

SOMERTON U3A

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

Newsletter 9

December 2020



Judi's Christmas Message



I think it is safe to say that this December, more than any in a long time, is going to be rather different. It is still uncertain just how many friends and family we will be able to see.

Along with many others this year, we decided in our house that the festive season should come early so we had great fun putting up and decorating four Christmas trees. In these dark times, the beautiful baubles and twinkling lights certainly lift the spirits!

We have also gone to town on the exterior of the house and if you drive past our house in Curry Rivel, you will see the strings of lights adorning the outside!

On a more mundane level, the garden has had a good tidy up and the cannas and dahlias have been mulched and put to bed so that is very satisfying.

We must still try to make this a special time as we all deserve some fun and pleasure so I hope you will join us on December 16th for our Zoom meeting when husband and wife duo, *Fool's Gold*, will be entertaining us.

Do dress up as I always look forward to seeing everyone's best frocks, Christmas jumpers, tinsel and cracking jewellery!

Whatever your plans are for this time of year, the committee and I send you our warmest wishes and look forward to the time when we will all be able to meet again, safely and in person.

Judi, Chairman Somerton U3A

Christmas Lunch and Entertainment

Wednesday 16th December 11.00 am, via Zoom



Despite not being able to hold the ever popular Christmas lunch and entertainment, the committee have come up with alternative arrangements so that you do not miss out.

David Robins, the Speakers' Co-ordinator, has booked *Fool's Gold*, a husband and wife duo, Steve and Carol Robson, to give us some festive cheer via Zoom. If you would like to know more about them, please look at our website.

More details can be found about *Fool's Gold* on the Somerton website.

David says, "Can I suggest you wear a party hat, open a bottle of bubbly and sing along. You will be muted whilst Steve and Carol are entertaining so you can sing along to your heart's content, only your dog or cat will hear you!

I have managed to find some non-alcoholic Prosecco called Nosecco which is a great bubbly at lunchtime. Tesco and Sainsburys sell it.

It *guarantees* you won't fall asleep in the afternoon".

New Committee Members Needed

The Somerton U3A Committee Needs YOU! ...I would like to introduce you to your committee members. I hope you find it useful to put a name to a face.



We hold a Zoom meeting every 2nd Monday of the month. You may be asking yourself "What on earth do they discuss for a couple of hours when there is nothing going on".

Ah, well there are lots going on.

We are all very busy with U3A business and taking our responsibilities to you, the members, very seriously.

To give you a flavour of our meetings (coffee & ginger biscuits excluded), here are some items we have discussed over the past eight months,

- Managing monthly committee meetings
- The newsletter
- Engaging speakers
- Zoom meetings
- Members' welfare
- Trustees' tutorials
- Our website
- Membership fees and renewal
- Income v expenditure



- National Office invoices
- New groups and leaders
- Group engagement and activity
- Beacon and Zoom training
- Risk assessments for groups
- Winter learning tutorials
- Trustee succession



As you can see here, it is a varied agenda.

We are a happy and busy team and I would really encourage you come and join us via Zoom at our next meeting,

Monday December 14th at 10.00 am.

Just bring your enthusiasm and gusto and join the trustees.

New times call for new ways and I think you can make a difference

Judi Powell, Chairman SU3A

01458 250280



Remembrance Sunday 7th



PHOTO OF SOMERTON
U3A POPPY WREATH

There were about 30 others, all muted, whilst Alan gave the service, but prior to the start all the "Zoomers" are allowed to speak to anyone at the meeting.

It's great to talk to those I have not seen for ages.
At 11.00 there was the 2 minute silence and at 11.02 EXACTLY there was the yearly flypast over the Cenotaph.

Thankful Villages

On holiday in Cornwall in 2018 an inadvertent detour took us through Herodsfoot near Looe which was signposted as a Thankful Village. I was curious to know more about this topic.

The term Thankful Villages was first used by the British writer and journalist Arthur Mee in his series of books entitled *The King's England*. The books are a guide to the counties of England as they existed in the 1930's and describe the churches, major buildings and other features including any famous or infamous people connected with those villages.

