

Stroud u3a SEPTEMBER NEWS

Welcome

Welcome to all those who have recently joined Stroud and District u3a. Wherever you're from, you're very welcome and we look forward to meeting you soon. If you need any assistance, please contact [Dilys Warren](#), our new member liaison.

NEWS

Dates for your Diary

- **September 22nd:** 10.30 Coffee morning at Egypt Mill, Nailsworth **[[NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE, FOR THIS MONTH ONLY]]**
- **October 1st:** Lansdown Hall, 2.30: Monthly meeting: Liz Davenport, Woodchester Mansion - Opening the Treasure Box (Details in a separate article, here).
- **October 15th:** Deadline for submission of articles to this newsletter
- **October 16th-17th: 7.30pm**, Oakridge Lynch Village Hall: 'Arsenic and Old Lace' performed by the Lewiston Players (Stroud u3a Drama Group)
- **October 20th:** Publication of the October newsletter
- **October 27th:** Coffee morning . **LOCATION TBC**
- **November 12th: 2.00-4.30** , Lansdown Hall, Stroud u3a AGM

Lansdown Talks

October 1st: Liz Davenport on Woodchester Mansion - Opening the Treasure Chest

A peek at a Victorian family and their mansion through surviving letters.

The unfinished Woodchester Mansion, near Stroud, was built for the wealthy Roman Catholic convert William Leigh. As a Neo-Gothic mansion, it was an on-trend example of mid-19th-century architectural design that drew on the talents of Augustus Pugin, Charles Hansom and Benjamin Bucknall.

In 2005 a collection of Leigh family memorabilia was discovered in the attic of a house in Brighton. Comprising letters, photographs, accounts and some books, it casts light on this interesting Victorian family. Volunteer mansion archivist Liz Davenport will be delving into this collection and exploring the extended Leigh family, their problems and their accomplishments, and travel across the globe.

By opening up this treasure chest, Liz will be able to answer many unanswered questions surrounding this unique family and ambitious building project.

Liz Davenport has been a volunteer at Woodchester Mansion for more than 20 years and is also a trustee. She has written a comprehensive guide to the history of the Mansion.

To book your place, visit <https://stroud.u3asite.uk/events/> or email the [Bookings secretary](#)

November 12th: AGM and Jenny Dunford on "Bringing History Alive through Reenactment"

A not-to-be-missed date for your diary! In addition to the official business there will be drinks (including mulled wine), and a living history presentation of life in the English Civil War ("off with their heads"?).

The *English Civil War Society* has been "bringing history alive" by presenting re-enactments since the 1970s. This talk is an invitation to look behind the scenes. It's about what the society does and who the re-enactors are.

There will be "props" on display for you to look at, as you come in and as you sip your mulled wine, and, yes, re-enactors in period dress. (There will be no live firing of cannons or guns during this event!)

Annual membership

If you haven't renewed your membership in recent weeks, it was due on 1st September- eg NOW! You should have had a message from the Treasurer Sylvia Pearse which explains the situation and tells you how much to pay and how to pay it. If you haven't seen it, it may be worth checking in your junk email box. To ensure you don't lapse, please find this email (or letter if you don't use email), and if you can't find it then contact [Sylvia](#) who will explain how to pay your annual fees (still just £12!).

OTHER NEWS

Arsenic and Old Lace

Prepare to die of laughter as the mad Brewster family bring Brooklyn to wild and crazy Oakridge Lynch. Imagine dear old ladies receiving a shocking visitation.

Enjoy the bar, but don't get trapped in the choir loft with the vicar's daughter. The Stroud u3a Drama Group (AKA the Lewiston Players) put the fun into dysfunctional, so don't go clutching your pearls. Pearl Harbor is about to happen and nobody knows what the President of the United States will do next. You'd be mad to miss it...

