

SOMERTON u3a

Newsletter 20 November 2021



Christmas Lunch Invitation

Below is your invitation for the much loved Christmas Lunch at the Edgar Hall on Friday 10th December. Full details including methods of payment are included.

All the features that make this such a popular event will be there: the 3 course buffet with many choices, the beautifully decorated tables and the raffle with its many seasonal prizes.

Entertainment this year will be of the home grown variety and have a festive feel.

The committee have worked hard to keep the price at a very reasonable price of £18.

As long time member Malcolm Gardiner said, on hearing the announcement of the return of the lunch,

"Thanks for the good news about the return of an old favourite."

We're sure his words echo what many of you maybe are thinking, tickets are selling well, so why not get yours today.

Somerton u3a Christmas Lunch

Come and join us at the Edgar Hall on 10th December

Doors open at 12 noon for 12.30

Followed by our own entertainment and Christmas songs

Tickets £18 for a two course lunch and coffee

Email treasurer@somertonu3a.uk or write to Liz Short to book a place. Send your cheque made payable to Somerton u3a to Liz at:

8 Wheeler Barton, Somerton TA11 6FE

Or you can pay by bank transfer to Somerton U3A

Account No: 00958442 Sort Code: 30 18 16

Let Liz have a stamped addressed envelope to return your ticket

Tickets will be non-refundable and for members only

Places for guests will be dependent on numbers

Please let Liz know if you have any special dietary requirements

Chairman's Message



I have recently received many emails from you containing your thanks to Somerton u3a committee and support members for their hard work.

We ALL need Somerton u3a; we need members and we need groups and activities, otherwise why are we here?

This is why I would like to thank Jane Redgrove for her energy and enthusiasm in meeting with the group leaders and encouraging potential new groups and new group leaders.

Hopefully, this will result in a more diverse and interesting u3a to not only attract new members but also for us all to enjoy.

Marilyn Muffett and Liz Short have been extremely busy with members' renewals as well as enrolling new members.

It was really good to see some of you at our **Meet the Committee** event at the *White Hart* recently. We hope to hold another one in the new year.

A very big "thank you" to Doug Skillicorn and Laurence Reeves, for finally fathoming out the Edgar Hall sound system.

This will enable us to hold live meetings in the Hall as well as zooming them to those members unable to

attend.

I am sorry the October Friday meeting was cancelled but we have to consider everyone's ongoing health; better to be prudent now than have isolation in the coming months.

The Zoom meeting delivered by Debbie from the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance was more than just interesting. It was enlightening to discover the work of this amazing self-funded emergency service. There is a short piece about the talk later on in the newsletter and information on how you can help this totally self-funded organisation.

I have my fingers crossed for the Christmas lunch and, again, thank you to all of you who wish to attend - payment details etc are in this newsletter.

Diary Dates

Saturday 20th - Curry Rivel Community Day
Friday 26th - Monthly Meeting at Edgar Hall
...details on p 14...

Judi



Group News

Bird Watching



Photos taken at Catcott by Dick Carlyon



Group News



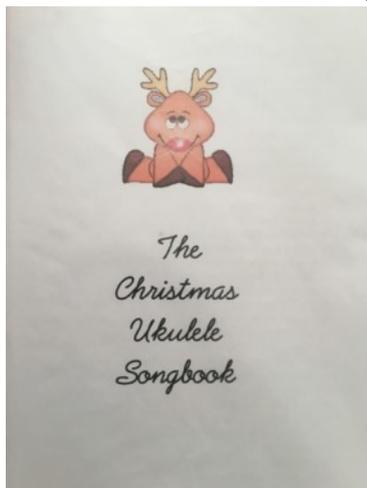
Craft Group

Some members continued to make a card at home, this time the theme was "Balloons".

We have now had two sessions meeting in person, each time doing silk painting...here is some of the work in progress. Future sessions will use a range of media resulting in various items, not necessarily cards.



Ukulele Group



After a long period of only meeting over Zoom it is

wonderful for the group to be able to meet and play in person again. The atmosphere in the hall can be chilly, with all the windows and doors open, but is undoubtedly warmed by the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the members.

That season is coming around again and the ukulele group has already been booked to provide some festive entertainment for several events.

Time to get out the Christmas songbooks and start practising.

Roast Potato Club



Members of the Roast Potato Club enjoying Sunday lunch at The Podymore Inn, (Yes, it is spelt like that) Podimore



Group News

Coffee & Chat

New group, Coffee & Chat, had their inaugural meeting at the White Hart in Somerton. Ten u3a members enjoyed meeting and swapping news over coffee.

