

# June 2026 Newsletter

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Welcome to the fifth bumper 2026 issue of the Kidsgrove and District u3a Newsletter covering the last 2 month's activities. If you have any items you would like to be considered for future publications please forward details to our secretary by email: [u3amemsecst7@outlook.com](mailto:u3amemsecst7@outlook.com)

## EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR

A big welcome Sara Anthony who has joined our committee as Events Co-ordinator. Sara is a member of the Craft, Local History and Philosophy groups. In addition to arranging speakers for the monthly meetings, she is also hoping to arrange other events open to all members. Watch this space.

## WEB SITE



Don't forget we now have a web site with full details of all our groups and contacts.

Click on this link to see more <https://kidsgrove.u3asite.uk>

All the latest information on activities and contacts can be found here so it's worth checking occasionally to find out if anything new is happening.

Google still hasn't found our website yet so please keep clicking on the link above to wake him up!

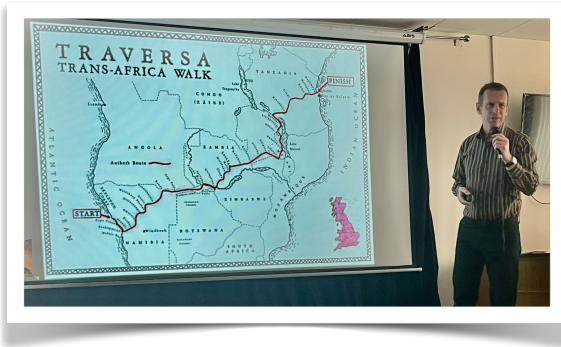
## MONTHLY MEETINGS REVIEW

Our monthly meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month in Kidsgrove Social Club (formerly the Masonic Hall) starting at 1.30pm. All members are welcome.

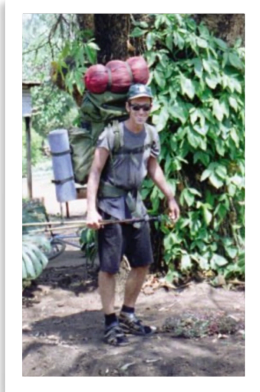
The speaker at our April meeting, Fran Sandham, gave us a fascinating and amusing account of his 1997 solo walk across Africa, as he described in his book, Traversa.

Fran planned his 3,000 mile route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean carefully, selecting known routes and terrains. Although he wanted to include points of interest he also wanted to experience the 'real Africa' with its natural beauty, culture and wildlife.

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He knew the dangers he faced: the intense heat, loneliness, blisters, insects, lack of stamina and, most dreaded of all, the possibility of malaria. So when he arrived on the west coast of Africa he acclimatised to the terrain and conditions by taking a 200 mile walk along Namibia's Skeletal Coast - an area of intense beauty but, as the name suggests, a graveyard to many ships over the centuries.



His plan was to walk across Namibia and Zambia, with a short detour to the Zambezi River, on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, to see the breathtaking Victoria Falls, before continuing his trek through Malawi to reach Tanzania and the Indian Ocean. In total he walked a distance of 3,000 miles, with only his iPod and his 100lb rucksack for company.

In the year it took him to complete his epic journey he experienced many adventures and challenges, but he wasn't left unscathed. He lost almost a third of his body weight, dropping from 12 stones to 8.5 stones. At one point he spent five days without any real food, surviving only on what he could scavenge.

Illness was a constant threat, often caused by polluted water, extremes in temperature or insects. In one such episode Fran was crossing a game park, renowned for its lions who had a penchant for human flesh, when he experienced his worse case of 'African Tummy'. He was unable to leave his tent for three days - except for imperative calls of nature. Fran suggested that even man-eating lions cannot overcome the stench of African Tummy, no matter how good the meat might be!

Fran ended his riveting narrative by sharing with us that his fear of catching malaria on the journey was unfounded - until the day after he arrived at his destination. Then it struck!



