u3a Cardiff

learn, laugh, live



Magazine 2026

A Word from the Chair

There is so much going on in Cardiff u3a that it is difficult to know where to start. Whether you enjoy depth of learning and discussion, exploring avenues you did not have time for when working, doing something different every day or keeping your brain active by spending time talking to others, there is something here for you.

This magazine is a showcase of good news about group activities and members' interests and creativity. Volunteers writing news items and creative pieces worked on by a team of editors, sharing and learning new things, all of which are great examples of what u3a is all about. Cardiff u3a is successful because its members contribute, collaborate and make things happen; the learning comes from within. Convenors, and often others who may not have that role, facilitate, communicate and prepare so that members can grow that seed of learning. Support teams look after IT, the website, publicity and, of course, the magazine. Committee members, an essential component, listen, support, organise and act as guardians. Everybody has a role to play.

So, continue to enjoy what you have already tried, consider trying something new and give some thought to what you can do to keep the wheel turning so that Cardiff u3a can be as good as it possibly can be.

Margaret Richards



Front cover photo: Diane York wearing her roving poster for u3a.

90 Years Old Together



Barbara and Dave Smith both celebrated their ninetieth birthdays in December 2025.

The Cardiff u3a Bridge Group congratulated them during one of our Monday morning sessions. This lovely couple have been married for sixty-nine years.

Barbara started playing Bridge in 1987 and Dave started in 2003. They have been u3a members for over twenty years and having moved to Cardiff, they joined the u3a Bridge group about eleven years ago. Their experience and ability are greatly valued and they always help and encourage newer, younger players. They demonstrate how Bridge keeps your mind sharp.

Liz Perkins

Tabernacle Support for Cardiff u3a

Every year we are fortunate to be able to place a Cardiff u3a information banner outside the iconic Tabernacle Chapel, a Welsh language Baptist chapel in The Hayes in central Cardiff.

A chapel has existed on the site since 1821. It was enlarged and rebuilt in an Italianate style several times during the 1800s. The chapel has been a listed building since 1975, being described as an 'ambitious chapel . . . with a particularly fine interior'.



The chapel has played an important role in music and later in broadcasting too. It became renowned for its Sunday concerts which were staged during the war and in 1961 it was the location for the first broadcast of the BBC's long running religious programme, 'Songs of Praise', which later returned there in 2011 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary edition. It was also the setting for the first ever television broadcast of a programme in the Welsh language in 1953—'a Cymanfa Ganu' (hymn singing festival).

Liz Knowles

Zoning in on Zandra Rhodes

What comes to mind when you think of iconic textile and fashion designer Zandra Rhodes? For me, I'm transported back to the late '70s; models draped in shocking pink and black plus safety pins, rips and tears—her *Princess of Punk* years. That a London designer managed to grab the attention of this North Walian sixth former was in itself remarkable. Even more remarkable is that she is still going strong at the grand age of eighty-five.

So, when members of our u3a Art Appreciation Group were invited to decide on our next gallery visit, I was delighted that one of the choices was a trip to the Holburne Museum, Bath, to see *Zandra Rhodes: A Life in Print* exhibition.

Entering the exhibition space, we were hit by a sea of vibrant colours, an eclectic mix of styles featuring squiggles, zigzags, sequins and feathers, mannequins with wigs of multifarious colours and—above all—a feeling of 'where do I start?' The answer, unsurprisingly, was at Mannequin No. 1.



Reflecting the different developmental periods of Zandra Rhodes' career, the mannequins were positioned together in several distinct groups. I found it remarkable to discover that she had not been specifically trained as a fashion designer, having studied at the Medway College of Art, majoring in printed textile design.

She picked up pattern cutting skills from friends, configuring her outfits to highlight the features and contours of her highly innovative textile patterns.



Place was very important to Rhodes, as evidenced by her extensive travels which are then clearly reflected in her designs. We were treated to designs featuring the dramatic Manhattan skyline, banana leaves from Mexico, lilies inspired by Tokyo's neon lights and the Tutankhamun's Leopard print inspired by a visit to Egypt. It seems that wherever she went she found something that sparked her creative imagination, resulting in the hugely varied selection contained within this exhibition, a fraction of her lifetime's work.

All in all, a highly enjoyable cultural daytrip with a lovely group of people brought together through a common interest. That's u3a for you in a nutshell.

Gwyn Stroud

The Other Bennet Sister

No doubt some of us watched the BBC costume drama *The Other Bennet Sister* in the spring (also currently available on iPlayer). Based on the 2020 book by Janice Hadlow, the adaptation is filmed mainly in South Wales.

The Other Bennet Sister is Hadlow's imagining of the life of Mary, the somewhat overlooked middle daughter of the Bennet family. In this portrayal Mrs Bennet (Ruth Jones) becomes more acerbic and waspish in her dealings with Mary while Mr Bennet (Richard E. Grant) is more reclusive. I was rooting for Mary to get away from the toxic family dynamic, and fortunately, Mrs Bennet's brother and his wife rescue her from a life of drudgery.

Between the screenings and the end of August, some of the costumes and props from the TV series were on show in the National Trust property, Dyffryn House.



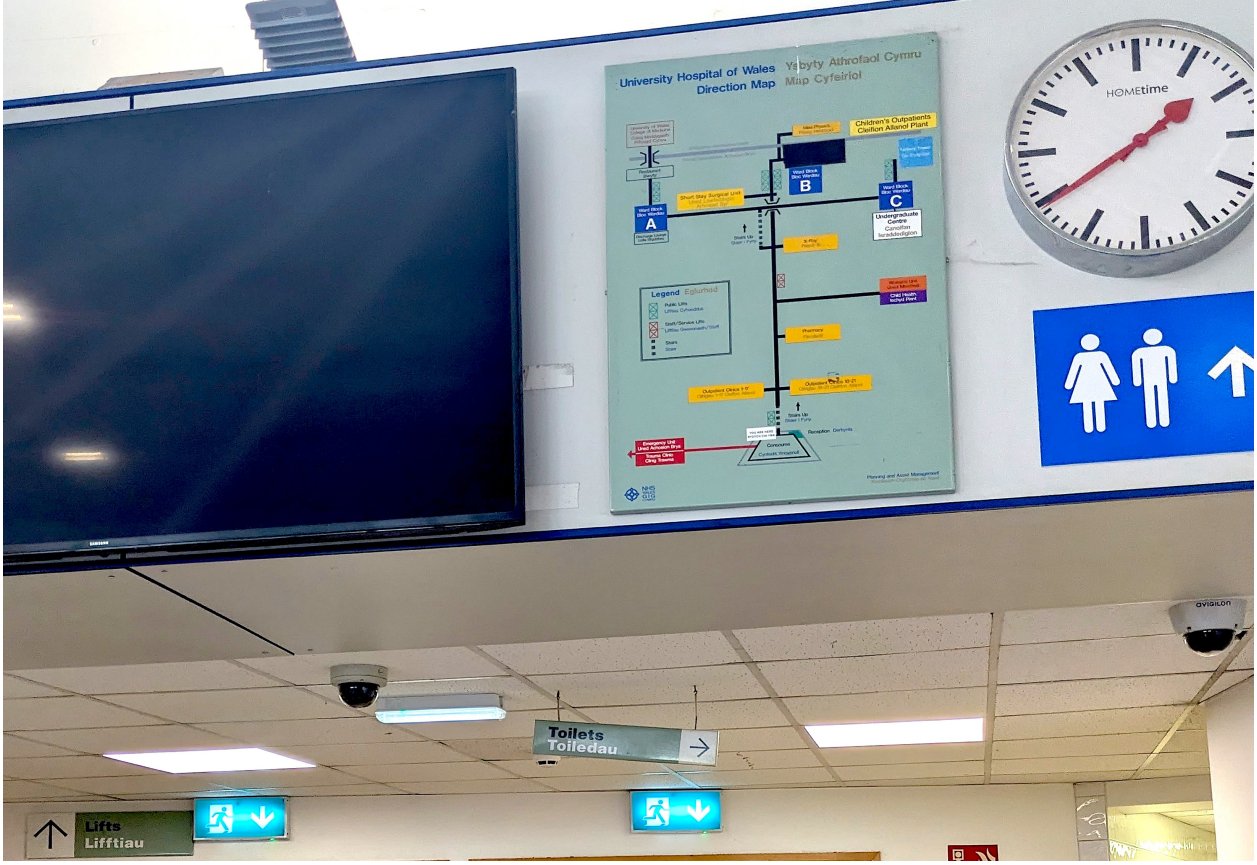
Dyffryn Gardens were designed in the late 1890s (after Jane Austen's time) by renowned landscape architect Thomas Mawson. Nevertheless, the Pompeian Garden, bedecked with purple wisteria was used as the scene for a recital of Wordsworth's poem, 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge'.