A Thankful Village was said to be one which lost no men in the Great War as all those who left to serve King and Country came home again. The Somerset volume, which covered the old County of Somerset, states that only 32 villages in England had all men returned from the Great War of which Somerset had eight. Mee listed the following:-

Aisholt--north of Taunton

Chantry--west of Frome

Chelwood--west of Bath (now not in Somerset)

Rodney Stoke--near Cheddar

Stanton Prior --west of Bath

Sunday November 8th 2020, 75 years on since the end of WW2, for the first time I was not in St Michaels Church with 400 other people, and another 150 waiting outside at the cenotaph.

Instead I was sitting in my study with a Zoom connection to the church where the vicar, Alan Symons, is now an expert at these online Sunday worships.

I could hear the planes from Alan's microphone in St Michael's!! Apparently, from someone near the church who looked out their window, this year there were FOUR planes (I suspect Dave Linney from Pitney was one of the pilots in his WW1 aircraft....).

This year we were unable to collect money for the Royal British Legion, but, I hope people will donate using their mobile

**Text Poppy* to 70545 where " *" is the amount you wish to donate e.g Poppy2 or Poppy5
OR telephone 0845 845 1945 to donate by credit card.**

Dr David Robins

A wreath was laid on the war memorial in Somerton by David Robins on Remembrance Sunday on behalf of Somerton U3A.

Somerton U3A member, Jeffrey Bailey, has written an article, *Thankful Villages*, so called because they lost no one in WW1.

Stocklinch--near Ilminster

Tellisford--south of Bath

Woolley--north of Bath (now not in Somerset)

A lot of research has been undertaken in recent years to attempt to verify the number of Thankful Villages and the numbers have changed due to problems with the definition of a village and the place of birth or home of those who went to war. The latest figures show that there are possibly 53 in England and Wales.

The revised details for Somerset show two additional villages, they are Holywell Lake which is west of Wellington and Shapwick near Bridgwater. However Stanton Prior has dropped out giving a net total of nine Thankful Villages.

A few villages were also fortunate to have no fatalities in World War II and these are known as Doubly Thankful Villages. These include Stocklinch and Woolley and claims have been made that Tellisford should also qualify. The recent reports show that only 16 villages in England have this title.

In some "Thankful Villages" there is little or no recognition but others have

road signs and rolls of honour. In Aisholt for example the local poet Sir Henry Newbolt wrote:-

"They came home on smooth and shining tides,

Swiftly the great ship glides,

Her storms forgot, her weary watch is past."

In St, Leonard's church in Rodney Stoke there is a stained glass thanksgiving window and a roll of honour for those returned from the Great War. On the window is written;-

"All glory be to God who in his tender mercy has brought again to their homes the men and women of Rodney Stoke who took part in the Great War."

There are an estimated 16000 villages in England so it can be seen that Somerset had a very significant share of the few who had reason to be thankful.

If you are interested in further reading on this subject you will find several sources listed on your computer search engine. It is also still possible to get a copy of *The King's England*, Somerset volume.

Jeff Bailey.



Buddy Message System - Telephone Befriending

The dark days of winter are coming ever closer and this year may be darker than ever, whilst we are all more isolated than usual. The committee are wondering if any of you would be interested in a 'Buddy' telephone system whereby a regular phone call between agreed partners could take place at agreed intervals you choose.

If you are interested or know anyone in U3A who might be interested in this scheme, please telephone:

David Robins. 07831323582

Sue Haigh. 01458 273303

Valerie Taylor 01458 252071

A friendly chat to keep in touch can make us all feel better.



Response to Kindness Day 2020

Pamela Miley

I really think this year has made everybody kinder never mind a special day for it.

However I phoned a 91 year old cousin living in *Toherbane* (my house name) in Kerry, delivered a picture postcard to my 93 year old friend in Wessex House (I've been doing this every week since lockdown began in March) and took some lemon drizzle cake I'd just baked to a friend and neighbour who recently had a stroke. Easy things to do but I hope they made the day just a little brighter for the recipients.



