

Christmas Concert



The Photography Group were honoured to be asked by the u3a District Committee to take photographs of the Christmas Concert held in the Town Hall on the 13th December 2023.



The level of the lighting in the Town Hall was challenging, but we did not use our Flash Guns for fear of ruining the performances by disrupting the performers' concentration. We strived to provide sharp photographs with minimum motion blur.



Mary Williams

Playing Music for Fun

We thoroughly enjoyed playing in the Christmas Concert, and providing the background music whilst people were arriving.

I would like to thank all the musicians who put in a lot of hard work to make this event happen, and also to thank Linda, and all the committee for organising the concert.

It must be a logistical nightmare, but it just wouldn't be Christmas without it!

The number of members, and variety of instruments in our group has continued to grow during the last year, which means we are now able to play, and tackle new pieces that were previously unavailable to us.

We are nearing the limit of how many more musicians we can accommodate into the group, but if you think that you would enjoy making music with us please get in touch with me via the website.

Mary Richardson

Happy Retirement to Pat Fryer

Pat Fryer has been leading a group of volunteers for many years to provide refreshments in Chipping Sodbury Town Hall during Speaker Meetings, Christmas Concerts, and other events.

Pat has decided to step down, with the recent Christmas Concert being her last event.

At the concert the u3a Committee Chairman presented Pat with a bouquet of flowers, and thanked her for many successful years of organising the refreshments.



Kurling Group 3

We held our Christmas meal at The Players Golf Course in Codrington. This was our third time at this venue and everybody who attended said that it was a very good meal.

We enjoyed the allocated room, and found the square layout meant we could see all the people sat around the table.

Our Kurling group has a very good membership, so at the moment we have no room for new members.

There are however three other Kurling groups which may have spaces.

Otherwise a new group could be started.



Chris Brown

Quiz Group

The Group continues to hold successful monthly meetings with over 40 people regularly attending each quiz.

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month in the Charter Suite, which is upstairs in Chipping Sodbury Town Hall. We start the quiz promptly at 2:30pm and should finish by about 4:30pm. It's a team quiz so no-one is put on the spot, and individual members are always welcomed into teams.

New members are always welcome – just turn up!

The month of March sees both International Women's Day (8th), and Mothering Sunday (10th) so it shouldn't be too hard to work out what these ten questions are about!

1. Who wrote about 'The Famous Five' and 'The Secret Seven'?
2. Emmeline Pankhurst is associated with which campaigning movement?
3. Who was the second female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?
4. Which female England footballer won the 2023 BBC Sports Personality of the Year award?
5. Who was Clyde Barrow's female partner in crime?
6. Jane Goodall is considered the world's foremost expert on which animals?
7. What position does Kamala Harris currently hold in the American political system?
8. Who was the first historical woman to appear on a British Bank note?
9. Who was the first woman elected to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame?
10. In 1926 what did American Gertrude Ederle become the first woman to do? (It took her 14 hours and 31 minutes to do it)

Answers on the last page

Lloyd Pellow

Mahjong Group

The Mahjong Group began in September 2023, with a very friendly, enthusiastic group of 16 beginners. After a term we have now started to play more complicated hands, which has been challenging, but fun!

The joy of Mahjong is that with every roll of the dice we can laugh and enjoy the game, seated around well covered-tables with tiles.

It helps us use our brains, and improve our memory skills. We also stop for a chat at tea time.



Liz Kabbara, who introduced us to the game, circles the room helping us when required with anything that we have forgotten.

She has also produced picture books, showing us all the hands that we can choose.

We will learn more in time, with practice, and experience, but we can play at any level we want without affecting anyone else's game.

It is a lovely way to spend an afternoon once a week in Chipping Sodbury.



Sally Gow

Science and Technology Group

Visiting the vaults, Clifton Suspension Bridge

On the 18th September, 15 of our members had a Two Hour Historical Hard Hat Tour into the vaults of the Clifton Suspension Bridge, including access to the visitor centre.

This was our chance to take a look inside the Leigh Woods Tower (the westernmost tower) which stands on 12 massive vaults.

We were able to gain access to Brunel's hidden vaults which were rediscovered in 2002. Before this time it was thought that they were solid abutments, as all drawings of the vaults were lost.

Tours of the Vaults began in 2017, allowing members of the public to view the larger chambers.

Vaults 4, and 5 which we explored, are on the first floor level.



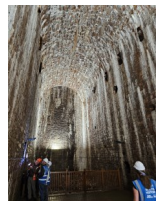
After donning our hardhats we were led by a knowledgeable volunteer Guide, and a Health and Safety officer.

