

## This Month's Talk

Monday 15th December 10.30am

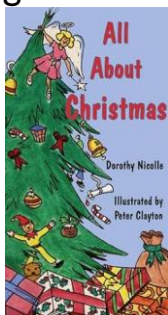
**SHREWSBURY TOWN**

**FOOTBALL CLUB**

Dorothy Nicolle



Dorothy is a tourist guide and author and will talk to us about the myths and traditions of the Christmas season. Why do we celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December? Who was Father Christmas? Who invented Christmas cards? Come along and find out.



## HIGHLIGHTS

Future Events (Page 2)

Group Reports (Pages 6–9)

- **Bridge 3** • **Digital Photography** •
- **Naturewatch 1** •
- **Walks (5th Wednesday)** •
- **French Conversation 1** •

You can renew your membership now

New Groups (Page 11)

- **Drama Workshop** •
- **British Sign Language** •
- **Podcast** •
- **Love2Travel** •

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Frank and Rosi's  
Christmas Day Invitation  
Page 3

## Events Coming Up

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January  
10:30am

**Shrewsbury Town Football  
Club**

**Sharon  
MaGrath**

**My Atlantic Journey**

**A Shropshire midwife who rowed from The Canary Islands to Antigua**

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February  
10:30am

**The Walker Theatre**

**Alison  
Utting**

**AGGIE' – The life and adventures of Dame Agnes Hunt**

**The story of an amazing Shropshire nurse and medical pioneer**

## Palmer's Café Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December **Note Earlier This Month**

Our popular drop-in afternoons are held at Palmer's Café on Claremont Street, usually on the last Friday of the month. Join us anytime from 2.00pm until 4.00pm in the room upstairs where a lift can transport you in comfort.

This is a good chance to meet other members to chat about everything u3a and there will be Committee members there, and they just love answer to answer all your questions. All current and potential and members are welcome so why not give it a try?

**Future Dates are Fridays 30<sup>th</sup> January and 27<sup>th</sup> February**



## Theatre Trip

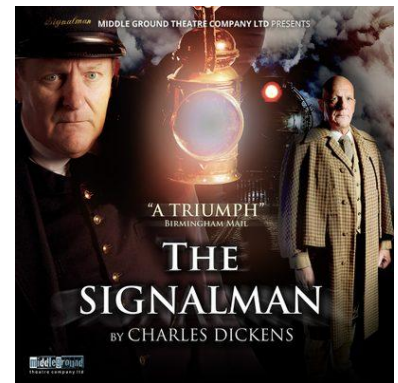


We are off again, this time to Wolverhampton Grand on March 28<sup>th</sup> to see the matinee of "The Signalman" a ghost story by Charles Dickens.

The total cost will be £49.50 which includes the coach fare. The coach will leave Abbey Foregate Car Park at 11am giving time for lunch before the show at 2.30pm

Starring Chris Walker and John Burton, with James Morley, Bruce Chattan and Adam Bert.

Middle Ground Theatre Company Ltd is delighted to announce a new extended adaptation of their hugely successful production of Charles Dickens' nerve-tingling ghostly masterpiece THE SIGNALMAN. Set in 1880, this is the exquisitely unnerving tale of a tormented signalman who is haunted by visions of impending disaster on his isolated stretch of line. Can a well-meaning traveller, who chances upon the lonely signal box while out walking, calm the man's fears before he spirals into self-destruction. If you would like to join us please contact Gill Mortimer at [gillian.mortimer1@gmail.com](mailto:gillian.mortimer1@gmail.com) or Gill Trelawney at [gilltrelawney38@gmail.com](mailto:gilltrelawney38@gmail.com)



## LETTER FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

With the 2025 AGM behind us, we can begin the new u3a Year, hopefully in good spirits.

My Chairman's report in the AGM supplement summed up where we are now and does not need repeating here. So, for the 2025/26 year, I hope that we can continue to introduce improvements to how we deliver wellbeing enhancement outcomes to our members. I note that we should try to enhance the Theatre Severn experience for those with mobility disabilities, so will be looking into that shortly.

