learn, laugh, live

u3a

Message from the chair – Juliet Hancox

Welcome to the latest edition of *The Sentinel*, our local u3a newsletter.
As the clocks have gone back and the nights are drawing in, Christmas will soon be upon us! To help us get into the festive spirit, we have planned a special **20th Anniversary Brass Band Concert** for u3a members on **Sunday 13th December at 2pm** in St Peter's Church. Please put the date in your diaries and look out for booking details nearer the time. The concert will include Christmas carols for us all to sing along to, so it promises to be a lovely way to celebrate the season together.
A quick reminder that we will be holding a brief **Special General Meeting** at **2pm on Thursday 5th November**, before our usual monthly meeting. This is an opportunity for members to formally approve the proposed membership fees for 2027. Afterwards, we will welcome musicians and folk singers Julie and Steve Wigley, who will entertain us with their own take on songs and stories inspired by autumn and winter.
Finally, don't forget to book your tickets for our **Race Night on Friday 27th November**, hosted by Mick Gill at the Village Hall. Please visit our website for the booking link. It promises to be a fun evening, so I hope many of you will join us!
I look forward to seeing you at one of our forthcoming events.

Quick intro from the editor – Lisa Truslove

Hello from your new editor and thank you for welcoming me into the u3a community. Juliet asked me if I would help with the Sentinel and here I am, following on from many previous diligent editors, I hope that I can do as well as they did.

I have lived in Balsall Common for around 11 years having moved here from the Nuneaton and Coventry areas. I worked throughout my career in science based industries, starting in a research lab in Scotland and ending up as a sales trainer for a medical diagnostic company. At the heart of it, I'm a professional sales person.
Being in medical diagnostics, I have been able to travel extensively paid for by the company I was working for, sounds glamorous, in reality it wasn't.

I look forward to working with you all and to receiving your insights and reports on the events you either organise yourself or attend, it's all interesting stuff and people love to read them.
Cherish your yesterdays, dream your tomorrows but live your todays!!

Race Night – Mick Gill

Calling all race enthusiasts....
Just a reminder about our Race Night in November.
There are still places which can be reserved by completing the online booking form on the Balsall Common website reached via the "What's On" page or by using the link below.

https://balsallcommon.u3asite.uk/race-night/



RACE NIGHT



FRIDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

BALSALL COMMON VILLAGE HALL
6.30pm for 7.00pm start
£5 per person

To include Race Card and Free Raffle Ticket with Quality Prizes

Tote Betting Odds with £1 Bets

Save your £1 coins, bring your own food and drink and come and enjoy an evening of the thrills of real horse races on the big screen.



Come join the fun
Mick

20th anniversary celebration Lunch Group Cynthia Bennett



In September, some members of the coffee/lunch group met for coffee, tea and cakes at McKees Brasserie. The gathering was held to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Balsall Common u3a, the groups were originally created by **Peter Driffield**, a founder member. Peter is sadly no longer with us but will always be remembered.

We were served a proper afternoon tea, with cake stands used to display the beautiful cakes, and china was provided for the beverages. This all seemed most appropriate for such a celebration and we all enjoyed the event.

The lunch group continues to be popular, as the group remains at capacity.







Theatre group – Richard Drake

So far we have had a pretty good year of trips to our local theatres. We have 2 to go. If any of you who aren't booked would like to join us you can still book direct if seats are still available.
I'm starting to look ahead to 2027 but so far, the programmes aren't complete.
If you are interested in future visits and aren't yet a member, check the Group out here Theatre Visits - Balsall Common

Although I won't do bookings for them, there are a couple of Christmas related shows at the Old Joint Stock in Birmingham that we have previously booked for ourselves

Sleigh Miserables - The Ultimate Musical Theatre and Christmas Cabaret - We're booked for Saturday 19th December Evening

Miracle 2026 We're booked for Monday 21st December Evening

These are normally good fun, reasonable value and the OJS is a good pub not far from New Street and backs on to The Wellington if you want an alternative venue for a drink.