Don't be disappointed if you visit now—CGI magic created the view of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral in the background—the wisteria has gone. However, if you visit next spring, you may witness in Dyffryn's colourful parterres, a 'host of golden daffodils'.

Trisha Thomas



Signs are for Strangers



I returned to live in Cardiff a couple of years ago after twenty years away. I'm not from Wales, but worked here earlier in my career. I know my way around in some places but feel completely lost, like any stranger, in others. I've become fascinated with signage.

The first time I really noticed a sign after I returned, was while driving down Clare St to the station to pick up a friend. There is a road sign indicating the direction of the station. I found out the hard way that there is no road that goes past the front of the station. It's only the next set of major traffic lights that leads to a road, that leads to a car park at the back of the station. There is no sign at that turn. Now, I leave it at that. Signs are for strangers.

I might have forgotten this, if shortly afterwards I hadn't had to find my way around Heath Hospital. There is a friendly reception, coffee shop and seating area there and I saw an entrance to the clinics. There is a sign above it, presumably telling you which clinics are where. It has many lines of small script, cleverly positioned so high up it is impossible to read. I asked why at the Information desk, and was told many other people had asked as well and it had been reported. It was left at that. Signs are for strangers.

Somewhat later I went to the National Library of Wales, a magnificent building in Aberystwyth, to see an exhibition of Welsh artists through the ages. We were told the exhibition was on the second floor, but pressing the lift button marked '2', brought us to a cupboard with locked doors and no exit. So, we returned to the floor below, pressing button '1', to get to the second floor. When I mentioned this, it was quite irritably left at that. After all, signs are for strangers.

I've experienced other examples, and in some ways, they are quite funny. They remind me of 'the family' in T.S. Eliot's poem about 'Mungojerrie and Rumpleteazer', in his book *Old Possums Book of Practical Cats* (Faber). They are a very notorious couple of cats who break in to steal, even raiding the oven of Sunday dinner and leaving mayhem behind them. The family would say: 'it's that horrible cat, it was Mungojerrie or Rumpleteazer, and most of the time, they left it at that'.

I've always thought that Eliot, the boy from St. Louis, was laughing at these islanders, noticing this national trait, that nobody else can see. He was the observant stranger.

Judy Noble

Enjoying Science: A Personal View

The whole ethos of u3a is to keep our grey cells exercised, both physically and mentally. And one group that excels in this is 'Enjoying Science'. OK, so in the spirit of full disclosure I have to admit I hold a PhD in medical sciences so I'm bound to be biased. But, whilst many who attend the monthly meetings have a background in science, many do not. And that's really important.

The Convenor, Margaret Richards, does a great job in inviting speakers, mostly from outside the group but sometimes within, who know how to pitch a topic that has enough basic principles and detail to appeal to all of us. And what a spectrum of topics the group have experienced. From the farthest reaches of physical theory to the topics that are important to our daily lives in the environment and our health. Laid out for all to enjoy. Some meetings are delivered classical lecture style, while others are participative such as ten minute 'TED Talks' on a diversity of subjects that group members want to share while others are workshops on topics such as environmental science, first aid or coping with arthritis. All are offered with a view to helping us understand how science pervades our daily life.

One particular talk that found me repeatedly pushing my dropping jaw up was given by a volunteer working with several ecosystem charities by watching the biodiversity in her own garden! Another talk on the science behind ground management in the construction planning process had many of us agog. And then there was the echo cardiologist who showed us how her science allowed her (and us!) to visualise our hearts working. Talks on environmental science have given rise to great discussions helping us to tease out meaningful science from popular myth. And not to forget the psychology of gender! My own contributions have been 'Immunity in a Nut Shell', concerning the impact of 3D printing on our lives, and the science of leaf colours. And there's so much more that answers questions we often never knew we had or that just beg more questions about the wonders of our lives. Hope to see you at future meetings.

Stuart Swinburne

Improv Comedy and Drama Group

Our Improv comedy and Drama Group is suitable for beginners and the more experienced alike and, as convenor, I am very enthusiastic to coach new members. No prior knowledge or talent is required because the group's focus is on manageable improvement and fun.

The group is fairly new and only started sixteen months ago. At the start it was thought that we would hold just one meeting a month as this seemed the norm in u3a. However, Cardiff seems to show a strong interest in this type of activity. So, the group has flourished and we now hold two meetings a month.
Originally, we enjoyed stand-alone improv workshops, but now we have a range of interesting things to do. Some of us are even writing sketch comedy and other things for the purpose of being performed in our group! Some of the workshops have become very sophisticated events where the different disciplines of improv, comedy and drama are merged together. However, this should not worry anyone as everything is gently introduced, stage by stage.

Recently we had a fast-paced workshop where we started with introductions to help the group cohere. Then we had some short form improvisational games to brighten our cognitive abilities. This was followed by practicing some character/emotional work in readiness for the next stages. Then we talked briefly about common structure in a comedy sketch. This then moved us to cold reading and performing some comedy sketches which embodied that particular structure, before trying to act in character. However, the most fun was had when we then improvised those same comedy sketches, providing the dialogue and action ourselves! We all agreed that doing the improvisation was actually more fun than acting out the original written sketches that we had followed. You should give us a try. It is a good decision to keep our marbles intact! In our group we do that by having a lot of fun too!

Rob Morris

‘Look out of the window as you drive past’

Early in the 1970s I started a new job, which involved driving around South Wales selling mechanical handling equipment. When travelling through parts of the country where I had never been before, I began to notice signs and street furniture which looked very old, and most certainly were. (All these photos were taken as colour slides with colour prints taken from them).



Illustrated here is a typical road traffic island, usually displaying the words, ‘Keep Left’, with back illumination at night. Different wording could be substituted using interchangeable glass plates, for example; ‘road closed’; ‘no through road’ etc. These islands were universal throughout the UK until replaced by full length metal frames having a larger illuminated area. It appears to me that the white lines on the road, indicating the stop area would have been a more recent addition. Perhaps the council were saving money by retaining the original bollards. This photo was taken in February 1974.



Many will remember the subject of my next picture. A typical road sign of the period, a cast iron plate with a symbol indicating the hazard ahead; wording underneath; a red triangle at the top, and a black and white painted post. Every other warning sign was displayed in a similar manner. For example: ‘road narrows’; ‘bend’; ‘T junction’; ‘railway crossing’ and many more advisories. These old signs were later replaced with large painted signs, mounted high up for better driver vision.

Found in every town and city, the ubiquitous gents’ public urinal. Made of cast iron, formed with rounded ends and a top cover. Entry and exit from the rear area. Typical of the Victorian attitude, the structure was like a ‘decency’ shield (my words) all around, usually painted green and having no external markings. Photo taken in Moseley, Birmingham in June 1980.



Photographed early in 1976, this WW2 wartime pillbox was situated on the main A48 road leading out of Llanelli (or Llanelly, as it was known then) to Carmarthen. Built in their thousands when invasion was expected, this particular unit was situated at the junction leading from the main road to the ordnance factory and airfield at Pembrey. Of course, these types of defensive units could be found all over the country at vulnerable locations. Most of these relics are now gone, and it is likely this one has disappeared too.



One of the most iconic British products, the ubiquitous red telephone box. Photographed in a rural location somewhere in West Wales in 1975. Look closely and you can see the early telephone set with the old ‘A’ and ‘B’ push button coin operations. Also, have a look at the post box attached to the telephone pole. It looks like the script on the box is a Victorian one



A surprising relic from the Second World War, still extant in September 1980! The photo taken in the Birmingham area shows a location guide for a water point used by pumps employed by the National Fire Service (NFS) during the war. Although slightly faded in parts, the style and lettering are still clearly visible.



This legal notice was photographed in 1976 but the location was not recorded. The writer thinks it was positioned near a railway crossing (or possibly a canal bridge) somewhere in South Wales. Typical of many thousands of similar signs, positioned near railway property all over the UK it was made of cast iron, and mounted on a metal post.





Travelling through the Cotswolds sometime in the late 1960’s, we spotted this gas lamp illuminated in the daylight. My wife looked up with surprise? There were a few along this stretch of roadway, in a very rural setting. ‘Suppose it was cheaper to leave them illuminated at all times to save the cost of someone coming to turn them on, then off’, she said. I don’t think a local council would be prepared to pay for this service today, neither the cost of attendance by a lamp lighter, nor the cost of the gas!

