



Tarporley and District u3a

May 2026 Newsletter

Greetings from La Belle France!



And welcome to May and the May Newsletter. Last year I collaborated with Sue Hardcastle on the May edition before taking it over. I can't believe how quickly the time has passed! Yet here we are, a whole year later! And still going strong!

May is truly a wonderful month with all kinds of marvellous things going on! New life is really gathering momentum and you can see it all around you!

I have found a lovely little verse for you which I think you will love !



In the merry month of May, when green leaves begin to spring, little lambs do skip like fairies, birds do couple, build, and sing."





Some Important facts about May that you need to know

May is believed to have been named after the Greek goddess of fertility known as Maia. Ovid, the Roman poet, however, believed that May was named for the maiores (the elderly) and June for the iuniores (the youth).

More [UK](#) prime ministers have been born in May than in any other month... Nine, in case you were wondering! Weirdly enough, Theresa May isn't one of them – she was born in October!

The 4th of May or rather May the Fourth (may the force be with you) is commonly known as Star Wars day. Star Wars fans use this as an excuse to rewatch the movies

Here In the UK, we have 2 bank holidays in May. May Day is usually celebrated on the first Monday in May. The latter bank holiday, Spring Bank Holiday is the last Monday in the month. I feel as a retiree that I miss out on these bank holidays and I should receive some sort of compensation, I am not sure how but I will continue to look into it!

Morris Dancing is seen as a traditional dance during the month of May. It's a form of folk dancing performed by groups of men or women, using bells, handkerchiefs, and maypoles. Perhaps an idea for a new group? Any convenors out there??

Every year on the last Monday of May, the Coopers Hill Cheese Rolling event takes place at Coopers Hill Nature reserve. This event attracts thousands of spectators and in **1993 16 people were injured**, 4 of them seriously, during the event! Enter at your own risk



And the main May event is that we picked Togg up from her carers on 31st May 2021 when she was just 8 weeks old!

MONTHLY MEETING

TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Thursday 28th May 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**.

Stuart Wood

Memories of a Mersey River Pilot

Stuart Wood was a river Mersey pilot for many years and tells us the fascinating and varied stories of his lifetime on the River. Pilots guide shipping into and out of the River Mersey, from the shipping bar system, from the Bar Light ship which is some miles out in the Irish sea, all the way into the River Mersey itself, the docks on both banks and the Manchester Ship Canal

Stuart Is also the President of the Daniel Adamson Preservation society



Midway Walkers

On the penultimate day of March, the Midway walkers (hardy branch) drove out to Wales and to the town of the 4 L's. Which doesn't narrow it down much. Llangollen. Having fed a fortune into the machine at the Short Stay car park, we crossed the River Dee bridge, up and over the Shropshire Union canal, past Valle Crucis Abbey and into the limestone crags of Eglwyseg (pronunciation unknown). After a snack break using limestone chairs and tables, we trudged back along Offa's Dyke before descending into Llangollen for refreshments at the canal tea room.

Amazingly it was dry all day and we sat out on the sun terrace drinking our teas and coffees, with a view of the town falls that tests the skills of kayakers. The

gastronomes amongst us stopped at the pie shop on Castle Street to buy a Welsh Lamb and Mint Oggie which must be one of the food wonders of the world, a super-sized Cornish pasty with the weight of a sack of coal.



U3A Chess Group

Are you getting 'board', or 'going to pieces'? Why not come along and 'check' out a few 'mates'.

We would welcome chess players, of all abilities, to join our small thriving U3A group that meets in Tarporley every second Tuesday of the month between 2.00pm and 4.00pm.

For further details – please contact the convenor – steve.dilworth@gmail.com



Nature

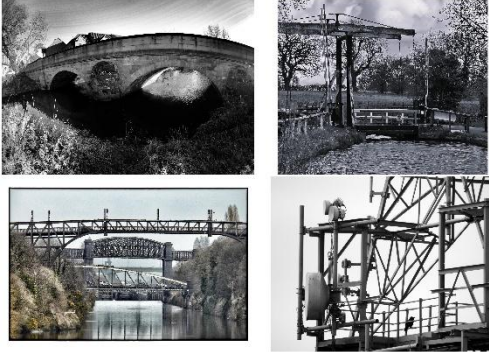
The variety of Nature never ceases to amaze us. No more so than when Gilly Murray introduced us to the world of solitary bees. When asked about bees, you think about hives of honey bees. In reality, there are some 250 species of solitary bees, who don't live in colonies but who construct individual nests in soil, wood, or plant stems. Gilly has been building bee hotels, where mated female bees can prepare individual 'rooms' to fill with food, pollen and nectar before laying an egg. The mother bee then seals the room. The egg hatches into a grub which some months later pupates into an adult bee. In Spring this new bee then breaks out of its room, looks for a mate and starts the cycle all over again.

