

SOMERTON U3A

Newsletter 2

May 2020



LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

Chairman's Message



As you are probably aware, the Government recently confirmed that the lockdown will continue for at least another 3 weeks. With the uncertainty over how and when to ease the lockdown, there is the potential for this situation to continue for some time.

This has implications for the administration of Somerton U3A, both in the holding of regular monthly committee meetings as well as the annual AGM normally held at the end of May in the Edgar Hall. Under Charity Commission rules, we can delay the holding of the AGM for up to 3 extra months. Depending on the length of the lockdown, this gives the committee the option of holding an actual meeting or holding it online.

Once the national situation becomes clearer, I will be able to confirm which option the committee chooses.

Rest assured that, despite not being able to physically meet together, the committee have been working hard to ensure that essential administrative tasks are still being attended to so that when restrictions are eased, we can all hopefully

resume our normal activities in the U3A.

The cancellation of the monthly Friday meetings has affected the figures of our annual income and expenditure but I am confident that by the time we are able to hold an AGM, in whatever form, we will be in a position to advise you of Somerton U3A's financial position.

I hope you all enjoy this newsletter and I have been privileged to read what some of you have been doing over the last 4 weeks. It just shows how amazing and inventive you are, still keeping in touch by various means, still quizzing, learning, reading and most importantly of all, socialising.

Please don't forget to keep telling us about what you are still managing to do in your groups, with photos please if possible. If your group have not yet managed to be together online, perhaps some of the group news will inspire you to follow suit.

Judi, Chairman Somerton U3A

Editors' Note

Thank you for all the positive and encouraging comments we received after the first newsletter.

Pauline Riocreux asked if we could include ideas for new groups. We actually had that in one of our initial drafts but when it became apparent that the lockdown could last for a very long time, it was put on the shelf for the time being.



When the Government gives some indication as to when they consider it safe for 70+ section of society to be

able to meet again in groups, then we will concentrate on suggestions for new activity groups and will be seeking your ideas.

In this edition of the newsletter we have included details of the interesting and innovative ways members of some groups are managing to still interact with each other on a regular basis.

This is very inspiring and we are interested to hear of any other groups who are managing to stay in touch, despite being in lockdown.

We would also like to receive some

more lockdown journal accounts of how you are coping with the situation, and indeed, anything that you think our members will enjoy reading.

Also, the June issue will have a general theme of gardens and we would be delighted to receive photos and any relevant prose and poems.

Keep well, keep safe....

Kay, Contents Editor

Mike, Production Editor

June Newsletter Deadline 15th May editorsu3a@gmail.com

Group News...Apart but Together



Margaret Morgan *Mary Beth Greenop* *Valerie Taylor*
Avril Prestwich *Jenny Oliver* *Sheree Dobson*
Marilyn Muffett *Julie Hopkins*

What a tech savvy group we are. Undaunted by lockdown, this group of **book lovers** “met” on Tuesday evening to discuss our April read, “The Dry” by Jane Harper. Set in a small drought-ridden town in the Australian outback it is an evocative “who done it” exposing the frustrations and weaknesses of a confined community. Strangely enough, some similarities were noted...

Given our constraints, it was a pleasure to feel connected as a group (and a reason to get out of our scruffy gardening/painting clothes!). It was such a success we have already scheduled May’s meeting.

Veg, Cook and Eat Group

Ingrid Grisedale

Roy, a member of the Veg, Cook and Eat Group came up with the brilliant idea of taking it in turns to send out a list of ingredients each week for everyone to cook on the Tuesday and then email back on their successes or otherwise!

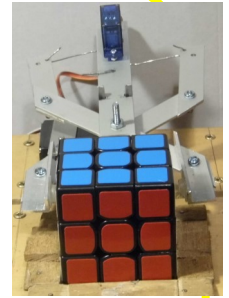
Rules: 5 ingredients, add any spices, herbs and staples such as butter, milk, oil etc and 1 extra ingredient can be added.





