

Sully and District u3a Newsletter February 2026



Membership 2026

Polite reminder - you must renew your membership before the end of February 2026. After this date your membership will lapse.

If you attend any of our groups, you must be a member in order to be covered by our insurance - if any unforeseen accident or event should take place.

The cost of membership for 2026 remains at just £10,
Our preferred method of payment is by bank transfer to:
Sully u3a bank account sort code – 309652
Sully u3a bank account number – 18245668
Reference is your name and membership number

If you prefer to pay by cash, then post your renewal in the u3a post box in the foyer of the Old School. Please put your name, membership number and email address on the front of the envelope.

Don't forget to let me know if you move house or change your email address. Please use the form on the membership section of our website to send me a message.

u3a Matters Magazine

If you do not wish to receive future copies of this magazine, please let me know.

MEETERS & GREETERS NEEDED

Our u3a needs people to Meet and Greet members and non-members when they arrive at The Old School for our monthly meetings. A warm and helpful welcome is appreciated by everyone when entering what may be a "new environment". Are you happy to talk to people you do not know? Are you happy to help them find their way in a new environment? If your answer is "YES" to either question, please spare about 30 minutes of your time in The Old School foyer with David on the second Thursday of each month at our Monthly Meetings from 1.30pm to 2.00pm. Thank you in anticipation of your help! Please contact Paul or David at [Chair](#) or [Web](#) for more information.

GROUP NEWS

Book Club 2

Book Club 2 is a group of curious, civically minded readers, mixed-gender U3A members who read:

- To talk together, not to perform cleverness
- To understand the world they live in now, not to retreat from it
- To hear voices they might not otherwise encounter, but within a shared cultural comfort zone

They value:

- Empathy
- Historical perspective
- Ethical seriousness
- Clear prose
- Emotional intelligence

We are recognised as politically alert but not ideologically rigid who prefer books that invite conversation rather than demand allegiance.

We buy our own books and aim to follow a mix of long/short and light/serious titles.

We meet at 10.30 on the third Thursday of each month in the Woods Room at the Old School Sully. The charge is £1.00 and coffee and biscuits can be obtained from the Jubilee Hall for another pound.

We'd love to welcome new members. Just drop us a line at bookclub2@sullyu3a.co.uk.

Sully U3A Book Club 2 Spring Programme

Book Club 2 has released its spring reading programme:

19 March: The Sellout – Paul Beatty

16 April: Remarkably Bright Creatures – Shelby Van Pelt

21 May: Any Human Heart – William Boyd

Notes on the books

The Sellout – Paul Beatty

A LAUGH-OUT-LOUD SATIRE ABOUT RACE, CLASS AND INEQUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA, BY A LITERARY GENIUS AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME

Winner of the Man Booker Prize, 2016

In his trademark absurdist style, Paul Beatty will make you laugh and cry in this outrageous – and outrageously entertaining – indictment of our time.

Born in Dickens on the southern outskirts of Los Angeles, the narrator of *The Sellout* spent his childhood as the subject in his father's racially charged psychological studies. He is told that this work will lead to a memoir that will solve their financial woes. But when his father is killed in a drive-by shooting, he discovers there never was a memoir. All that's left is a bill for a drive-thru funeral.

What's more, Dickens has literally been wiped off the map to save California from further embarrassment. Fuelled by despair, the narrator sets out to right this wrong with the most outrageous action conceivable: reinstating slavery and segregating the local high school. The results will take him from Dickens to the Supreme Court, in the trial of the century.

Remarkably Bright Creatures – Shelby Van Pelt

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night cleaner shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium. Ever since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat over thirty years ago keeping busy has helped her cope. One night she meets Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium who sees everything, but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors - until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova.