Lewiston Players will perform 'Arsenic and Old Lace,' by Joseph Kesselring, at 7.30pm on Friday 16 and Saturday 17 October, at Oakridge Lynch Village Hall GL6 7NZ

£10. Tickets on Eventbrite OR by phone 07833 770117. Bar from 7pm and during interval.

Half of any profits will be donated to Stroud and District Food Bank.

u3a Week

It's national u3a week Sept 19th-27th. We are marking it with a banner campaign on the railings outside Waitrose, and on Saturday 26th, will hand out leaflets to likely people as they walk by. I'd like to have a couple of people doing shifts of an hour or so, through the day. Very informal as we won't have a table. If you can spare an hour or two, please let me know. [Peter Furtado](#)

First Aid

Time to start planning a firm date for the next First Aid Course. This is a 2-3 hour course about the basics for saving life in event of accidents.

First Aid is no longer about how to tie bandages - it's about more immediate steps. The course includes practice with CPR ("stayin' alive, stayin' alive") and use of a defibrillator. Contact me, [Richard Bedford](#), to get your name on my list. I need a minimum of 12 attending to call in the Red Cross! And they can handle up to 20.

Rodborough Playgroup Committee

Would anyone be interested in joining the committee of this long-running playgroup that operates out of Rodborough Tabernacle, GL5 3UJ?

Without a sustainable management committee they may have to close, which would obviously be a huge shame. There is a full staff of professional childcare workers, and committee members primarily have a management, financial and fundraising role. Retired people with business/management/education experience, or willing to learn those things with the support of the existing chair, would be perfect.

If this appeals to you, contact [Catherine Forrester](#)

Getting to Know You - Phil Bischler

I spent my whole career as a Materials Scientist and Engineer working on projects such as aerospace applications, replacing body parts, robotics, nuclear reactors and finally explosive demolition. So you could say I finished with a bang! Since retiring the u3a has been a big part of our lives. I take part in the Food Appreciation, cycling, Wayward Walkers, Urban Sketchers and Geology groups.

1. How long have you lived in Stroud?

I changed roles and moved to King's Stanley in 1987 after my research contract at Oxford University was concluded. It's a great part of the world with community spirit and things to get involved in such as the village Wine Circle and Local History Groups.

2. What was your most enjoyable job before retirement?

I was Chair of the judging panel for the Young Person's World Lecture Competition for 18 years. It allowed me to visit universities all over the world.

3. What is your dream holiday activity?

Since my mid teens I have climbed mountains all over the world, both in summer and winter.

4. What is your favourite book?

I love a good Scandi Noir murder mystery, I've read all the Jo Nesbo books.

5. Do you play or enjoy any sports? Which?

I have run since my school days, and completed marathons in places like London, New York, Angkor Wat, and North Korea, although these days it's more like a trail run in the local woods!

6. When were/are the best days of your life?

It has to be days spent travelling. We have explored all seven continents on expeditions, long road trips, crossing deserts, African safaris, city breaks and mini adventures in our camper van.

7. What is the next exciting thing you are planning?

We are going to Switzerland for a week to explore the alpine rail routes in winter.

GROUPS

New groups meeting

About 25 people met in Lansdown Hall on September 17th to see if we could get some new and exciting ideas actually happening.

Some of the suggestions with enough support are almost ready to go:

- Healthy Eating
- Play Reading
- Rediscover Shakespeare
- Country Dancing
- Meditation

If ANY of these ideas appeal to you, please get in touch with [Elizabeth Hutton](#) in the first instance, and she will put you in touch with the relevant people.

What is really exciting is that there were lots more suggestions supported by volunteers prepared to get them started. These will be announced in a future newsletter.

In addition, there was a suggestion to organise a series of expert talks, for example on science, history or health matters. These would be separate from the Lansdown talks, and may need a different venue. Watch this space.

It was also clear there is a real demand for more beginners' groups - especially for languages and sports. Can people in the existing language and sports groups give some thought to this, please?

Geology

The Geology Group spent a day exploring two sites examining the 'bone beds' for fossils on a recent field Trip to Aust Cliffs.