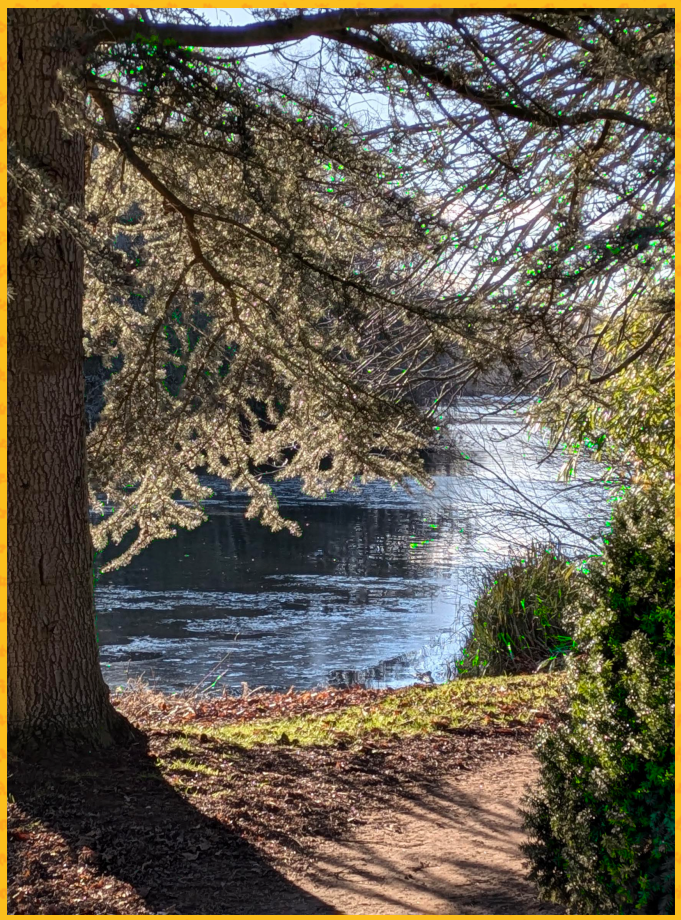
Keith Roberts

Photography Groups



Both groups meet once a month for an outing to follow a set theme, maybe 'Shadows' or 'Macro' for example, and then get together again later in the month to share results. It is always interesting and surprising to see the many creative and inspiring ways in which a theme has been interpreted.

Pauline Bezodis



This page:
Llandaff Fields Between April Sun and Showers, Pauline Bezodis, April 2026.
Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, Yvonne Courtine, 3 January 2026.
Overleaf
Little Green Bee-eater (bird) and Lunch, Sri Lanka, Jeremy Hucker, April 2026.
'It does not rain, it pours': Green Heron Perched on a Branch During a Downpour at Maquenge Lodge, Costa Rica, Patrizia Donovan, 17 January 2026.
Peace, Jonathan Guest, February 2026.
Swish, Swash, Swell, David Harrison, 4 June 2025.




LADYSMITH · KIMBERLEY





Two Coffees and Two Cakes: My Secret Police File

In late November 2025, I travelled to Prague. The Christmas market glittered below my window, but I was not there for the mulled wine. I had come to read my secret police file and discover what the Czechoslovak State Security (StB) had made of me in 1981 when I was a British Council scholar researching interwar history.

As a Western postgraduate in a communist state, I had attracted routine attention. The signs were subtle but unmistakable: tampered mail, a searched room. The StB also questioned people I knew, especially those vulnerable to pressure—foreigners, the self-employed, or anyone on the margins of socialist respectability.

After the fall of communism, a friend told me she had been summoned and asked about my political views. She said she responded with careful blandness, calibrating what was safe for both of us, describing me as "left-leaning" and "peace loving." In the event, I was not surprised to learn that she was the principal informant in my one remaining file.

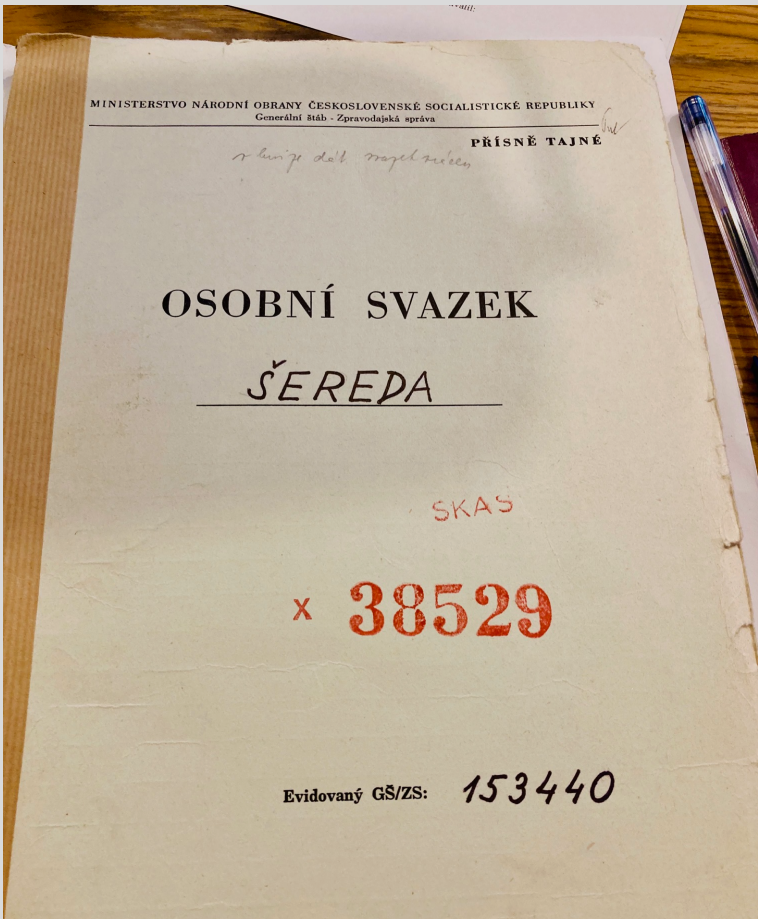
For a long time, it was claimed that StB records on foreigners had been destroyed in the chaotic weeks after 17 November 1989. For years, I had assumed that nothing of mine remained beyond perhaps some routine visa paperwork. Only recently, prompted by writing about my student years, did I think to search again. By then, what was left had been systematically assembled and digitised. Entering my details into an online database, I found an entry complete with a code name "*Šereda*." Google translated this as "Mischief," but "Gorgon" would be a more appropriate rendering.

A few weeks later, I sat in the Security Services Archive reading room, just steps from the Czech National Theatre, and was handed my file. Its contents were, for the most part, predictably mundane.

The StB had begun vetting me as soon as I applied for my scholarship, and when I arrived in Prague in spring 1981, preparations to recruit me were already underway. I was first placed in a shared room in a student residence. My roommate, whose communist credentials were impeccable, was tasked with reporting on me. As a postgraduate, I was entitled to a single room, and I complained loudly to both Charles University and the British Council. Within a week, I was moved, though not before my roommate filed a brief report noting basic details: my education, my subsequent work as a librarian, and my current research position at the Open University.

Next, the Head of the History Department made contact. I recall a morning summons to his office and being unexpectedly plied with slivovice, plum brandy. His report praised my Czech language skills, and my thesis title and academic background were duly noted. He added a few extra details, including the personal observation that I was amiable but 'no great beauty'.

Over the following months, the same information was recopied and reformatted, always reaching the same conclusion; I was a potential candidate who required further probing. At this point, the StB turned to



my friend. Refusal was not really an option. She confined herself to such facts as were likely to be known from my research application. She described me as 'progressive' and 'opposed to racism'. I was bookish; I attended the theatre; I liked to travel. She named my principal contacts in Czechoslovakia, carefully selecting those she was confident would already be known to the security services as my every overnight stay in a private home had required registration with the local police. All these routine details were recorded once again. The meeting ended with an itemised expense claim: 52.10 Kčs—two coffees and two cakes.

The plan was to use my roommate to draw me into cooperation. At the next meeting, just over two weeks later, a new note of urgency entered the file. The StB had noted that I had once worked at Chatham House—the Royal Institute of International Affairs—albeit as a Slavonic librarian. This elevated me from a mildly interesting foreign postgraduate to a potential intelligence asset. Their assumption seemed to be that the Institute was a front for British security services. My friend was instructed to ask—delicately—if I could obtain some RIIA publications for an acquaintance. Under Communism, such things were difficult to access, so the request was framed as a harmless favour. (This was also how the process of recruitment of agents often began, moving on from an initial innocent request to something more potentially incriminating). The meeting ended, as so many did, with an itemisation of expenses, drinks carefully invoiced. Nothing came of it. I have no memory of the request, and the file confirms I never supplied the publications. This failure, however, only increased suspicion.

When I returned to Prague later that year, the matter was raised again—this time more sharply. My friend, who by now had been given the code name Jilka, was questioned about my recent travels, my prospects at the Open University, and my failure to acquire the requested materials. She could offer no answers. By then she had moved to another flat, and I had not contacted her. The file records this as evasiveness on my part.