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## May Meeting

The speaker at our May meeting was Lizzie Short from the Stafford History Centre. Her talk was about the life and work of Thomas and Samuel Peplow Wood, local artists and sculptors.



One of our members wrote:

*'I was so impressed with the drawings and paintings, the trees and buildings were so detailed, they looked real! Being self educated in the Arts, he made everything look alive*

## **Future events:**

30th June - return visit by Rodney Paul who has a keen interest in the Antarctic. He previously told us about Penguins, this time his talk is entitled 'The Coldest Place on Earth'.

28th July - Penny Wheat with a talk entitled 'Well I never' about a collection of weird facts she's accumulated over several years and you will be amazed, amused and enlightened by all the things you will discover.

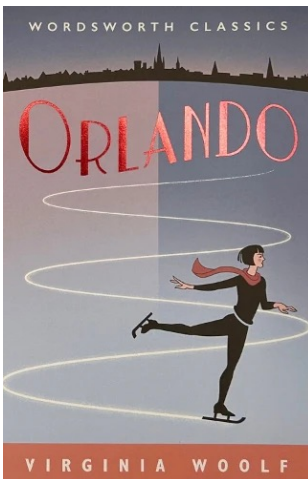
25th August - Philip Leese

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## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### BOOK GROUP

We meet on the last Friday morning of the month at 10.00am at Kidsgrove Library. At the moment the group is unable to accept new members due to book availability at the library but if you are interested in joining please contact Barbara who will put you on a waiting list.



This month the Book Group explored 'Orlando' by Virginia Woolf. This is a complex story of a 16th century nobleman who changes into a woman, via two stages, firstly waking in the Victorian period, and secondly in 1928. It discusses the perceived differences between men and women, and of writers and artists over the centuries. It was a landmark in feminist literature at the time of publication and provoked very interesting discussions around the table about its relevance today. Our group was split between those who enjoyed the challenge and those who struggled to finish due to the extremely 'wordy' style of writing.

### CRAFT GROUP

The craft group have been busy over the last couple of months. They have been crocheting butterflies for the "A Child of Mine" butterfly display, which is a moving community art installation created by the UK charity A Child of Mine in Stafford. The installation of handmade butterflies, honours babies and children who have passed away. The 2,557 butterflies represents the estimated number of parents bereaved across Staffordshire.

The display is being held at St Mary's Church, Stafford, ST16 2AP from 20th June until July 5th as part of an art exhibition.



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The project we are working on at the moment is Sunflowers and Forget-Me-Nots for a display for the Dementia Support Group at Whitehill. These will be on show at the Flower Festival at Whitehill Methodist Community Church on Friday 10th July 2pm to 8pm and Saturday 11th July 10am to 4pm, refreshment will be available.

Other challenging projects over the last 2 months have included wire animals and glass painting.

If you feel inspired come and join us, we meet weekly every Monday afternoon at 1.00pm at Butt Lane Community Centre, you'll be made very welcome.



## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 2.00pm in the main room in the Victoria Hall.

Eight writers were present at the June meeting which was extremely enjoyable. Some members read laugh out loud stories whilst others were quite moving. It really is a pleasure to facilitate this group of enthusiastic writers.

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## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

We meet weekly every Tuesday Morning at 11.00am at Kingsgrove Library.



The local history bunch have been following the 'romantic' history of Lawton Hall (Gentleman Jack and the Grey Lady and a rascally steward etc), then we quickly raced through the story of Linley Hall, and at present we are strolling round the area in 1979, spotting buildings which have since been demolished, and noticing how much wildlife and how many birds we have lost in the past 40 years. And occasionally, when the class doesn't stop him, the leader reads bits of his life story, - goings on

at the library, mixed with wild holidays in the USA , Greece, and Iceland. (Nothing to do with local history, really, but never mind...)

**Note: The History group will be closing for a Summer break , last meeting 7th July starting again on 8th September.**

## MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

We meet fortnightly at 1.30pm at 36 Ravenscliffe Road.