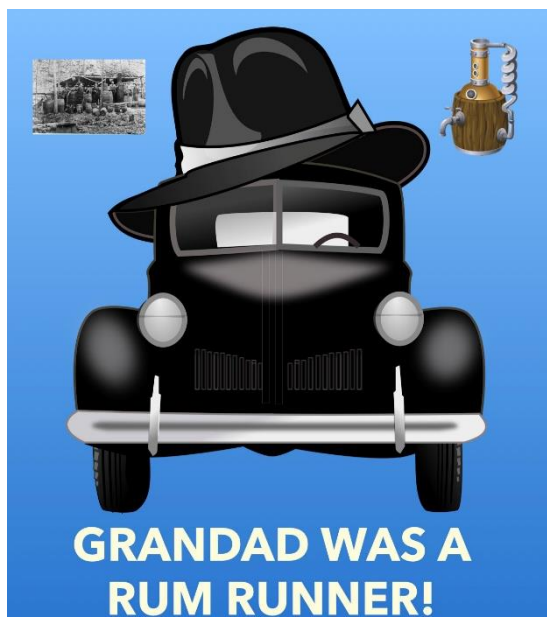
Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late...

Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

Any Human Heart – William Boyd

Every life is both ordinary and extraordinary, and Logan Mountstuart's - stretching across the twentieth century - is a rich tapestry of both. As a writer who finds inspiration with Hemingway in Paris and Virginia Woolf in London, as a spy recruited by Ian Fleming and betrayed in the war, and as an art-dealer in '60s New York, Logan mixes with the men and women who shape his times. But as a son, friend, lover and husband, he makes the same mistakes we all do in our search for happiness. Here, then, is the story of a life lived to the full - and a journey deep into a very human heart.

History Group February Talk



Phil Thomas grew up listening to tall tales about his grandfather at family gatherings. He took them with a pinch of salt believing that there wasn't much truth in them. Until, that is, he started to research his family history. He found a record on a passenger list sailing to Canada, a census record of a young lad working as a farm labourer and newspaper cuttings of an award in court for the back payment of years of unpaid labour. Suddenly all the tall tales began to ring true.

As Phil's grandfather aged dementia set in but on one rare occasion of lucidity speaking to his great-grand daughter he pointed to a picture of a stylish red Cadillac and said "I used to have one of them", "how did you come to own that" the young girl replied, "my boss gave it to me – I used to run board for him". The gathered family members stared at the elderly man in stunned silence. Another tall tale or truth?

Members of Sully History group enjoyed this talk and it led to a lot of spirited discussion about their own family gatherings and the stories handed down by aging relatives.

Phil encouraged everyone to consider writing down their own life stories to be passed on, "Don't think to yourself that nobody will be interested" he said "I would have been fascinated to read about any one of my ancestors' lives in their own words".

Memoir Writing

As a footnote, if anyone is interested in writing up their life story, please contact the Groups Convenor and Sully u3a will consider starting up a new group.

The next talk will be on 4th March in the John woods Room at 10.30am

The Sanatorium Movement by Dr. Peter Smith.

The talk this month will be given by one of our own members, Dr. Peter Smith. His talk is a history of the sanatorium movement in the management of tuberculosis during the height of the pandemic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time the death toll reached one in four and led to the setting up of the King Edward VII Memorial Association Wales and the building of Sully Hospital in 1936 for the modern treatment of the disease.

National Museum, Cardiff – Geology Open Day:

To include a discussion on the future of Welsh Geodiversity Homepage | Amgueddfa Cymru | Museum Wales

Saturday 28th March 2026

Geologists from the National Museum Cardiff would like to invite you to a forthcoming Open Day event in the museum in order to introduce ourselves, and also to bring together geologists in Wales from all sectors: public, private, academia, societies, enthusiasts, etc. to discuss safeguarding the future of geology in Wales.

The morning session (10.30am -12.30pm) will offer an opportunity to meet the museum geologists and see what we do, browse small displays, and join short tours of the store areas. We also invite other institutions, companies, societies etc. to bring along small displays to introduce and promote themselves. We hope that this session will be a good chance to chat with other geologists and discuss possible collaborations.

During the lunch break (lunch unfortunately not provided), you'll have a good chance to look round our Evolution of Wales Gallery which tells the story of Wales from the Big Bang to the Present Day.

In the afternoon session (2.00-4.00pm) we invite short talks (5 minutes) about you or your institution, and how you feel about the future of geology in Wales, whether through research, academia, mineral wealth, citizen science, or other.

We are all aware that we have no unifying geodiversity network for Wales, let alone a formal partnership. We would like to bring together Welsh geologists from all sectors (public, private, academia, societies, enthusiasts, etc.) and invite a healthy discussion about the future for geology in Wales. Can you see a positive future, or one where geology is becoming steadily disregarded?

