

# ***WINTER 2015 MAGAZINE***

Welcome to the Winter 2015 edition of our Magazine.  
This issue runs from 1st January to 31st March.

Reports include:

Walking Group—January

Science, Nature & All Things Technical—January, a visit  
to Solihull Library for an exhibition of photographs.

New Year Lunch

Science, Nature and All Things Technical—February

Ballroom Dancing

Walking Group—March

Science, Nature & All Things Technical—March, an illus-  
trated talk about Holy Trinity Church.

The Choir Spring Concert, March 2015

U3A Memory Course

Last update: 31st March 2015



Pictured above is the Shakespeare Birthplace Lightshow December 2014



## Walking Group—January 2015

We had a lovely sunny, dry day for our monthly walk on Wednesday 14th January. Val and Fred led us on a walk around Stratford, using hard surface paths where possible—and it was most of the way! We met at the Gower Memorial on the Bancroft and walked down the river bank to Lucy's Mill Bridge. We did a roughly circular route past the Greenway car park along a wide path between the Wetherby Way development by the racecourse and the cemetery. After crossing the Evesham Road, we followed the course of a brook towards Shottery, using footpaths and a road to arrive at Shottery by the Primary School. From there we crossed to Church Lane and then the footpath towards Ann Hathaway's cottage. We continued to follow the stream past the café and through the Birthplace Trust's woodland walk. We then continued at the end of the cottages in Shottery Lane when we turned off the lane along yet another footpath to follow the stream again. We stopped

for a refreshment break and photo opportunity near the allotments in Church Lane.

We continued along Church Lane, over Alcester Road and then followed the road through the housing development towards Drayton Avenue. There is a streamside footpath but it is not surfaced all the way and gets very muddy. At this time of year it is best avoided. From Drayton Avenue we walked across to Masons Road and so to the canal towpath at Timothy's Bridge Road. The towpath is now a lovely hard surface path down as far as Birmingham Road and along to Warwick Road. We followed the canal back to the basin and the Bancroft. A very pleasant walk with good weather.

Thanks to Val and Fred for organising and leading the walk.

Continued on next page.





## Walking Group—January Walk Continued



Photographs taken on walk.

RSC Theatre from Tramway Bridge

Tree near canal basin dressed with crocheted/knitted squares for a charity event.

RSC Theatre from near canal basin.





## Science, Nature and all things Technical Group

For our meeting on Friday 16th January we went to Solihull Central Library to visit an exhibition given by the Victorian Society. The exhibition was about their work in publicising Victorian buildings, their beauty, the workmanship that went into their creation, the design that made them well suited to whatever role they were erected for. The Victorian Society was established in 1958 and has had many successes in preventing iconic buildings from being destroyed - St Pancras Station and Hotel to name but two. There have been some missed opportunities. Euston Station and Arch were destroyed in the early 1960s before the Society really got going. But there is some hope that the new redevelopment of Euston Station (the 1960s building was found to be not up to the job and is to be rebuilt) may see the return of the Euston Arch. There were many photographs of Victorian buildings saved, and lost, with narratives to explain. A very good exhibition.

Most of the party walked across the road from The Touchwood Shopping Centre, where the library is situated, to the Church of St Alphege. This is a very early church; established by 1220 (as was Holy Trinity in Stratford) and of a similar construction to Holy Trinity with a transept form with tower above the transept. A guide gave us a very instructive tour of the church, including a chantry chapel below ground with a further chapel on a floor above it. Noted was the lean in the columns and arches flanking the nave. Tie bars and buttresses have been employed to counter the lean and it is hoped that it will not get any worse. Lunch was taken in an American style eatery in the

Shopping Centre.





## Science, Nature & all Things Technical Group visit continued..

Photographs inside St Alphege Church

Top: Underground Chantry Chapel to St Francis

Bottom left: Upper Chapel

Bottom right: Nave showing columns and arches splaying out at top.





## The New Year Lunch—Saturday 24th January 2015

Over 80 U3A members sat down to our New Year Lunch this year. Venue was Le Bistrot Pierre, close by the historic Clopton Bridge over the River Avon.

Chairman, Geoff Bridgewater, opened the proceedings with a short speech welcoming everyone and then lunch was served. During the interval between the main course and the dessert a short quiz was held—twenty general knowledge questions. Teams were as people organised themselves, couples threes or whatever. Three teams managed 20 correct answers with several more on 19.

