# The Bulletin Cam, Dursley & District

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

## COMMITTEE NEWS

### Do You Know B R Lewis? – From the Membership Secretary

We have recently (10th September 2026) received £12 from B R Lewis

I presume this is a membership subs, but we have no details about the person, so cannot fill out their membership details. This is a pity, as B R Lewis cannot become a member and take advantage of the facilities of membership, until we have completed registration. If you are or know B R Lewis, please contact the Membership Secretary Malcolm Taylor at email address - u3a.memship.camanddur@gmail.com

### Christmas Quiz

This is the last call for entries for our annual Christmas Quiz with mulled wine and mince pies at 10.15am for 10.30am on Thursday, 17th December 2026 in the Dursley Methodist Church. There will be a nominal charge of £1 per person and, due to limited space, it is Strictly Members Only for this event.

Please let me have your team name (limited to 4 per team - again due to space) by the closing date of Friday 27th November - moretoncoxm@gmail.com. Thank you. Myrtle.

# Doctoral Research at the University of Leicester



## Meet Your Group Leaders – Paul Lewington (Cycling for Softies Group)



I was brought up in Cam but the nearest primary school was Slimbridge. Later I went to Dursley Secondary Modern and then, briefly, Rednock Comp when the Dursley schools merged in the 1960s. In professional life, I was an energy economist and travelled extensively with work. I have always had a bike but only used it casually. I took up cycling in a group after returning to the area when I headed toward retirement, and then I got a second-hand touring bike. My most adventurous ride has been through Armenia, Georgia and Turkey.

## Monthly Meeting – November 2026

The next monthly meeting will be held on Thursday, 19th November 2026 in the Dursley Methodist Church. Doors open at 10am for a 10:30am start. The talk will be on "Volunteering with Community Connexions - transport for the Elderly and Infirm". Refreshments will be provided at the end of the meeting. For more detail see the website: https://cam-dursley.u3asite.uk/events.

## 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

### Wotton-Under-Edge Wine Group

The Wotton Wine Group meets in each other's houses on the evening of the first Monday in the month. They currently have room for 1 or 2 new members. If you would like to join this merry group, or you would like more information, please visit our website – https://cam-dursley.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/wine-appreciation-wotton/ and contact the leader Claire Haines.

### Ukulele Group 1

The Cam, Dursley and District u3a Ukulele Group 1 are giving a concert on Friday, 27th November 2026, in Stinchcombe Village Hall from 1-3pm. There will be a tea break, including mince pies, and chorus sheets will be provided for audience participation.

The theme of the concert is loosely Christmas and will be as lively and entertaining as the Group's concert in July. As before there is no admission charge but attendees are encouraged to donate generously to the bucket for the Stinchcombe Village Hall refurbishment programme.

### Theatre Group Trip to the Theatre Roal, Bath – Report by Judy Dawson

On 7th October 2026, 29 of us went to see "Yes, Prime Minister" at the Theatre Royal in Bath. After enjoying time for shopping and lunch in Bath, we were treated to a performance which very much lived up to expectations. The interactions between Jim Hacker and Sir Humphrey bore all the hallmarks of the classic TV series, with a modern twist to involve contemporary issues. The humour and satire weren't diminished and of course, we enjoyed Sir Humphrey's ability to produce ridiculously long sentences which said very little! A thoroughly enjoyable day.

# Group Reports

## Travel Group Holiday to Southern Ireland




## Historic Places Vist to Boscobel House, Shropshire – Report by Deborah Dinnage

This first report was sent to me a few days late to be included in the September Bulletin, but I intended to include it in the October Bulletin. For some reason, I overlooked it – my mistake entirely – I fully apologise to Carol Wilson and Deborah Dinnage. However, it is a good report and I still believe that it should be made available to everyone.

September's trip was to Boscobel House, Shropshire, home of the Royal Oak. Both House and oak sheltered Charles II on his escape from the Battle of Worcester. The House began life in c.1595, as a timber-framed modest building, set in a remote wooded area. This survives as the Entrance Hall to a grand lodge, created c.1620, by John Giffard, who named it after a visitor

declared it a ‘bosco bello’ (beautiful wood in Italian). It was not John’s main home but was a country retreat - he lived at nearby White Ladies (a former priory named after its Carmelite Nuns). Only ruins remain but many of us enjoyed the walk to visit them.



