

## **GROUP LEADERS' REPORTS 2023/24**

### **ARCHAEOLOGY – Leader: Maggy Simms**

During 2024 the Archaeology group has continued to discuss and learn about a variety of topics, focusing on events, sites and other types of evidence from the end of Roman rule in Britain to the invasion of England by the Normans in 1066.

Most recently we looked at the archaeological sites of Smithills Moor, Rivington Moor and Winter Hill, and we are considering how to work with Bolton Museum and other agencies to bring together some kind of report that summarises the sites of this intriguing area of the country.

### **ARTS AND CRAFTS – Leader: Serena Johnson**

The Group continues to meet once a month on the second Tuesday of the month for 10 months a year in the meeting room at St Andrew and St Georges. The two-hour sessions are founded in active, participatory learning.

We currently have 10 members, although not every member is able to attend every session due to other commitments, personal health issues, care for family members or holidays. Consequently, we have fluctuated between 3 and 10 members attending as the financial report confirms but this is slowly re-stabilizing.

Each crafting session is chosen by the group on a termly basis. The last academic year included the following crafting sessions – silk painting; slow sewing; metallic wax embossing; decoupage and mini-Easter flower wreaths.

What participants have recently created is shown on the Art and Craft Gallery website for U3A members to enjoy – thank you Maggie.

As an exciting new opportunity has arisen at the end of the academic year, the Art and Craft Group will be moving to a new venue in January 2025. The Hive Gallery workshop space situated in the Market Place Shopping Centre will provide a perfect area for the group to continue creating at the community session rate of £10.00 per session, this includes kitchen and toilet facilities, with free tea and coffee thrown in!

---

### **BEELINE TRAVEL GROUP – Leader: Michael Biggs**

This year has been a reasonable one and I hope everyone has enjoyed the trips out. Some trips have been well attended and others not so much due to holidays, illness and appointments etc.

This year we have been to Blackburn; Chorley; Wigan; Warrington; St Helens Glassworks; Imperial War Museum; Guided Busway; Rochdale, Bury and Altrincham via Manchester Airport.

On the whole the weather has been good, and we have used bus, tram and train to get around at no cost to ourselves.

---

### **BRIDGE GROUP – Leaders: Barbara and Chris Harding**

The group, which meets weekly, has retained a regular level of 15 to 20 attendees. All enjoy playing Bridge and when we, as leaders, stated that, after over five years of leading the group, we had decided to stand down the members were upset that this might result in the group closing.

However, we were all delighted that Tony Settle agreed to take over as group leader and there has been a smooth transition.

We will, on occasions, still attend and help, if necessary.

---

### **CANAL WALKS GROUP – Leader: Linda Rothwell**

We started these walks in July with groups A & B enjoying the walk and the scenery. Everything went well for the second walk for both groups with everyone enjoying being out in the countryside and forming new friendships along the way.

The setback began in September/October when I had to postpone the walks due to severe disruptions with the trains diverted because of major rail works towards Southport.

We are hoping to complete our last walk early November.

---

### **CINEMA GROUP – Leaders: Chris and Duncan Macpherson**

Yet again we had to change the day for the group as the Light cinema altered the day for 'silver surfers' to a Thursday.

Consequently, we now meet on the fourth Thursday of each month and, to take advantage of the reduced price available, need to attend a film starting before 3pm.

Although this limits the choice of film we have managed to find one each month for the group.

Our most popular choice this year was 'One Life', the story of Nicholas Winton who rescued children from the Nazis and the least popular choice was 'Dr Strangelove' from the 1960s. Our other films ranged from biopics of Bob Marley and Amy Winehouse to the comedy 'Wicked Little Letters' and the thriller 'Twisters'.

To date, everyone who attends enjoys being in each other's company and we occasionally go for a coffee at Costa downstairs afterwards.

---

### **CHAIR BASED EXERCISE GROUP - Leader: Jeanne Kelly**

This class of exercises to increase one's strength and balance runs weekly on Mondays from 4pm at Harwood Methodist Chapel, opposite the new church, which has a large car park.

The average class size is 10. The exercises we do are led by Age UK Strength & Balance Manager Niall Bradley and cover warm-ups, twists, squats, leg raises, arm raises 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.

