



Chairman's message

Most of you will realize that the 'Chairman's Message' for every month's Newsletter is written way before the date you receive it, so I will, at this point, thank Mike, our Editor, for constantly putting up with me submitting it to him after the closing date! I am writing this just a few hours before the Winter Solstice, which will happen at 3.27am on Friday 22nd December, and is a date I look forward to. The Winter Solstice is celebrated in many ways around the globe and is an important time in different cultures. Under the old Julian Calendar, the date that the Winter Solstice occurred was 25th December but is now recognised as the 21st under the Gregorian calendar. But why do I like this date so much? Simple – from this moment on I look forward to lengthening days, right up to the June Solstice when, on that day, we will be enjoying 8 hours and 37 minutes more daylight!

So, let's look forward, not only to lighter days but to more activity, more learning, more friendships and more fun in our u3a in the coming year.

Happy New Year everyone – and if you are reading this on Twelfth Night, you are already enjoying an extra 10 minutes and 36 secs. of daylight today, than when I wrote it!

Steve

Monthly meetings and talks

Monthly meetings are held on the fourth Friday of the month at the Edgar Community Hall, Somerton.

We are open from 9.30am for refreshments and the chance for members to meet and chat.

The refreshments will finish at 10.20 in order to clear away before the meeting.

The meeting starts at 10.30 with notices, announcements and any other business and will be followed by our guest speaker.

The meeting closes at 12 noon.

Please join us. Visitors are always welcome at our meetings for a small charge of £2 so please come along and see who we are and what we are about. If you are visiting for the first time then please just make yourself known to one of our Committee members or 'Welcomers' who will be happy to tell you a little bit about us and help you feel at home.

Don't forget to bring your stamps and coins for the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance

Friday 26th January

2024

Kay Townsend

'Fairgrounds at war 1939 to 1945'

Our speaker, Kay Townsend, has researched a lot about life on the fairgrounds and has written many books on the subject.

Most notably the Second World War and explain how this affected the lives of the fairground people.

Friday 23rd February 2024

Wayne Spilsbury

'The Origins Of Modern Art'

This talk explores the critical and contextual elements of the fundamental shifts in Art from the early 19th to the early 20th centuries.

About the speaker

"I am a professional contemporary artist working in a range of genres and media. I am based in Bruton and have exhibited around the country as well as

participating in Somerset Open Studios.

Most notably I have enjoyed a highly successful career in art education for over 40 years, running secondary school art and art history departments; tutoring to students and adults in colleges; participating in teacher training with UWE and examining. I have organised numerous art visits to galleries in the UK and around the world. I retired from teaching recently but am still an examiner with two boards."

Friday 22nd March 2024

Mike Denham

Jazz Pianist

1924 was a big year for piano music. Ragtime was giving way to its younger cousin, jazz, and the careers of young pianists like Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, James P Johnson and Duke Ellington took big strides forward. Mike will talk about some of the events which surrounded the music, and illustrate at the keyboard some of the new piano styles of a century ago

Future Events?

We always like to hear what Events you would be interested in attending or helping to set up/ run and new ideas are most welcome!

As there will be Olympics in the summer of 2024, perhaps we could have a theme for that?? For example, the Craft group could represent a sport (any media); the Badminton group could play matches to 24 points?!

...we currently only play to 11 points, in the past many us used to play to 21 points and I'm sure we could manage 24...

Any suggestions can be sent to events@somertonu3a.uk, passed on at Edgar hall meetings or to any Committee member.

Thank you and Happy New Year

Amanda

Christmas Lunch 2023

*Our lovely Christmas Lunch was, again, held at Long Sutton Golf Club
and attended by 109 of our members*



Group News

Good Times with the Local History Group Part 2

Another popular visit in October was when the group visited 2 very different buildings in Castle Cary. The first, The Old House at Cockhill, is a rare survivor of a medieval farmhouse with unique wall paintings.



Exterior of The Old House showing the extension above the front door which contains the painted room

The present owners, William and Pet, have been carefully uncovering and restoring the history of the house since they took it on, in a derelict condition, in the 1980s. On the ground floor they have discovered a diminutive Great Hall, open to the roof, which can be dated back to 1435. Local vernacular societies are very excited to see the original beams and later additions such as the huge fireplace.

Members were in for a treat as we ascended the stairs and entered a small room, built as an extension over the front door.

