

## This Month's Talk

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 10:30am  
**Walker Theatre at Theatre Severn**

**AGGIE**

The life & adventures of Dame Agnes Hunt



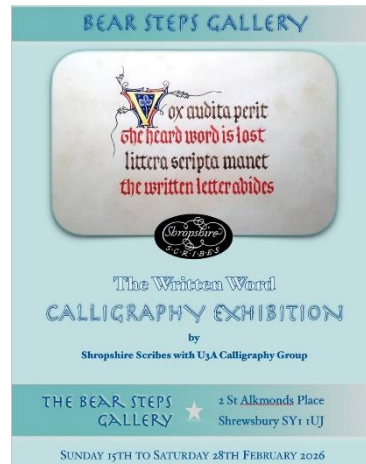
Local author and performer Alison Utting has been getting rave reviews for her one-woman performance about a nurse who sowed the seeds for what is now Oswestry's world-renowned Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital.

In her monologue Aggie, Alison takes us through the life and times of Dame Agnes Hunt, based on her memoirs



This is a restricted version of our newsletter to comply with GDPR. To read the full version join our u3a!

## HIGHLIGHTS



**Calligraphy Group Exhibition at Bear Steps Gallery 16<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February**

**Future Events Page 2**

**Group Reports Page 7**

- **Walkers1** ● **Architecture** ● **Badminton** ●
- **Local History1** ● **Classical Music** ●

**New Groups Page 11**

- **Welsh for Beginners** ● **Podcast** ●
- **Table Tennis** ● **Italian** ●
- **Radio, Computing and Electronics** ●

**Chairman's Report Page 3**

**Last Month's Talk Page 5**

**Group Details Page 12**



**Bridge Groups raise funds for Severn Hospice**

## EVENTS COMING UP

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

**The Walker Theatre**

Andrew Fusek-Peters

The well-known Shropshire photographer will be sharing stories from his two most recent books: *Garden Safari* and *Butterfly Safari* and some of his other iconic work

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 10:30am

**The Walker Theatre**

Brian Richards

A shot in the arm – a tale of policing Shropshire in the last century

At the February and all future talks at the Theatre Severn there will be five seats in the front row that will have a PRIORITY notice on them, these seats are being reserved for those members who have mobility issues and may be unable to use the stairs. The seats will be available on a first come basis and over the next few months we will carry out a review to see if we need to prioritise more seats.

A request has also been made to the theatre to remove one seat in the front row so we can provide a wheelchair space.

### Palmer's Café Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February (Future Dates are Fridays 27<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April)

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 to answer all your questions. All current and potential members are welcome so why not give it a try?



## NEWS

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November Bridge Groups 3 & 4 celebrated an early Christmas by holding their Christmas Party. It was a great occasion with 7 tables playing a morning of Duplicate Bridge followed by the usual fun 'Irish Bingo'!

An excellent buffet luncheon was enjoyed by all and finished with a superb raffle with all proceeds going to Severn Hospice. This raised the generous amount of £224. Thanks must go to all of our group members who purchased raffle tickets and the generosity of those gifts donated for prizes. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and really got everyone into the 'Christmas Spirit'!

Due to the groups generosity a cheque was handed over to a member of the Severn Hospice team, who were most grateful for this donation.

Many of us, at some time or another, have been involved or been touched by the care given by both Shrewsbury and Telford Hospice. This donation was most gratefully received and will help in some small way towards the wonderful care given to Shropshire residents, and long may it continue.

Thanks must also go to Marston's Brewery and Rachel Mooney for allowing us to use the facilities at The Inn on the Green.

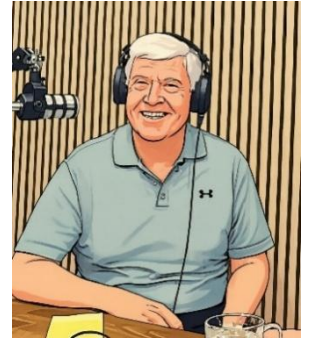
We are fortunate that we belong to a great community of Bridge players who are such a fun group of people and hopefully enjoy meeting as a group and continue to enjoy playing Bridge.