Gilly's hotels allow her to follow these life cycles. The hotels include simple collections of bamboo canes, and more elaborate constructions where the sealed rooms can be inspected. A developing bee's life is not straightforward and parasitic insects, for example other bees or wasps, can take advantage of this trapped food supply. Species of bees that Gilly has successfully 'reared' include Leaf Cutter Bees and Red Mason Bees (see below).



u3a Digital Photography

The group theme this month was bridges, towers and pylons. This was also the order of popularity, with pylon spotters a dying breed. Even the odd glimpse of a metal truss sent the group into a quivering frenzy. We had most types of bridge represented and a lot of material for a 'Name that Bridge' gameshow on ITV.



To prove we are not just lightweight bridge snappers, we watched a video on Sir Donald McCullin CBE, the British world-famous war photographer and photojournalist, who is now 90 years old and living in peaceful retirement. He was in his element in the photographic dark room but struggled a bit holding a heavy medium-format camera.

We also debated the question 'Who takes better pictures, a professional with a cheap and terrible camera or a novice with a very expensive camera?' We watched a video online where this was put to the test.

We also debated the question 'Who takes better pictures, a



Midway Walkers 2

For the Thursday walk in April and on a gloriously sunny day, a 17-strong group of average-ability walkers hit the popular trail from Yeld car park (also popular being free) to Delamere Forest and back, via the giddy heights of Old Pale Hill and Eddisbury Hill Fort.

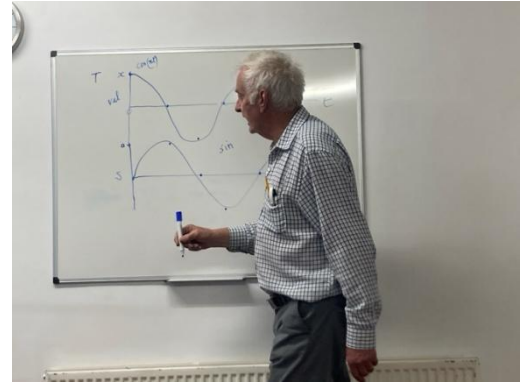
En route we found the hard-to-find Delamere triangulation pillar of the early Ordnance Survey maps of Great Britain. Map making needs a north-south reference line and the one at Greenwich was too far away for the northern counties of England. In the 1820's, the Delamere meridian was adopted as the go-to reference point for the surrounding maps (at nearby latitude $53^{\circ}13'17''274N$, longitude $2^{\circ}41'03''562W$). All the map sheets after no. 90 were then perpendicular to the meridian through Delamere. This would remain as the standard until the new National Grid system was introduced in the 1940's. If anybody thinks map-making sounds easy, just consider how you would represent a spherical Earth (or better, an ellipsoidal Earth) on a flat sheet of paper without wrinkly bits. If you have a few hours to kill then read about the Cassini, Equiarectangular and Transverse Mercator projections on Wikipedia. And in the days before satellites and GPS, you had to stand on a hill in good weather and try to recognise another hill or a church spire. Mapping Britain was an epic undertaking. This historical landmark is surrounded by brambles on United Utilities land and most people walk past it, glued to their phones.



Science Group

This month it was back to the classroom for the Science Group when they welcomed Mr Jim Blackford to the meeting. Mr Blackford taught science and physics for 30 years at Tarporley High School before his retirement. This class was, of course, extremely well-behaved!

Mr Blackford challenged the group to draw on both their scientific knowledge and their ability to use logic when faced with a practical problem. He asked questions about the forces affecting a metre ruler and about the behaviour of pendulums. Using a simple framework with small weights on strings of variable length, he was able to show several different effects from different forces being applied. Some of these were anticipated by the group.



The group was then presented with some scientific puzzles to challenge their ability to 'ask the right questions' that might lead to a solution. It was the logic of the approach to the answer rather than the actual answer that was the purpose of the activity.

For Example – when asked to calculate how many oxygen atoms we breath might have been breathed in by Julius Ceasar it would be necessary to calculate the length of his life in minutes and how many breaths he might have taken in a lifetime. The volume of oxygen both inhaled and exhaled would also need to be calculated, along with many other variables.