The file also noted that I had been seen with a young 'English' historian—my Welsh husband still bristles at this description—outside the Faculty of Arts. The StB already had information on him from intercepted correspondence, and his details were added to my record.

By April 1982, on my next visit, the tone had grown more anxious. My friend reported that I seemed 'shifty', attributing this to my boyfriend and claiming he was probably eager to break up my local friendships. That this was so readily accepted says much about the patriarchal assumptions of the time. Alternatively, she conjectured, perhaps Kontrarozvědná (Counterintelligence) had formally warned me. In other words, perhaps the right hand did not know what the left hand was doing.

By August 1982, the effort to recruit me was abandoned. The closing report summarised yet again my background, languages, education and career and concluded that I had failed to fulfil my 'promise'. It cited the influence of my boyfriend and the possibility of counterintelligence involvement. With that, my file was closed.

Reading that file now, what strikes me most is not what it reveals but what it fails to uncover. Page after page repeat the same facts, mostly available from my CV, rearranged into new forms, punctuated by speculation and frequent modest expense claims.

In the end perhaps, it was never really about me. This was a system designed to keep watch, to test loyalties, and make surveillance an ordinary fact of life. Nothing dramatic occurred - the system did not require drama.

Maggie Smales

Cathays Cemetery



Members of the Local History Group had a very interesting tour round some of the graves in Cathays Cemetery on the seventeenth of April led by Ted Richards, local historian and member of the Friends of Cathays Cemetery.

Among the cemetery's residents those we learned more about were entertainment parachutists (who knew there was such a thing?), significant Cardiff industrial and shipping families with links to famous world events, the spread of exotic wildlife, Scott's expedition to the Antarctic and the actor Kenneth More.





First stop, we learned about Elsa Spencer, born Gladys Robinson, an entertainment parachutist who made her first parachute descent from a hot air balloon in 1901. She left her body to medical science so she is commemorated here, like others who have donated their bodies to science, by the General Headstone of Cardiff University. Interestingly there is another grave for an entertainment parachutist in the cemetery—Louisa Maud Evans who is also buried here having died in 1896 at the age of 14½ performing at the Cardiff Exhibition when her descent went wrong and she ended up in the Bristol Channel.



We also learned that some of the more ornate headstones were replaced by plain ones to make cutting the grass easier—shorter grass was not something we noticed on our tour! These include John Elliot's, an engineer who made his money manufacturing tugboats. He was a consulting engineer acting on behalf of the US Confederate Navy during the American Civil War when the ship that was acquired became the CSS Shenandoah, famous for firing the last shot in the civil war.

Some fascinating wildlife was pointed out during the tour including the famous Foxglove Tree. A native of China, the seeds were used for packaging and often got scattered when packaging broke open.



Richard Watkins, registrar in Cardiff as had been his father and subsequently his son, had lived at what is now the Pen and Wig pub in Cardiff. Through Watkins' daughter's marriage, he became the actor Kenneth More's grandfather.



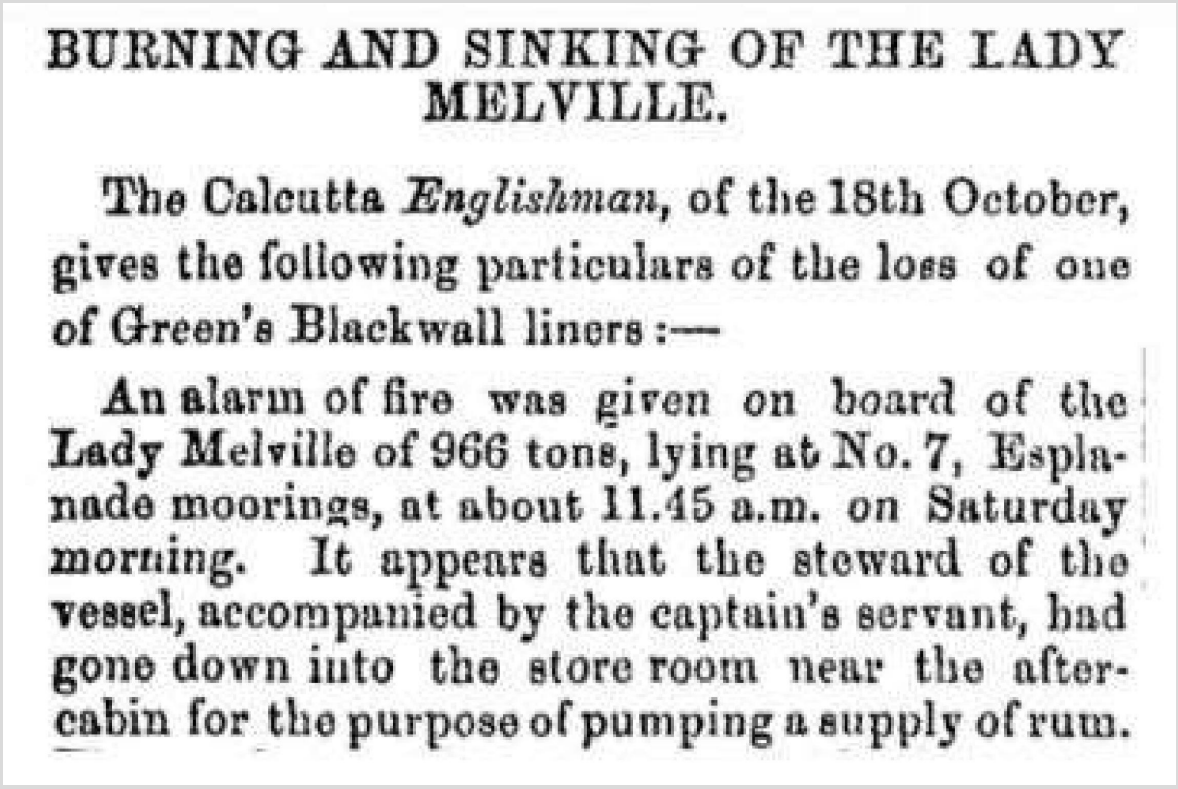
One of the remaining ornate graves in the cemetery is that of Sir William Tatem, his wife and son. Tatem, a Welsh ship-owner and philanthropist whose hobby was breeding racehorses, raised money for Captain Scott's expedition to the Antarctic. His wife was involved in a serious car accident and was supposedly carrying £30,000 worth of jewellery with her that was mysteriously burnt beyond recovery in the accident! Sadly, she died a couple of years later of injuries from the accident.

Another link to the Scott expedition and another resident, is Thomas Newland Rosser who was the Harbourmaster at Cardiff Docks. He was invited to a gala dinner celebrating the Scott expedition and somehow managed to sign a commemorative menu above the signature of Scott himself!

Liz Knowles



The Sinking of the Lady Melville and its Consequences



BURNING AND SINKING OF THE LADY MELVILLE.

The Calcutta *Englishman*, of the 18th October, gives the following particulars of the loss of one of Green's Blackwall liners :—

An alarm of fire was given on board of the Lady Melville of 966 tons, lying at No. 7, Esplanade moorings, at about 11.45 a.m. on Saturday morning. It appears that the steward of the vessel, accompanied by the captain's servant, had gone down into the store room near the after-cabin for the purpose of pumping a supply of rum.

You have probably seen pictures of the Cutty Sark and some of you may have visited her in her dry berth in London. She was one of a class of fast-moving sailing ships known as clippers, carrying tea and other commodities from India and the Far East to London, the heart of the British Empire.

Another such clipper, operating between Indian ports and Britain was the Lady Melville. On the morning of 14 October 1871 she was moored away from the dockside on the wide flowing Hooghly River in the Port of Kolkota (formerly called Calcutta), waiting to sail on the next tide for Mumbai (Bombay).

Now it happened on the day in question that the steward of the ship and the captain's servant had gone down into the hold carrying an oil lantern to light their way so as to fetch some rum. Using open buckets. they climbed back up the steep stairway.

Unfortunately the overburdened servant slipped, dropping his lantern and spilling a quantity of rum onto the large wooden cask below where the rum was stored. The consequences were predictable. The cask suddenly exploded sending streams of liquid fire racing through the hold, setting fire to rice bags, jute and other goods there.

The alarm was immediately raised and the Kolkata fire brigade in all its finery promptly arrived. However, to reach the Lady Melville the two water pumps available had to be ferried out on small boats and even then access was awkward, with the officers operating from the lower level of the river. Eventually by pumping vast amounts of water through portholes and down hatchways the blaze was brought under control and extinguished.

So what were the consequences of this to my family? Well, my great-great-grandfather, William Clayton Wood, was an employee of the shipping company whose goods were on the Lady Melville. That afternoon, following the fire he was sent on board to assess the damage done to the cargo and to see what could be salvaged. He was not alone. Many of the crew were there as well trying to recover their precious personal possessions.

