

# SOMERTON U3A

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

February 2021

## Newsletter 11



### Chairman 's Message

When I look back over the past months' newsletters, we have had so many challenges, none more than the lockdown. We have had plans and ideas to take us forward only to find we have to take a step back and put these on hold.

Whilst so much uncertainty still surrounds the months ahead, with the roll out of the vaccine there is light at the end of the tunnel. We have to change focus and remember we may not be able to meet face to face but we can engage with more online learning and participation.

There are so many opportunities, from the Third Age Trust to YouTube.

We are promoting a new group, lead by Mike Davis, to focus on Zoom and have training workshops.

We will have held a new members' Zoom meeting at the end of January with another one booked for early February.

There are dates to look forward to. Firstly, the Friday Speakers' meetings on Friday, 12 and 26<sup>th</sup>. Valentine's Day is on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>, Shrove Tuesday 16th and then Ash Wednesday the following day. Would one of you like to organise a pancake competition?

*What are you going to give up during Lent?*

So many activities to enjoy from the

comfort of your own home.

Don't forget February is a short month and we will soon be welcoming longer day light hours and beautiful spring bulbs of all descriptions and colours.

I hope our contributors to the newsletter will inspire you as there are a lot of things we all share - positivity, resilience and a passion for life.

Keep supporting each other and stay safe.

See you next month.

Judi



### February.....Did You Know?



*Frost patterns*



The Roman month *Februarius* was named after the Latin word, *februum*, which means purification, At one time the Romans considered winter a month-less period

The Romans changed the length of the month and at one time, it had 23 days

February was added to the Roman calendar in 713 BC

February is the only month of the year that can pass without a full moon.

February is the only month that, one every six years and twice every eleven years has four full 7-day weeks. This will happen this year.

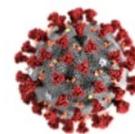
Birth flowers of February are the violet, the common primrose and the iris.

Birthstone of February is the amethyst symbolising humility, spiritual wisdom and sincerity.

*Photos : David Perkins and Judi Powell*



# Lockdown Lives



## What excitement will today bring?

Tendrils of consciousness slowly waft through the intense lockdown dream to ease me into a limbo land of uncertainty. As there has been nothing in the diary for ten months, the brain takes a while to fathom out what day of the week it is.

Puzzle eventually solved, I sally forth, well, hobble downstairs encased in my good old faithful dressing gown. Kettle on, tablets swallowed, coffee made, slump on to sofa, swing legs up with difficulty, pulling up the heated throw and switch on the iPad.

First decision of the day, read email or newspapers first? That's easy, newspapers. There might be an email that requires a sentient reply. Better wait until the caffeine hits the right spot in the brain.

One hour later, satiated with bad news, I check what the fridge has to offer in the way of culinary comfort. I'm finding 2 lightly poached eggs very satisfying at the moment. Must try Nigella's method of using a tea strainer to strain away the watery white.

Tummy happy, back to the sofa and the iPad.

Two hours later, all read out, better get washed and dressed.

Now very big decision, what next? The first lockdown took care of sorting cupboards, it's too cold and wet for gardening so it's a tossup between some household chores or the book du jour. The final decision depends on the level of energy although I do admit I do get a kick from seeing a pristine kitchen floor and a gleaming kitchen sink. We have to get our pleasures where we can. There's also the smug little inner voice rejoicing

about the possibility of a few extra calories lost after doing said chores.

Anyway the day grinds on and I don't seem to have achieved much. It's 5 o'clock so time for more food, something with not much effort involved and all swished down with a large glass of wine.

Suitably refreshed, I now have to decide what to watch on TV. Simple rule, anything goes but nothing real- life angst or seeing animals in jeopardy. David Attenborough, I have loved you since I was 15, but watching the iguana being chased by the killer snakes on Planet Earth a couple of years ago did it for me. If you haven't seen it, catch up on YouTube, it's very scary but the iguana escapes!

If I'm lucky, I make it to 10 o'clock without falling asleep in front of the box. It's with a feeling of relief to get ready for bed, hope I have a good night's sleep, ready to do the same all over again tomorrow.

Before I go, the papers are full of advice of the best ways to survive lockdown. One suggestion is to try new things so that we become more mentally flexible and so can handle things better. The idea is that every day for a week we do one thing differently. Getting ready for bed last night, I realised I had been wearing my jumper inside out all day. I don't suppose that counts as I was ignorant of the fact until it didn't matter!

Ah well, there's always tomorrow and the next day and the next day.....