Group News

U3A Raspberry Pi Group



The Raspberry Pi Group with its nine members builds projects using the small Raspberry Pi computer costing less than £10. Most of our projects tend to be rather “geekish”, and with the U3A Open Day planned, we thought we would build a project that could be “seen to be doing something”. We homed in on building a device to solve a Rubik’s cube. Anyone could mix up the cube, place it in our device, and after a camera had inspected the arrangement of squares a robot arm would twist and turn the cube until it was solved. We would discuss this idea further at our next meeting. But

Lock-down was announced and we like everyone else we had to cancel our meetings. Now we no longer meet twice a month, but every week by a Zoom video conference (which is free).

After overcoming our initial annoyance at not being asked to design ventilators for the NHS, we turned our

attention back to the Rubik’s cube. With Zoom it is easy to hold a meeting with almost any number of people. You can hold discussions, show presentations and even videos.

If anything, our project is moving ahead quicker than normal, as we all have fewer distractions. The hardware, as shown opposite is nearing completion, and soon it will be ready for our software expert to do the clever part.

When we do get together we hope you will take the challenge of mixing up a cube and seeing if our project will solve it. A project all done during the lock-down aided by a little technology.

If anyone is interested in joining our group please contact me john@jmlight.co.uk

Isolation...We are Not Alone

Group News



The Somerton U3A **Photography Group** decided to keep in touch whilst most of us are either self isolating, or unable to get out and about in these difficult times. So 7 of us agreed to post mystery photos in turn. One each day, the rest guessing what the photos are of. No prizes, just a bit of fun and a challenge to come up with available subjects and photograph them from unusual points of view.

Sue (Parry) emailed everyone in the **SUBS Ukulele group** to ask for two choices of songs from each person. She then sent the complete list to everyone with instructions to play for an hour, stop for a short tea break, and then play the remaining songs. So, just like a normal Thursday afternoon but all in our own homes.

Nancy (Schooling) has sent all her **History** group a short quiz about the Domesday Book which is what we were covering in the History group...answers on the Internet.

When and where was Domesday Book commissioned?	
What is its Latin name?	
How was the information collected?	
Where was it kept, and where is it now?	
Which areas of England were not included?	
How many places are named in Domesday Book?	
How many volumes of Domesday Book are there?	
What is the Exon Domesday, and why is it different?	
In what ways is Domesday Book different from a modern Census?	

Spring 2020...

Time for... **The Book-crafter** Leo Clarke

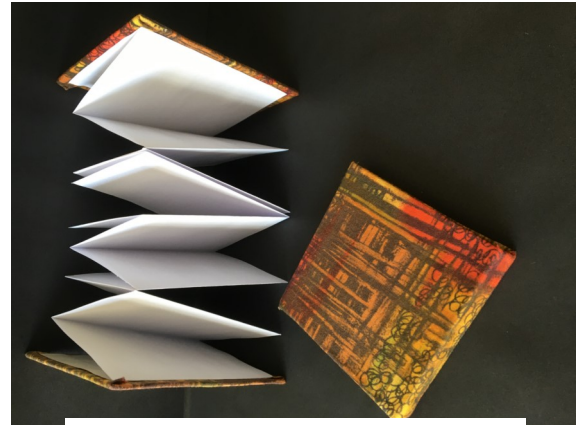
The table is spread and ready with all that's needed: drawing paper, grey-board, needle and threads, glue, end-papers, scissors, slim sharp knife to cut the folded paper, an awl for hole-making, a bone folder for creasing and flattening the folds.

The craft goes back to the Tang Dynasty China two-thousand years or so ago, where paper was made from mulberry leaves, hemp, tree-bark and fish.

**Book
binding
tools**



beauties of our world will be found upon these pages, lying here on the Crafter's table? And what hand will hold that pencil?