Am I the only Buddhist in Somerton U3A or are there others?

This gives a small flavour of what Buddhism is about.

Someone who has loved a lot
Has died and gone to "heaven".
All of those who are left behind
Are left to suffer inner pain.
Will never see that face again,
Or hear that laughter that they loved.
Have only the thought to sustain
them now
That when they go to "God"
They'll meet again and share that joy
They had before.

And this thought keeps them going
For years and years,
Until the time comes when they
Give up the ghost with a smile,
And a soul full of anticipation.

But the reality is – no heaven, no God,
Nor anything except merging with
eternity.

The one you loved moved on years
ago,

Is now already an adult again.

But where? And why? And with
whom?

Oh how the emotions do tie us to
those
We have loved and spent time with.
A mature soul is one who can let go,
Love all living creatures, love all
humans
We have known, or might have
known.
Then let them go, and most of all
Learn to love ourselves in the same
way,
For we are all one.

Mary Ellis

Forthcoming Events

zoom

Speaker Programme for the New Year.....on.....

If you enjoyed our first Zoom talk this month, here are details of what's in store for January, February and March 2021

Fri Jan 22nd - 11.00 am

Fishermans Tales - Kevin Little, a fishmonger for 50 years now a small holder, will share his animal tales

Friday 12th Feb 11.00 am

The Art of Trickery - Ian Keable, will talk about magicians depicted in paintings

Friday 26th Feb 11.00 am

Is anyone there? - Bob Mizon, talks about astronomy

Bob, a retired French teacher, used to inspire his pupils with his talks on the stars – all in perfect French!

Fri March 12th 11.00 am

Hypnosis – Alan Jones. His talk will definitely NOT put you to sleep!

Fri March 26th at 11.00 am

Photography - David Boag - back by popular demand after his talk in January 2020

Friday April 23rd 11.00 am

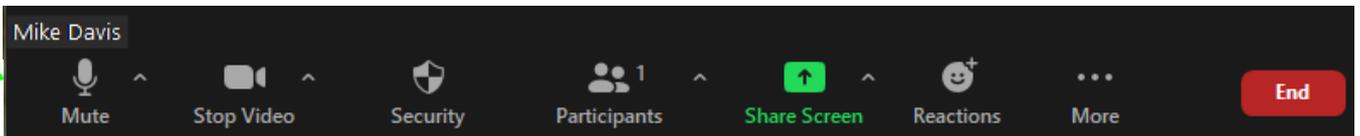
Picture Postcards - James Taylor will give a light hearted and humorous talk on the subject

Further details of speakers and their talks can be found on the Somerton U3A website.



zoom

help



ON

ON

Leave meeting

End

Reactions ..give it a try!

More next month

Vision, video, camera, screen OFF

Start Video

Select this to switch video on or off

Sound, (mic, speaker, earphone) OFF

Mike Davis
Unmute

Select this to switch sound on or off

...more next month...



Groups News



Bird Watching Group

A Marsh Harrier Display

At the last meeting of the bird watching group at Catcott reserves, just 3 days before the second period of lockdown, the group were treated to the very rare sighting of 3 marsh harriers repeatedly flying together over the ground, just in front of the hide we were sitting in. To see one is a treat, but to watch 3 for over half an hour was wonderful.

Marsh harriers have always been part of the aviframework of the UK but numbers dropped dramatically as fens and wetlands were drained for agriculture and in Victorian times birds were targeted by hunters, farmers and landowners and at the same time, eggs were being collected or destroyed and continued to be lost.

By the late 1800s the species had become extinct in England and the last pair bred in Ireland in 1917. Occasional birds originating from the continent bred in East Anglia but numbers crashed again and by 1961 no marsh harrier bred in the UK.

This time it is believed that the population crash was caused by the use of certain pesticides. When these pesticides were banned, populations began to climb again.

The future is looking more secure than at any other time in the last century and the marsh harrier is now on the amber list.

