

SOMERTON u3a

Newsletter 21 December 2021



Chairman's Message



Dear members,

As I write this message, the final one for 2021, I find it hard to believe that the end of the year is almost upon us. This year more than any in a long time gives us a reason to reflect on the important things in our lives and celebrate with loved ones - a time for sharing.

We will celebrate together on the 10th December at our Christmas lunch and we will be able to sing together and enjoy each other's company

We will look forward to the coming year and how we can make new friends and enjoy new activities within our u3a family.

I wish you all a very peaceful and wonderful time during the festive season.

Judi, Chairman





Help Wanted
 Timothy Tocher
 Santa needs new reindeer.
 The first bunch has grown old.
 Dasher has arthritis;
 Comet hates the cold.
 Prancer's sick of staring
 at Dancer's big behind.
 Cupid married Blitzen

and Dancer lost his mind.
 Dancer's mad at Vixen
 for stepping on his toes.
 Vixen's being thrown out—
 she laughed at Rudolph's nose.
 If you are a reindeer
 we hope you will apply.
 There is just one tricky part:
 You must know how to fly!

Christmas messages from Group Leaders

Group News

History group

Happy Christmas to all the U3A Historians! We have been studying old pandemics and political scandals and I wonder what will turn up in the New Year to set us off on some more investigations. The present government does its best to keep us interested.

Nancy

We will still not be able to continue with Jazz Appreciation at my house due to the lack of space and worsening Covid situation. I hope that things will improve next year and allow us to re-start the sessions.

Dave

Singing for Fun

Happy Christmas to all my singers.

Chris

Badminton

Wishing a very happy Christmas to all in our newly formed badminton group...and thanks for quickly getting to grips with the new (for many of us) scoring system!

Amanda



Jazz Appreciation

I would like to wish members a very happy Christmas and new year and thank them for their patience and support.



Craft group

Wishing a very happy Christmas also to the Craft group. You eagerly engaged with email ideas and meeting up for coffee when allowed during lockdowns, and you have continued to happily share ideas and resources these last 3 months when we could meet in person.....more mixed media projects coming up next year!

Thank you

Amanda





Group News

Christmas messages from Group Leaders

.....continued.....

Astronomy

Christmas greetings to all my Astronomy group, and let's hope the long awaited launch of James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) on the 18th December is a huge success.

Adrian

Local Discovery

A very merry Christmas and a happy new year to all members of the Local Discovery Group. Let's hope we can meet as normal in 2022!

Ruth, Cynthia and Joan

Collectables

Wishing all members of the Collectables group, A Merry Christmas and a very happy new year

Joan and Pauline

*A very merry Christmas and a happy new year to the members of Art, Music and Opera Appreciation groups.
From Enid*

Striders Walking Group

The choice of the title, Striders, for the group has led to a degree of misunderstanding of our walks and has led to some members being apprehensive about joining us. I would like set the record straight and reassure you that we will not be striding forth at a breath-taking pace, marching, or hiking or trekking long distances.

Our walks will take place on 2nd Friday of the month, starting at 10.00 am. They will be between 3-5 miles in length and will involve a mixture of walking along footpaths, farm tracks, through woods and across fields with some inclines of varying degrees involved and possibly the odd stile.

I suggest everybody wears sturdy walking boots or shoes. We will be walking at a comfortable pace to suit all members of the group & stopping at intervals to admire the scenery.

Whenever possible we will be finishing the walk with coffee and cake at a local café. If you enjoy walking and would like to socialise with other like-minded members then come and join us.



Just email Ruth at rvthomas687@gmail.com

Birdwatching

Group News



Birdwatchers go out in hope. Will it be cold, will it be wet, even will there be any birds? The warm temperatures this year, with the winds coming from the south has meant that our winter visitors from the Arctic are not arriving as normal. What will we see?

This was the mindset we set out with recently. On The Levels we were advised to look out for bramblings, and saw none, but sitting quietly in a hide on Shapwick Heath, a large brown bird went by, about 50 yards/metres away – it was a bittern which then banked towards us and made a semi-crash landing in the reeds right in front of us. Then it did what bitterns do best – it disappeared before our eyes – until it moved – and then disappeared again. Their cryptic colouring resembling dried reed stems makes them near impossible to see. For over five minutes the whole morning was worthwhile after all!