We were assisted with some access challenges like steps, ladders, low corridors, spiders, and water on the floor.

We came to a doorway that was cut into the side of the abutment to allow access directly into Vault 4.

Cutting the doorway took ten days to complete as the wall was almost two metres thick!

Once inside the first chamber, North-South aligned (above ground that would be from footpath to footpath) we could see lots of stalactites, and stalagmites, as well as some wood on the walls dating back to 1864.



The chambers are up to 11m (36ft) deep and a massive 33.5m (110ft) high.

A low access point allowed us into Vault 5, the second chamber we explored. This Vault is aligned in the direction of the road above (East-West).

There were more, and longer stalactites, and stalagmites.

We were given an explanation of how all this was built, and after completion everything was left "clean" of building materials, and supporting structures.

Below is a link to the details of how the vaults were rediscovered, and a digital survey of what is underground.

<https://cliftonbridge.org.uk/going-underground-discovery-of-the-leigh-woods-vaults/>

Lutie van der Park

Tai Chi Groups

Three of the four Tai Chi groups are well established, and running at full capacity every Tuesday.

There is space in the 12:15pm group, which caters in the main for relative newcomers, but the instructor is wonderful, and is easily able to adapt the session to meet everyone's needs.

The activity would suit anyone wanting to gently increase their flexibility, balance, co-ordination, and posture.

Tai Chi helps manage stress related anxiety by integrating relaxation, and stretching into the moves.

Amanda Suart

Art Group

Embrace the Changing Seasons with Artistic Inspiration

As daylight slowly returns, our art group is abuzz with fresh energy. Welcoming both familiar faces, and new enthusiasts, our vibrant group continues to be a haven for those eager to delve into the realm of creativity. If you're yearning to unlock your artistic potential or simply seeking a warm, and inclusive space to explore the wonders of art, your search ends here!



Ignite Your Imagination in our Creative Hub



Every Tuesday morning at 10am, we converge at the Yate Bowls Club, nestled in the heart of the Sunnyside Playing Fields. Our gatherings fuse passion, companionship, and artistic discovery. We are not in competition with each other, and do not provide formal instruction, but we wholeheartedly embrace the transformative power of collective inspiration. Occasionally, we're treated to exclusive sessions led by external talents, injecting a delightful array of experiences into our artistic journey.

Winter Wonders Unveiled: A Dazzling Showcase at the u3a Christmas Concert

In December 2023, our art group had the honour of charming the audience at the annual u3a Christmas Concert with an exhibition of our work, giving the entrance hall the magic of the season! The display featured many artworks, each crafted to capture the essence of Christmas, and winter.

The response from attendees was very encouraging, including several who asked if we sold our work! We have included a small selection of images that were shown that day in this article.



The interest didn't stop there, and we had several inquiries about joining our dynamic group.

The success of this showcase has fuelled our collective enthusiasm, and we're looking at options for a dedicated exhibition at a local venue later this year.

Stay tuned for more details.

Join the Artistic Affair

If you're intrigued, and itching to join the creative fray, our doors are wide open. Located at the Yate Bowls Club, our venue boasts easy accessibility, a convenient car park, and a spacious environment perfect for artistic collaboration. The cost is only £4 per session, covering room hire and other essentials.



No waiting lists here!

Dive right in with a "taster" session, where you can experience the magic firsthand. And guess what? We're just a click away on Facebook! Search 'u3a Yate & Sodbury Art Group' to get a sneak peek into our artistic escapades – plus you can see all the pictures exhibited at the Christmas Concert.

For more details, send an email to mikehayward0@gmail.com

We can't wait to see you at our next session!

Mike Hayward

History Group 2

Avon Wharf – Bitton – The Dramway

The speaker at our December meeting was Jim Pimpernell, who spoke to us about Avon Wharf and The Dramway.

The Dramway was the name given to the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway, which was used to transport coal from the North Bristol Mining area to the river at Avon Wharf, where it was then shipped to Bristol, Bath, and London.

It was a horse-drawn railway and 'dram' was the local name for a coal wagon.

Jim showed us pictures of the riverboats, and train trucks which were used to transport the coal. He also showed us diagrams of the areas where the river and surrounding areas were built on, including the weighing buildings, and what was left of them in 2006 when he took photographs of the sites.

It was a fascinating talk, and Jim will be returning to talk more about The Dramway at a future meeting.

