

u3a Todmorden Groups Report

December 2025

Alfresco History and Archaeology

On the 19th November, 19 members of the group found their way to Rochdale Town Hall, which as Wikipedia says, is widely recognised as being one of the finest municipal buildings in the country. It has become an outstanding heritage visitor attraction following a recent generously-funded restoration project, and runs excellent tours guided by extremely knowledgeable volunteers. Our group rated the tour very highly, but additionally, thanks to patient negotiation by group member Sue Hayter, this was followed by a specialist talk just for us. Jordon Perris followed the tour of

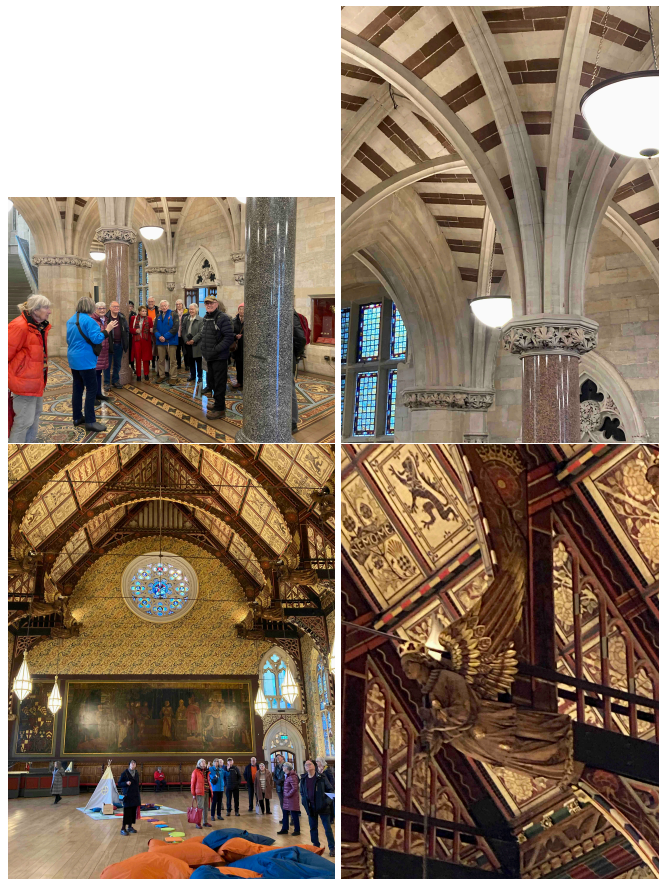


Figure 1: Alfresco History and Archaeology at Rochdale Town Hall

the Town Hall with a talk about the renovations of the exterior. Jordon is the resident archeologist concerned with the mapping of the old pathways and buildings

and the collection identification and cataloguing of historical artefacts. He spent an hour describing the work carried out and supported his talk with photographs of the old roadways, paths and architecture long since buried under late 19th and early 20th century developments. Jordon brought a number of finds including a Charles II coin, various pieces of tiles and pottery, and bottles. One find had many of us confused as to its origin, a 1960s Old Spice bottle. It was a very interesting talk indeed.

Art Appreciation

Submit 3 of your favourite painters. A lucky dip is held and all of those who submitted are given one of the submissions from which one artist is chosen. Research on that artist is done and a presentation given as a present to the submitter. And there we have our version of Secret Santa. A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon made even better by a lovely buffet to which we all contributed.



Figure 2: Art Appreciation: Buffet and presentation

No meeting in January as it would fall on New Year's Day. February a trip to the Cartwright art Gallery to see the Turner Prize exhibition.

We meet on the 1st Thursday of the month at Fielden Hall. New members always welcome, enquiries to Judith tel: 01706 812890 or email Tristan, tristan.tm@gmail.com.

Art Club

Art Club does not provide tuition but does give members plenty of mutual support, encouragement and advice as well as the opportunity of exploring their own ideas and projects in a variety of techniques and media from collage to watercolor and watersoluble oils. From time to time the convenor will suggest a topic by way of inspiration which can often be interpreted widely and freely. There is emphasis on the group being an opportunity for the members to be creatively playful and to experiment and to learn from each other.



Figure 3: Art Club members at the December meeting

At our last meeting of the year members took the opportunity of looking at some of the work the group had created over the last few months before enjoying a festive buffet!

We meet alternate Wednesdays between 2 and 4pm at Fielden Hall the next one being on the 7th January.

The Group is looking to recruit new members and anyone interested is very welcome to come along for a trial session to see if it's right for them. For further details contact Judith Malone on 01706812890.

