

# SOMERTON u3a

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

July 2021

## Newsletter 16



### A July Day

by Eben Eugene Rexford

In idle mood, this happy day,  
I let the moments drift away;  
I lie among the tangled grass  
And watch the crinkling billows pass  
O'er seas of clover. Like a tide  
That sets across the meadow wide,  
The crimson-crested ripples run  
From isles of shade to shores of sun;  
And one white lily seems to be  
A sail upon this summer sea,  
Blown northward, bringing me, to-day,  
A fragrant freight from far Cathay.



*Thanks to Marilyn Muffet*

### Chairman's Message

#### Hello Members

The Return to Hope and Joy !

Well, I do hope so as we look forward to July 19th.

Let's make plans, have adventures and find your new passions .. it all starts here with

Somerton u3a.

Although we cannot meet as we would all wish to (government guidelines should be followed) we can plan for the future.

I feel confident that the months ahead will be happier ones. I am sure that many of you will want to meet up and socialise having missed meeting in groups small

and large, inside or out in the country.

I am so pleased to know many of you have communicated with us. Do look out for the future events and plans based on your ideas.

Don't forget to attend the Zoom AGM meeting on Friday July 23rd. All the documents are on the website and I do encourage you to put your questions, observations and feedback to me as soon as possible .

[Chairman@somertonu3a.uk](mailto:Chairman@somertonu3a.uk)

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the day - if not before.

Judi Powell



## Appeal for more Group Leaders from Sue Haigh



### First of all, a big thank you to all group leaders!

Let us hope that in the next few weeks, restrictions start to ease and more groups can start meeting face to face again.

Unfortunately over the last 16 months, situations change and some of the group leaders are no longer able to continue in their role.

New leaders are needed for *Mah-jong for Beginners* and *the Strollers and Striders* walking groups. Both groups have members keen to carry on and it would be a shame if they cannot continue.

On a more positive note, we have a Zoom group that

meets once a week, so if you are feeling apprehensive about using Zoom or just want to know more, this is the group for you.

The committee are always keen to hear about your ideas for new groups, so if you have any ideas of thoughts about what new groups you would be interested in joining, or would be willing to help organise, please let me know.

**We are here to help and support you.**

**Groups Co-ordinator**

Please email: [groups@somertonu3a](mailto:groups@somertonu3a)

Sue, Group coordinator

## The Beacon System and Me

Good news for Group Leaders.

I had been very reluctant to get involved with Beacon until I started to think about the holiday to the Isle of Man. I wondered if the Beacon system might be helpful in keeping track of everything. So, I asked Judi.

She contacted Laurence who asked me to supply a user name, preferably just 3 letters. That was easy enough.

Then he sent me a password with the news that he was going out for a walk but he would be available later if I needed any help.

The password was one of those impossible strings of letters and symbols. It got me into the system and then it was easy to change it to something I had a chance of remembering.

Now I was faced with a yellow box in the middle of the blue Somerton u3a administration page. There I found a link to Beacon User Guide. Click.

Amazing revelation!

In no time at all, I had the list of members (10) in my Scrabble group on the screen and was able to send an email to them all easily.

Roast Potato Club ditto.

Now I was on a roll.

I looked at the Garden Visits group.

40 members, 20 of whom had not responded to emails last summer.

So I deleted the whole lot and then created a new list with of those of you who have told me you want to rejoin this year.

After this "training" session, I found it easy to set up the Travel group for the Isle of Man. I had a slight problem because I needed a working sheet that could include the few travellers from neighbouring u3as but an email to Laurence soon solved that.

Last year I had endless difficulty sending emails to groups using Windows 10 but now I use Beacon and my life is much simpler.

**I would encourage all group leaders to give it a go.**

Jane Redgrove

# National u3a Day June 2nd 2021



Following the disappointment of the cancellation of u3a day last year, thankfully we were able to go ahead with a rather more limited activity this year.

This took the form of a stall opposite the Somerton Library which was manned by committee members and volunteers for the whole morning.

Blue and yellow bunting and a u3a banner attracted lots of attention from passers-by to the display boards, featuring some of the activities in which Somerton u3a members are able to enjoy.

There was plenty of printed information for people to take away to read at their leisure.

Blue and yellow wrapped sweets helped focus attention on the display and were a draw for some younger passer -by as well as a constant temptation for the helpers!

