

Welcome

A belated New year to you all, it seems a long time since the last newsletter and there are several new events announced today. Shame I can't get down to the next open meeting as the subject seems fascinating. So lots to read in the next few pages.

This is my penultimate newsletter for Sidmouth and I regret to say that my plea for a replacement has fallen on deaf ears. I expected that with 550 members there would be someone with the interest and ability to step forward to do the task. So please contact me if you would like to find out more of what it involves! Thanks.

Brian Webb newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org

Chairman's Message

2024 is the 30th anniversary of Sidmouth u3a. We are planning many events and would like more people to come and help with the planning. If you would like to be involved please contact me. It's an important year and we have a lot to be proud of.

Have a look at our very exciting social events calendar for this spring, many outings coming up and more in the planning process but please get in touch as soon as possible if you are interested in any of them, as the deadlines are coming up fast for some of these events. The deadline for the next theatre trip is 13th February.

I would like to echo what Brian has said about taking over as newsletter editor from the next edition. Brian has done a lot of work to make the role as easy as possible, so do get in touch with him if you are interested. We also need a Front of House person. Please contact me about this.

Membership renewal time is 1st February. This will be a new experience for us all as it's the first time you can renew your membership online should you wish. Membership remains at £12 for the year. Best value in Sidmouth I think.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the February meeting where I think most people will be more than a little shocked at what Tony will be telling us.

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

Notification of the Annual General Meeting of Sidmouth u3a
To be held at the Stowford Community Centre, Chambers Close, Sidmouth EX10 9YL
On Tuesday March 12th 2024 at 2pm Tea and Coffee served at 1.30pm

AGENDA

1. Chairman's welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2023 for approval
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairman's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election to vacant Committee Positions:-
8. AOB

Forthcoming Events

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

Nightmares and Dreams - The Rise of Artificial Intelligence



The talk is being given by Tony Warren, a u3a member, who has worked in the Information Technology industry for 30 years until retiring. Tony aims to demystify the whole subject of *Artificial Intelligence* and the implications for society, even showing how you can use it in your everyday life!

AGM and Open Meeting 12th March 2024, Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30–3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.

Lost Exeter – the 1800s – A new talk by Todd Grey

Social Events

2nd Feb. Skittles. Fully booked.

A Saturday in Feb. possibly 17th A pickle ball taster session. Contact Jennifer at social.jen@sidmouthu3a.org

20th February. Evening Social – Drink & Chat at the Balfour Arms, Sidmouth.

This will be held on 20th February from 7 – 9 pm.

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

29th February BSO concert at Exeter Great Hall , Fully Booked

14th March. Theatre trip to Plymouth to see 'And Then There Were None'.

The matinee performance of Agatha Christie's 'And Then There Were None' at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. The coach will leave Sidmouth in time to get us to Plymouth for a two course lunch at Wildwood, (must be pre-ordered). Tickets are £66 including lunch, matinee performance and return coach travel. The deadline for this event is the open meeting on Tuesday 13th February.

Contact Janet at:- chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

19th March. Shopping trip to Street,

A coach has been organised to take us to Street Outlet Village. The coach will leave Sidmouth Triangle at 9.30 and return around 5pm. There will be other pickup points depending on request. The cost is £18.50 for the return journey. There are many places available for coffee breaks and lunch in the outlet village and the main street in Street. Contact Janet at:- chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

Friday 26th April 2024:- Visit to FORDE ABBEY HOUSE AND GARDENS

Originally built by Cistercian monks almost 900 years ago, and refurbished in the 1530's, the abbey is now the home of the Kennard family. The house contains luxuriously refurbished rooms, beautiful furniture and stunning tapestries. A guided tour will reveal the fascinating history of the house. The gardens span 30 acres of flower beds, lakes, an arboretum and woodland garden and an amazingly high-powered centenary fountain.



Join us for a fabulous visit. £35 to include entry to house and gardens, a private guided tour of the house and coach travel. Please sign up at the February or March open meetings and pay by March 12th. Contact Veronica on veronica.swinburn@icloud.com

Also, some time in April, a guided tour around Seaton Wetlands. Watch this space. Coming up, a visit to the waste plant in Exeter. Watch this space. And, a visit to the RNLi training centre in Poole. Another thing to watch for here.

Friday 10th May. Malvern Spring Show.

Advance notice that we have a coach booked to take us to the Malvern Spring Show. The coach will be leaving early on Friday morning and returning late in the day. Further details and price will be in the next newsletter. Please note the deadline for this will be early March so please let Jackie know if you are interested in going. Contact:- social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org

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

18th – 22nd June. Trip to France to visit Monet's Garden and Versailles, the last few remaining places available. This trip will be closing soon.

Groups News

German Conversation group 2

This new group will be meeting on a **Thursday afternoon** monthly (which week tbc), hopefully from Feb. 'A monthly chance to try some conversational German: all levels welcome. Fluent German speaker is available to assist but all that's required is enthusiasm about the German language and culture!'

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.](#)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2024-2025

This year we will be asking you to complete a **Renewal form** (for the first time since the pre-covid era). This is to update your personal details and to add some important information, if you have not previously done so, including:

Known as: the name or nickname you prefer to be addressed by.

Emergency contact: it is very important that somebody can be contacted on your behalf in case of emergency.