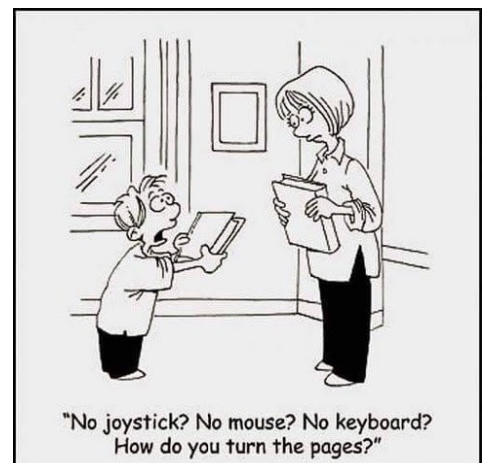
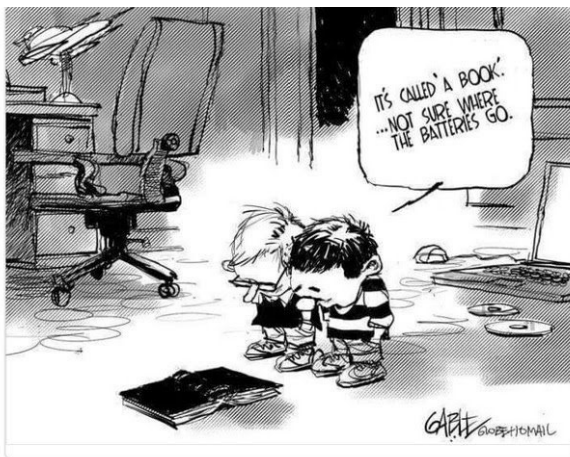
Absurd accordion with case

Our Crafter uses a glue that revels in the name of Mod Podge, which she found on the Internet. This hand-crafting is literally that, made by hand with fingers and thumbs but not all fingers and thumbs; care and precision and patience are needed. But these books are also made with love. When ready, the books await the touch of slowly charred willow guided by sensitive fingers to imprint patterns on the pages; or graphite ground up and mixed with mud will be shaped to add, shall it be flowers, or beloved faces, or trees or waterfalls or quiet pools? Still untouched patches of paper will create flickering lights between the trees' lace-winged branches.

What thoughts, what feelings, what responses to the



**Single
section
hard
case-min**





Archaeology... Bearsden Roman Fort

If not all, I would expect that a fair proportion of the local U3A membership is familiar with the discovery first of an iron-age settlement and then a Roman burial ground on the site intended for the new primary school in Somerton. They will also be aware that this has caused delay to the start of the building programme for the school even before the dreaded virus happened on the scene.

Several such events have come to my attention over the years, but the most interesting and the one with which I was actively involved was in Bearsden, Scotland where a significant part of a Roman fort was located as a part of the Antonine Wall. Bearsden is located on the northern outskirts of Glasgow and as well as part of the fort, there are several places in the locale where the stone base of the otherwise turf wall can be seen while the remains of the fort itself are located in Roman Road just a few hundred yards from Bearsden Cross. The principal remains to be seen are the bath house and the latrines and the site is surrounded on three sides by residential developments and when first investigated was also partly bounded by a defensive wall and ditch on the East side.

The site was exposed in 1973 following the removal of some Victorian villas for redevelopment and was the subject of intensive investigation by (*inter alia*) David Breeze of Historic Scotland, James Dickson, a paleobotanist of Glasgow University and Jim's wife Camilla. Next to the latrines and outside the wall the defensive ditch contained deposits suggestive of sewage waste; in other words, it was a potential cess-pit. There were four layers in this ditch and the bottom one appeared to be waste material not least because of parasitic worms and fragments of half digested cereal crops. Examining her own produced samples Camilla found similar materials but, happily, without the parasitic worms.

Jim and I were then members of the Botany Department and he asked me if there was any way that I could verify the situation using my experience which was as a steroid chemist. It was possible in theory since there had been a report of analysis of deposits found in a cave in Nevada. Whilst comparable in age to the Bearsden material, the Nevada material had been recovered from a dry cave and was recognisable as turds, whereas the material recovered from the Bearsden ditch had spent about

1,800 years in a wet and soggy state enduring the Scottish climate.

Jim gave me samples from all four distinct layers which I analysed for sterols and bile acids. The top three layers afforded no detectable steroidal material and the same was true for the water blank (used to cover for possible contamination). The bottom layer was another matter. First off cholesterol was found along with some plant sterol analogues (such as sitosterol) which come from plant material in the diet and secondly several bile acids formed in the body from sterol precursors but most importantly, coprosterol was easily found. As far as I am aware this substance is only formed by metabolism of cholesterol by microflora of the gut of animals including humans and is an established key to the presence of fecal material.

