

Welcome

Where has the year gone! This newsletter is the last one until February so please hang on to it as it contains information about what is happening during January 24. There is lots of information in this edition about what various groups have been up to as well as what is coming up. Finally Tony Warren has written an article about A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) and how it affects you and how you can use it. Fascinating stuff! Best wishes to everyone,

Brian Webb newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org

Chairman's Message

Well, that's another year nearly over and I hope it's been a good year for you. It certainly has for your u3a. We've had so many new members, new groups and many events and visits. Wait until you see what we have organised for next year! It will be the 30th birthday of Sidmouth u3a next year and we have a small group of members who are doing the planning for the celebrations. Please let me know if you would like to be part of that.

The next newsletter will be February, the start of the new financial year. Everyone will need to fill in a new membership form for this coming year and it will be sent to you closer to the time. The cost of your membership will remain at £12 for 2024 but please consider ticking the box on the form to allow us to claim gift aid on your subscription if applicable, as it will keep costs down for the following year. Our new membership system, which is a necessity, costs around £1 per member. We are hoping not to have to pass on the cost to you and allowing us to claim gift aid will help us achieve that.

I'm delighted to inform you that we have a new Secretary and an additional Groups Coordinator. chairman@sidmouthu3a.org.

I will introduce them in the February newsletter. There are many things for you to take part in on a national level, not just in our own town. Have a look at the information on 'Found in Nature' which our Digital Photography group has drawn our attention to. Anyone can send in photos, not just the group. I'm looking forward to seeing many more pictures from our part of the country.

I hope to see many of you at the December meeting when we will be having a social afternoon. There will be prizes for the Christmas quiz, mulled wine and Christmas nibbles. You are welcome to bring your own drink as tea and coffee will only be served until 2pm to allow the kitchen crew to join in the afternoon. Feel free to dress as Christmassy as you wish to and there will be prizes for the best and funniest Christmas hats.

I wish every member and their families a wonderful Christmas and New Year and I look forward to us enjoying an amazing 2024 together.

Best wishes **Janet Bailey** chairman@sidmouthu3a.org.

Forthcoming Events

Next Open Meeting 12th December, Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30–3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.



Join us for our Christmas open meeting on Tuesday 12th December at Stowford Hall. 1.30pm as usual for a Christmas get together with mulled wine, mince pies and nibbles. Tea and coffee will be served only up until 2pm to allow the kitchen crew to join in the festivities and you are welcome to bring your own drinks or soft drinks for the rest of the afternoon.

There will be a Christmas quiz with prizes. How much do you really know about Christmas? Come in your best Christmas hat as there will also be a competition for the best Christmas hat, most festive hat, biggest Christmas hat and most outrageous Christmas hat, all with prizes. Maybe even a Christmas sing-along.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Open Meeting 9th January 2024, Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30–3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.

Pebblebed Heaths, a talk by the Conservation Trust Reserves Manager, Kim Strawbridge

East Devon's Pebblebed Heaths are an outstanding area of natural beauty, which have been enjoyed by members of the public for generations. They are a superb and accessible area of wilderness, ideal for a range of recreational activities for people of all ages. Hear how populations of some of our rarest species which depend on the heaths are faring, and how we hope that the reserve will power nature recovery beyond its boundaries.



Open Meeting 13th February 2024, Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30–3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.

Sidmouth's world of trees- our multinational treescape with Ed Dolphin



One of the benefits of living in Sidmouth is the local treescape which was accorded Civic Arboretum status more than ten years ago. We have trees from all around the world in our parks and gardens. Local tree enthusiast Ed Dolphin introduces us to some of our overseas residents, where they come from and how they arrived on our shores.

Social Events

Evening Social – Drink & Chat (at a new venue last month 'The Anchor Inn').

This is held on the 3rd Tuesday in the month from 7 – 9 pm on the following dates:-

Tuesday December 19th at the Balfour Arms.Sidmouth.

Tuesday January 16th 2024 7–9pm at the Anchor Inn. Sidmouth

It's a very friendly chatty group who would welcome any new members especially if new to u3a. Just come along, no need to book. However it would be useful if you are able to email me so I have some indication of numbers. Thanks, Kate Ashby vice.chair@sidmouthu3a.org

Skittles event at the Blue Ball. Friday 2nd February, 10.45 for 11am.