Beginners' Bridge

There was a very good turnout of 22 members at the inaugural meeting on Tuesday 25th November and there is at least another six members who wish to be part of the group but couldn't make the meeting. Of those who attended eleven are complete beginners, six had played a bit and two were willing to support the learning process of the group.

Andrew Bell, one of the coaches, outlined the basics of the game, recommended books to look at and websites to consider.

The group plans to meet on every first, third and fourth Tuesday from 2-4 pm at the Hare & Hounds in Todmorden. The first meeting will be on Tuesday 6th January. If you are interested and wish to try Bridge come along at the first meeting or contact the convenor Michael Astrop on mwastrop@gmail.com

Board Games

The Board Games Group met as usual on the second Monday of the month in December, at 2 pm as usual, in the Ridgefoot Community Room. There was a good turn-out

despite the weather - including a prospective u3a member on a “taster” session, who did not seem put off. Attenders were rewarded for their dedication with the offer of a mince-pie. Games of Splendor, Rummikub Words and Qwirkle were played with the usual enjoyment. If you’re curious about these strange-sounding games, there is a website BoardGameGeek which has reviews and explanations of almost all of the 1,000s of games out there, including those we name-drop regularly. Or you could just drop by when we’re meeting, or contact the convenor, Jim Botten at jroyd33@gmail.co or telephone on 01422 844987.

Book Group

The group discussed *Morality Play* by Barry Unsworth in our December meeting. This story of a group of travelling players making their way through a wintry landscape in the 14th Century describes north country small town life for ordinary folk and the hardship they endure. The tale turns into a ‘Whodunnit’ as the Company decide to create their own play, based around an actual murder which has just taken place.

We mostly found the book interesting, or indeed gripping, in its sympathetic portrayal of the well defined characters, and their physical deprivation, against the backdrop of feudal hierarchy. Some found the detail of the nuances of performance, using mask and specific costume tricky to follow, but the writer did not dwell too long on these episodes. We probably all agreed that the ending was a little too tidy!

Canasta

Our meeting at the end of November saw us joined by a new member Tricia – welcome, and an enjoyable afternoon was had by us all with some lively play.

Our meeting for early December was cancelled due to various people being ill, apologies from others etc. We are hoping to meet on 22nd December for our final meeting of the year.

If you fancy giving Canasta a go in the New Year please get in touch with Barbara at barbarawigley@btinternet.com for more information and the rules we play by.

Our next meetings will be on Monday 22nd December and Tuesday 13th January 2026 at the Hare & Hounds 2.15–4.15pm.

Coffee Club

Naturally the recent Budget was one of the many topics discussed when five of us met for our monthly meeting at Honest John’s on 1/12/25. Somewhat surprisingly the item which generated the most comments was the removal of the two child benefit cap.

A close second was the last minute change which saw the government taking a step back from the proposal to permit complaints about unfair dismissal from the first

day of employment. All agreed that the revised time period of six months was both practical and fair.

We covered a myriad of other topics including the u3a Let's Go trip to Chester, the recent Al Fresco visit to Rochdale Town Hall also the various walking groups before moving on to cost of Mobile & Land Line telephones, public transport issues etc etc

Three of us elected to take lunch which was perhaps as well because, by then, the restaurant was filling up rapidly. Members of *any* u3a branch who happen to be in town on Monday 5/1/26, are invited to call into Honest John's at 6 Rochdale Road Todmorden and join us

We meet there every month from about 10:30 am until noon and have exclusive use of the private room on the right just after mounting the steps of the building. Drinks are ordered from the room so there is no need for anyone to venture into the bar area. Light snacks are also available to buy.

People can stay for just a few minutes or the whole session and don't even need to have a drink if they do not wish to. As stated earlier some of us also elect to take lunch there after the meeting. Future dates will be published in the monthly Groups Reports.

Concert Party - Senior Moments

We will be at the Age Concern Coffee Morning on 17th December, and then have a break until the beginning of February 2026 during what should be the worst of the winter weather.



Figure 4: Concert Party: Scoot, a snow-white, pure-bred mare

We will change about 50% of the program for next year and introduce our newest

member called Scoot, a “Snow-White, Pure-Bred Mare”.

Anyone else who may be interested in what we do will be most welcome to visit us at the Fire Station Community Room in February, where we meet on most Tuesday afternoons, from 2 pm to 4pm.

