

Bolton u3a Group Leader Reports

2024/2025

Archaeology -- Leader Maggy Simms

This group was put on hold in March 2024 due to the unavailability of the leader. Prior to that, we commenced in September looking at evidence for slavery and sacrifice in archaeology, the Galloway Hoard, and the Archaeology of the West Pennine Moors. At the start of 2025 we began looking at world archaeology, starting with Australia and India, at which point events intervened. We hope to recommence in early 2026

Arts And Crafts—Leader Serena Johnson

All group leaders, of which we were a number who were in the red, were asked if we could reduce the costs of running our groups.

Crucial to reducing costs of this group was the renting of room at St Andrew and St George's. The cost per session was £25 ie. £250 per annum .As a small group with an income of £16 max per session, this put us in the red annually by £160.Fortuitously ,I was able to contact Julie Levy, Art and Education Consultant and manager of the Hive Gallery and Community Workshop, who was willing to let us the Workshop space for £10 per session, including refreshments.

At this rate, we will in the future, be able to break even over 10 sessions per year i.e.. 10 sessions @8 participants (average attendance) @£2.00 fee per person per session=£160.00 per academic year

There are pros and cons to the Hive Workshop but at the end of the year group review it was agreed that the pros far outweighed the cons.

This year, 24 -25 the A&C group will still be in the red as there were 4 sessions (September to December) at St Andrew and St George costing £25 per session = £100 plus 6 sessions at the Hive Workshop at £10, overall cost for the year £160.The income for the year 24-25 records a deficit f £60, which I anticipate will be met with u3a reserves.

As crafting is a material -based activity, it is more expensive given the increased interest in crafting throughout the West and consequently prices have risen. Most of the materials used by the group are from my own stash(in addition to this is the cost of colour printing) A proportion of the cost of extra materials is occasionally borne by the group. The Committee responded that any invoices submitted would only be considered if the items could be added to the inventory of the group e.g. Die cutting machines, printers, and any other costs should be met by participants.

Therefore, I have proposed, and this has been supported by the group, that participants each month contribute an additional £3.00 to create a separate ongoing fund which will be devoted to meeting consumable requirements. Any purchases will be meticulously addressed by invoices.

The Committee has subsequently approved a grant for 10 Gell Art packs (i.e. one per group member) which will enable us to progress a new craft, many thanks to the Committee.

At the time of writing (pre-October) a display at the September u3a Friday meeting will celebrate the range of crafts of which the group have experienced—now over twenty—is now agreed. In addition, we have now planned the projects for 25-26 including several new crafts.

Beeline Travel—Leader Michael Biggs

This group is suspended due to the unavailability of the leader.

Bridge Group---Leader Tony Settle

There is on average about 9 or 10 players. There have been 3 new members over the last 12 months. Bridge is a sound game for those who enjoy playing cards. The difficult element is the bidding, and this does take time to master, even at the basic level.

The group is very mixed in terms of ability and thus they are extremely supportive and helpful to any new players, especially those who have never experienced bridge before. It is a lively an, sociable group, but one that also wants to improve in terms of their bridge skills

Canal Walks---Leader Alison Dyson And Pauline Treuherz

The group started in May 2025 under the leadership of Pauline and Alison, who have led a small number of walks along the Manchester canals. These have proved very enjoyable with opportunities to see some of our industrial heritage as well as enjoying coffee and lunch breaks at various hostelrys along the way!!

Strength and balance (formerly Chair-based exercise – Leader: Jeanne Kelly

This class of exercises to increase one's strength and balance ran weekly on Mondays 4pm at Harwood Methodist Chapel and the average class size was 11, though attendance ranges from 6 to 16. The exercises we do are led by Age UK Strength & Balance Manager Niall Bradley and cover warm-ups, squats, knee raises, bicep stretches and one-leg balances, all with the use of a chair if needed. In place of a teacher's fee, a donation is made to Bolton Age UK. Many members say they have seen a big improvement in their physical health since starting this group. For the year starting October 2025, the start time has changed to 2.30 pm and the name changed to Strength & Balance.

Chinese Stories ---Leader Nick Tyldesley

This was a pop up course of 4 sessions following on from a previous session on Chinese poetry from Classical to Modern Times. Participants were reassured that the stories were in translation rather than the original mandarin! The sessions took place in the café area of Waterstones' bookshop adding a pleasant and literary ambience –good coffee and cakes being available too.