“What an unexpected surprise to see the secret room and its unique wall paintings.”

Alison F

Three walls of the room have wall paintings showing

One of our members definitely felt an atmosphere,

“I could not imagine living there. I’ve had nightmares about it since our visit.”

Anon.

Very different in atmosphere was our second building we visited, the very distinctive Victorian gothic style Market House in the centre of Castle Cary. Our guide this time was Pet, joint owner of The Old House.

religious symbols, probably executed in the 1480s, in a remarkably good state of preservation which William, the owner, attributes to the later covering of plaster, not being properly scored in.

The photo show various Christian symbols including crosses, lilies and flowers painted on the wall in a folk art style.

It is thought that the room could have been a chapel or a meeting place for a religious fraternity. What adds to the mystery of the purpose of the room, are the 2 squint holes in the wall overlooking the road. Did a secret society meet here? Was it dangerous to do so?



More next month

Kay

Regional u3a Websites

All u3as across the UK are part of a Regional group. There are twelve regions that cover different geographic areas of the UK, nine in England and one each for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Each Region appoints its own Trustee that sits on the u3a board and acts as a representative for that Region. Trustees are voted for at an Annual General meeting that all u3a members are able to attend.

As well as the Regional groups, there are also informal Networks of u3as that exist to share information and best practice local to them - sometimes across regions.

South West Region

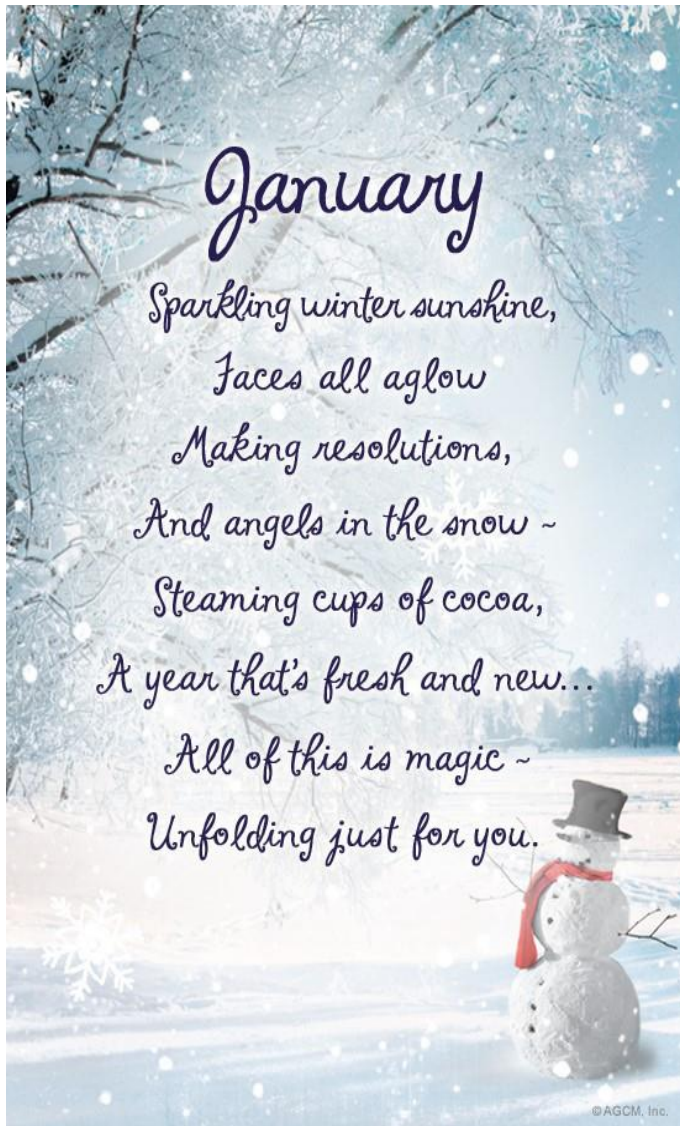
Avalon Network

Camelot
Chard and Ilminster
Crewkerne and District
Martock and District

Somerton

Street and Glastonbury
Yeovil





Somerton u3a Committee Members 2023/2024

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

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.

Website: <https://u3asites.org.uk/somerton/home>

Please send all articles for the Newsletter to the editor

mike.davis@silchester.org

Deadline for the February edition...20th January

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please.