The Bulletin Cam, Dursley & District

Cam, Dursley and District u3a Website: https://cam-dursley.u3asite.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Cam, Dursley and District u3a Events in the next 2 months

Date/Time	Group	Meeting
11th October 2026 10:30am – 12:45am Walk	Science and Engineering Group	**Introduction to Geocaching** This is a short 2.6 miles walk held as a part of the Dursley Welcomes Walkers festival led by Graham Ellis. This is a family friendly circular walk through Hermitage Wood to find several geocaches. **Booking Required**
15th October 2026 10:30am	Monthly Meeting	**Poems of the Countryside and Nature** A talk by Tony Bradley. Monthly branch meeting. Doors open at 10am. **Venue**: Dursley Methodist Church
19th October 2026 12:30pm – 2pm	Science and Engineering Group	**Visit to the Amazon Fulfillment Centre, Swindon** **Booking Required. To book on this visit, please contact Graham Ellis through our website.** All guests must be registered with Amazon at least one week in advance of the tour. If you can't wait for this group visit, it is possible to arrange a visit for yourself. Available Tuesday - Friday at https://events.amazontours.com/uk/onsite/BRS2
20th October 2026 Coach Outing	Garden Visits Group	**Bodenham Arboretum for the Autumn Colours** **Booking Required**

Date/Time	Group	Meeting
28th October 2026 2pm Workshop	IT Help	**IT Help Afternoon** Provisional date - New date to be arranged. We will be there to help members with one to one help on laptops, PCs, Android phones and iPhones. iPads and Tablets. If you are experiencing difficulties or would like to know "how to" do something, let us know, give us a few details and we will arrange an appointment and do our best to help you. Please note that it is not a drop-in session. **Venue:** Dursley Methodist Church **Booking Required**
5th November 2026 10am – 11:30am Group Meeting	Sustainable Floristry Group	**Sustainable Floristry Group Monthly Meeting** We'll be creating a table decoration that can be updated for use at Christmas **Venue**: Dursley Methodist Church **Cost**: TBC **Booking Required**
6th November 2026 Coach Outing	Historic Places Group	**Winchcombe Guided Walk and Church** **Booking Required**
19th November 2026 10:30am	Monthly Meeting	**Volunteering with Community Connexions - transport for the elderly and infirm** Monthly branch meeting. Doors open at 10am. **Venue**: Dursley Methodist Church

For more detail and later activities see the website: https://cam-dursley.u3asite.uk/events

COMMITTEE NEWS

Following on from our successful "Meet Your Committee" series of entries, the Committee would like to run a similar "Meet Your Group Leaders" series of entries. Here is the first:

Meet Your Group Leaders: Carol Barton (Mahjong and Writing for Pleasure Groups)



Hi. My name is Carol Barton and I am a retired primary school teacher. I've been a member of u3a for nearly 10 years.

I grew up in Gorleston, on the east coast but moved to Dursley 27 years ago.

I lead the Mahjong and the Writing for Pleasure Groups. I love travelling and being a Granny.

Annual Christmas Quiz – Myrtle Moreton-Cox

Please could you let me have your entries for this year's Christmas Quiz, which will be held on Thursday 19th December 2026 at Dursley Methodist Church, as soon as possible but at the very latest by the closing date Friday 27th November 2026. Please include the name of your team. If you are unable to make up a team of four (numbers per team are limited to 4 people due to spacing) let me know as I always get requests from people who want to join the Quiz but aren't able to make up a team themselves.

Due to limited space, the number of teams at this event is limited to 25 and to Members only.

Although I have someone who is willing to organise the heating and serving of the mince pies (yes, there will be gluten free ones) and mulled wine (there will be soft drinks and alcohol free mulled wine for those not wanting the alcoholic version), **I still need someone to take on heating the mulled wine and adding ingredients PLEASE**!

Myrtle e-mail: moretoncoxm@gmail.com

Third Age Matters On-line Magazine

You can read the latest issues at: https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/u3a-matters/screen-reader-editions.

However, if you no longer wish to receive your magazine through the post and are happy to read the latest issues online, please let our Treasurer Debbie Sirett know by emailing her on cam.u3a.treasurer@gmail.com

GROUP NEWS

From the Groups Co-ordinator

Poppy Proms 2026 – Saturday, 24th October 2026



Group Reports

Garden Visits Group - Brobury House – Report by Carol Wilson



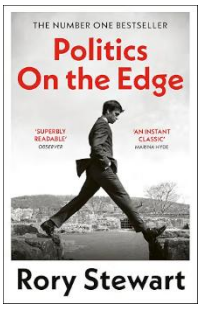
Another beautiful Garden Visit! The weather was good again and this lovely place in the Hereford countryside hosted us for a late summer experience of good food and green landscaping. Looking around, no-one would have thought we were at the end of one of the hottest summers on record.