# LETTER FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

For me, January seemed to last a long time. I think that part of the reason is that it really feels like January starts on 27<sup>th</sup> December. Anyway, we have successfully passed through Blue Monday (19 Jan), and I hope that membership of our u3a really helped everyone.

**Membership Renewals.** I am pleased to report that membership renewals have gone better than last year. Thank you to everyone who persevered with renewal on-line. This has saved a lot of work for our long-suffering Membership Secretary.



**New Members' Secretary.** I am grateful to our Vice Chair/Marketing Officer, Sue Davies, for volunteering to take the New Members' Secretary role. The Marketing role will be on ice for a while, as we have enough in hand for the coming year. Sue will continue with our Facebook presence while focusing on getting our approach to New Members' firing on all cylinders.

**Thank You to Sue Langley.** For many years, Sue Langley has enthusiastically briefed new and prospective members at Monthly Talks and Palmers Drop In Fridays. In December Sue announced her intention to stand down from that role. On behalf of all of us who have benefitted from her work, I thank her for her dedicated service. Sue's role will be subsumed into the New Member's Secretary role from now on.

**Group Coordinators' Conference.** I can confirm that our Groups Administrator will be holding a Conference for all Group Coordinators, at the Hive, on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Details will be provided in due course but rest assured that significant focus will be put on helping Coordinators with our IT system.

**Open Invitation to Attend Committee Meetings.** There is an open invitation to all members to attend a Committee Meeting. The aim is to show members that the Committee carries out a function that is essential to the existence of our u3a and is not a "waste of space," as some ignorant members have been heard to say. Most people who have attended in the past have been surprised at how effective and succinct Committee proceedings actually are. Some have even asked to join! Anyone with an interest in attending should get in touch with me, preferably by email.



January Committee Meeting!

# Odds n' Ends

## Beacon Profiles

If you've recently joined our u3a, please take a moment to create your **Beacon Profile**.

Your profile gives you secure access to your personal record in our Beacon system. You can update your contact details at any time (phone numbers, email address, postal address, etc.) and, importantly for us, when renewal season arrives, you will be able to renew your membership online quickly and easily.

More information is available on the [Membership](#) page of our website, alternatively you can view an online tutorial [here](#) (electronic version only).

## Shrewsbury u3a Policies

To operate effectively, and legally, we all need to take a responsible and commonsense approach to our participation in u3a activities. All our policies are contained in our Members' Handbook, which is available on our website. Paper copies are available on request.

## A Note from the Editor

I have been having a lot of computer problems this month so if you are reading the Newsletter here then that seems a bit of a miracle. If you have sent me anything and it is not included or I have not replied to you about anything, please accept my apologies. Hope to be back to normal next month.

# Honour for Former Chairman



News has reached us that a former Chairman of Shrewsbury u3a has been awarded the BEM for his charitable work. The second major award he has scooped in the last year. Well done Andy Emery from all your friends here and perhaps we can bathe in a tiny piece of your glory for the work you did for us over the years.

## NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER March 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 **22nd February** please to [editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk](mailto:editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk)

- Ancient Greek ● Art Appreciation ●
- Bridge 1 ● Cinema ● Cycling 2 ●
- Feminism Discussion ● Latin ●
- Pétanque ● Philosophy ● Lunch Club 3 ● Ukulele ●

## My Atlantic Journey by Sharon Magrath

Rosemary Salter



The Talisker Whisky Challenge 2017: a record-breaking year for the world's toughest row, instigated by Chay Blyth in 1997. 3000 miles, land to land, unsupported. As of 2017, only 144 females in the world (83 from the UK) had successfully rowed an ocean and only seven were over the age of 50. Now, the Atlantic Ladies hold Guinness World Records for the oldest female trio and the fastest female crew to successfully row across the Atlantic Ocean, and the oldest female to row any ocean.

Sharon Magrath was one of these 'Atlantic Ladies'. What inspired her to row 3000 miles across stormy seas? Did she have lots of experience? No, it turns out she had never rowed in her life! She met three women, all in their middle years, who were seeking a fourth to join them in this challenge. She agreed and the quartet committed to rowing the Atlantic, for charity – and for themselves. One person had to drop out but the remaining trio – Di, Elaine and Sharon – commenced their extensive preparations:

- Sponsorship – £100,000 needed
- Training – physical and mental
- Learning to row (Sharon!); gain strength and flexibility
- Personal kit including wet weather gear
- Food and calories required

- Fundraising for their chosen charities
- Life coaching and working as a team
- Learning how to use the equipment
- Safety kit

And, most importantly:

Find an ocean-going vessel!

