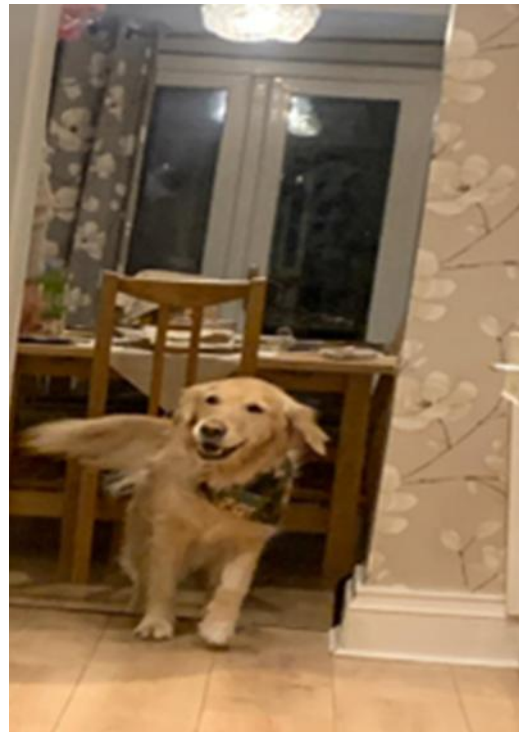




Tarporley and District u3a January 2026 Newsletter

Hello Everyone! I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and didn't eat or drink too much and that Father Christmas brought you everything you wished for! We had a lovely Christmas, a pity there was no snow but at least it was cold and sunny.



And so we say goodbye not only to Christmas but to 2025 and Hello and welcome to 2026 and to January! January is named after Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions in ancient Roman religion and mythology. The Roman god Janus was depicted with two faces, one looking to the past and the other to the future, representing duality, beginnings and endings. Of course January is well known for fresh starts, New Year's resolutions. I haven't decided what to do yet! When I was little it was often to help more in the house! But I sort of have to do that now!!! The magic fairy has long gone. However, if I leave my cup next to the kettle long enough the magic fairy does make me a cup of tea!

I always think that January looks very dark and sad and dare I say a little miserable when we take down the Christmas lights, Spring seems so far away. **But I have good news for you!** We have already passed the longest night and the shortest day and the nights are now getting shorter and the days longer, although I haven't noticed it too much myself yet but it is true!

MONTHLY MEETING

TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Thursday January 22nd 2026

Doors open at **9.45 am** for refreshments.
The meeting begins about **10.15 am** with announcements.

The talk starts at **10.30 am**.

Neil Hanson

**Champagne Breakfasts and Flying Pigs. How Not to Have
a Career.**

Having made us laugh at his exploits in his former rather wide-ranging careers, Neil Hanson is well known to our members. This time he draws on the many curious characters, tales of high and low life, false teeth, a thespian piglet, how to flog a dead horse and how to survive on a diet of beer and pot noodles. Strange but true and very funny.



Midway Walkers



Blessed with 'mild for December' temperatures and a steady, refreshing drizzle in the face, the Midway walkers set off from the Swettenham Arms on the 1st December, ignoring the dreadful weather forecast. Something about torrential downpours and flooding. We took in the sights along the route... the house of Sir Bernard Lovell, the family grave, the River Dane, Brereton Pool and Nature Reserve and finally The Lovell Quinta Arboretum, home to a range of 2,500 different plants. After shedding a few layers of damp polyester we warmed up in the cosy pub, pleasantly quiet in the run up to Christmas Party season.

Nature

Before our November meeting, we had asked members to go out and discover trees and, in particular, to have a look at and photograph all the different barks they could find. And what a variety they found.

At the meeting, Angie explored the role bark plays in the growth of the tree. Bark is more than just an outer covering; it protects the stem, helps the tree withstand external stress, and serves roles in aerating the tree, storing water, and facilitating photosynthesis. Different bark types offer unique advantages: smooth bark (such as beech trees) deters insects and climbing plants but grows slowly, while rough or fissured bark (such as oaks) allows for rapid repair but may harbour insects, requiring chemical defences like tannins. Some species, such as birch, shed their bark regularly to remove moss and lichen but are left vulnerable to insects and weather in the process.



Sweet Chestnut



Paperback Maple

Paul then shared members' photos illustrating a wide variety of trees in our neighbourhood and even from overseas. We can recommend Portal Golf Course for a local walk with many mature trees.

After mince pies and stollen, Nick ran a quiz asking us to identify trees just from their bark. We weren't very good; we need to get out more and open our eyes!

Science

At our pre-Christmas meeting, we explored the problems caused by plastics (polymers) and other persistent chemicals. This produced a very lively and engaged discussion. Paul Bujac introduced the topic and explained the main issues. Basically life has been evolving slowly on Earth for more than 3 billion years, and then humans invent plastics, new materials which are not easily broken down by the environment. One of the first plastics produced commercially was Bakelite, invented in 1907. Further discoveries followed and, triggered by World War II demands, production of the plastics, as we now know them, took off in the 1950s. Currently World production is some 450 Million tpa. Although much of this material remains in use for some years, significant quantities are disposed of each year.

Disposal route	Very approximate (indicative) proportions
Recycling	10%
Incineration	20%
Discarded to the environment	20%
Landfill	50%

Pete Broad then explored the bio-chemistry of these materials. He explained that polymers do occur in Nature, for example proteins, cellulose and fatty acids. However the chemistry here did not evolve to breakdown the Carbon chains of plastic polymers, so discarded plastics could persist for many years in the environment. Although there is evidence for some micro-organisms digesting plastics, the challenges of adapting this approach for cleaning up the planet are significant.

