of personal growth that is positively rejuvenating. Are you ready to take up the challenge?



**U3A Fact:**

There are 1046 U3As across the United Kingdom with over 439,000 members

**Martin Green**  
**2019 Yearbook Editor**

## A Message from your Chair ...

*We continue to attract new members and most visitors tend to join our U3A. Obviously because of 'advancing' years we do lose some of our older members due to ill health but we still seem to maintain our membership at about 350 which is, by far, the largest organisation in Bridgnorth.*

*Our Speaker's Meetings still manage to have around 100 members and sometimes even more, which can be quite a 'squeeze' to get everyone in!*

*Some of our members join just to access our various activity groups only, which is fine as we cannot accommodate everyone at our monthly meetings.*

*With the changed car parking charges around the Community Hall we now do not have a rush of members signing in at the start of the meeting and then rushing off again at the end so that they miss out on the refreshments.*

*We have now established three teams to help at the monthly meetings. One team sets out the stage, chairs, sound system and the screen. We still need several more members to help in this area.*

*Another team works in the kitchen setting up and delivering your refreshments and washing up.*

*The last team, our welcome hosts, signing you in, helping at notice boards, guiding our new members and visitors and generally being a friendly face. These three groups*

*all help to allow our monthly meetings run smoothly.*

*We are lucky that we have started up several new groups this year. The 'health' of our U3A depends greatly on our groups and I would like to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all the Group Leaders for their commitment in running their groups. Do you have an interest or hobby that you would like to share*



**U3A Committee 2019-20** (l to r)  
Martin Green, Peter Smith, Trevor Padget,  
Richard Cookson, Jenny Green  
Norma Flower, Maria Hughes, Chris Wright  
(Pat Lowe, Kay Yendole)

*with others? Groups do not have to run monthly, weekly etc, they could just run for a few weeks or a 'one-off' session. If you do think that you would like to start up a group please speak to me and we, the committee, would be very happy to give you some advice and help with setting it up.*

*Our annual New Members Event is working really successfully and gives the new member a chance to meet our Group Leaders in a more relaxed environment giving them an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have. The monthly meetings are generally too busy for this to happen.*

*Your Committee work very hard to give you an invaluable experience as being a member of our U3A. We try to improve wherever we can. Suggestions are always welcome to any committee member.*

*We have paid towards the purchase of a new 'drop down' screen which we will be making full use of in 2020 and beyond improving the viewing of Speaker's slides.*



*As always we are in the need of new Committee Members. We have at least 350 members and a small committee of ten who try to make the correct decisions on your behalf and make your experiences good. We now have several committee members whose term of office must finish in 2020 so we need members to volunteer please. We need new blood and new ideas. Please contact me if you are interested in joining us on the committee from April 2020. We meet once a month on the second Thursday of the month, except December, to prepare for our following Speaker's Meeting and any other matters that need to be discussed. It really is not an onerous task.*

*I would like to wish all our members, old and new, a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020 and I look forward to seeing you at our various meetings and trips.*

*Also, can I take this opportunity to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all of our Committee Members for their hard work and commitment.*

**Maria Hughes**  
**Chairman 2019-22**



## Speakers' Meetings 2019

- January**—**John Butterworth: Editing The Black Country Bugle:**  
*A fascinating history provoking memories amongst the audience*
- February**—**Wilma Hayes: In The Sticks: 'Flora Sanders, Lady Soldier in WW1**  
*What an inspiring adventuring lady pioneer!*
- March**—**Gillian Waugh Pead: 'A Beneficent Undertaking: The Bridgnorth Infirmary**  
*A presentation by one of our members on the early days of our hospital with book*
- April**— **AGM** **USA Writers Group: 'We Wrote it our Way'**  
*Interesting memoirs by members of one of our own Activity Groups.*
- May**—**Natwest Bank: Jamie MacKail: 'Friends Against Scams'**  
*More than a little scary ... but we are now much more aware !*
- June**—**Bill Durose: 'The Antiques Road Show Experience'**  
*We have all watched the Show ... but great to hear what it is like to be on it!*
- July**—**David Skillen: 'Forewarned is Forearmed' Royal Observer Corps**  
*Back to the origins of the Corps and its influence in Peace and War*
- August**—**Dr Richard Churchley: 'Wayside Wonders and Countryside Curiosities'**  
*Excellent slides of often ignored, and some sadly missing, local constructions.*
- September**—**Rob McBride: 'Shropshire's Ancient Trees'**  
*Interesting presentation highlighting the dangers to the older trees around us*
- October**—**Colin Millett: 'Worcester Porcelain: A Collector's Tale'**  
*Collector and Author held our attention with wonderful slides of beautifully decorated porcelain ... followed by valuations of items brought by our members*
- November**—**Whalebone: 'Music and Festive Stories'**  
*What a way to finish off the year being entertained by two superb guitarists*



## U3A Charity for 2019/20

Bridgnorth U3A has raised a total of £445.50 during 2019, for which the charity is very grateful.

**Headcase Cancer Trust** is the only UK charity raising money solely for research to find the cause and ultimately the cure for Glioblastoma Multiforme (GBM) brain tumours. GBM is currently an incurable cancer.

If you get a brain tumour there is a 70% chance that it will be GBM with life expectancy a mere 14 months. Although GBM kills 5000 people annually in the UK, its research received just 0.7% of total UK cancer funding!