'Poppy' was built for them, quite a small boat into which a huge amount of kit had to be fitted.



On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017, the trio travelled to La Gomera, Canary Islands, the starting point, from which they expected to set off on their Atlantic voyage on 12<sup>th</sup> December. Winds delayed the start by two days. On the 14<sup>th</sup> they were off!

They were prepared for the boat's very basic facilities – no running water and a bucket for a toilet – but were naive about conditions out at sea. Wind and strong waves made rowing very hard and within a couple of days they were bruised and blistered and suffering badly from sea sickness. They had a satellite phone and after a few days they learnt that several boats had already turned back. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December two boats capsized; once out on the ocean, there were no support vessels, and the unlucky sailors would have to wait to be rescued by a passing ship.

The crew did not row at night as it was just too rough. Calm seas were rare, even by day. But they kept their spirits up with music (powered by solar) and tried to laugh at mishaps – it was that or cry. Di's husband regularly updated them on progress of the other boats; upon hearing that the winners had arrived in Antigua when 'Poppy' was only halfway across, they realised they had to row at night to make up time. Only one of them rowed then, the other two trying to get some sleep in a tiny, shared cabin with the noise of waves crashing and tossing the boat around.



Eventually, conditions became very hot and humid, and all their clothes were salty. They had no appetite and ate sporadically. When Di was being sick every day, Sharon realised they needed to eat and set up 'Sharon's Coffee Shop', open daily to encourage them all to eat the unappealing packet meals, imagining they were enjoying delicious food.

Sharon's greatest fear was swimming when she couldn't see the bottom, but she had to overcome her fear when getting into the water (attached to a rope) to clear barnacles from the underside of the boat. On another occasion, the bilge pump broke, necessitating pumping by hand.

Sharon ended her talk by showing a film of the horrific waves and crews being rescued. As for 'Poppy' and the Atlantic Ladies, they crossed the finishing line after 60 days, 18 hours and 34 minutes. They were second from last, but they had made it!



### Lessons learned:

Believe in yourself,

Big journeys begin with small steps,

What you see is what you get.

After completing this challenge, Sharon's life changed. On the voyage, she had plenty of time for reflection and she learnt to appreciate the importance of slowing down, mindfulness, getting outside and exploring values and interests. In the words of Christopher Columbus:

*'You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to leave the shore.'*

### Postscript

26 teams started the race; 22 crossed the finish line. The winners, with a record time of 29 days, 15 hours, were The Four Oarsmen, from Great Britain.

'Poppy' did another Atlantic row the following year, once more with a female trio.



This was an amazing story and if you want to see more, the three ladies were interviewed by Philip Schofield and Holly Willoughby on *Good Morning* and this can be seen on *You Tube*, as can a musical play about them and their journey called *Atlantic Ladies*, which was written by Shrewsbury's own Chris Eldon Lee and performed at the Wightman Theatre in 2018.



# Group Reports

## Walkers 1

Philip Aldred

We have enjoyed another year exploring the beautiful countryside of Shropshire on our walks.

Looking back over the year I realise that, as well as the views, our walks give us the chance to get close to smaller scale features of the countryside so for a change I have included some pictures of these in this report, like this one of a road sign near Market Drayton which might suggest frogs flying over a bridge ahead? Sadly, we didn't see such wonders!



As always there are glorious views (except when it rains!) such as this very welcome view of Cleobury Mortimer at the end of a summer walk in July



A Banded Demoiselle by the canal at Market Drayton



Manx Loaghtan Sheep, a rare breed originating on the Isle of Man but also seen on the western slopes of the Stiperstones



Waxcap Fungi seen on the western slopes of the Stiperstones

These are just a few of the highlights of our year and I would like to thank all the group members who took on the task of leading our walks – and arranging pub lunches afterwards!