Mobile number: this is essential should a group leader or event organiser lose contact with you during an outing or event

Gift Aid: if you are a UK taxpayer, please agree to Sidmouth u3a claiming Gift Aid on your membership subscription. Your subscription can make each £1 worth 25p more to us at no cost to you, and helps to keep your subs down.

RENEWAL OPTIONS

There will be 3 options for renewing your membership:

Email Form: the renewal email you receive will include a very simple email form, to save you printing and delivering the paper form

Paper Form: this will be included with the renewal notification, or can be downloaded from the 'Renew' page on the website. Forms can be posted/delivered to the Membership Secretary at the address shown on the form; or Forms and payment can be presented at the February u3a meeting at Stowford (cash payments cannot be accepted). For anyone without a printer, renewal forms will be available at the u3a meeting on 13 February.

Online Renewal: to renew online you will need to register on the Members Portal. Full details below or are on the website at 'MemberPortal'.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL RATES

The renewal rates have been held yet again this year at:

Individual Member: £12 Associate Member (member of another u3a): £8.50

Third Age Matters magazine is an optional extra at £4 for 5 editions, posted to your home address.

PAYMENT

Our preferred method of payment is by BACS but cheques are accepted.

We cannot accept cash payments.

If you wish to pay by credit card, debit card or PayPal via our PayPay payment platform, you will need to register for the Members Portal. You do not need a PayPal account to pay by credit or debit card.

[Important All Members – Renewing your Membership online?](#)

This year Sidmouth u3a is introducing the facility to renew your membership online. To do this, you will need to register for the Sidmouth u3a Members Portal, where you can:

- renew your membership online
- see information about Sidmouth u3a Interest Groups
- update your contact details and add some important information

You will need your Membership Number to register. (see your individual email for this).

You can register via the [Sidmouth u3a website](#) using the **MemberPortal** menu item, where there is detailed information including links to instructional articles from the u3a Beacon Help Centre.

You can, if you wish, use the link below to go straight to the Members Portal to register. The link is safe but we are all very mindful about using links in mails, so you may prefer to register via Sidmouth u3a website :- [Sidmouth u3a Members Portal Registration](#)

- > Click on '**Register for a membership account**'
- > Complete all of the fields, including your Membership Number.
- > Click on 'Confirm Identity'. > Confirm your email address and create a password
- > Once this is completed you will be able to log into the Members Portal through Sidmouthu3a website via the '*MemberPortal*' menu item.

If you do have any questions about registering or have any problems, please email me.

Chris Powell
Sidmouth u3a
Webmaster & Beacon Site Administrator



Tech Corner with Tony Warren

As the years march on, and technology marches even faster, it is becoming quite a task for people approaching their relaxed years to embrace the ability to do the simple things in life. For example, sending an email or just browsing the internet, watching some YouTube or perhaps writing a letter.

We have to drag out the laptop, wait interminable minutes for it to come on, only to find that Microsoft is running yet another update! We then have to have all those programs loaded to browse web pages or send an email, then there are all the password and spam messages we need to work with. By the time we actually get to the part where we can simply check our emails, we begin to wonder why we bothered in the first place! This can be intimidating for people who grew up before mobiles or the internet. But there is a solution, it doesn't cost a lot, and it's simple. It's called the "Chromebook" system and several companies make Chromebook

computers, normally the size of a laptop; you might not have heard of it, but, being a computer enthusiast and paranoid about data safety, I've thoroughly researched it and spoken to people who use them. All you need is a broadband connection in your home, which costs an average of £28 a month, though some are cheaper than that. *Chromebooks* are lightweight, simple, fast and they don't have programs to install. They also don't need anti-virus packages to slow everything down, and they



certainly don't need expensive powerful computers to run the *Chromebook* system. When you buy one, you switch it on, connect it to your broadband and everything comes down from Google automatically. You can finally breathe a sigh of relief because it is so simple and you don't have to buy any software to write letters, send emails, talk to loved ones, listen to YouTube, store and go through your photos, browse the internet, watch TV or just read books. You can add applications if you want to, for example Netflix or BBC iPlayer.



You don't need to worry about losing files or data because everything is stored on the Google cloud and is therefore backed up. It is necessary to have a Google email account, which is called a "GMAIL"

address - simple to create and free of charge. But you can still use your existing email as well. If you want to print documents, then you can buy a good value colour printer for under £50 which will not only print from your *Chromebook*, but will scan documents for you, even acting as a photocopier and connecting without wires.

To give you an idea of costs, I checked out a few I found on Amazon at the moment:
ASUS from £185 (This is a touchscreen, so doesn't need a mouse);
LENOVO £229; ACER Spin £243

The great thing is, you don't need to buy anything else to get started.

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

Editor's Note:- I am a great fan of *Chromebooks*. Three years ago I bought a very basic and inexpensive one to replace a 10 year old Laptop. It is amazing, it does far more than expected. Works well alongside my main Computer as well as my Android phone and Tablet. I can now use my phones 'Whatsapp' on a big screen with good speakers. The only thing I did wrong on this purchase was that I should have spent £50 more and got a touch screen. Then your Chromebook can double up as your Tablet device. In my opinion, the learning curve is no greater than updating to a new version of Windows. (watch out Windows 12 is coming requiring new hardware!!!!). If you would like any advice then please contact me. **Brian Webb** newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org

(PS- Have produced this newsletter on my Chromebook!)

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Committee

Contact
Details