

# SOMERTON u3a

## Newsletter 35

March 2023



## Chairman's message

February has been a sad month, with the passing of two of our members, Doug Skillicorn and Malcolm Gardner. Both, in their own ways, had contributed a huge amount to the progression and success of our u3a. I had the privilege to work with them both, at different times, on the Committee and it was a real pleasure to do so. They both brought different skills along but they both shared similar characteristics in the way they did things. Doug and Malcolm were gentle, kind, appreciative, courteous, and humorous gentlemen, who made a difference. I offer condolences, on behalf of all our members, to their families and friends, and feel sure that we can, collectively and individually, continue to offer comfort and support to them and each other. We will miss them both.

Earlier in the month I was invited to attend the S.W. Regional Meeting as a guest, by the Avalon Network representative, Val Warren. It was an all day 'hybrid' meeting, held at Launceston, and Chaired by the Trustee for the South West, Susan Parker. It was the first of these meetings that I have attended on behalf of Su3a, since I was Chairman last, when I had the pleasure of attending with Malcolm Gardner and others from our Committee. These meetings help to forge closer relationships with others in the various Networks in our Region and keep us in touch with the 'goings on' in the organisation, as a whole. I believe we think of ourselves as a 'family' in Su3a, but I hope we remember that we are part of a bigger network as well? By sharing and co-operating with others is, I think, the way we will grow and improve.

I hope that all our members will have a good month, value friendships, learn from the past and look to the future. Let's have a good year!

*Steve Davis*

*Chairman*

## Contents:

*Chairman's message, picture of a March hare.*

*Monthly meetings and talks*

*Future events*

*Group news*

*Charity Coach Trips*

*Somerton u3a website address, Facebook link, editors email address, committee members and a poem.*



*Mad as a....*

# Monthly meetings and talks

**Fri Mar 24th**

**Brian Freeland "The Charente...a trip down the river"**

King Henri IV described the River Charente as "the most beautiful river in my kingdom" but it is much more than that. A border between warring forces; the invasion route for the Vikings; a main transportation route until the arrival of the railways, carrying cannon, paper, brandy, salt and building materials. It now plays an increasingly important role in the tourist industry of two French departements, Charente and Charente Maritime. Discover all this, and more, with this presentation.

BRIAN FREELAND...

SPEAKER, PLAYWRIGHT, and AUTHOR

Brian's theatre career started in 1959, direct from National Service, and has taken him to forty-three different countries including three residencies in the Middle East;

Eight tours of the Indian sub-continent and two circumnavigations of the globe.

He has worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, Scottish Opera,

Sadler's Wells and London Festival Ballet Companies, Nottingham Playhouse,

Manchester Library Theatre and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop Company.

Approaching retirement he started to 'branch out' - directing; writing scripts, and giving Talks.

**Fri Apr 28th**

**Janet Seaton and Barry Winetrobe - "Town Criers"**

Janet, Chair of Langport & District History Society, and Barry are well known in the area and have given many talks to Somerton History Society.

**Fri May 26th**

**Somerton u3a A.G.M**

The meeting will consist of the Treasurers Report, the Chairman's Report, the election of the Committee and other business. An Agenda will be available beforehand to all members. Two members of the Committee will be leaving and there will obviously be vacancies.

Our u3a cannot operate without a full committee so, if you feel that this is something that you would like to get involved with or you would just like some information about what being a committee member entails, then please speak to any present member as soon as possible. We would love to have you join us.

**Fri Jun 23rd**

**David Boag - wildlife photographer**

**ICELAND, A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS VIEW**

There is such a wild, remoteness to most of Iceland that it is a photographers dream. So much space, so much air, so much rain! Lush vegetation clothes great sweeps of mountainside right down to the beaches of black, volcanos sand. A multitude of birds, many of which are British rarities, choose Iceland as a perfect nest location where they can safely raise their young. Comparatively few land mammals are found on Iceland but they have unique wild horses that have that are part of their Viking heritage. The landscape is awesome with some of the most magnificent waterfalls I have every seen.

*David has been to our u3a on 2 previous occasions and is a very popular speaker with outstanding photographs.*



# Future Events



**No experience required with live music & expert tuition for all abilities**

*You can bring your own drinks and nibbles*

**Tickets are £5 each – names to be checked off at the door (i.e. no tickets to be issued)**

Email [treasurer@somertonu3a.uk](mailto: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

**Wha hae!!!!**

**Come and join us for a Barn Dance**

**on Friday 21st April in the Parish Rooms**

**from 7pm to 10pm**

Or

you can pay by bank transfer to Somerton U3A.

Cash in advance will be accepted for this event

only to Liz or Amanda

Account No: 00958442 Sort Code: 30 18 16

Liz will email you with confirmation of receipt

**Don't forget your dancing shoes**

**Members only**

## Coronation Lunch

*Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May from 1.30 to 4.00pm*

**Come and join us at Edgar Hall to celebrate King Charle's Coronation**

Tickets ar £15 for a full buffet lunch

Email [treasurer@somertonu3a.uk](mailto:treasurer@somertonu3a.uk) or write to Liz Short to book a place.