We walk between five and seven miles on the first and third Thursday every month and we also walk when there is a fifth Thursday in the month. Most walks end with a pub lunch for those who like to stay on for it and sometimes on longer walks or in the summer we take picnic lunches. The walks vary from flat to hilly and members of the group take turns in leading. We still have space for a few more members so if you might be interested and would like to know more about us, please give me a call on 01743 245871

## Badminton

This group meets at the Sports Village, Sundorne Road on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the month. The group has grown to 25 members, and three courts are now usually booked for each session. Court fees are divided amongst us all so it is an inexpensive, active and social hour. Shuttles and rackets are provided if needed. Players are of varying abilities and have some expertise but those with less ability can fit in. Games are doubles, either Ladies, Gents or Mixed, played to just 15 points. This minimises waiting times between games and to enable a good mix of players.

This also makes best use of the time we have available. Owing to the restrictions of space at the Sports Village at the present time, the group has to be limited to its present numbers so prospective players are placed on a waiting list for the moment.

Cynthia Hedley



## Local History Talk

The Local history talk last month was about discovering the Loggerheads.

Seeven Thandrayen



Reg Wilford, and his wife, two of our esteemed members gave us an illustrated talk about the Shrewsbury Coat of Arms, the Loggerheads.

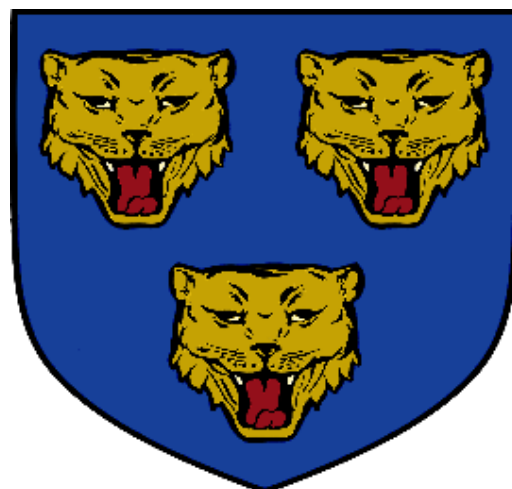
The Loggerheads are one of Shrewsbury's most recognisable emblems, remarkable for the long history behind such a simple design: three stylised, leopard-like heads. These golden faces, set against a blue shield, have represented the town for more than six centuries and first appeared on the Shrewsbury seal in 1425. Although they are sometimes described as lions because of their manes and fierce expressions, heraldic convention classifies any feline shown full-face as a leopard.

"Loggerheads" is the traditional Shropshire nickname for these three heads. Its true origin is uncertain, but several explanations have been suggested over time, and the name endured largely because generations of townspeople continued to use it with affection. The town motto, Floreat

Salopia ("May Shrewsbury flourish"), also appears on the 1425 seal, though both motto and arms may have even earlier roots, possibly granted by a medieval king such as Edward I as a sign of royal favour.

Today, the Loggerheads are woven into the fabric of Shrewsbury itself. They appear carved into stonework, cast into drainpipes, set above doorways, and displayed proudly across buildings and public spaces throughout the town.

Local History Group 1 organised this talk and the group has vacancies for new members. Contact Angela Axson via the website if you are interested in joining.



This monthly meeting is well attended at Bayston Hill Methodist Church on the first Tuesday of the month. A few new members with an interest in architecture are welcome. A few examples of what happened these past months are:

A guided tour of Bridgnorth in June was followed by tea in Bishop Percy's tea rooms. (built in 1548). It was an easy stroll around the town with some members using the cliff funicular railway for transportation from high to low town and back. St Leonard's Close, the church situated in the middle surrounded by beautiful houses, including the old grammar school, is one of many places of interest.



The Hearth, subject of January's talk, was known as the heart of the house (just as the kitchen is today). Hearths began as simple constructions e.g. such as a firepit with stones and progressing through the ages to more sophisticated fireplaces in a variety of building styles from very ornate rococo to arts and crafts, art nouveau etc. In modest homes early hearths had the dual function of heating and cooking e.g. stone cottage hearths. The Victorian cast iron range was an enormous advancement.



**At the High End  
Rococo Fireplace by Germaine Boffrand 1740  
Hotel de Soubise Paris**



**Not So High Status  
An Irish Cottage Fireplace  
Built in the 17th Century**

A variety of picturesque Shropshire follies were presented some of which may not be available for public view without prior permission as they are privately owned. Others are free to explore. The group member who gave the talk has extensive knowledge of follies and has visited many where access is not easy.