15th April 2026

We had a very relaxed 'vibe' to our music group this week, as many of the tracks played were 1960's mixes or classical tunes. Debussy followed Duffy and The Salts followed Stevie Wonder, Simple Minds and Stubby Kaye. A true mix of tastes and styles with a Hans Zimmer to finish.

27th May 2026

On one of the hottest days of the year, (to date) a much depleted group gathered to share some 'weather appropriate' music. The Stranglers started round one with "Always the Sun" followed by a varied mix of pop and classical tracks, including ELO, Vivaldi, The Stylistics, and a hilarious Bill Bailey singing about Debbie at the chip shop, in the style of Billy Brag. After a short coffee break we continued, ending fittingly with "Too Damned Hot"... which it was. ..although we were 'cool'.



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10th June 2026

## Frampton Comes Alive!



A full house today left our host sitting on the floor as all seats were taken. We started with an upbeat Shania Twain track and progressed through 25 very mixed songs, having a break at half time to enjoy a chocolate cake supplied by our favourite baker. We heard a new song from Michael Ball entitled "Vintage" ...very apt for our group. The wet weather was addressed with "Why does it always rain on me" by Travis, and Richard Burton entertained us with the half spoken barely sung "Camelot". A bit of "Uptown Funk" and "Show me the way" by Peter Frampton and our two hours were up! Another great afternoon.

## PHILOSOPHY GROUP

We meet weekly every Thursday morning at 10.00am at Butt Lane Community Centre.

Over the last few weeks the Philosophy group have been discussing the different theories for creation and as always differing views were held. We then moved on to Crime and Justice - does the current system work, is it fair, do we have a two tier system? Finally we discussed racism in society. The great thing about our group is that discussions are always thought provoking and although individuals have different opinions we never fall out. New members are always welcome to join us at Butt Lane community centre (next to the Fire station) on Thursday mornings 10.00am-12.00pm.

## QUIZ GROUP

Since the last newsletter we have had 2 quiz sessions.

At the first one in May the winning team were 'The Outsiders' consisting of Hilary, Colin, Evelyne and Malcolm with a score of 94 points and the team who came in second place with just 2 points less were 'The Four Stoogies'.



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In June the winning team was 'JELP' consisting of Jill, Evelyne, Lynne and Philip who had a magnificent score of 134½, which was 18½ points ahead of their nearest rivals.

The answers to April's brain teasers are:

1. Who invented the famous Bouncing Bomb? - *Barnes Wallace*
2. In the 1960's sitcom Steptoe and Son what was the name of their horse? - *Hercules*
3. Before decimalisation how many old pennies were there in £3 7s 6d? - *810*
4. Which of these Mediterranean Islands is the smallest in area?  
Minorca, Corfu, Sicily or Cyprus - *Corfu*
5. Who was the first man to reach the South Pole? - *Roald Amundsen*

This month's brain teasers are below and the answers will be in next month's newsletter

1. To which Country do the Galapagos Islands belong?
2. What star signs are represented by a Ram, a Sea Goat and an Archer?
3. Name the 4 monarchs who ruled in the 19th Century?
4. What element is a diamond composed of?
5. Which Scientist first discovered gravity?

The next quiz will be on 29th July, usual time and place, 1.30pm Butt Lane Community Centre. Why not come along and get your grey cells working!

## TAI CHI GROUP

We meet weekly every Wednesday morning at 10.00am at Kidsgrove Town Hall.

The aim of this group is to do gentle, slow movements to improve balance, stability and flexibility, improve breathing and well being. The first part of the class focuses

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on gentle Tai Chi exercises followed by a short yoga section and finishing with the Chen style 18th form Tai Chi.

It's pretty much a set routine of gentle exercises a little yoga followed by the tai chi sequence so not a group that has much to report on a monthly basis but anyone is welcome to join whatever their ability.

## THEATRE GROUP

This month members of the group have been to the Kings Hall, Stoke to hear the City of Stoke On Trent Symphony Orchestra's performance of Music from the Movies and The New Vic Theatre to see Around the World in 80 Days which were both excellent shows. Here are a couple of reviews.