If you are interested in joining this new monthly group, please contact groups@organiser, Jane Redgrove

Photo...Kay Williamson

Table Tennis

The group restarted at the beginning of September and has settled back into regular weekly sessions on Wednesday afternoons at the Meadway Hall in Compton Dundon.

The hall offers excellent facilities and we have four tables which allows up to 16 people to play at any one time.

Anyone interested in joining should contact Mike Beeson on 07715747476 or email beesonm@btinternet.com



Photo – Anita Redman

Message from Jane Groups' Organiser

It has been wonderful to see so many of our groups becoming active again and new groups starting up. Let's hope we can continue through the winter without any further disruptions.

I know that some of you have found it difficult to respond to emails sent out via Beacon.

The sender is shown asnoreply@u3abeacon.org.U.K.

Very off-putting and confusing.

However, if you scroll down, through the message plus a

further inch of empty space you will see details of who wrote the message. If I have sent the message it will show either [groups@somertonu3a.U.K.](mailto:groups@somertonu3a.U.K) or my personal email.

Either will come to me, so send in your requests to join a new or existing group and if any group is full we will set up a new one as soon as possible.

Jane Redgrove

u3a – Online Learning Events

If, for whatever reason, you are planning to spend more time indoors this winter, why not try some of the u3a Online Learning Events?

The u3a are offering a number of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions delivered by members, for members, which are free to join.

Listed to the right are some of the events listed for November.

For more details, go to the u3a website.

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

Laughter workshop – 10/11 at 10am

Egyptology – 12/11 at 2pm

Ancient Civilisations of the Americas – Mondays in November at 4pm

The Numbers You Eat: nature's favourite numbers in fruit and veg – 9/11 at 2pm

The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior – 10/11 at 10.30am

Maths Games and Activities

Why Did the Armada Fail? – 30/11 at 10am

All the events are via Zoom and are free



Friday meeting photo and appreciation

Hi Judi

Just to say once again many thanks for your amazing work to keep us all connected during the pandemic and organising our recent get-together at Edgar Hall. A tremendous turnout and an excellent speaker! You asked for suggestions re Christmas celebration. Personally I'd love what we've done for years and have a sit down meal at Edgar hall, preferably with food by Kath Fewings from Littleton.

Best wishes
Glennis

We'll done to you and all concerned!
What a resounding success the first opportunity to gather together at Edgar Hall.
Much enjoyed by all those fortunate enough to be there.

Many thanks,
Pam Short.



Photo ...Steve Davis

Special feature report on the u3a Isle of Man Holiday

In the first week of October the jet containing 29 excited but relieved u3a members touched down in Douglas airport in the Isle of Man at the beginning of their 4 day visit.

Excited because holidays have obviously been in short supply since March 2020 and the Isle of Man is nearly abroad isn't it, relieved to have received entry permission, having all battled with somewhat convoluted online vaccination forms in the week before. Special thanks to Jane here, who helped many to conquer Manx bureaucracy.

In a nutshell, the weather was changeable, some rain, some sunshine, some cloud but a constant wind, obvious really, on an island stuck in the middle of the Irish Sea.

The hotel, The Welbeck, in Douglas, was rather old fashioned in some ways but being family-owned, gave a personal touch, with caring pleasant staff. One example, one hard mattress replaced after a guest's complaint about sore hips!

Mealtimes were definitely appreciated at the end of each activity filled day. There were

excellent breakfasts to start the day, including Manx kippers. Also, three course dinners with plenty of choice and changing daily menus, lifted flagging spirits, after returning to the hotel at 5pm

Highlights included the visit to the Manx parliament and the tram ride up Snaefell, the Isle of Man's only mountain.



Members of the Somerton u3a standing in front of Tynwald Hill.

Laxey waterwheel, Manx and Snaefell Mountain Railway

Having arrived the night before, we were excited to be off on our first full our first full day, exploring the Isle of Man's fine Victorian examples of industrial and transport heritage. A lot of the island's resources have been used to keep the 3 heritage lines fully working, using the original carriages and trams whilst buying second hand parts from other railways.

We started our journey on the Manx Electric Railway from Douglas to the village of Laxey, famous for Lady Isabella, the world's largest waterwheel, built to pump water out of the zinc mines.