Most people enjoyed the lunch and the social get together. Photographs of all ten tables follow. Many thanks to Athena for organising and Robyn for helping with the menus and other printed matter.

















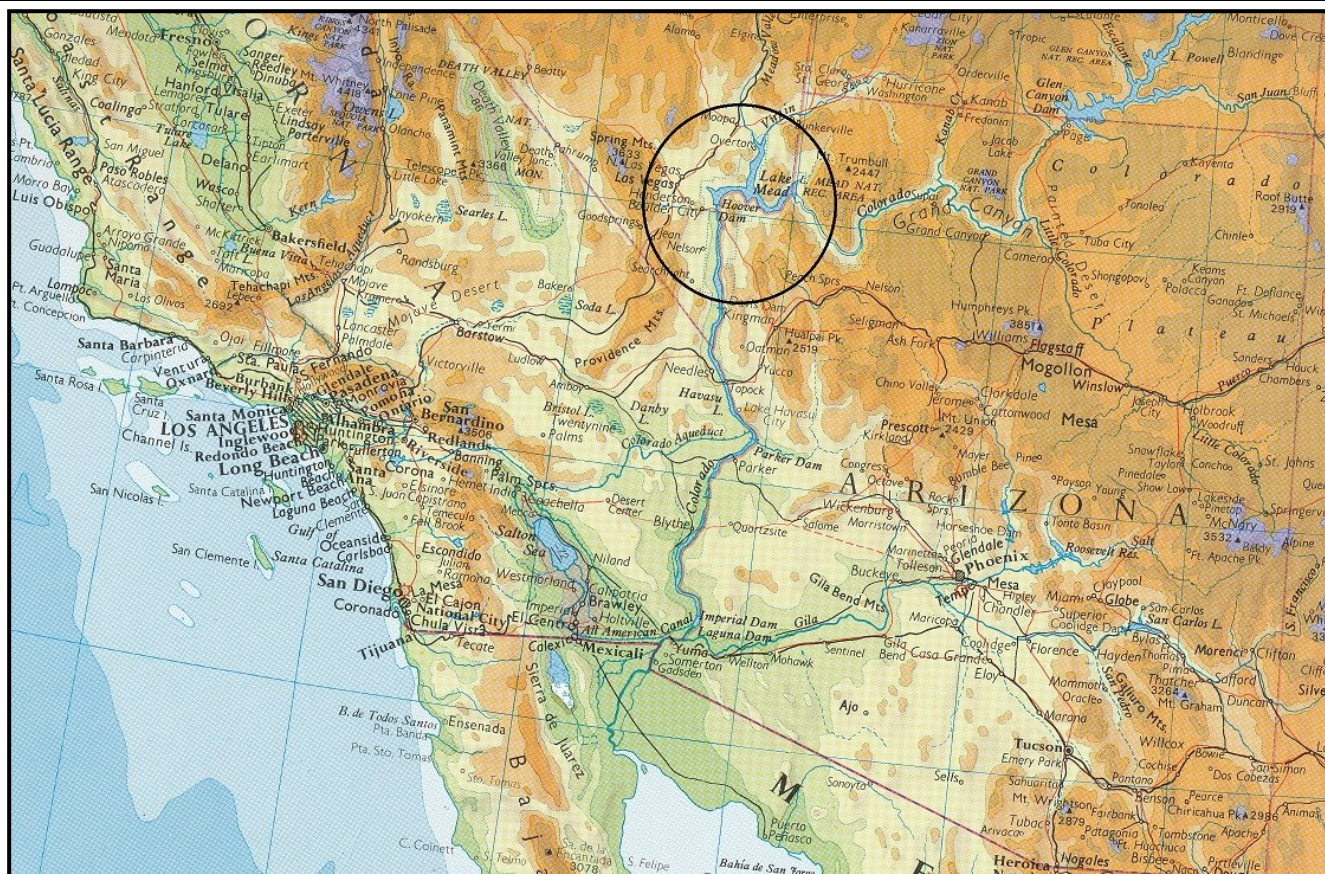
## Science, Nature and All Things Technical

Our meeting on Friday 13th February was very well attended with 37 members crowding into the New Room at the Methodist Church Hall to watch a DVD about one of the Technological Wonders of the World.