---

### **CHINESE POETRY SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION - Leader: Nick Tyldesley**

This pop-up series was a follow up to last year's course on Poetry from Classical Times to Mao Ze Dong. I believe this subject is unique to u3as although "Third Age Matters" persistently refuses to consider an informative article to show how active u3as up north really are!

It was a difficult time to be a poet during the Cultural Revolution – intellectuals were imprisoned for being class enemies and only socialist realist praise of the proletariats' achievements were allowed.

However, poems written in prison survive and poets in exile recall their feelings at the time. Nevertheless, classical themes are not quite extinguished. As China became more westernised under Deng Xioping and accelerated under Xi Jiping, poetry becomes freer in form and makes reference to issues like the move to cities and urban alienation. There is still censorship and references to the Tiananmen Square Massacre mean a harsh punishment.

Those contemporary poets who avoid political themes flourish from university bases: poems continue to refer to nature, relationships, daily life and there are even "trash poets" who write about topics like Chinese pigs!

To illustrate the diversity of China, one session was devoted to Uyghur poetry from its Sufi Islamic origins to the very serious themes of deep sadness at the current political situation in Xinjiang Province.

A small but enthusiastic group enjoyed a wide range of poems and even tried their hand at writing their own acrostic poems. As an experiment, the first session was held in the cafe area at Waterstone's cafe – no hire charges required and in comfortable surroundings with good coffee/cakes available. This venue is worth considering for a possible follow-up series on Chinese stories but watch this space!

Finally, in order to cut down on wasteful duplication of resources, it would be helpful for future course planning if members would let me know in advance if they are unable to make a session for whatever reason. Thanks. Nick Tyldesley

Possibly one of our favourite contemporary poems:

**I sell Pollen (probably saffron)**

The day I started my pollen business,

All holidays stayed away from me.

Chinese New Year,

I sell pollen.

Lantern Festival

I sell pollen.

Valentine's Day,

I sell pollen

May Day.

I sell pollen.

Dragon Boat Festival,

I sell pollen.

National Day,

I sell pollen.

Mid-autumn Festival,

I sell pollen.

New Year's Eve,

I still sell pollen!

Now the three most touching words

In this world

Is NOT "I love you",

But "I buy pollen",

Mei Lao Xie

---

## **CLASSICAL CIVILISATIONS GROUP – Leader: Paul Dyson**

There was an upsurge of interest in the group this year, with the average attendance reaching almost 28. It was good to welcome several new members while enjoying the presence of 14 who have been coming through all nine seasons of the group's existence thus far. Anyone with an interest in the eras of the ancient Greeks and Romans is welcome to join in.

The first and last sessions of the year explored political topics – how the Athenians operated their democracy and how both Greeks and Romans ran their elections. Another topical subject was the Greek Olympic Games, ancient ancestor of all the excitement of this year's Paris event. In many ways the first Roman Emperor Augustus (an absolute autocrat, who did his best to disguise the fact) is one of the most highly regarded figures in history; such were his achievements that it took two sessions to cover them. The pre-Christmas meeting was entertained by two fictional and much exaggerated accounts of Roman feasting.

Literature this year was represented by Aristophanes' comedy 'The Frogs', including videoed extracts of modern productions. But we also looked at the remarkable and sometimes fortuitous ways in which Greek and Roman literature has been preserved over the centuries. Archaeology is the other major source for our knowledge of the ancient world. As we saw, plenty of excavations are constantly revealing new material and an outstanding example of an excavated Roman city is – no, not Pompeii! – Lepcis Magna in north Africa.

---

## **CLUELESS AT CLAREMONT QUIZ GROUP**

The Branch Committee agreed in June to set up a second Quiz Group as the existing Group was oversubscribed.

A second Group was established to meet at Claremont Church on St George's Road, on the last Wednesday of the month. Hence the name of the Group.

Around 15 members initially registered an interest in joining the new Group. However, the meeting date subsequently proved inconvenient to some of them.

The Group had its first meeting in July and has met again in August, September, and October.

Around 15 people are regularly attending, with some being members who attended the other, established, Quiz Group.