**Headcase** funds PhD level research into GBM, and is currently supporting work at Wolverhampton, Nottingham and UCL Universities. Typically, a research programme runs for three years and costs £30,000 annually.

*Thank you so much  
for your generosity.*

**Andrew Johnson**  
Charity Representative  
[www.headcase.org.uk](http://www.headcase.org.uk)

## From a New Member ...

*My husband and I moved to Bridgnorth from Claverley two and a half years ago. We were recommended to join U3A by our new neighbour.*

*We were very surprised that it was a countrywide organisation with so many varied activities available to everyone.*

*Some of the things you may want to do, visit, or learn about, all organised for you, just sign up, quite wonderful really. The group leaders are there to help and advise you.*

*Sadly, my husband passed away in February 2019, luckily, during this sad time committee members and friends encouraged me to come back. I am so glad I did, U3A has helped me so much to fill the void in my life.*

*I have now joined the Cribbage Group every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month and also the Out & About Group. I am meeting more new people and old friends and even helping out the committee members at busy times.*

*I really do admire the committee members, group leaders and others who work so hard to make sure the Bridgnorth branch of the U3A is so professional, successful and welcoming. Thank you all.*

*Joining is made so easy by the people who meet and greet you at the door when you join or visit, they help you settle in and feel comfortable.*

**Christine Nock—A New Member**



## Membership and Communication

Our U3A attracts members not just from Bridgnorth Town but from wider afield including Ackleton, Albrighton, Alveley, Wolverhampton, Kidderminster, Much Wenlock, Shifnal, Telford, Broseley, Claverley, Pattingham and Wombourne! We also offer Associate Membership to members from adjoining U3As.

During 2019 our membership peaked at **369** ending the year at **360**. The ratio of males to females remains the same at 27% and 73% respectively. *Where are all the men?* We welcomed **65** new members and our records show that **205** came along to at least one of our Monthly Meetings, and **252** members took part in at least one of our Activity Groups. Many members belong to several groups. For a variety of personal reasons, some **45** members decided not to renew.

Life, however, never stands still and sadly, we lost Poppy Webster, Lysbeth Pead, Sue Rumble-Evans and Barbara Frost (the latter two were very active and contributing U3A members). We take this opportunity to send our condolences to their families and close friends

**BEACON**, which is our management information system, is now well embedded for our membership and financial record-keeping. We are joined by 300+ other U3As who are also using the same system.

Apart from record keeping, **BEACON** allows us, securely and safely, to keep in touch through email with our members ... whether it is a message to the whole membership ... or a Group Leader keeping in touch with his/her group members. So please check your Inbox regularly ... as there may well be an important message waiting for YOU!

Good communication is so important! Our Monthly Meetings offer the opportunity to hear notices and sign up for trips ... but we know this is not for every member ... so we work hard to keep our **WEBSITE** up to date as this is always available to members at their own convenience. If you use a PC, Tablet, iPad or Smartphone, do set up a shortcut on your Home Screen to quickly access our Website ... and check '**Look What's New!**'

There is also a **Members Area** link on the Website. This takes you directly to your personal U3A record on **BEACON** ... where you can ask '*to join*' or '*to leave*' any Activity Group, check the U3A Calendar and of course, renew your subscription.

Give it a try! [www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk](http://www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk)

No ... we haven't forgotten members without internet access! A monthly News Sheet is also available. Please don't forget to pick one up at our monthly meetings.

**Chris Wright**  
**U3A Beacon Admin & Website**

## New Members Event



In January, we welcomed 40 new members to our Annual New Members' Event & Activity Group Fayre with 18 Activity Groups represented. The Cream Tea was, of course, enjoyed by all!



## Activity Group Leaders Get-Together

During 2019 we set aside time on two occasions to give support to our Group Leaders who monthly, and sometimes weekly, give their personal time to organise trips, run our activities and share their skills and expertise with fellow members to everyone's benefit.

**A big 'Thank You' to you all!**



## The Role of a U3A Chair — My Experience



Taking on my role as Chair after the AGM in April 2019, I thought that I would merely have to chair the Committee Meetings, which I had done previously on occasions and open up the monthly Speaker's Meetings. **Yes I do this ... but there is more involvement than this.**

The main difference is at the Speaker's Meetings when I have to greet and welcome the Speaker - not an onerous task but interesting as some just want to me to introduce them and others have specific items that they wish me to convey to you. My worst fear is not remembering their name and title!

For me, what has changed most is thanking so many people who help our meetings run so smoothly. There must be around 20 members who appear on the day and help in various ways. Wonderful! I am really grateful to all those involved.

One of the surprising results from being your chair is how many of you contact me either by email or by phoning me. This is brilliant as I get the opportunity to speak or contact you personally which I do not always have the chance to do at our monthly meetings. Please continue to contact me on any issue that you may have.

I have attended two Shropshire U3A Network Meetings in Shrewsbury on your behalf. These have been interesting meetings particularly hearing that some U3As meet once a week and that Shrewsbury U3A has 1000 members and about 100 activity groups! In return we have managed to take ideas from our U3A when asked by others to share good practice. A very good experience.

I hope that I can continue to serve you as your chair for a while to come.

**Maria Hughes—Chair 2019-22**

### Shropshire U3A Network

### What is a U3A Network?

A Network is formed when a Group of U3As come together informally to share experiences and/or organise joint events such as Study Days.

Shropshire U3A Network is a mature and established Network of 11 independent U3As within Shropshire and its surrounding area. Members exchange ideas and good practice in a friendly and supportive environment. Although this Network has a Constitution and abides by the Objects of the Third Age Trust, it is not a part of its formal governance.