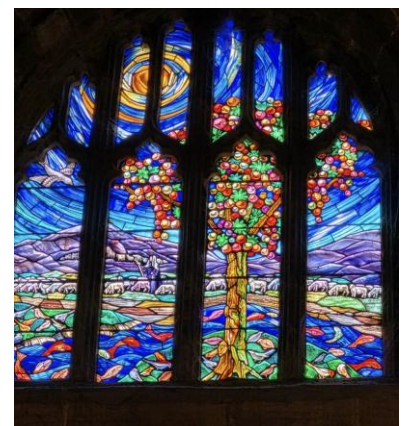
There was also an interesting discussion on how the internet might influence the curiosity and logical thinking of future students of science. While asking individual, specific questions of, for example, Wikipedia might widen knowledge, a carefully worded question to an AI Chatbot source might stifle an enquiring mind completely.

It was an interesting morning though it is fair to say that one or two members may have had to be kept behind for extra lessons!

Art Appreciation

There has been an emphasis on structures recently in the Art Appreciation group. In **March** they visited Tarvin Parish Church to look at the architectural development of the building and the stained glass. Of particular interest was the modern west window that was commissioned by Hilary Banner in memory of her husband and was designed by her daughter. It was created by a Lancashire company and provides a positive and uplifting image of God's love as the congregation leave the church.

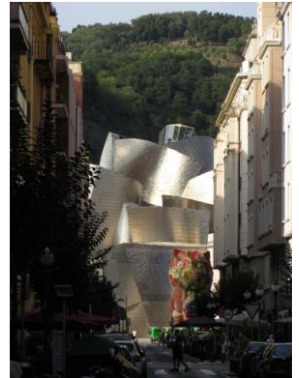
Much of the remaining windows in Tarvin were created by the Victorian designer C E Kempe, whose work is noted for the delicacy of the colour and the fine details of the figures. Audrey Wraith then gave a fascinating history of stained glass, both ecclesiastical and secular.



The building theme was continued in the **April** meeting when members spoke about their favourite building. The mix was eclectic and reflected a wide range of both styles and personal experiences.



The Fogg Island Inn on a sparsely inhabited part of Newfoundland, sits dramatically on the bare rocky shore showing that nature and contemporary design can sit together with great effect.



The titanium tiles of the Guggenheim in Bilboa add drama and light to a deep river valley, not to mention a huge boost to the local economy.



Closer to home, the Fort Dunlop Building in Birmingham, now over 100 years old, has dominated the landscape in many guises; as an industrial workplace, a derelict monument to changing times and now as an office centre, hotel and cultural space. Thousands of people pass it daily on the Motorway, but few may see it clearly as a definitive piece of Victorian architecture,

Another exuberant Victorian structure was the headquarters of the John Summers steelworks on the River Dee. The exuberant brick building it is now undergoing renovation and repurposing after a period of decline.



Among other structures discussed were Portmeirion, Chester's old market facade, the Dancing House in Prague, the Stature of Liberty and the Registan Square in Samarkand.

Art Appreciation welcomes anyone with an interest in any kind of art and design. As well as lively meetings, the regular Newsletter contains information on many exhibitions and events over a wide local area. Trips are arranged; the next will be to the Lady Lever Art Gallery, while the meeting after that will focus on female artists, well known and neglected.

For more information, please go to the website www.tarporleyanddistrict.u3asite.uk for more information. A warm welcome - and coffee and biscuits - await!

Book Group 2 April Review

Our book choice for April was the Daphne du Maurier gothic mystery novel “My Cousin Rachel”. The book opens with Philip Ashley, a young heir in Cornwall, resolved to despise the widow he suspects of causing his guardian Ambrose’s death in Italy. But when Rachel arrives, her charm draws him in, blurring the line between devotion and distrust until both love and danger seem equally possible. The author gives the reader plenty of clues to the mystery, some suspicious evil characters and others who’s naivety and impulsive acts are frustrating.

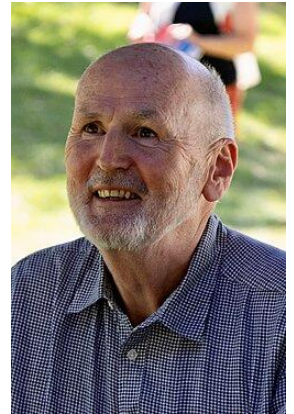
Most members of the group enjoyed the book and found it to be very well written. The themes of jealousy, deceit and obsession kept us engaged throughout and the ambiguous ending was a refreshing change from more formulaic modern mystery novels. The book provoked a lively discussion, and members were split in their opinion as to whether Rachel was evil and manipulative or not.