Sue Maloney

History Group 2

Bristol's Lost City

The speaker at our January meeting was Clive Burlton, an enthusiastic speaker who gave an interesting, and in-depth talk about Bristol's Lost City, which was part of the Bristol International Exhibition, a 30-acre site in Bristol between Ashton Gate, and the Cumberland Basin.

It started taking shape in 1912, and was finally opened in May 1914.

The 'lost city' of temporary buildings was made of white material, earning it the nickname 'white city', and it included a replica of Bristol Castle.

Several local people were involved, one of whom was Clive's grandfather, which is how he got interested in the subject.

Unfortunately, it was not commercially successful and the exhibition faltered, nearly going into administration after the first month.

It struggled on until war broke out in 1914, when the men working on the exhibition had to enlist in the forces and it was finally closed.

This was such a good talk I thoroughly recommend it and all present enjoyed it.

Sue Maloney

History Group 2

Our group meets in the Watkins room at The Old Grammar School, in Chipping Sodbury, every second Wednesday of the month from 10am - 12pm.

There is no waiting list, we are open to anyone interested in history.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our talks.

Sue Maloney

French Groups

The four French Groups are going well. We meet on Tuesdays at Dodington Parish Hall.

At present all the groups are full.

Jean Powell

Science and Technology Group – Vickers Machine Gun Collection

We visited the Vickers Machine Gun Collection and Research Association, and were surprised to find this facility in buildings behind a large detached house, tucked away in rural Wiltshire.

Due to the nature of its contents, the location is secret, and only advised to those visitors holding valid tickets.

Our first impressions were of an eclectic mix of First, and Second World War weaponry, and associated hardware, but pride of place was given over to variants of the Vickers machine gun, which was a mainstay of the British Empire forces throughout most of the conflicts of the first half of the 20th century, and beyond.

With a rate of fire approaching 600 per minute, this was a formidable weapon used by the British Army from 1912 to 1968.



Richard, a Director of this Charity, is clearly passionate in his interest of the subject. He bought his first machine gun (deactivated) aged 12 for around £350!

He gave us a detailed talk on how the Vickers, and other machine guns worked, and the strengths, and weaknesses of the various types on display.

He then gave us some live firing demonstrations indoors, obviously using blank ammunition.



First up was the Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifle, which was the mainstay of Empire forces during the same period. Although this was a bolt action rifle, a trained rifleman could fire 15 to 20 aimed shots per minute. The 0.303 inch diameter bullets, also used in the Vickers, could kill a man a mile and a half away.

Some of the other automatic guns would not burst fire, which Richard thought was due to the lower gas pressures generated by the blank rounds, compared with live ammunition.

The Vickers machine gun was able to fire a few short bursts, but with 0.303 ammunition costing over £1 per round this is a very expensive exercise!

Before, and after the firing, Richard had to phone the local police so they knew that any other reports of machine-gun fire in the area were not him!



A very interesting visit for those interested in the weaponry of the 20th century, and it was greatly enhanced by Richard's extensive knowledge, and enthusiasm for his specialist subject.

There are videos of the Vickers, and Richard on YouTube if you want to know more.

<https://youtu.be/XbmCXf6kWdl>

Philosophy Group

We are a thriving, and growing group of individuals who meet once a fortnight, on a Thursday morning to hear about a range of philosophical ideas, which inevitably leads to a lively discussion.

This term we are looking at what is meant by a "good life", considering the views of Ancient Greek philosophers, the beliefs of Eastern religions, as well as what Richard Dawkins has to say on the matter.

There are no right answers, and everyone's view is encouraged.

Come along – you will be very welcome.

Our next two meeting dates are 7th March, and 21st March in the Watkins Room at the Old Grammar School in Chipping Sodbury at 10am.

Kate Wake

Creative Writing Group

In November the Creative Writing Group visited Westonbirt Arboretum to take a woodland walk of a very different nature.

Mark is blind, and an amazing volunteer for the Arboretum. He took the group on a two-hour sensory woodland experience, starting with a meditation session as we stood among a cathedral of fragrant trees.



Then we were off, tasting, smelling, and caressing trees, and bushes as we walked. The amazing textures of the bark enticed some members to do a little tree hugging.

Time was made to stop to breathe in the scent of the cedars, and to be mindful of the different sounds of the woodland and its creatures.

The visit gave the group fresh inspiration to write, and Alan Connor who organised the visit for us, wrote the poem below:

Our Trip Out

Our little group of authors
was need'n inspiration
So w' booked a trip out,
t' the local Arboretum.

The weather was canny
but the journey fraught.
Still we gathered bright n' early,
on a cool Novemb'r morn.