Doreen Mitchell

### Be kind

It has been painful not to see friends and family who may be struggling because of the present Lockdown. Our emotions can be difficult to control but that is being human. Being human is to feel a lot - if we can carry on loving, living and persevering we can inspire others to do the same.

Be kind to oneself and to others.

Judi Powell

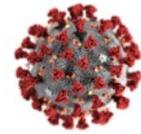
### Hope to meet up again soon

I think we are all looking forward to some normality come the Spring ( I hope). I am not that technical so looking forward to when we can all meet up again. I thought your suggestions where very good and maybe having a party of some kind would be great

Hope all well with you

Cynthia (Curtis)

# Lockdown Lives



## What I do to survive the pandemic.

What do I do? Well, first I make a plan for every single day of things to do, or sometimes I stay in my 'jimjams' until 2pm *wondering* what to do.

I think exercise is key to keeping a healthy body and a healthy mind so I get out as often as I can but, hang on a minute – aren't I supposed to be staying in under lockdown rules? Perhaps I should see how I feel? Oh look, its raining so maybe tomorrow?

Eating is a vital part of my regime. Healthy eating. Knowing that I have fuelled my body with the obligatory '5 a day' gives me the peace of mind to sit down in the evening and scoff chocolate!

Drink plenty of fluids. Advice I received in my running days – 'Take plenty of liquid on board' and, after all, beer is mostly water and wine is only grape juice. Isn't it?

Take up a new hobby. Learn something. 'Homes Under the Hammer' and 'Bargain Hunt' can be as addictive as model making or puzzle solving *and* you can learn a lot, so doesn't that count towards keeping your mind working

and expanding your education as well?

Finally, listen to advice. Hear what other people are suggesting you do. Somerton U3A has between 300 - 400 members so you will have between 300 - 400 great ideas to take note of and follow.

The pandemic has had a huge effect on all of us and perhaps we don't even realize it has? We have had our routines disrupted, our friendships curtailed and become isolated from our families so, whether you feel you fall into the first part of each suggestion on 'how to survive' or the second or maybe a combination of the two, *my* only suggestion would be - not to worry about it. Be kind to yourself, do not judge yourself too harshly, go with whatever it is you want to do without guilt and remember, if things really are bad for you then reach out, with honesty and give a friend a call.

You are not alone.

Stay well,

Steve Davis

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## Lockdown Liz

We were asked to detail some of the more positive lifestyle changes that we are experiencing with the advent of Covid. I would like to concentrate on just one aspect of change.

Very early on in the pandemic my brother set up a family WhatsApp group for me and my five siblings and their partners. We kept it as a fairly small group but, I have to say, it has given us all such a lot of pleasure. We post funny things, interesting things, family related memories and photos, thoughts, concerns, upbeat messages etc. My oldest brother and sister-in-law live in Cyprus but we have all felt so much closer to them through our group. We can even have video phone calls to them for no extra cost and it's always lovely to see and share the warmth and sunshine that they experience during our winter months.

My brother set it up with the name 'Happy Families' and

as anyone with a number of siblings will know, it wasn't always that! Now our squabbles and disagreements provide lots of laughs and fond memories.

Being able to see my daughter and her partner and my 6 year old Grandson through the wonder of WhatsApp has been heart-lifting, particularly at Christmas time when, for the first time, we couldn't spend the day together. It was far from ideal but I feel so lucky that we live in a time when this medium is available to us so that we can see and speak to each other and share photos and videos to keep us going.

We all, obviously, look forward to the time when we can be with our friends and family again but IT is definitely bridging that gap in such a positive way.

Liz Short

# Lockdown Lives

## The comfort of cats

I have heard that some people stay in bed until mid-day because they see no point in rising earlier with an empty diary. Chance would be a fine thing. My cats do not approve such behaviour.

At the moment they usually sleep peacefully downstairs until suddenly they are overwhelmed by a desire for my company between 4 and 5 a.m. Meera usually arrives first. She is petite and gentle so I do not always feel her landing on my bed. Her next action is to walk all round the edge of my mattress. If this doesn't work she will sit on my pillow, sometimes on my hair. If I choose to ignore this, she walks backwards and forwards over my body.

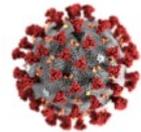
I give in and get out of bed. Hugo, her big brother, is sitting on the landing. He makes such a fuss of me that I am quite sure he sent her in to get me. We stagger downstairs together, I open the cat flap and top up their food.



I usually return to bed but rarely sleep. I am not sure what they do next but it must be very energetic because by 9 o'clock they are curled up together and sound asleep on the spare bed where they remain for several hours.