**U3As:** *Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Much Wenlock, Wrekin, Wolverhampton, Oswestry, Oswestry Borders, Market Drayton, Wem, Pontesbury & Rea Valley*

## The Role of a U3A Secretary — My Experience

I have been your U3A Secretary for four and a half years.



I was elected at an AGM for a three year period and I am presently half way through my second term.

Much of my role goes on 'behind the scenes'. Regular work revolves around the monthly committee meetings. I draw up an agenda and send it out by email to committee members a few days before the meeting. If there are any other documents needed I will send these as well. After the meeting I type up the minutes and distribute them.

Surprisingly for a Secretary, I actually write fewer than half a dozen letters a year! The regular ones are confirming the dates for meetings with the Town Council for the use of Low Town Community Hall and the bookings for The Bungalow where we hold committee meetings. This year I have also been corresponding with the relevant people about the installation of the new drop-down screen which will enhance the presentation of the monthly talks and hopefully make it easier for everyone to view the slideshows.

I am the person whose contact details are used by the Third Age Trust, the Charity Commission, our website and other U3As. I receive post and phone calls and I pass on enquiries to the relevant person and share correspondence that I have received at our committee meetings

When the phone rings it's always interesting to speculate what it is going to be about - I cannot promise to know the answer but I'll do my best to find out - so don't be afraid to ask.

**Jenny Green—Secretary 2018-2021**



The U3A model is low-cost,  
defined by its participants,  
and learner-led.

It is not dependent on state funding.

## The Role of a U3A Treasurer — My Experience

In April 2018 I took on the U3A Officer Role of Treasurer. Yes, it has been a 'challenge' because the finances needed integrating into BEACON. But there is always a light at the end of a tunnel ... **I just needed to find it!** Now everything has settled into a routine enabling me to give a brief outline of my role as your Treasurer.

To start, in April, our major expenses have to be paid to The Third Age Trust, namely the Capitation Fees, the Beacon Fees and the Direct Mail Costs for our U3A Magazines. This comes to £2,000+.

Next it is time to collect some money in! Firstly I claim the Gift Aid from HMRC and then chase members' subs - by email or letter. On-line payments have made a huge difference ... so PLEASE make this your first option.

New Members join every month and their details are entered onto BEACON, their cheques are banked and I put together a Welcome Pack to deliver (or post) to their home address.

At our Monthly Speakers Meeting the entrance fees are counted, and the Speaker, Hall and Refreshments are paid ... and next day the cash is banked.

Of course, as the year progresses, money is being spent on rent, postage and printing and other committee expenses. Then the inevitable monthly Bank Statements need reconciling!

The other major financial task has been

that of keeping track of trips and visits by the Activity Groups. These monies represent most of our turnover.

The Group Leaders have been fantastic keeping in touch by email as transactions happen and recording everything onto BEACON. A simple summary of each trip is kept safe for the end year examination.

Like any Treasurer of an organisation, reporting monthly to the U3A Committee is required ... if only to reassure everyone that I haven't run off with the money! U3A is a fairly simple cash in/cash out organisation ... and in April, our Examiner checks everything ... ready for the Annual Trustees Return to the Charity Commission.

Yes, it does occupy a few hours each month ... but it really is not too onerous. It is an interesting job and very satisfying to know that members can enjoy U3A with confidence that the finances are all safe and in order!

Next year I enter my third, and final, year doing this job ... so if you have read this item and have bookkeeping, admin and computer skills ... please consider coming on board to shadow my last year?

Our U3A needs to be looked after well for the benefit of all our members.

**Chris Wright**

**U3A Treasurer 2018-21**



## A View from a New Committee Member ...



After joining the U3A early 2016, I quickly became a regular at the monthly Speaker Meetings and I joined the Canasta Group.

It was earlier this year during one Monday afternoon (when taking on the might of Chris and Doug's Canasta playing skills) that I was asked to consider joining the Committee as I was considered to be an observer and

thinker. Anyway, to cut a long story short, my arm wasn't twisted behind my back, but in a moment of madness or rational thinking (you can decide which!) I said "yes" and here I am a few months later having survived!

So what is the U3A Committee like? Well we start with the essential priorities of coffee and biscuits and then Maria (our Chair) gets us into order for a prompt 10.00am start. Now 'refreshed' and 'in order' ... we do discuss much and actually make decisions! And all this takes place in under two hours!

Over my time, we have discussed the running of the monthly meetings, including setting up and packing up of the Community Hall, reviewing the last month's speaker, preparing for next month's speaker, supporting new Activity Group start ups, Activity Group Leaders Events and New Members Events. Like all Committees the familiar Officers of the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary have an input ... but also less familiar ones like Speakers Secretary, Members Secretary and Group Activity Coordinator who update us on all sorts of things. In fact a wide range of subjects that affect our U3A.

Now you might be thinking you haven't got 20/20 eyesight or whatever (and I most certainly don't have that!). But I took up the challenge so there is nothing stopping you finding out more and even considering joining us.

And finally yes we do make decisions! And there is always the benefit of getting December off each year!