Meeting up wi' Mark,
a blind and chirpy fella.
He told us how t' be careful,
when trampin' throu' the forest.

Suited, booted and truly prep'd,
we set off, in search of 'who knows what'.
The pace was brisk, as excitement built
and the mornin' ahead was encountered.

Mark first offered meditation,
so under the Three Sisters we stood.
These giants of trees would ignite emotions,
suggestin' we leave that other world behind.

It wasn't long before huggin' and feelin',
became the norm on the Walk.
Bark was attractive, leaves crushed for to smell,
then for the brave, a red peppercorn; heaven or hell?

A group hug at the Paper Bark Maple,
then Bronwen found love at the pine.
Energy transfer from body to body,
registering a magnificent smile.

Redwoods and Acers and dinosaur bark,
sunlight glinting through Cedar of Lebanon, dark.
Onward to more of the sights that abound,
reindeer shapes and mammoth mounds.

A brief encounter with a Norway spruce,
cameras overheating with excess use.
Lodge pole pine signals a champion,
then on for black pepper, the final tasting.

To soon we arrive, at the end of the trail.
Monkey puzzle reminding us not to impale.
Restrooms and refreshment the final stop,
with coffee and donuts, the world we are atop.

(Alan Connor – 2023)

Last year The Chipping Sodbury Writers produced an anthology of short stories, and poems.

We are pleased to announce that *A Gallimaufrey* has been a great success, and all copies of the book have been sold.

On the 22nd January 2024, the Writers presented Kay Tily, from Mindsong, a cheque for £360, which was the profit made from selling the book.

Kay gave a talk to the group about Mindsong and how it supports people with dementia, and those that care for them, through music-therapy, and singing.

She explained how singing together can help reduce feelings of loneliness, and is good for health, breathing, and posture.



Joy Charlton

Classical Music Listening Group

It has been good to welcome some new members since the u3a Open Day, and we would like to welcome even more. There's no waiting list.

Our meeting on the 8th March will focus on "Music about Music", with contributions from members on the day.

I expect there will be settings of "Ode to St Cecilia", the patron saint of music, as well as extracts from Elgar's "The Music Makers", and maybe "To Music" by Schubert.

On 12th April, members are asked to bring Scandinavian music to share.

On 9th May we'll concentrate on "The Voice".

Do join us in the Watkins Room at the Old Grammar School in Chipping Sodbury on the second Friday of the month from 2-4pm.

Margaret Roy

The Recorder Group

The Recorder Group is thriving under Mary Richardson's leadership.

There are now 14 of us, playing a variety of pieces with just the right amount of new music given to challenge us.

We play descant, treble, or tenor, and Mary sometimes plays bass. Even short pieces are fleshed out by these levels of sound, which makes it a joyful experience for us all.

We stop for a chat, and coffee, and tea in the middle of our 2-hour morning at the Yate YMCA Hall every fortnight on a Friday.

It was very rewarding to be part of the successful and well run u3a Christmas Concert 2023, especially considering some amongst us had only picked up a recorder 18 months beforehand.

Our repertoire goes back to the start of the group founded by Cherry, and owes much to her and her successor, Linda.

Please consider joining us, whatever your skill level.

We can help complete beginners get started, so go for it!

Remember your first 2 sessions will be free. The fee for the 8 summer sessions will probably be £20.

We have a social luncheon booked for 15th March at The Bodkin in Petty France.

Donations of recorders, music, and music stands that are surplus to requirement, and gathering dust in your home would be much appreciated.

It is rewarding, and fun, and one member said she didn't want each session to end!

Come along and exercise fingers, and brain alike in good company.

Bridget Holdship, Joint Group Leader (Admin)

Table Tennis Group

The Tuesday morning table tennis group got together for a social recently with partners also invited.

The evening was held at YTCF where we played skittles, darts, and giant jenga.

We also enjoyed a ploughman's supper, and a quiz.

A good time was had by all with the suggestion that we do it all again very soon!

Wendy Morrison-Jones

Science and Technology Group – Retrofit Presentation

Twenty-eight Members of the Science and Technology Group attended a most interesting presentation on Retrofit by James Mullen, the Retrofit coordinator at the Bristol based Centre for Sustainable Energy.



We all learned that Retrofit is not an easy or straightforward topic.

Retrofit is the addition to existing buildings to improve energy performance, and comfort level.

The UK has some of the leakiest buildings in Europe, with 14% of UK carbon emissions due to domestic heating.

To start our own retrofit journey we first need to understand our homes, then take a fabric first approach.