**A beautiful tower  
at Oteley Hall,  
Ellesmere,  
overlooking the  
Mere and having  
no function other  
than to enhance  
the landscape.**



**An unusual two  
storey summerhouse  
in a hybrid Chinese  
Gothic style in the  
grounds of Orleton  
Hall, Wellington.**

The Group's December meeting was a little different in that a non-member gave a talk. The owner of a self-build house recounted how a plot of land was found, the problems experienced, the financing and timespan of the build and a discussion of whether or not it had been worthwhile. After this entertaining talk the group mostly decided they would not have liked to have undertaken a self-build project. Problems could arise that were unforeseen and not accounted for as well as difficulties with bureaucracy, finding a plot, finding skilled help and costs involved. In fact, on the continent it is far more common, easier and cheaper to build your own house than it is in Britain.

Thanks to ALL who gave talks throughout the year.

## Classical Music Appreciation

Mike Etchells

Do you enjoy listening to classical music and discovering new composers? Our small and friendly Classical Music Appreciation Group shares great recordings — many with a fascinating personal history — and welcomes new members.

The Classical Music Appreciation Group has now been meeting under my stewardship for almost two years, and it continues to be a real pleasure to share and explore music together.

Our listening covers a wide and varied repertoire. We enjoy many well-loved classics by composers such as Beethoven and Mozart, but we also venture further afield to names including Boccherini, Salieri and Messiaen. Our more modern selections have featured composers such as Percy Grainger, Aaron Copland and John Rutter. Variety is very much part of the group's ethos.

Many of our monthly listening choices are drawn from a very personal source: my late grandfather's extensive collection of LP records. Between the late 1950s and the late 1970s he amassed a remarkable library of over 400 LPs.

His love of music was born out of adversity. At the age of eight, around 1915, he suffered an accident that left him totally blind. Despite a limited early education, he went on at the age of thirteen to attend Henshaw's School for the Blind in Manchester, where he trained as an organist and choirmaster.

After leaving Henshaw's, employment was hard to come by, but he eventually secured a position as organist at a Methodist chapel near his home in the Manchester suburbs. During this time, he met and married my grandmother — a poignant reminder that he never saw his wife, nor later his two sons, one of whom was my father.

Following the Second World War, he joined a government training scheme and learned to use precision instruments adapted for blind users, including Braille micrometers, vernier callipers and depth gauges. This led to work as an inspector at the well-known oil engine manufacturer L. Gardner & Sons in Patricroft, Manchester.

With a regular income at last, he was able to pursue his passion for music in earnest. He began collecting 78rpm records and later embraced the then-new 33rpm LP format with enthusiasm. In an era before catalogues and online listings, he relied almost entirely on listening to BBC Radio 3 to discover new recordings.

My grandfather died in 1980, and for some thirty-five years his collection was largely unused, cared for by his remaining son, my uncle. Following my uncle's death, the collection passed to me. I am proud that these records are once again being played and enjoyed — helped, no doubt, by the welcome resurgence in the popularity of LPs.

Each month we usually listen to two works, sometimes both from my grandfather's LP collection, and sometimes a mixture from my own collection in more modern formats such as cassette or CD.

We are currently a small and friendly group of four and meet in the coordinator's home. Members are warmly encouraged to bring along records, CDs or cassettes from their own collections to share and discuss.

Due to space limitations, we have room for just two more members. If you have a love of classical music and enjoy listening and sharing in good company, do come along — you'll be made very welcome.



**Treasured vinyl recordings at the heart of our Classical Music Appreciation Group**



**From vinyl to cassette to CD — sharing classical music in all its forms**

The stream of new ideas has continued unabated throughout January – some highly developed, others more speculative, and others reflecting the appeal of existing groups bearing significant waiting lists.

### Welsh for Beginners – additional group

*Bore da, Braf cwrdd â ti.* If you would like to know what this says – and how to say it to others, please think about joining the Welsh for Beginners group. This new group is aimed at absolute beginners and using practice, discussion and conversations will provide you with the opportunity to develop skill in conversational Welsh.