**Richard Cookson**  
**Committee Member 2018-19**

## Theatre Group

### This year we visited ...



Birmingham Hippodrome, to see the ballet '*Hobson's Choice*' which was a remarkable performance in modern period costume and was a highly delightful adaptation by David Bintley of the stage play by Harold Brighouse. It tells the story of the Hobson family and their three daughters courted by Albert Prosser, the lawyer, and William Mossop, who works in the family shoe shop business. It is an amusing story and to see it performed with no words in dance was an amazing performance. The music composed by Paul Reade was delightful. Everyone who saw it enjoyed this show immensely and we hope to find another ballet as worthy for next year.

Next, '*The Lady Vanishes*' at The Malvern Theatre starring Juliet Mills and Maxwell Caulfield in this classic thriller in Hitchcock style. An Agatha Christie story, it is quick witted and amusing too. You almost start to rock as if you are on the train. The set was really cleverly staged and it was a thoroughly enjoyable theatre production.

The Theatre Group try to include a drama each year as one of our visits. Our first one for 2020 will be '*Blithe Spirit*', a Noel Coward classic.

Finally, '*Amelie*' The Musical at the Malvern Theatre, which is the story of an astonishing young woman who bring happiness to those around her by her acts of kindness and absolute positive thinking on every situation. The music was excellent, with a highly polished performance by Audrey Brisson and Danny Mac. Clever staging and warm performances made this adaptation of Jean-Pierre Jeunet's Oscar-nominated film a visual treat. A real 'feel good factor' musical that made everyone who came to see it feel elated. We are looking for another musical to attend next year.

All suggestions are welcome from members as to productions they would like to see and we try to please all tastes. We do, however, have to book often six months in advance to get good seats and hope our members understand the need to reserve their seats early.

## Out and About

If you enjoy visiting a wide variety of different locations, both near and far, and finding out about something new then the Out and About group is for you.



By popular demand we began the year with a repeat visit to the **Coffinworks** in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. Not as macabre as it sounds as this is actually the Victorian foundry where the fittings for coffins were made rather than the coffins themselves. It is now a museum and contrasted strongly with **George**

**Hook's Mother of Pearl Button Factory** which we visited in the afternoon. The chaos of his workshop is at complete odds to the artistic and beautiful work he produces.

Our alcohol themed visit this year was to the **National Brewery Centre** in Burton on Trent. We had a guided tour of the factory followed by the opportunity to taste the products and eat lunch in the on-site pub/restaurant. We had time to browse the parts of the museum that had caught our attention and buy supplies in the shop.



July saw a local visit to three locations in Ironbridge. We started in the **Jackfield Tile Museum** with an introductory talk about the **John Scott Gallery**. We then moved to the **Toll House on the Iron Bridge** where David de Haan talked to us about the recent restoration work undertaken by English Heritage.

We now know why it has been painted red not grey. Royalty then disrupted our proposed visit to the Museum of

Iron so we rearranged quickly and enjoyed a wander round the **China Museum in Coalport**.



**Pitchford Hall**, near Conover, was a very popular visit this year. The house has been bought back by the original family and we were given very knowledgeable guided tours showing us the restoration work they have already accomplished and the amount of work that still needs to be done. An amazing commitment by the owners as parts of the house are quite derelict and will take years (and mega money) to restore. Homemade cake and tea rounded off the afternoon.



Equally popular was our day out on the **Vale of Rheidol Railway** and visit to the seaside at Aberystwyth. After driving through rain we were lucky to have a beautiful sunny day to enjoy the

scenery and admire the countryside on our train ride.

Our final visit was another long day out to South Wales on an extremely wet day. Fortunately the **Royal Mint Experience** is indoors and is an informative and interesting place to visit. Have you ever tried to pick up a gold bar? Several members struck a commemorative 50p to celebrate 50 yrs of the 50p.



Where shall we go in 2020? We have already begun to think of places to visit next year but any suggestions are always welcome. We aim to provide destinations to cover a variety of interests and hope you would like to join us on at least one of our trips.

# LIVING, LEARNING & LAUGHING!





**LIVING, LEARNING & LAUGHING!**

## Garden Visits

My fellow members in the Gardens Group will have their own memories, but for me the highlights of the year were:



### SPRING ...

The abundant snowdrops, hellebores and aconites at **Hopton Hall**; the lovely views and **Childhood Museum at Sudbury Hall**; the new **Japanese Garden at Lyndale House**, and our visits to the **Derwen Garden Centre** and the spectacular gardens and views of the Welsh border at **Powis Castle** kept us captivated

### SUMMER ...

May saw us enjoying the emerging summer plants at **Ness Botanic Gardens**, basking by the pool at the **Cottage Herbery**, and enjoying the violas and hardy perennials in the walled garden at **Wildgoose Nursery**. In June we visited **Preen Manor** (now under new ownership), the spectacular **Kenilworth Castle** and the “old-style” gardens at **Lord Leycester Hospital** (accompanied by a very informative monk, Brother Ken). The “wow!” factor was certainly in evidence at **Langdale** in July, and we loaded up with plants from **Bob Brown’s Nursery**, and then we undertook a long, but rewarding, journey to the dramatic gardens at **Tredegar House**, South Wales. In August we enjoyed an old favourite, **Winterbourne House**, and then we visited the **Martineau Community Gardens** to learn how they were developing their grant-aided



individual plots. **Plas Brondanw** in Snowdonia proved to be a lovely garden, despite the rain, with beautiful varieties of hydrangeas and well-clipped yew trees.



## AUTUMN ...

In an interesting tour of the lovely gardens at **Arley Hall** in September a guide explained to us how they had been altered for an episode of 'Peaky Blinders'.