Repair, and Remediation, Air Tightness, and Insulation first to reduce the demand on the heating system.

Moisture is responsible for the vast majority of building problems.

A damp wall is a cold wall with 30% more heat loss.

Draught Proofing, and Ventilation were covered next.

James showed us examples of how we might do this and explained the advantages, and disadvantages of each.

We covered heat pumps, how they work, and how costs might compare with a gas boiler. Solar and how it works.

Then finally sources of funding or subsidy, and information and advice about retrofit.

Kate Kelliher

Global Diners Group

We have been in existence for 6 years and have the full capacity of 15 members. Due to continued interest a third dining group called Eating Out is now up and running.

As the name suggests, we aim to try a variety of International food for a reasonable cost, where it is available nearby.

So far we have sampled Chinese, Italian, British, Indian, Mexican, Thai, Greek, French, Sardinian, and Moroccan.

The group continues to attract near full attendance at each monthly meal, and we are due to sample more different nationalities in the coming months with some adventurous venues in Bristol.

Our 2023 venues included: Il Gusto Italian, Casa Mexicana, Antica Roma, The Fern & Forge, The Bolero Lounge, Panevino Italian, Siam Thai, The Bell Inn, and Bristol Lido

To keep the group fresh everyone has agreed to organise a venue themselves.

This should ensure we get a variety of types of venues and meals.

Our first meal in 2024 will be at Egypt Mill in Nailsworth.

Marcus Dunstan, Group Leader

Email: amdunstan@btinternet.com

Phone: 01453 521485 or 07970 636280

Photography



We meet on the first Thursday of every month at St John's Church Centre, Wickwar Road, Chipping Sodbury from 2-4pm.

www.facebook.com/u3aphotoyateandsodbury is where we post images and updates.

Please do "Like" this page and post comments – we are keen to hear from anyone interested in photography who may like to join our group.

Welcome to our New Members

We had a good uptake of potential members from the u3a Open Day in October, and are pleased that some of them have already joined and anticipate more to do so soon.

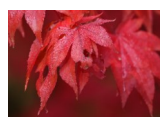
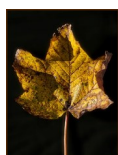
Our Membership Contact is – Nick Bishop nickbishop54@btinternet.com

Monthly Projects

Our group activities concentrate on monthly projects. Each month a project theme is given. Our members take photographs based on the current theme, and upload 1-3 images to our Flickr account.

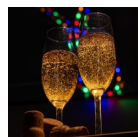
At the meetings, members are encouraged to critique the images, ask questions on the techniques used, and share their knowledge.

November Project – Autumn Colours



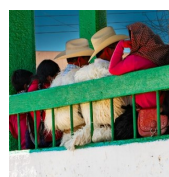
December Project – Celebrations

Any type of celebration any time of the year.



Editing Projects

A photograph is selected for members to use various photography editing software, from the free versions in Windows, and Apple products through to the more advanced programmes, Photo Shop, and Affinity, etc.



New Format for the Group

We are having a transition into a new format for the Photographic Group.

We will keep the 2 to 3 images per member, but cut down on the friendly critique time.

We will have presentations of camera techniques, talks on upcoming projects for the following month with tips, and hints, and we have brought back the social break so members can mingle and discuss topics in general.

Forthcoming Photo Shoot in April – Mere Down Falconry, Manor Farm

We have a planned visit to the Falconry, with Peter Hitchman, and Allan the Falconer.

The birds are used to cameras, which gives us the opportunity to photograph them on the perch, the glove, or flying free. The falconer has over 20 birds, vultures, hawks, kestrels, falcons, and a variety of owls.

Rolling Plan for Upcoming Projects

Topic next Month	Black and white	none	Table tops	Bird Photos
Meeting Date	04/01/2024	01/02/2024	08/03/2024	04/04/2024
Meeting Discussion and Topic	Colour into black and white Software? What to look for to highlight B/W	Equipment camera auxiliary special?	Table tops 1. Flowers+ water spray 2. Smoke 3. Oil & Water 4. Engineered object 5. Plastic Camera settings	Photographing Birds. Shutter Speed Background

For more information visit our page www.u3asites.org.uk/yate-sodbury/page/19348.

You can also email me, **Nick Bishop**, if you have any questions, or if you would like to attend a taster session. nickbishop54@btinternet.com

Mary Williams

History and Social Studies Group 1

RMS Carpathia

In November, the acknowledged maritime historian Paul Barnett provided a gripping account of the controversy surrounding the sinking of the Titanic, which took place just two years before the start of the First World War.