There is spare capacity at the venue for other members to come along and compete to get their photo taken with the prestigious cardboard winners' cup and go home with a bar of chocolate!!

Please come and join us.

---

### **COFFEE AND CHAT GROUP (TOWN CENTRE) – Leader: Duncan Macpherson**

The coffee and chat group in the town centre has continued to meet at the Olympus Restaurant on the first and third Tuesday of each month and has, over the year, seen regular attendances of about 12 to 14 members, which has been most encouraging.

Some of us occasionally partake of lunch there to continue our social activity and we have used the coffee and chat group as a venue for welcoming new members to Bolton u3a.

### **COFFEE AND CHAT GROUP (EGERTON) Leader: Shirley Pressler**

The Egerton Coffee morning runs on the second Tuesday in the month at the Globe Cafe in Egerton. It has been well attended with lively discussion.

This year attendance has ranged from 9 to 14 , with an average attendance of 11.

Some non u3a members have attended and, as a result, have subsequently joined us.

### **COFFEE AND CHAT GROUP (HEATON): Leader: Kamalini Cook**

The Heaton group meets at the Coffee Shop on New Hall Lane on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Attendance is usually 10/12 members.

There is always an enquiry about the u3a from other customers and we are able to publicise the activities on offer.

### **COFFEE AND CHAT GROUP (HARWOOD): Leader: Eirina Maginn**

The Harwood coffee and chat group meets at Harwood Methodist Church Restaurant on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 10.30 am. We usually have between 8 and 12 people attending.

---

### **CROWN GREEN BOWLING GROUP – Leader: Michael Haworth**

We have continued to meet weekly at the excellent Bradshaw Bowling Club facility every Monday during the season, that runs from April to end of September and, despite the adverse weather conditions that we experienced earlier this year, we have managed to have sessions every week.

We have 27 members on the books, including the non-bowling Group Leader, and attendances average 20 - 22, hence the reason for posting a “Group full” notice in the Newsletter as we try to ensure that all who want to, manage to have 2 or 3 games in the 2-hour session.

We run a league table, based on average scores, and this year we have also managed a pairs knock-out competition, to encourage a competitive element, but first and foremost the Group exists for members to have fun whilst pursuing outdoor exercise

---

### **CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS – Leader: Eamonn Kelly**

Meeting twice a month, Group One has mastered the basics of how to solve cryptic crosswords and has steadily progressed to being able to complete two moderately difficult crosswords in every session.

The group only consists of a maximum of 7 members and, on average, 5 regularly attend our meetings. This group will continue for the foreseeable future.

Since November 2023 Group Two also meets twice a month. We started with the basics of how to solve cryptic crosswords and have steadily progressed to being able to complete at least two crosswords in every session.

The group only consists of a maximum of 10 members and, on average, 7 regularly attend our meetings. This group will continue for the foreseeable future.

---

### **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY – Leaders: Janet Thatcher and Sheila Carlin**

We have continued the meeting pattern of a field trip on the first Friday of the month and a meeting at St. Andrew and St. George church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month.

On the first Friday, we have met in a variety of places. Town centres such as Bury, Chorley and Westhoughton give the opportunity to take pictures in an urban environment, whereas Turton Tower, Doffcocker Lodge and Moss Bank Park provide more opportunities for those who are keen to photograph the natural world.

Our numbers have decreased this year and we would encourage new participants to join this friendly group keep it viable.

The group has members with a wide range of photographic experience and we would welcome new members, whether experienced photographers or those who have only recently taken up photography as a hobby.

---

### **DINING CLUB GROUP – Leader: Chris Druck**

There are now 28 regularly attending members in this group.

On average 14 members attending each meal but occasionally the number has been as high as 18.

So far this year we have met at a variety of restaurants including Spice Valley, The Pack Horse, The Thomas Egerton, The Rivington, The Retreat, Nam Ploy Thai Restaurant, Luciana's and the Jolly Crofters. Most venues have good parking and are on a bus route.

### **FAMILY HISTORY – Leaders: Eamonn and Jeanne Kelly**

We meet at Harwood 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 4) particularly since the Library asked us to move away from our afternoon slot.