So far as we could tell this was the first application of the techniques used to evaluate the origin of soils of archaeological interest and created a lot of interest at the time and subsequently. Reports of the findings at Bearsden Fort are easy to find on the internet but access to the part of the ditch of greatest interest has become restricted by a residential development but the bath house and latrines are available for public access with free parking nearby.

It would be nice to learn that some part of the site in Somerton is going to be preserved not least because it would offer scope for teaching in the school something of the history of the area and even something of how people lived that long ago.

Brian Knights



Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You

Jane Redgrove

Ex –Chairman Somerton U3A, proud mother of 2 sons, interior designer, gardener, crafter, opera and ballet fan and Scrabble enthusiast

Favourite film

Pretty Woman

Favourite book

It's a toss -up between "Chocolate" by Joanne Harris and "Miss Garnet's Angel" by Sally Vickers

Favourite piece of music

"Finlandia" by Sibelius

Favourite holiday destination

New Zealand

Favourite food

Hot chocolate fudge cake with cream

Favourite drink

Sauvignon Blanc, either Vienna or New Zealand

First record you bought

Perry Como's "Magic Moments"

First teenage crush

A young German engineer who was working for my Dad. I don't think he even knew I existed.

What makes you happy?

Sunshine and flowers

What makes you sad?

I 'm not often sad but I do cry over other people's successes because I'm so happy for them, weird or what?

What makes you angry?

Seagulls pooing on my car.

3 words to describe you?

Impulsive, extravagant, lazy

Greatest weakness?

Magnum ice cream

Which person do you admire and why?

My Mother. She never let us know that she was scared of thunderstorms and would sit up all night in case we would wake up and

be scared.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a good mother and friend. Not sure that will happen.

Quality you most admire in people?

Sincerity

Which 6 people, alive or dead would you invite to a dinner party?

Michelle Obama who has achieved so much, Nick Clegg who I think would be very interesting, Roger Peters, a friend who is good company, Nelson Mandela for the obvious reasons and my Aunt, Pamela Ashton, a larger than life character who took no prisoners and Kay Williamson as a punishment for getting me to do this article.



Strollers & Striders



Recorders

Time For Us Girls

*I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus
here
We can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the oldies
now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a
while.
They'll think we've upped
and died.
They'll never know the
things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old
ladies
Who would never be
uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s –
If you only knew the truth!
There was sex and drugs
and rock 'n roll
The pill and the miniskirts*

*We smoked, we drank, we
partied
And were quite outrageous
flirts.
Then we settled down, got
married
And turned into someone's
Mum,
Somebody's wife then nana
Who on earth did we
become?
We didn't mind the change
of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're
dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!
So here you find me stuck
inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the
door!
It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family*

*But I've got no flaming
flour!
Now Netflix is just
wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy
killer,
There's wine and whiskey,
even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal
To recovery and health
And hope this awful virus
Doesn't decimate our
wealth.
We'll all get through the
crisis
And be back to join our
mates
Just hope I'm not far too
wide
To fit through the flaming
gates!*

Pam Ayres



Spot the celeb!...answers next month



Important Note on Security

Given U3A membership includes many who are elderly and/or restricted, may I recommend to them this series of YouTube videos.

Each video lasts between 8 and 10 minutes.

First and foremost, I can confirm that these videos are genuine, as confirmed by the Avon and Somerset Police. I can assure you of this, as I receive notifications from them via a

restricted link in my role as a Police Chaplain.

Although the videos were produced with a 'seniors' audience in mind, I would suggest much of what is included is highly relevant to everyone so you might also wish to suggest a wider circulation.

Kind regards

Brian Pearson

<https://youtu.be/oJEwTAcxuzs>

<https://youtu.be/NUWkITYmcQg>

<https://youtu.be/9lImntGvp84>

...copy and paste each link in turn into your browser and watch the message on you tube...

All articles for the Newsletter send to editor Kay at editorsu3a@gmail.com

Deadline for the June edition...15th May ...*please note earlier date!*

No entries can be accepted after this date.

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please

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