

Welcome everyone to the start of a new term here at the U3A. I do hope you all had a wonderful summer, enjoying the sunshine (when it hasn't been too hot!). Had to mention the solar eclipse on 12th August, hope you all managed to see it as the next total one isn't until September 23rd 2090!

To recap, in July, we had two sessions before we broke for the summer, and a very enjoyable meal (more about that later).

At the beginning of July, we enjoyed a very interesting, and sometimes very graphic, talk about the Shroud of Turin given by Mark Bradley, an outside speaker. He was full of enthusiasm with regard to this topic and had so much information to share that we almost ran out of time! It was a great morning.



Our last Monday morning meeting was led by Ivan and Alistair. We began with a radio quiz hosted by Ivan. The scores were extremely close with two teams on equal points. After two tie break questions which both groups answered correctly, it was decided to call it a draw.

This was followed by Alistair leading an art and music inspired session. Members were asked to choose their favourite painting and explain why they chose it. Alistair then played a piece of music he felt complemented the painting choices.

As it was only a half session, only six people chose paintings and they were as follows:

Lynn Roff – The Night Watch by Rembrandt

Alistair Scott – Starry Night by Van Gogh

John Phillips – The Floor Planers by Gustave Caillebotte

Angela Gill – Crossing the Sands by David Cox

Chris Gilbert – The Last of England by Ford Maddox Brown

You may wish to look up these paintings and see what you think about them. Artwork is very subjective.

Lynette Braid – Snug as a Bug. This was Lynette's own painting which we all greatly admired.



It was great to hear about people's choices. Maybe this could be repeated again in the future?

A wonderful end to a very successful year.

On 10th July we held our annual end of year celebration meal at Haig's Hotel in Balsall Common with thirty-eight people attending. We had a fantastic meal, with good service, and great company. It was a lovely way to end the year! Thank you to Alistair for organising this and ensuring we all knew which courses we had ordered! The room was decorated with Greek flags and bunting and we wondered why. The place was hosting a Greek themed evening that night, so mystery solved.



Continuing the food theme, the lunch group met in July at the Mason's Arms in Solihull. Great value and delicious food. Why not give it a try? They meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month. See Toni for more details. It is very good value for money at £8.95 for a meal plus a soft drink and an extra £1 for an alcoholic beverage.



Group information

History

There are a few spaces available in the History group. The group meets the first Tuesday of the month at the Methodist Church Hall, Station Approach 10 – 12. If you would like to join you would be very welcome. Speak to Angela or Toni for more details or just turn up at the next meetings on 1st September or 6th October 2026. Go along and give it a try.

Walking

I asked Tony to give us an update on the first year of the walking group. Here's what he had to say.

A year ago, I suggested (or perhaps pressurised into would be a more accurate description!) forming a new walking group although I was not sure how many people would be interested. The previous walking group had merged with another group and very few of our members joined. So, in August 2025, 7 walkers stepped out from Ye Olde Saracen's Head in Balsall Common. I was chatting and missed the path back to the pub but luckily no one seemed to notice.



Since then, we have had 8 further walks around the Solihull area and are averaging 12 walkers with most staying for lunch as well as some non-walkers joining as well. Things have improved, other than falling down in the mud and losing the sole of a walking boot. You can see from the photographs that we are a sartorially dressed elegant group; no expense is spared (sorry used) in our dress code. They are also educational (obviously a u3a principle) as we have learnt all about geocaching (ask Andy Sheridan) although we realise that it is not for everyone as it does involve clambering into ditches and being stung by nettles and scratched by brambles. We are able to put the world to rights and are just waiting to be contacted by the government to solve all of their problems as well as the NHS (our consultancy fee is still to be negotiated but a glass of wine or pint of beer will probably be sufficient). We have sampled the menus at the Kings Arms (Knowle), Hatton Arms, Queen & Castle (Kenilworth), Plough (Shustoke), Red Lion (Earlswood Lakes) and Navigation Inn (Wootton Waven). Walks are between 3 and 4 miles on the third Friday of the month (except December and January). We walk in the morning and then have lunch (if desired) at a pub. There are 20 members in the group – we always have room for more so if you fancy a gentle and social ramble then please contact me.

Finally, we celebrated our first successful year by returning to Ye Olde Saracen's Head where it all began.

Thanks Tony, it really has been a good year!

What's on in September

8th – 12th September



Get yourself along to the Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham to see Agatha Christie's **The Mousetrap** (it has been running since 1952). Step into Monkswell Manor and solve the murder mystery.

22nd September

Any budding gardeners out there? How about an evening with David Domoney – step-by-step gardening live at **Melbicks** garden centre **5.30 – 8.30**. Tickets cost £12. The evening includes live demonstrations, advice and tips and you also get a welcome drink on arrival.



September in history

16th September 1620

On 16th September 1620, the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth UK with just over one hundred passengers, mostly English Puritans and Separatists, collectively known today as the Pilgrims, from a site near the Mayflower Steps in Plymouth. They were all hoping to start a new life in America.

You probably know all about this event but, did you know?

*The voyage was supposed to be done by two vessels. The second, the *Speedwell*, was deemed to be unseaworthy, so the passengers were crammed onto the *Mayflower*.

*The ship was a cargo ship, built to haul wine and dry goods, not people, meaning passengers lived in dark, low-ceilinged areas.

*Only one baby, named Oceanus Hopkins, was born during the long crossing.

*Nearly half of the 102 Mayflower passengers who arrived in Cape Cod died during the first winter due to food shortages and outbreaks of disease

*The passengers and crew felt that a form of defence may be needed against pirates, French, Spanish and Native Americans and so the Mayflower had four medium and eight small cannons on board.

Celebrations in September

Moon festival September 25th

The Moon Festival, or Mid-Autumn Festival, is a harvest festival celebration in Chinese culture. The event, which is also known as the Moon or Mooncake Festival, is the second biggest in the country after Lunar New Year. It can fall between 7th September and 8th October. It celebrates the autumn harvest, family unity, and moon worship. People gather around to share a meal that



includes mooncakes - round pastries with sweet or savoury fillings symbolising completeness and family reunion. They also light colourful lanterns, share seasonal fruits like pomelos, watch lion or fire dragon dances and look at the bright full moon.

Local history

Here is a question for you to ponder –

Where was Solihull's first police lock-up and station built and in what year?

More information on this next time. I came across it accidentally whilst doing a treasure trail around Solihull with my grandchildren.

I have one piece of news I'd like to share – on 19th August my daughter gave birth to a little boy – Rowan.

If anyone has anything to share with the members of our U3A let me know and I will add it to the October edition.

Thanks for taking the time to read our newsletter and look forward to seeing you all on 7th September when our first talk will be by Alistair - Antoni Gaudi, God's Architect.