---

### **HISTORY GROUP – Leader: Tony Settle**

History has seen several new members joining. The group continues to provide suggested ideas for me to cover.

This means we have had a great variety of topics covering about 900 years of history and from all parts of the world.

The group members are also willing to participate during the sessions which often means they are lively and fun.

I therefore thank the group for making it fun for me as well.

---

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDIES – Leader: Brian Jones**

We held our first meeting at the Hub on 4 September 2023, when we had an interesting insight to Abu Dhabi, presented by Steve Brown, who has been a frequent visitor to the emirate.

In October and November, we discussed both Albania and North Macedonia, being two countries who are candidates for joining the European Union.

In December David Dean gave a talk entitled "Round the Horn". The talk covered countries in the Horn of Africa; Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia, with special reference to the former British Protectorate Somaliland, which declared independence from Somalia in the 1990s, but has yet to achieve recognition by the United Nations.

In February 2024, Steve Brown gave a talk on Portugal with plenty of information regarding good holiday destinations. He was able to draw on his considerable personal experience of Portuguese places.

In March, David Dean gave a presentation on Cambodia, drawing again on his experience of his time spent there.

We ended in June with a talk on Austria, another country having a general election this year.

There will certainly be plenty to discuss and learn about in the coming 12 months with further important elections coming up.

---



### **ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART GROUP – Leader: Liz Robinson**

This course ran for 10 months over the last year.

We looked at the changes brought by the Renaissance, such as perspective and individualistic figures. We considered the big names from Giotto to Michelangelo and looked in depth at their greatest works.

We also looked at the role of art in political life and considered the role of patrons.

---

### **LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION GROUP – Leader: Win Conway**

The nine sessions this year have covered three topics.

The first was names – the importance of naming a child, and the ceremonies surrounding it, which led to surnames, what they mean, how they came to be adopted both in this country and abroad and the various ways in which they are passed on through the generations.

Next we took a philosophical turn and considered the question of Language and thought. Do we think in words? How do animals think without words? This led on to the whole issue of intelligence. What is it? Can it be measured etc? We even tried our brain power on a few 11+ type questions, for fun.

Finally, we took on the topic of the language used regarding half the human race – woman! We began by studying the language used (then and now) about the single woman, formerly, ‘the spinster,’ and we went on to look at the position of woman in Victorian society, then in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We read articles from a 1905 edition of the ‘Times’, and one from the first edition of ‘Woman’s Own,’ in 1932, and looked at the images of the ideal woman perpetrated following the Festival of Britain exhibition of 1951. Finally, we studied copies of women’s magazines today to see what image of woman is put forward as the ideal.

None of us measured up, of course, because she is young, radiant, successful and above all slim, slim, slim. It has been a whole lot of thought- provoking fun.

---

### **LINE DANCING GROUP Leader: Jeanne Kelly**

This group has had to close as Janet Malloy, our teacher, has on-going issues with her health. Before that we met mostly twice a month at Triangle Annex, having moved from Queen’s Park café earlier in the year.

Average attendance was 11 per session. Line dancing proved to be both mentally and physically challenging, but great fun.

If we can find another teacher we will try to re-establish this group.

---

### **LOCAL HISTORY – Leader: Joan Blunsdon**

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month -. We had eight meetings during 2023/2024 –

The meetings included a visit to the newly refurbished Central Library; a talk about the WWII project which we ultimately decided not to get involved in, but we did continue to WWII in Bolton at a later meeting.

Group Leader, Joan Blunsdon, experienced some family health problems and we were very grateful for Maggy Simms for leading some of the meetings.

Unfortunately, no one from the group was willing to take over as Group Leader on a permanent basis, so the group closed at the end of June 2024.

---

### **MAH JONG – Leader: Chris Druck**

The group started in January and has now grown to 14 members.

Some members had played previously but half of the group are new to the game. There are many minor variations on how the game is played so there has been some negotiations on our u3a rules.

New players are always welcome.