The Manx Electric Railway with the Snaefell Mountain Railway in the background

...Isle of Man...

Fabulous views from the top of the Lady Isabella waterwheel for those brave enough to do so. The viewing platform was very exposed and the one up, one down steep spiral staircase caused a lot of extra up and downing much to the amusement of those seated below watching the proceedings.

The upper platform of the Lady Isabella waterwheel and the narrow spiral staircase

We then boarded the Snaefell Mountain Railway, a unique Victorian enterprise which has been in operation since 1895, the only electric mountain railway in the British Isles and constructed in a mere 7 months.

Travelling in the original coaches, the train wound its way up 5 miles through spectacular scenery gradually becoming more and more rugged and bare as we neared the summit. On a clear day there are impressively wide-ranging views across

the Irish Sea to the coastlines of neighbouring countries. In fact, there is a well-worn saying that from Snaefell, on a clear day, one can see 7 kingdoms: Mann, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, and rather more fancifully, Neptune and Heaven

However, the weather on Snaefell is as famous as the mountain itself, so it is very important to pick the right day for your ascent. The day of our visit the weather was cloudy with sunny periods with a moderate breeze. It was quite a shock to step out of the carriage on the summit in gale force winds. However, that was nothing compared to the strength of the wind encountered by the brave (foolhardy) folks who struggled the few last feet to the trig point. You could hardly open your eyes let alone see any views. Needless to say, nobody lingered and everyone stumbled down to the warmth and safety of the café perched near the summit. For some strange reason, everyone who'd done it felt exhilarated at having survived such an unpleasant experience. However, the mountain had one last shock to spring on the unwary. A gorgeous looking yellow cake sat invitingly under its cover. "My favourite", said the girl serving. I should have known, sweet corn and coconut! Whoever thought of putting those 2 ingredients together?

The taste lingered unpleasantly in the mouth for many hours, at least until the pre-dinner drink in the bar at the hotel and the anticipation of an enjoyable 3 course meal.



Waiting to ascend to the summit of Snaefell

...Isle of Man...

Peel Cathedral

The tram and train rides captured the historic. The castles were historicker (sic), and the churches yet older - but for me, Peel Cathedral was real and found during the last lunch break before departing to the airport.

It looked fairly unused, approached from the bus stop, but once inside you knew you were wrong.

The Amnesty International Candle with its barbed wire coat spoke of 'awareness' of the outside world, followed by a seven feet tall menorah made of rocket shells and ammunition used in the continuing Israel - Palestine conflict which was there as an encouragement for conflict resolution.

If these were creative then more was to come when you toured the churchyard, hitherto unseen. A large area surrounding the building which looked like natural woodland with clearings was a pilgrimage route through nineteen 'room' gardens. They illustrated events covering fourteen centuries some of which took place on the Island, but many which didn't. The oldest was a replica of a 7th century thatched keel (chapel) of which there are many on Man. The largest was a replica of the Chartres labyrinth which was set inside a screen of apple trees and wild flowers and other plants used in monastic times - all labelled. During both world wars the island was used as a prison for internees - people unfortunately caught in the wrong country when war was declared. There were two big camps, and this garden was split into four areas reminding us of ethnic cleansing in Nanking, Ukraine, Rwanda and Bosnia and each had a story from a survivor.

These were followed by a small garden telling Anna Franck's story. There was a Children's Hub centring on Creation, and many more. One of the largest was a grass lawn with '3 foot' waves. It represents the current movement of refugees across seas and reminds us that Einstein fled from the Nazis and Steve Jobs from Syria.