Boscobel House



The Royal Oak

John used high-quality materials and striking features, such as a huge chimney stack and a turret which are still intact. As a Catholic family used to persecution, 2 ‘priest holes’ were built, one (under a staircase) was where Charles II spent one night - apparently, he slept well. He may have been being polite; it looked a bit cramped for a man over 6’ tall.

Boscobel became famous because of its custodianship of the Royal Oak. In 1812 it was bought by Walter Evans. His very wealthy Derbyshire family restored it to its 17th century appearance, inspired by the story of Charles, and the fashionable Romanticism movement. It was used as a holiday retreat, enabling many visitors, from school outings to Prime Ministers and members of the Royal family, to enjoy its history, with the tenant farmers as custodians. The farm prospered, producing and selling its own cheese and butter. Boscobel was sold in 1918, when sadly the period contents acquired by the Evans were dispersed, including the dining table Charles II had eaten at.

Unfortunately, many visitors helped themselves to pieces of the famous Oak, which inevitably led to its decline. By 1712 it had nearly vanished, but a side shoot grew which survived the death of the original tree. In 2000 this was hit by lightning so is ‘bound’ by bands to attempt to keep it going. A replacement grown from one of its acorns was planted by Charles (Prince of Wales) in 2001 and is doing well.

The house remained open to visitors and was handed over to the Ministry of Works (MoW) in 1954, and by 1967 was no longer a working farm. The MoW became English Heritage, who now manage it - restoring and refurnishing the house, Victorian farmyard and formal gardens sympathetically.

Despite the lack of original furnishings, the house retains its comfortable and cosy atmosphere, especially in the Parlour, where Charles II dried his soaking boots and socks by the fire. His escape and the protection offered by residents of Boscobel, has passed into legend – all who helped him were granted a pension in perpetuity on his Restoration. The Giffords (a prominent local Catholic family) were asked to provide these, and incredibly they still do, posting cheques to their descendants ( thanks to inflation it’s not a lot these days, around £10/year).

## Historic Places Group Visit to Treetower Court and Castle – 2nd October 2026 – Report by Carol Tipper



The castle at Treetower came into being about around 1100AD with the start of the Picard dynasty. Roger Picard the second built the circular tower in the centre of the existing castle, between 1235 and 1250 not merely for protection, it was also a social climbing made visible and imitated the castles at Pembroke and Skenfrith.

The Picards transformed themselves from invading Normans to powerful Welsh Lords and their home became know as Treetower or place of the tower. The castle would be remarkable enough on it's own, but Tree tower is two wonders in one. Just across the castle green lies an entire medieval court created by Sir Roger Vaughn in 1450.

Downstairs we saw where the fabulous food that fed Treetowers reputation for lavish hospitality was prepared. In the kitchen was an amazing fireplace where the meat was spit cooked, usually turned by a child, also a large bread oven and a range. A separate wine area which led to a separate room for food preparation. This led to the passage way between the kitchen area and the great hall. The hall has it's original wall paintings and was laid out for a feast. Next door was their recreation area. Upstairs a walking gallery encircled three quarters of the main square. The large hall had been converted into four large bedrooms each had it's own toilet and fireplace and would have been a comfortable dwelling in those days.



The Great Hall



Roof of the Great Hall



The Walking Gallery

Sir Roger Vaughn was executed at Chepstow in1471 for his Yorkist sympathies and supporting Edward 1V in the war of the roses, the court went on to be a magnet for many evil Welsh poets, who drank it's fine wines and sang it's praises and still today is a place worth visiting. The gardens were a joy to behold with Medlers, quices and many other old plants.

## Garden Visits Group Trip - An Autumn day at Bodenham Arboretum – Report by Carol Wilson



Well! If our damp day out at Bodenham, was meant to be a payback day for all our lovely sunny outings then I think it failed. We all seemed to have a good time, with plenty of colourful trees to look at. We were guided around by the son of the original plantsman and his dog and were fed many amusing and amazing anecdotes about the establishment. He had grown up there and witnessed the creation of a series of lakes, and the building of their houses. They had also constructed a business that would appeal to many visitors in all seasons and were nearly ready with a number of family friendly Halloween activities.