Seen	Play	Theatre (both Kenilworth)	Genre
February	The Unfriend	The Talisman	Comedy/Farce
February	Jane Eyre	The Priory	"Gothic masterpiece!"
April	Come From Away	The Priory	"Joyous, life-affirming musical"
April	Backstairs Billy	The Talisman	"Irreverent Comedy"
May	A Streetcar Named Desire (Tennessee Williams classic)	The Talisman	"Passion. Desire. Madness. Survival"
May	Witness For The Prosecution	The Priory	Agatha Christie Classic
June	Rock Of Ages	The Talisman	"A Juke Box Romp"
July	Stepping Out	The Priory	Tap Dancing Play
August	Bleak Expectations	The Talisman	"Mischief, mayhem and darkly comic chaos "
September	Goodnight Mr Tom	The Priory	Well Known Play Set in WW2
October	The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time	The Talisman	"Uplifting Drama"
Booked			
28th October	When Darkness Falls	The Priory	Ghost Story
4th November	Gaslight	The Talisman	Victorian Drama

Classical Music Group – Alan Buckland

The Classical Music group continues to be well-supported with a steady stream of new members. The programmes are extremely varied and demonstrate a wide interpretation of the term "classical music", as can be appreciated by a survey of some recent sessions. At the most recent meeting, Leslie de Chernatony introduced "A diverse collection of beautiful music" and that is exactly what we heard. Leslie talked entertainingly about the background and inspiration for the pieces, which ranged over 300 years and included works by Bach, Berlioz, Mozart and Vivaldi. He concluded with the marvellous, haunting Concierto de Aranjuez. Written for guitar by Joaquin Rodrigo, it is by far his most popular work, despite the fact that Rodrigo, an accomplished instrumentalist, could not play the guitar.

At the September meeting, Gwen Sands, our Co-ordinator, presented a programme of "Unplayed Melodies" – otherwise popular and notable pieces that had not featured in meetings in recent years. These included Beethoven's Fifth, Haydn's very short Symphony No 2 in C major (not even 10 minutes long), excerpts from symphonies by Mahler and Shostakovich (rather more accessible than you may think), a "Boccherini" Flute Concerto (in inverted commas because, in reality, someone else wrote it). The session concluded with Mussorgsky's wonderful Great Gate of Kiev from Pictures at an Exhibition. It has a certain significance and topicality at present. For those who might not be familiar with the piece, please make a point of listening to it, at high volume. At this same meeting Gwen very kindly brought in cakes by way of celebration of the 20th Anniversary.

For something completely different, in August Liz Cowley regaled us with a fascinating review of brass band music. She talked about the make-up of the band, the role of the different instruments and the arcane world of brass band competitions. Her diverse playlist included two particularly melodic and emotional pieces - La Califfa by Ennio Morricone (a prolific composer, but best known for his spaghetti western music) played on soprano cornet and the Pearl Fishers duet by Bizet played by two euphoniums. Liz even brought along a range of instruments so that members could attempt to get some sort of sound out of them for themselves. The session gave us a great insight into brass bands and most of us went away knowing an awful lot more than we had two hours earlier.

At an earlier session June Reader introduced a programme very much of two halves. The first part was a selection of great operatic arias, with June setting the scene for each one. For many of us, several of the pieces evoked a reaction of, "I know and love that tune but can't be sure which opera it comes from or who wrote it." The second half consisted of music associated with the natural world and threats to the planet. It was something of a tribute to Sir David Attenborough, and included music from the Blue Planet series.An eclectic mix indeed, but very representative of the range of topics and music presented and enjoyed by members of the group. New members are very welcome and will be given every opportunity to suggest and introduce new and different topics, if they wish. We meet on the last Wednesday of the month at 2.00 pm in Blessed Robert Grissold Church Hall.

Classical Music Appreciation - Balsall Common

Curry Club – Marie Louise Marsden



The curry club is now in the 3rd year and still enjoy our monthly Curries at either Sumatrah or Tamarind. As you can see from the photo, the event is well attended and everyone enjoys both the food and the conversation of the members, it's a well-attended evening out

We have welcomed many new members but also have many regulars!
Do contact me if you would like to join us on the last Weds of the month.