---

### **MATHS GROUP – Leader: Pat Todd**

This is still a lively and interested group which has been running since November 2017. Consequently, many topics have been revisited from previous years, often with a new slant. In the last year we have worked on:-

Algebra; thinking in 3-D; ratio; trigonometry of all triangles; calculating in binary numbers; calculating a value for pi (as it was first found); indices, sets and Venn diagrams; permutations and combinations; primes and their uses; and (from statistics) lines of best fit, mean, median, mode and standard deviation.

We would be delighted to welcome new members.

It is not as frightening as you may have found it to be at school!

---

### **MINDFULNESS GROUP - Leader: Annie Jones**

Both the mindfulness and reading groups have continued to meet on Zoom, and we're finding that this works well for everyone, for a variety of reasons.

The Mindfulness group has continued to meet on alternate Mondays at 1pm, using my zoom account. Each meeting lasts around an hour. Membership has remained stable, and there are usually between 5 and 8 group members present for the meetings. These involve a short presentation / discussion about some aspect of mindfulness, and at least two mindfulness practices. We continue to explore the benefits of meditation in managing stress in daily life, particularly in those situations we are powerless to change. I continue to maintain contact, mostly by email with group members, and also occasionally through phone calls and WhatsApp messaging.

New members are welcome – there's no need to have any previous experience of mindfulness.

---

### **MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP - Leader: Win Conway**

The composer we have studied over the sessions since September, has been Felix Mendelssohn, (1809 – 47) whose music has delighted audiences ever since his untimely death at the age of 38.

Born into a German Jewish family, famous on both sides for its intellectual and musical achievements, as well as for its enormous wealth and influence, the young Mendelssohn was blessed not only with the silver spoon in his mouth, but with a prodigious musical talent arguably as great as that of the child Mozart some 50 years before him.

No composer, except perhaps Handel, has been as successful and lauded in his own lifetime. He was the Musical Director of the great Gewandhaus concert Hall in Leipzig, (where his memorial statue stands to this day), the friend of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and the darling of the Birmingham Choral society, for which he wrote the Oratorio, 'Elijah,' he nevertheless died of overwork, before he had time to relax and live in peace and plenty with his beloved wife and five children.

Learning about this extraordinary background, and listening to a selection of his wonderful music, has kept us well occupied.

One session however took us outside our Mendelssohn syllabus, and into the world of Russian music. This was because the group was scheduled for an outing to the Bridgewater Hall in January, to hear a concert of music by Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich.

This very special concert, played not only by the Halle Orchestra but with the Halle Youth Orchestra playing alongside, resulted in an exciting and exhilarating event. We hope to repeat such an experience in the future.

---

### **MUSICAL CHOICE GROUP**

Unfortunately, this group was discontinued during the year through lack of numbers attending.

If any member would consider re-starting the group, perhaps on a different day or time, please contact the groups' co-ordinator to discuss it further.

---

### **NORDIC WALKING GROUP - Leader: Lynn Gray**

This group is temporarily in abeyance as Lynn has, reluctantly, not renewed her membership of u3a for personal and family reasons.

We thank her for all her efforts in running this group.

---

### **PATCHWORK AND QUILTING GROUP – Leader: Pauline Treuherz**

After an informal meeting at the Olympus restaurant in May, the group met for the first time in June 2024.

A small but enthusiastic number of attendees explored some possibilities for products using a number of skills, some of which were new, and others were old favourites revisited.

Some group members have brought their own projects whilst others are working on a small project set by the group leader; materials and equipment are provided and there is technical support for those who need it.

The members enjoy working on their own projects in an informal and relaxed setting and, hopefully, we will grow our numbers in the months to come.

---

### **PHILOSOPHY GROUP – Leader: Carole Collins**

The members of the Philosophy Group have continued to have lively discussions in the 2023/2024 sessions.

The average attendance has been 15 and we have been grateful to Nick Tyldesley who took 2 sessions on Chinese Philosophy.

Philosophers covered during the year by Carole were the Indian philosophers Avicenna and Averroes; the Ancient Greek philosopher; Thomas Aquinas; Descartes; Ryle; Quine; Singer; Hannah Arendt; Sam Harris; John Rawls and Daniel Dennet.

Although several members have been attending the group for many years, new members are always welcome.