Cats are like babies. Just when you think you have understood their sleep patterns they change the rules. Maybe when you read this we will all be sleeping through the whole night. Then again maybe we won't.

Jane Redgrove



## Be thankful

It may not be an easy time but every time you wake up in the morning, just remember the new day is a gift .

Heather Wallace

## Keeping in touch

These are trying times but do offer some opportunities for learning new things and taking up new hobbies.

I have certainly learned how to use technology to keep in touch with family and friends, to some extent more often than before.

It can be quite comforting on a cold or wet and windy day to know that you haven't got to go out and have the perfect excuse not to!

It is important though, I think, to maintain a routine and not to give in to the pyjama syndrome which apparently afflicts some, though not our members I am sure.

Marilyn Muffett

## Keeping Busy

I don't have any special way of keeping motivated during lockdown and I do miss the social contact with both family and friends. I have enjoyed reading a variety of different books, and have started doing crosswords. I am currently working on a piece of embroidery I started many years ago. I still have some way to go and hope that lockdown ends before it is finally finished. I like to get outside to tidy up the garden (weather permitting), as I don't like not being able to put out a full garden recycling bin for collection every other week.

Sue Haigh

# Lockdown Lives

## Thank goodness for technology

Just to show that something good can sometimes come out of something bad or unhappy...

On December 21st, my 98 year old mum died, peacefully, in Immacolata nursing home in Langport. She had not been "my Mum" really since the start of the first lockdown. This I am sure was made worse by the fact that we did not see each other for FIVE whole months.

Her cremation date in Yeovil was Tues Jan 5th.....the day AFTER Boris gave the order to lock up. I was supposed to go with Alan Symons, the vicar, to the short service, shown on webinar zoom, to the rest of the family but that was curtailed; suffice to say I used the Zoom link.

Alan kindly agreed to hold a Zoom church service for Mum, and i was able to read out, albeit tearfully, Mum's obituary. All sad so far, BUT, I got to see and talk to my 2 sons and their wives in London, PLUS my cousins in Wales, PLUS my brother in law and his wife in Salisbury, PLUS a Welsh schoolfriend and chapel goer from my home town, Brynmawr. I had not seen or hugged them for 12 months!! How wonderful is the internet!

David Robins



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## 12 months with Covid

Available time up. Efficiency down. Coffee consumption up. Petrol consumption down. On line purchases up. Meals out down. Day time TV up. Travel time to meetings down. Computer time up...Zoom. Weeds in garden down. Vegetable produce up. Spare space in freezer down. Study/Workshop tidier. Unused rubbish down. Built new workshop bench. Received long awaited bandsaw. New workshop hand tools up. Broken tools down. Wind on greenhouse...down. Fix greenhouse...up. Daughter in Australia. She's just got a job! Mother-in-law surviving in Sunderland. She's holding up! I'm getting fatter. Wife's cooking outstanding. Leg ulcer back. Health centre brilliant. We are ok. Feel guilty when think of others who aren't. Memory is poor but I will never forget 2020.

Mike Davis

## Speaker Programme

for Winter 2021.....on.....

zoom

**Friday 12th Feb 11.00 am**

*The Art of Trickery* - Ian Keable, will talk about magicians depicted in paintings

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 11.00 am**

*Is anyone there?* - Bob Mizon, talks about astronomy

Bob, a retired French teacher, used to inspire his pupils with his talks on the stars – all in perfect French!

**Fri 12th March 11.00 am**

Hypnosis – Alan Jones. His talk will definitely NOT put you to sleep!

**Fri 26th March at 11.00 am**

Photography - David Boag - back by popular demand after his talk in January 2020

Further details of speakers and their talks can be found on the Somerton U3A website.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/somerton/events>

You will be sent a reminder and a Zoom link a few days before the talk

# Useful Information

## U3A/u3a

Some of you might be a bit puzzled if you have seen the name of the organisation written in a different way, u3a instead of the more familiar, U3A.

In a bid to encourage an increasingly younger membership, the change was approved at the National AGM held in November.

The rationale was that the previous badge shape and capital letters was felt to be too old-fashioned and too formal and did not reflect how the U3a wished to be seen in the future.