For those that don't know, Aust Cliffs are located on the eastern side of the Severn Estuary in South Gloucestershire, right next to the village of Aust and directly beneath the original Severn Bridge. They feature mudstone from the Triassic period, recording an ancient desert flooded by rising Jurassic seas. These have yielded ancient shark teeth, fish scales, and marine reptile fragments (such as ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs), and are recognized as one of the most productive British sites for Triassic-to-Early-Jurassic fossil insects.

For more information contact [Alan Severance](#)

Singing for Fun

We have vacancies for our group for anyone who enjoys singing and would like to join us. We do not perform, just sing for enjoyment. All welcome.

We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month and future meetings will be at Stroudwater Court GL5 4ET, making it easily accessible for anyone able to get into Stroud by bus. Look forward to hearing from you for more information. Please contact [Linda Nelder](#)

Computing for (near-) beginners

I tried getting this group off the ground (or online) about a year ago but there was a very low response. However, recently a few members have contacted me to ask about it so it will be starting up in some form or another soon! What is a “near beginner”? It depends on your point of view so once we have a small group of folk together, we will decide amongst ourselves where we start and how far we will go.

We definitely won't be getting into the advanced stuff though. This about getting comfortable with accessing the digital world and doing things safely online. It will not be about AI or the advanced use of Spreadsheets. Someone else would need to set up that kind of group!!

Contact Richard Bedford via https://stroud.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/computing-near-beginner/ as soon as possible if you are interested please or phone me via **0300 102 1745**.

Outdoor sketching

We have been meeting for about a year, as a group of 3-6 people, but we have room for more. We meet in a cafe and then head out to sketch whatever catches our eye. We have met at different parts of Stroud town centre, at locations along the canal, at the former mill buildings, the train station, the park, the cemetery, and at the top of Westrip. We are very easygoing, indoor or outdoor sketches are fine, as one of the main challenges has been rain. We seem to have a knack for meeting on rainy days.

This group is:

- for people of any ability who like sketching/drawing
- self-supplied - each person brings their own materials and maybe a portable stool.
- local - meets at a specific location outdoors in Stroud to sketch an interesting building, street scene, interior.
- supportive - we meet together at the end in a cafe to chat and look at each other's work with (positive) feedback if people wish.
- not a teaching session, but for sharing ideas
- accessible - locations easily accessible by foot, bicycle, or public transport.

Our future meetings include Stroud Brewery, and Nailsworth.

If you're interested, contact [Kate Golten](#)

Art appreciation

Barbara enthralled us in August with a comprehensive look at Blue Pigments – Ancient and Modern.

Here are some of the highlights:

- c.2500 BC, Egyptian blue is the earliest artificial pigment, turquoise blue in colour, luminescent in infra-red light and exceptionally durable. It was used in wall paintings, tombs, mummies' coffins and today it is used in biomedical imaging and security links.
- c.850 AD Maya Blue - vivid turquoise produced from indigo (leaves of the Anil plant and a special clay palygorskite) resistant to corrosion and weathering and does not fade. It was used in wall paintings, ceramic pieces, sculptures and burial rituals.
- Renaissance blues arrived in the 15th century and came from either ultramarine (Lapis Lazuli) or Azurite. The former is a deep blue with a touch of red and is very rare, never

fades and is very expensive. The latter is a pure blue with a greenish tint, rare and expensive. Because of the price tag the Renaissance artists had to find ways to use it which would enhance their reputation but not cause financial ruin.

- Prussian Blue 1706- The first modern synthetic pigment, intense dark blue with a green tint – light-fast, stable, easy to make but above all cheap. It is used in paints, inks, dyes and in medicines. The Prussian army was probably one of the first to benefit, as Prussian Blue was used in their uniforms. More recently (July 2026) it was used to restore the original 1859 colour scheme of the clock face of the Great Clock of Westminster (Big Ben).

CONTACTS

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