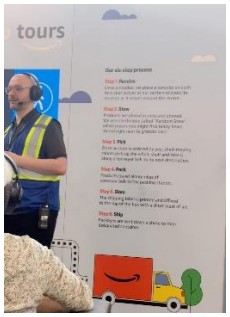
Even if the weather had been awful we could have enjoyed our day out, because their restaurant was warm and welcoming and a wide-ranging menu lived up to our expectations. We stopped there first for a coffee and a cake then went off on the tour. After that, some of us set off on a further exploratory walk, others stayed back at the restaurant for lunch. There was still plenty of food left for the later group when they finally returned. As we set off for home the rain came back and started to fall heavily, almost as if it had held off for us while we were there. It had been a satisfactory event to close our 2026 season. See you all again next year! The new programme will be out soon.



## Science and Engineering Group Visit to BRS2: Amazon Fulfilment Centre

Everything about the Amazon site is huge. A car park fit to bursting, more than 3000 employees and 1000 robots. The Science and Engineering Group visited the site in Swindon which is celebrating its 5th birthday. This site receives and sells smaller items - up to 13 kg. The packages are then taken to a dedicated despatch area off site.

On our tour we went through 6 areas: Receive, Stow, Pick, Pack, Slam and Ship.







Robots are the key to all the processes in the site. The robots resemble robot lawnmowers, although larger. In the product area, these are topped with towers perhaps 2 metres high that have pockets on all four sides that are filled with products.

Amazon sell their own items and some on behalf of other merchants. In the receiving area, everything is scanned to check it contains the correct item before proceeding to the next stage (Receive).

Filling the pockets with products (Stow) proves to be an unusual system. The products are delivered to the workstation then placed by hand randomly. In fact, a camera shows the preferred spot with a yellow light, non-suitable spots with pink. However, the operator can place the item in a different section. The camera logs all this so it knows exactly where everything is. All to avoid bottlenecks.



At this point, the boxes head off on the network of conveyor belts located above the working areas to the next step in the process.

Should an item fall off the tower, a person wearing a very special vest goes in to retrieve it. The vest ensures that the robots avoid a wide area round the person.

Orders are collated from the towers into separate buckets, necessitating some dexterity hopping up and down steps to collect items stored at the top (Pick). The boxes are then despatched to either the Single item pack or Multi item pack.

In the packing area (Pack), the machine suggests a box site for the person to use. At this stage, only barcodes are used, so no identification of the recipients details. A special type of tape is dispensed that is warm and sets quickly.

Parcels are then moved on a high speed conveyor belt, each one placed on a specific space before being dropped into bins for a particular delivery area. (Slam and Ship).

Employees receive a huge raft of benefits including term time holidays; discounted private medical care and £3000 worth of learning each year. Each person's work goal is set separately. There is an apprentice scheme and recently they have welcomed 300 SEND people to train, of which 160 became employees.




Workplace Benefits

It's an impressive place, the noise level seems high (although less than the legal limit) and the temperature set at 23C, rather warm. The employees seem well cared for throughout. Amazon are hoping to attract many more with the introduction of more automation (rather than reducing the workforce) at a starting salary of £16.60 an hour.

## Country Walkers Group – Report by Gail Oliver



On 5th November, 11 members, led by Gail and Jenny met at The George Inn at Cambridge to complete Greta's Walk'. We walked along the river Cam via Rosie's wood and watched the dredging being carried out for flood prevention purposes.

We continued to Frampton on Severn church where we had a short break and pondered what animal used these boxes.
[Editors Note – they look like Swift Boxes to me]



We then walked from Splatt bridge, along part of the canal, where we saw a vole scrambling through the dried grass by the water's edge, to leave via the next bridge and back across the fields to The George again for lunch. We walked 5.72 miles in just under 3 hours at a rate of 2.5mph enjoying the sights along the way. Well done to one of our walkers who hadn't walked anywhere near that distance for over a year!

## Climate and Nature Group – Report by Carol Mew

The record breaking summer is over and the cold winds and those energy bills are rattling the letterbox.