The subject was the building of the Hoover Dam (originally called The Boulder Dam but renamed in 1948 in honour of former President Herbert Hoover) on the Colorado River in the south west of the USA. Our group leader, Geoff Bridgewater, introduced the DVD with some information about the siting of the dam in the middle of a desert miles from any town or city. The site chosen was in the mountains on the edge of the Rockies where there were

two possible canyons with the required narrow profile. In the event, Black Canyon was chosen, although Boulder Canyon had been an early favourite. The name Boulder Dam was retained, with a later renaming to Hoover Dam after the President who started the project.

The documentary programme concentrated on the technical challenges faced and the interplay between the Chief Engineer for the Consortium, Frank Crowe, and the Engineer for the Government overseeing the correct manufacturing standards were maintained. This was particularly noticeable during the concrete pouring in the later stages of the project. Incorrect pouring—trying to pour too

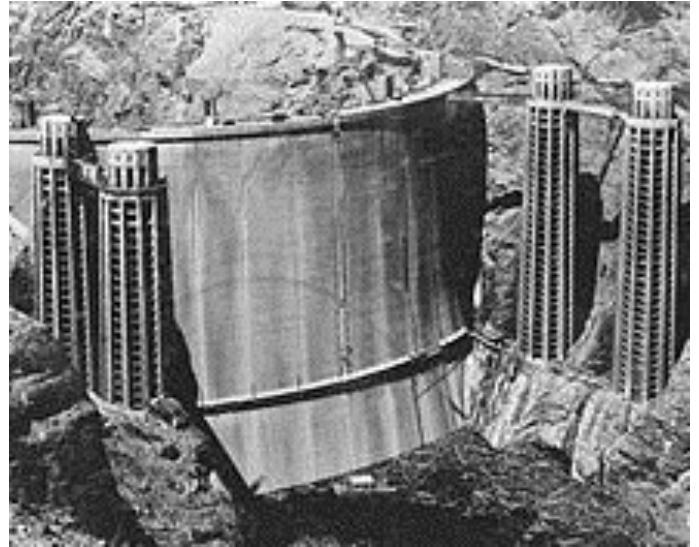




large a segment at a time would have had serious consequences for the strength of the dam.

Due to the constant pressure from Frank Crowe, the dam was completed about 2 years ahead of schedule, earning big financial bonuses for the consortium. On the way over 100 employees lost their lives, many suffered horrific injuries due to bad working practices, many workers were affected by carbon monoxide poisoning in the tunnels due to poor ventilation and the use of internal combustion engines in the drilling rigs; there were unable to bring a successful claim in the courts as both the consortium and government fought a successful court action.

The electrical output from the dam enabled the building of Boulder City, Las Vegas, and other towns and cities in the desert regions and the water available for irrigation allowed agriculture to flourish in what had been desert.



Upstream of the dam before the water level rose.





## Ballroom Dancing Group

The first meeting of the new year was Wednesday 21st January—we have now settled on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 10.30am— in the usual venue of the Holy Trinity Church Hall in Old Town. The floor is a sprung wooden floor, excellent for dancing.

We have been working on the standard dances, waltz, quickstep, square tango, cha cha with occasional attempts at St Bernard's Waltz and Veleta. Music is provided by our leader, John Buxton Barker, as is most of the tuition. We have all been progressing well. Several new

members have joined. Do come along. No need to bring a partner, although you are welcome to do so.

Dates for the rest of the session are:-

Wednesday 4th March

Wednesday 18th March

Wednesday 1st April

Wednesday 15th April

Wednesday 6th May

Wednesday 20th May

Wednesday 3rd June





## Walking Group - March 2015

We met in the riverside car park in Shipston-on-Stour on Wednesday 11th March for a walk around Shipston, following hard paths as far as possible. At 10 walkers, this was a slightly smaller group than normal. From the car park we walked over the bridge—the River Stour was very low as we had not had much rain for quite a few days. We walked in a roughly square route following roads mostly. There was very little traffic on these country roads.

We paused for a mid walk drink in the churchyard extension at Burmington where there are a couple of benches and a picnic table. It is very quiet there and the flowers in the

churchyard were attractive — snowdrops and primroses. The church is built from the local Cotswold stone and is very attractive.



The group pictured below at Burmington Church Yard.