In October, autumn colours in their full glory were in evidence in the stunning setting of **Penryn Castle**.

## WINTER ...

At **Chirk Castle** the theme was 'Christmas of Make-Believe', located in a five and half acre garden with spectacular views. We review the year and plan the next over our Christmas lunch at **Bodenham Arboretum**.

If you would like to join us next year just take a look at the Programme for 2020 and decide which garden trip you want to join and pay a £10 deposit, which will be receipted.

Wishing you a happy gardening year in 2020!



**Maria Hughes—Group Leader    Members: 108**

*NB Whilst this Yearbook was in the editorial process, Maria has been in hospital for a serious operation and we wish her a very speedy recovery.*

## Bridge

Our group meets every Friday at The Bungalow, Innage Lane, where we enjoy a light-hearted and sociable morning playing bridge. Many of us first learned to play a few years ago under the tutelage of one of our members, Alan Crouch, whilst others have joined along the way.



In addition to these Friday sessions some of us play at each other's homes on a casual basis. (Bridge can definitely take over your life!)

We have had 24 members for some time now, and as the venue will only accommodate a maximum of 6 tables we are fully subscribed. Because of this, some U3A members who wish to play have consequently joined the Bridgnorth Bridge

Club, who meet regularly at Morville. I do have a short waiting list, although it is unlikely there will be a vacancy in the near future.

**Mary Galloway—Group Leader**

**Members: 24**

## Canasta

Canasta is a fun card game from the Rummy family for two, three or four players. Some luck and tactical knowledge is necessary if you are to emerge on the winning side.

Our group of over 20 players has been running for nearly four years. New members are always welcome and you do not need to bring a partner. We are happy to teach the game to newcomers or refresh the rules for returnees. The aim is to have a pleasant afternoon and make new friends. Depending on the number attending, it is either £1 or £2 per session. Tea/coffee and biscuits are provided.

We meet at The Bungalow on a Monday afternoon at 2.00pm.

If you enjoy playing cards you will love playing Canasta and will be made very welcome.



**Brenda Spencer & Jen Everitt—Group Leaders**

**Members: 21**

## Cribbage

A new Group in a new venue! Starting with a few experienced players, we now have 16 members at various levels of confidence to play. Some have started from scratch, others recall playing from many years ago! Whatever ... we are all practising our mental arithmetic busy calculating around the critical numbers of fifteen and thirty one and coming to terms with the unique pegging board to keep score.



Did you know that Cribbage was the only game that was allowed to be played in a Public House without a Gaming Licence? Hence its popularity!



We are a very light-hearted (sometimes animated and a little noisy!) group sharing a pint or a pot of tea in The Fosters Arms, Low Town on a Tuesday afternoon. Would you like to join us?

**Chris Wright—Group Leader**

**Members: 16**

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## Table Tennis

This Group started in March 2019 with sessions every Friday 10.00—12 noon at The Paddocks, Uplands Drive.

We have two full sized tables and one three-quarter table, enabling non-stop challenging activity.

It is a really friendly group, and whilst everyone endeavours to improve their game, it is done with much humour.

People of all abilities are very welcome to come and try it out.



**Maureen Mumford—Group Leader**

**Members: 10**

# Mahjong

Have you heard of mahjong? If you have, do you play it as a game on your computer? If so, you may be surprised to know that the actual game of mahjong is nothing like 'matching pairs' and the game is far more complicated but **very** interesting.

A mahjong set consists of 144 beautifully designed tiles. It is a Chinese game and the Chinese can take it **very** seriously!

The tiles are generally made from resin but you may be lucky enough to play with a set made from bone and bamboo.



The tiles illustrate Bamboos, Circles, Characters, Winds, Dragons, Flowers and Seasons.

If you have played Rummy in cards it is a slightly similar game as you collect three of a kind - a Pung, or four of a kind - a Kong, or a run of three tiles called a Chow. Then there are 'special' hands such as All Pairs Honours, Triple Knitting, a Wiggly Snake and other similarly odd-named groups of tiles!

I run a weekly session at the Bungalow, at the back of the Innage Lane car park, on Tuesdays 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm. We are a friendly group of 18 and usually have four tables set up and we are more than willing to have new members join us whether you have played before or not. We are more than happy to show you how to play.



Please be warned though - this is a highly addictive game which certainly uses your brain cells!

If you wish to join us or want to see what we do please either turn up on the day or telephone me. You will certainly not regret it!

**Maria Hughes—Group Leader**

**Members: 18**



## U3A Fact:

There are 14 U3As  
in the County of Shropshire.  
85 in the West Midlands Region

## Geocaching

In 2018 Barbara and Mike Frost together with our 'Geocoach', Bob Mitchell, set up a U3A caching trail in our local area. The group reformed in 2019 and our first geocaching experience used this U3A trail. We meet monthly and follow set trails using a GPS cache locator.

Present members are new to geocaching but already we have discovered the joys of discovering hidden treasure in our lovely local countryside. With Bob's help we have learnt how to navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location, using a hint or puzzle.



For our first geocaching walk we went to Chelmarsh following the trail set by our U3A group. We were delighted to find nearly all of the caches and learn about the fascinating world of geocaching which has its own codes and skills. This carefully concealed stone was

one of our first and the cause of great excitement!

Our next adventure took us to Kemberton near Shifnal. Locating one particular cache proved challenging but Sue didn't give up, following the clue – something to do with 'roots' - she found the cache buried in the roots and rocks after a scramble up a steep bank.