Following on from the successful quiz night, run by our Newsletter Editor, Mike McGarry, the Committee would like to run some more central social events in 2026. The times of day chosen for these may be morning, afternoon or evening, depending on members preferences. So far, the Committee has identified the following possibilities: Further Quizzes, Ceilidh, Concerts featuring some of our performing arts groups, some form of external entertainer.

Our capacity to run these events will be directly proportional to the number of members prepared to help out. We can't expect the Committee members to do it all. Therefore, I would like to hear from anyone who is interested in helping out. Please e mail me to register interest.

### Abusive Behaviour

We introduced our Members' Handbook that is accessible on our web site and available in hard copy. A lot of the content is flowed down from the Third Age Trust: including the "Member Code of Conduct." Included is the following:

- Members are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times.

Of late there have been some instances of members sending e mails to other members that are abusive, and/or gratuitous promotion of contentious personal views. This contravenes our code of conduct and will not be tolerated.



## Membership Renewals

Renewals can start from 1 December. Please, please, please try to help our long suffering Membership Secretary and Treasurer by going onto our website, clicking on "Membership," and then following the very straightforward instructions for registering (if you have not done that already as previously requested) and then paying by credit or debit card. It is very easy but if you struggle, ask someone you know in u3a to help. We are a learning organization, so saying that you can't do something is not a valid excuse.

Membership fees remain the same at £15 for Full Members and £11 for Associate Members.

## A Very Special Christmas Day Invitation

If, like us, you don't have family living nearby, or you would just like some convivial company on Christmas day, you're invited to join Rosi and Frank for lunch at their home in Cophorne. We have three places at our table. If you'd like to talk to us about it, we will be at the monthly talk at the football club on the 15 December. You can also contact us by email [frankenrose2017@outlook.com](mailto:frankenrose2017@outlook.com) or give us a call on 07972 019077 Frank & Rosi



## Midlands Air Ambulance Charity

Don Burgess

The speaker at the November Monthly Meeting was Marcus Watkin who is a Volunteer for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (MAAC). Marcus began his talk by explaining why he became a volunteer for the charity. Marcus's connection is because he had been a patient. In 2002, Marcus and 7 friends set out on their motorcycles for a ride-out into Wales. Unfortunately, they only got as far as Halfway House on the Welshpool Road because a car veered across into their lane and collided with Marcus. He was taken by Air Ambulance to Stoke Hospital and his wife was informed that he wasn't going to make it. He woke up after 6 weeks in a coma to be told he would never walk again. He was in various hospitals for a total of 12 months. After being discharged he went to meet the ambulance crew who saved him and has been involved as a Volunteer ever since.



MAAC was founded in 1991, the 3rd air ambulance service in the UK. In the early days its base was a caravan in a field, with the helicopter chained to a tree overnight. They operated from 7.00 to 20.00 five days a week. Nowadays they have 3 modern bases at Cosford in Shropshire, Tatenhill in Staffordshire and Strensham in Gloucestershire. They fly an average of 12 missions per day and reckon to be able to reach anywhere in their six counties in 10 minutes (see map). They now operate 24/7. In the early days it was a scoop and go operation. The land ambulance would attend first and if a fast transfer was required, they would call in the air ambulance. Fast forward to 2025, and the decision to send the air ambulance is made by the 999 operator after identifying red flags in the emergency call and then referring it directly to the air ambulance team. It is better to

send the air ambulance then abort if not needed rather than delay by waiting for a land ambulance to attend first. As well as the pilot, each air ambulance carries 2 paramedics and an experienced doctor. Once they arrive at a casualty the team gets to work on the patient and may spend up to an hour stabilising the patient before flying them to hospital. The air ambulances always carry blood and some very high-tech equipment.

