

## January 2026 Speaker's Report

### You've Got to Have Guts –Highlights from Dr Graham Cope's Talk

Members of Sully u3a gathered in January for the second in a series of talks by medical researcher Dr Graham Cope. His presentation, "You've Got to Have Guts", took us on a fascinating journey through our digestive system, from mouth to colon, exploring how lifestyle choices impact gut health.

Starting at the top, we learned halitosis (bad breath) is caused by pathogenic bacteria, with gingivitis as an early warning sign of gum disease. Good dental hygiene – and even garlic paste – can help disrupt harmful biofilms. Moving down, Dr Cope explained acid reflux and its link to oesophageal cancer, noting some UK pharmacists can offer a simple "sponge on a string" test for early detection, whereby the patient swallows a pill, which expands into a sponge and then can be withdrawn for lab testing for cancerous cells. In the stomach and small intestine, he highlighted the protective role of mucus and risks smokers face from ulcers. The pancreas and gall bladder were shown as vital for digestion and blood sugar regulation. Alcohol intake, he reminded us, is often under-reported: GPs typically double the unit figure the patient gives!

The colon took centre stage as Dr Cope stressed the importance of fibre for healthy bowel movements and a robust immune system. About 80% of our immune cells reside around the gut, alongside trillions of bacteria and other micro-organisms. A course of antibiotics can wipe out these microbes and recovery is slow.

Sobering statistics followed: only two-thirds of those eligible in Wales take up free NHS bowel cancer screening, which can be life-saving in early detection. Bowel cancer is rising among younger people, linked to alcohol and ultra-processed foods (UPFs). These foods, packed with preservatives, disrupt gut health and encourage overeating. Processed meats containing sulphates and nitrates also increase cancer risk.

Dietary advice was clear: eat high-fibre foods, wholemeal bread, berries and avoid burnt toast. Choose natural fermentations like yoghurt over strong ones such as kimchi. Avoid UPFs and stick to visually recognisable ingredients.

The talk concluded with insights into the gut-brain axis, serotonin's role in mental health, the value (or not) of fecal implants and even nicotine's surprising effect on Parkinson's. Takeaway message: a healthy gut means a healthier you – so fibre up, cut the processed foods, and make the most of screening opportunities!

**More details about Sully u3a please see our website – [sully.u3asite.uk](http://sully.u3asite.uk)**

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## Dr. Cope's Bread Recipe

### Equipment Recommended

Digital scales Oxo (1gm divisions)

Bread maker Panasonic SD-2500

Included measuring spoon

Included columnar water measurer

### Ingredients

Bread making dried yeast 1 teaspoon Hovis

Strong white flour 150gm

Strong wholemeal flour 350gm

(Sunflower seeds – optional) 40gm

Granulated sugar 26gm

Sunflower oil 26gm

Fine table salt 1 1/2 teaspoons

Cold water 330gm or ml

### Method

Place bread making pan on scales and add or weigh out in this order:

Yeast

Flour

Seeds

Sugar

Fix pan into bread maker and adjust settings: wholemeal and large 500gm loaf, medium bake. Press START.

After 5 hours remove baked bread when finished or set to run overnight

Allow to cool