### Music from the Movies

*"Great concert. Enjoyed it enormously!"*

*"Excellent evening, great seats on the balcony"*

### Around the world in 80 Days

*"Spectacular show Around the World in 80 days, full of action & humour, enjoyed by all that attended from the theatre group, amazing performance yet again from the brilliant Mr Michael Hugo."*

*"Totally agree, it is the best show I've seen at the Vic!"*

There is a Murder/Mystery being held at Crewe Hall on Thursday 3rd December. Several members are planning to attend. This is a SELF BOOK event. If you are interested in joining the group click in the link below for detail of how to book. If you put a note in the additional information box when booking telling them your are part of Kidsgrove u3a they will arrange seating together.



["https://www.murder57.com/events/detail/murder-under-the-mistletoe-99#:~:text=Directions-,SHARE,-03"](https://www.murder57.com/events/detail/murder-under-the-mistletoe-99#:~:text=Directions-,SHARE,-03)

Everything is on the website link above but if you need any more information please contact Barbara via the Reading group link on our website.

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## UKULELE GROUP

We meet weekly every Monday afternoon at 2.30pm at Butt Lane Community Centre.

We have an enjoyable session each week with an average of around 18 members attending. Our aim is to improve our playing and singing, along with a break for tea, biscuits and a natter.

Over the last 2 months we've been Wombling around Wimbledon common, Dancing on our Mexican hats and playing and singing to Elvis's Teddy Bear and Polly put the Kettle On before our tea break.

We've got 2 spare Ukuleles, provided with a grant from Kidsgrove Town Council, which are free to use so why not come and give it a try. It's not that difficult but its lots of fun.

## WALKING GROUPS

### SUNDAY STROLLERS



These past few weeks we have been to Astbury Mere, Westport lake, Chatterly Whitfield, Hanley Park, which at first sight, as in the picture, it always seems it's been snowing white daisies. Tunstall Park was next, and Leg-o'-Mutton pool. So now the rain has eased we've got more varied outings in. Quite some coffee and cake has been consumed too.

### BATHPOOL STROLLERS

We meet every Wednesday morning at 10.00am on the car park at Bathpool Park.

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## LONGER WALKS

The *Intrepids* have been out walking in all weathers over the last couple of months.

One of the most recent walks was in Upper Peover.

Dave wrote: This week I'd decided on a walk around Upper Peover from The Park Gate Inn. After contacting the *Intrepids* I called the pub only to be told they had a funeral on with a large number of guests. Thwarted once again! So to Plan B:-

A call to The Dog a little further along the road solved my dilemma. It was a good choice too, as it was the 100<sup>th</sup> different pub the walkers have managed to visit over the years!

Anyway, the walk. There were a few spots of rain as we left The Dog but they stopped as we walked across open fields at Peover Heath. The weather was very changeable with hot sun one minute then a cold breeze the next. Onward we passed some sort of 'pet supply store' with massive grounds and a helipad too, an odd assortment of artificial wild animals in the grounds.

Further on we passed a converted water tower, now a private residence, then crossed more fields and sauntered along country lanes to pass by a huge greenhouse full of tomatoes, to end up on Stocks Lane. Going by a lodge for Peover Hall we walked through the extensive grounds of the Hall, then along roads back to the pub. The walk was a smidgen under a staggering 6¾ miles and the lunch at The Dog was excellent.



*Just one of the 'animals' at the pet supply store*



*Taking a rest in the shade*



*Walking on water?*

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The *Intrepids* have also been ambling around Cheshire and Staffordshire with local walks around Parrot's Drumble to view the bluebells and Scholar Green passing Little Moreton Hall.

Venturing further afield they've been to Meir Heath, Moddershall, Nantwich and Goostrey.

Some comments from members of the group:

*"Lovely walk. How lucky are we to have such beautiful countryside on our doorstep"*

*"Was a glorious day loads of stiles and high grass just the ticket to put me through my paces"*

*"Nice country side again and history thrown in, thanks Dave"*