### **PILATES GROUP - Leaders: Janet Thatcher and Jeanne Kelly**

Although the group quickly filled when first announced, the numbers attending were much smaller. The group met weekly at Westhoughton Hub from September until May. In early Autumn there were 10 to 15 participants; in late Autumn and early Spring the numbers fell to between 6 and 9 and from March to May only 3 or 4 attended, so the group was disbanded when our teacher was offered another job at the time that we met.

One problem was that our teacher started at an easy level that all could manage. As the weeks went by, she gradually made the exercises a little more demanding. This was fine for those attending every week but was problematic for those wanting to start after a few months when vacancies were announced and for those who had a long break either because they went abroad for winter sun for several weeks or because illness or hospital treatment forced the break.

---

### **POETRY FOR PLEASURE - Leader: Lynn Gray**

This group is temporarily in abeyance as Lynn has, reluctantly, not renewed her membership of u3a for personal and family reasons.

We thank her for all her efforts in running this group.

It is hoped that this group will continue, perhaps in a different format.

---

### **PSYCHOLOGY GROUP – Leader: Brenda Maciejowicz**

The Group lost its experienced leader, Brenda, in November 2023 as she had relocated to Kendal. There was not an obvious replacement and Brenda suggested we appoint a coordinator to arrange future topics for meetings.

Members were invited to share their experiences, and to take turns to lead future meetings.

Steve Brown volunteered to act as coordinator for the Group.

During 2024, the Group has discussed a variety of topics covering psychology of work; the secret of happiness; The 7 Deadly Sins; psychology of sport; psychology of the news; the deserving poor and memory loss.

The last topic involved a presentation from Bolton University personnel and may lead to the Group being involved with the University's research into this topic in the future.

---

### **QUIZ GROUP – Leader: Michael Haworth**

The Group has continued to meet monthly at The Hub. It has flourished over the last year to the point that, with regular attendances exceeding 30, we had to put a stop on new members joining.

Consequently, this was the reason for a second Quiz Group being formed and meeting on a different day and venue with a different Group Leader.

I continue to have been fortunate in having four other Question Master teams to assist in the running of the Friday Group, and this has ensured a wider variety of the types of questions being asked of the participants. So, my thanks go to Tony, Lorraine & Norman, Chris & Duncan and to Patsy and Paul.

We like to think that we live up to the u3a ethos of 'Live, Laugh and Love'

---

### **READING GROUP – Leader: Annie Jones**

The Reading Group members agreed last year that the group has worked well on Zoom, and we decided to continue with this indefinitely.

We continue to meet on the third Thursday in each month at 10.30am. There are usually 4 or 5 members at each meeting from a possible 6.

In October 2024, we chose the books to read during 2025, to make it easier for group members to obtain copies in good time – see list below.

We've tackled some long and challenging books this year – e.g. 'David Copperfield' and 'Demon Copperhead'. We've also read some interesting non-fiction, most recently 'Moderate, Becoming Good Later', by Toby Carr and Katie Carr, which most people found quite moving.

We've got a similarly eclectic set of books to read over the coming year. Once again, we've chosen a mix of fiction and non-fiction. We've chosen Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men', because we're provisionally planning a group outing to the Octagon to see the dramatization of this next year.

Again, new members are welcome.

20/02/25	Charlotte Bronte	Jane Eyre
----------	------------------	-----------

20/03/25	John Steinbeck	Of Mice and Men
17/04/2025	Pema Chodron	When Things Fall Apart
15/05/2025	Ann Napolitano	Hello Beautiful
19/06/2025	Clive Myrie	Everything is Everything: A Memoir of Love, Hate & Hope
17/07/2025	Jennie Godfrey	The List of Suspicious Things
21/08/2025	Ta-Nehisi Coates	The Water Dancer
18/09/2025	Rory Stewart	The Places In Between
16/10/2025	Sandra Newman	Julia: 1984
20/11/2025	Pat Barker	The Voyage Home
18/12/2025	Kate Atkinson	Death At The Sign of The Rook
15/01/2026	Jessie Burton	The House of Fortune

Next year's programme begins in February, because we decided to discuss Min Jin Lee's 'Free Food For Millionaires' over two months rather than just in one meeting. It's a long and complex book, which most people enjoyed. That meant, though, that this year's programme won't finish until January 2025 rather than in December.

