

**May 2025**

 *Letter from the Chair:*

Hello everybody. Thanks to this fabulous May weather I am once again writing this in my lovely garden. I hope you are all enjoying the sunshine as much as I am.

It was good to see so many interested people at the A.G.M. on 8th May. Thanks, as ever, to all the members who helped to organize this and make it the success it was. Marian had found another excellent speaker and Sally chose wisely with her cake selection. Thank you. And... who knew there are so many varieties of bee in this country? It is always good to learn something new.

I do have two things I especially wish to say:

The first is to do with our social meetings and is a problem so easily solved... but only if I am made aware that there is a problem. On more than one occasion I have been approached at the end of the meeting to be informed that the member in question had been unable to hear the questions and answers at the end of the talk. It is utterly pointless, obviously, to tell me this after the session has finished. Why not simply raise a hand, say you cannot hear, and we will go from there. If nobody does this I will naturally assume everyone is happy.

The second topic is, as seems to be so often, the problem of volunteers. We are really struggling to find members who are willing to be part of the committee. Without the requisite members of the committee the Church Stretton branch of the u3a will fold and we will no longer have our interest groups and social events to enjoy. Many people do offer their help and head up interest groups or serve on the committee. Many people have done these important roles in the past. It is the responsibility of each member to keep the whole enterprise going... not someone else's responsibility. I feel strongly about this because I enjoy the groups I attend and appreciate the friends I have made. It was for this reason that I volunteered two years ago to be Chair when Lesley Dench, after many years, decided to resign. I was not at all confident at first, but all the members helped me to settle into this role. I am not intending to do it forever though ... maybe two more years maximum, so then we shall be in the same position as when I first joined the u3a.

We have had a very good start to the 2025-2026 year with 228 members renewing their subscription out of a total of 278 members, so there is obviously an active interest in this branch of the u3a. We are required, in our constitution, to have four Honorary Officers. We have only three. We do not have a Vice Chair and we must have this fourth role filled ... please. We also need a Publicity Officer to make sure Church Stretton u3a is advertised locally and to ensure members receive up-to-date news. There is room on the committee for ten members and we only have six, with Sylvia Davidson taking a back seat in preparation for retiring at the 2026 A.G.M. I make no apology for constantly stressing the need for volunteers. I assume everyone understands exactly why I need to do this. Your u3a needs YOU!

Finally, we have the summer ahead of us, always a fabulous time of year for our interests outside as well as in. I hope you all enjoy it and continue to help make Church Stretton u3a a successful and happy institution.

Best wishes, Janie Davis (Chair).



### Next social meeting:

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2pm: "Edward Elgar – the composer you thought you knew" – Richard Westwood Brooks**

Elgar is as much an Enigma as his famous Variations – this talk seeks to introduce him in a way that most people don't recognise. Many people think of him as a sort of Nationalistic composer of 'Land of Hope and Glory' – but be prepared to be surprised.

URC Hall, refreshments provided, members free and visitors welcome £2



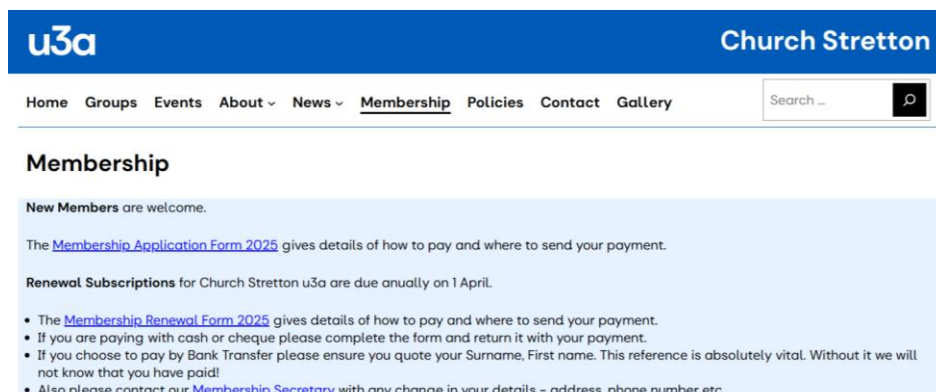
### Next coffee hour:

**23<sup>rd</sup> June, 10:00am in the Health and Wellbeing Centre's cafe**

Please drop in to chat with a u3a member about our current interest groups and social meetings or just join us for coffee. Open to members, new members and prospective members.