Here in England in 2025 an estimated 9.4'% of households (2.36 million) were in fuel poverty according to the Department for Energy Security and the Net Zero Annual Fuel Poverty Report and 7.63 million households spent more than 10% of their income after housing costs on energy.

At our October meeting, a representative of Severn Wye (a locally based sustainability charity) gave a presentation on home energy and explained that their team of expert energy advisers give free energy efficiency advice to help people stay warmer and healthier at home. They work with people to overcome fuel poverty, promote energy efficiency and support a low carbon future.

Warm and Well is managed by the Severn Wye Energy Agency - they can help you better understand and manage your energy use and bills, switch your energy tariff or supplier, advise on renewables, and check if you are eligible for any grants or funding schemes towards energy efficiency measures or help with debt, and may be able to offer a free home visit to provide in-depth advice specific to your property and needs.

The Warm and Well advice line is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm on 0800 500 3076.

Here are Severn Wye's 10 tips for a warmer safer home:

1. Set your boiler flow temperature to 55-60$^{o}$C - its more efficient.
2. Turn your thermostat down just one degree to cut up to 10% off your heating bill.
3. Get a free smart meter so you can see your energy use and costs in real time.
4. Do your washing at 30-40$^{o}$C and a full load if possible.
5. Use thermal curtains – but you need the sun in the daytime.
6. Block external draughts – remember to cover keyholes and letterboxes.
7. Ventilate to prevent damp: keep lids on pans and dry laundry outside or near an open window.

8. Stand-by mode costs money. Turn off electrical items at the wall.

9. Slow cookers, air fryers and microwaves are more efficient than ovens – and induction hobs are ideal.

10. Install a CO alarm (their lifespan is about 10 yrs) to protect against the silent killer, carbon monoxide, in your home.

In addition, if you haven't already signed up for the free Priority Services Register, visit the PSR Official Website or contact your electricity, gas, or water supplier.

Following on we discussed future topics for our meetings: amongst suggestions were Citizen Science, Climate Realism, Climate Change and the Ocean and much more.

If you care about nature, environmental issues, or an interest in adapting to what's ahead as the Climate and Nature Crisis unfolds, come along on the 2nd Tuesday of the month 10:30am, Dursley Methodist Church. It's not doom and gloom, or preaching about only eating organic carrots, we are a positive bunch and we don't all hug trees, however I do recommend it.

On behalf of the Group I look forward to seeing you.

## Fun Quiz Group – October Quiz – Report by John Walton

The twenty-nineth Fun Quiz Group Quiz was held in the Chantry Centre Garden Room, Dursley on 20th October 2026. The subjects this time were:

| Round | Subject | Round | Subject |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Halloween | 4 | Aviation |
| 2 | Mothers | 5 | British Inventions |
| 3 | America | 6 | General Knowledge |
| **Open Round**: Autobiographies | | | |

This eventually turned out to be a close game. The Waifs and Strays (3 of whom were new quizzers) went into an early substantial lead with a fantastic 100% on a joker round – the chase was then on to catch them. Although their lead was whittled down, they still hung on to run out as eventual winners. I hope we've whetted your appetite for another go! What a game, which everyone enjoyed. The final scores were:

| Final Position | Team Name | Final Score |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Waifs and Strays | 76.5 |
| 2 | The Ducks | 74 |
| 3 | The Newbies | 70.5 |
| 4 | The Silver Spoons | 66 |
| 5 | The 'O' Team | 61.5 |

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).

We'd love to see you at the next quiz on 15th November 2026.

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

| Date/Time | Group | Meeting |
|---|---|---|
| 3rd December 2026<br>10am – 11:30am<br>Group Meeting | Sustainable Floristry Group | **Sustainable Floristry Group December Meeting**<br>We'll be creating a Christmas themed arrangement<br>**Venue**: Dursley Methodist Church<br>**Cost**: TBC |
| 17th December 2026<br>10:30am<br>Social | Monthly Meeting | **A Christmas Quiz.**<br>A Christmas Quiz. Doors open 10.00am. Quiz starts 10:30am. Details to follow. Bookings should be made via Myrtle (via our Website). Jane Ball will be the Quiz Master as usual. Volunteers are still required for refreshments.<br>**Venue:** Dursley Methodist Church<br>**Cost:** TBC<br>**Booking Required** |

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