Then, further disaster struck. Thanks to the valiant efforts of the Kolkata fire brigade the Lady Melville was half full of water and very unstable. Without warning she listed violently and capsized immediately throwing all on deck into the deep waters of the Hooghly River and injuring several badly. Tragically, two of those on board were drowned, and my great-great-grandfather William Clayton Wood was one of them.

There were other consequences too. Edward Hind Wood, my great-grandfather, son of William, i.e. the next generation, was a native of Kolkata, born and bred there like his parents and grandparents before him. He was now an orphan aged ten years. His mother had died in 1867, his grandparents were all deceased and now so was his father. What future did he have in India? At the time of the Lady Melville tragedy he happened to be at a boarding school in London and there he stayed to make a new life. There was no reason to return to India.

The consequence of this was that Edward Hind Wood eventually met and married my great grandmother. The result of this union was my grandmother who, having married my grandfather, produced my mother who produced me. So you see, one thing leads to another. Without this chain of events I would never have existed and you would not now be reading my family history.

Nic ApGlyn

Off to the Opera 'The Flying Dutchman'

Part of belonging to Cardiff's u3a Music Appreciation group means having the opportunity to attend selected Welsh National Opera Dress Rehearsals. Lynne Plummer has continued for many years to get community tickets for us and they are very much appreciated. Those who go along support the opera by making a contribution.



The latest production we saw was Wagner's 'The Flying Dutchman', based ona gripping legend of a ghostly ship endlessly condemned to sail the world's oceans and a lonely captain cursed forever unless he can be redeemed by true love. The Dutchman can only go ashore once every seven years to search for true love.Will he find it this time?



The staging was minimalist, the swirling mists atmospheric and Wagner's music from the cast, chorus and orchestra was awesome.

Valerie Maidment

Cardiff u3a Cycling



Another great year for the cycling group. Looking back at 2025 we had more than 26 outings and cycled a total of more than 550 miles. We are fair weather cyclists so if the weather forecast is good, we use a WhatsApp group to choose a day for a group ride. The day and time is then confirmed to all group members by email. We usually meet outside 'Brodie's On The Wall' (formerly Pettigrew Tea Rooms) in the lodge just inside the Bute Park entrance on Castle Street. Here we decide on a route and destination. We always make sure to choose a ride that is within the capabilities of everyone. Electric bikes are welcome and Lycra is rarely worn (although there is no rule about that!). Our preference is for routes that minimise proximity to traffic and avoid steep gradients. We aim to stop somewhere to have a coffee, picnic or lunch and to give us the chance to chat, tell a few jokes and put the world to rights.

Last year we started to make use of the new local trains with their excellent provisions for bikes to enable us to explore rides further afield. Here are some of the rides that we did:

St Fagans
The Bay Trail
Forest Café just outside Tongwynlais
Y Maerun Pub in Marshfield
Pontypridd
Caerphilly
Cosmeston Lakes
Ely Trail and Bay Trail
Porthkerry Country Park (starting from Penarth railway station)
The Captain's Wife pub in Sully
Merthyr Tydfil (train there, rode back)



One pub that we discovered last year and have visited a few times now is the Llanover Arms in Pontypridd which is a pub frozen in time. It doesn't have a kitchen, doesn't sell food and doesn't have piped music. It does have some fine ales and there is a quiet 'snug' where the landlord is happy for us to eat our own sandwiches. It has blue plaque on the wall outside to commemorate the 'Celebrated Circle of Poets, Bards and Musicians' associated with Pontypridd who met in The Llanover Arms between 1850 and1900. I think our aim should be to get a second plaque to commemorate the Cardiff u3a cycling group!

‘Slow Train Coming’ Meet Maesteg u3a



If you would like to join us you will find a warm welcome to the group. The easiest way to get in touch is probably to use the link on our group page on the u3a website https://cardiffu3a.org.uk/groups/cycling/. We welcome new suggestions for places to explore by bike.



Paul Browning

In April 2026 our group, ‘Slow Train Coming’, explored Maesteg on a sunny day. We were met at the railway station by Helena and Tracey, members of Maesteg u3a who shared their knowledge of local industrial history as well as the more recent redevelopment of the Spirit of Llyfni community woodland, a lovely area built on reclaimed land from the former collieries. The walk took us along what had been a railway line originally designed for horse-drawn transport and stretching from Porthcawl to Maesteg. The line carried iron and coal to the coast, returning with lime quarried in South Cornelly for use in the iron works.

At the highest point in our walk, we met the nine-foot-tall *Keeper of the Collieries*, fashioned by sculptor Chris Wood from naturally fallen Welsh trees. *The Keeper* was quite a sight and provoked lots of conversation and investigation of its structure.

Downwards again, we headed for Maesteg Town Hall which is well worth a visit. The Grade II listed building was built in 1881 and at that time included a market hall. Following a major refurbishment, the building was opened to the public in November 2024 with many community resources including a library and heritage centre, studio theatre and cinema space along with a café and mezzanine bar.

This was a day out to remember, leaving many of us with the intention to return.

Margaret Richards

SciTech Café

I got the idea for the SciTech Cafe group about four years ago in 2022. I was living in Bridgend at the time, and when the COVID lockdown ended, I joined a coffee group that met every Saturday in a local coffee shop. Most members were women, and the conversation was about female topics. Many people wondered why we didn't have men in the group.

I believed that if the group had more to interest men, the gender balance would improve, but the ladies did not want to adopt the idea. So, I started a group called SciTech Cafe meeting in our local Wetherspoon pub on a Tuesday evening. There were several regular attendees, all males, and having no formal meeting plan, we discussed anything that interested us at the time.

After about a year, the number of people attending fell and eventually the group stopped meeting on a regular basis. The WhatsApp is still active today, but since my move to a retirement flat in Cardiff, my involvement has been limited.

I've been an active member of u3a for about ten years, and one of the advantages of living in Cardiff is that u3a is very well supported with lots of members and groups to interest everyone. When I saw that there was a coffee group that was looking for a Convenor to restart in the John Lewis café, I couldn't resist the urge to start a u3a SciTech Cafe group.

Although it is a new group, we officially have over thirty members, although the number actually attending is settling down to be about fifteen. That's an ideal number for a group like this, where everyone is encouraged to participate by presenting a topic for discussion or adding to the knowledge that we are sharing.

We held our first two meetings in the John Lewis Cafe but recent changes there made it difficult to discuss our topics in a practical way, so future meetings will be held in the United Reformed Church in Windsor Place. The meeting room is equipped with a monitor and white board which will be very useful for presentations and other media activities.

As for topics we discuss in the meeting, they range from geological research to big tech companies; no subject is off-limits if it is related to science and technology in some way. And when I come to think of it, everything is related in some way or another, and I try to find that relationship every time we have a change of topic.

Some members of the group would like help with their smartphones and devices, so I intend to devote a lot of time to digital technology, one of my few passions.

In March we had a visit to the Apple Store for an 'Introduction to iPhone' session. The several members who attended found it very interesting. Other members have expressed an interest in another visit for an iPad session. This is something that can be arranged.

The idea for the SciTech Cafe group is to keep the meetings informal, but with just a little structure so that everyone gets a chance to contribute. No technical knowledge is needed —just curiosity and a cup of coffee.

Keith Llewellyn

u3a for Aye!

Keep the candle burning,
commit to lifelong learning!
Nature may prostrate ya,
but nurture won't desert ya.

Forbidden Fruit: A Literature Professor's Love Song

Ms V Bramley-Cox, Ms V Bramley-Cox,
With your soft plummy voice and luxuriant locks,
Demure on the front row through Shelley and Keats,
While my pulse palpitates and my heart overheats.

Smooth as an apricot, sweet as a pear,
Delicate, dainty, refined, debonair.
From the crown of your head to the toes of your socks,
Of blue-blooded family, my V Bramley-Cox.

Am I courting disaster and risking the dole?
Have I over-extended my pastoral role?
Does it constitute gross dereliction of duty
To woo you, my extra-curricular cutie?

Fairest of creatures, temptress of teachers,
Ten out of ten for your peachy-cream features,
Cherry-lipped, apple-cheeked, golden, delicious,
Firm-fleshed and succulent, amply nutritious.

Victoria Cox, Ms Victoria Cox,
The face of an angel, the grace of a fox.
Let us away to a green forest glade,
Where a man can be man and a maid can be maid.

Ensconced in a love nest all comfy and cosy,
An hour of Persuasion, then Cider With Rosie.
What metrical magic together we'll weave
In our scholarly Eden - me Adam, you Eve.

Oh promise you'll be, my fruity tutee,
My delectable cocktail of vitamin C.
Hand in hand we'll meander through Byron and Brontë,
You Carmen Miranda, me Man from Del Monte.