There are now thought to be 400 pairs in the UK with the majority mainly in eastern England. In winter, they will range more widely over the UK but are still very rare outside their core areas. Marsh harriers are mainly seen over reed-beds and marshes, as well as farmland near wetlands which is why there are the occasional sightings in the Avalon Marshes.

When we observed them at Catcott they were hunting for food, such as small birds and mammals, insects, reptiles, frogs and even fish. They hunt by quartering low over the reed beds with their wings held in a classic shallow "v" position.

Sadly that day we knew that it would be our last outing together as a group for some time, but were all thrilled that it ended on such a high.



The classic flight pattern of a marsh harrier photographed at Catcott Reserve.



Holly Goldcrest



Groups News



Craft Group Report

from

Group Leader **Amanda Hooper**

The Craft group have continued to work independently on a monthly theme to produce a card(s).

This month's theme was *silhouettes*.

Below are photos of some of our work.

Four of us managed to meet for a socially distanced coffee/tea/cocoa between lockdowns and six of us have managed to catch up on Zoom- helpfully assisted by Laurence.

Meanwhile we are now 'baubling' away with *baubles* for our next theme.





Groups News



Creative Covid Collaboration

The U3A want to produce a national collage to celebrate the ways in which people have been using their craft activities to continue to connect, learn and support each other during lockdown.

The collage will be formed of hundreds of picture of squares, individually designed and created by members and U3As across the country.

The U3A will bring them all together to form a giant digital collage as a marker of this period, in which both virtual and physical book

Seven members of the Craft group, led by Amanda Hooper, have all contributed a strip to complete a square, entitled "Rainbow" which is shown below and is also featured on the national U3A website.



More Music from Laurie Phillips

Listen and watch Laurie play

The Rolling Hills of the Borders...

Select this link

and choose from the list on the right hand side.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/somerton/page/15028>



U3A National Learning Programmes...Take a Look at What is Available Online

With the current social restrictions, the U3A is coming up with ever more creative ideas for keeping our communities together and enjoying each other's company so it is worth taking a look at the U3A national website and seeing what's on offer.

On *Online Events* are an exciting range of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions delivered by members for members. Learning events in December include talks on texts with the British Library, the history and the role of the National Trust and Japan as well as a festive cookery demonstration and a Christmas choir special.

On the *National Programmes* page there are many ideas to keep learning alive during these times – a mixture of suggestions from members, quizzes, challenges and projects.

Some are one-off events and others ongoing over a period.

Why not take a look!

All events are free and are online via Zoom.



Group News



OPERA APPRECIATION

If you enjoying reading my article about opera in the November newsletter, you might enjoy this.

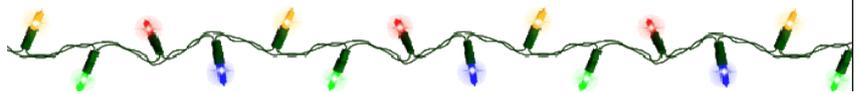
During my recent forays through YouTube I found the video link featured at the end of this item. (*below*)

It is the Polish counter tenor, Jakob Josef Orlinski.

He is in London, talking about how he became a singer, walking around Handel's house and break dancing (for which he is renowned in Poland) in a London park, possibly Hyde Park. He is very entertaining and easy on the eye too!

Enid Thresher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwBj7ct8JQk>



SOMERTON U3A UKELELE GROUP

The Somerton U3A ukulele group is alive and well. Those of us who are lucky enough to have the technology (or have local family members who can help with it) are able to meet for a Zoom meeting on Thursday afternoons, when we used to meet in the Parish Room in the good old days. Members (at least 18 of us) send in their choice of songs for the afternoon from our selection of over 180 – not bad for a group who have, mostly, learnt to play from scratch over the last four years. One of our members, who has the skill and IT knowledge, hosts the meeting. We have a brief chat as members join the meeting and then one player will lead the song while the rest are muted, and this means that the group can play along with no time delay. The speed of the internet sometimes makes this a bit challenging but, on the whole, it works with a degree of success, and those of us who are able to join certainly feel that it is better than nothing. We have a break for tea/coffee at half time, which also gives us the opportunity to catch up with each others news. It is unfortunate that some members are unable to join us and we all long for the time when we can meet safely together again in the Parish Room.