The choice of texts was chronological starting with short novellas of the T'ANG Dynasty through to Nationalist China in the interwar years; the propagandist literature of the Cultural Revolution under Mao, post-Mao modern times and China's growing connections with the West. It has to be recognised that writers who criticise the government either wrote in exile or accepted strong censorship.

The stories ranged the machinations of feisty, foxy women and the spirit world; descriptions of a traditional rural life; through the self-sacrificing exploits of true Communist Party members and the dystopian effects of rapid urbanisation today. Literary traditions from Europe have little impact on Chinese writers. But the Chinese diaspora in America are critical of current issues around human rights and a perceived lack of democracy.

Perhaps the most significant story of all is (The Rickshaw Boy) by Lao She, published in 1939---a tale of misfortune, failed ambition and a critique of the chaotic politics of the interwar years. It is a weepie and doesn't end happily. But it is still widely read in China and is on the curriculum for study. It reinforces the Confucian idea of stoicism in the face of adversity.

Small group discussion round the table, coffees to hand, worked well with this sort of topic. Possible next steps might be to return to more stories of a contemporary nature; a module including stories from North and South Korea; another pop- up medley that includes stories, language awareness, culture ...perhaps later in the year---watch the newsletter for further details.

Cinema Group---Leader Chris And Duncan Macpherson

The cinema group has been well attended this year. From October 2024 to September 2025, we met 10 times as the December meeting was cancelled due to Christmas, and in July as there was no suitable film for our age group.

Our choice of film is always limited as , to obtain the over 60s discount, the film has to start before 3.00pm on a Thursday. However we can normally find one suitable and , this year we had a variety diet ranging from The Blitz to Bridget Jones---Mad about the boy and Downton Abbey -The Finale.

On average, 12 members attended each film albeit a select group of regular attendees.

Bridget Jones was the most popular choice with 18 attendees closely followed by The Salt Path at 16, A Complete Unknown, a biopic of Bob Dylan, at 15 and Downton Abbey at 15.

New members will be welcomed. If you fancy a couple of hours escape from trials and tribulations of the world once a month, why not come along and join us at the Light Cinema in the Market Place, Bolton town centre---the films always start before 3.00pm so you leave in daylight throughout the year.

Classical Civilisation---Leader Paul Dyson

Some statistics. Sessions held 10, members on mailing list 50, of whom 49 attended at least once, average attendance 28 with members attending between 5 to 6 sessions and 17 members attended 80 to 100% of sessions.

Interest in the group was maintained this year, with an average attendance of 28. There was some turnover, as we welcomed about the same number of new members as those we lost. Anyone with an interest in the ancient Greeks and Romans is welcome to join in. The group continued to enjoy the excellent facilities and service at The Hub.

As usual , we ranged over a variety of themes- history, literature, biography, culture, --picking out particular relevant subjects. But we also made a special effort to set the classical world in its context. We usually jump from topic to topic in random fashion, so we spent one session putting the main events of the 1200 years from the Trojan Wars to the last Roman Emperor into chronological order in the hope we might see how they relate to each other.

The whole classical world surrounded the Mediterranean Sea, so we looked at its importance over the centuries—who knew that it needed 8000 murex sea-snails to be killed to produce 1 gram of Tyrian Purple to help dye the emperor's cloak? And we took a look at the Classical Heritage—when we enjoy the books and broadcasts of, for example Mary Beard and Natalie Haynes, why has their subject matter continued to be of interest over so many centuries?

Clueless At Claremont Quiz Group---Leader Steve Brown

This second quiz group was commissioned in June 2024 by the Committee to provide an additional facility for members who could not access the main Quiz group, which was unable to accept new members.

We had around 20 members registered and had around 12 to 16 at our monthly sessions. Unfortunately, attendances dropped off from June 2025, as members were able to once again join the main group. It was decided to close this second group in September

Coffee And Chat Town Centre, Olympus —Leader Duncan Macpherson

We have a regular group of around 10 to 20 members having a coffee and a chat about nothing.

We have also used this venue to host meetings for members. This drop-in session is held on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 10.30, at Olympus Chippy. to hear about new groups that are being set up such as the new walking group.

If you are a new u3a member, why not join us, or any of our other coffee and chat groups, to get to know people in an informal, unstructured session?

Coffee And Chat Egerton---Leader Shirley Pressler

This group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10.30 at the Globe Café, Blackburn Road, Egerton. Approx 8 to 14 members attend.