Mike Greenhough

A Winter Fire

The wind blowing in from the sea was bitterly cold and Halima knew that the washing she was hanging out on the balcony would be frozen by the evening. Unfortunately, there was nowhere else to dry clothes since supplies of heating oil ran out weeks ago. She worries that Ali might catch a chill, or something worse, because his clothing is never fully dry. Fortunately, he is a sturdy boy because medicines, including antibiotics, are scarce.

Sometimes she wishes she had gone to Jordan with her in-laws, because she had become increasingly anxious about her son's well-being since then. Her husband, Idris, helps when he can but in addition to his job at the local school there are regular calls for help whenever a building is targeted. It's an appeal which no able-bodied male can ignore. Her mother in-law had begged them to pack up and go with them, but Idris was adamant. He was the only one left who was qualified to teach senior school, and he would not let his students down. He had tried to persuade Halima to go with his parents though. Taking Halima in his arms he had whispered, 'You take Ali and go with my parents. I'll come for you when the situation here improves.' But she wouldn't go without him, and the situation had never improved. Then Idris was picked up by a gang of Israeli soldiers while he was walking to school. He was thrown into a van containing other hapless detainees and they were driven away. They were hostages, taken without questions or charges, nor were any investigations carried out.

So, Halima became Ali's sole relative and protector. She was not only his mother, but also his father, grandmother and aunt. It was hardly surprising that she was over-anxious. She would have kept him near her always if she could. But she knew that she couldn't. Ali was a normal, healthy young boy who wanted to go out to meet up with his friends. It wouldn't be fair to try to keep him by her side, a mummy's boy.

Halima suppressed her own anxiety by fussing over trivial things. She tried to tame Ali's mop of curly hair with her hairbrush, until he pulled away in disgust, and nagged him when he came home with dirty clothes. She nagged even though she knew dirty clothes were unavoidable in the rubble strewn streets. She also questioned him about his friends, though she must have realised that, in this ever-shifting population, a boy couldn't be too choosy about who he bothered with.

Sighing, Halima went back indoors. Ali was having breakfast, a piece of dry flat bread wrapped around some herbs she had grown on the kitchen windowsill. He was playing a game on his phone while he ate, but he already had his coat on.

'It's too cold to go out yet, darling. Why don't you wait until later?' Halima shivered for effect as she sat down and reached for the teapot.

'I'll be fine, I've got my coat on.' He stood up ready for a quick getaway, but his mother barred the way.

‘You’re not going out like that. Zip up that jacket while I get you a scarf.’ She went into the bedroom and returned with a woollen scarf of his father’s and a bright blue and white striped beanie which his grandmother had sent him from Jordan. It wasn’t too bad, Ali decided, as his mother pulled the hat right down over his ears. At least it didn’t have a pompom on top.

‘Have you got your phone? You must come home immediately if I ring you, so make sure it’s switched on. Don’t forget.’ Halima was wrapping the scarf around his neck as she spoke. He pulled away from her and ran down the stairs. Exiting the building, he headed to where two boys were sitting on a chunk of concrete. Judging by its shape, their seat had probably formed part of a pile supporting a building. Local children were always searching through the rubble for items which might prove useful, either in their games or at home. One of the boys, Hazim, stood up and greeted him, ‘Where have you been? We were just about to go without you.’ It was a rhetorical question; the boys weren’t planning to go anywhere specific. There was nowhere to go. They would just mooch around until they found something interesting to while away some time.

‘Let’s go down to the town centre,’ suggested Ali and they set off, stopping when they noticed a pile of stones, all of them rounded and smooth. They had obviously been gathered by other children for a game, possibly hopscotch. The third boy, Adam, picked one up and thew it, initiating a competition to see who could throw the furthest. Adam selected only flat stones and showed the others how to make them spin when they were thrown. They became quite engrossed in developing their stone-throwing skills until an old woman shouted at them.

They wandered on, debating who had won the competition, until a loud buzzing alerted them to an approaching drone. They ducked instinctively but the drone passed over them and dropped its bombs several yards away. They moved forward cautiously until they reached the square where they found the usual chaos which accompanies a drone attack. The local police station had been hit and the explosion threw debris in all directions. A huge shard had smashed through a window of the nearby church, igniting the wall hangings. Several young men were pulling wooden pews and relics out of the building, and one of them yelled to the boys to move them further away from the fire before running back inside. The boys jumped to it, struggling to move the ancient wooden furniture until a whooshing draught announced that the fire had taken hold. Hungry flames were licking the ancient maple-planked door, so all that could be done now was to wait for the fire engines to arrive.

Ali’s phone had been ringing for some time. He had ignored it, knowing it would be his mother telling him he must come home for some trumped up reason. But he was a good lad who had been taught to obey his parents, so he knew that he had to go.

‘I’ve got to go home. See you back here later,’ he called to his friends as he ran off. A weak winter sun was shining now, transforming the bleak grey concrete apartment building into a pink palace. Ali ran up the stairs thinking how proud his mother would be when she heard he had helped save the church. He never knew that a missile hit their building, causing the outer wall to collapse sideways onto the stairwell. But Halima knew. She knew when she was pulled out from the rubble and saw a blue and white striped hat perched on a pile of bricks.

Dorothy Al Khafaji

Painting Together



Whether the theme for the day is 'Ice', 'Nature', 'Colour' or there is an idea you just want to pursue, the Painting for Pleasure group never fails to turn out a variety of pieces, each with its own style. Many pieces are carefully planned whilst others develop on the day; some recall moments, others things seen or imagined. Quiet concentration mixed with bursts of conversation make for a morning spent in good company.

Margaret Richards

This page:
Apple, Margaret Richards, acrylic on paper.
The Lonely Penguin, Peter Lewis, watercolour with gouache.
Amaryllis Bulb, Rosamund Jones, pencil on paper.
A Winter Sunrise, Peter Donovan, acrylic on canvas.
Overleaf:
South American Boy, Irene Lock, oil on canvas.
London Embankment, Gilly Bladon, watercolour on paper.
Untitled, Peter Brand, pencil, water colour, acrylic poster paint.
Cyclamen, Rosamund Jones, pencil on paper.
St Fagans Castle, Peter O'Hanlon, watercolour on paper.
Birch, Brecon Beacons, Liz Lewis, pen on paper.
At the Quay, Robert Wilcox, Topsham, SE Devon, watercolour on board.




















INN

Recorders Reunion

Phil: I first joined Cardiff u3a in 2013, shortly after I'd retired from teaching. I'd taught for thirty-nine years in schools in the South Wales valleys and throughout my career I'd been involved in the teaching of music as well as computer skills towards the end of my career. I then became an active member of the u3a Recorder Group and Digital Matters Group.

Being a bit of a computer nerd, I occasionally dipped into Facebook where I re-discovered a few of my ex-pupils who had branched into really interesting career paths. One worked in the study of forensics, another worked for the English Folk Dance and Song Society. My main claim to fame though, the man who currently manipulates the Sooty puppet . . . had also been one of mine.

I could go on. One day, I was delighted to receive a message from Karen, an ex- pupil from the start of my career. At the time I was a very junior member of a music department of a large comprehensive school. Karen showed so much promise as a young musician. Initially she asked if I remembered her. In truth, how could I ever have forgotten her, her talent and her bright red hair? This is what she wrote to me.

Karen: I first met Phil (Mr Edwards) when I was in the first year of secondary school in Ferndale, Rhondda. He was my music teacher and set up a recorder group, which I joined. He also encouraged me to learn the clarinet (free lessons in those days) and to attend school residential music courses in Ogmore. This enabled me to meet fellow students from the wider area of Mid Glamorgan. He was so kind and encouraging and gave me so many opportunities to use my burgeoning music skills.



One day, while looking at a Facebook group for the area where we had both lived, I noticed a post by Phil. So, I sent him a message asking if he remembered me and he did! He asked if I still played the recorder and invited me to the u3Aa recorder group. I had recently retired from teaching but still worked three days a week. Luckily the recorder group would meet on a non-working day near to my home. I went to my first session and haven't looked back. The group is so friendly and welcoming and the music is varied. I hadn't forgotten how to play! I am so glad that I am reunited with a teacher who I remember with fondness, and to use the musical skills I learned all those years ago. It is a joyful thing to make music with others.

Phil: Karen wasn't just a pupil. Back then my parents owned a shop. Karen lived near the shop and she and her parents were regular customers.

So, strangely, after nearly fifty years we've rediscovered each other through playing the recorder.

Philip Edwards and Karen Olds

The Dialects of Taff

Seeping from my wellspring
I surface tremulous, and start
Down from the boggy Pen y Fan,
A trickle through this sodden land.

Tumbling, stumbling, rumbling,
I falter at the roar, and find
I've joined a murky inland sea
And lost my true identity.