The Royal Mail Steamship Carpathia was launched in 1902 from Swan & Hunter in Wallsend, and will always be known as the one ship which in May 1912, raced to the aid of more than 3,000 potential souls left on the chilly surface of the ice field, when the Titanic broke in two and sank beneath the Mid-Atlantic waters.

Distress signals were telegraphed, and flares fired into the calm night sky, but it was only Captain Arthur Ransom who raced the 58 miles to provide aid, and collect 712 passengers, and crew from the lifeboats.

Showing immense fortitude he risked his own vessel by concentrating all the output from his furnaces to race through the ice field, dodging six other icebergs at 18kts.

The SS California which was much closer to the Titanic, was so slow to act that it was daylight before it approached, therefore the only task left for it to do was collect some floating corpses.

Paul Barnett touched on some of the myths which even to this day still surround this tragic event.

Although he wasn't able to explain why the Titanic was making 22kts on a pitch-black night when the absence of wind meant there were no white horses to delineate the bases of the icebergs, he did confirm that the provision of 20 lifeboats, each holding a maximum of 68, only provided capacity for less than half of the combined passengers, and crew.

This was however more than the 16 which the UK Board of Trade had stipulated.

Nearer 50 would now be needed to meet the pro rata totals required on a similar sized modern cruise ship.

As expected, once the survivors landed in New York there was a feeding frenzy amongst the press, and Captain Ransom was lionised, knighted by George V, and awarded a Congressional Medal of Honour by the Americans.



The photo shows the "unsinkable Molly Brown" one of the socialite survivors who was foremost in such adulation, and is shown presenting the Captain with a commemorative cup.

As for the Carpathia itself, unhappily it succumbed to a German U-boat torpedo during 1918.

Bob Keen

History and Social Studies Group 1

In December, David Cheesley gave us an intriguing talk entitled "The Golden Years of Severn Beach".



Using pictures, and music, David took us back over a hundred years to the heyday of the South West's Riviera.

Beginning with appropriate train puffing noises which evoked memories of reaching what had been the New Passage Pier, to cross the Severn.

For decades, the hotel built there provided overnight stays for those awaiting a suitable tide for the ferry.

Creation of the tunnel killed off the hotel, but the shingle beach had already attracted horse-drawn wagonettes, bearing Sunday school outings, and day trippers, and a rustic tea garden soon arrived.

Eventually the railways decided to build a platform so that the trains could discharge passengers heading for the beach, and its attractions .

For just the 6d train fare the residents of Bristol could have a day at the seaside, visit the souvenir shops, and buy a stick of Severn Beach Rock.

David drew our attention to the sombre clothing of the revellers shown in the photo, who were setting out for a day at the seaside.



Men wearing ties, and waistcoats, and ladies with coats better suited to a funeral.

These would be the only respectable clothes that they owned, so maybe it was Hobson's choice.

A local showmen family, the Pruets, opened a funfair, which soon expanded to include a dance hall, a casino, and the biggest dodgem car area in the South West. Crazy golf, a Putting Green, a Waltzer, and a Galloper followed.

By 1924 the railway found it worthwhile to install a proper station with all the usual amenities.

Soon there were 10 caravan sites.

Enterprising travelling showmen built a complete village using timber from a derelict First World War camp, and the electricity came from a generator salvaged from an obsolete submarine.

David showed evocative photos of the holidaymakers paddling in the muddy waters of the Severn.

We were even treated to a rendition of Adge Cutler and the Wurzels playing a pop tune devoted to Severn Beach.

The shingle beach was carefully tended by the showmen families, who imported lorry loads of sand to counter the erosion which was threatening it.

The Blue Lagoon was very impressive. Thousands of revellers flocked to partake in its attractions, which drew excursions from as far afield as Birmingham, and even Bournemouth. The activities even included beauty contests.

The boating lake surrounded by the miniature steam train ride was always a very popular attraction.

David linked the decline in popularity of Severn Beach with the advent of widespread car ownership. Families could now drive to Weston Super Mare or Breen Sands.

Late in the day the Severn Beach Hotel was opened by the Georges Brewery in 1936 with a very posh ballroom. It was very popular with American GIs during WW2, but has subsequently been demolished to make way for houses.

Shirley, who was the daughter of the Pruets, opened a café which is still there, and proudly bears her name. She turned down an offer of £1.5 million from the developers, who were anxious to maximise the number of properties in their new housing developments in the 1980s.