MAAC costs £16M/year to operate. They own the helicopters which are maintained by Babcocks who also supply the pilots. The 20+ paramedics are directly employed by MAAC, most having left the NHS. There are also NHS doctors on board who sign-up for 30 shifts per year. Each mission costs £2950. MAAC also operates a fleet of BMW X5 cars which are fully equipped the same as the helicopters. These are used when a helicopter is unsuitable – e.g. in urban areas or in foggy weather when the helicopter can't fly. MAAC has CQC accreditation as outstanding. Since inception in 1991, MAAC has recently completed its 80,000th mission, a UK record.

Some statistics, on average MAAC rescues :-

- a child every day
- a horse rider every week
- a motorcyclist every week
- a stabbing victim every week

As people become more aware the highest percentage of incidents attended at 30% are cardiac arrest. Second highest at 21% are Road Traffic Accidents. The remainder are trauma, unconsciousness and stroke.

The MMAC raises the money it needs to operate in several ways:-

- They run charity shops like the one in The Darwin Centre in Shrewsbury
- The annual Bike for Life event
- Your name (or that of a loved one) on the new helicopter if you donate at least £150
- Their 8000 collecting tins which raises £80,000 per year and pays the annual fuel bill for three helicopters
- Challenge Events such as parachute drops
- Committed Giving – e.g. Regular Monthly Donations



They have over 200 volunteers but are always looking for more. A chance to give something back and meet new people. Volunteers also get airbase visits and a chance to meet the crew.

The MMAC receives no Government Funding, it is financed entirely by donations. It is also independent from Government Funding criteria, so that when they want to purchase a new helicopter or vehicle it is their decision.

If you want more information or are interested in helping the charity in any way there is a lot of information on their website [Home | Midlands Air Ambulance Charity](#)

## Our First Shrewsbury u3a Quiz Night

The Quiz Night was a success but there were a few hiccups. Our apologies to those who were not able to hear the questions well and to everyone that we had to rush everything at the end. These and other things will be put right next time and our thanks to everyone who entered and made it such a fun evening.

The winners were Pheonix but there was only four points (2 questions) between the top four team. The poetry group finished equal third and one of their number penned this little ode about the night.



### **VERSATILITY (a little Iambic Pentameter)**

Two thirds by Michael chauffeured in the car  
Carol's leggings brightest and best by far  
Kath poised with pen and notebook plays her part  
All six of us fought bravely from the start  
Kevin, without AI, shares poets' bliss  
Elaine responded simply with a KISS  
Our secret weapon, Sara, raised the bar:  
Shropshire and sport, male singers and film star.

**Michael Carding (Poetry Workshop)**

# Group Reports

## Walks (5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday)

Nina Matlock

Before COVID there were two hilly walking groups that met on Wednesdays, one meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, and the other meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday. So, it seemed logical to set up another walking group for the months when there were five Wednesdays. Thus, this group meets sporadically, just four or five times a year. We aim to travel a little further than on other Wednesdays, and to walk a little further, and to take a picnic lunch with us rather than finish with a pub lunch. Our walks are usually of 6 or 7 miles and up to 1000 feet or so of ascent. We share rides to the start point, mostly by meeting at Meole Brace P&R or by sharing with people living in the same neighbourhood and generally arrive back in Shrewsbury later in the afternoon. Particularly memorable were two walks we had this year.

One walk was in Corvedale. It included lovely villages and:



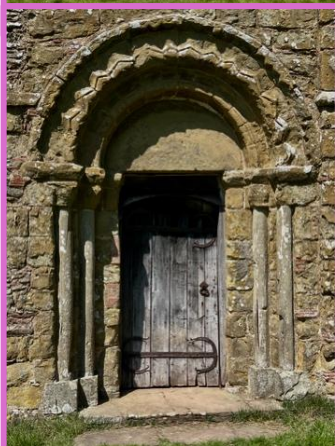
an old water mill in Bouldon...



a Saxon/Norman church in Clee St Margaret, which has extensive herringbone masonry...



a well-preserved hill fort, Nurdy Bank, with widespread views over Corvedale...



and, "Quite alone in a field. The perfect example of a rich little Norman chapel" (to quote Newman and Pevsner; *The Buildings of England: Shropshire*): Heath Chapel, which dates from about 1140. It has chevron decoration on the doorway and once served a medieval village thought to have been wiped out by the plague...