Craft Club

On November 28th we tried out some simple techniques to 'paint' designs for use in card making without using a brush. Attractive and useful results were achieved by Club members who declared that 'they couldn't paint or draw' as well as the experienced painters. As some of the group were due to attend KidsFest in December



Figure 5: Craft Club: Painting with cotton buds, KidsFest and Diwali

planning and preparation for this continued.

Our last session in 2025 was very busy as we finalised plans for Kidsfest, made Diwali candles, exchanged Secret Santa gifts and had an end of 2025 celebration with food, mulled wine and lots of chatting.

The next day, 9 Club members took part in Kidsfest. The children attending were offered the opportunity to make several different Christmas Crafts. As usual it was hectic, exhausting, noisy, messy and overall enjoyable. Thank you to the members of

u3a Todmorden who donated materials for us to use in addition to those that Craft Club members and their contacts provided.

After these exertions we are taking a break until January 9th when we shall be investigating ways of recycling Christmas cards, wrapping paper and decorations.

If you are interested in possibly joining the Craft Club please contact either Mary Findon, the convenor, or any Craft Club member to find out more and arrange to come along to one of our regular sessions held every second Friday from 10.30 to 12.30 at Fielden Hall.

Creative Writing

Novembers' meetings of the Creative Writing group had a variety of offerings from the group, for the themes of 'Spy' and 'Preparation'. For the 'Spy' challenge there was a bird who spotted a farmer using a deadly weapon to dispatch a nearby kestrel, and a game of 'I Spy something beginning with...' An adult describing what they were looking at, and a child's frustration of things with different spellings who, quite reasonably, refused to play any more. For preparation, there were poems one advising early Christmas shopping, and another preparing to move, and downsize to smaller accommodation. Just the one meeting in December, and new members will be welcome then, and into 2026.

Enjoyment of Wine

This sociable group continues the programme of twice monthly meetings with a lunchtime event at Tod College at 1:30pm on Friday 19th December. Looking forward to Christmas our theme will be 'sparkling wine'. There will probably not be any champagne but we will be searching the local supermarkets for similar offerings at much more sensible prices. We will bring along a glass each and light lunch to share. All are welcome to come along and join in but be prepared to tell us what you like, or don't like about the wine choices. The group also meet online on the evening of the first Saturday each month using Zoom the theme is set by the previous meeting. Online meetings have several benefits such as nobody needs to drive home after and we chat from the comfort of our own homes.

First Tuesday Readers' Group

We discussed Knut Hamsun's book 'Hunger'. Most found it thought provoking with some enjoying it and others not so sure. One big issue was the number of different translations that affected the way that the story was presented.

French Improvers

We will meet for the last time in 2025, on Monday 15th December. After several sessions of revising the past perfect tense we are allowing ourselves a slight reprieve, by sharing with the group how we celebrate Christmas with our English families, that is to say, by using the present tense. We are also going to share some Christmas food as well as learning French vocabulary for traditional celebrations across the channel. We will return to the normal pattern of meeting on the 2nd and 4th Mondays in the month on 12th January. Joyeux Noel à tous, amitié Gill radfordgill23@gmail.com

Gardening

No regular meetings for next year. Our garden visits depend on flowering time and the weather. So unpredictable.

Genealogy

We started our November meeting in the room at Honest Johns where we looked at what Military Records might be available and where to find them. We also learnt that a lot of the First World War Service records were lost in bombing in the the Second World War but that some Pension Records survive.

We then moved across to the library where we met Ann, the Local History Volunteer, who was there to help us access their records. Unfortunately none of us had local ancestors in the military because the library does have a lot of books covering soldiers from Calderdale.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 27th January 10.30 at Honest Johns when we will be swapping interesting stories we have uncovered about an ancestor, before moving to the library.

There is room for new members – please contact Barbara – barbarawigley@btinternet.com if you are interested.

Golf for Fun

We are firmly into the winter period now. Winter greens are in operation. Nevertheless, we still play regularly, weather permitting, at 10 am Mondays and 1.00 pm Tuesdays. Anyone wishing to try us out (for free), please come along half an hour before. Drop me an email to let me know. For all inquiries, please contact the convenor, John.Allison@3-C.Coop. Our web page is https://u3atod.org.uk/u3a_groups/golf-for-fun/.

Intermediate Walking

IWG group - the most recent meet was on the 18th November, when 8 of us met in Mytholmroyd to do a 3 mile walk along the path of the River Calder to Brearley Corner, and back along the canal. The weather broke as we set off on the return leg with quite torrential rain, but all declared it an enjoyable walk.