Pete also discussed PFAS or 'forever chemicals'. These are Fluorine containing materials such as surfactants, fire-fighting foams or plastics such as PTFE, which are particularly persistent in the environment. The C-F bond is very strong and very rare in Nature. Hence the 'forever' label. This persistence means that these chemicals can spread and can be detected in many different environments, in animals and in humans. This observation is causing serious safety concerns. Much work is needed to understand both the potential and actual health risks, and to set the appropriate regulations.

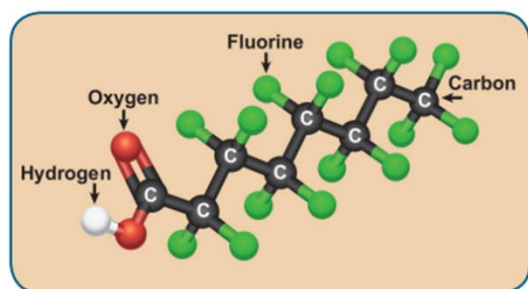
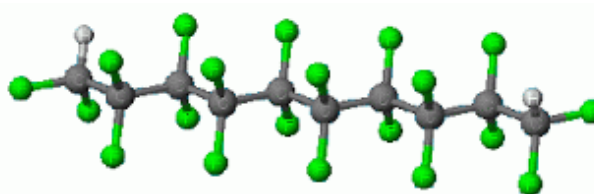


Image credit: NIEHS.



Teflon, $-(CF_2CF_2)-$

PFOA: Perfluoro-octanoic acid

The History Matters Group

The group will be changing its meeting date in January to the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 1.30 pm.

On 14th January our speaker will be local Historian, Tony Bostock, whose talk is entitled Mary Fitton, a Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth I and Shakespeare's Dark Lady.

On 11th February, Neil Gatt, the owner of Tarporley Manor House, has kindly offered to give a talk about the restoration of the 16th century Manor House to the History Matters Group on 11 February at 1.30 pm. Many of you will know that this project has been ongoing over a long period of time and the results are outstanding and a credit to Neil and all those who have worked on it.

The convener, Liz Carter, thought that this talk may be of interest to other u3a members who are not in the History Matters Group and Neil is happy to speak to a larger audience so Liz would like to invite u3a members to the meeting which will be held in the main hall of Tarporley Community Centre.

There will be an entrance fee of £2 to cover the cost of the hall and Liz would be grateful if you would please email her if you wish to attend so that she knows numbers.

Lizcarter19@btinternet.com



Neil sent the has sent the following information to Liz

If it would help people understand what there is to share, here are some bullet points to consider:

- *Overview of 16th Century Tarporley*
- *Origins of The Manor House and its ownership – including new information about the date of construction*
- *Significance of the shield on the east gable*
- *Likely format and uses of the original house*
- *The evolution of the building and its use*
- *Circumstances that lead to the most recent rebuild*
- *Methods and techniques used in the rebuild of the timber frame*
- *Materials used in the rebuild*
- *Findings during the project – inc. Priest Hole, artifacts and markings*

Tarporley Future Attractions

FILM NIGHT

FRIDAY 16th January 2026 at 7.30 p.m.
TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE



(PG)

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When Mary finds herself at the centre of a public scandal, and the family faces financial trouble, the household grapples with the threat of social disgrace. The Crawleys must embrace change as the staff prepares for a new chapter with the next generation leading Downton Abbey into the future.

Starring: Hugh Bonneville, Jim Carter, Michelle Dockery, Elizabeth McGovern.
Director: SIMON CURTIS. A CARNIVAL FILMS production. (Run time: 115 mins)

REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE

ALL PROCEEDS DONATED TO ROTARY SUPPORTED CHARITIES

£5 Adult
(All Films shown with subtitles, where available)
For more information email: filmnight@tarporlevrotary.org.uk

£4 Child
(Age restrictions apply)

Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start

A poem, kindly sent by William Harrison, friend of Hektor and Togg, to help you use your computer more efficiently

The Computer Swallowed Grandma

**The computer swallowed grandma.
Yes, honestly its true!
She pressed 'control' and 'enter'
And disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely,
The thought just makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I've even used the Internet,
But nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Jeeves
My searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative,
Not a thing was found 'online.
'So, if inside your 'Inbox,'
My Grandma you should see,
Please 'Copy,' 'Scan' and 'Paste' her
In an email back to me.**

And almost finally, some Scandinavian tips to help you through the winter to spring!

Accept the darkness. It will be dark.

Light up the darkness, light candles and small lights, this and switching off the main light can create a lovely cosy room.

Hibernate with family and friends. Spend more time with family and friends.

Embrace the outdoors and reap the benefits of fresh air whilst getting some vitamin D.

Wrap up for the weather. It will rain, it may snow, but if you dress for it, it is ok.

Practise hygge. Create a warm comfortable relaxed atmosphere in a cosy corner.

Make food that you enjoy and will make you feel good.

Be kind to yourself. Accept that in winter you may feel more tired than in the spring and summer, but that is fine and normal. Our bodies still remember when we lived in caves.

And as we bring the year to a close all that remains for me to do in this newsletter is to wish you all a very Happy New Year and that 2026 is a wonderful year for you



And finally.....

Just a brief word about any images of members in the Newsletter. They are sent with the participants agreement but are intended for inclusion in the Newsletter only. Please do not send images of u3a individuals in the Newsletter to other public digital spaces.

To respond, or contact any Committee member, please get in touch with the Secretary, Angela Wilson by email at Tarporleyu3a@outlook.com

For contributions about your group's activities, contact the editor at Angiegreen1961@sky.com

For wider information on the activities of Tarporley and District u3a go to <https://tarporleyanddistrict.u3asite.uk/>