**END OF FIRST WALK.**

The second memorable walk was through the limeworks landscape around Llanymynech. These borderlands were a powerhouse of the lime industry until the early 1900s.

Our walk began along the canal which served the lime industry, and we soon passed the English kilns...



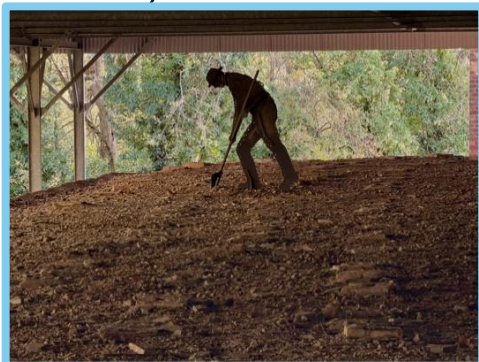
then spotted the heritage railway, near Llyncllys, built for transporting lime...



We passed a quarry from where limestone has been extracted since the late bronze age...



Our route later took us over Llanymynech hill and along a part of Offa's Dyke with distant views of Llanyblodwel Church and the Berwyns...



Finally, we reached the Hoffmann kiln, designed for continuous lime burning: and is one of only three such kilns remaining in the country...





Naturewatch 1 has had another busy year enjoying the natural world in different and sometimes unexpected ways.

In February we ventured to Attingham Park for the snowdrops and the following month we visited Bowbrook allotments where local allotmenters showed us how they garden with nature in mind. In April we had a fabulous guided walk round Minsterley Meadows to see the annual display of green winged orchids. What an exceptional place this is, now owned and cared for by the community.

In May we went to Llanymynech for the butterflies, though sadly the very warm spring meant that for many their season had come and gone. In June we were treated to a guided visit round the grounds of Shrewsbury School with their inspiring biology teacher and learned how students are encouraged to take control of their environment.



In July possibly the highlight of the year was a fascinating talk from the Welsh Beaver Officer, Alicia, about the famous Shrewsbury beavers, followed by a visit to the site at the Old River Bed. We will definitely go back to and watch progress.

Our annual coach trip in September, this year was to the Elan Valley, and we enjoyed a lovely late summer day with walks by the lakes and in the woods.

October took us to Longden Road Cemetery for a fungus foray, skilfully led by Rob Rowe who had also revealed the orchids to us in May. We were rewarded by rare blue waxcaps and many other species.

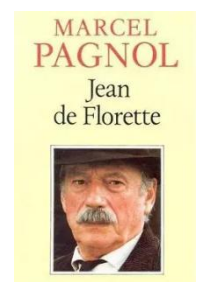
We don't have any vacancies at present, but they may come up next year if anyone would like to go on the waiting list.

## French Conversation 1

## Christina Durham

We continue meeting in each other's houses as usual where we exchange "nos nouvelles" and this generally leads on to further discussion. We try hard to be disciplined and only speak in French, helping each other with vocabulary and verb tenses.

For about 20 minutes towards the end of the meeting, if the discussion hasn't gone on too long, we take turns to read and translate our book of which we have 8 copies so normally enough for one each. We have just begun a new book, "Jean de Florette" by Marcel Pagnol, and even in the first few pages Pagnol has created a vivid picture of the insular life of a Provençal hill community in the 1920s.



**Are you unhappy with your photos?  
Are they badly exposed or out of  
focus? Do they lack interest or not  
look like the scene you remember?**

If so, the Digital Photography Group may be for you!

The aim of our Group is to help members understand how to get the best photo from their camera (and, if necessary, to carry out further enhancements using editing software).

