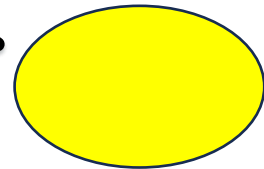


u3aNorthwich Newsletter

APRIL 2026

<https://northwich.u3asite.uk>



Monthly Meeting

English: A very curious language

The speaker at March's meeting was Neil Sheldon, who gave a talk entitled, 'English – A Very Curious Language'. Neil is Vice Chair UK Linguistics Olympiad and explained that the UK team has been champions for the last two years.

Neil began by giving us some facts and figures. There are approximately 370 million native English speakers, and depending on which website is chosen, the third most prolific language. It is, however, the most spoken language out of 6-7,000 different languages in the world. Many members in the audience were surprised to learn that there are 14 different native languages spoken in the British Isles, including Sign Language, Gaelic and Cornish, (though there is debate about the question of living speakers and use of the latter). English derives broadly speaking from a Germanic structure and much French and Latin vocabulary and there are many curiosities.

Pronunciation and spelling are, as Neil pointed out, very interesting. His examples were the use of 'ough' in words such as through, bough, thought, thorough, lough and hiccough, and the sound 'oo' as in two, to, too, blue, flow, through, room and pollute, as well as the words: good, book, poor, brooch and blood. An amusing example was 'ghoti', a creative English respelling of the word 'fish', used to illustrate the irregularities in English spelling and pronunciation; gh as in 'enough', o as in women and ti as in station.

Members learned about 'Eggcorns and Mondegreens'. An eggcorn is a phrase or word altered to something that sounds familiar in order to make sense, e.g. 'damp squib' is 'damp squid' and 'to the manor born' is 'to the manner born'. A mondegreen is something misheard and comes from the Scottish ballad, 'The Bonnie Earl of Moray'. 'Thae slain the Earl o' Moray, and laid him on the green.' Became 'Thae slain the Earl o' Moray and Lady Mondegreen'.

This example was followed by a very amusing segment of misheard song lyrics such as Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen – 'Is this just Battersea?' (Is this just fantasy?), Credence Clearwater Revival – 'there's a baboon on the right' (there's a bad moon on the rise) and The Beatles – 'A Girl with Colitis goes by' (a girl with kaleidoscope eyes).

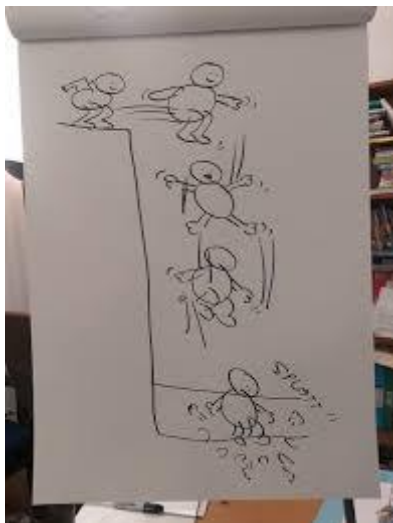
Silent letters, personal pronouns, Tok Pisin, rhyming slang, Polari, some etymology and grammar were all part of the talk.

Neil's premise was that English is a very curious language and he definitely proved his point in an entertaining fashion. He took us back to our schooldays with grammar rules and amused us with misheard lyrics. His presentation was enjoyed by all.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 15th April at 2pm, in the Owley Wood Recreation Centre. The speaker is Les Pickford, who will talk about and demonstrate cartoons and how to draw them.

Les is a cartoonist who loves drawing cartoon characters. He talks about how by drawing a simple character a story can be developed. He draws characters such as Sid the tractor man and Uncle Sam the labourer, and his narrative is accompanied throughout by quick pen sketches, punctuated by the odd joke.



Message on behalf of u3a council members for the North West Region

The Third Age Trust is inviting u3a members to take part in a national u3a survey that explores what u3a means to them and how being part of u3a has impacted their lives.

This survey is open to **all u3a members** so please take a moment to complete the survey. It is a great opportunity for members to share their experiences and support their u3a to thrive into the future. The feedback will be used to grow membership, demonstrate the impact of u3a and raise our profile.

You can sign into the survey on the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/u3a-me>

To thank members for their time, they will be entered in a John Lewis £100 prize draw. The survey closes on 31 March.

We would request that you circulate this information on the survey to all your u3a members giving them the opportunity to participate in the survey

Thank you for your support.

Gill Russell David Blanchflower u3a Council
Representatives NW Region



Registered Charity No 1159091

invite applications for the 2026 Residential Summer School

**Tues 11th August – Friday
14th August**

**At Manchester Metropolitan
University, M15 6GX**

The Metropolitan University is located in the centre of Manchester and less than 20 minutes' walk from Oxford Road Railway Station. The campus has modern facilities, student en-suite rooms with Wi-Fi access. There will be a quiz on the first evening and a "Gala Dinner" on the third and final evening. Speakers will also attend on the second and third evening.

Full Board Residential Delegate: £430. (+£15 car parking charge if applicable;)

We include full board for 3 nights, including dinner on 11th August, breakfast, lunch and dinner on 12th August, breakfast, lunch and Gala Dinner on 13th August, and breakfast on 14th August.

Also, tea and coffee refreshments on each day.

Non-Residential Day Delegate: £215 (+£15 car parking charge if applicable)

This includes lunches, teas and coffees, excludes breakfast daily and dinner on Tuesday and Wednesday but does include the Gala Dinner on 13th August.

Accommodation is available nearby in the Manchester city centre.

An Application form (available online at north west region.u3asite.uk) must be completed by post or email. Payment can be either by bank transfer (North West Region of u3as, Lloyds Bank sort code 30-90-16, account 00197002 quoting name and post code) or by cheque (payable to North West Region of u3as)

£100 DEPOSIT (£50 non residents) PAYABLE UPON APPLICATION;

BALANCE BY 11 MAY 2026

Queries should be directed to Alan Hough or Neill Stewart at

alanhough1949@gmail.com; neillstewart.uk@icloud.com

Post to 8 Salwick Close, Wigan, Gtr Manchester. WN3 6RE

The 8 courses on offer are:-

Archaeology Explorers

Making sense of everyday Mathematics

An introduction to Geology

Photography - Beyond the Snapshot

Art challenges - the history of colour

The UK and USA Political Scenes

Operatunity – opera appreciation

Intermediary Ukulele

**Full course synopses available
separately (and on north west site).**