I'm not myself, I'm vortexed,
Then funnelled out I gasp, and duck
Under the heads of the valleys road –
I widen, catch my breath, and flow.

Through woods to join my brother,
Then follow road and rail, and hush
Past Aberfan in the Merthyr Vale,
I cannot speak: the valley wails.

Next through Abercynon,
I spray on shingle, splash, and sweep
Under a bridge where in former times
Would laden barges trundle by.

At Pontypridd I'm ready
To brave the Rhondda's might, and brace
As we merge and swell to take my name:
Though dazed I find my course again.

The Cardiff city challenge!
I bend to Brunel's will, and turn -
Where Dragons roar in voice and flame –
To let him route his iron way.

Driven down to freedom
I ooze on, current-born, and sigh
As gulls whirl high on the tidal bay
I lose myself to the Severn's sway.

Thoughts from another wonderful Bus Pass Thursday to Pontypridd – Thank you, Mario.

Susan Biggin



Local History Group

A while ago I got into a discussion with a lovely person who had moved from Bath to Cardiff thirty years ago. I happened to mention our Local History Group and got the quite unexpected response of 'Cardiff's boring, it's got no history, not like Bath'. I was both saddened and astonished. Saddened because it must be awful to spend thirty years in a place that was, albeit by default, your home and apparently hating it. And, astonished by how someone could get it so wrong! Now, granted, the post WWII Cardiff city planners and their 'bulldozer' philosophy of heritage management have made appreciation of Cardiff's history a tad more difficult, but you really don't even need to scratch the surface to see it all around you. Granted, also, that you could be forgiven for thinking that not a lot happened between the Roman occupation and late Georgian times, but in fact, John Speed's 1605/10 map of Cardiff largely reflects Cardiff's layout for that entire period.



But you would be entirely wrong to think that nothing happened during that period. In the Local History Group, we've looked at life under the Romans, the Vikings, the local Welsh kings, the Norman Marcher Lords and English kings. And there's still so much more to discover in future meetings. For example, why was Cardiff the 'pirate capital' of the world for quite some time?



Now, most people who know anything of Cardiff's history will know the town exploded under the Victorians and became a city under King Edward VII. But did you know that it was the centre of the largest mass migration of humans in the nineteenth century? And, that this fuelled its expansion such that it was the fastest growing town in the world. And, that during that period it was the largest coal exporting dock in the world until even Cardiff docks couldn't cope with supplying the demand and that Barry docks took that crown? And, that (disputedly) it was the location of the first £1 million cheque to be signed.

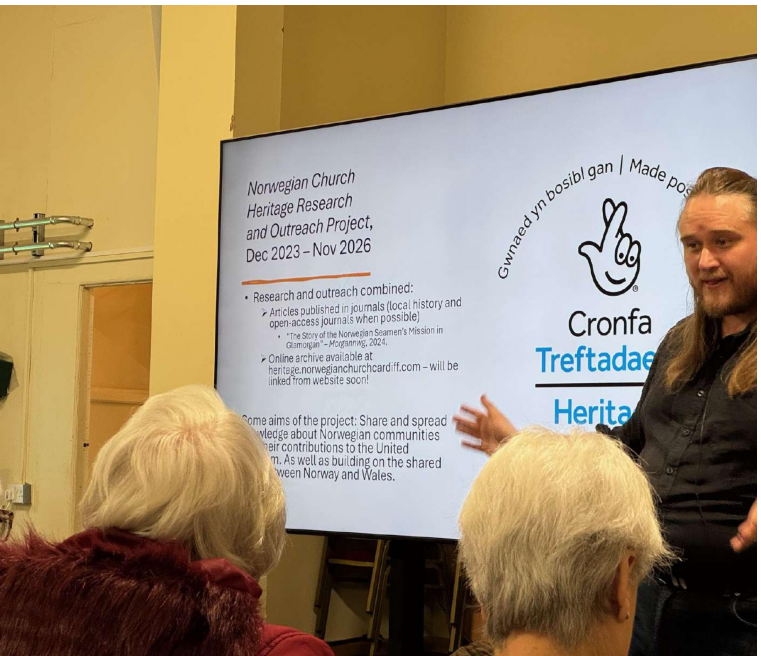
With all that came the establishment of wealthy families and fine houses, and poor families with overcrowded slum houses. The evidence of once stunning architecture is all around helped by some sympathetic architectural and planning practices. It drove the need for effective public health provision, hospitals, religious and entertainment needs. Commercial needs drove

the development of a mighty transport infrastructure connecting Cardiff with the Welsh valley towns, the rest of Britain and the world through the docks. The trade drove Cardiff to be one of the most cosmopolitan towns in Britain with sailors from all over the world visiting and often staying to make Cardiff their home. Of course, a thriving, teeming town would not be complete without its fair share of scallywags, some of whom were nasty characters. And a police force to match the challenges. Oh, and the politics of power is a fascinating story.

With the rapid expansion of population came the inevitable rise of the number of dead and the need to bury them. Cardiff has very fine examples of Victorian cemeteries and if you think the dead are silent about their life stories —think again!

So, if I've whetted your appetite to know more about Cardiff's rich history, do come along to one of our meetings. We use both lecture style talks and walk and talk tours led by both external leaders and those from within the group. If you have a particular topic you want to hear about, know someone who would talk on it, or are looking for help with research of your own, then you will be amongst many like-minded people. I hope to see you at future meetings.

Stuart Swinburne



Targeting Cancer Stem Cells

When Professor Richard Clarkson of the European Cancer Stem Cell Institute, part of the School of Biosciences, Cardiff University, spoke to the Enjoying Science Group in Spring 2025, he offered to host a visit by the group to the Institute in 2026. Let's just say that finding people to go along was not a problem and when Richard said, 'bring as many as you want', we did.



Our group of thirty members spent an afternoon meeting current research students, visiting the labs and learning about the promising research that is happening on our doorstep.

The science was delivered in bitesize takeaway facts comprehensible to all and time was taken to answer the more extended questions of some members. A noteworthy fact was that about 1% of a typical tumour is made up of stem cells and it is these that can then escape and cause the growth of further tumours. One area of the Institute's research focuses on this, targeting a specific molecule in cancer stem cells that has been seen to drive metastasis, the spread of cancer from its primary site to other parts of the body. We were told that drugs are currently being developed that would attach to that molecule and reduce its functionality.

An afternoon of new experiences, discovery and stimulating conversation left us wanting to find out more.

Margaret Richards

The Traveller

The traveller he makes his way to a different part of the world each day
If he is sad, he sings his song, it cheers him as he goes along.

Could this traveller be a tramp who sometimes sleeps in the cold and damp?
Or is he a salesman with lots of goods
Who sells what he can perhaps, plastic hoods?

Or is he just like you and me who have never been as far as the Irish sea?

An afterword about The Traveller . . .
I thought I'd go back in time. I remember being keen on poetry when I was quite young. I also had ambitions to travel and be a writer, so full of enthusiasm at that age. My mother used to read the Women's Realm magazine (no longer published) which had a page for children. I noticed that some children wrote in with interesting anecdotes about their pets, holidays etc. I decided to send one of my poems to the magazine and didn't expect to hear anymore. However, I had a letter from them with a cheque for 2 guineas. I was ecstatic, so much money. My mother took me to the Co-op where they cashed the cheque for me. I opened my first Post Office Savings Account with the money.

Kathleen Mc Carthy

Want to help Cardiff u3a be as good as it possibly can be?

Find out more about joining the committee, being a convenor or supporting one of the many groups and activities by contacting chair@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Consider writing an article for the 2027 magazine; share an experience you have had in an Interest Group or elsewhere. Take a picture that captures the interest of your group and tell everyone about it, or write a story, poem, crossword or quiz. Work with our editors to polish it up.

Roses, Orchids and a Cool Space



On a very warm day in May, the Gardening Group ventured, with some trepidation, to Wyndcliffe Court, just outside Chepstow; hats and sun cream aplenty. Air-conditioned VEST minibuses were a welcome relief on the journey and we hoped for cool spaces on arriving in the garden.

Sarah Clay, owner and resident of the house with her husband Anthony Clay, showed us around the garden which had been designed in 1922 by the architect Eric Francis and garden designer and writer H. Avray Tipping with the Arts and Crafts movement in mind. The garden which extends around the Edwardian house, echoing its style, has been enhanced and extended.

Clipped hedges and roses, walled areas and a summerhouse gave onto an imaginative meadow and a wood; the bench in the wood was a popular shaded spot for lunch. Orchids that appeared unannounced in the lawn were being protected from mowing and the more you looked the more of them you spotted.

The number of the less common orchid, Helleborine epipactisleptochila, in the woodland area was added to when one of our members, Elisabeth, found one previously not seen.