## **Membership Renewal – Final Call:**

Subscriptions for Church Stretton u3a were due on 1st April 2025. Lapsed status comes into effect on 1st June. The annual subscription remains at £12 per person (£5 for full members of other u3a Branches) for the coming year.



You can also drop-in to our Coffee Hour session to pay your subscription.

## **Group News:**

### Proposed New Group



A new member has suggested a **Lunch Group** ... if you are interested use *Contact Details* below to find out more.

### Rusty Spanish Group

Hola, ¿te gusta España? ¿Quieres aprender español? Bueno, ahora tenemos un grupo de español u3a.

The new Spanish group has now met for a handful of times and is proving popular as its existence becomes known.

All of the current group members have 'some' history of speaking Spanish, although this may be decades ago and only to a very basic level. So the current format of the group's meetings is based very loosely around the mid-1980's BBC beginner's course - Espana Viva . The videos are still available on Youtube, which we watch together, and the course books can be picked up online for just a few pounds. This gives us a focus for practicing phrases and vocabulary either together or, for the keen ones, at home.

The aim of the group is to chat, so there's a fair bit of Spanglish at the moment, and to have fun, so we always play a game where we can practice some of the vocabulary.

To begin with we intended to meet once a fortnight but we have decided that the group will now meet weekly where possible. In this way it won't matter too much if someone misses a session.

Originally we were 4 but have since grown to 7, which we agree is the practical maximum size given the format of the group sessions. Consequently, there is a growing waiting list of those who would like to participate. So there is probably enough demand for a second Rusty Spanish group, should anyone wish to start one, to cater for all those Church Stretton u3a members heading off to Tenerife, the Costas or wherever.

Group Leader Andy White - Contact Andy by using *Contact Details* below

 *List of Current Groups and Leaders:*

| <b>Group</b>            | <b>Leader</b>   | <b>Group</b>             | <b>Leader</b>   |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Art                     | Mary Leckey     | New Experiences          | Dave Lyons      |
| Art History             | Sue Toghill     | Philosophy               | David Howard    |
| Book Group              | Susan Lees      | Poetry Appreciation      | Margaret Ramage |
| Bridge                  | Eric Brown      | Popular Music            | Steve Moore     |
| Cryptic Crosswords      | Trevor Halsey   | Scottish Country Dancing | Alison Bradley  |
| Family & Social History | Pauline Lockley | Singing for Pleasure     | Ru Trew         |
| Folk Music Appreciation | Tess Moore      | Spanish (Rusty)          | Andy White      |
| French – Rusty          | Jean Cuthbert   | Tai Chi                  | Lesley Dench    |
| Friday Walking          | Carol Lyons     | The Stretton 'Inklings'  | Barbara Vickery |
| Hill Walking            | Roger Spittles  | Writers' Group 1         | Lesley Dench    |
| Mahjong                 | Peter Toghill   | Writers' Group 2         | Jenny O'Shea    |

On our website <https://churchstretton.u3asite.uk/>

 Go to the Contacts page to send a message to our Groups Coordinator, Sally Serpell, for information, help and advice.

OR

 Go to the Groups page, select the relevant Group to send a message to the Coordinator.

### *NATIONAL and WEST MIDLANDS:*

There is a wealth of news and information about u3as across the UK – with 1,000+ u3as and over 450,000 members.

These two websites will give you access:

[u3a.org.uk/](http://u3a.org.uk/) (National)

[u3asites.org.uk/west-midlands/home](http://u3asites.org.uk/west-midlands/home) (Regional)

Also

The *u3a Friends newsletter* shares news, learning opportunities and member stories from across the u3a movement.

Signing up to the newsletter means you are up to date and in touch with all that's happening across the movement as it happens. You'll also gain exclusive access to our Friends Extra website - a range of offers, discounts and services.

Sign up at [u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter](http://u3a.org.uk/news/newsletter).

### *Contact Details:*

Contact any committee member; find the latest group news or to contact a group leader; send updates and news from groups and comments on recent events -

- through our website <https://churchstretton.u3asite.uk/>
- by email [strettonu3a at yahoo.com](mailto:strettonu3a@yahoo.com) (Sylvia Davidson)

Your input will be appreciated.

### *Committee:*

- Chair - Janie Davis
- **Vice Chair - Vacancy**
- Treasurer - Malcolm Szortowski
- Secretary - Rachel Finch-Lees
- Membership Secretary - Tess Moore
- Groups Coordinator - Sally Serpell
- General Meetings Organiser - Marian White
- Web Manager - Marian White
- **Publicity Officer - Vacancy**

Due to retire

- Data Manager - Sylvia Davidson