The Group meets monthly throughout the year, offering a varied programme that blends field trips with classroom sessions focussed on essential skills and techniques.

During our meetings, members take part in peer reviews of photos taken during outings and in response to our two-monthly themes.



At the start of each year, we hold an annual competition to judge members best images taken in the previous 12 months.

We currently have spaces available and warmly encourage anyone interested to contact the Coordinator (David Flett). Our indoor meetings are on 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 2pm in Radbrook Community Centre.

And finally, a photography-themed joke...



**Q:** Why was the photographer such a good listener?

**A:** *Because they always focussed on what was being said!*



The Bridge 3 Group has continued to meet at 10am every Friday throughout the year at the Inn on the Green in Radbrook.

Our sessions are well attended, with enough players to fill five or six tables each week.

We're a friendly bunch of enthusiasts who have reached a solid, moderate standard of play—thanks in part to occasional tips from some of our most experienced members.

At the moment, our group is full. However, we encourage prospective members (who have at least a basic understanding of bridge and its bidding systems) to join our waiting list – or consider Bridge 4 as an alternative.



*And just to keep things in the spirit of bridge...*

**Q:** Why don't bridge players ever get lost?

**A:** *Because they always follow suit!*



## Shrewsbury u3a Policies

To operate effectively, and legally, we all need to take a responsible and commonsense approach to our participation in u3a activities. The general principle in Shrewsbury u3a is that all members are responsible for their own wellbeing, health and safety. They are trusted to use common sense and judgement in their participation in our activities in accordance with our Code of Conduct. All our policies are contained in our Members' Handbook, which is available on our website. Paper copies are available on request.

### NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER January 2026

I am looking for reports that promote your Group and tell us what you have been doing. If you are the coordinator of one of these groups, I would love to hear from you. No prescribed length but around 300 words is good, and a few photos are welcome too – by **15<sup>th</sup> December** please to [editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk](mailto:editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk)

- **Deutscher Stammtisch** ● **Economics** ●
- **French Improvers** ● **History of Science and Invention** ●
- **Motown, Soul and Funk Music** ● **Practical Photography** ●
- **Reading 1** ● **Sunday Lunch Group** ● **Walkers 1** ●

The new groups area has been buzzing lately! At a personal level I am excited to step into the role of New Groups Facilitator and to continue the excellent work carried out by Patti over the past five years.

Recent progress includes the successful launch of **the British Sign Language group** which is off to a great start and will be holding its first meeting in December. The Drama Games Workshop initiative is gaining momentum and should commence regular sessions in the New Year. The Amateur Radio group is holding its position despite its niche appeal. Finally, the Love 2 Travel group is enjoying broad popularity, appealing perhaps to everyone from armchair travellers to polar explorers. And – we have a new entrant, the Podcast Group (below).



**Drama Games Workshop** Remember enjoying practical drama lessons or taking part in productions at school? Or maybe involvement with amateur dramatics? This group may be for you – it offers interactive drama games and exercises, improvisation, and creative collaboration in a relaxed and enjoyable setting, led by two experienced theatre and drama education practitioners. No previous experience is required – only a willingness to participate, step into a role at times and work with a group in a relaxed and informal setting.



**Love2Travel** This group is aimed at like-minded u3a members who enjoy travelling and exploring in the UK and overseas, to meet up with others to share ideas, tips, technology and views on places already visited and to discuss thoughts on places we'd like to visit – maybe even organise our own trip if there is enough interest!



**Podcast Group (NEW)** This committee-led initiative is aimed at establishing our own regular podcast series to 'inform, educate and entertain' members about Shrewsbury u3a and its activities. Group members could try various roles such as presenters, interviewers, reporters, producers or sound engineers – who knows. For further details **about the idea** please contact our Sue Davies



[vicechairperson@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk](mailto:vicechairperson@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk) To **register** please contact me at the email address below

Oh.....and what is a podcast you may ask? Perhaps the best way to answer that is to listen to our chairman's excellent spot on the Shrewsbury Biscuit website earlier this year [Click here to listen](#).