The River Wye flowed below us and streams running down to it still had enough water for little waterfalls and charmingly laid out ponds linked together. Most importantly there were plenty of seats for us to rest in, and an interesting selection of good food and drink back up at the café beside the house…. as well as a delightful garden to eat outside in and glass houses to explore around the edges.

We have one more visit yet to go this year, on Tuesday October 20th, to Bodenham Arboretum, which describes itself as 'Worcestershire's hidden garden.' We look forward to seeing you there!



Bookworms – Politics on the Edge by Rory Stewart – Review by Sue Dunn.



This is an interesting and insightful look into Rory Stewart's 10 year political career and the state of UK politics. Rory Stewart started his career as an attaché from the army in Afghanistan, amongst other places, before entering politics so he had much experience which he could use once embarking on his chosen career.

It was a tortuous journey to become an MP, having to be accepted or not by various committees but he finally became MP for Penrith and developed a deep affection for the place. He entered Westminster to make a change in many areas but was disillusioned and frustrated by the workings and traditions in the bubble of Parliament. He had a constant feeling of not being able to achieve anything.

His book names many politicians. Some he got on with, and some he definitely didn't! A lot of it is surprising.

The book is well written, but very dense – it is not a speed-read. The book prompted much discussion , as usual, with nods to the book and to the state of what is going on in the world.

Not every Bookworm finished it but we were agreed that it was worth having as our choice this month.

Science and Engineering Group Visit to the Science and Innovation Park, Wroughton – Report by Brain Gornal

Have you ever wondered what happens to the items held by museums that never go on public display? The Science Museum's answer is to use some of old aircraft hangers at the former RAF Wroughton airfield. More than 300,000 objects now live in the new Hawking Building, under environmental conditions essential for long-term preservation. This was good news for our visit on

26th June. A dozen of us braved the drive under the hot sun. The inside temperature however was a steady 20 degrees.

We enjoyed a 90 minute tour of the storage hall with rows of vehicles and 30,000 metres of shelving. Our guide could only highlight a few of the vast range and sheer variety of items on display. A block of vertical-thrust aero engines used in the “Flying Bedstead” project were near to a piece of wreckage recovered from the Mediterranean after the disastrous Comet passenger jet crash of 1954. Following that crash, forensic examination confirmed that manufacturing and window design issues resulted in the grounding of all other Comets in the fleet.



There were however far more examples of success rather than failure. The Hawking building is a living store. A SnoCat used by Vivian Fuchs on the 1957/58 Trans-Antarctic polar expedition will be off shortly to Kensington for a new exhibition in the Science Museum.

Members shared their personal highlights. Tony Wooldridge described the collection as “astronomical” in scale, like Stephen Hawking (after whom the building is named), chose the 1916 electric car“ 110 years ahead of its time”. Myron Burak picked the beautiful example of a Honda CB750 from around 1970, something that alas hastened the downfall of the British motorcycle industry.



A Whitaker Tunnelling Machine, made for the Channel Tunnel Company Ltd in 1921, was the choice of John Delafield. It was used on a 150 metre trial excavation at Folkestone Warren in Kent at an average speed of 23 centimetres per operational day. Abandoned and left in a storage shed for the next 70 years, it was salvaged in 1990 to be preserved as a unique relic of its kind.



A modern example of women’s health care from South Africa caught the eye of Jean Gornall. This modified all-terrain motor cycle and side car combination created as an obstetrics and gynaecology ambulance, is still used to transport pregnant mothers to hospitals from areas where conventional emergency vehicle access might be problematic. Paul Sheppard picked a very recent innovation in healthcare, a complete bed and treatment unit built for a Nightingale Hospital during the Covid outbreak. It was of course completely unused.



And on a shelf I found my memorable, very poignant item - a duplicate of the space suit worn by Buzz Aldrin for the first moon landing in 1969. I first saw it in all its glory at the Science Museum in 2019. Now it’s back on the shelf at Wroughton, in storage, in the words of Aldrin’s animated alter ego, to infinity and beyond.