Lunch optional. Sign up sheet at January meeting. Judy Bosanko.

Next BSO concert on February 29th Exeter Great Hall

For all those members who were disappointed by the cancellation of the BSO concert in November the good news is we have another upcoming concert. So if you wish to join us for a lovely evening concert here's a "save the date" for the Next BSO concert on February 29th Exeter Great Hall.

Further information is available. Click on the link below to find out more details. Looking forward to seeing you then, Marian.



<https://bsolive.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Exeter-2023-24-Concert-Season.pdf>

Events are now being planned for the spring of 2024. If you would like to join the social committee please contact Janet on chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

Important information for All Members

Sidmouth u3a is in the process of introducing a u3a membership management system called Beacon. As part of the Beacon system, all u3a members can register to use the **Members Portal** where you can see additional information about the Sidmouth u3a Interest Groups, and renew and pay for your membership online.

In the coming weeks you will receive an email from Chris Powell, the Beacon administrator, with a link to register for the Members Portal.

The 'From' email address will be *Chris Powell via Sidmouth U3A* <noreply@u3abeacon.org.uk> and the email footer will read *This email was sent by Beacon on behalf of webmaster@sidmouthu3a.org*. **This is a safe link** but if you have any worries about using it, contact us through the contact section of the Sidmouth u3a website at www.sidmouthu3a.org.

Registration is very straightforward. Initially you will be asked to fill in your membership number (which will be included on your notification email), forename, surname, postcode and email address. Thereafter you simply log in with your email address and the password you set.

Groups News

Digital Photography group



Two members of the group Jenny Roberts and Christine Bowler have each had a photo added to the **U3A HQ – Found in Nature** section. It was Jenny who brought this photograph area on the national U3A website to our notice. There is a second photo section where only the winning photos are shown. We will be encouraging the rest of the photography group to add some of their photos. However It's not just for our photo groups, any U3A member can send in photos. Click on this link to see more about [Found in Nature](#)

Recorder group.

In November the Sidmouth and Exmouth u3a recorder groups met in Exmouth for a joint Playing Day, expertly managed and directed by *Mary Thomas*. Each member nominated a piece in advance, from which Mary created an interesting and varied program. Both groups boast descant, treble, tenor and bass recorders, with many of the musicians playing several instruments. The resulting sound was rich and sonorous, and with a multitude of cakes for sustenance a good time was had by all. We intend to make this a regular event. For more details contact Amanda Haste



Birdwatching Group.

A group of birders from the Birdwatching group get a "birdseye" view of the numerous waterfowl in the marshes on the other side of the fence. The rest of the group were already in the hide, along the lane, enjoying a hot drink from the volunteers at *The Lookout*, *RSPB Bowling Green Marsh*, a favourite site of ours. **Janet Fernley**

NEW Discussion group:- This House believes! (Zoom only)

This new group is modelled on the Oxford Union Debating Society. The group will have an opportunity to debate current and ethical issues with the meeting ending with a vote of members, after hearing the debate between those for and against "what this house believes". Our time together will be via Zoom, which will not only accommodate a larger number than an in-person venue, but will also make for more authentic voting and questions. We just need a few more to sign up, then we can arrange a suitable time and day to commence. For more details, please contact Stephen Low

Groups with vacancies.

Please contact the group leader to find out more details. The full groups list is sent out with this newsletter. [Full details can be found here or on the link on the newsletter email.](#)