Sue Parry



PHOTO OF UKE GROUP MEETING AND PLAYING BY ZOOM



A Walk up Dundon Beacon (337')



Why not try this winter walk up Dundon Beacon (337') from the Meadway Hall car park?

David Perkins gives details of the route and what to look out for at this time of the year.

One short steep part.

This winter walk is a circular from Compton Dundon to the top of the Beacon and looks at the work of the Somerset Wildlife Trust at this time of the year that results in the (mostly) flora that we see in the spring and summer. Some of the changes at the top of the Beacon that have happened since its purchase by the Trust in 1978 are noted.

Park in Ham Lane at the second footpath sign on the left, just before the village hall, where a flagstoned path from Compton Dundon cross roads to Dundon Church leaves the lane via a kissing gate.



Bryony berries

There is blackthorn (sloe) here and nettles.

Walk on the diagonal path where moles are busy, across the fields where there are alpacas on the right and donkeys on the left. These show how



Lichen graphis



Spindle

farming has changed in the last 50 years.

Between the next two gates are some near-derelict buildings and disused implements, a tractor and a straw-blower that reinforces these changes, as does an old roller a few yards further on.

Carry on along the flagstones through two more gates. The hedges to this point have mostly been field maple, ash and hazel, with clematis, ivy and bramble, and demonstrate having been there many years – signs of old hedge laying and three-inch thick clematis. Those with sharp eyes will spot black **bryony berries** and the **lichen graphis** on smooth barked trees and sloe bushes on the wrong side of the flags.

Follow the stones to the point where there is a major path on the left marked with a Wildlife Trust sign. Go through the gate, taking the path up the hill. Early on there is much **spindle**, a pink flower with a green stem, followed by rosehips and hart's tongue fern. There is also stinking iris in the hedges, mosses and a little **polypody**, and herb robert.

At the top of the hill is an information board and stile. When the reserve was purchased in 1978 this plateau, an Iron-Age fort, was planted with conifers, leaving a few clearings. In 1999, as the site is calcareous soil, the Trust decided to clear them and graze it in a suitable style to produce what we see twenty years later – the slow growth of a calcareous meadow.

How many conifers can you see now?

...continued on page 10...



A Walk up Dundon Beacon (337') ...continued



Grazing has to be after the flowering and seeding season, so on a winter visit we don't see any flowers, so instead look out for the grazers – probably Dexter cattle, (but possibly sheep or horses, when TB interferes).

Watch how they eat - sheep 'bite' all herbage but cattle 'pull' it with their tongues which make a taller sward. They also select the species of grass and flora they like and the result is a mosaic of short turf, with scattered clumps of taller grasses, very evident in the south western area. Here, these often contain false brome – a leftover from the conifer era? The height of the grass determines which insects will lay eggs where.

Another feature to look for, just inside the fort, is the ant hills made by meadow ants, which seem to have got going very early. Some appear to have been opened by green woodpecker or badger. Around the fort there are also older deciduous trees which pre-date the conifers and various species occur – ash, oak, maple, beech, horse chestnut, etc.- try your winter bud identification, and look for evidence of leaf miners in the fallen leaves. There is often stinking iris around the bowls of these older trees. Why, do you think?

If you get to the tumulus, the highest point at the south end, (110m.) you can see some corsican pines on the western slope outside the fort, and a good viewpoint for the River Cary, then Pitney ridge, and beyond.

Making your way back to the cattle trough, which is the pumped source of water for the cattle, you will be treading over dormant cowslip, orchids, etc. which will be flowering in five or so months time, and can listen

Footnotes

I spoke to Mark Green, SWT Reserves manager, before walking the above and he sent some interesting background information which naturally included the Trust's objectives which briefly aimed at sensitively converting the overall site to species rich grassland, maintaining the same, at minimal cost, whilst providing safe visitor enjoyment. A Management policy was included to enable and monitor the above. In the section on physical features the soil is described, plus the hydrology, which leads into the biology – flora, fauna, fungi and plant communities. It finishes with a section on archaeology and the history, e.g. strip lynchets, quarrying, the 1810 tithe map, the last owner, and most recently the occupation by travellers! The last words tell of the contrast of the external views from the fort interior in winter and summer – "summer is a disappointment due to the leaf cover on the trees".