The group breaks for December and January, but will resume on February 17th. Walk details will be posted in early Feb. Thanks to all attendees for joining the conveners on some splendid walks, hope to see you in the New Year

Let's Go

We had a good day out on a bright, sunny day (despite some members not being able to come due to our appalling bus service, and the virus doing the rounds just now).



Figure 6: Let's Go to Chester

The Christmas market was well attended with plenty of interesting stalls to visit and some of us also went to the Cathedral to see the 80 Christmas trees that had been decorated by local school children on the theme of Christmas around the world.

Everyone seemed to have a good time, plenty of shopping was done and our driver got us home safe and well despite two awful accidents on the motorway.

Local History

There was no meeting in November and on the 1st December, members met to discuss the future of the group. It was agreed that the group will meet on every other month starting in February. Also, the meetings will alternate between a speaker and member's research. February will be a speaker, yet to be announced and April will be member's research.

The idea behind the new format is to allow members who wish to look into local history the time to do it, and it offers those who wish to listen to talks on local history the facility to access these subjects.



Figure 7: Local History: A Chartist Meeting at Basin Stones, Todmorden, 1842'

The session finished with Jim giving a brief introduction to the life and work of the local artist Alfred Walter Bayes (1831-1909), Discussion within the group highlighted the fact that there are more of his paintings in Todmorden Town Hall, all of local subjects depicted within his own lifetime, in contrast to the paintings of imaginary 17th century scenes which made his fortune down in London. Figure 7 shows the well-known painting 'A Chartist Meeting at Basin Stones, Todmorden, 1842'.

Lunch Club

The Lunch Club held its annual Christmas meeting at the Dusty Miller in Mytholmroyd. Once again we enjoyed excellent food and service.

Mah Jong

Emily hit the jackpot with a Unique Wonder this month, but otherwise it has been meteorologically quiet at the Hare and Hounds' Mah Jong tables. The dragons seem



Figure 8: Lunch Club at the Dusty Miller

to have gone on holiday as well.

But that has not prevented us having a good time and for new members to have got their feet under the tables, their hands on the handbook, and their heads round the scoring system.

New Year resolutions may be along the lines of ‘This year I will achieve a Civil War’ or ‘I will strive hard to bring a Lilly Pilly to the table’. Alas, determination and knowledge are not enough in this wonderful game, for the native hue of resolution is all too often sicklied o’er with the pale cast of chance, and enterprises of great pitch and moment will their currents turn awry so that the expectant player finds her- or himself settling for an Ordinary Hand.

Never mind: the fun lies in achieving the unexpected and in the good company. Happy Christmas, Everyone!

Come and join us. We meet every Wednesday from 14.15 until 16.15 in the Hare and Hounds in Todmorden. Please contact Emily Watnick if you are interested - emilywatnick@gmail.com. New members still very welcome.

Modern Greek

We entered the murky world of contracted verbs and verbs that have lost their active form with only the passive form retained. Καλό Χριστούγεννα σε όλους (Happy Christ’s birth to you all).

Online Talks

The Online Zoom Talks Programme starts at 7.30 on January 8th with Christopher Simmons talking about 'Empress Matilda - The First Queen England Never Had'. In the mid-1100s Matilda, daughter of Henry I, was named heir to the English throne. But she was never to become Queen. This talk looks at her claim to the crown and the civil war that it caused. A link to join the session will be sent out on Monday 5th



Figure 9: Online Zoom Talk scheduled for 8th January

January.

Philosophy

The next philosophy meeting is January 12th at 10.30am at Roomfield church.

Photography

The photography group meets at 10:30 am on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays in the Fielden Centre Upstairs Room. Please see the group's page on the website for contact details.

Pickleball

Please note we are now back to Tuesdays 10 - 11am for our Pickleball sessions, starting in the new year on 6th January.



Figure 10: Pickleball - new nets at Todmorden Sports Centre

The Sports Centre have now purchased pickleball nets, more balls & paddles which we are more than happy with. All you need to start are sports shoes suitable for indoor use and comfy clothes.

If you fancy having a go, come along and give it a try. We are a very friendly group and always happy to welcome and assist newcomers.

Our group ranges from beginners and improvers to players with more competent skills. We all learn from each other!!

Poetry Appreciation

This group meets monthly on the second Tuesday of the month. For an invitation to join the meeting on Zoom, please contact the convenor, David Connolly at https://u3atod.org.uk/contact-form/?contact_id=90525

Practical Art

Over the past 2 sessions we have tackled very diverse subject matter. Firstly we attempted to draw figures in a sketchbook style and place them in a relevant context. This was always going to be challenging so there were many sighs of relief when our last subject, dragonflies and butterflies proved more to most people's liking. Last Friday was our last group meeting before Christmas so several of us met for lunch at The Ram in Cliviger which proved a very good choice of venue.