Marie-Louise Marsden

Want to join a reading group?

Currently our reading groups have a wait list, if you want to join a reading group and are OK to travel, please find information from another u3a group with space for new readers. Solihull Widney u3a and the co-ordinator for the group Square Heads, Gladys Pye has contacted us with the information below.

We are a slightly different book group and we have been going for almost twenty years. We do not meet monthly as the books we choose may be long and appear challenging, or shorter, but may require some thinking about. We meet in each other's homes on a day and time which is agreed in advance, depending on members' commitments. Recently, it has been on a Tuesday morning and around every six weeks or so.

We read a wide range of books, from any era, any country, any topic and it can be fact or fiction. Currently, we are reading "From a Mountain in Tibet" by a lama who had to flee from the Chinese in Tibet at the age of 15 and after various experiences is now at a monastery in Scotland. Other examples are War and Peace, Midnight's Children, The Odyssey. You can see how wide a range we cover. We decide together which we want to read.

It is possible to attend a group in another u3a as an associate member for a nominal sum. This is necessary for insurance purposes, e.g. if a mug of coffee was spilled on a member's new pale carpet!

Please share this information with your members.
Gladys Pye
https://solihullwidney.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/square-heads

Did you know? - Vivienne Waterer

If you are looking for something interesting but find it difficult to travel, did you know that there are many virtual interest groups delivered via zoom. Interest Groups Online (IGO) is the u3a movement's national online community – a virtual u3a where members can learn, share and socialise from wherever they are. Like all u3a activities, IGO groups are member-led and member-run, creating friendly, informal spaces to explore interests and learn together.

What IGO Offers

A wide range of interest groups, covering subjects such as languages, history, music, literature, science, creative writing, technology and much more. Many groups are interactive, and members are encouraged to take turns sharing skills, leading discussions or presenting topics that interest them. The ethos is informal learning for fun and shared fulfilment, not for qualifications or taught courses.

IGO members also have access to u3a's broader national online learning programme, which includes additional talks, workshops and competitions open to all u3a and IGO members.

u3a - Interest Groups Online

Photography Group -

Reflections competition judged by Van Greaves 27 Aug 2026- amendment
Apologies to the winners, one of the groups was missed from the last announcement

Prints - Adams

	title	by
First	Splash Down	Anne Watkinson
Second	Winter Calm	Anne Watkinson
Third	Coffee Break	Pam Martin

Prints - Leibovitz

	title	by
First	A Light Breakfast	John Hayes
Second	To Crow Island and Cat Bells	Angela Reid
Third	Egret	John Hayes

Projected images - Adams

	title	by
First	Centenary Square	Karen Coates
Second	Ladybower Reservoir	Roy Chambers
Third	Outside Looking In	Andy Roe

Projected images - Leibovitz

	title	by
First	Bath Reflection	Leslie de Chernatony
Second	NY	Kaushalya Rihal
Third	Loughrigg Tarn Reflections	Angela Reid

Well done to the winners once again

What's on

Date	Where	Event
1st October 2pm	St Peter's Hall	Monthly Meeting - Judge, Jury, Judgement, Justice -- Alan Cutler
1st 2nd Mondays	Xcel Leisure Centre in Canley	U3A Swimming sessions continue on the first and second Mondays of October, November and December.
3rd November	Berkswell Bear Inn	20th Anniversary Ramble
5th November 2:00 pm	St Peters Hall	Monthly Meeting - Songs and Stories of the Season (Autumn and Winter) -- Steve and Julie Wigley
27th November 2026 7:00 pm	Village Hall	U3A Race Night
Thursday Mornings @ 10am and 11.15am	Village Hall	Chair and Mat Pilates Classes
4th November	The Talisman Theatre	Gaslight - Theatre Group
2nd December 8:30 am to 3rd December	Visit to Thursford Christmas Spectacular	**Cost:** From £280.00 **Booking Required with out and about group**