### Podcast Group



This committee-led initiative is aimed at establishing our own regular podcast series about Shrewsbury u3a and its activities. Group members could try various roles such as presenters, interviewers, reporters, producers or sound engineers. For further details **about the idea** please contact our vice-chairperson [Sue Davies](#).

### Table Tennis – additional group

There are already 4 Table Tennis groups within Shrewsbury u3a, yet this activity continues to prove popular and to attract strong interest. At this stage we are looking to determine the level of interest in creating an additional group, meeting ideally on Monday afternoons. (Timing and venue are subject to agreement by the members).



### Radio, Computing and Electronics



If you are an electronics experimenter, amateur radio enthusiast or computer technologist this group may be for you. The aim is to share our knowledge, create our own projects and develop our skills in both the analogue and digital worlds.

### Italian – additional group

This is intended for members that already have, or are working towards, a reasonable understanding of the Italian language and are keen to improve their knowledge of both the language and the culture of Italy. The aim is to cover grammar and the main points of standard spoken and written Italian, to deal with most everyday situations including describing experiences, opinions, plans etc.



### Central Events

Following Mike Reece's remarks in the January newsletter we are looking for additional members to join the small band of people already committed to running some central events. Whilst some effort is necessarily involved, the camaraderie of working in a team should be enjoyable and rewarding.

**There is more to come** in the coming weeks; please watch this space!

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

## Shrewsbury u3a Committee Members

Mike Reece	Chairperson		
Sue Davies	Vice-Chairperson		
Russell Game	Secretary		
Ian Hallworth	Treasurer		
Ian Tanner	Membership Secretary		
Sue Davies	New Members Secretary		
Frank Velander	Speaker Organiser		7
Tony Brown	New Groups Facilitator		
Patti Cooke	Minutes Secretary		
Andy Edwards	Groups Administrator		
Mike Etchells	IT Admin		
Mike McGarry	Editor	<a href="mailto:editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk">editor@shrewsburyu3a.org.uk</a>	07840 759702
Marketing Officer, 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	British Sign Language	Architecture
Cycling 2	Clock Repairing for Beginners	Deutscher Stammtisch	Creative Writing
Golf Croquet	Computer Club 01	French Conversation 1	Creative Writing 2
Indoor Bowling	Computer Club 02	French Conversation 3	Economics
Naturewatch	Family History	French Improvers	Exploring English Language
Naturewatch 2	Love2Travel	Parlez Vous Francais	Feminism Discussion Group
Pétanque	Reading 1	German	History 1
Pickleball 2	Reading 2	German Conversation Improvers	History 2
Table Tennis 1	Stitching	Greek Holiday Conversation	History of Science/Invention
Table Tennis 2	<b>Creative Arts</b>	Italian	International Relations & War
Table Tennis 3	Creative Arts	Italiano	Local History 1
Table Tennis 4	Digital Photography	Italian Improvers	Local History 2
Touch Tennis	Drama Games Workshop	Latin	Local History 3
Walkers 1	Early Dance	Russian Language	Local History 4
Walkers 2 (Hill Strollers)	Folk Music	Advanced Spanish Conversation	Military History
Walks – Even Shorter	Folk Music 2	Welsh for Beginners	Philosophy Group
Walks (5th Wed)	Folk Tunes Workshop	Welsh Intermediate	Political Philosophy
Walks Just Walking	Line Dancing	<b>Social and Wellbeing</b>	Practical Philosophy
Walks Medium 1	Play, Write, Record	Breakfast at Shrewsburys	Topical Discussion
Walks Medium 2	Practical Photography	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 1	<b>Cultural</b>
Walks Medium Hilly	Ukulele	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 2	Art Appreciation
Walks Short	<b>Indoor Games</b>	Discovering Shropshire Lunch 3	Cinema
	Backgammon	Exploring Mindfulness	Classical Music Appreciation
	Board Games	Have Pass Will Travel	Jazz Appreciation
	Bridge 1	Living Sustainably	Looking at Art
	Bridge 3	Lunch Club 2	Modern Art History
	Bridge 4	Lunch Club 3	Motown, Soul and Funk Music
	Contract Whist	Lunch on Sunday	Music Appreciation 2
	Cryptic Crosswords	The One Club	Poetry Appreciation
	Mahjong	The One Club Group 2	Poetry Workshop
		Sunday Lunch Group 1	Theatre Trips