---

### **RUMMIKUB AND SCRABBLE - Leaders Tony Settle and Nellie Platt**

This group continues to be popular and has seen new members over the last 12 months.

The addition of mah-jong at the same session has been beneficial. It has allowed several members to choose which game they would like to play and thus giving variety to the group members.

The lively atmosphere, which is indicative of friendly competition, allows for development and fun at the same time.

---

### **SINGING FOR PLEASURE GROUP – Leader: Paul Dyson, Musical Director: Win Conway**

The group has continued to meet twice a month (plus a couple of extra rehearsals) in the Seminar Room of Claremont Church, where we enjoy the excellent facilities as well as the help and support of their administrator, Bill Mason.

We entered our second Bolton Choirs Festival in March at Victoria Hall and again enjoyed the experience, some of us for the first time on such a stage – 23 of our members took part. The aim of the festival is to encourage choral singing in the Bolton area and a considerable variety of choirs participate. It is not a competitive event but one where each choir does its best and can learn from its own and the other performances. As last year the adjudicator, Stuart Overington, director of the Halle Youth Choir, gave us an encouraging evaluation as well as a couple of things to think about for the future.

Taking heart from this appearance our MD, Win Conway, enthusiastically rehearsed us for an end of year concert at the June Monthly Meeting – our first ‘in public’ since before the pandemic. Her programme offered a concise history of England in eleven varied songs including a mediaeval round, sea shanties, a narrative ballad and two spirituals. Win had also composed an informative commentary accompanied by a slide presentation. Ted Wisedale kindly made a video of the concert, which may appear on the Bolton u3a website.

We have had some turnover of members this year but finished about the same size as we started. New singers are welcome in all four voices. 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.

---

### **TABLE TENNIS GROUP – Leader: Christine Hart**

This group started on 27<sup>th</sup> September and the number of people enjoying this activity has increased since we began.

The group’s members are aware of its health benefits such as improved co-ordination, balance, concentration and the exercise the game provides.

In addition, we must remember that there are the social and team interactions, and fun and laughter during the session too.

New members are most welcome to visit to see what goes on and will be welcomed if they decide to join us and give table tennis a try.

Rest assured that it is not treated too seriously!

---

### **TRIPS AND OUTINGS: Leader – Julie Beaman**



Our ad-hoc group had its first trip this year in July to Port Sunlight where we enjoyed a guided coach tour around the village and learned about William Hesketh Lever, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Leverhulme, his connection to Bolton and his philanthropic work and liberal ideals.

Our next trip is on 28<sup>th</sup> November to York St. Nicholas Fair and Christmas Markets.

Currently, we block book seats on pre-arranged 'Tasos Coach Tours', based at the Olympus Restaurant.

Our average attendee number is 33 which we feel precludes us from arranging our own trips due to the high cost of independent coach hire.

---

### **TOPICAL SCIENCE GROUP – Leader: Rosemary Ashworth**

The aim of the Group is to give a background to a wide variety of scientific news items and topics of interest. No specific specialised knowledge is needed as the aim is to cover any background required for further understanding. Very important is 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. Then we study topics in more detail (see below).

Topics covered over the year have also included: -

- Scientific News over the Summer
- Microplastics
- The National Grid
- Greenwashing
- The Earth – past, present and future, including new research
- New thoughts about BMI, Alcohol Consumption, kcal Counting etc.
- Science happenings to look out for in 2024
- Heat Pumps
- The Sea – temperatures, levels, impact on climate, deep sea mining, carbon dioxide and oxygen levels
- Hydrogen in the gas supply and sources of natural hydrogen
- The Effect of Road-run Offs
- Vaping
- Scientific Techniques in Archeology
- Extremophiles – their uses; implications for life on other planets or moons
- Latest research on:- New Blood Groups; Carbon Capture; Tinnitus and Deafness; Use of AI by Met Office

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 average of 10 members this year.

We always welcome new faces.

---

**WALKABOUT GROUP – Leader: Joan Blunsdon**

Unfortunately, this group was closed early in the year.

Plans are afoot to start a couple of walking groups in the Spring with new leaders.