Send your cheque payable to Somertonu3a to Liz at 8 Wheeler Barton, Somerton, TA11 6FE

Or you can pay by bank transfer to:

Account Name: SomertonU3A

Sort Code: 30-18-16

Account number: 00958442

Please let Liz know if you are paying for more than one person and if you have any dietary requirements.

Names will be checked at the door ie no tickets will be issued.

Coffee/tea will be served after the lunch.

You may bring your own drink if you wish.

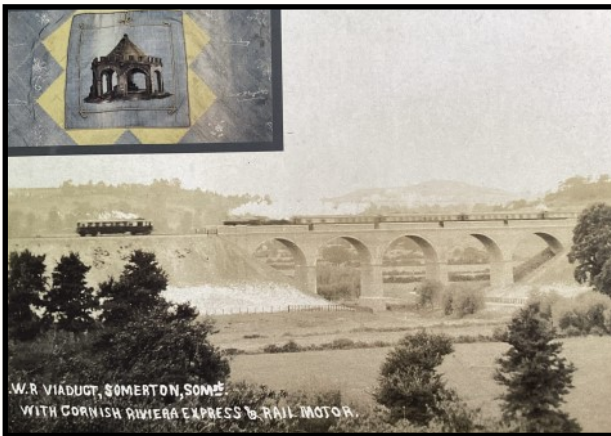
**There are still some slots left if you would like to offer any entertainment....please contact Amanda.**



# Group News

## Local History Group

Last autumn the Local History Group visited Somerset Heritage Museum in Yeovil. Under the guidance of Joseph Lewis and his team we were shown many local treasures and historical items. In February this year we invited Joseph to join us in the Parish Rooms to speak to us about Somerton and its heritage. Joseph brought along many letters, photos and items for us to read, view and handle. He gave us a very interesting talk about these many artefacts and we realised this was just a snapshot of the wonderful history of Somerton.



*Somerton Viaduct with the express going west and the local train, known as 'The Bucket' going east. Construction started in 1903 and the line opened in July 1906.*

A quilt of 200 blue linen squares with a painted central section of Somerton Market Cross made as a fundraiser for a good cause. The blocks that surround the picture have 100 embroidered signatures of the people who donated, and the embroidery was probably done by children in Monteclefe School for the Industrial Loan Exhibition of 1892. The signatures range from local families 'Searle and Nutt' to local gentry 'Dickinson and Pinney.' Henry Strong was the Vicar of Somerton. (Gratitude to the Marmaduke Cradock Trust)

At our next speakers meeting we welcome the return of David Maclean on Wednesday March 8th in the Parish Rooms at 9.45 - 10am. £5 entrance to include refreshments. All u3a members are welcome.

This meeting will be about Lytes Cary as you may never have heard before! We very much look forward to David's individual and entertaining talk with unusual facts and stories about this National Trust Property.

Long Load - What is the origin of this village name? Answer on 8th March

See you there

*Judi Powell*

## Su3a Groups

Aviation, Birdwatching, Recorders, Walking Strollers, Art Appreciation, Choral Music Appreciation, Family History Opera Appreciation, Quiz Group, Scrabble, Computers, History, Mahjong, Raspberry Pi, Art, Majong, Reading Group, Rummikub, French Refreshers, Local Discovery Local History, Spanish Conversation, Zoom, Collectables Pins & Needles, Table Tennis,

Coffee & Chat, French Conversation, Photography, Science & Technology, Short Mat Bowls, Geology, Scottish Dance, Singing for Fun, Ukulele, Upwords, Chess, Craft Group, International, Studies, Music Appreciation, Walking Striders, Badminton Jazz Appreciation, Publications Group, Scrapbooking, Roast Potato Club, Sunday Gourmet Girls, Sunday Roasties, Sunday Singles.

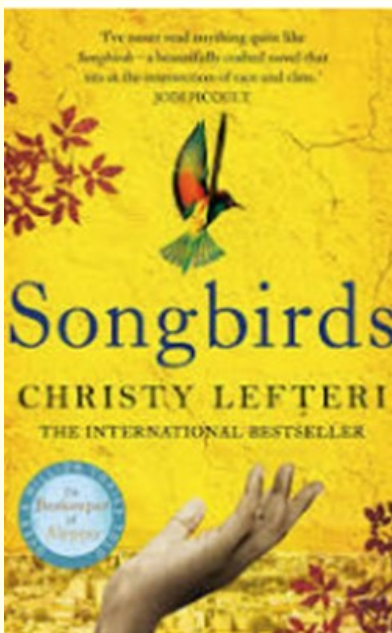
# Group News

## Reading Group

Mary Beth Greenop

Last month's book was 'Leaving Berlin' by Joseph Kanon. Like most of his novels this was set in post war Berlin – when it was possible to move between controlled sectors and political intrigue was rife. It is a fast paced novel centred on a Jewish writer who fled Nazi Germany to live in America but whose Communist connections have forced him to return to Berlin. Self survival, conflicted loyalties and a love story are woven into a plot that also enlightened us on aspects of how Germans were treated post war and the Cold War developed.