However, we were in luck and did see other birds. Several

hundred wigeon, ducks that somehow managed to get through from the north, a marsh harrier that was having a snooze on top of a dog rose, about a hundred yards away, and more flying about. Great white egrets, which like bitterns and several other marsh harriers that are rare almost anywhere else in the country but now regularly seen here, put in an appearance. The regular common water birds were present too but if youngsters or coming into winter plumage were spotted, they are harder to identify and can be guaranteed to disturb the brain. My problem was resolving what a brown duck, with a white head, and totally white underwing was called. It resolved into a gull, hiding behind the sleeping duck - having a wash! Five minutes fun.

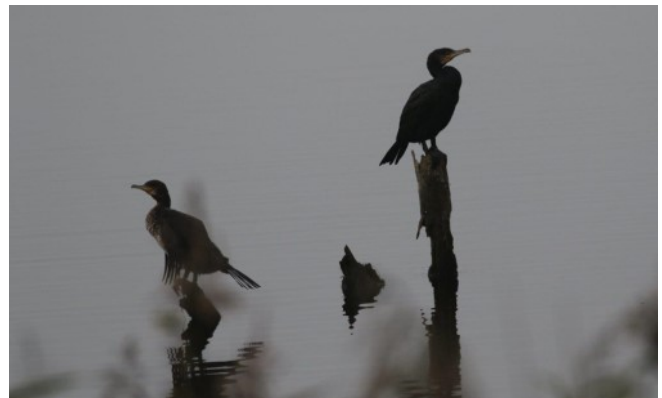
But above all, today, hope was fulfilled.

Dave Perkins

Photos:
Dick Carylton



A young marsh harrier balancing on a slender branch on the top of a tree surveying his world



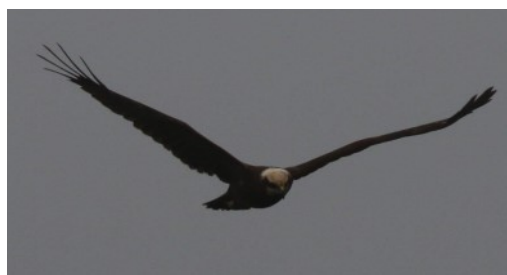
Cormorants resting



The rare sight of a bittern in flight



A bittern heading towards the reeds note the colours



Marsh harrier in flight



Bittern camouflaged in the reeds

Group News



Cycling Club

CALLING ALL CYCLISTS

We are all in our 70's and enjoy the social intercourse of cycling in a small group i.e. 3 at the moment.

Please see excellent photo taken by a helpful passerby, at top of High Ham with a fab view of Glastonbury Tor.

We cycle 10 to 12 miles once a week on an afternoon, usually often with a coffee/tea stop halfway round.

At the moment the group is a little male heavy.... no inference intended!!

I certainly take medication for high blood pressure and a high cholesterol count but am otherwise healthy AND wish to remain that way.
Hence the exercise.....

Do contact me for any further information.

David

Dr D W Robins, group leader u3a cycle group

07831323582



Members of the newly formed cycling group taking a rest

Left to right: John Holmes, David Robins, Ron Kench



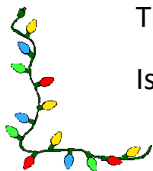
Coffee & Chat

If you would like to meet old friends and make new ones, why not come and join us for the next *Coffee & Chat* meeting on Thursday 9th December, 10.30am at the White Hart, Somerton. We can guarantee a warm welcome and hopefully, fun and laughter.

“Somehow, Not Only For Christmas” by John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Somehow, not only for Christmas,
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others,
Is the joy that comes back to you.

And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to you glad.



Group News

News about Groups 3

New Groups

We have several new groups that have started recently. These include:-

French Refreshers with Anne Green meets in Langport

Geology with Trevor Ryder meets at the Edgar Hall plus outings to sites of interest.

Scrabble a second group that meets in Langport, leader Jenny Healey

Mahjong for Beginners,

Sunday Roasties, a third Sunday Lunch group that will meet on the first Sunday of each month under the leadership of John Day

Coffee and Chat at The White Hart at 10.30 on the second Thursday, of every month.

Badminton with Amanda Hooper,

Cycling with David Robins

Thank you to all these leaders for coming forward with new ideas or facilitating an older idea.