To express interest in any of these groups please contact me at [newgroups@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk](mailto:newgroups@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk)

There is more to come in the New Year, but – please keep your ideas coming! In the coming newsletters I hope to demystify the process of establishing a new group, which you may find helpful. Meanwhile, if you have an idea yet feel uncertain about bringing it to fruition, or apprehensive about what is entailed, please contact me – I would be delighted to have a chat.

## Shrewsbury u3a Committee Members

Mike Reece	Chairperson		
Sue Davies	Vice-Chairperson		
Russell Game	Secretary		
Ian Hallworth	Treasurer		
Ian Tanner	Membership Secretary		
Frank Velandar	Speaker Organiser		
Tony Brown	New Groups Facilitator		
Patti Cooke	Minutes Secretary		
Mike Etchells	IT Admin		
Andy Edwards	Groups Administrator		
Sue Davies	Marketing Officer		
Mike McGarry	Editor	<a href="mailto:editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk">editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk</a>	07840 759702
New Members Secretary, Equipment Officer and Local Networks Officer posts are currently vacant			

## Study Groups, and Activities

If you would like full details of a group, or would like to join, then log on to our website or you can contact the Editor. Details above.

Outdoor and Sports	Hobbies	Languages	Academic
Badminton	Calligraphy	Ancient Greek	Anthropology
Crown Green Bowling	Classic and Vintage Vehicles	Deutscher Stammtisch	Architecture
Cycling 2	Clock Repairing for Beginners	French Conversation 1	Creative Writing
Golf Croquet	Computer Club 01	French Conversation 3	Creative Writing 2
Indoor Bowling	Computer Club 02	French Improvers	Economics
Naturewatch	Family History	Parlez Vous Francais	Exploring English Language
Naturewatch 2	Map Reading	German	Feminism Discussion Group
Pétanque	Reading 1	German Conversation Improvers	History 1
Pickleball 2	Reading 2	Greek Holiday Conversation	History 2
Table Tennis 1	Stitching	Italian	History of Science & Invention
Table Tennis 2	<b>Creative Arts</b>	Italiano	International Relations & War
Table Tennis 3	Digital Photography	Italian Improvers	Local History 1
Table Tennis 4	Drawing & Painting	Latin	Local History 2
Touch Tennis	Early Dance	Russian Language	Local History 3
Walkers 1	Folk Music	Advanced Spanish Conversation	Local History 4
Walkers 2 (Hill Strollers)	Folk Music 2	Welsh for Beginners	Military History
Walks – Even Shorter	Folk Tunes Workshop	Welsh Intermediate	Philosophy Group
Walks (5th Wed)	Line Dancing	<b>Social and Wellbeing</b>	Political Philosophy
Walks Just Walking	Play, Write, Record	Breakfast at Shrewsbury	Practical Philosophy
Walks Medium 1	Practical Photography	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 1	Topical Discussion
Walks Medium 2	Ukulele	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 2	<b>Cultural</b>
Walks Medium Hilly	<b>Indoor Games</b>	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 3	Art Appreciation
Walks Short	Backgammon	Exploring Mindfulness	Cinema
	Board Games	Have Pass Will Travel	Classical Music Appreciation
	Bridge 1	Living Sustainably	Jazz Appreciation
	Bridge 3	Lunch Club 2	Looking at Art
	Bridge 4	Lunch Club 3	Modern Art History
	Contract Whist	Lunch on Sunday	Motown, Soul and Funk Music
	Cryptic Crosswords	The One Club	Music Appreciation 2
	Mahjong	The One Club Group 2	Poetry Appreciation
		Sunday Lunch Group 1	Poetry Workshop
		Trips	Theatre Trips

# Some Things We Could Not Squeeze In

## U3a Trip to Haddon Hall