Coffee And Chat Harwood —Leader Erina Maginn

This group meets on the second Tuesday each month at 10.30 at Harwood Methodist Church. Around 10 to 14 members attend.

Coffee And Chat Heaton---Leader Kalamini Cook

This group meets at 10.30 on the second Tuesday each month at The Coffee Shop, New Hall Lane. Around 6 to 12 members attend.

Coffee And Chat Westhoughton ---Leader Helen Yeldon

This new group started in July and meets on the second Friday each month at the Hub in Westhoughton. Around 8-10 members attend

Crown Green Bowling---Leader Mike Haworth

We had another successful season of Monday bowling at Bradshaw Bowling Club's green at The Rigby's, where the facilities are excellent, but this year the green's surface was well below its usual high standard. The club is well aware of this and terminated our hire by 2 weeks to undertake substantial improvements in readiness for the 2026 season.

However, despite the poorer green surface, we all enjoyed our weekly bowl there and the excellent summer weather (which probably contributed to the green's deterioration) meant that we did not lose a session to rain until the final Monday.

We lost 6 regular attendees from the previous 2024 season but recruited 6 new members, 3 of whom became regular attendees and 2 more who would have been regular but for health issues. Our average attendance has been 15-20 members per week, and most of whom played the usual 3 games of singles.;1 or 2 just played the 1 game, but enjoyed the social aspect of the group.

As in previous years, we ran a league table based on results per game, to make the social bowling a touch more competitive and we also introduced some games of pairs, which has proved to be very enjoyable and we may well incorporate that aspect more fully next year.

We would be happy to welcome new members, whether they maybe bowlers already, or whether they wish to try it out for the first time as tuition will be given before they play a competitive game.

Cryptic Crosswords – Leader: Eamonn Kelly

Meeting twice a month for about 3 years, Group One has mastered how to solve cryptic crosswords. We now complete two crosswords (one moderately easy, one more challenging) in every session. The group consists of a maximum of 8 members and, on average, 6 regularly attend our meetings. This group will continue for the foreseeable future.

Meeting twice a month for about 2 years, Group Two has mastered the basics of how to solve cryptic crosswords and has steadily progressed to being able to complete two crosswords in every session. The group consists of a maximum of 13 members and, on average, 6 regularly attend our meetings. This group will continue for the foreseeable future.

Digital Photography---Leader Janet Thatcher

This year we have maintained our pattern of one field trip per month during which we go out and about in and around Bolton and take photographs, often with a topic in mind, and one meeting per month in which we compare our photos. However it is getting harder to think of venues which we have not visited several times and the group membership has dwindled. Because of our small numbers, we now have our second meeting of the month in a coffee shop so there is no room rent to pay.

The group would benefit from an input of fresh ideas and if there is any member who would like the thought of setting up new projects and leading it in new directions, please get in touch

Dining Group---Leader Chris Druck

There are now 35 active members and numbers attending the meal varies from 15 to 22. This year we have eaten at Spice Valley, Café Italia, The Cross Guns, The Rivington, Baci's, The Wilton, Luciano's, Ocean Palace, The King William and the Goose and Gander. In the summer 9 ventured to La Bohemia in Lymm where we enjoyed some fine dining.

Family History – Leaders: Eamonn & Jeanne Kelly

With the refurbishment complete, we relocated this group from Harwood library to meet at Bolton Central Library once a month and use the Council's free edition of Ancestry and Find My Past, pairing

an experienced Ancestry user with a novice to help the novice find out about their own family history. Attendance has been low averaging 6.

History Group---Leader Tony Settle

The average number attending is around 25-30. We have covered several topics, and these have come from suggestions made by group members. It is not a discussion group, but members often ask questions or make points during the presentations.

They respond willingly to questions asked. This means they have no fear of being put on the spot and can therefore enjoy the topics covered. There have been around 12-15 new members, but also some who have not been for a while. We covered about 1000 years of history and I know it is hard to please everyone all the time, but hopefully there is something of interest during the full year.

In April, many of our members had an interesting and successful trip to the Houses of Parliament.

Language And Communications Group---Leader Win Conway

The group has had 9 meetings in the year with an average attendance of 20 members

The main topic of consideration this year has been that of Language and Food, which has provided lively and enjoyable sessions, especially when there were occasional samples!