New Leaders

The following groups have new leaders

Collectables with Joan Banbury

Pins and Needles with Sherry Briggs

Strollers with Liz Short

Striders with Ruth Thomas

Thank you to these new leaders who have effectively saved the groups from extinction.

Ideas for next year.

Rummikub

Upwords

Theatre visits

Spanish

Local History

Some of these groups may already be full if they meet in private houses but let us know if you are interested. There is nothing to stop us starting up another group.

You can find more details on the website or by phoning Jane on 01458 899962.



Cygnet Roundup Day

Group News

Since moving to Somerset I have been fortunate enough to get involved with Abbotsbury Swannery, Dorset, home to the world's only managed colony of nesting Mute swans. The site, set at the eastern end of the Fleet Lagoon and spread over 25 acres, was established by Benedictine monks with the building of St. Peter's Monastery during the 11th Century. The swans were farmed for food by the monks but, following the destruction of the monastery in 1539 during the dissolution, the site has been under the stewardship of the Ilchester Estates.

On average there are about 600 mute swans on site and in October there is a roundup of the new cygnets to enable staff to ring, weigh and record them as well as giving the birds a visual health check. This is where volunteers come in.

At the start of the day, we will begin to work through the flock by carefully capturing the birds that are in the small streams and ponds as we enter and walk through the site.

Once those have been recorded, we work through the birds that are in rearing pens.

These birds are those that have, earlier in the season, been identified as needing, for numerous reasons, a bit more TLC and are placed with successful breeding pairs and their cygnets, in pens, to monitor their progress.

Having worked our way through the pens our attention then focuses on any 'strays' that have escaped us and this often results in a battle of wits to hook them out of the water at feeding time! At the end of the day, all the swans are free to go.

This year we ringed and recorded 110 cygnets and around 20 adult birds that had been in the rearing pens.

The cygnets can weigh between 7 – 10 kilos and the heaviest adult we handled was more than 15 kilos. It's a tiring day!

Steve Davis



Speakers Corner

All the best speakers for our Friday morning u3a gatherings are giving their talks via Zoom. Our talk this Friday 26th was given just this way and presented to you as if you were in the cinema, i.e. on the big screen at the front of Edgar Hall. It has also been possible with Zoom to allow those members who do not wish, yet, to be face to face, to view the speaker and talk at home via the same Zoom.

DID YOU FIND THIS HYBRID TYPE MEETING GOOD OR BAD?

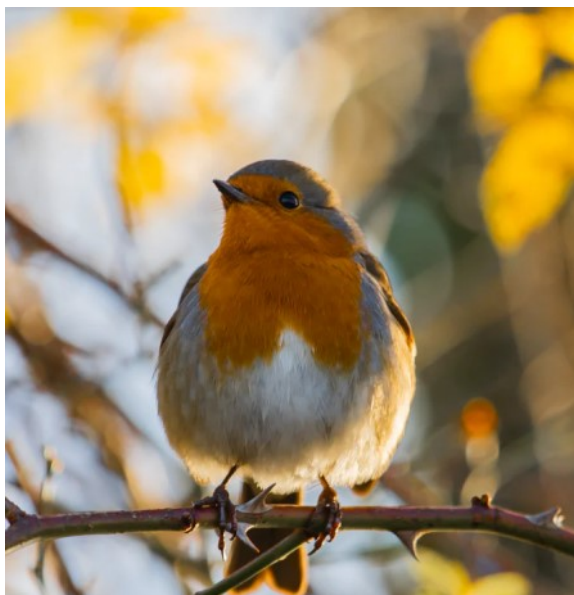
It is proving difficult to get local speakers face to face in the hall, so I would like to continue using this hybrid system whenever I cannot obtain someone local.

Please email me dwrobins@doctors.org.uk or phone..0783 132 3582 with your opinion.



Diary Dates

***Future talks/meetings ...
negotiations are ongoing,
so watch this space***



Also, a way around this problem would be if **our own members would give talks**. This would also reduce our costs of speakers, since local u3a members, by constitution, cannot charge for their services, but there is nothing in the rules to say a “bucket” at the back of the hall cannot be used for members to place donations for the speakers favourite charity.....

I am sure many of you have led very interesting lives with many varied experience which you may like to share with our members.

Please give this some thought

Dr David Robins, speaker co-ordinator 07831 323 582

Please send all articles for the Newsletter to the editor

kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com

Deadline for the December edition...20th December

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>