## Science, Nature and all Things Technical

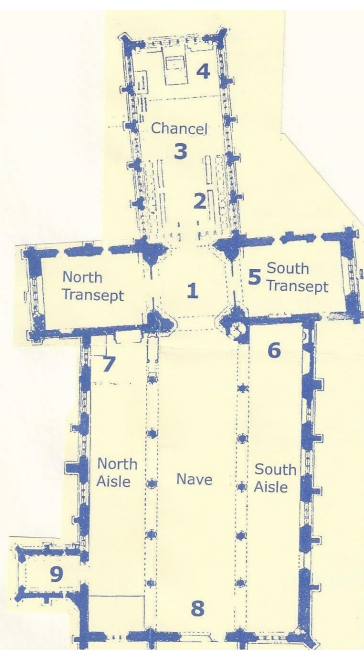
Our meeting on Friday 13th March saw one of the biggest attendances so far at 45 members. We were entertained and educated by our Group Leader, Geoff Bridgewater, with his illustrated talk about "The Secrets of Holy Trinity".

Worship started on the site—one of the highest parts of the riverbank which never seems to flood—in the early 8th century, if not before. Bishop of Worcester, Ecguine, was granted land at Stratford in 714 and a church was built, most probably of wood. The Normans may have replaced that by a stone building, but there is no trace of either. Later, in 845, King Berhtulf of Mercia granted privileges to Bishop Heaberht of Worcester regarding Stratford. In 1068 Stratford was mentioned in the Domesday Book but with no men-

tion of a church.

The present church was started in 1210 with a small stone church where the transepts and centre crossing meet under the spire. About 200 years later this was extended by building

the nave and the chancel of the current building. The chancel was deliberately built at a slight angle to the nave. This is known as a "weeping chancel"—to symbolise Christ hanging from the cross and weeping. Other features, such as the



Holy Trinity Church in high summer from over the river.



side aisles and clerestory windows were added later. The transepts became chapels.

One side is the Clopton Chapel. A tomb for Sir Hugh Clopton is empty. His body is interred in London—he was Mayor of London, amongst other high level appointments. Several other members of the family are commemorated in the chapel.



The Misericords seating in the chancel is contemporary with the chancel and is in oak.



The organ has 3000 pipes and was last rebuilt in 1948. It is mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records for a marathon 36 hour playing of an organ.

The pulpit is Victorian in grey marble with alabaster panels. Some people think it does not fit in with the rest of the earlier church fabric.



Similarly, the font is a more modern creation, although the original stone font (broken) is also still in the church.



The tower and spire are reached by a spiral stairs in one corner of the crossing. The bells are a good set and are regularly used. There is a waiting list of applicants for inclusion as a guest ringer.





The church receives over 300,000 visitors per year, mostly to see the evidence of the Bard. The effigy of William Shakespeare was apparently seen by his wife and family after his death and they approved it—it seems his complexion was dark.



There is a muniments room above the porch, which was used for keeping records in years gone by.

Outside, the pock marks in the stone on the end of the church were caused during the Civil War by troops firing their muskets at the church.



On the main door there can still be seen the bronze Sanctuary Bell.



Sanctuary could be claimed by ringing the bell and the church would take in the claimant and feed them for a short period of time, after which they supposed to move on.



## The Choir Spring Concert - Friday 20th March

Our concert on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March at the Methodist Church Hall was very successful; we had a full attendance of a very appreciative audience; the choir sang well with some difficult pieces, particularly "Good Vibrations", a hit number from the Beach Boys in the 1960s.

We had a couple of good solo pieces from Val and Bob and a very good duet from Sheila and Elaine. Our readers were very entertaining, some of the poems being created by the performers.



Marilyn did a reading "Footprints".



Chris read a poem that she had created "Do you remember the sixties?".

Margaret read a poem "I'm fine" about the joys of aging.





Bob sang a solo "I'll walk with God".



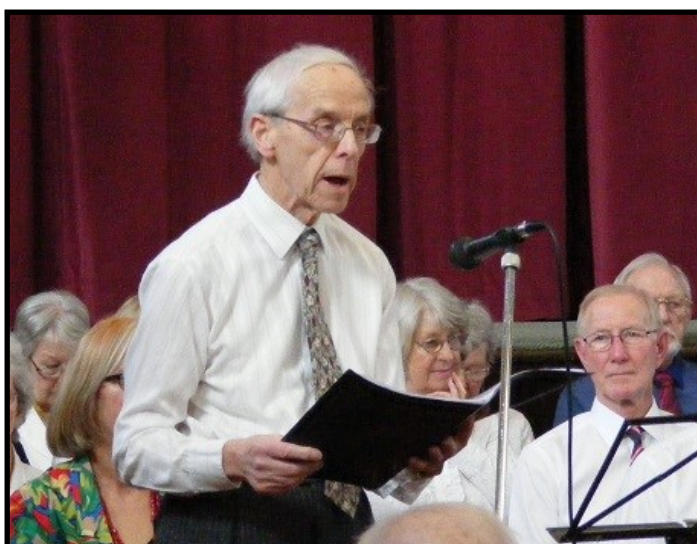
The choir then split into two sections and the ladies sang "Where is love?" and the gentlemen sang "What a wonderful world".