There is much in this to occupy one's thoughts whilst working your way up and down the hill and it is comforting to know that serious consideration has been given to the visitor experience.

for raven, buzzard and other birds.

When leaving the fort, as you descend look for a path on the left hand (western) side of the path leading to a metal gate. This is a 'Permissive' path taking you out to a view to the north, and revealing Dundon church and beyond.

Follow the path downhill and look for a metal kissing gate in the corner of the field over on your right.

Depending on mobility there is a gentle descent to the left-hand end of a very straight hedge below, which when you have reached it, you follow to the metal gate. If however, you descend the steep slope you will see the remains of betony, scabious, and other summer flowers. Compare the height of the grass here to that in the fort.

Reaching the gate, go through and you are on the flagstones. Turn right and retrace your steps to the start.



Polypody



HEALTH CLAIMS PROJECT

I am writing to let you know about a project that the British Nutrition Foundation is currently working on that I believe will be of interest to your u3a group members.

The Health Claims Unpacked project aims to help consumers understand health claims on foods and drinks in order to make healthy choices.

Researchers are looking for people to complete a series of short, enjoyable interactive activities, which explore the health claims we see on food and drinks. Activities include testing nutrition knowledge and the opportunity to design a health claim on pack.

The activities take about 15 minutes to complete and as well as informing users about health claims, the results will be used by researchers at the University of Reading to make recommendations to the food industry and regulators on making health claims clearer for consumers. So, this is the opportunity for your members to contribute to scientific research and have their say on the information you see on products!

The Health Claims Unpacked project team is encouraging as many people as possible to get involved in the research to get more peoplesâ€™™ views and get a clearer picture of how health claims can best be communicated.

The interactive activities can be accessed via the website: <https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unpackinghealthclaims.eu%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C09b3998232e441dbee5308d87b4b95dd%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637394911848751467%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=DrSvWbGC92QO5r4MjwwXRXRc%2FWGTsxuDDtSQRIPeoM0%3D&reserved=0>

We would be grateful if you could circulate the above information to your group members, so that they can have the opportunity to take part in this interesting and worthwhile research project.

More information about the project can be found here:

<https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DuAr2CTdvzQU&data=04%7C01%7C%7C09b3998232e441dbee5308d87b4b95dd%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637394911848751467%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=fQ1pPG4nTNmLDxePicp5RulHgwZRaMuFIBPhQ0VrLUo%3D&reserved=0>

Please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Many thanks

Frances Meek

Senior Education Officer

British Nutrition Foundation

f.meek@nutrition.org.uk



This activity has received funding from EIT Food, the innovation community on Food of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the EU, under the Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Can I take an opportunity to remind those of you who have not, as yet, renewed your membership that it will expire at the end of December. That will of course mean that you will no longer receive this entertaining and informative Newsletter. Information about the activities that are continuing and the speakers that will be available on Zoom will not find its way to you either. Please consider renewing your membership now to enable you to join the many interest groups that are so important to our wellbeing, especially in these difficult times. If you have mislaid your form you can download another from the Website or contact me for one. Let us hope that we can all meet again soon.



Best Wishes, Marilyn SU3A Membership Secretary

Dear U3A,

I know you will all be very sad to hear that Pete Barrett died at home recently. This was quite sudden, he was sitting in his chair and his daughter, Louise, was in the house with him. After all his medical problems and spells in hospital I find it comforting that he was able to pass away so peacefully with a member of his family close by.



He was a lovely man and I am sure we will all miss his cheerfulness and his sense of humour in spite of his health and “losing” his beloved Ann to dementia. He visited her as often as he could but of course, Covid has limited the contact he has been able to have.

Best wishes,
Elaine Griffiths

Please send all articles for the Newsletter to the editor kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com

Deadline for the January 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>