Tech Corner with Tony Warren

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – UNWRAPPED

What is Artificial Intelligence all about, need I worry, and how can I use it? First, let's get something cleared up. AI is just a computer program that is very fast indeed. It doesn't "know" anything. It has to look everything up on the internet or be trained how to. It's so fast and so powerful, that it makes the results look like a human response. Using AI is simple. It is offered to all users as a "CHAT" or a "CHAT BOT" on laptops, tablets and phones – and it's free! You can write books, poems, create songs, essays, lists, building plans, designs, paintings, the possibilities are endless. On your computer, smart phone or tablet, open your internet browser and go to WWW.BING.COM. You'll see "Chat with BING", it's just waiting for you to type in a question. Your question is called a "prompt". Here's one you can try: "Please explain to me how I should look after petunias so that they produce a beautiful display that lasts a long time. Explain it as if I were a six year old child" You will be amazed by what this produces – it even adds a picture! Make sure you give the AI model a "Context". In this case, I wanted it to explain it as if to a child of six. You might want to limit how many words, or include an illustration. Perhaps you want to plan a holiday to see the Palace of Versailles and the Louvre in France. Here's one I tried: "Plan a holiday in France, husband and wife aged 60, travelling by railway from Exeter in Devon. Staying in a gite for five nights, near, but not in, Paris. Include a visit to the Palace of Versailles and also to the Louvre. Include transfers."



Let's create some art – "Create an image of a Japanese garden with a lily pond, beautiful Acres, mountains in the background, trees and white clouds'. The result is the image shown. Another time I used it was when we were having a mysterious fault with our car. I put all the details into the Bing chat box and it produced a two-page report of what was causing the problem and how to fix it, which turned out to be dead right. There are lots of other AI Chats apart from BING. There's Google BARD for example, much the same as BING but doesn't produce images. Yet.! Governments and scientists around the world are very well aware of the dangers posed by uncontrolled AI and I

don't doubt either their determination or abilities to keep us safe. I am confident, but I am well aware others don't share my optimism. Only time will tell. One of the best ways AI is helping us is in medical research, where it can formulate and test drugs and diagnoses thousands of times faster than humans. If you want to know more about where AI might be taking us, especially in military settings, there's a really good one hour documentary on Netflix, called "UNSEEN – Killer Robots" The Americans say that their AI controlled weapons will never be autonomous – a human will always have to decide on whether to attack the enemy. I hope that's lifted the lid on AI for members, it's certainly a fascinating subject.

Finally if you would like to suggest a topic for another edition please [click here to put your suggestion on this form](#)

The 2024 Sidmouth u3a Calendar

As usual, the calendar has been produced by the Sidmouth u3a Digital Photography Group, using photos that have been taken in & around the East Devon area by the photography group members.



Following feedback on last year's calendar, this year we have changed the format to long and thin (425mm x 135mm) with a line per day to allow a bit more space for writing your important information. The price has also changed: this year it is just **£5 per calendar**

Calendars will be available for collection at the monthly u3a meetings on 14th November and 12th December. If you are unable to attend either of the meetings, calendars can be delivered to your home **FREE OF CHARGE**.

MAKE YOUR PAYMENT BY BACS, with FREE home delivery

BACS Payment details Account Name: Sidmouth U3A Photo Club
Sort code: 30 98 97 Account No: 66583062 Reference: Your surname + 'calendar'

Then send us an email to u3a2022@gmail.com with your Name & Address, together with the number of calendars you have paid for.

MAKE YOUR PAYMENT BY CHEQUE, with FREE home delivery

Send your cheque for the number of calendars required at £5 per calendar to:
Chris Powell, 7 Primley Gardens, Sidmouth EX10 9LE Please remember to put your name + calendar on the back of the cheque. Then send an email to u3a2022@gmail.com with your Name & Address, together with the number of calendars you have paid for.

Calendars will be delivered to your home as soon as possible after receipt of payment.

Chairman:- Janet Bailey - chairman@sidmouthu3a.org
Vice Chairman:- Kate Ashby - vice.chair@sidmouthu3a.org
Secretary:- Christina Isis - secretary@sidmouthu3a.org
Treasurer: Vera Arnold - treasurer@sidmouthu3a.org
Membership Secretary: Neil Morley - membership@sidmouthu3a.org
Groups Co-ordinator 1:- Amanda Haste - groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org
Groups Co-ordinator 2:- (vacant)
Beacon Administrator:- Chris Powell - webmaster@sidmouthu3a.org
Newsletter Editor:- Brian Webb - newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org
Social Committee Chairman:- (vacant)
Speaker Finder:- Norma Pearce - normapearce4@btinternet.com
Front of House Manager:- Chris Pike - frontofhouse@sidmouthu3a.org

u3a
Committee

Contact
Details