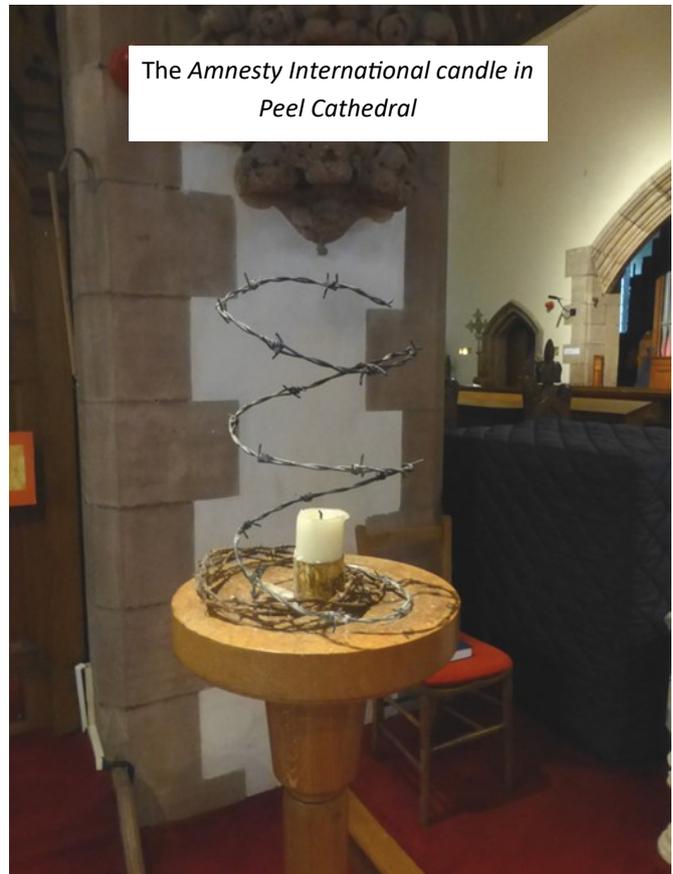
This enormous project made me wonder what size congregation serviced it?

There is a web page with much more detail to be found under Peel Cathedral gardens., which will correct errors above!

So now I'm on the aeroplane asking, 'What was the best thing that happened on the holiday'? On reflection it was 'the change in me! - being reminded that good as Somerton is, there is a world outside with millions of people in differing situations, all with their own story,

some of which are nice and some nasty. I'm fortunate.

Dave Perkins



The Amnesty International candle in Peel Cathedral



Isle of Man ..Notes of appreciation

I would just like to say a big thank you to Jane for all the work she put into organising the holiday and being her usual sensitive and helpful self, prior to and throughout the holiday.

Nancy Martel

The hotel was an excellent choice - comfortable and friendly, the food was good and we loved the sea view from our room, with the ferry crossing the bay every morning and evening. The train ride up to Snaefell was beautiful, and the gale force winds at the top certainly made it a memorable experience! It was wonderful to watch three or four seals watching us off the Sound. They really seemed to like seeing us.

Jenny Lewis



Temptation strikes Jane in an ice cream parlour on Peel seafront

"I didn't realise how much I had missed Jane's holidays, this one was very well organised as it would be. The Isle of Man is full of history and amazing countryside and sea views, together with the sunshine and the delightful company. It was a perfect autumn break "

Thank you so much for a lovely holiday, very well planed and we saw so many interesting places, thank you.

Sarah Kamm

Did You Know? ...8 Interesting Facts About the Isle of Man

- The island is a self-governing British Crown dependency with its own currency, airspace and time zone. The British Crown acquired the feudal lordship in 1764 and the Queen is the Lord Mann. Islanders are British citizens but were not granted a vote in the Brexit referendum.
- The economy of the Isle of Man is low-tax, top rate is 20%. The island is now home to many offshore banking and finance companies, also the headquarters of online gambling companies.
- The world's oldest continuous parliament, Tynwald, founded by Viking settlers more than one thousand years ago and is still making the island's own laws. The seat of government is now in Douglas but laws don't come into being until they are read out on 5th July, Midsummer's Day, at the gathering of islanders on Tynwald Hill.
- Unique fauna such as the tailless Manx cat and the multi- horned Loaghtan sheep which can have up to 6 horns.
- According to traditional superstition, it is unlucky to utter the word "rat". When necessary to refer to one,they call it a "longtail".
- The Gaelic language on the island is known as Manx and was very nearly classed as extinct when the last native speaker died in the 1970s. Efforts to revive it have shown some success and there is one primary school on the island where all the teaching is in Manx. Only 2% of the population have any working knowledge of the language.
- The symbol on the Isle of Man flag is called the triskelion. The island's motto is: *Quocunqve jeceris stabit: Whichever way you throw me, I shall stand*. Clad in armour with golden spurs, the three-legged symbol can be traced back to the 13th century but it's unclear whether it's a pagan sun sign, a modified Viking badge or emblem or an homage to the Sicilian connections of the Scots king.
- Today the symbol can be seen stamped on everything.
- The Bee Gees were born on the Isle of Man.

...Isle of Man...

Tynwald, the Parliament of the Isle of Man

The Tynwald Court meets in the House of Keys in the island's modern capital, Douglas, on the third Tuesday of each month, but once a year on July 5th an open air ceremony is still held at Tynwald Hill. The day is a national holiday for the island and the laws passed during the year are proclaimed in both Manx Gaelic and English.