Science and Engineering Group Visit to Britwind – Report by Danielle Ellis



You might have wondered about QPark in Woodchester. The u3a Science and Engineering Group recently discovered what goes on behind the fence. It is home to 3 businesses owned by Dale Vince. We visited Britwind and an unexpected extra visit to SkyDiamond.

Britwind manufacture 3 different 'small' wind turbines. Their smallest is the only wind turbine not needing planning permission to erect in the UK and generates 1 kw. The middle size turbine can generate enough electricity for 3-4 houses (5kw), the largest 30 or more (15kw). The main customers are farmers and landowners particularly in the Scottish islands. They also export worldwide - a shipment for Japan was boxed ready to go when we visited.

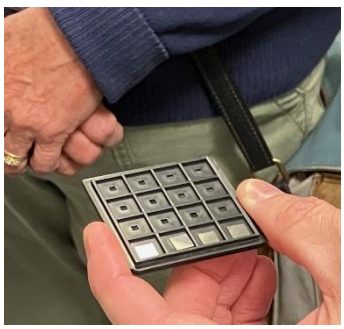
Managing Director Nick Phillips showed us round. We soon discovered that his job is rather unusual in that his primary aim is not to make money but follow ecological principles and pursue innovations.

Only a tiny percentage of people enquiring about the turbines go on to purchase. This might be due to the space required or the amount of wind the site receives (which can be checked on a useful wind map). Ironically, QPark itself is not in a good spot for wind generation, but despite this, several of us were pondering on where we could fit a mini turbine.



All the manufacturing processes for the turbines are located at Woodchester and all components for the turbines are sourced from the UK, with the exception of magnets - there are no UK manufacturers. The blades of the wind turbines are carefully tailored to create just the right amount of turbulence - we saw the painstaking shaping of the blades to ensure the very necessary perfect dimensions. In another area, copper coils waited for inclusion in the large turbines - the copper is one of the most expensive elements.

The Company is currently working on a solar panel/wind turbine hybrid. This would be far more effective as wind turbines generate more wind in the winter months, and the panels in the summer. They are also using long screws as an alternative to concrete for installation of the larger turbines reducing the amount of time to erect them.



The second business is that Skydiamond makes diamonds! It is the only facility in the world producing lab-grown diamonds locally and exclusively from nature's elements, ensuring end-to-end traceability. "Everything we need to create a Skydiamond comes from the sky. The carbon it's made from is taken from the atmosphere, wind and sun provide all our energy and the water we use is captured rain. The only thing we put back into the world is cleaner air than we took." Dale Vince, OBE, Founder.



We discovered the extraordinary processes and machinery needed to create the diamonds and viewed pieces of jewellery. The quality is as close to a 'real' diamond without all the environmental impact, and high water and energy use (it is powered by 100% renewable energy from Ecotricity).

We must applaud a wealthy man pursuing his eco credentials, experimenting with different projects with the aim of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.

Science and Engineering Group Visit to the Amazon Fulfilment Centre, Swindon

The Science and Engineering Group have finally managed to book a tour to the Amazon Fulfilment Centre on Monday 19th October 2026 at 12.30pm. This will be a car share event. You will have to make your own arrangements for lunch (there is a Sainsburys close by).

Please read all the details and conditions outlined on the event website. Note that registration must be finalised by 12th October.

Climate and Nature Group - A Local Government Panel faces the Climate and Nature Group – Report by Kath Hudson

A panel of local councillors answered questions from group regulars and other u3a members in an interesting format likely to be repeated. We welcome new members if lively and varied meetings appeal.



Toby Stride - Dursley Town Council (DTC)



Martin Pearcy - Stroud District Council (SDC)



Richard Dean - Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)

Members of the Local Government Panel

We began with the findings of our bat surveys in Dursley's urban and green spaces. Bats are a useful indicator because they need clean water, abundant insects, connected habitats and safe roosts and are highly sensitive to environmental change. The low level of bat activity recorded suggests poor biodiversity health in the town. Following this sobering message, panellists introduced themselves, their council's role and particular achievements, projects and plans.

DTC has environmental management plans for its green spaces and has identified starlings, slow worms, hedgehogs and bats as target species. Obstacles include insufficient volunteers, staff not always putting training into practice and people objecting to longer grass.

SDC uses its influence in natural flood management and active travel (walking, cycling) projects. They increasingly emphasise adaptation to climate change, for example modifying social housing for cooling and ventilation as well as heating. Another initiative is a group for regenerative farming, an approach that improves the health of the land and soil.