## Apply for or renew your bus pass

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/bus-travel/bus-passes/apply-or-renew-your-bus-pass>

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## U3A Winter Learning Programme

**If you've not yet tried the u3a winter learning programme, it's not too late to catch up with what's on in February.**

<b>Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2.30pm</b>	<b>Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2.30pm</b>	<b>Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2pm</b>	<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March 10.30am</b>
<i>Maths activities and Games</i>	<i>Maths Problems and Puzzles Workshop</i>	<i>Wellbeing in Nature</i>	<i>The British Army in Germany Since 1945</i>
Interactive session	Interactive session	An interactive talk	
Free	Free	Free	
(repeat of previous session)	(repeat of previous session)	Repeated Thursday 11th March at 2pm	

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## King Lear Prizes - NATIONAL CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION

The King Lear Prizes, the national creative arts competition for older people during the COVID-19 pandemic has just opened to entries, and is running from January to 19th March 2021.

Your U3A members may be interested in hearing about the competition, which is specifically for amateurs and beginners who are over the age of 65.

The competition accepts entries in poetry, real stories

(short stories from people's lives), art and musical performance, and there are over £2,000 of prizes on offer.

The winners will be picked by our panel of expert judges including Gyles Brandreth and Julian Lloyd Webber.

Our website gives more information about the competition and the organisation which runs it!

<https://www.kinglearprizes.org.uk>

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## Car Insurance

Has your expected car mileage gone down due to the pandemic over the past year? Have you informed your Insurance company? I went on line yesterday and changed my mileage from 6000 to 4000, bingo, a refund was processed instantly and the money was returned to my credit card that I had used to pay the policy.

Judi



## A Tribute to Jean Rattenbury

Jean was a very valued member of our Friday afternoon Book Group who sadly died on December 19th, at home with her family. This was 2 days after her 91st birthday and she will be sadly missed for her interesting contributions and her wealth of life experience and reading.

Many of you will remember Jean contributed an interesting article about her memories of VE Day to one of our magazines. Oral history is so important as so many experiences disappear into the mists of time.

I was privileged to attend her funeral at Yeovil and learned even more about her life from the beautiful programme her family had assembled plus the contributions of a humanist practitioner. The funeral was /is available on Zoom. Many of you know how hard it is not to attend funerals at present. It can be a great support at a time of loss.

I was pleased to meet her family and hear them speak about Jean's life and experience and her grand daughters' contributed readings of memories and a poem. It was good to learn more about her life. I only knew her since she joined the book group. I was moved to discover her son mentioned the pleasure she gained, from books we were reading, in his address.

She got to grips with Zoom, (with some help from her gardener) which was commendable. She

preferred real books, rather than Kindle and I do agree ! In the summer I picked her up to have a socially distanced meeting in another member's summerhouse, which was a welcome change for both of us, as she was really no longer driving by then.

Recently I took books up to her home in High Ham, when we were able to use the library and in the past few months when she felt less able to go out except to the doctor. Like so many, she had very little company in these distressing times, after an impressive career.

I felt particularly sad that I had known her for such a short time in a long and interesting life. Our longest conversation was when the group visited Lyme Regis after we had read *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and took advantage of being able to visit the house, now with the Landmark Trust, which belonged to John Fowles. It is only open for 2 weekends a year and is let at other times.

She enjoyed the Colette stories...and our last books were the complete Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan series... she was enthusiastic about visiting Naples many years ago where the stories are based, but possibly she did not manage to complete the final book, before she sadly departed. We will miss her as we also miss 2 other members who lost their husbands during this last year and did not continue with the group.

Jenny Oliver



# Group News



## Bird Watching ..... Dick Carlyon



Teal

All photos shot at Lodmoor Reserve, Dorset



Heron



Black-headed gulls



Kingfisher



Snipe

## Craft Group

In anticipation, but not wishing for, wintery weather the theme for January was –

**White with a hint of blue and silver**

Here are some of our cards:

Amanda Hooper



# Group News



## Science and Technology (S&T) Group

The S&T group have started meeting again at 10.00 on 4th Thursday in the month on Zoom.

The topics we have covered recently are:

***To live or to die in an Intensive Care Unit***

Presented by David Robins

***A Ticket to Mars -***

A review ***of the explosion (literally) of Space Exploration in Recent Times***

Presented by Laurence Reeves

Our meetings in the future plan to cover:

**25th February**

*Respiratory Failure*

**25th March**

*The science behind testing for COVID-19*

All U3A members are welcome to join our meetings.

John Light



## History Quiz....Nancy Schooling

- ***Bonfire of the Vanities, 1497***
- ***Who organised the Bonfire and what was burned on it?***
- ***In which city did this Bonfire happen?***
- ***Which famous Italian family had invited Savonarola to preach there?***
- ***Who were his 'Piagnoni' and what did they do?***
- ***How long did the rule of Savonarola last?***
- ***Which Pope excommunicated him and how was he executed?***
- ***Can you think of any modern parallels?***



# Organic Veg Garden...Crop Protection...Mike Davis

My veg garden is based on 6 x 8' (240cm) by 2' (60cm) deep beds so all accessories fit into a 2' square so it is easy to run 3 year crop rotation.