We'd like to end this session with a discussion to gauge interest in taking this event forward, either to build towards a more formal network, or just to organize a yearly geodiversity conference at different venues around Wales.

If you would like to attend this Open Day, please reply to the email address below, and let us know if you'd like to bring a small display or poster highlighting you or your company, or if you'd like the opportunity to give a short talk (please no power-points as we're trying to keep this simple).

If you can't attend but would like to be kept on a mailing list for future updates or events, please also let us know. We are hoping that further events would take place at venues across the whole of Wales.

Please reply to: cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk

Essential museum information:

The National Museum Cardiff opens from 10am - 4pm during winter months and has free entry for all. There is a public car-park at the rear of the building, for which there is a charge of £6.50 each day. There is ramp access to the front door, and internal lifts to access all floors. There is a small cafe in the Main Hall which sells a limited selection of sandwiches, cakes and drinks. External venues for lunch can be found close to the museum, or you are welcome to bring your own lunch.

Geology Group

Although Sully u3a don't have a geology group, South Wales Network does and it is very much still active, and welcomes members of South Wales u3a's. Their site is [South Wales and Severnside Geology Group - Wales Region](#) (Place cursor over link and press Ctrl + Click to follow the link)

Possible new groups

There is a possibility of starting the following new groups: Crafts/Cardmaking, Board Games, and Whist, or if you would like to suggest another activity please contact the group co-ordinator Gill at groups@sullyu3a.co.uk giving group of interest, name and contact details

We are still looking for volunteers to join our committee

Becoming a U3a Committee Member/Trustee

Especially anyone who would like to take over as Treasurer. Without volunteers Sully u3a would cease to exist also without members and convenors there would be no u3a – it is a co-dependent organisation.

The roles within the committee consists of: Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Coordinator, Speaker Co-ordinator, Events Planner, Group Administrator, Room Rent Collector, Website and IT Manager and a Gift Aid Administrator. There are other less defined but still very important roles within the committee that provide help and support when needed. The meetings are friendly, and matters are discussed that relate to the success of our u3a and getting the best for its members.

Please help. If you think you can help, **please e-mail Paul Lister, who is the current Chairman of the Committee Via sully.u3a@site.uk contacts, chair.** It can then be arranged for you to sit in at a meeting as a non-contributory observer.

[Sully](#) (Place cursor over link and press Ctrl + Click to follow the link)

February Speaker's Report for 12th February 2026 talk,



Daniel Curtis: "Song Stories"

Daniel's polyglot musical life (so far!) includes persuading the Welsh museum authorities to get an upright piano down a mine for a concert, collecting a proper revenge punch from Welsh boxer Joe Calzaghe – "You made me sing," Joe said, "then told me I was rubbish at it!" – and getting a symphony orchestra to perform music from a tiny hymn sheet.

Born in the Welsh valleys, Daniel's boyhood was divided between two households: one with a record collection comprising mostly just one performing artist – Mario Lanza – and the music of George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern; the other of his grandparents who were Frank Sinatra fans. Daniel called the

combined recorded music of his childhood houses “The Great American Songbook 1920-1950”.

Daniel shared how the music of this era has impressed and shaped him, using his in-depth knowledge of the evolution of two Gershwin works we know as modern classics: Rhapsody in Blue for piano and orchestra, and the song Someone to Watch Over Me. Originating as a fast jazz dance number for the Oh, Kay! 1926 musical, when later performers slowed the tempo, the song became the haunting ballad more familiar to us now. Daniel showed us the tragic ephemerality of these composers’ and performers’ lives – Gershwin and Lanza dying at only 38 – their struggles with commercial contracts, and getting their original work acknowledged.

For the 2013 centenary of the Senghenydd colliery explosion, Wales’ worst mining disaster in which 440 men died, Daniel Curtis and Laura Coyne created A Miner’s Song. A composite video premiering before the Six Nations Wales vs England fixture on 16th March 2013, it featured over 300 famous Welsh voices – and that piano in the Blaenaevon Big Pit mine surrounded by singing miners.

From the macro reach of the video we went to a micro fragile ‘penny sheet’ of the words to a hymn called Prepare to Meet Thy God by Sarah Ann Thorne of Abertridwr. Written shortly after the Senghenydd disaster, this tiny piece of paper was to raise money for a memorial plate at the local church. Any music for it was long lost, but Daniel felt it deserved to have “an entire orchestra thrown at it” and we heard the spectacular rendition.