It was very gratifying that many existing members came along to see us, giving us the opportunity to actually meet people face-to face after so long.

It was also good to meet some of our newer members in person, who joined either online or by post during the past year.

There was plenty of interest from non members to whom committee members and

volunteers were able to give details of all the benefits of belonging to the u3a and also give information about the 50 plus interest groups..

Many potential new recruits took away membership forms which we hope to receive completed in due course.

The weather was kind until the last hour when the heavens literally opened and we had to hastily move under cover.

In spite of this we felt the morning had been a great success and well worth the time spent and all the organisation involved.

Judi



# Group News



## Sunday Lunch Club

Reunion of Sunday Lunch Club members with Andrea Talbot, former Somerton u3a committee member who now lives in Sidmouth.

We hear that she is now a very active member of Sidmouth u3a.



*From left to right; Viv Winterburn, Andrea Talbot, Alison Boswell, Ali Relton, Mary Whitaker, Jean Chambers*

## Science & Technology

Our Zoom meetings are at 10.00 – 12.00 on the fourth Thursday of the month and will cover the following topics:

**22nd July – Fusion Energy** Last month the talk looked at the current situation with the large international projects, but there are also many smaller privately funded fusion reactors. These could well be first to generate electricity. This talk will be given by a guest speaker Leigh Edwards.

**26th August – Cephalopods** (octopuses, squids, et al) surely some of the most unusual creatures around - given by Dennis Brown

If you are not a member of S&T but would like to join one of these Zoom presentations please email me at [U3A@jmlight.co.uk](mailto:U3A@jmlight.co.uk)

John

=====

## The Raspberry Pi Group

The group meet by Zoom every Tuesday 10.00 – 12.00, and we are currently working on two projects.

A project to look at the energy efficiency of your house by logging the inside and outside temperatures and the quantity of energy you are using. As we all need to become more 'green' in the future it is important to know where your energy is going.

The second project is rather more 'geekish' and is to design a build a meter to measure low resistances ( 0 – 19.999Ω) using the latest Raspberry Pi Pico which costs just £1.80!!

John

# Group News



## Bird Watching

Thank you to bird watching members, Steve Davis and Dick Carlyon, for the beautiful photos taken last month at Ham Wall and the area between Somerton Doors and Steart



*DRAGONFLY 4 Spotted Chaser – male  
Libellula Quadrimacula  
Photo – Dick Carlyon*



*Female mallard and 2 ducklings Dick Carlyon*



*A grey heron Steve Davis*



*Male banded agrion dragonfly ( green)  
Dick Carlyon*



*Greylag geese*



*A group of shy bird watchers!  
Steve Davis*

Some exciting news, Dick spotted a red kite over the gardens of North Street on the 18<sup>th</sup> June. The bad news is that it did not hang round long enough for Dick to take a photo.

# Group News



## Garden Visits Group

### *Report on Rose Cottage, East Harptree*

Ten members of the Garden Visits group enjoyed the delights of the garden of Rose Cottage situated in a hillside setting overlooking the beautiful Chew Valley and lake.

Numerous paths meander up and down this one acre garden, leading the visitor to enjoy panoramic views in the many seating areas. Planting is cottage garden style with many beautiful roses and hardy geraniums. The owners are keen organic gardeners and plants are chosen to encourage wildlife.

We all found the garden is very restful and the opportunities for sitting and admiring the view encouraged a contemplative mood, culminating in tea and a variety of delicious homemade cakes.

Many thanks to our leader, Jane, for organising, yet another enjoyable garden visit.



### **Good morning!**

*Thank you for a lovely visit yesterday. We did enjoy meeting everyone and exploring Rose Cottage. The views over Chew Valley Lake were great and there was an interesting range of plants to see. We also enjoyed our tea and cake. We look forward to joining future visits.*

*Here is a photo for the next newsletter.*

*Best wishes*

*Annette Sparks*

# Group News



## CRAFT GROUP

During the last 2 months the Craft group have been working on themes of *Floral and Bees*. Here are some of the cards we have made so far.



## Notice of Memorial Service For Jean Francis

Jean Francis who sadly died in April 2020 was a member of U3A and also a member of the Quakers in Long Sutton.

A tribute to Jean, by Sue Bedlow appeared in June 2020 magazine.