Sarah, as well as providing such a wealth of information and delicious cake, gave us the use of the wonderfully cool Oak Room, an oak panelled oasis where we could take a break from the heat.

Wyndcliffe Court opens under the National Garden Scheme or by prior arrangement.

Margaret Richards



Dotty Don't Do That

Irene Lock

Dotty don't do that, she said
Just do what I say, instead
Come, sit quietly on your chair
Let me brush that matted hair.

Ah that's better, you look fine
Now I'm proud to say you're mine
Oh Dotty, be good as gold
Doing only what you're told.

Then Daddy might leave his new family
And come back to live with you and me
Do you remember how he used to say
We'll go to the park to play today?

When I was sad, he'd hold me tight
Make everything be alright
Dotty, please make him come home again
And take away this awful pain.

Dotty sat there, head in a loll
For she was just the child's rag doll.

The Timeless Personal Benefits of Singing
60 years . . . and 312 miles



The location of this experience of timelessness was 312 miles away from my first such experience and known to us all I expect: St Edwards Church in Penylan—and particularly at a gathering of the Forget-Me-Not Café group.

The experience is that of my singing solo in public—out in front of others who were performing with me.

The time element is that my performance at St Edwards was approximately sixty years after the first time I ever sang solo.

The distance element comes from the fact that I first sang solo as the lead singer of a pop group, The Wigan Peers, that I formed with school friends back in my home town of Wigan (famous in a few ways in 2026 actually). This was around 1963—the time of my A-Levels. Our base was the local church hall near my street and the home of our youth club.

The benefits of such experiences of singing—not at all limited to the solo element—are these days recognised and proven to be extremely beneficial to one's health and wellbeing, most particularly in our third age.

For myself within this story, I feel tremendously excited and proud that I am still able to carry off (reasonably well) a lead vocal to a song much as I had done around sixty years ago. Actually, even more so in that my first Penylan performance was acapella because we (our Singing for Pleasure Group) had no accompanist that day. In the Wigan Peers scenario, we created loud drum and guitar backing music, of course.

The music itself: I speak of 'timelessness' but things like music do change a lot over time. To illustrate, the music I was singing across the ages sounded like this:
1963: 'Roll over Beethoven' (no not him): a rock song made famous by American singer-songwriter Chuck Berry. Our signature tune and great to dance to.
2025: 'Sweet Caroline', a massive current crowd-pleaser from Neil Diamond, singer-songwriter. Thanks to the notoriety and singability of the song, I can safely report that the performance was a big hit. To say that they joined in loudly and happily would be a real understatement. And capping it all: delight for me at delivering such pleasure to so many people at this stage in life.

So, you see: the personal benefits of singing really ARE timeless.

Tony J. Baines

Discussing Current Affairs

The Current Affairs Discussion Group is open to everyone and it's a great spot to share your thoughts on news stories, social trends, and global events that affect us all. We aim to keep the atmosphere open, friendly, and respectful, no matter what your opinions. Marcus West, the group's main coordinator, does an excellent job of keeping the group together and organising meetings.

As one of the group's regular attendees, I always have a good time at the meetings and try to bring something new or a different perspective to the conversation. After the meeting, many of us go to the nearby Wetherspoon bar for more conversation and usually a meal before heading home.

The group meets twice a month on a Monday morning. A rotating chairperson picks three topics from members which keeps our discussions fresh and relevant. I like to be in a group where people know more than me, but not too much, and this group has some very knowledgeable and experienced members.

When I was asked to be a co-convener of the group, I thought I would probably make some changes to make the group more appealing to members who may not usually discuss world politics and geopolitical tensions. It is, on the whole, a serious group for serious people, with over forty u3a members, with a regular twenty or more attending on a regular basis. CADG is a traditional u3a discussion group that everyone can understand and participate in.

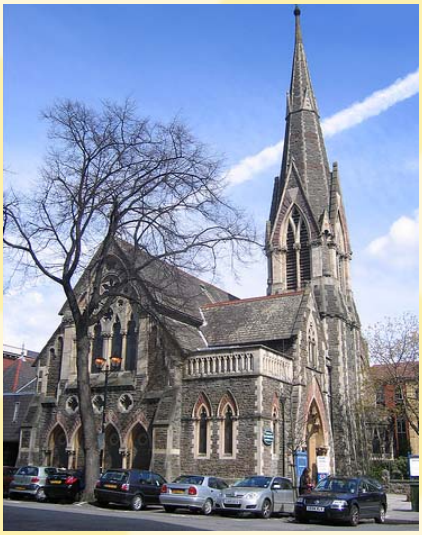
It's good to talk, they say, and that's what this group is good at, even if it doesn't solve any of the world's problems other than getting some of us elderly people out for a few hours twice a month.

Recently, we've talked about wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, the new Welsh voting system, the housing crisis, a rise in church attendance, the hybrid war with Russia, and the changing role of the US President. There's always something new to explore and discuss.

Keith Llewellyn



Monthly Meetings



Monthly Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of every month; a talk followed by questions, tea, biscuits and conversation. Whether your interest lies in American bootlegging or the social context of good food, there will be something of interest.

Meetings are held at City URC, Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ and start at 2pm. There is a hearing loop in the church which is most effective on either side of the central aisle.

Talks may be given by one of our members or an outside speaker, often from a neighbouring u3a. Some of the talks to look forward to include a look at the Wonders of the Tidal Severn, writing Comic Poetry and Jane Austen's Life and Writings.



Interested in giving a talk?
Contact talks@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Interest Groups



Interest groups are, as it says, groups of members interested in a common topic and learning together. Meetings can be led by one person or involve contributions from many. The u3a model is about learning from each other and having fun doing so.

We have over 50 Interest Groups covering a wide variety of topics; group discussions, talks, shared research, music, creativity, outdoor activities and visits. Each group has a different dynamic, shaped by the people who participate.



Have a browse on the u3a website, Groups – Cardiff u3a, and see what sparks your interest, an opportunity to do the thing you always said you would pursue or take a risk and try something completely unexpected.

Got an idea for a group and want to find out how to go about it?

Contact groups@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Committee Members and Post Holders

Committee

Chair : Margaret Richards

Secretary : Elize Ferner

Treasurer : Catherine Jewsbury

Membership Secretary : Mel Jones

Groups Coordinator : David Munson

Assistant Groups Coordinator : Karen Olds

Paper Advocate : Rosemary Griffiths

Committee Member : Kay Richmond, Meryl James, Richard Noble

Post Holders

Beacon and Website : Paul Perera, Susan Freeman, David Harrison and a team of website editors

Monthly Meeting Talks : Angela Perrett, Liz James, Margaret Richards

Publicity : Liz Knowles, Tony Baines

Magazine : Frances Woodley, Kate Dacey, Tony Baines, Nina Foley, Patrick Legge

Social Media : Ted Richards

Charity Number : 1033518

Content and design © Cardiff u3a 2026

Who's Who in Cardiff u3a Communications

In addition to the work done by convenors, much of the organisation and information behind the successful running of Cardiff u3a is dependent on your data being held in Beacon so that convenors can easily and securely contact their groups and on the website where there is a wealth of information about groups and what is planned.

Beacon administration
Paul Perera and Susan Freeman keep us updated on system changes and support the administration needed to start new groups. They also check that you are getting your emails and ensuring that the membership renewal period runs smoothly. beacon@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Website Management
David Harrison is our website manager, a key outward face of Cardiff u3a. David is working with a team of new website editors who work on web pages to keep things up to date, informative and appealing to a browsing audience as well as our current members. The team is made up of Susan Powell, Paul Browning, Richard Houdmont, Michael Dark and Peter Gaskell. website@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Paper Advocate
Rosemary Griffiths keeps our non-email members up to date with What's On and other useful information

Facebook
Ted Richards is administrator of our Facebook page. Photographs showing meeting activities with a short caption can be sent to him. Please ensure that those in the photograph have given their permission for its use. comms@cardiffu3a.org.uk

Phone contact
Sue Thomas continues to help members and non-members find the group information they need. Her phone number appears on the Join Us page of our website.

u3a Cardiff

learn, laugh, live

Become a member of the u3a. Live your best life and connect with others for access to shared learning opportunities.

Cardiff u3a is a member of the 'Third Age Trust'. Founded in 1982, the University of the Third Age is a UK wide movement which brings together people from all backgrounds in their 'third age' to develop their interests and continue their learning together in groups. u3a has over 1000 local organisations with Cardiff u3a being just one of them.

Useful contacts:
u3a website: www.cardiffu3a.org.uk
Chair: chair@cardiffu3a.org.uk
Membership Secretary: memsec@cardiffu3a.org.uk
Groups Co-ordinator: groups@cardiffu3a.org.uk
Shop: Shop - u3a - Brand Shop
Postal address: u3a Cardiff, City URC,
Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ
Phone: 07544 289434