One of the joys of geocaching is how inventive the people who create the trails and the caches are. This one was found in a bird box. Although sometimes the terrain is familiar, those who hide the caches take us on little known routes (always on public footpaths) using their local knowledge. In this way we are always discovering new places and views.



**Bob Mitchell—Group Leader**

**Members: 11**

## Walking

about in beautiful Shropshire has many benefits. We meet monthly and walk planned routes of 4-6 miles. The aims of the group are to get to know each other, learn something about the places we visit and gain the physical and psychological benefits of walking.

Recent studies have promoted the benefits of walking for physical and mental health. In the walking group we certainly find getting out and



In 2019 we visited a variety of places both local to Bridgnorth and venturing as far as Croft Castle in Herefordshire, Mortimer Forest and Kinver Edge.

Our walking year began with a local walk to High Rock and Queens Parlour overlooking our lovely town. As always, lots of fun was had in spite of the weather. We ate our packed lunches at Queens Parlour taking in the splendid view before heading back into town.



The April walk was around Kinver Edge. It was a beautiful spring day with the promise of summer around the corner. As is our usual practice, the walk ended at a tea room where we also took the opportunity to look round the Rock Houses. Sadly, this year, our group leader became very ill and we lost her in the summer but during her illness we always

updated her on our progress and sent pictures of our walks. We all miss Barbara's company and her love for the outdoors.

Our next walk took us to Mortimer Forest near Ludlow, where we enjoyed the bluebells and beautiful views over the Shropshire Hills into Wales. We explored Richards Castle and ended the day at Ludlow Farm Shop for tea.

One of the themes of this year seems to have been rain, but we don't let the weather stop us!! In October we enjoyed another wet walk, in the grounds of Croft Castle. In spite of the weather a new member noted how, *"we all remained positive"*. We combined this walk with the tea shop (of course) and a visit into the castle, with suitable adaptations to footwear.

We round off our year in December with a local walk and a Fish and Chip lunch at Quatt. This is when we plan next year's itinerary of monthly walks and discuss any extra walking activities and new walking opportunities that present themselves.

When we venture further afield, we share transport and costs. Come along to Westgate in Bridgnorth by 10.00am on the 2nd Friday in the month and you will be made very welcome. A new member of our group has commented, *"Fellow walkers were always welcoming, transport to start points is well organised and the walks well led. The walks have been in very different locations and I have seen beautiful and historic parts of the country"*.

Why not join us – pull on your boots, pack a lunch and make 2020 a year of discovery!



# Genealogy

Genealogy is family history research (as in 'Who Do You Think You Are'). Our Group is now about 20 strong, which is as many as we can manage in the meeting room we currently use.

This year we have been meeting at The Bungalow at the rear of Innage Lane Car Park and this venue has proved to serve our needs very well.

Meetings of the group take place on the first Tuesday of each month (except January). Members contribute towards the room hire costs and take it in turns to provide the refreshments.

We aim to have a theme each month, often with one member introducing the theme to start the discussion off.

This year's themes have included:

*'Past Occupations'*

*'Producing a Book on Your Family's History'*

*'DNA Testing and its Value'*

*'Using a Home Computer or Laptop for Research'*

*'Individual Approaches to Researching Family History'*

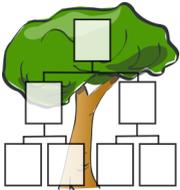
*'Using the Family Search Web Site' (a free internet source)*

*'What Else Can I Get for Free?' (exploring free internet sites)*

*'Using Family Tree Maker Software'*

*'Where Did All the Money Go?' ...*

*or 'Where There's a Will There's a Way!'*



Meetings are very informal and, whilst we do not cater specifically for beginners, we can point newcomers to sources of help and provide advice which might help in demolishing 'brick walls' that members may come up against in their own research.

## Book Club

This well-established group meets monthly to discuss and appraise the book they have recently read. This often leads to some very lively discussions, especially when the book had had a mixed response.



Books are group member's choices, from lists provided by Shropshire Library Services, and all agree that this often leads to members reading books that they would perhaps not have normally chosen, and quite often this reveals a new favourite author.

The group occasionally meets up for a meal at a local venue.

**Peter Wariner—Group Leader**

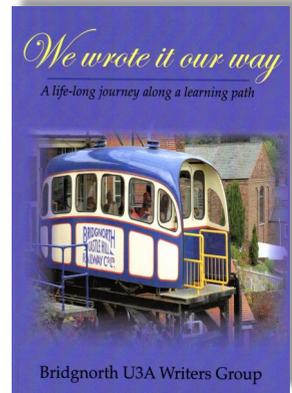
**Members: 13**

## Writers Group

We have had a lovely year in which we managed to produce our first book '*We wrote it our Way*'. Nine of our group contributed poetry and prose on different themes, which were discussed and analysed in our monthly meetings. Editing is tough work, but we all learned something from the experience and I hope it has made us better writers from the experience. So much so that we plan to do it again next year and already have some interesting writings.

Our numbers stay around the 9-10 mark and members come and go so anyone can join us at any time. A new face always brings a new dynamic to

the group and some fresh ideas to keep us going. Our next book will contain a section on Bridgnorth and Shropshire - inspired pieces from the new themes we explored this year. £1 of the sale of each book goes to our U3A charity and we still have a few books left if any one wishes to buy one.