The site of Tynwald Hill is thus one of the most important monuments in the island, representing not just a symbol of the rich heritage of the Manx people but also a contemporary focus where the future life and culture of the community is forged.



The House of Keys, Douglas



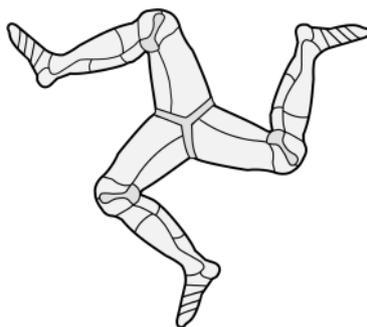
Tynwald Court



The House of Keys, the lower house of Tynwald, the parliament of the Isle of Man



Sitting in Members' seats in the House of Keys



The triskelion

Isle of Man...picture gallery



An original locomotive on the Castletown to Douglas heritage railway.



Waiting for the train



Nancy and Marjorie enjoying a rest



Seals in the sea at the Calf of Man



A personal view

Joan, Dave's wife on the top platform of the Laxey Wheel!

We didn't expect such a warm greeting in such a chilly place. We'd just got out of a warm railway carriage near the top of Snaefell and were making our way along a relatively flat path to the summit, where to be fair it was rather breezy, when we were strongly forbidden to go any further.

It was cold anyway, and potentially dangerous, so we decided the warm cafe was the better option.

Later, we asked ourselves how we would have been greeted if Joan had been seen going up the outside spiral staircase to the top of the Laxey Great Wheel? (see photo)

Some old people like a bit of fun!

Dave Perkins

Editor: Many thanks to the following for sending in your photos: Mike Ashton, Judi Powell, Viv Winterburn, Dave Perkins,....

sorry we couldn't use more.

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance



zoom talk given on Friday 22nd October

DSAA, an entirely self-funded operation

The talk for the Friday meeting on the 22nd October was given by Debbie from the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance. The fact that the talk had to be switched last minute from live at the Edgar Hall to Zoom did not detract from the enjoyment for those who watched it.

Debbie said that September and Sundays have the highest call-out times for the Air Ambulance. She recommended that everyone who participates in outdoor activities should download the app, *what3words*, where every 3 metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of 3 words and is free to download.



Debbie thought that this should be a mandatory app for all, but especially for anyone participating in outdoor activities. She said,

“ This could save those vital seconds in finding you and stopping a life-changing event.”

Since the talk many members have been moved to send in positive messages, indicating their gratitude and admiration for the service.

Here are some of your comments

“What an excellent presentation”.

“I have learnt so much about the DSAA - never knew they were totally self-funded.”

“Those volunteers are unsung heroes. Not just in the emergency but their time given over to research and development of new product and life-saving procedures. “

“I am about to amend my will - the money might save my loved ones now”

“Just on my way to the post box with a form for a monthly donation after this morning's talk about the amazing Air Ambulance, all unbelievably self-funded.”

How You Can Help

Following a wonderful presentation in support of the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance it emerged that they welcome used stamps for recycling to help their fundraising efforts. With Christmas coming postage is likely to increase so it would be appreciated if you could save your stamps. They can be sent to:

Head Office

Landacre House, Castle Road, Wellington TA21 9JQ

Alternatively we will have a collection point at the January monthly meeting at The Edgar Hall.

A helicopter ride with a difference

On a sunny October day 10 years ago Helga Stiles and I set off on a recce of a walk from Merriott. We were about 20 minutes into the walk along a grassy footpath passing a farmer and into a field when we encountered a stile. It looked harmless but I noticed that the descent was onto a muddy slope. Helga being braver than I am got over it and reassured me that it was ok. However I said that I didn't like the look of the descent. Needs must! So I gritted my teeth, climbed over but took hold of a handy looking branch and started the dismount. Unfortunately I slipped and heard a crack which was not the branch and my arm and hand assumed an unfamiliar angle. It then became apparent that I couldn't lift myself up. Luckily I had my phone – a necessity on any walk-. However, as Helga reminds me unluckily it was in my rucksack underneath me but with great presence of mind and despite turning “a whiter shade of pale” she got back over the stile (don't ask me how) and went back to seek help from the farmer.