Book Group 2 rating 8.5/10

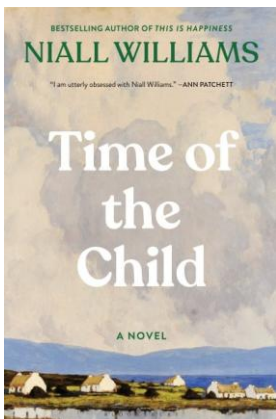
Book Club 1

The book chosen for the April meeting was **Time of the Child** by the Irish author **Niall Williams**. Published in 2024, this is the 13th novel of a writer who has received many prizes and much literary acclaim, but id perhaps not as well-known as other Irish writers.

The book is set in December 1962 in the small West coast Irish town of Faha. Steeped in the traditions of Catholic, conservative rural Ireland, knowledge is spread efficiently and discretely in an accepted verbal short-hand. In this community, the reticent and deeply private doctor, Jack Troy, has offered help for many decades. He lives with his oldest daughter Ronnie, who has quietly accepted her supportive role as her father’s companion. When a baby is found abandoned at the end of the Christmas Fair and brought to the doctor’s house, the lives of these two changes for ever. Reluctant to



hand over the child to the authorities and aware of the deep bond that has developed between Ronnie and the baby, he seeks to find a solution that will allow her, an unwed woman, to be able to keep and raise the child who they have named Noelle.



The group agreed that this was a beautifully written novel in a language that was almost like poetry at times. His description of the characters is intimate, heartwarming yet totally realistic. The slow pace of rural life conceals a wealth of characters whose internal lives and public actions convey the complexity of the parish and the parishioners with insight, understanding and, quite often, humour.

If there was a dissenting view it was that the words, however lovely, were very abundant and sometimes slowed the narrative to a snail’s pace. The rain, a constant backdrop to the story, was described many times in many ways, but was always wet!

Despite this, the general conclusion was that this was a book to treasure and a story that would linger in the reader’s mind for some time.

Future Events

At Tarvin Community Centre

Friday Film Night

Song Sung Blue

Friday 22nd May 2026

Doors & Bar Open at 7.00 pm

Film Starts at 7.30pm

Run Time 132 mins

Certificate 12A



Cheshire Rural Touring Arts

The War of the Worlds

Gav Cross

Saturday 2nd May 2026

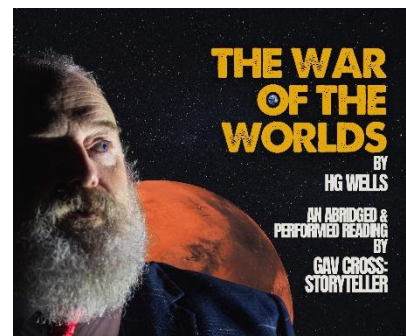
Doors & Bar Open at 7.00 pm

Run Time 100 minutes (plus interval)

Suitable for Adults and Children 12+

Tickets £12.00, Available at the Post Office, [Online](#) or

Pay on the Door (Cash or Card)



HG Wells' sci-fi classic takes on urgent new meaning in this gripping solo performance by Gav Cross. Delivered in the intimate style of Victorian parlour reading, this 100-minute event plunges audience into a world torn apart by merciless Martian invasion.

Tarporley Future Attractions

Tarporley Film Night

Hamnet

Friday 15th May

7pm for a 7.30pm start in Tarporley Community Centre. ADULTS £5, CHILDREN £4 (subject to film rating).

| FILM NIGHT |

FRIDAY 15th May at 7.30 p.m.
TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

© 2023 FOCUS FEATURES LLC
(12)

William Shakespeare falls for the free-spirited Agnes. Their whirlwind romance leads to marriage and three children, but, as Will's theatrical ambitions draw him to London, Agnes remains to manage the household. When tragedy strikes, their bond is deeply tested - but through grief and resilience, their journey inspires the creation of Shakespeare's masterpiece, Hamlet.

Starring: Jessie Buckley, Paul Mescal.

Director: CHLOÉ ZHAO. A UNIVERSAL PICTURES FILM. (Run time: 120 mins)

REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE

ALL PROCEEDS DONATED TO ROTARY SUPPORTED CHARITIES

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

£4 Child
(Age restrictions apply)

And almost finally, some May jokes from Hektor and Togg

Why did May bring a ladder? To reach the high spirits of spring!

What's May's favourite type of music? Bloom & roll!

What do you call a party in May? Mayhem

How does May stay in shape? By doing flowercises every morning!

Why did the bee love May? Because it's always buzzing with fun!

Why did the sun break up with April? It found May more radiant!

What do you call a May picnic for ghosts? Boo-nanza ... but the fun kind!

And Now

Au revoir de France et a bientôt a Angleterre!



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, please get in touch with the editor at Angiegreen1961@sky.com

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

Tarporley & District U3A is a Registered Charity – No 117137