See below for the gentlemen singing.

Sheila and Elaine sang a duet "Spreading the news".



Bill did a reading.





Val sang a very spirited solo "Spring, Spring, Spring".



We are so fortunate to have such a talented Musical Director. Stewart has worked very hard with us and planned a varied programme. He created a digital arrangement to enhance our vocal performance of "Good Vibrations" (a Beach Boys' song). He conceived and created the musical accompaniment. See the choir photo below.

Margaret then told us about the traumas of producing a piece such as "Good Vibrations" which was a studio composition, not supposed to be performed live.

Mary told us about "The Coach Trip"



We repeated the concert at Briar Croft on the following Friday.  
Many thanks for your continued support.





## Memory Course—March 2015

This project was inspired by a course that was put together and run several times by Aughton and Ormskirk U3A, based in Lancashire. Since they started to run the course several other U3A groups have run similar courses using the materials, instruction books and ideas provided by Aughton and Ormskirk U3A.

Athena Roderick canvassed a select group of "guinea pigs" and called a meeting to talk about setting up a course. Eleven members joined with Athena to do the course and it ran on four Monday mornings in March 2015.

Athena was joined by Elka as joint presenter and they worked together to put on the course using the two course books provided by the original U3A group.

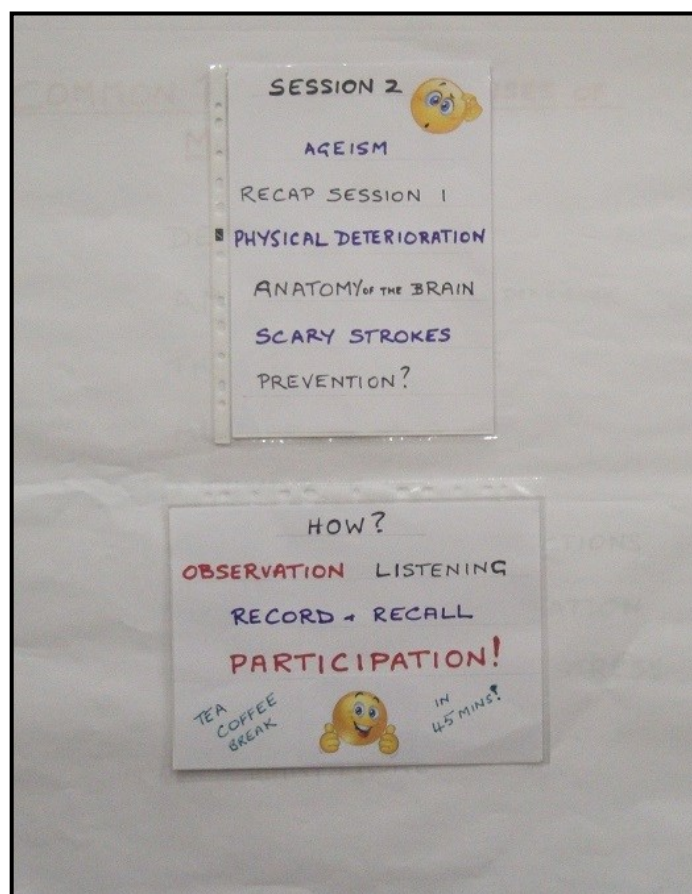
We looked at attitudes to age and memory, memory systems and processes in humans, understanding memory and how to help us manage everyday memory problems, short term memory, long term memory,

Other things looked into as part of memory problems were sensory input and attention, hearing, vision, smell, taste, touch. All these sensory pro-

cesses affect how we remember; if we do not sense the information in some way we have no hope of remembering it.

The concluding sessions dealt with our reactions to the course and ways of improving our abilities and lives for the future. Some participants had already started to put in place strategies to improve memory and fitness and were looking for other ways to go forward.

All felt that the course was worthwhile and that the course should be offered to other members of our U3A.



Left—Group photograph of presenters and participants.