It was a bit chilly lying on the slope but it was not too long before she came back with the farmer and his son and a blanket. They had phoned for an ambulance

which came quickly but

unfortunately it couldn't get near enough as we were too far from a road. So plan B came into operation in other words the Air Ambulance was called. Again we soon heard the welcome sound of the helicopter fully equipped and whose staff took over in such a calm and reassuring manner that I didn't mind being dragged to the bottom of the slope. And in no time I was strapped into the helicopter and on my way to A & E at Yeovil Hospital having been transferred to a land ambulance

from the helipad. I must have presented as a sorry sight being a bit dopey from medication and filthy dirty.

My one complaint was that I couldn't see out of the helicopter but this was far outweighed by the kindness, efficiency and attention which I received and my grateful thanks go to Helga, the farmer and his son, the land ambulance and last but by no means least the Air Ambulance. Where would I have been without them?

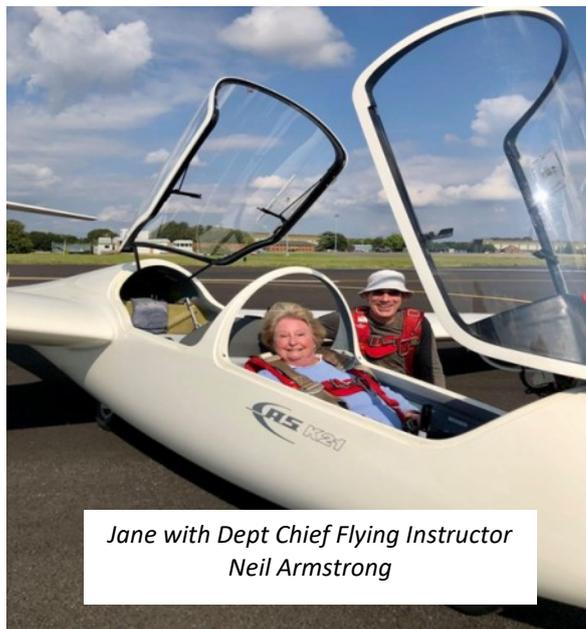
Gillian Pentelow

RAF GSA Kestrel Gliding Club

In September, Kestrel welcomed back a past member, Jane Skillicorn who went solo with the club in 1975 and was treated to a glider flight to celebrate her 80th Birthday. Jane has certainly not forgotten anything according to her instructor, (Neil Armstrong) who was given a commentary of the flight as it



Jane in 1975 after her first solo



Jane with Dept Chief Flying Instructor Neil Armstrong

progressed with Jane spotting other aircraft and reporting the airspeed and variometer readings. The flight included a loop which Jane insisted on. It was a pleasure to fly Jane on this occasion and for all on the ground to see she still has so much enthusiasm. Jane was presented with a certificate of achievement and her logbook bought up to date.

Doug Skillicorn

Edgar Hall meeting

Fri Nov 26th

**British Raj Christmas in
1940's Madras**

A talk by Jenny Mallin

Author "A Grandmother's
Legacy" Winner of Best in World Cookbook
World Gourmand Cookbook Society.



This is what Jenny has to say.

This talk centres around my family's traditions at Christmas, how the festive season was enjoyed by those who were living in a country which was part of the British Raj. We explore and discover how enticed they were by those exotic ingredients found in India, which with the help and careful consideration of their native cook, produced a different kind of cuisine. Through the pages of the old cookery book dating back to 1844, we uncover family recipes which were so loved and enjoyed over five generations, which provide a fascinating insight into those unusual recipe names which are alliterative with titles such as Ding Ding Fry and Rumble Tumble!

We also get a good idea as to how they entertained, and how their social calendars were filled with tea dances, balls and social evenings which started on Christmas Eve and went right through to twelfth night".

Jenny's talk will be Zoomed to the Edgar Hall.

Members can watch it there after coffee or if preferred, at home via Zoom.

A Zoom reminder and link will be sent out a couple of days before via Beacon email.

Curry Rivel Parish
Council cordially
invite all residents

**OPENING
UP POST
COVID -**

**Reconnecting our
community**

**3PM VILLAGE HALL
20TH NOVEMBER
2021**

Rediscover the many
and varied social and
interest groups that
exist within and around
the village.

**REFRESHMENTS WILL
BE PROVIDED**

Somerton u3a will have a stall at
this event which is raising
awareness of social groups in the
Curry Rivel area.

If you visit, please stop and say
hello to us.

Please send all articles for the Newsletter to the editor

kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com

Deadline for the December edition...20th November

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>