Daniel concluded our afternoon of musical commemoration reminding us to record the stories and experiences of our upper generation before they are lost to time. SJW

Next month’s speaker

Thursday 12th March 2026 at 2.00pm.



Flat Holm - A Walk Through Time with Bridget Box (Acting Chair of the Flat Holm Society)

“Bridget Box, Acting Chair of the Flat Holm Society, started volunteering on Flat Holm nearly 40 years and has been a Tour Guide and Trustee ever since.

Her talk entitled, "Flat Holm - a Walk Through Time" covers the history of Flat Holm up to the present day, with visitors ranging from Welsh Saints, royalty, Vikings, the Army and thousands of gulls"

Flat Holm Society

For anyone interested in joining the Flat Holm society (£20) There is a weekend residential volunteer working trip to Flat Holm (leaving Friday 13th March and returning Sunday 15th March). If interested, please contact the Flat Holm Society who are organising the trip. flatholm.society@gmail.com

Invitation to Cowbridge u3a Quiz

Any members interested in forming a 4 person team please see below

As a bit of fun we are organizing a U3A Quiz at Cowbridge Town Hall on Monday 23 March doors open at 1.30 for a 2.00 start finishing between 4.00 and 4.30. A lift is available. It will cost £10 cash for a table of 4 payable on the day.

Ample parking at the back of the Town Hall in the centre of Cowbridge, free parking a walk away. There will be 8/9 rounds and 2 picture rounds with an interval at halftime for light refreshments.

if you would like to enter a team. Please let Hywel Davies know by email at hyweld@aol.com

Don't forget to visit the Sully u3a website

There is a wealth of useful information on our website, it can be reached at [Sully](#) (place cursor over the link and press ctrl + click) or use the QR code



Scam warnings be aware

THE "HI MUM" WHAT'S APP SCAM

Many of our Members may have sons/daughters or grandchildren who are abroad on holiday or gap-year experiences. If scammers can get hold of your relatives' phone and its' contacts list, they can text you pretending that your loved one is "in a pickle". It can be anything from arrested by local police, being mugged and robbed, or some other "disaster". BE VERY SUSPICIOUS!! Try to contact your loved one or, better still, their travelling companion, to confirm the "disaster" is true. DO NOT SEND MONEY BY WIRE or other means until you are 100% sure it is going to your loved one.

THE GIFT CARD SCAM

You may be asked to pay a bill using one or more GIFT CARDS purchased from reputable sources such as a Supermarket. When you purchase the Gift Card(s) the scammer will call you and ask for the numbers! The Gift Cards will then be "cashed in" within moments and you will be unable to retrieve your money. NEVER, EVER PAY A BILL WITH GIFT CARDS!

"SCAM INTERCEPTORS" from the BBC is a worthwhile series of half-hour programmes that cover a wide range of Scams. Many programmes from previous series will be available on BBC iPlayer.

BE ALERT to SCAMS and DON'T GET CAUGHT OUT!

Tune into the u3a Radio Podcast

u3a learn,
laugh,
live



I'm Maggie West, your National Podcast presenter.

Each month, in just 30 minutes, we share fascinating stories and learning experiences from across the country.

From life as an executive airline pilot, to being a maid at Buckingham Palace, to quantum physics made simple, and even the mysteries of the ancient archaeological site Göbekli Tepe in Turkey – **we cover it all**.

If you have a story or passion to share, we'd love to feature you. Get in touch at communications@u3a.org.uk.



Listen now!

The u3a Radio Podcast is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Podtail.

Or scan the QR code to listen on our YouTube channel.

Join us for the first in-person Genomics Showcase in Wales

• Talks from experts in genomics

• Lived experience sessions

• Exhibition stands

• Hands-on activities

• Virtual Reality workshops

• Posters, pictures & poetry area

• Networking opportunities

**GENOMICS
SHOWCASE**

Decode. Discover. Inspire.

Thursday 23rd April 2026 | Cardiff City Stadium

FREE event open to all

Partneriaeth
Genomeg
Cymru
Genomics
Partnership
Wales

Regards,
Paul Lister (Sully u3a Newsletter editor)