Quakers have arranged a Memorial Service for Jean, by agreement with her family, for **September 15th (changed from 8th)** at 1.00pm, after her ashes have been interred alongside her former partner.

Everyone is welcome to attend this ceremony, which is an opportunity to share memories and reflections on Jean's life and her many contributions in various groups and organisations.

This will follow the normal Quaker practice of waiting in silence and anyone who feels moved to can share their reflections.

It will be followed by tea in what we call The Childrens' Room, alongside the Meeting House.

Jenny Oliver

## Out and About Around Somerton

Spotted by a Somerton u3a member with a keen interest in botany was herb paris, paris quadrifolia or true lover's knot.

Although the plant has a widespread distribution across England, it is uncommon and can be very hard to spot. Our eagle-eyed botanist was very excited to find a group of plants, covering an area of only 2m x2m deep in the lower reaches of Swell Wood near Curry Rivel.

It is a singular looking plant with a star-like green flower with golden stamens. The single black fruit can be seen in the photo which ripens in June. The word "paris" in the name comes, not from the city of Paris, but from the Latin word "pars" meaning equal and simply refers to the leaves. The occurrence of herb paris is a good indicator of ancient woodland.

The leaves of the plant suggested both the cross of Christ and the true-love knot to the medieval mind and sprigs were placed in

hats, hoods and purses as a charm for luck in love.

In the 17th and 18th centuries it was a much esteemed plant and used in medicine but today its use is almost confined to homeopathy. At that time syphilis was treated by prescribing arsenic and mercury and herb paris was used as an antidote to this treatment.

Herb paris is a narcotic and, if ingested, can cause nausea, vomiting and convulsions.



# Zoom Talks Programme for July



## Friday 9th July

### ***Great British Eccentrics And Rogues***

This is an extremely popular talk! Have you ever wondered why Britain has had so many eccentrics? Great British Eccentrics & Rogues is a highly amusing talk which looks at some of the world's great eccentrics and rogues who just happened to be British!

Paul takes you on a light-hearted journey that looks at some of the great characters from our past like the lord who lived in a converted fish tank, a unique singer, a UFO

Presented by Mr. Paul Robbins

obsessed peer and then to more recent times and some of the great eccentrics of the last 30 years.

PAUL ROBBINS BSC (HONS) BA, ISEB CERT CONS SERVICES PHF

Step Back in time is a programme of historical talks presented by Paul Robbins BSc (Hons) BA, ISEB Cert, PHF an experienced presenter, historian and author.

## Friday 23rd July

Please note this starts at 11.00 am after the Somerton u3a AGM scheduled for 10.00 am.

### ***My Musical Life in Russia and How I Nearly Became James Bond***

Presented by Professor Gerald Seaman

I am an international authority on Russian music, having held the post of Professor of Musicology at the University of Auckland for 33 years, before returning to the UK in 1998. Since then I have held various appointments at the Birmingham Conservatory, where I was in charge of post-graduate studies, and as a staff member of Oxford University. For many years I was attached to St. Antony's College as a Senior Associate Member.

My publications include a History of Russian Music, the volume Nikolay Andreevich Rimsky-Korsakov: a Research and Information Guide, contributions to Grove's Dictionary and other works. I recently completed a book on Tchaikovsky published by Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

In the past I have lectured at many different universities, including Columbia, Brown and Rutgers in the United

States, Canada, Australia, Germany, Russia and elsewhere.

In particular, I have had the good fortune to spend considerable periods in Russia, including a whole year when I was engaged in postgraduate study at the then Leningrad Conservatory. During my time in Leningrad, I was given a unique insight into the Russian system of music education, being able to visit music specialist schools (a very rare experience for Western visitors), to attend the Union of Soviet composers and meet with many outstanding musicians such as Shostakovich, Khachaturyan, Khrennikov and Kabalevsky.

The talk I am offering, My Musical Life in Russia or How I Nearly Became James Bond, is completely informal and a-political.

### ***Zoom Talks Member's Comment***

Somerton u3a committee, including the Speakers' Organiser, David Robins, were very pleased to receive the comment below from member, Althea Pearson, on the Zoom talk given on Friday 25th July on New Orleans to New York, which focused on the link between jazz and musical theatre.