GCC, together with SDC, supports community-owned renewable energy schemes (including one in Coaley) and the Greenway (Pederson Way) cycle route. The principles of "Doughnut Economics", a model for meeting everyone's needs within the means of the living planet, will be

introduced to GCC's corporate strategy. A motion on the notoriously polluted River Wye is under consideration, reflecting the emerging rights of rivers movement.

Pre-submitted questions were answered by each councillor in turn, with limited supplementary questions from the audience. Topics covered included the National Emergency Briefing film; attention to the Gloucestershire Nature Recovery Strategy; housebuilding on farmland; the ecologically unsound practices of housing estate management companies; making householders more receptive to desirable behavioural changes and increasing community resilience to flooding, drought and climate-related disasters.

Space being extremely limited, let's consider the response to one sample question:

> The amount of housebuilding on farmland and countryside in the county is unsustainable – do the Panel agree and what can be done to stop this disastrous trajectory?

One panellist observed that adopting a mainly plant-based diet would enable more food production on a given area of farmland. Panellists variously commented that greenfield building could be reduced by having fewer empty or under-occupied properties; prioritising brownfield sites despite higher development costs; accepting higher density housing and developing designs for flood-risk areas. It was contended that in Dursley all the brownfield sites have been used, necessitating the sacrifice of some greenfield land or higher density living. Audience members noted excessive building of executive homes rather than social housing by profit-hungry developers; the hassle of renting out surplus rooms and the desirability of enforcing the highest environmental standards if building on farmland.

MOTO Group Visit to The Titanic Experience – Report by John Dawson



The MOTO Group is wide-ranging in its activities and welcomes ideas from any of its members. In this instance, five of us spent 45 minutes wearing special virtual-reality headsets that made us feel that we were actually boarding the Titanic at Southampton on its maiden voyage. In reality we were only taking steps inside a relatively small, level room but our brains told us that we were walking up the gangplank looking down at the onlookers on the quayside below waving goodbye to us.



A virtual officer was waiting to welcome us on board with five glasses of champagne but our attempts to pick them up only resulted in knocking over the glasses. Most other attempts to touch anything or anyone predictably had no effect, other than often bumping into another member of our group. Still thirsty, we continued on our tour of the ship, appreciating the luxury of the cabins and the ship's restaurant. In contrast to all the luxury, we went into the boiler room to be greeted by one of the virtual ship's workers who was laboriously shovelling coal into a furnace to generate steam for the ship's power.

We walked onto the bridge and watched the ship being steered, until a large iceberg collided with us. At this point, it was disappointing (or perhaps a relief!) that we didn't experience any sensation of the dramatic movements or horrors that would have occurred in reality. From there we made our way into a lifeboat to watch the Titanic sinking, getting a visual impression of how it broke into two before sinking quite rapidly into the depths. In fact, before starting on the voyage, we had experienced an introductory session with a virtual diver when we descended 3,700 metres to inspect what now remains of the ship.

The Titanic Experience is continuing in Bristol until the end of October. Undoubtedly more could have been done - given the advances in AI and virtual reality - to improve the realism of the experience but we had a great time ending with a leisurely wine-enhanced lunch in a local Italian restaurant.

Fun Quiz Group – September Quiz – Report by John Walton

The twenty-eighth Fun Quiz Group Quiz was held in the Chantry Centre Garden Room, Dursley on 15th September 2026. The subjects this time were:

Round	Subject	Round	Subject
1	Bones	4	Wedding Anniversaries
2	Historical Events	5	Monsters
3	On Your Feet	6	General Knowledge
Open Round: Fruits			

On this occasion, things didn't always go according to plan (kicking off with the fact that I forgot to bring the Projector so we had to rely on me reading things out. However, it worked), which provided a lot of merriment. We managed 6 teams this time – the Garden Room is starting to get a bit crowded. Once again, this turned out to be a close game throughout. It was good to see the Newcomers come along again to join us and having finished in the Wooden Spoon position first time out they moved to the other end of the table and were in joint first place with the Silver Spoons. The final scores were:

Team Name	Final Score	Final Position
The Newbies	74	1=
The Silver Spoons	74	1=
The Wotsits	70	3
The "O" Team	68	4
The Ducks	66	5
The Whatknots	62.5	6

As an aside, if anyone wants any of the question/answer sheets that I use, please let me know – there is no copyright and they'll never be used again (for a u3a Quiz).

Please note that we'd love to see you at the next quiz on 20th October 2026.