The first topic was Festive Food, in which we studied the various spook-terrifying concoctions for sale in the supermarkets for Halloween, and the historical background behind the strange festival dating from Pagan times.

Festive food from other countries and cultures also were noted (and sampled) together with the myths and legends associated with them.

We studied the massive vocabulary associated with food, the enormous number and types of cookbooks on the market, and we watched videos of 3 great cooks to compare their language and style. These were Fanny Craddock, Delia Smith and Nigella Lawson.

Some entertaining sessions were entitled "Recipes Ancient and Modern " with examples from the Middle Ages up to the latest edition of "Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management"

This example of cooking of chicken in 14th century gave us a laugh; "Take the henneys and skald them and open them and wash them and smite them in gobbets"

We looked at the use made of food related items in figurative language, in similes and sayings and proverbs, and we studied some fine examples of food writing in Dickens and Nigel Slater. And finally, we looked at the topic of over-eating and its causes, and the opposite, anorexia.

I would like to point out that Language and Communication is not about parsing and analysis of grammatical structures, or learning how to "talk proper", it is about how the language used in real life situations is all important to the meaning intended and the message given.

There is plenty of room in the Hub and new members are very welcome.

Life In Other Countries—Leader Brian Jones

This year we took a decision to retitle this group from International Studies to better convey to members that our sessions were about learning about other countries' cultures and lifestyles. There is an average of 10-12 attendees in the group.

Our September 2024 session was a presentation by David Dean about Bangladesh and his time working there.

In October, Steve Brown gave a comprehensive presentation about Norway, both a summary of its history but also an overview of its outstanding wealth, welfare and health care systems. Whilst impressive, he pointed out there were social tensions around the treatment of the indigenous Sami people and recent problems from immigration.

Brian gave a presentation about South Tyrol in Italy following its transition in 1919 from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

January saw a wide-ranging discussion about President Trump's policy impact on the wider world.

February was a discussion from Alan Tucker about Belgium and his time working there. Of particular interest were the political and linguistic cultural divisions within the country.

In March we looked at the results of the German general election and the continuing issues from unification.

April was a presentation about the history of the formation of Israel and the ongoing tensions in Palestine. This was not about politics but about geography and cultural legacies that affect the area. Of interest were the words of Jonathan Sumption, former Supreme Court Judge, commenting on how current acts of violence, claim and counter claim, leave the respective populations in an invidious position with no clear pathway in place areas for the future.

We have other countries to look at in the coming season and there will be plenty to discuss and learn about life elsewhere. Members are welcome to come and share their experiences of travel and or work abroad.

Mah Jong---Leader Chris Druck

The group has 12 regular members and meets alongside the Scrabble and Rummikub groups. Some members have played before but most are new to the game. Members have now progressed to the difficult aspect of scoring in the game. Over the winter months the group hopes to meet twice a month if an appropriate venue can be found.

Maths Group---Leader Pat Todd

The average attendance in the group is around 12, and 4 new members have attended some sessions this year.

Our sessions have covered a variety of mathematical concepts:

- Permutations and combinations
- Prime factors
- Algebraic fractions
- Area and volumes
- Coordinates and symmetries

- Simultaneous equations
- Algebraic graphs
- Similar shapes
- Percentages
- Series
- Trigonometry

Mindfulness Group---Leader Annie Jones

The group came to a decision to close from April 2025. As life opened post-pandemic, it was becoming more difficult for people to commit themselves to attending regularly. Some people did want to continue, but I used my casting vote to end it, because otherwise I'd be turning up in no certainty about whether anyone else would attend. It was too hit and miss, and people didn't always remember to tell me if they couldn't come (some did).

There are now very many online mindfulness groups, e.g. run by Breathworks and the Mindfulness Association, so we agreed that our group had come to a natural end. I'm now leading two Mindfulness Meditation & Poetry groups for IGO. The group was on line, so there were no cost implications for u3a for room hire and I used my personal Zoom account.

Music Appreciation---Leader Win Conway

The course this year of 10 sessions, with average attendance of 24 members, has been devoted to the life and work of the greatest English composer, Sir Edward Elgar, (1853 – 1934) whose notorious song, 'Land of Hope and Glory,' has been heard by just about everyone.

We began by tracing history of music in England from the previous great English composer Henry Purcell (1659 – 1695) up to the later Victorian era, and by noting all the fantastic musical achievements which date from that time – the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal College of Music, The Promenade Concerts, the Halle Orchestra, and many others.