Most of us thoroughly enjoyed this book and it has led us to other writer such as Alan Furst and John Laughton who write about this period.



Many of us had already read Christy Lefteri's excellent 'The Bee Keeper of Aleppo' and this book was of an equally high standard, beautifully written and wonderfully narrated.

It is set on the North/South boarder of Cyprus and follows the disappearance of a Nanny/Maid/Housekeeper. Like so many this young woman works outrageous hours and pays a huge proportion of her fees to the agency that brought her to Cyprus. Like the others she is invisible as a person and simply a useful servant – until she goes missing. Meanwhile she is involved with a Cypriot man who illegally earns a living trapping songbirds for restaurants. All are equally entrapped in different forms. Sad, touching and yet uplifting – it is an insight into a life few of us have experienced and a thought-provoking read.

For something completely different we read 'The Gallery of Vanished Husbands'. In 60's London, brought up in a tight Jewish community, a young woman is abandoned by her husband leaving her with two young children. Through her love of art she ends up running an art gallery all the while trying to track down her husband.

For most of us this provided an insight into the Jewish life and attitudes that were a stark contrast to the swinging 60's of permissive London. It is one of those books that is easy to dismiss as an "easy read", and while it is indeed easy to read and won't leave you awake at night trying to work out the plot, it provoked good discussion on the perceived role of women and the strength need to break the mould.



# Group News

## Striding in the Spring

It was a lovely crisp sunny spring morning for our February walk. We set off from the Prince of Wales pub to explore Ham Hill.

First of all, we walked over to the fields which were once an Iron Age Village, then on to the site of a former Roman Villa and views of St Michaels hill. Back at the visitor Centre we then entered the sandstone quarry where there we were rewarded with stunning views of the Somerset Countryside. After a photo stop at the WW1&2 memorial, we made our way back past the stone circle to enjoy a cup of coffee at the pub.

Walks are arranged for the second Friday morning of the month and well-behaved dogs are welcome. If anyone would like to join us for our monthly walk, please contact group leader Ruth Thomas for more details.



## Charity Theatre Trips to Bristol Hippodrome

*(not just u3a)*

*Chris Cox*

Our coach picks up at 5p.m. in Curry Rivel, then Langport, Somerton and either Street/Glastonbury/Wells or Keinton Mandeville/Shepton Mallet.

Recent additions to the programme are Lion King, Peter Pan Pantomime and Life of Pi which features puppetry and magic and has been much praised by folk who have already seen it.

We have availability on all of the listing, although Fisherman's Friends is nearly sold out; no surprise there. Payment is usually due

two months before the performance, but the earlier you book the better your seats. All profits support British Red Cross. For more information go to

[www.charitytheatretrips.com](http://www.charitytheatretrips.com)  
or telephone 01458 273085.

Thu 2 Mar 23	Bourne's Sleeping Beauty
Tue 21 Mar 23	The Commitments
Thu 30 Mar 23	The King and I
Thu 4 May 23	Fisherman's Friends
Thu 25 May 23	Lion King/ 17:00
Tue 11 Jul 23	Strictly Ballroom
Wed 27 Sep 23	Charlie & The Chocolate Factory
Wed 6 Dec 23	Peter Pan Pantomime
Wed 17 Jan 24	Life of Pi (play)

# A Laughing Chorus

by Anonymous

Oh, such a commotion under the ground When  
March called, "Ho, there! ho!"

Such spreading of rootlets far and wide, Such  
whispering to and fro;

And, "Are you ready?" the Snowdrop asked,  
"'Tis time to start, you know."

"Almost, my dear," the Scilla replied; "I'll follow  
as soon as you go."

Then, "Ha! ha! ha!" a chorus came Of laughter  
soft and low,

From the millions of flowers under the ground,  
Yes—millions—beginning to grow

O, the pretty brave things! through the coldest  
days, Imprisoned in walls of brown,

They never lost heart though the blast shrieked  
loud, And the sleet and the hail came down,

But patiently each wrought her beautiful dress,  
Or fashioned her beautiful crown;

And now they are coming to brighten the world,  
Still shadowed by Winter's frown;

And well may they cheerily laugh, "Ha! ha!" In a  
chorus soft and low,

The millions of flowers hid under the ground  
Yes—millions—beginning to grow

## Somerton u3a website

If you require more information concerning entries in  
this newsletter or other points of interest, take a look  
at the Somerton u3a website, address below.

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

## Somerton u3a Facebook

<https://m.facebook.com/people/Somerton-u3a/100070538943417/>

## Somerton u3a Committee Members 2022/2023

Chairman	Steve Davis
Vice Chairman	Jane Redgrove
Secretary	Annette Sparks
Treasurer	Liz Short
Fran Cook	Committee Member
Mike Davis	Newsletter Editor
Amanda Hooper	Events Co-ordinator
Marilyn Muffett	Membership Secretary
Laurence Reeves	Beacon Administrator
David Robins	Speaker Co-ordinator

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

**mike.davis@silchester.org**

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

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

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

# Notes