**Kay Yendole—Group Leader**

**Members: 10**

## Classical Music

When planning our programme for the year we try to choose concerts that we hope people will enjoy. Sylvia, Jenny and I study the CBSO programme to see which we think will suit, taking care to avoid dates that might clash with other U3A outings.

I began helping Sylvia in early February 2019 when we went to hear '**A Hero's Life**' an epic story of an imaginary hero. Later that month saw us listening to '**Mozart and Brahms**' always a favourite.

March's visit was an evening concert to see **Simon Rattle** conducting **Beethoven's Ninth**. He was, of course, Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra during the 80s and 90s before moving on to the Berlin Philharmonic. So it was a rare opportunity to see him once more back in Birmingham. April's concert was **John Wilson 'A Pastoral Symphony'**; while for May's concert **Mirga** conducted Stravinsky's '**The Fire Bird**'. A story of princesses, courageous heroes and green-clawed demons: **Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla** is currently the music director of the CBSO. Our last concert for our season was **Brahms Symphony No 2**.



The feedback we get from our fellow concert lovers is always positive and of course being able to be picked up in Bridgnorth, starting with Westgate, then the High Street, Lavington Court, Mill Street and finally Alveley is a bonus. We use Mawley Coaches who do an excellent job in getting us safely through the many and difficult road works into Birmingham.

Our New Season began in September 2019 with a visit to hear **The Britten-Shostakovich Festival Orchestra**. Quite an evening to remember. The Conductor was Jan Latham Konig. The orchestra was mostly young Russian musicians all very elegantly turned out and a pleasure to watch. They began by playing God Save the Queen followed by the Russian National Anthem which got us all in the mood. They played Britten's **Four Sea Interludes** followed by the magnificent young Russian pianist **Pavel Kolesnikov** who played **Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini**. This young man is one to watch! We then listened to excerpts from **Romeo & Juliet**, **Hamlet** and the evening finished with the rousing **1812 Overture**. A really lovely evening enjoyed by all who went.

Following from that the next concert also in September was to hear **Sheku**

**Kanneh-Mason** who played **Elgar's Cello Concerto**. As many of you will know Sheku Kanneh-Mason is part of a very talented musical family. His sister Isata can often be heard playing piano on Classic FM.

The end of October is Concert No 3 of our new season. **Dvorak's Seventh** with **Conductor Anja Bihimaler** with **Renaud Capucon** on **Violin**. November is **Haydn and Mozart** while January 2020 is Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla conducting **Beethoven**. In the year that CBSO turns 100, Ludwig Beethoven turns 250 and Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla has picked out two of Beethoven's fastest, funniest and most thrilling symphonies...

February 2020, while **Klaus Makela** conducts, we will hear Nicola Benedetti play **Bartok**. She is always a favourite with our members. Then in March a change of scene when we go to listen to **100 years of Movie Magic**. Classic FM knows that some of the most exciting music of the last century was written for the cinema. But there is nothing to compare with the sensation of hearing film music played live in concert by the 90 strong CBSO.

And so into April 2020 with **Beethoven's Eroica**. Julian Rachlin will not only conduct the orchestra but he is also the violinist. May brings **Brahm's Symphony No 1**. Rising passions, Brahms' First Symphony begins with the pounding of a broken heart and ends in a blaze of triumph. Our Last concert will be **Rachmaniov and Shostakovich** with **Alexander Vedernikov** conducting. A fitting end to what I believe to be an excellent 2019-20 season of concerts.

Thank you to all our members who enjoy our trips to Symphony Hall and to Sylvia Grant for helping put such a wonderful programme together.

**Margaret Lomas—Group Leader**

**Members: 87**

**Cinema Goers**

There are 77 members on the Cinema Goers List. An email is usually sent out weekly. This reminds members and keeps them up to date with the latest films.



Live Shows are very popular and members do support them. Members have the option of making their own arrangements or they can meet up with a pre-arranged interested group of members.

We all realise that if we don't use The Majestic we shall lose it, and that would be a great loss to us all. So add your name to my list ... and you can regularly hear what is on at 'The Flicks'!

**Diana Bufton—Group leader**

**Members: 77**

## Spanish

We are a relatively new and small Group, mainly beginners, with the aim of increasing confidence in conversing in Spanish.



Our individual vocabularies have increased tremendously during our fortnightly Friday morning meetings – we have learned to play “I Spy” in Spanish! Grammar and verbs are taking a little longer.

However, we are enjoying learning together, sustained by a good supply of Bec’s coffee and lots of laughs. *Todos son bienvenidos!*

**Norma Flower—Group Leader**

**Members: 6**

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## French

The French Conversation group is a lively bunch.

We meet at Bec's Coffee house in St Mary's Street every other Monday at 11 am.



We enjoy other activities apart from conversation, including crosswords, puzzles and reading, as well as exercises to improve our vocabulary and use of French phrases. Our aim is to be able to confidently speak some French if we visit there, and to have some fun when we meet.

We are of all different levels of fluency, so if you have some basic French you will fit in.

**Caroline Dudley—Group Leader**

**Members: 10**

## German

The German Conversation Group meets once a month at Bec's coffee house over a hot drink to chat about anything that group members feel like talking about: experiences on holiday, problems with travel insurance, also local events like theatre performances, exhibitions in London, the intricacies of languages and much more. We all contribute to the discussion with our own experiences, and we usually have a lot to laugh about!



**Eva Peringer—Group Leader      Members: 9**

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## iPads - The Basics

Information Technology has a language all of its own ... but sometimes it needs an explanation and an interpreter!