We meet again after Christmas on Jan.2nd.

Corinne and Wendy (joint convenors)

Psychology

The Psychology Group meets monthly on the second Thursday from 12 noon to 1:30 pm at Honest John's, Todmorden. Please note that we have now reached full capacity for the group and are unable to accept new members at present.

Quiz

The Quiz Group's meetings take place at Tod Methodists on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 10:15am.

Science

The Science Group has recently changed convenor, and we are in the process of re-assessing the format of the group. We will be holding a group meeting before Christmas to finalise the new format and agree a plan for the first quarter of 2026. We are hoping to make the new format as flexible and attractive as we can to attract as wide a range of u3a members as possible. We will publicise our new programme in the early New Year. If you would like to know more about the group then please contact the new convenors: John (john@readle.org.uk) or Jack (marktahorner@gmail.com).

Scrabble

The Scrabble Group continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, starting at 2 pm downstairs at Central Meths, with added tea and biscuits, all for a mere £2 per head. If you'd like to join us please get in touch with Jim Botten at jroyd33@gmail.com or by telephone on 01422 844987, or just drop in on one of our sessions for a taster. We always have room for more players (of whatever standard).

Social History

FAMOUS FIVE GO TO A MUSEUM

I enjoyed yesterday looking at so much of the machinery. I wondered how, "in the old days" all this was made without computers, laser cutting machines and modern technology.

The "power loom" as Alan called it, is intricate; so many moving parts, just to send a shuttle, at speed, from one side of the loom to the other. Today, it would probably require 15 microswitches; and what happens when to 13 amp plug is pulled from the wall? All made by human hand.



Figure 11: Social History: Famous 5 go to a museum

Plus the size of some of the machines; I chose the steam engine, and huge flywheel.

Marvellous, just marvellous.

Erne

Strollers

The Strollers Group walk March – October so there are no more walks until next year.

The Group is looking for a new Convenor to organise the group next year as Barbara is stepping down from this role. If you are interested please contact either Barbara at barbarawigley@btinternet.com or Helen at helenstarmer@hotmail.com

Table Tennis and Badminton

This group meets from 3–5 pm on Monday afternoons, in term-time only. New players, who will be welcomed, can just turn up at Todmorden Sports Centre, and introduce themselves to the convenor, Sandra Lambshead

Walking Cricket

On Wednesday 26th November the Tod Tigers went to play Oldham u3a and came back victorious winning by 12 runs. Below is the whole team in their new strip and some individual performances.



Figure 12: Walking Cricket: Team wearing new strip

The last session of the year was on the 11th December when the award for best all Rounder of 2025 was presented to Roger Barford. The rest of this year's awards will be presented at the group's Christmas lunch on the 17th December at Todmorden Cricket Club. The first game of the new year will be on Thursday 8th January at

2 pm. If you fancy a game or just want to try it out, either contact the convenor Michael Astrop on mwastrop@gmail.com or just turn up at the Todmorden Sports Centre, Ewood Lane on any Thursday except the third one in the month.

Walking

The Walking Group currently meets on the last Tuesday of each month (except December) and details of each walk are sent out in advance by email to all Group Members and posted in the website calendar. Membership of the group is open to all current members of U3A Todmorden and enquiries about the group, or requests to join, should be sent to the Group Convenor through the Walking Group's entry in the u3a Todmorden website (u3atod.org.uk).



Figure 13: Walking Group members at Great Rock

The November meeting of the group was led by Bill Black and 11 members walked from Mytholmroyd to Todmorden on the north side of the valley - in brilliant sunshine for most of the walk. Some of the paths taken were unfamiliar to most of the group.

The usual December activity for the group (to which Strollers and Intermediate Walkers had also been invited) was a Walking Treasure Hunt in Littleborough on 9th December, organised by Bill Griffiths. Unfortunately the Hunt had to be postponed with 24 hours notice due to the weather conditions forecast for that morning. It will be rescheduled in the New Year.

Please note that Convenorship of the group will pass to Judy Audaer from 1st January 2026, after almost 8 years in the hands of Peter Gibson, assisted by Bill Griffiths.

World Cinema

Our last film this season was a 1987 award-winning West German film. It was well-attended and well-appreciated.

Our next season begins on Friday 9 January. Film group members will be notified of the 6 films to be shown on 9 & 23 Jan; 13 & 27 Feb; 13 & 27 March.