Eventually the construction of the barrier topped by its shoreside walk (provided to obviate winter flooding episodes) speeded the demise of Severn Beach as a holiday venue.

Earth Sciences and Geology Group

Come and join us on the first Tuesday of each month at 3pm in Westerleigh Village Hall, £1 each.

We chat amongst ourselves about earth-science items which members have spotted in the press or on holiday.

Then one of us introduces the main theme for the day as below:



Tuesday 5th March: **On the New Zealand Lahars**

Lahars are a volcanic hazard which can be as dangerous, and destructive as pyroclastic flows.

Tuesday 2nd April: **Almost like being there** (Geologists Association Video)

Deciphering what traces mean is all part of the fun.

We see dinosaur “muddy boots”, splodge prints, and dino burrows.

We see traces of shrimps, insects, and giant termite nests, and then lobster trackways, showing that little has changed in the mangroves over the last 20M years.

By Dr Jon Noad of Calgary.



Tuesday 7th May: **Vesuvius**

The active volcano that rises above the Bay of Naples in southern Italy.

By Chris Greef

Tuesday 4th June: **Dinosaurs: New Visions of a Lost World**

In a Geologists Association video, Professor Michael J Benton brings a visual guide to the world of the dinosaurs, showing how rapid advances in technology, and amazing new fossil finds have changed the way we see dinosaurs forever.

Patrick Mills, and Chris Greef.



WW2 Group

For our January meeting the WW2 group were joined by members of the Science and Technology Group for a visit to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Museum at Lyneham.

A three-hour tour led by the museum Curator was both interesting, and informative, and included many anecdotes about his own experiences in the regiment.

The photos show members of the group learning about the merits of a six-wheel drive Scammell heavy recovery truck, and the role of REME in the postwar revival of Volkswagen.



Future group talks are planned on the subjects of the role of the Royal Navy in the Pacific, Mulberry Harbours, and the capture of what is now known as Pegasus Bridge.

David Fussell

Theatre and Classical Concerts Groups

The booking deadline for our current newsletter has passed and the next one will go out in June.

We still have some seats available for both plays, and concerts.

Prices include coach transport, picking up in Chipping Sodbury, Yate, Coalpit Heath, and Downend.

You can also go on our waiting list for any seats from the rest of the programme, as we often get cancellations.

To request tickets, or a copy of our newsletters, with full details of all the trips, please email: janeclimpson@btinternet.com or call 01454 228672 and leave a message.

Theatre – we have a few tickets for 5 plays – They are all matinees.

New Theatre Cardiff	<i>39 Steps</i>	Wednesday 24 th April, £54
Bristol Old Vic	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	Thursday 9 th May, £41
Festival Theatre Malvern	<i>Moby Dick</i>	Wednesday 12 th June, £44
Bristol Old Vic	<i>A Child of Science</i>	Thursday 27 th June, £46
The Mill at Sonning	<i>Three Men in a Boat</i>	Thursday 11 th July, £99

Classical Concerts Group – we have a few tickets for 3 concerts, They are all 7:30pm evening performances at the newly relaunched Bristol Beacon (aka Colston Hall)

Bristol Beacon Thursday 18th April, Dresden Philharmonic £52

Bristol Beacon Wednesday 8th May, The Hallé £57

Bristol Beacon Friday 17th May, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra £52

Jane Climpson

Happy Retirement to Liz Hamer

On Monday mornings, we had an hour of non-stop folk singing with Liz Hamer. It was such a lovely way to begin each week.

Our group first met at the church in Rangeworthy, and later on at the Lamb Inn, Iron Acton.

Liz entertained us on her guitar for over 16 years, many of us staying with her for all that time.

Now she has retired we want to acknowledge what she did for us all.

She was such a gentle, jolly person, it was a privilege to know and sing with her.

Many of the songs were those she taught to her pupils when she was Head Teacher at the local infant school. We always began with 'Albert Mooney'. We sang protest songs from the 60s, and Joan Baez songs were a favourite, like 'Copper Kettle'. Not every song was liked by everyone. 'Donna Donna', for example was disliked by many, but we still sang it for Liz.

We played some gigs too! This was a small folk festival in Winterbourne. It is not often that many of the performers had to be lifted up on to the stage!

Over the years we took part in many local community and charity events.



In this photograph Liz Hamer is extreme left, and Ken Thompson (her second in command) extreme right.

Thank you Liz for our happy times

Jenny Smith

Ukulele Group 2

We started the year on a high!