We listened to music by Elgar's English contemporaries including Holst and Vaughan Williams, and other composers of whose music little is played nowadays.

Finally, we came to a study of the life of Elgar, from his birth in Worcester in a humble country cottage, to his phenomenal success some 40 years later when the Enigma Variations took the musical public by storm and over the following twenty years, praise and honour and civic titles and awards were heaped upon him.

The attendance at this course has been very rewarding and a great time has been had by all.

Philosophy—Leader Carole Collins, And Nick Tyldsley

In spite of the enforced absence of our group leader, Carole, a varied and eclectic programme was put into action. The topics were designed to provoke lively discussion – the purpose of any philosophy group – the process being as important as the outcomes or solutions. Over the year the following subjects were raised:

1. The reputation of Machiavelli- arch political cynic or liberal republican? His stereotyped image does need to be reassessed – he was in fact a loyal Italian [and Florentine] nationalist who believed that shared government as opposed to Medici autocracy.

2. What is beauty? The group brought along objects which might be described as having the characteristics – very much in the eyes of the beholder including a silk scarf, Japanese wooden bowl, bottle of rum and icon...
3. “The Little Book of Thunks “allowed for some creative thinking based on the Socratic model of questioning: Do dogs like poetry; What colour is heaven; uses for a brick...
4. What is History? We tried to find an all-encompassing definition but this was difficult. The answers are multiple, ranging from Marxism, the Whig interpretation, mentioning Herodotus, Thucydides, Gibbon, Simon Schama... “God cannot alter the past, historians can”.
5. What makes for a good read? Is it length, universality, cultural empathy, style, familiarity? What is the appeal of Jane Austen, Dickens, Tolstoy, Richard Osman? What are examples of good literature and why?
6. Museums – what are good places to visit – are they sources of entertainment, education or propagandists for establishment values. Should the Elgin Marbles be returned. Do we need museums when Mr Google can give us all the information we require on screen?
7. British Values- a political hot-potato which can excite much passion. Do we admire a British sense of fair play, toleration, liberal ideas, diversity or is this more aspiration than fact? Who should teach values: the state or schools or parents?
8. The Philosophy of Music: - how might we link the cognitive process to emotional response, what makes for “good” music ; connecting music and mindfulness, the links between maths and music...

Unfortunately, the future of this group is under threat. Following Carole’s decision not to continue as group leader there have been no volunteers willing to take over and only the few usual suspects have expressed an interest in running future sessions. Despite a variety of organisational model being suggested to keep the show on the road- it has been decided to operate on a bi-monthly basis as there is no capacity to operate 9 sessions between September and June. Thus far we only have session leaders for September and November. Hereafter- who knows?

This problem of passive group members who rely on “someone else “ to run things, provide biscuits, collect the money, and inform the newsletter is an ongoing bugbear for U3A's. The original belief that a group would be self-sufficient with an active fully participatory cohort is being eroded. But perhaps we have to recognise that groups have a natural life cycle and can be replaced by new ones. We need to accept that if no volunteers come forward then obviously a group will collapse.

We do thank Carole for her support and efforts in running the Philosophy Group over the years and wish her well on a path to full recovery after her accident.

Poetry For Pleasure---Leader Eileen Lord

The group currently has 18 members, with an average of 10-12 attending each session; 6 new members have joined, and 3 members have not been able to attend due to health issues but plan to return.

Sessions have been topic based, background details of poets are shared by members reading and we have commented on poems read. We’ve endeavoured to be adventurous with our choices, if only to find something no-one is likely to red out before us! Old favourites have had a place too.

Some members have been happy to lead a session, which keeps us forward-looking and interested. With access to libraries, bookshops, newspapers, the Internet and our own resources, sessions have

featured work from the UK, America, Australia and bits of the world in-between, which makes us sound more academic than we are.

Pleasure comes foremost, but we learn alongside that. We've especially enjoyed some of today's poets, writing in different styles. Stand-out poems have been John Mole's "Cyclamen" and "The Walk", and Brian Bilston's ingenious palindrome poem, titled "Refugees". They demonstrate that poetry need not be fusty, irrelevant to today's world, or dare I say it—boring

Psychology Group—Leader Steve Brown

We have had an average of 16 attendees per session, with a core of regulars and others attending intermittently.

Our focus has been to look at examples of psychology in a practical sense to discuss and understand why people behave in the way they do in given circumstances.