It is three years since the first U3A iPad sessions started ... and the Apple operating system has been updated several times over that period. We are now working with the latest update ios 13.0 ... launched this summer. We all love our iPads but occasionally panic when things appear to go wrong! After three years of exploring different functions of the iPad, this Group took a different approach. Over a short four session programme, we re-visited the very basics. The course was designed to help those who have recently purchased an iPad or anyone who still lacks confidence ... or has just forgotten previous sessions!



Have you just acquired an iPad?

Watch out for a repeat of this programme in 2020.

A little bit of friendly hand-holding in good company!

**Chris Wright—Group Leader      Members: 10**

## Memory to Memoirs

Memory to Memoirs is a new U3A Writing Group meeting second Tuesdays from 2:00pm to 4:00 pm in Bridgnorth Library.

Our inaugural meeting was in October.

Participation has been encouraging, and I look forward to welcoming new members who may be interested after reading this article.

Why Memory to Memoirs? Every life is a story waiting to be told. And no story is too small to be lost to future generations. Writing your life story can be a voyage of self-discovery, freeing up images and memories that may have been long forgotten. Once revived, your recorded memories of people, places and the events that have shaped your life could be a precious legacy for your family and your descendants. From your written life story, your descendants will see the footprints you made in your life's path.



At each meeting techniques for finding the essentials of story structure within life's scattered experiences are presented: how to remember what you thought you had forgotten, how to develop characters by assessing participants in photographs, how to unify a story with thematic conflict, how to write scenes with dialogue.

Most important, is to first develop the overall structure of your life creating your own blueprint before commencing writing your narrative; this will help you to stay focussed and to reject a memory causing you to veer off into another memory before requiring it for your narrative.

**Patricia Hansen—Group Leader    Members: 8**

## Art - Drawing

Another new Activity Group encouraging those amongst us who have never ventured into the artistic world of 'drawing'. There are techniques to learn and time to stop and put them into effect. Members have been surprised by their ability to use the pencil or coloured pens to produce a good result!

Meeting first and third Tuesday mornings in Tasley Village Hall.

**Val Craig—Group Leader    Members: 18**





## SUMMER SCHOOLS

### *Did anyone take the Summer School plunge in 2019?*

At the time of writing many of 2020's offerings are still at the embryo stage, but they will all now be in the pipeline and they do book up quite quickly.

Log on to the national website <https://www.u3a.org.uk> and click on 'Events' to find out what's available.

If you still have the winter edition of your TAM magazine, page 13 shows some of the study days coming up (or just gone!) and page 11 gives a flavour of the 2019 U3A Science Network in Conference Aston, Birmingham (our local!) a trailer for 2020 from 10-13<sup>th</sup> August. Already they are listing some ten subjects at <https://u3asites.org.uk/u3asciencenetwork/welcome>: Indigo, Vitamins, How the Internet Works, Aspirin, Darwin the Geologist, Chocolate (the science), Radiology, Benford's Law (maths), Medical Computing and the Soho Foundry. A couple of visits will probably be included.

Do check it out; this sounds really interesting.

Our other "local" is at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. This year their dates were early/mid September but 2020 information is unpublished.

It is quite a nice idea to go further afield and combine a Summer School with a few days' holiday in a completely different area. The Yorks and Humber School is based in Easingwold about ten miles north of York. The North West has its base at Newton Rigg, Penrith. The Scotland Region is well ahead with its planning information. The School is held at Stirling Court Hotel, on the beautiful campus of Stirling University, 18-20<sup>th</sup> August. The subject range is also quite wide: Ancient Civilisations of Mesoamerica, Creative Writing: Short Stories, Exploring Poetry, Immunology – Friend or Foe? and The 1820 Radical Rising in Scotland. Details at: <https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/page/79029>

If you fancy the South East, they hold theirs in Chichester. The dates for the summer school are 15-18th June 2020. Full details will be on the website in December 2019. <https://u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum/events>

Personally I'm a bit chicken about London and the South East because of the inevitable cost of accommodation, but consider taking the plunge in 2020! They aren't hideously expensive and you meet many interesting people.

**Val Johns—U3A Member** (and a U3A Summer School adventurer!)

## CLOSING MESSAGE ...

We hope you have enjoyed reading through this Yearbook. Our aim was to give a fair reflection of our U3A Activities here in Bridgnorth during 2019.

Maybe it has inspired you to join a Group ... or to start an Activity ... or just to invite a friend or neighbour to come along and see what U3A in Bridgnorth is all about.

We '**Third Agers**' need to stick together to continue to enjoy life through '**Living, Learning and Laughing**'.

**And next year?** Look out for the first National U3A Day!



### WHAT IS THE THIRD AGE?

The **Third Age** refers to the period of time after the **First Age** of childhood dependence and the **Second Age** of full-time employment and parental responsibility.

Anyone in their **Third Age** can join a U3A and this includes people who are nearing retirement or semi-retired or maybe working part-time and self employed.

There is no lower (nor upper) age limit for membership.

No qualifications are required and none are given.

### JOIN U3A!

#### Speaker Monthly Meeting

The Bridgnorth Community Hall,  
Severn Street, Low Town  
Bridgnorth WV15 6BB  
2.00pm—4.00pm  
4th Wednesdays (ex December)

#### Telephone:

Secretary: 01746 862191

#### Email:

[info@bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk](mailto:info@bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk)

#### Website:

[www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk](http://www.bridgnorthanddistrictu3a.org.uk)