"We are currently watching Roger Browne's presentation on my husband's iPad. Please could you pass on to him my great appreciation: this Zoom is well worth the year's u3a fee!

Thank you, Best wishes Althea Pearson"

**If you have any comments on the current programme of Zoom talks you wish to share, or indeed on any aspects of Somerton u3a, please don't hesitate to send them into us.**

# Library Reading Competition



## Announcing the Summer Reading Challenge 2021

The UK's biggest annual reading promotion for children aged 4-11 returns for the summer in Somerton library on **Saturday 10th July until Friday 10th September.**

The theme this year is Wild World Heroes, to help everyone think about ways we can help to look after and improve our environment. Check it out now at the official Challenge website, [wildworldheroes.org.uk](http://wildworldheroes.org.uk).

There are two ways to join in,

- At home, parents can register their child online at <http://bit.ly/WildWorldHeroes>
- In Somerton Library, where our friendly team will support them

Children set their own reading challenge then choose from the hundreds of books available in our children's section, many brand new.

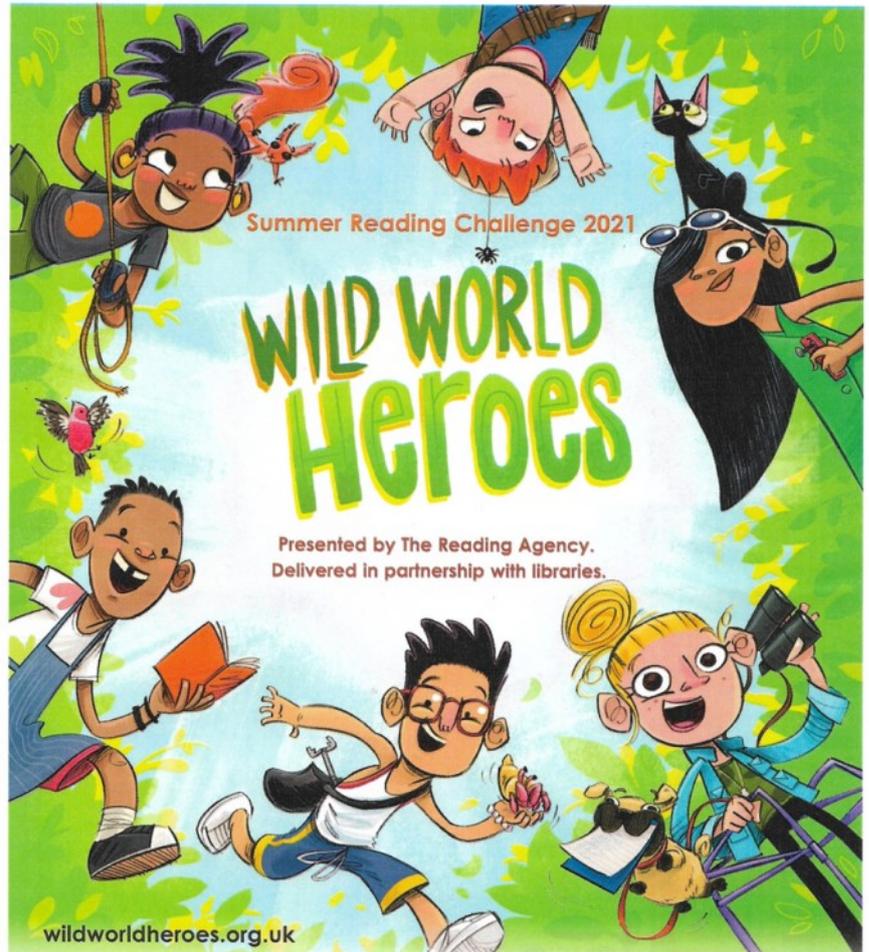
There are stickers to collect from the library to complete their poster and when they've completed their challenge they will receive a medal and certificate.

We look forward to seeing you soon at Somerton Library.

It's FUN! It's FREE! It's LOCAL!

Sue Partington, newly appointed *Community Engagement Trustee*, has provided us with the following information about the Somerton Library Reading Challenge 2021 as some of you might have grandchildren who might like to participate in this annual event.

Sue says that, "Books and comics can be accessed online and the website is full of ideas for activities and book recommendations so well worth a look".



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

***kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com***

***Deadline for the August edition...20th July***

***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>