Not surprising if no protection was used I would suffer from various common pests/weather conditions.

When we moved to Curry Rivel in the autumn of 2015, our eyes were clearly focussed on our garden; the prime reason for buying this particular house.

The first year was taken up clearing the excess wild apple & plum trees that were crowded into the lower end of the garden, where now stands a set of fresh young fruit trees nicely spaced and a set of vegetable dedicated deep beds.

The second year, we learnt that being located on top of a hill is good when it rains but terrible when the wind blows.

...and, what is digging up our veg and lawn?

Badgers!

...and what is eating our brassicas?

Wood Pigeons!

This meant focus went on protection against the new challenges.

Being an organic garden where pesticides and herbicides are not used we naturally encouraged pest predators (slow worms, frogs, toads, beetles, hedge hogs, birds, hoverfly, ladybirds etc) at no extra cost except, the dilemma of loving butterflies meant the caterpillars ate all the brassicas the pigeons left.

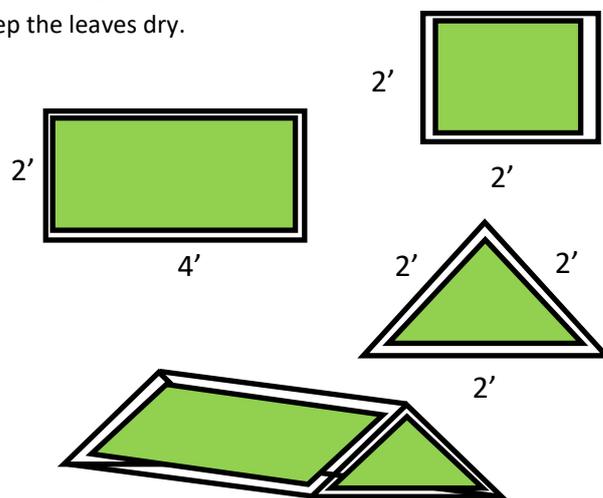
My point is I need to protect from the above and the remainder of common challenges. eg frost,

I always wanted a polytunnel but they are such an eyesore, I looked at the design of many and noticed often the walls were often constructed of netting, so I built some mini nets around the deep beds which have worked extremely well so I will share the idea with you.

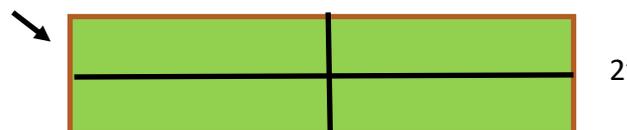
The frame, made from 2" (50mm) x 1" (25mm) treated timber was constructed as shown below with simple glued/screwed cross halving joints. I then attached a fine netting tacked every few inches on one side. The frames were based on a side length of either 2' (60cm) or 4' (120 cm), so could be assembled like Lego on my deep beds. (decking screws or hinges could be used to fix).

Cloches could be used but the nets let the rain through unlike most cloches!

Indeed, a square cloche can be attached on top of a square net box for your tomatoes, to keep the leaves dry.



Triangular or square end frame



6 frames on 1 deep bed



*Forgive me if the detail has sent to sleep...perhaps you wanted to catch up on your sleep? ...M*

## Zoom help

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

*I am considering starting a Zoom Group but I need to know what help you need.*

*Please contact me on [mike.davis@silchester.org](mailto:mike.davis@silchester.org) with questions/comments.*

Mike Davis

# LORD OF THE RINGS

HAYDN CALLOW

Hi, during lockdown one I made 15 ukuleles, 15 is enough for anyone so what to do during lockdown 2 to stay out of trouble? I've been a bit of a fan of *The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings* for some years and I decided to make a diorama based on *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

These little characters are only two centimetres tall and are constructed from tiny kits and then hand painted using, in my case, a magnifying glass/light. This went okay but I then decided to make it a centrepiece for a small scale model railway.

Below are a few photos of the progress, it's not yet finished and may never be. The locomotives run on a system called DCC (digital command control) whereby each individual engine has a computer chip fitted and this enables each one to be controlled, This means in theory many can be running independent of each other on the same track, some even produce sound.



## Picture Quiz



Answers next month

***Please send all articles for the Newsletter to the editor***

**kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com**

**Deadline for the March edition...20th February**

**No entries can be accepted after this date.**

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please...**no pdfs!**

Web site:<https://u3asites.org.uk/somerton/home>