Following our Christmas gig in the foyer of Tesco in Yate, playing, and collecting for the Trussell Trust Charity, we were apparently spotted by a BBC Radio Bristol producer, who managed to find our email address, and asked if we would like to appear on the radio.

I thought I was going to be crushed in the stampede for fame and glory! I must admit to being surprised by everyone's modesty. It just goes to show that bright lights aren't for everyone.

We did have more than enough volunteers in the end, so unfortunately some were disappointed.

We were scheduled to appear on the Paris Troy radio show on New Year's Eve lunchtime.

We arrived by the allotted time, bright-eyed, and bushy-tailed, ukuleles tuned and ready, our chosen songs well rehearsed, but still a little nervous for what lay ahead.

We needn't have worried, Paris was great! He was welcoming, friendly, jovial, and put us all at ease.

We were "on air" for around 15 to 20 minutes, playing our three songs and generally chatting about the u3a, and our ukulele group. The time flew by.

I believe the resulting recording may still be available on the BBC local radio website (it's a 4 hour show and we appeared from around 13:25 hours).



We all had a lovely time and were well looked after. Little did any of us know when we joined the u3a that fame (if not fortune!) would follow.

Ian Baddeley

ps. Signed photos may be available if demand is considered high enough, and we can charge excessive sums!

Cycling Group

Although no one could pretend that this winter weather has been all that promising, the cycling group has suffered very few ride cancellations, regularly reaching places such as Sherston, Leyhill, Severn Beach, and even Slimbridge.

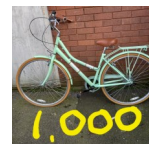
A few drops of rain can easily be coped with by modern cycling clothes, and mudguards prevent being a nuisance to other riders.

However the only rider who is happy to cope with the slippery roads from frost, and ice is the group leader who turns out on three wheels.

The rest of the group are more sensible, and happy to swap a slippery ride for a chat over a hot drink in the Waitrose cafe.

Riders using battery assisted bikes are welcomed nowadays, as the average age of the group is increasing.

The photo shows the pristine city bike, which was rescued from the scrap bunker at the Yate Sort It Centre with the collaboration of the SUEZ organisation.



This makes it the 1,000th bike to be donated to the Yate Community Bike Hub, since it originated as a brainchild of Climate Action Yate and Chipping Sodbury, and it began accepting donated bikes, and accessories in late May 2022.

Several of the u3a cycling group members have helped the Hub to bring home their second award as one of South Gloucestershire's Community Heroes.

Any enquiries to Bob Keen, Cycling Group leader

01454 881966

Speaker Events at Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Dates for your Diary

The next speaker event will be on Friday March 1st – Paul Barnett – On Easter at Christmas – Exploring the Mystery of Easter Island. A travelogue detailing the hidden gems of this mystical, far off island.

Fri Apr 19th – AGM followed by David Boag – Nature’s Marvels. This very experienced wildlife photographer and author will explain how the miracles of nature can be embraced in the word “instinct”. The talk will be illustrated with stunning photographs.

Fri May 3rd – Fraser Gunn – The Great Fire of Windsor. A detailed description from one of the fire brigade commanders of how the 1992 fire in Windsor Castle was contained, and eventually extinguished.

Fri Jun 7th – Steve Bird – Wellington’s Military Career. Apart from winning at Waterloo, what about his other successes, and failures. How did a man known as a violin player, and a fun lover become the Iron Duke?

Fri Jul 19th – Philip Caine – From Barrow to Bagdad. The author gives an entertaining description of his career moves from the hotel business to the oil industry.

Fri Sep 6th – Stuart Burroughs – Jane Austen and the Engineers. The Director of the Museum of Bath at Work will talk about life during the Regency.

Fri Oct 4th – Maggie Christison – Medical Detection Dogs.

Fri Oct 11th – u3a Open Day 2:00pm at Chipping Sodbury Town Hall

Fri Nov 1st – Jill Brookes – Berkeley Castle – Fortress to Stately Home.

The doors open at 1:30pm and the talk starts at 2:00pm.

It is suggested that members get there in plenty of time to avoid disappointment.

Answers to the Quiz

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Enid Blyton | 2. Votes for Women/The Suffragettes |
| 3. Theresa May | 4. Mary Earps |
| 5. Bonnie Parker | 6. Chimpanzees |
| 7. Vice President | 8. Florence Nightingale |
| 9. Aretha Franklin | 10. Swim the English Channel |

If you would like further information regarding any aspect of your u3a please visit our website:

[https:// www.u3asites.org.uk/yate-sodbury/welcome](https://www.u3asites.org.uk/yate-sodbury/welcome)