We have looked at the work of famous psychologists and their research to understand their views and relevance to human behaviour in the variety of situations we have discussed.

Members were asked to suggest subjects they would like to discuss and our topics this year have covered:

AI, Criminal behaviour, Cognitive dissonance, Resilience, Crowd behaviour, Positive Thinking, Teaching old dogs new tricks, Mental well-being, Phobias, Nature or nurture, The Media, Personality types, Psychological effects in behaviour,

We have invited along outside speakers on occasions to hear about ongoing projects such as University of Bolton's Hummingbird Project aimed at helping to address mental anxieties in school children and work they are doing to address memory issues and Alzheimer's.

Quiz Group---Leader Mike Haworth

Over the last 3 years, our monthly Friday Quiz Group sessions at the Hub have continued to prove as popular as ever with an average attendance of 30-35 members.

We have stuck to the tried and tested format of 4/5 members per team, answering 6 rounds of 10 questions, with topics varying from General Knowledge, History, Geography, Music, Arts and Literature, with the occasional Connections round thrown in. Additionally, we always have a tabletop set of questions that teams can work on throughout the 2-hour session. We have a rota of 5 Question Masters, so there is always something to test the brain each month.

We have a system by which it is impossible for a rogue team of quiz ringers playing together each week and scooping the prizes, even though that may only be a block of chocolate or a bag of sweets.

So if you fancy a brain-teasing couple of hours in good company with plenty of fun, come and join our sessions on the 2nd Friday of each month at the 1.30 at Hub.

Reading Group—Leader Annie Jones

The Reading Group has continued to meet on Zoom on the third Thursday each month. I use my personal Zoom account for this. There are 6 members in total now, though 1 is taking a break from attending but still wants to be kept in touch with what we're reading. The average attendance is 4. We had a discussion in August about whether to continue the group with such low numbers, but

everyone wanted to continue. September's meeting had to be cancelled for logistical reasons—holidays, medical appointments etc.

I list below the books we have read so far, plus the books we're reading through to December. We had a planning meeting in October in addition to discussing our book for October, which was *The Voyage Home* by Pat Barker _ (the last in her trilogy about the Trojan Wars) Very optimistically, we've planned our reading through to February 2027!!!—see list below. We'd welcome new members but have had no enquiries.

I also lead the Breathworks online Book Club, and it might be that its easier to recruit new members from the Breathworks community of people with long term illnesses, who often find it difficult or impossible to attend face to face groups

20 11 25	Kate Atkinson	Death at the sign of the Rook
18 11 25	Jessie Burton	The House of the Fortune
15 01 26	Thomas Hardy	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
19 02 26	Graham Norton	Holding
19 03 26	Tan Twan Eng	The Garden of Evening Mists
16 04 26	Kristin Hannah	The Nightingale
21 05 26	Karsten Duse	Murder Mindfully
18 06 26	Robert Macfarlane	Is it a River
16 07 26	Joanne Harris	Broken Lights
20 08 26	Kotaro Isaka	Bullet Train
17 09 26	Vincent Delecroix	Small Boat
15 10 26	C K McDonnell	The Stranger Times
19 11 26	Stephen Fry	Troy
17 12 26	Harriet Tyce	Blood Orange
21 01 27	Elif Shafak	There are Rivers in the Sky
18 02 27	Rory Stewart	Politics on the Edge

Rummikub And Scrabble—Leader Tony Settle And Nellie Platt

This continues to be a fun social group session. There have been several new members, though these are activities that members dip into when convenient. The average group size of the games combined is about 9 or 10.

One of the issues with scrabble is that those who play on a regular basis do know some very strange scrabble words. This can be off putting for new visitors to the group. However, there is room for newcomers to play on different tables with lists provided of some of these strange words. Those joining rummikub have picked up how to play very quickly, even if they had never played before. Again those who enjoy both the activity and the social element which comes with the game.

Singing For Pleasure Group—Leader Paul Dyson, Musical Director Win Conway, Accompanist Chris Deacon

We have had 20 sessions with an average of 23 of our members attending, and 39 of members attending at least once .Around 14 members have attended 80-100% of our session.

The group has continued to meet twice a month in the Seminar Room of Claremont Church, where we enjoy excellent facilities as well as help and support from the administrator, Bill Mason.

Encouraged by our public performances last year, our MD Win Conway enthusiastically rehearsed us for a second end of year concert at the June Branch Monthly Meeting. This year's musical programme was entitled "The Story of a Life in Song".

As Win herself described it; "Beginning with the "mewling and puking "infant described in Shakespeare' we illustrate in song the various stages through which humans travel in the process of living, until they are..well, let's say as old as we are! The songs were drawn from Folk, Traditional, Old Tyme Favourites, and Modern Musical and were interspersed with Win's commentary and slide presentation. Earlier in the year we had also learned songs from a more general repertoire.

We had some natural turnover this year, welcoming new members while losing a few long-standing ones .New singers are always welcome in all 4 voices, even if you're not sure which you belong to! There are no auditions—all you need is a desire to enjoy singing with other people and to make some progress musically, no matter from what point you start. Come along and give it a try.

Table Tennis Group –Leader Christine Hart

The group has now been active for over 12 months and people have found it to be not only an excellent way to get fit physically but is beneficial for mental health too. Even people who have never played it recognise that it is a good activity providing co-ordination, balance and social interaction.

Throughout the year the numbers change depending on the weather. In the summer there aren't as many members attending due to gardening or holidays. In the winter we find that members increase significantly because it is an indoor activity when the weather is bad.

So, numbers fluctuate from 4/5 to 10/12 people. For the following year we expect numbers to increase due to word of mouth and how much fun it can be.

One downside is that there are only 2 tables and there are more people joining then managing the session may prove difficult. In other words, another table would really be needed. Overall, the group is a successful one.

Textile Arts—Pauline Treuherz

A small group of members have met regularly throughout the year and continued to develop skills and share expertise in a number of textile related crafts. We really need some more members to join us to make the group viable.

Trips And Outings---Leader Julie Beaman

On 28 November 2024 we had approximately 35 members enjoy a coach trip to York where we visited the St Nicholas Christmas Markets to browse the artisan stalls. Free time gave members the opportunity to visit York Minster and browse the many shops in the vicinity. The weather was very kind to us and despite it being November, the sun shone all day.

On 23rd October 2025. Approximately 15 members visited Keswick by coach for market day. Again another sunny day. Our journey up to Keswick took us along a scenic route where we enjoyed seeing all the fabulous lakeside settings and beautiful autumnal colours.

Topical Science Group---Leader Rosemary Ashworth

The aim of the group is to serve as background for a variety of scientific news items and topics of interest.

No specific specialised knowledge is needed as the aim is to cover any topics required for further understanding. We produce an information sheet to take away. It is very important to have a keen interest in what is going on in the world.

At the start of each meeting, we share and discuss small scientific news items, many of which have been brought in by members. The enthusiasm of members is very encouraging. We then study a variety of topics in more detail.

This year we have discussed:

- Scientific news over the summer
- Adhesives—history and developments
- Sewage treatment –what should happen and what is happening
- End of year Festive Science miscellany
- Science to look out for in 2025
- Making products from waste carbon dioxide—the beginning
- Fascinating fungi—their importance and uses
- Critical materials –minerals that matter
- New findings about mitochondria and health
- Microbes in the news, including tiny viroids
- In addition, members have been encouraged to take part in citizens science projects, such as –the Big Plastic Count, Big Garden Bird Watch and the Big Butterfly Count

Our meetings take place at the Hub and have been attended by an average of 10 members this year, with 17 members in total

We always welcome new faces—why not give it a try!

Walking Group—Leader Lizzie Bomber And David Haythornewaite

In late May 2025 it was decided to look at reviving the walking group and so an exploratory meeting was held at the Olympus. This was attended by 14 interested parties and it was agreed that the walks would be held on the last Wednesday of the month. As Lizzie had held a walk earlier in the year, she kindly agreed to supply her list of interested parties.

This increased the group numbers to 21 and accordingly the first walk was held in June with 11 attendees. Unfortunately, the July planned walk had to be cancelled due to holiday and grand children minding commitment of members. The August Walk attracted 11 members

The walks are led by Dave or Lizzie or both of us. It is monthly, usually on a Wednesday but may change occasionally so that other people are able to join in.

The walking group has held 4 walks around the local area. They are well attended. They are never more than 5 miles in length and we do try to do a reconnaissance walk beforehand. Any objects like styles, etc, we try to let you know about before the walk. If you do bring your dog with you, it must be always kept on a lead.

There is a nominal fee of £1 per person which goes towards u3a funds. Membership of u3a ensures we are insured.